THE BRYGGEN PAPERS
Main Series No. 12

FOOD AND FEAST IN THE ARTHURIAN WORLD

Edited by David Brégaint, Ingvil Brügger Budal and Jens Eike Schnall

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

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Publisher
The University Museum of Bergen & The Faculty of Humanities,
University of Bergen, Norway
ISBN 978-82-93904-03-8 (print)
ISSN 0805-4487 (print)

ISBN 978-82-93904-04-5 (online)
ISSN 2704-0682 (online)
DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

Published with grants from
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL)
Department of Historical Sciences, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Inquiries about The Bryggen Papers can be directed to
Principal Contact https://boap.uib.no/index.php/bryggen/about/contact

Layout and production
Cover illustration: Sir Galahad is introduced to King Arthur's knights, gathered at the Round Table. This illustration is from The Quest for the Holy Grail and the Death of Arthur, attributed to Gautier Map. Unknown artist, Public Domain. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Round-table-bnf-ms-fr-343-f3r-14th.jpg
Layout: Christian Bakke, Communication Division, University of Bergen. Print production: Merkur Grafisk AS. Paper: 100g uncoated. Typography: Main text: Junicode 11,5pt/12pt.

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Content

Foreword

The Editorial Board of *The Bryggen Papers* is proud to present No. 12 of The Bryggen Papers Main Series. This thematic anthology brings together scholars from across Europe, North America, and Asia. Drawing on approaches from literary studies, history, and related disciplines, the articles range from comparative analyses of individual romances in European vernaculars to studies of medieval table manners, ideals of courtly conduct, ethical discourse, culinary spectacle, and the politics of display. The volume is published in both printed and online formats. The online format is in Universal Design and available as open access from day one.

The Bryggen Papers was established during the 1970s as The University of Bergen's scientific, international book series presenting the archaeological finds from the pioneering archaeological excavations at the German Wharf *Bryggen* in Bergen (1955-1979). The series had two strands: The Main Series for monographs, and The Supplementary Series for thematic anthologies. During the 1980s and 1990s, the series expanded its profile thematically and geographically. Today, *The Bryggen Papers* has merged The Main Series and The Supplementary Series into one expanded and flexible series and revised its focus and scope. *The Bryggen Papers* now aims to be the brand and name of a flexible non-commercial peer-reviewed book series for research on the Middle Ages. The profile is multi-disciplinary with focus on the Middle Ages in a broad sense. *The Bryggen Papers* publish full presentations of basic studies as well as general and interdisciplinary analyses, both monographs and anthologies.

The series is published by the University Museum of Bergen and the Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen (UiB). The editorial board responsible for the publication of the series is appointed by the Faculty of Humanities, UiB, and consists of Professor Dr. Gitte Hansen, Department of Cultural History, University Museum of Bergen, UiB (Chief Series Editor); Researcher Dr. Irene Baug. The Medieval Research Cluster, Faculty of Humanities, UiB; Professor Dr. Visa Immonen and Professor Dr. Kirsi Salonen Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, UiB; Professor Dr. Henning Laugerud and Associate Professor Dr. Jens Eike Schnall, Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies, UiB, and Senior Curator Dr. Sigrid Samset Mygland, Bryggens Museum / Bergen City Museum. PhD fellow MA Brita Hope Department of Cultural History, University Museum of Bergen, UiB acts as editorial Staff. The series' Editorial Board members responsible for this volume were Jens Eike Schnall and Gitte Hansen.

The publication of the present volume has been financed by grants from the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) and the Department of Historical Sciences, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Bergen February 2026
Gitte Hansen
Chief Editor

Food and Feast in the Arthurian World: An Introduction

David Brégaint

> King Óláfr's mother Ásta was sitting in there and some women with her. The workmen then tell her about King Óláfr's coming and also that he could be expected there soon. Ásta gets up straight away and told men and women to put things to rights there as best they could. She had four women see to the arrangement of the living room and to deck it out with hangings and get the benches ready. Two men spread the straw on the floor, two put up the table, two set out the food, two she sent away from the farmhouse, two brought in the ale, and all the others, women and men, went out into the courtyard. (*Heimskringla: Óláfs saga ins helga* [The Saga of St Olaf Haraldsson] (ch. 32, 24))

Asta's reaction to her son's arrival reflects the centrality of banquets in medieval societies throughout the Middle Ages. Any major event was typically celebrated by gathering people around a meal, where the sounds of drinking, chants, and music echoed in the richly adorned halls of castles. Of course, these meals and festivities were not only occasions for merrymaking, but also opportunities for dialogue, disputes, and politics in its broad acceptance. Similarly, food, table services, banquets hall, and table codes bore many different meanings and encapsulated various uses. The versatility of courts and the multi-dimensional character of their activities is always fascinating to all who are engaged in medieval studies from far or close. Our knowledge about courts and court life in Central medieval Europe is well covered by contemporary sources such as narratives, household accounts or court codes and laws, and this in increasing amounts as one approach in the late Middle Ages.

However, there is also a type of document that is essential not only to our knowledge about twelfth- and thirteenth-century courts but also for our understanding of the conceptions and perceptions of princely courts and what happened there. Arthurian literature is literally replete with episodes centred on banquets and feasts. Among quests, knightly battles, monsters to slay, deserts of all kinds to cross, loves that must be hidden, tragic fates that unfold inexorably, and more, the banquet, the meal, constitutes a central and recurring element in the romances of the Round Table from which everything begins and ends. Often, it is the starting point and the conclusion of the adventures that have made these novels popular throughout medieval Europe. The round table itself may well have been a symbol

of unity between King Arthur and his knights, it still is an artifact borrowed from the field of commensality and meals, probably appealing to aristocratic culture in various manners (Schmolke-Hasselmann 1982: 41–75). In many ways, descriptions of festivities, buffets, and meals, as well as accounts of table etiquette, rules for seating arrangements, and decorations and musical performances in Arthurian histories and poems, were sources of inspiration and models for aristocratic courts to follow, to access its codes and norms, to 'imagine' a courtly world with its expected standards. As such, the topic of food and feasts in Arthurian literature opens fruitful avenues to foster our understanding of the world of courts and of the aristocratic elite in Western medieval Europe.

The present collection of essays derives its origin from a conference initiated by the Nordic Branch International Arthurian Society (NBIAS) and held at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and the University of Bergen, 4th–6th May 2022. The conference's purpose was to specifically focus on food and feasts in Arthurian romances and poems in the medieval north. We are all too aware of the wealth of Old Norse translations of Arthurian literature in Norway, Sweden, and Iceland in the central Middle Ages (Halvorsen 1973: 17–26) to understand how fecund this topic can be for appreciating the impact of this literature and of continental court culture in Scandinavia. The following contributions aim to offer variegated and valuable insights into this broad topic.

* * *

In his seminal work on courtly culture in medieval Europe, Joachim Bumke emphasizes the pivotal role of banquets and feasts in courtly life (Bumke 2000: 203 ff.). He notes that it is no surprise these events are well-documented in source material, as they were exquisite means to cultivate courtly culture through organized events. Even though the audience of Arthurian romances most certainly were struck by the role and magnificence of its festivities, we must admit that not all narratives of feasts and banquets were as thoroughly described as King Arthur's coronation banquet in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (*History*: 212–214). For their part, Norse translations of these accounts provide considerably less detail. Indeed, a characteristic feature of the descriptions of banquets in the Norse translations is their brevity. Too often, as highlighted in various studies, many details relating to guests, etiquette, table service, and food are abbreviated, summarized, or even omitted, either in translation or in the transmission of these texts. It may be that translators or later text redactors deemed these details too mundane. However, the reader should not be mistaken: the scarcity of description is certainly not representative of the pivotal function of banquets as a social, political, and cultural arena.

However, the quasi-omnipresence – though shortly described – of festivities and grandiose meals in court literature, as much in romances as in etiquette treatises and household ordinances, certainly contributed to, and possibly exaggerated this picture of courtly life as permanently evolving in a festive environment of extravagant lavishness and entertainment. True, it was the mark of the aristocratic elite not to indulge in physical work as commoners did, but festivities were not mere leisure for a class that struggled to access the circles of power, or to maintain

its position once there. As the present studies richly illustrates, the court and its festivals constituted a space imbued with power, and first and foremost, a reflection of the prince's influence. It was at his behest that parties and banquets were organized, and he was the spatial center of these arrangements. The power of the prince was both representational and performative. It was representational because the banquet served to ostentatiously demonstrate that the prince or king could afford to organize grandiose meals, unlike other members of the court. This simple act was enough to express power and influence over court society. However, festivities were more than just a stage for power displays; they were also an arena for building and consolidating power. Rules of etiquette and seating arrangements established strong and binding norms that courtiers were expected to follow. As the *King's Mirror (Konungs skuggsjá)*, the famous Old Norwegian *speculum* (ca. 1250), eminently demonstrates, courtiers distinguished themselves from villains and cotters through their honorable behavior (cf. Schnall 2000: 78–120).

The simple issue of hosting festivals and banquets was not spared from politics either. It was definitively a matter of power demonstration. The cost for food and beverages which sometimes required importing costly products from abroad, and all the organization capacity that was required to mount such great events frequently befell princes and kings, ascribing to them the monopoly of ostentation (Barber 2020: 258–261). The construction of tents or buildings big enough to host courtly feasts was no exception (Bumke 2000: 103–127). In the thirteenth-century, edifices made to welcome festivities occupied an important place in the court life of the kings of Norway. King Hákon Hákonarson contributed greatly to the construction of a locus for his court in connection to Magnús VI lagabøtir [the Lawmender] Hákonarson's marriage and crowning in 1261. He thus commanded the building of the iconic stone hall in Bergen, which now bears his name. The choice of stone as a building material instead of wood marked a radical change and may demonstrate the new importance of a permanent building for his court (Brekke & Ersland 2013). Furthermore, the *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* dedicates a long description to the entire process of building the wooden halls that would host the crowning ceremony of the eponymous king in Bergen in 1247. It concludes a rather detailed account about the discussions between the sovereign and the papal prelate concerning the quality of the buildings, descriptions of the decorations, and lengthy information about seating arrangements (Ch. 252–254). Likewise, when the author of the saga concludes its work by listing the building activity of King Hákon, he does not fail to mention all the veizluhallir, banquet halls, which he had built in the kingdom to accommodate his followers during his wanderings (Ch. 233).

Speaking about power and court feasts, one cannot ignore how food itself was embedded with symbols of prestige, leadership, and hegemony. Of course, food was and still is a source of subsistence for the body, and meals serve as a means of communication, simply gathering people around a table. Yet, from ancient societies onward, commensality has been central to the organization of social order. Food was often sacred, and the language of the table allowed people to express themselves about themselves and about the world around them (Qviller 2004). In the Middle Ages, food consumption was highly shaped by social norms; it was not merely a material reality but also a matter of symbolic representation. For instance,

peasant food was perceived differently from elite food because different standards and systems of representation applied. The primary system was based on the idea that everything on earth is classified on a scale ranging from the ground to the sky. The closer the food was to the ground, the less noble it was considered, making it more suitable for the poorer classes. Conversely, the closer it was to the heavens, the more it was deemed appropriate for the higher echelons of society. Thus, vegetables were culturally regarded as the food of the poor, while fruits were seen as more noble. Similarly, meat from animals that were closer to the ground was considered suitable for the lower classes, whereas birds were reserved for the rich. Social metaphors also drew from the animal world, with the elite – both clerical and lay – being identified with birds, while plebeians were represented among four-legged animals that crawled on the ground. Providing the best meats and vegetables, the most exotic fruits, the whole served on the finest and wealthiest plates and cups was a mark of the hosts' magnificence and was thus the focus of much attention.

It is this world of food, table rules, banquet halls, but also of power and social distinction, and cohesion at court in the Arthurian universe that the following authors in this book have chosen to address. The reader will discover that the present volume covers a large corpus of texts from the Arthurian legend from the thirteenth-century to the fifteenth-century. It comprises several *riddarasǫgur*, such as *Erex saga*, *Ívents saga*, *Parcivals saga*, *Mǫttuls saga*, *Breta sǫgur*, *Kláruss (Clári) saga*, *Samsons saga fagra*, *Mírmants saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr* and *Hjálmþérs saga ok Ǫlvis*. Unsurprisingly, Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is also present. In addition to these rather pivotal works from Arthurian literature, the contributors to this volume have relied upon other works which, though more or less related to the Arthurian world, open exciting and fruitful comparative analyses and reflections on the theme of feasts and banquets. These include *Historia Brittonum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Wace's *Roman de Brut*, and a few more. The wealth of all these texts contributes to deepening our understanding of banquets' functions in the universe of medieval courts.

Likewise, the authors of this volume discuss a wide array of topics and themes related to food and feasts in Arthurian literature and their translations. We have gathered the different contributions into three distinctive parts. On the one hand, some studies readily emphasize how banquets and meals function as exquisite stages for power-building and competition (Part I). Descriptions and narratives of festivities are not only decisive tools for historians to access past realities, but they are also literary elements with an existence of their own that could be used and reused in different contexts, each time being ascribed new meanings (Part II). "A court is never complete without joking and laughter; a court without gifts is mere mockery of Barons. And the boredom and vulgarity of Argentan nearly killed me," said Bertran de Born, a baron and troubadour from Limousin, while visiting the court of Henry II in Normandy in 1182. His definition of a princely court obviously included music, poetry, and diverse merriments. Henry's court was certainly magnificent in other respects, but a vivid disappointment for an artist like Bertan de Born (Paden, 164–165). In the final part of this volume (Part III), we explore meals and feasts through the prism of musical instruments and other artifacts such as jewels and drinking horns. These elements were present both in the material reality of

the audience and as literary devices and somehow connected these two dimensions with each other.

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Part I
Banquets and Feasts of Competition

Introduction

David Brégaint

At northern courts – and probably at any medieval court – education and entertainment were two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the well-known prologues of the translated romances make a point of explaining that these texts were written to entertain, *skemmtan*, but also for instruction, *fróðleikr* (Leach 1921: 153; Barnes 1974; Kalinke 1981; Budal 2014; Brégaint 2016: 243–254). It is thus not so surprising that banquets and other festive celebrations combined recreational and didactic purposes. The medieval court was precisely a place for leisure, far away from any form of labor – the 'privilege' of the commoners, but it was not spared from any political and more general power considerations. The following contributions, each in their own way, disclose how power was at work during feasts and exceptional meals in courtly literature.

In "Weaponizing the Feast: Type-Scene Analysis in *Clári saga*", Michael Lawson approaches the medieval court not as an environment necessarily dedicated to building social and cultural cohesion and solidarity among its members, but rather as a stage for performance in a competitive setting. The court is transformed into a modern boxing ring where courtiers are engaged in a fight to access it and maintain themselves within it. In this setting, cultural norms and etiquette are not merely common markers for integration, but also, and perhaps foremost, central elements of hierarchy and social stratification. In *Clári saga*, we follow the tragic fate of Prince Clárus, who is manipulated into a hostile festive environment only to be ambushed by Princess Séréna, exposing his social inferiority to the attendees.

The court of *Clári saga* blatantly reminds us of that of the Sun-King in the seventeenth century, who based his power over the nobility on placing nobles in a situation of competition for royal favor to better control them. Thus, the dinners organized in the king's apartment were envisioned as a form for selection between courtiers; being invited signified a social promotion (Hours 2002). Indeed, royal and princely patronage can also be addressed through this perspective. In commanding the redaction of works or translations into local languages, kings and queens not only enabled their courtiers to access culture (not just an example of largesse), but it also awarded the patrons with a privileged role in cultural transfer processes together with a strategic superiority in the cultural field at court (Brégaint 2020: 101–114). It seems thus that across time, intra-court relationships

were highly determined by competition and power games, both in reality and in narratives.

Following Lawson's work on *Clári* saga, Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir also demonstrates that Banquets are not just a decorum for action. They intrinsically provided the exquisite premises for political stands in general. She has turned her attention to one of the most famous feasts of Arthurian literature: a legendary banquet that turned into an equally legendary test of female chastity. The episode is originally found in *Le Lai du Cor* (twelfth century) and *Le Mantel mautaillé* (thirteenth century), but it made its way in Scandinavian literary culture through several texts and translations, and among them in *Mǫttuls saga* (thirteenth century) and *Skikkju rímur* (fourteenth century) which the author examines here.

Martin Aurell assumed that women are the real protagonists of lais, whether they are harpies or faithful wives and attentive mothers (Aurell 2024: 35). However, in the process of translation and transmission, cultural misogyny can strike hard. Ingvil Brügger Budal's examination of the *Lai du Lecheor* and *Le Mantel mautaillé* and their Old Norse translations*, Leikara lioð*, *Mǫttuls saga*, and *Skikkju rímur* throws light on gender issues in the famous test of chastity. Beyond the obvious entertaining character of the event lurks an underlying mockery and humiliation of women. Revisiting the context of festivities attached to the cloak, Budal convincingly demonstrates how the different processes of translation from mid-thirteenth century to the following century is pretty much a descent into misogyny and female disempowerment.

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

Weaponizing the Feast: Type-Scene Analysis in *Clári saga*

Michael Lawson

Medieval romances routinely indulge in elaborate descriptions of extravagant banquets held at royal courts. These tales portray such marvelous repasts as methods of marking different points of the year, demonstrating the largesse and prosperity of a sovereign's retinue, celebrating marital unions, as well as occasions to relax and distract oneself from the banalities of daily life. Literary depictions of feasting require the inclusion of explicit components for them to function properly, elements such as eating, drinking, boasting, and speeches (Fry 1968: 52). Such scenes were dynamic in form and could be altered according to the needs of the story. This can be witnessed, for example, in Arthurian romances where a reliance upon earlier narrative traditions to craft intricate depictions of feasts were unburden by the constraints of meticulous duplication, exact metrical patterns, a fixed order of events, details, or concepts (Fry 1968: 53). In other words, the formulaic content of a scene such as feasting is variable, much in the same way that it has been theorized that singers of oral poetry shaped their songs (Parry 1930: 73–147; Lord 1960; Arend 1933). With this in mind, we can analyze these feasting episodes as 'type-scenes' which have a flexible set of rules that must be followed, to some degree, in order for them to make sense, all with the understanding that the procedure for creating these scenes could be modified. Following in the footsteps of their Arthurian predecessors, late medieval Icelandic authors used specific formulas in the crafting of their sagas – and they were fully cognizant of the horizons that constrained these scenes and enthusiastically negotiated with the possibilities therein. This essay examines an example of how one such saga demonstrates a manipulation of the boundaries of its feast type-scene, demonstrating that such a narrative element could be employed in a slightly different manner than early continental examples. Within this narrative, the feast is used for more than a mere social gathering. Its host turns it into a political weapon, a space where power, hierarchy, and gender roles are contested, a stage on which female sovereignty and male honor are negotiated. By examining the portrayal of this pivotal feast in the late Icelandic romance, *Clári saga*, I argue that the literary representation of the feast as a type-scene can be used as a lens for exploring how late medieval Icelandic writers adapted, and – in this case – weaponized, imported motifs to comment on local anxieties about power and consent.

Clári saga (in ONP: *Kláruss saga*) is a late-medieval Icelandic romance from the fourteenth century that has been noted as occupying a very peculiar and isolated position within the genre of Old Norse and Old Icelandic literature (Cederschiöld

1907: ix). The reason for this assessment is due, in part, to the purported provenance of the original narrative that is offered in its prologue. The saga opens with a story about how it was found in Latin verse by the Icelandic bishop of Skálholt, Jón Halldórsson (1322–1339), in Paris. This origin-story may have initially dissuaded scholarly interest in the saga, as it was recognized as being merely a translation rather than an original composition and therefore of presumably less value towards understanding the native Icelandic literary corpus. No material Latin exempla have been found for *Clári saga*, which has given some scholars reticence enough to argue that it may have, in fact, been an original composition (Hughes 2008: 136). Adding complication to the theory of its Latin origins, the saga contains portions of the narrative that seem to be of German origin, specifically those that concern the haughty princess tale type that can be found in the König Drosselbart legend as recorded by the Brothers Grimm. One of *Clári saga*'s central characters, the Princess Séréna, is presented as part-ruler of France with her father and exhibits a misogamous and antagonistic attitude towards marriage and her would-be suitors, a motif that is thought to be unknown outside of Icelandic literature (Sigurðsson 2021: 161). Its narrative structure is thought to have been the archetype for subsequent *riddarasǫgur* texts that highlighted the so-called 'maiden kings', who would exemplify similar traits of overbearingness and arrogance in the face of attempt to woo them and, thereby, subvert their regnal power. Due to genesis of the primary power struggle occurring during a feast scene in this saga, I have chosen to analyze this moment in terms of the type-scene and explore how this methodology can potentially allow for the isolation of key elements of this feast scene and thereby offer readers entry into the intricate representations of power and agency that are on display during this sequence of the saga.

A type-scene can be understood as an event that recurs frequently in a body of literature. This term, first coined by Walter Arend in his 1933-study *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer*, is derived from the oral-formulaic theory of narrative poetry initially developed by Milman Perry and later refined in cooperation with Albert B. Lord. Working within Homeric oral poetry, Perry and Lord theorized that an illiterate poet or 'singer' composed his poems extempore, within a live setting by relying on a stock of formulas to build individual lines and on type-scenes to constrain the plot. The process of borrowing material is not a phenomenon limited solely to oral poetry but also occurs with marked frequency in writing culture. This act of borrowing offered a frame of reference for an audience by supplying them with familiar story elements from tradition, yet it could be manipulated by authors to create more nuance and depth. French jongleurs and trouvères most certainly used preexisting material to form their songs, sometimes even from their own compositions (O'Neil 2006: 175). These songs then gave rise to many of the motifs found in Arthurian prose works, which were later translated in Scandinavia, and then enmeshed with the native traditions of the saga writers, forever affecting the way that they plied their craft. Although type-scene analysis may not unlock the secrets of the ingenuity of medieval Icelandic authors, scribes, and redactors, it might prove to be a useful way of thinking about the boundaries of genre in the late medieval world and how these boundaries could be manipulated for the purpose of exploring relevant social concepts and the forces that created them. This conceptual framework has previously been applied to studies concern-

ing fight scenes in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* as well as towards the homestead burning in *Njáls saga* (Heinemann 1974; Tirosh 2017).

The typical feast type-scene from oral poetry can be broken down into a few key sequences. As with any type-scene, many of these elements can be expressed with stock terminology, phraseology that can be understood as syntagmatic or one-to-one relationally with a part, while others can take a more paradigmatic, dynamic form. The type-scene gets its meaning from the relation across the lateral, syntagmatic axis, in other words, its connection with the other examples in the phrase, or in this case story. The vertical axis is concerned with possibilities, what can be substituted to create a variation of the original statement or work. Roland Barthes outlined the paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements of storytelling in similar terms with his 'garment system' (Barthes 1968). Herein the paradigmatic elements are all the items which cannot be worn at the same time on the same body part such as hats, trousers, shoes, and the syntagmatic is the juxtaposition of the different elements at the same time in a complete ensemble from hat to shoes. It is the vertical, or paradigmatic, sequence that is often highlighted in literary analyses and folkloristics, as when it expands, and the many strands of possibility are displayed, one can holistically gaze across all examples of elements for what is unique about a type-scene. Therein is where the substitutional differences are recognized and, subsequently, their implications toward the understanding of the ideologies and tastes of the dominant writing culture that are being communicated within the type-scene.

Regarding the role of literary predilections, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu insists taste is not something that is only personal, meaning contingent or unsuitable for scientific analysis, but on the contrary a subject that can be put under sociological scrutiny. People's tastes – their likes and dislikes – are as much ingrained in the power dynamics of society as is their political standing. They form part of their cultural capital, and it can be analyzed in the same manner as economic or political issues (Bourdieu 1986: 241–258). For example, when read through Bourdieu's categories of capital, field, and illusio, saga writing in thirteenth-century Iceland can be seen as approaching a semi-autonomous literary field: although closely tied to political, religious, and aristocratic concerns, poetry and sagas possessed a distinctive prestige and function of their own, which helps account for the remarkable literary output of the period (Tulinius 2002: 15–17). The *riddarasǫgur* genre was immensely popular, as is evidenced by the sheer magnitude of manuscripts that were copied, edited, and reworked that included the same collection of stories and characters. Bjørn Bandlien has noted that this was an enormous achievement given how past scholarship has labelled the late medieval period as one of literary decline and 'bad taste', hinting that these shifts in taste can tell us something about shifts in thought and attitudes among a wide spectrum of the population (Bandlien 2005: 242; Glauser 1983: 229–233). Similarly, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir has asserted that patterns of literary, social, and ideological preconceptions can be discerned by examining adaptations of source texts, and that translations offer a unique lens through which cultural transformations can be observed as they offer a glimpse at the encounter between two discrete cultural traditions (Ríkharðsdóttir 2012: 3).

The authors, scribes, and redactors of the Icelandic *riddarasǫgur* actively engaged with both oral and written material from local as well as continental traditions. With this notion in mind, the type-scene can lend itself readily to the study of medieval narratives and has been used previously to examine both Old French and Old Norse traditions. In his study on *chanson de geste*, Jean Rychner argued that these songs relied upon stock motifs to build their narratives. Each of these motifs could be manipulated at the author's discretion and broken up into smaller sets. Particularly, the type-scene of the battle could be subdivided according to the combatants' choice of weapons (Rychner 1955: 151–152). Similarly, in his work examining fight scenes in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, Fredrik J. Heinemann noticed a similar pattern in how *Íslendingasǫgur* authors manipulated stock elements within battles to build and release tension dynamically, working specifically within established topoi that match with earlier ones from Old English poetry (Heinemann 1974: 102–119). Theodore Andersson has likewise noted that "The [saga] writer undoubtedly could and did use written sources, supplementary oral sources, his own imagination, and above all his own words, but his art and presumably the framework of his story were given him by tradition. The inspiration of the sagas is ultimately oral" (Andersson 1967 119). He later reaffirmed this point, arguing that the sagas shared structures and techniques derive from "an anterior oral tradition that gave shape to the narrative style...before they were actually written down" (2012: 3–4).

Though the type-scenes of the feast in Arthurian literature normally display these festive gatherings as having the primary function of complicating the action of the story which pushes the protagonist out into the world to prove his bravery and honor, the way in which this could be achieved varied greatly. The feast in Arthurian literature, for example, is explained by Sarah Gordon as follows:

> Characterized by ritual and spectacle, the Arthurian feast is also an environment of exchange and action. During the feast, knights recounted their successes and failures, while unknown individuals arrived with news, quests, prisoners, or adventure. Meals at court demonstrate the virtue of Arthurian largesse. Such communal occasions also bring the Arthurian fellowship together at the beginning of the narrative and are echoed in feast-day, tournament, and wedding episodes in which narration is combined with consumption. (Gordon 2006: 57)

In typical depictions of feasting from Arthurian literature, the feast can be broken down into a few constituent parts: *contextualization*, where the purpose of the feast is explained (i.e., why or when it is occurring, usually a celebration of a holiday such as Pentecost); *display*, which gives a cursory exploration of the various dishes being served and/or gifts exchanged, with the purpose of communicating the largesse of the court; *complication*, the action that disrupts or complicates the feast and most often serves as the central portion of the narrative; and, finally, *realization*, where the feast is actually allowed to occur uninterrupted.

Icelandic authors built upon this Arthurian conceptualization of feasting, allowing the scenes to serve a distinctly political function for their hosts. Though they did not imitate the themes and structures of the Arthurian romances, they

did incorporate some Arthurian motifs in their compositions (Kalinke 2017: 140). As the romance genre in Iceland had its beginnings in the translated works of Old French and Anglo-Norman originals, which in turn had their genesis in the oral songs of continental jongleurs, it not too much of a stretch of the imagination to suppose that Icelanders also used stock sets of motifs to create their original compositions. This idea is not a new one, as scholars such as Carol Clover have already noticed that the interweaving of synchronic plot lines and the delight in the aesthetic of multiplicity and recurrence make it difficult to imagine that sagas and prose romances are unrelated (Clover 1982: 184). Using the feast as a point of socio-political exchange is not limited solely to the romance genre but can also be witnessed in scenes from the king's sagas, where feasts were known to devolve into verbal contests between rival monarchs, in the form of a traditional *mannjafnaðr*, each seeking to prove his superiority over the other. John Miles Foley contends that, "...the Feast serves as a metonymic cue that summons that highly valued, almost ritualistically appropriate context to each of the very different narrative situations in which it appears" (Foley 1991: 34–35). By carefully substituting signs in place of others, an author or redactor can effectively change the meaning of a literary scene such as a feast. In this way, such celebrations can then be used as theater for that character who initiated them, allowing them to measure the refinement of their attendants. Marianne Kalinke, for example, has pointed out that *Clári saga* is the first of the Icelandic romances to arrange its type scenes in such a way as to precipitate future narratives to emulate its general structure (Kalinke 1990: 66). This dialogue between saga texts is a rather common conception, and a rather old one, as Carol Clover has also noted that saga authors must have known one another and been a part of a unique literate society, wherein each saga is a response to those that came before it and a standard for those that followed it (Clover 1982: 200–201).

In the pivotal banquet scene of this study, the saga's eponymous protagonist, Prince Clárus of Saxony, is judged according to his table manners and is determined to be woefully lacking. When he is handed a soft-boiled egg, Clárus is unable to hold onto it, due to the duplicitous interference of his host, and inadvertently spills the yolk down his costly silken tunic, leaving an obvious and unsightly stain (*Clári saga* 22). This assumed breech in dining decorum prompts his host to call into question his breeding, his status as a gentleman, and, by insinuation, his sexual capabilities. This arguably harsh pronouncement is made even more baleful in the context of the prince's motivation for visiting the court of France, as his intention was to ask for the hand of this host, Princess Séréna. Within this scene, the princess uses the inability of the young lord to perform satisfactorily in this highly structured act as an excuse to forcibly expel him from her tower, unwashed, unpledged, and unsatisfied. The spilled yolk can, therefore, be interpreted as more than just a tangible stain on his tunic but also as a metaphorical blemish on his reputation, equally symbolizing his emasculation at the hands of his host. This breakdown of hospitality is made all the more scandalous for Clárus when consideration is given to how well he was initially received by Séréna's father, King Alexander (10–11). The contrast between the description of Clárus's beauty and courtliness during his audience with the King and his backwardness and ostensi-

bly slovenly table manners prove just how far Séréna's actions went beyond normal decorum.

As was previously mentioned, in most feasts from Arthurian literature, the complicating action is usually an interruption of the feast or a frame narrative that must occur before the feast can commence. In *Clári saga*, however, the feast type-scene occurs in an uninterrupted manner until the final course is served. The pivotal banquet scene is described as prepared for the visiting Prince Clárus by the daughter of the King of France, Princess Séréna. Séréna's intentions are not immediately made known to the reader, though they are hinted at through her lady-in-waiting Tecla, as she implores her mistress to deal with this suitor justly, something that Prince Clárus's own teacher, the wise and storied Master Pérús, had warned him was outside the purview of Séréna's capabilities (Sigurðsson 2021). This incorporation of such a feasting motif has a great deal to do with how Icelandic saga writing developed. By the early fourteenth century, when this saga was first written down, Icelandic sagas and poetry had undergone a notable literary reformulation, and a subsequent generation of saga authors appear to have developed a taste for importing themes, motifs, and story patterns into their sagas that were evidently picked up from continental literature, mainly those of Latin and French. In the most popular of these sagas, we see a cultivation of playful virtuosity in the style, an increased richness of descriptive language, alliteration, and parodic exaggeration (Jensson 2021: 59).

If one were to map out the feast scene in *Clári saga* in the same way as has previously been done with a typical Arthurian feast, one would discover the degree to which the saga's author has negotiated with the horizon of expectation. Like the horizontal axis of the Arthurian feast, *Clári saga*'s feast features the familiar segments of contextualization, display, complication, and realization, but the occurrences within each of these portions of the type-scene are altered in such a way as to change the purpose of the scene. Within the contextualization segment, the audience is treated to the background of this feast, as it is planned by Princess Séréna. Herein, the narrative dwells on the idiosyncrasies within the preparation of the feast, remarking that:

> Er nú þegar mikill viðbúnaðr í turninum um fram dagligan vana. Er þar allt tjaldat með gulligum purpura ok guðvefjarpellum ok ǫðrum hinum dýrustum vefjum, svá at hvergi sá bert á útan þar, sem þat sómði betr. (*Clári saga*, 17)
>
> [A great preparation is now undertaken in the tower beyond that of the daily routine. There were many tapestries with gilded purple and carpets of precious materials and of that other one the most precious textiles, so that nowhere looked empty except for where it suited best.]

Here also we have the logistics of the feast being discussed, as Clárus negotiates with Séréna's maidservant Tecla regarding the proper number of men to bring to this occasion. This departs from typical Arthurian feasts in a marked way. Tecla, the maidservant, is functioning as an intermediary in a negotiation of power between her mistress Séréna – who has no intention of marrying – and the newcomer Prince Clárus. By all accounts, the saga would have us believe that Clárus has

a certain comportment that has alerted Tecla to his superiority as a matrimonial candidate. He is inexperienced, however, and must be guided to bring enough men to prove his worthiness as a suitor. When Clárus first supposes to bring sixty men as his entourage, Tecla gently admonishes him:

> 'Þat þykkir oss vera fátt, en eigi ofmart,' segir Tecla, 'þvílíkum herra, sem þér eruð, ok slíks mannz boð, sem þér þiggið'. (*Clári saga*, 17)
>
> ['It seems to us too few, and not too many,' says Tecla, 'for such a lord, as you are, and such a person's invitation, as you receive'.]

It is possible that the audience is meant to believe that Clárus is the favored character of this narrative and that his bridal quest is worthy of success, as he is being steered in the proper direction by his own people as well as outside agents in Séréna's employ. The stage is set for the drama that is about to unfold during this meal, and those familiar with the saga genre are apt to infer some strand of narrative foreshadowing by having the protagonist's trip begin so well.

Within the 'display' segment of the syntagm, rather than focusing on the decadence of the table and enumerating its many delicacies, it is important to note that the description of the food is entirely skipped over in favor of a description of what Clárus, and his retinue, see upon entering Séréna's tower:

> Ok þegar sem hann kemr inn um dyrrin, eru þar fyrir þjónustumeyjar með munnlaugum af brendu gulli gǫrum. Svá mikil birti var hér, at hneppiliga mátti í gegn orntjá. Því at allt ráf var lagit ok laugat í brendu gulli. Ǫll var hon pentuð ok purtréuð innan með stjǫrnugang ok alls kyns margfrœði. Hon ilmaði ǫll af hinum dýrustum jurtum. Ok aldri kom enn svá mikill meistari inn um þær dyrr, at eigi mætti nema enn meira, en hann kunni áðr, af þeim meistaradóm, sem þar mátti líta. Svá ferska lykt gaf þeim hér at kenna at þeir hugðuz í páradísum komnir vera. Ok þó at Clárús keisarason væri fœddr í hásæti heimsins, þá þótti honum eigi at síðr mikils um vert alla þá makt ok frygð, sem þar mátti líta. Jungfrú Séréna sat niðri á langpallin ok þar léénan liggjandi fyrir hennar fótum. Hon var með svá tíguligum búnaði, sem ekki lifanda mannz augu leit annan mektugra. (*Clári saga*, 17–19)
>
> [And immediately as he comes in through the door, were there waiting before him serving-maids with washbasins of pure gold. Such a great brightness was here, that one could hardly direct one's eyes to it. Because all the roof was laid and inlaid with pure gold. It was all painted and pictured inside with astronomical images and all kinds of great wisdom. It all smelled of the richest herbs. And never came yet so great a master in through those doors, that he might not learn still more than he could before, from those masterful works, which might be seen there. So fresh was the smell they experienced here that they believed themselves to be come into paradise. And though Clárus the emperor's son was brought up in the high seat of the world, he nonetheless thought not much of all that power and glory, which might be seen there. The young lady Séréna sat below on a long bench and, there, a

> lioness lay before her feet. She was dressed in such dignified clothing, as no living man's eyes have seen another more gorgeous.]

Séréna's ostentatious display reiterates the difference in the social standing between her and her would-be suitor Clárus. The opulence of Séréna's introduction – as experienced by Clárus – is intended to add an additional layer to the dynamic tension that is already at play inside the pursuit of a marital alliance. Clárus and his men are immediately approached by maidens with golden wash basins and bathed before the meal. Séréna then greets everyone individually and seats are assigned. Rather than displaying her gregariousness here, Bridget Ann Henisch would argue that Séréna is simply reinforcing the social hierarchy as she deems it. Henisch claims that "the ideal of sweet and generous affability, however, was held in check by the principle of hierarchy... Each person occupied his own precisely defined position on the social ladder; he and everyone around him knew exactly where that was and the degree of honor due to it. To move or be moved up and down the scale were actions deliberately taken and carefully noted" (Henisch 1985: 194). Séréna is welcoming her guests, but there is a clear distinction drawn between who is in power and who is not here.

As the feast begins, the audience is informed that there is both food and drink in abundance at this banquet, but none of the food is described save for the last dish, wherein the complicating action occurs. The trap has been set and Prince Clárus inadvertently walks right into it:

> Ok í hinn síðarsta rétt kemr inn blautsoðit egg, sem mǫrgum hœverskum manni þikkir gott at súpa eptir mat sinn. Ok nú tekr konungsdóttir upp eitt eggit ok spyrr keisarason, svá segjandi: 'Herra Clárús!' segir hon, 'vili þér sakir hœversku halda mér eggit til hálfs ok hafa hinn síðarra hlut?' 'Gjarna, jungfrú!' segir hann. Ok nú þegar hallar hon at sér ok lætr, sem hon drekki, ok réttir síðan at keisarasyni. Han var svá búinn, at hann hafði einn guðvefjarmǫttul ok undir myrkbrúnan kyrtil af ciclade, allan skínanda, með gullhlǫðum ok gimsteinum settan um háls ok handvegu. Han var þá orðinn XVIII vetra gamall. Ok nú býz hann at taka við egginu sem einn hofmaðr. En svá sem hann tekr við, þá fitlar hon til fingrunum. Ok allt saman af hálleika skurnsins ok hennar tilstilli verðr honum laust eggit ok steypiz upp í fang honum, svá at stropinn strýkr um bringuna ok kyrtilinn allt niðr at belti.
> (*Clári saga*, 21–22)

> [And as the last dish comes a soft-boiled egg, which many courtly men think it good to drink after their meal. And then the princess takes up an egg and asks the prince, thus saying: 'Lord Clárus!' She says, 'Would you for courtesy's sake share with me half of this egg and have the second half?' 'Gladly, young lady!' he says. And then at once she turns sideways to herself and pretends as though she drinks and presents it afterwards to the prince. He was so equipped, that he had a velvet cloak and underneath a dark brown tunic of Damascene silk, all glimmering, with golden lacework and gemstones set around the hem and the wrists. He was then eighteen years old. And next he prepares to receive the egg as a gentleman. But when he receives it, she

> then touches it with her fingers. And altogether from the slipperiness of the eggshell and her management he loses the egg, and it tumbles over his breast, so that the stream pours out over his chest and the tunic all the way down to the belt.]

There are many elements at play in this feast scene, but all of them are extremely important for understanding the purpose of the scene. First, the meal should be understood in its proper context. It is a performance of courtliness rather than a celebration. Though the reason that it is being held – to welcome the emperor's son, Clárus, and his retinue – may suggest otherwise, the visiting suitor is being publicly judged, and the metric is his ability to display courtesy. This is deftly steered, within the narrative, by showing the graciousness of the host, Séréna, but there is an ulterior meaning woven into the fabric of the story. She is willing to share a portion of a soft-boiled egg with Clárus, certainly, but this only magnifies her own courtesy, as it was deemed gracious to share with one's social inferiors (Henisch 1985: 191). It should also be noted that she offers him, the second half, this courtesy. The narrator then inserts their own voice by explaining that Clárus is, currently, eighteen years of age. No judgment, positive or negative, is associated with this statement, but it is intriguing to think why this was deemed to be a necessary inclusion at this point in the scene. It seems that this parenthetical note exists for the sole purpose of excusing Clárus from the shame that is to follow. His youth, and thereby inexperience, does not prepare him for the deceit of his host. The touch of her fingertips causes him to spill the egg onto his tunic – the physical display of his own affluence.

Séréna's interference in the feast as a segment, in isolation, is notably different from typical feasting scenes from Arthurian literature, where the act of physically touching a guest does not appear. It appears that this scene in *Clári saga* is meant to highlight the agency of its female antagonist. She causes her suitor to experience public shame by interfering in a surreptitious manner. Additionally, this scene may also have been meant as a critique of Prince Clárus, particularly examining whether he was, indeed, ready for a woman's touch, leaving the audience to infer that he was evidently not. These musings aside, it is clear that the power was, and remained, in the hands of Séréna during this feast, and that this scene was meant to serve as a public forum for humiliating the protagonist (Ragnheiðardóttir 2012: 103).

Rather than ending with a realization segment, this feast's interruption leaves this meal forever unfulfilled. Instead, the audience is privy to the shaming of Clárus at Séréna's hands:

> Hér verða skjót umskipti, þvílík sem grimm hríð kœmi í móti blíðu sólskini eða þvert veðr kœmi at skipi siglanda áðr góðan byr; ok betr má hon nú kallaz Severa en Séréna; því at skírleikinn kastaði hon, því at hon tekr sér þann vargham, at hér á ofan skemmir hon hann með svá fǫllnum orðum: 'Sé hér,' segir hon, 'leiðr skálkr ok fúll farri! Hvílíkr þú vart, ok hversu þú drótt þinn flatan fót úsýnju út af þínu móðurhúsi, meðan þú kunnir eigi svá mikla hoftypt, at þú mættir þér skammlaust mat at munni bera hjá ǫðru góðu fólki. Ok nú í samri stund verð úti, vándr þorpari! Af þvísa herbergi með

> ǫllum þeim fǫntum ok ribbǫldum, er þú drott hér inn, svá framt sem þú vilt úskemðr vera!' (*Clári saga*, 22–23)
>
> [Here things changed in an instant, as when a fierce storm comes after mild sunshine or contrary weather to a ship sailing before in a good breeze; and better might she now be called Severe than Serene; because she threw off her purity, because she takes on herself that wolf's skin, and to top it off she insults him with suchlike words: 'See here,' she says, 'a loathed lout and stinking vagabond! Such a one you are, and in such a way you dragged your flat foot in vain out from your mother's house, while you do not know so much of courtly customs, that you might without shame bring food to your mouth near other good people! And now in this same hour get out, wretched peasant! Out of these quarters with all those tramps and ribalds that you dragged in here if you want to remain uninjured!']

Instead of admitting culpability for her actions, Séréna uses this opportunity to call Clárus's breeding into question. What is worse, Clárus's shame extends even to those men whom he brought with him on this bridal quest. Séréna's misogamy, or hatred of marriage, has been noted a possible shared motif with the Old French lai, *Doon*, which would have been known to Icelandic audiences as a part of the *Strengleikar* compilation (Kalinke 1990: 37). There, the female ruler of Daneborc was so wealthy that she arrogantly rejected anyone who wished to court her. Neither love nor marriage were of interest to her because she, *ne se voloit metre en servage* [did not want to become enslaved] (*Doon and Tyolet*, 28). Such folk motifs may have been obvious to listeners of this saga, and this would account for the copious number of fairy-tale-type topoi that can be found throughout the *riddarasǫgur* corpus. While the maiden-king topos incorporates recognizable fairytale motifs, such as the spurning or arrogant princess, its form in the Icelandic romances emerges as "a uniquely Icelandic element" shaped by local literary traditions rather than direct foreign borrowing (Strawbridge 2020: 41–42; Elmes 2016: 171; Kalinke 2014: 273–292). As Lévi-Strauss has suggested, these fairytales are not only 'good stories;' they are also 'good to think with', because modern readers consciously choose to engage with such literary forms, just as medieval audiences may have done (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 81).

Such a public humiliation as Prince Clárus suffered would have been understood in manifestly socio-political terms. Ken Fullam, a cultural historian of the food, wine, and feast of the Middle Ages, maintains that these banquets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provided royal courts with an apparatus he describes as 'sociogenesis', offering fertile grounds not only for the production of social change but also permitting – and oftentimes encouraging – reactions to such change (Fullam 2008: 180–181). Similarly, the historian Hans Jacob Orning suggests that the feast should be viewed as a reflection of that particular society in which it occurs, saying: "A feast clarified and simplified, it created a moral nucleus and differentiated between who was included and who was excluded. Further, it represented an interpretation of society that emanated from the host, his views, and strategies" (Orning 2015: 189–190). Feasts were understood, in this way, as a pantomime at its most precocious level. They offered those in positions of author-

ity the chance to display their capacity on their own terms. It is, therefore, helpful to think of these feasts as a type of performative display of power. When a feast was a literary artefact, the listening audience was its primary spectators (Eriksen 2012: 179). Authors of such type-scenes would then have to be mindful of what they wanted their audience to learn from such a flamboyant public scandal as this episode provides.

Rather than a fulfilment or realization of the feast, we are instead regaled with Clarus's forced and shameful exit from the tower. This immediately follows Séréna's verbal tirade against the potential wooer and his followers:

> Hvat þarf hér langt um? Þetta sama ferr fram, at upp er haldit borðunum, ok gengr keisarason úþveginn af veizlunni með sínum mǫnnum, svá útskýfðr um portit, at þegar er læst eptir. Sitr konungsdóttir nú eptir glǫð ok kát ok þykkir vel hafa gengit. (*Clári saga*, 23)
>
> [What need is there to go on about it? This continues in the same manner, the tables are taken up, and the prince goes unwashed from the feast with his men, is shoved out of the gate, which at once is locked after him. The princess now sits back glad and merry and thinks it has gone well.]

Just as quickly as his invitation was sent, the hero suffers immeasurable shame at the hands of a woman, one that is arguably smarter and more prepared for the vicious world of politics than he is.

The similarities between these Icelandic innovations and the oral-formulaic mode of creating epic poetry can also be observed within the frame of the type-scene by simply observing how time is dealt with in the narrative. During these feasts, time seemingly stands still until all requisite action has been completed. Those things that are of little consequence to the understanding of the action of the plot are quickly leapt over, whereas those moments that add to the complexity of the story are lingered upon and given preferential attention. Francis B. Gummere termed this vacillation between abbreviation and elaboration as: "leaping and lingering" (Gummere 1907: 91, 117, 283). In terms of late medieval romance, this "leaping and lingering" structure allowed authors to focus the attention of their audience on what mattered most about the story.

Several times throughout the text, the saga uses free indirect discourse to let the audience know that its omniscient narrator does not intend to enumerate everything, opting instead for the path of least resistance to communicate the lessons they wish to be known while linking the scenes of the narrative together. The audience is steered in this way, being convinced that they should not worry about what was being eaten so much as what was occurring between the two characters of Clárus and Séréna. In moments where the attention to detail is crucial for storytelling, however, the narrative pace of the tale slows. Andersson noticed that this is also a commonality that is shared among *Íslendingasǫgur* texts as, "just before the climax a saga, frequently lapses into a fuller and denser narrative. There is a deceleration of pace, a magnifying of detail, and a dwelling on incidentals to focus the central event one last time and enhance its importance in relation to the rest of the story" (Andersson 1967: 54). This dilation of time occurs with remarkable

frequency in *Clári saga*, as the attention of the reader should be focused on the key details of the story. When the feast is about to occur, rather than detailing what is on the table, saga reports the following:

> Seint er nú at telja alla þá dýra rétti ok fáséna, sem fram kómu í þessari veizlu; ok því munum vér þar um liða ok þar til vikja, sem á er rétt fyrir keisarason ok konungsdóttur (*Clári saga*, 21)
>
> [It is late now to tell of all those expensive and rare dishes, which came forth in this feast: and for that reason, we will pass by there and turn to that, which was presented before the prince and princess.]

Events extraneous to the narrative thread spun from this feast are treated in much the same way, with stock phrases such as: *Ok hvat meira?* [And what more?]; *Hvat þarf hér langt um?* [What need is there to go on about it?]; *Hvat hér meira?* [What more is here?]; *Hvat langt?* [What longer?], potentially indicating either an attempt to mirror the learned format of the presumed Latin exemplar of this text or a testament to the learned standing of its writer (Cederschiöld 1907: xx). Whatever the case, these phrases condense the narrative in such a way that only the moments that are integral to the main plot are lingered upon.

"What, then," as Fredrik Heinemann asked in his study on type-scene in *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, "is the relation of this [feast] type-scene to the saga's main theme" (Heinemann 1974: 114)? In *Clári saga*, we can understand this feast as instigating or perhaps entering a larger conversation surrounding the propriety of feminine independence, specifically the notion of consent in marriage. The moral and ethical values of the writing culture of 14th century Iceland are then preserved in the semiotic codes of their literary expressions (Ríkharðsdóttir 2012: 13). Marianne Kalinke suggests that this narrative was meant to be taken as an exemplum, focusing on the link between table decorum and the social standing of a ruler (Kalinke 2007: 8). While this might explain some of the tension at the table, it does not address Séréna's function within the narrative. Clárus's table manners were not the issue at all, as he performed his role admirably. Rather, *Clári saga* features a protagonist playing a game whose rules he does not fully grasp. Séréna effectively serves as a foil to Clárus's pursuit of her hand in marriage, but why? Bjørn Bandlien considers that the tension between the two main characters can be summarized as a tension relating to female consent. He suggests that the attitude of the writers of the fourteenth century would have been that consent should be used wisely and not used to exercise vain gestures of freedom such as we see in this alleged blueprint of the maiden-king sub-genre of *riddarasǫgur*. Bandlien goes on to explain that the moral of this saga was a matrimonial one directed particularly at women, warning against the dangers of arrogance, pride, and the disregarding of generally appropriate suitors (Bandlien 2005: 291).

Orning suggests that stories such as these were more than simple ideological relief or wish-fulfilment, acting more to vent individual frustrations, furnishing audiences with ideas that they found pertinent or invigorating to their own lives (Orning 2017: 62). My own contention is that these stories can and do fall somewhere in the middle, without the need of mutual exclusivity. They can serve as

both didactic, moralizing tales, humorous repasts, and boundary-pushing works of social critique. Additionally, they allowed medieval writers to inject native ideologies into foreign materials. After all, the romance genre in Iceland arose from a combination of cultural transmission and assimilation (Kalinke 2017: 162). As Icelanders of the fourteenth century spent very little, if any, time inside the royal courts of Europe, the political aspects of prince versus princess would have been less relevant to their lives. They would, however, have recognized, and perhaps relished in the idea of conflict as being a necessary component to the social order, a familiar tale from the *Íslendingasǫgur* genre (Byock 1982). The 'feud' between these two characters begins at this feast and, in many ways, it also serves as the narrative's terminus. The lesson learned by Clárus allows him to grow as an individual and eventually win his bride.

Late medieval Icelandic romance built upon the Arthurian conceptualization of feasting, allowing these scenes to serve purposes outside the norm of continental traditions. As this genre in Iceland had its beginnings in the translated works of Old French and Anglo-Norman originals, which in turn had their genesis in the oral songs of continental jongleurs, and trouvères, it is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to suppose that Icelanders also used stock sets of motifs to create their original compositions. This utility of the feasting scene is not limited solely to the romance genre but can also be observed in scenes from the king's sagas, where feasts were known to devolve into verbal contests between rival monarchs each seeking to prove his superiority over the other (cf. *Morkinskinna* ch. 71 and *Heimskringla* ch. 259). By carefully substituting signs in place of others, an author or redactor can effectively change the meaning of a literary scene such as a feast. In this way, such celebrations can then be used as theater for those characters who initiated them, allowing them to measure the refinement of their attendants. This is precisely what occurs in this saga, as Séréna employs the setting of the feast to publicly humiliate Clárus for his attempt to marry her, and—more importantly—subsume her political power.

Icelandic scribes could and did work with a set of stock motifs which they manipulated in specific ways to tell their own stories. Using the feast as a vehicle for social order, they could have their characters perform their power for the audience, thereby reinforcing the validity of or communicating resistance to the idea of certain hierarchies. In *Clári saga*, the presumed first of the maiden-king sagas, we see the anxieties of female sovereignty on full display. As with most medieval representations, this sovereignty exists on several planes from the political to the physical. The reluctance of the maiden king to marry is distinctly political in nature and hints at a larger discussion regarding the role of women in society. Akin to its Arthurian predecessors, the shame that Clárus receives at her hands is the shame of all courtly individuals who fail to head the sound advice that they are given by their mentors, as Clárus is warned by his teacher of Séréna's nature in much the same way that Perceval's naivety is displayed throughout *Le Conte du Graal* of Arthurian narrative tradition.

Séréna's maleficent feast in *Clári saga* demonstrates that Icelandic scribes were not simply passive borrowers of European motifs, but active reinterpreters who used narrative to debate pressing questions of sovereignty and social order. This episode provides a poignant reminder that even demonstrably 'literary' scenes can

function as political texts, encoding cultural anxieties about hierarchy, gender, and power for the time in which they are written (Hughes 2015: 274-281). Approaching the feast in *Clári saga* as a type-scene provides us with an effective way of analyzing the structure of storytelling as it applies to late medieval romance sagas. The potential similarities between how these stories were created in much the same way as older forms of oral poetics are both a fascinating notion as well as being fertile ground for future examination. Subsequent studies could approach all depictions of feasting across the *riddarasǫgur* corpus for commonalities or variances. Likewise, the type-scene can extend beyond feasting into other areas of narratives as well, perhaps allowing future scholars to realize the areas in which certain authors and translators used their creativity to the utmost of their considerable abilities.

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How to Spoil a Feast at Arthur's Court: Rewriting the Test of Fidelity in *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur*

Ásdís Rósa Magnúsdóttir

The early voices

The first manifestation of the test of fidelity in French and European literature can be found in the *Lai du cor* written by Robert Biket in the late twelfth century. This text is conserved in one manuscript from the second half of the thirteenth century. The *Manteau mal taillé*, from the first half of the thirteenth century, is conserved in five medieval manuscripts, four from the second half of the thirteenth century and one from the fourteenth century. The two short narratives relate a similar story, yet different in tonality. The events described in both poems take place at Arthur's court during a feast when the knights and their beloved ones are reunited, all beautifully dressed and well equipped, and waiting for an *aventure* before the food can be served. In this case the adventure turns out to be the arrival of a messenger that brings a mantle to the court in the *Manteau mal taillé* but a drinking horn in *Le Lai du cor.* Both the mantle and the horn are presented as gifts from threatening otherworld characters in the Arthurian romances. The horn is decorated with gold and tingling little bells that literally hypnotise the court while the mantle is described as the most beautiful ever made. In *Le Lai*, all men present at the court must drink from the horn and if they succeed without spilling the wine all over themselves, the faithfulness of their wife or lady-friend has been proved. Arthur is the first one to take the test; to his great surprise and anger, he fails, but rejoices when he sees that one after another, the knights and the barons fail too. Only Caradoc is capable of drinking without spilling the wine and he leaves the court with his faithful wife and the precious horn.

In *Le Manteau mal taillé* it is the women that try on the mantle. The queen is the first one and then, one by one, all the other ladies follow her lead. The tonality of this narrative brings it closer to the *fabliaux* than the former one since the mantle reveals, in front of the assembly, the exact part of the body with which the woman has been unfaithful to her husband or beloved knight: the calves, the thighs, the behind or, at worst, the whole body when the mantle simply slips down to the ground. Again, it is Caradoc's beloved, here named Galeta, who is the only woman who turns out to be faithful and the couple leaves the court with the mantle which they deposit at an abbey. However, the narrator adds that the mantle could easily return into circulation, reminding his audience of the threat it stands for. The humour on display in the *Mantle* is more grotesque than in *Le Lai* and the moral constraint is somewhat lower since in the older narrative the test fails if the woman has been unfaithful, not only in her deeds, but also in her thoughts.

The test of fidelity is an unusual adventure as it takes place inside the court and not outside of it, like most adventures in the Arthurian romances, and by creating such great turmoil and confusion it can also be interpreted as an attempt to destabilise the court (Bennett 1978). Despite their courtly and feudal context, both texts show – in a surprising and disgraceful light – the fragile balance of this courtly gathering. The public humiliation of those concerned is narrated in a comic manner, yet the test and its consequences challenge the order and the stability of the court. This specific intrusion of *féerie* is rare in the Arthurian romances and offers a particularly misogynist representation of Arthur's court. The king is also humiliated in front of his knights and his reputation is also at stake due to the outcome of the test which appears as a threat to the social order. There is little joy to be found at his court during the chastity test among the women and amidst the men who, in *Le Lai du cor*, condemn this horn that dishonours their beloved. On the other hand, Arthur is overjoyed when he sees the horn spilling its content over every man that tries to drink, not only himself. Thanks to this equality in shame the stability of the court is restored in the end; the feast has not been tarnished, and the guests can enjoy the meal, though many of the knights are seething with anger and jealousy at the table in *Le Manteau mal taillé*. In the final lines of *Le Lai du cor* it also becomes clear that only those knights who deeply love their wives return home with them (Biket 2005: vv. 581–582).

And yet, both the mantle and the horn test the chastity of women, not men. While it honours the man through the virtue of his wife or lady-friend, it reflects deeply rooted misogyny according to which la *gent féminine* is physically and morally weak, both dishonest and deceitful, as can be seen in many of the *fabliaux*. Philip Bennett underlines the anti-courtly attitude of the author of *Le Mantel* which, according to him, is not only a *conte à rire* but also a satire condemning all the women at the court, except Caradoc's friend, who is, as he states, not specifically a lady of the court (Bennett 1976: 119–121). Likewise, Nathalie Koble draws attention to the misogynistic note that the clerics may have wanted to introduce in this short text in order to criticise both women and courtly love celebrated in poetry, romances and lays at the time of its composition despite the new stability which is founded on negative values (Koble 2005: 9, 107).

Examples of selective tests of virtue and fidelity can be found all over the world and in many literary works of different genres and origins (Kalinke 1987: xv–xxxii; Eckhard 1988; Kasper 1990: 11–134; Magnúsdóttir 1998; Vincensini 2000; Koble 2016). Their presence in medieval Arthurian texts has attracted considerable interest, but it remains hard to pinpoint the origin of the horn- and the mantle-test tales as they appear in *Le Lai du cor* and *Le Manteau mal taillé*. Their Celtic origin has been advocated by several critics (Cross 1912; Loomis, Lindsay 1931; Baumgartner 1975), for instance through the brief mention of the Mantle of Tegau Gold-Breast, wife of Caradawc Strong-Arm in the Welsh triad 66, that "would not serve for any (woman) who had violated her marriage or her virginity. And for whoever was faithful to her husband it would reach to the ground, and for whoever had violated her marriage it only reached to her lap." (Bromwich 1961: 299–300). However, this source does not antedate *Le Manteau mal taillé* and it seems that nearly all the extant mantle-test tales derive from the French text (Kalinke 1987: xxi).

The French narrative was translated both into Old Norse under the name of *Mǫttuls saga* and Middle High German with the title *Der Mantel*. As Marianne Kalinke has shown in her edition and presentation of the Old Norse text, these medieval translations are important for the history of the mantle-test because they inspired later mantle-test compositions. (Kalinke 1987: xxii). The mantle appears in *Samsons saga fagra* [The Saga of Samson the Fair], an Icelandic *riddarasaga*, but *Mǫttuls saga* also inspired the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century metrical romance *Skikkju rímur*. This narrative poem is an interesting example of the *mouvance* of the medieval text (Zumthor 1981) as it introduces significant changes to the outcome of the test of fidelity as it appears in *Mǫttuls saga*, while adapting the story of the mantle to a more familiar background than in the saga as well as to a new lyrical tradition, the rhymes or *rímur*.

Mǫttuls saga: "it is more fitting to conceal than to reveal"

Along with *Historia regum Britannie*, *Le Conte du graal*, *Erec et Enide* et *Le Chevalier au lion*, *Le Manteau mal taillé* is one of the few Arthurian texts that were translated into Old Norse, probably around 1250, in relation to the translation activity associated with the court of King Hákon Hákonarson (1217–1263) and his sons (Kalinke 1981). The king is mentioned in the last lines of the prologue, where the translator states that he has translated the story *til gamans ok skemtanar* [as entertainment and diversion] according to the wish of the worthy King Hákon, who asked him *at gera nokkut gaman* [to provide some entertainment] (*Möttuls saga*, 6). The saga has been conserved in two manuscripts branches, the oldest fragments extant being from the first half of the fourteenth century, transcribed in paper manuscripts from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (Kalinke 1987: LXXXV–CXL).

In her 1987 edition of *Mǫttuls saga*, Marianne Kalinke states that the prose translation includes almost all the verses of the original text as well as some amplifications that may be seen as "rhetorical embellishment" (Kalinke 1987: LXXIII). One of them is a detailed portrait of King Arthur; another one, a description of the mantle. In *Le Manteau mal taillé*, the description of the magic mantle is rapid and sober:

Li vallez prist une aumoniere,	The youth took a pouch
Si en a tret fors .I. mantel;	And drew out from it a mantle;
Onques nus hom ne vit tant bel,	No one has ever seen one so fine,
Car une fee l'avoit fet.	For a fairy had made it.
Nus hom ne savroit le portret	No one could describe it
Ne l'uevre du drap aconter.	No one could describe it
trop i convendroit demorer.	Or account for the workmanship in the cloth.
	(*The Lay of Mantel*, vv. 192–197, 68–69)

The amplified version in the saga may have been meant to impress the audience:

> Ok því næst tók hann upp ór gullsaumuðum pússi sínum einn möttul af silki, svá fagran at aldri höfðu dauðlig augu sét jafnfagran eða þvílíkan. Þenna gerði ein álfkona með svá mörgum ok ótrúanligum hagleik at <í> öllum þeim fjölda, er þar váru saman komnir hagra manna ok hygginna, fanz engi sá er skynja kunni með hverjum hætti klæðit var gert. Þat var allt gulli ofit með svá fögrum laufadráttum at aldri váru ein önnur þvílík sén, þvíat engi kunni finna enda né upphaf, ok þetta á ofan sem kynligast var, at þeir sem gerst hugðu at, þeir gátu sízt fundið hversu sá hinn undarligi hagleikr var samtengdr.
>
> [Thereupon he took out of a small, gold-embroidered pouch a mantle of silk that was so beautiful that mortal eye had never seen one that resembled it or was its equal. An elf-woman had fashioned it with such great and inconceivable skill that in that whole assembly of skilful and intelligent men gathered there, there was no one who could perceive in what manner the garment had been made. It was shot through with gold in a pattern of such beautiful, embroidered leaves that never the like was seen, for no one could find either the beginning or the end. What was strangest, moreover, was that those who scrutinized it most closely could least discover how that wondrous piece of workmanship was put together.]
>
> (*Möttuls saga*, 12–13)

In the French counterpart, the mantle conveys, with humour, an ethical message highlighting the value of fidelity, despite the outcome of the test (Besamusca 2010: 297). The magic mantle is indeed supposed to reveal the unfaithful women (*fausses dames*), the wife that has done wrong towards her husband, or wandered from the straight path (*meserré*), and the maidens that have made mistakes (*avra mespris)* and betrayed their friends:

La fee fist el drap une oevre	The fairy incorporated into the cloth a device
Qui les fausses dames descuevre.	That reveals unfaithful ladies.
La dame qui l'ait afublé,	If the lady who has put it on
Se ele a de rien meserré	Has done wrong in any way
Vers son bon seignor, s'ele l'a,	Towards her good husband, if she has one,
Li manteaus bien ne li serra.	The mantle will not fit her properly.
Et des puceles autresi:	And the same for the maidens:
Cele qui vers son bon ami	Any one of them who towards her beloved
Avra mespris en nul endroit	Has erred in any respect
Ja puis ne li serra a droit,	Will find that it will never fit her truly,
Qu'il ne soit trop lonc ou trop cort.	Without being too long or too short.

(*The Lay of Mantel*, vv. 201–211, 68–69)

In the saga there is a slight shift in the logic of the test toward a praise of virginity rather than fidelity or loyalty. When the mantle is mentioned in the saga it is said to test whether young women are virgins or not (*sem spilz hafði*) – a requirement that would hardly apply to the married women at the court:

> En álfkonan hafði ofit þann galdr á möttlinum at hver sú mær sem spilz hafði af unnasta sínum, þá mundi möttullinn þegar sýna glæp hennar er hún klæddiz honum, svá at hann mundi henni vera ofsíðr eða ofstuttr, með svá ferligum hætti at þannig mundi hann styttaz at hann birti með hverjum hætti hver hafði syndgaz. Sýndi hann svá allar falskonur ok meyjar at engi mátti leynaz, sú er hann tók yfir sig.
>
> [[...] the elf-woman had woven a charm into the mantle so that the misdeed of every maiden who had been intimate with her beloved would be revealed at once when she dressed in it: it would become very long or very short in a flagrant manner so as to reveal how she has sinned. Thus it would expose all false women and maidens, so that nothing could be hidden when it was put on.]
>
> (*Möttuls saga*, 12–13)

More in line with the French poem, the narrator then adds 'faithfully' and 'faithfulness' (*trúliga*, *trúlyndi*):

> En nú er þar at komit at möttullinn mun segja hve trúliga þær hafa búit við bændur sína eða trúlyndi haldit við unnasta sína.
>
> [Now, however, the time has come for the mantle to tell how faithfully each has conducted herself toward her husband or how faithful she has been to her beloved.]
>
> (*Möttuls saga*, 14–15)

However, at the end of the saga, Karadín's (Caradoc's) lady wins the mantle because of her purity of maidenhood (*meydóms hreinlífi*, *hreinlífi meydóms*):

> 'En nú skalt þú at sönnu vita at þessa skikkju hefi ek í marga fjölmenna hirð flutta, svá at fleiri en þúsund þeira er meyjar kölluðuz hafa falsaz undir þessum möttli ok sýndi hann aldri þinn maka fyrr at meydóms hreinlífi.'
>
> [...] 'þér eigið engum manni at gjalda ömbun fyrir skikkjuna nema hreinlífi meydóms yðvars' [...].
>
> ['But now you are to know the truth: I have taken this mantle to many courts where there are many people, where more than a thousand of those considered to be maidens have been exposed by this mantle. Never before has it shown your like in the purity of your maidenhood.'

> [...] 'you are not indebted to anyone for the mantle except to yourself, to the purity of your maidenhood.']
>
> (*Möttuls saga*, 26–29)

This change and fluctuation might reflect an effort to strengthen the morality of the saga, but according to Caroline Larrington here, as in many other chivalric texts, the erotic outweighs the didactic as motivation for honour (Larrington 2011: 88). Yet, we can also note that the Old French verbs *meserrer* 'wander from the straight path' and *mesprendre* 'make a mistake' are rendered with the verb *synðga* 'to sin' with a stronger religious connotation than in the French poem – even if this is the only occurrence of this verb in the saga – and the unfaithfulness is described as a *glǿpr* 'crime, an evil deed, misdeed'. The French poem ends on a religious note in the epilogue: it informs the audience of the mantle being brought to a monastery after the departure of the happy couple and then, at the very end, the narrator relates women's infidelity and the tendency to accuse them in the present time of 'the wickedness there was then' (*le mal qui donques fu*), which seem to refer to the original sin or *péché historique* in Koble's translation (*Le Manteau mal taillé*: 87). However, the mantle should not be used anymore because now, women only have a good reputation:

Et si n'i a il fors honnor	Yet they have nothing other than honour;
Que que jadis i ait eü,	Whatever they had in the past,
Mes por le mal qui donques fu	But for the wickedness there was then
Lor va on encor reprochant.	People are still reproaching them.

(*The Lay of Mantel*, vv. 908–911, 100–101)

This Biblical reference is not included in the Old Norse translation that ends on a more pessimistic note about the virtue of women: if some women are good and have earned their merits, few of them will be able to own the mantle because it will always reveal the truth. This statement is followed by the ambiguous morality that the truth should better be concealed than revealed; thus, women should be praised even if we know the bitter truth about them:

> Nú ræði engi annat til þeira en gott, þvíat betr sómir at leyna en upp at segja, þó at hann viti sannar sakir. En hver sem í skikkjuna kemur, þá sýnir hún hvílík hver er, sú er henni klæðiz.
>
> Ok megum vér því góðar konur lofa at verðleikum, þvíat þær eru verðar frægðar ok fagnaðar.
>
> Nú endiz hér Möttuls saga, en þér lifið heilir marga góða daga. Amen.
>
> [Now let no one say anything but good about women, because it is more fitting to conceal than to reveal something, even though one may know the true state of affairs. No matter who puts it on, the mantle will show what the one trying it on is truly like.

> Therefore, let us praise good women according to their merits, because they have earned renown and happiness.
>
> Now the Saga of the Mantle ends here; may you live happily for many years to come. Amen.]
>
> (*Möttuls saga*, 28–29)

The mantle found its way into one of the Icelandic chivalric romances, *Samsons saga fagra*, from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century (Tétrel & Magnúsdóttir 2020). This particularly hybrid and entertaining narrative contains a description of the fabrication of the mantle, inserted into an original storyline where Arthurian motifs and names are introduced into the imaginary universe of the legendary sagas. The author of the saga seems to build on the few lines from *Mǫttuls saga* about the elf-woman who made the mantle in such a way that no one will ever be able to find out how it was done, and his story offers an answer to this mystery. In the *Samsons saga fagra*, the magician Kvintalín is sent up north to look for the precious mantle that four elf-women have woven for eighteen years. He will find it where, "in the middle of summer, the sun at its zenith, shines from below the earth when it has gone down; during this season the elf-women do not sleep" (*Samsons saga fagra* 1949: 380). In their need for material, these four women attempt to steal bales of wool from Skrímnir, king of the Land of Giants. The king allows them to take the wool if they promise to make for him a multicoloured mantle of many colours with supernatural powers (*Samsons saga fagra* 1949: 384). These powers are described later in the saga:

> Hafði hún margar náttúrur. Hún birti fals kvenna, ef þær fölsuðu bændur sína, stytti svo á hverri sem hún hafði mót horft, þá hún lét liggja sig, og á sama hátt meyjar falsaðar. En ef þjófur klæddist henni, féll hún á jörð.
>
> (*Samsons saga fagra*, 396)

> [It [the mantle] had many assets. It revealed the falseness of women if they had been unfaithful to their husbands, shortened according to the direction in which each woman had looked during the deed, and in the same manner it revealed unfaithful maidens. But if a thief wore the mantle it fell to the ground. (My translation)]

Kvintalín steals the mantle while it is being used to test women's fidelity at the royal court in the Land of Giants and then offers it to Samson, who becomes king of England. At the end of the narrative, the mantle appears briefly again with a mention that seems to indicate that the Icelandic public was already familiar with *Mǫttuls saga*:

> En skikkju þá góðu, sem Samson fagri átti, gaf hann frú Ingína. En löngu síðar var hún rænt af víkingi þeim, er Grímar hét. Bar hann hana vestur í Affricam. Ein rík frú öfundsjúk, Elída hét, sendi hana í England Artús konungi, og rís þar af Skikkju saga. (*Samsons saga fagra*, 401)

> [But Samson the Fair gave his good mantle to lady Ingína. A long time later, the mantle was stolen by the viking called Grímar. He took it westwards to Africa. A jealous and powerful lady by the name of Elida sent it to King Arthur in England and that is the beginning of the Story of the Mantle.] (My translation)

By placing the fabrication of the mantle in the hands of elf-women in Skrímnir's kingdom, the anonymous author of *Samsons saga fagra* further embeds the magic mantle in the Icelandic literary and legendary landscape and writes the prehistory of the mantle before it becomes the central piece of the chastity test in *Mǫttuls saga* (Tétrel & Magnúsdóttir 2020: 110). This author may have been familiar with the poem *Skikkju rímur*, also composed in the late fourteenth or the early fifteenth century.

Skikkju rímur: A spoiled feast

Whereas Arthurian material left a considerable mark on the original *riddarasǫgur* and some other saga writing, *Mǫttuls saga* is one of the few Arthurian texts that inspired the composition of a metrical narrative in Iceland, a poem of 189 stanzas written in square metre, under the name of *Skikkju rímur* or *Mantle Rhymes*, probably in the early fifteenth century. These *rímur* are preserved in three manuscripts, the oldest one is from the second half of the fifteenth century, the two others from the second half of the seventeenth century (Driscoll 1991: 112). Even if the metrical rewriting may point to a certain popularity of the story of the mantle, the small number of *rímur* inspired by the Arthurian legend may suggest that Arthurian material did not greatly appeal to Icelandic *rímur*-poets (Guðmundsdóttir 2021: 767).

The so-called *rímur* seem to have been one of the most beloved literary genres in Icelandic literary history until the nineteenth century judging from the number of manuscripts and works preserved. The *rímur* were performed orally, but the writing of these metrical romances started 500 years earlier, or in the late fourteenth century. The *rímur* poets adapted and rewrote popular stories in a sophisticated form of metrical poems, influenced both by Icelandic rules relating to alliteration and rhythm and some characteristics of foreign poetry like the use of rhymes that can be found in the various meters of the *rímur* poetry (Þorgeirsson 2021; Guðmundsdóttir 2021).

Despite several additions, reductions, and some significant changes, the story told in the *Skikkju rímur* remains close to the basic plot of *Mǫttuls saga*. The saga is the main inspiration of the poem even if the author also seems to have known other Arthurian texts such as *Erex saga* (Kalinke 1981: 217; Larrington 2011: 90). The famous description of King Arthur at the beginning of *Mǫttuls saga* is abridged, and so are many of the courtly elements of the saga narrative, even if the poem is all about love and the disaster it may generate. The anonymous author creates an original framework, both pagan and Christian, around his Arthurian storyline, where the mantle test does not lead to reconciliation and a happy ending as in *Mǫttuls saga*, but has been replaced with a more dramatic issue (Kalinke 2021).

The poem is divided into three fits. Each fit begins with a short *mansǫngr* or love poem that highlights the negative aspects of love in diverse ways. This uncourtly attitude toward women, in relation to their volatile nature, is in line with the overall tonality of the poem. In the *mansǫngr* of the first fit, composed of 60 stanzas, the narrator compares the quest for love with sailing: a good wind can help a man to reach the country of love, but he cannot trust the woman he loves to be faithful. The narrator then describes the arrival of the guests at Arthur's court and the preparations of the feast that cannot begin. The messenger is seen riding out of the forest in the last stanza of this first fit, where the poet comes back to the metaphor of the quest for love from the *mansǫngr*: indeed, the ship of poetry must be tied up, indicating a break in the narrative. The boat is a well-known image for a poem as can be seen, for instance, in the *Third Grammatical Treatise* written by Ólafr Þórðarson in the thirteenth century.

The second fit has 44 stanzas and starts with a similar digression, this time taken from Snorri Sturluson's *Skáldskaparmál*, explaining how the giantess Gunnlǫð, the guardian of poetry, was deceived by Óðinn in disguise. Because of this, no woman's love can be gained through verse without suffering, and yet, it is women who are fickle, not men. This second fit contains the description of the mantle and the chastity test. When the messenger has taken off his cape, he opens the chest he carries and takes out a beautiful mantle, white and pure, with ties of silver and golden thongs. It has taken three elf-women fifteen years to weave this multicoloured garment the beauty of which is a mystery to the knights. The test is the same as in *Mǫttuls saga*: if a woman has been unfaithful, the mantle reveals the part of her body that has been involved in the game of love:

Sé það mey eður mektug frú	If a maid or noble dame
misjafnt vel hefur haldið trú,	has been unfaithful,
herra ríkur, heyr það nú,	hear now, noble lords,
henni hæfir ei skikkjan sú.	the cloak will not suit her.
Þann veg styttir þorna ná	This mantle shortens on a woman
þennan möttul oftast á,	most often in the same way
sem hún vill sig til leiksins ljá	as she is wont to give herself
leigumanni sínum hjá.	when disporting with her paramour.

(*Skikkju rímur*, II:31–32, 292–293)

There is no reference to virginity in the *rímur* and the second cycle ends with the king taking the fine cloth for the queen to try it on.

The third fit, composed of 85 stanzas, begins with yet another *mansǫngr*, this time a rather embarrassing mythological digression inspired by Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning*. During Þórr's visit to Útgarðaloki, the god must confront an old woman that turns out to be physically stronger than he is. The reason is simple: no one can beat Elli, or Old Age. In the *rímur*, however, this episode is adapted to the sentimental context of the *mansǫngr* and the metrical romance. The narrator explains that since he paid no attention to women who swarmed around him in the world of love in his youth and thought himself too good for them, fate has brought him to a love meeting with a tall woman, both deaf and blind; she is Elli,

Old Age, who will be his companion from now on since he has finally been captured by love. The irony of love, depicted by the disgraceful age of the woman, appears as a punishment for the narrator's pride. Coming back to the storyline after this mythological introduction to the fit, the women try on the mantle, one after another, with the expected outcome. *'Nú er það uppi er áður var leynt'* ['What was hidden is now revealed'] (*Skikkju rímur* III:20, 300–301), declares the fool Girflet, when the queen tries on the mantle and then a thousand and a hundred maidens try it on. The mantle shows that all women are false, until Kardon, Kaligras's wife, arrives and turns out to be the only woman who has ever tried on the mantle without shame. At this point in *Skikkju rímur*, Arthur chases all the women from his court for they "will live in shame" as they deserve:

Fylkir talar við fljóðin öll:	The king speaks to all the women:
'Fari þér burt úr minni höll;	'Go now from my court;
lotning fáið þér litla hér;	you will be afforded little honor here,
þér lífið við skömm, sem maklegt er.'	but will live in shame, as you deserve.'
	(*Skikkju rímur*, III:76, 312–313)

The test has not only delayed the drinking but has also spoiled the feast: the women are dishonoured, and the men are angry, but the test will nevertheless be a starting point for new chivalric deeds since now the knights shall go into battle and find new women, better women! Marianne Kalinke interprets this outcome of the test as the beginning of *riddarasǫgur* writing since the need to serve the king with deeds – once the unfaithful women have been chased from the court – will generate chivalric tales (Kalinke 2021: 15–17).

This third cycle ends with four stanzas that can be seen as an epilogue expressing an even more negative end and pessimistic view of women than in *Mǫttuls saga*:

Vildi guð, að væri hún hér,	I wish to God that it [the mantle] were here;
veisa skyldu meyjarnar sér;	then maidens would lament;
þá mundi eigi orðalaust,	it would not go without comment,
ef engin þeirra reyndist traust.	if none of them proved true.
Hér hefur sannast Salomóns orð,	Here have been proved right the words of Solomon
segir af falskri menja skorð;	who spoke of false women;
æ er gott við æru og sið	it is always good for honor and morality
eyru sín að hafa við.	to keep one's ear open.
Við Skikkjurímur skilst eg nú;	Now I leave these mantle verses;
skal sú hvör að ei er trú	each one who is not true
hlæja þegar hún heyrir þær,	shall laugh when she hears them,

hvort það er heldur kona eður mær.	whether she be woman or maid.
Sé þeim rétt sem snæra sé	It is fitting that they be made as if to burn
sett frá nafla og ofan á kné;	from the navel down to the knee;
slokkni ei fyrr en segja þær til.	may the fire not go out until they confess.
Svo skal lyktast þetta spil.	So ends this entertainment.

(*Skikkju rímur*, III: 82–85, 314–315)

Another interesting change worth mentioning can be observed in the epilogue. The narrator does not share the morality of concealing rather than revealing expressed in the saga; on the contrary he thinks the mantle would still be useful and that all disloyal women should burn from their navel to their knees until they confess their sins. Finally, he declares that they will laugh at his *rímur*. From the critical perspective of *Le Manteau mal taillé* to the ambiguous morality of *Mǫttuls saga*, in *Skikkju rímur*, the literary work itself has thus become a test of fidelity and is endowed with a didactic value that the saga does not have, despite the general humorous tonality which is in perfect accordance with its value as an entertainment.

Even if *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur* were being copied in Iceland at a time when the story of *Le Manteau mal taillé* as well as the chivalrous Arthurian romances, no longer appealed to the taste of the French public (Cappello 2013), Arthurian literature does not seem to have been a great inspiration to the *rímur* poets and the chastity test had an insignificant impact on Icelandic medieval narratives. Nevertheless, the Icelandic audience was familiar with tests and contest in courtly surroundings and if *Le Lai du cor* had found its way to the medieval Nordic public, it would have met an interesting counterpart in the spectacular drinking contests described both in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, where Þór tries desperately to empty a huge drinking horn ignorant of the fact that it contains the sea itself, and in the short *þáttur* or narrative *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* (*Thorstein Mansion-Might*), probably written in the late thirteenth or the fourteenth century. In this text, inspired by Snorri's amusing description of Þór's failures, the contest takes place at the royal court of King Geirröður in the fictional Land of Giants. Drinking horns are brought to the guests and anyone who cannot empty theirs in one draught will be penalized. The biggest horn is carried in by two men, it is "full of magic" and has a living human head at its narrow end, capable of predicting or revealing the future. The horn belongs to the king and is presented to one of the guests who voluntarily spills its content over his shirt, knowing that the drink is poisoned. Competitions and fights break out and this utterly spoiled feast ends with the host's death whereas the guests leave in a hurry since "This is no place for weaklings" (*Thorstein Mansion-Might* 1985: 272). Indeed, there are no women present at this legendary Nordic otherworld court and the contest has nothing to do with love or chastity but drinking capacity and cunning. However, by framing his Arthurian storyline with digressions inspired by Óðinn's amorous treason and Þór's shameful defeat against the incarnation of Old Age, the anonymous author of *Skikkju rímur* must have thought that these additions suited his material and would contribute to the pleasure of his audience. Finally, even if Arthurian texts

translated into Old-Norse were scarce, their reception and impact on Icelandic saga writing, poetry, and oral tradition are important contributions to the world of Arthurian fiction.

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Not Worth a Button! From King Arthur's Round Table to Women's Counsel

Ingvil Brügger Budal

> *Gather around, let me tell you a story! Listen, it is all for entertainment and pleasure.*

Both tales and displays of lust, sex, and frivolity, as well as the participants' reactions, are the very entertainment of the courtly feasts of the French *Lai du Lecheor* and *Le Mantel Mautaillié* and their Norse translations and adaptations *Leikara lioð*, *Mǫttuls saga*, and *Skikkju rímur*.[1]

My initial imitation of the beginning of an Old Norse *riddarasaga* not only evokes the presence of an audience – both actual and imagined – but also accentuates the listening circle, the orality of the story, as well as its entertaining function. A story, once told or written, lives on; it is retold, rewritten, translated, adapted, and reworked.

In this article, we shall investigate the narratives of courtly feasts as scenes for exposure of female agency, of power and the lack of such, in *Lecheor*, *Leikara lioð*, *Le Mantel Mautaillié*, *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur*, After brief summaries of the stories, an overview of the texts in transition, both in regard to the material transition, but also the shift in genre, is presented. The examination of two physical objects – the button, and the round table – the representation of, and shift in, female agency in these texts through translations and transmission.

Outline of the stories

Both *Lecheor/Leikara ljoð* and *Le Mantel Mautaillié/Mǫttuls saga/Skikkju rimur* are stories of feasts and celebrations where the entertainment deals with sex, chastity (and the lack of such), and decency, with gender and agency, and with buttons, cloaks, and round tables.

1 In this article, the editions and translations used are the following: Burgess and Brook's edition and translation of *Lecheor* (1999); Bennett's edition of *Le Lai du cort mantel* in Kalinke (1987); Burgess and Brook's translation of *Le Lai du cort mantel* (2016); Cook and Tveitane's edition and translation of *Leikara lioð* (1979); Kalinke's edition and translation of *Möttuls saga* (1999), and Driscoll's edition and translation of *Skikkju rimur* (1999). When quoted, I will only refer to year and page/verse.

Lecheor/Leikara ljoð is only transmitted in French, and narrates the celebration of the festival of St Pantelion, where people gather to share news. During this festival, the tradition is to compose a lai that recounts the most remarkable adventure of the past year. These lais, named after the person who experienced the adventure, are widely disseminated. At one such festival, a group of courtly ladies proposes a novel idea for a lai. They assert that a knight's noble deeds – or, indeed, any actions – are inspired solely by his desire for a woman's cunt. The other ladies, along with the festival participants, concur that this theme should be the subject of the new lai. The lai is highly praised and spreads widely.

The plot of *Le Mantel Mautaillié/Mǫttuls saga/Skikkju rímur* revolves around a magical mantle that has the peculiar property of revealing the fidelity of the woman who wears it. The cloak arrives at King Arthur's court with a mysterious messenger. The first to try on the mantle is Queen Guinevere. The mantle fits her poorly, revealing her infidelity. Subsequently, the other ladies of the court try the mantle, with similar results. The mantle only fits perfectly on a humble and virtuous maiden, who earns admiration and respect from the court.

The texts in transition

The material in transition

The first text, the *Leikara lioð* from *Strengleikar*, is elusive. It is Old Norwegian, usually dated to mid-13th-century, and transmitted in the manuscript Uppsala De la Gardie 4–7 4° (DG 4–7), usually dated to ca. 1270. The *lioð* of the Norse title, *Leikara lioð*, is in general used as at translation for *lai* (Budal 2009: 105–109), and *leikari* (n. masc.) refers in general to a musician, a minstrel. It is a derivation of *leikr* (n. masc.) and thus refers to all sorts of games, play, delight and entertainment, including sexual play. The short story in prose was translated from the French *Lai du Lecheor* and is thus among the *Strengleikar*-texts originating from the so-called lais anonymes, rather than Marie de France's *Lais* (see Budal 2009 and 2014). However, dialectal traces in *Lai du Lecheor*, as well as the inclusion of the lai in the Norse *Strengleikar*-collection, most likely translated from an Anglo-Norman manuscript, lead Tobin (1976: 357–358) to propose an author with a Northern French or possible English origin. All that remains of the Norse text is a brief passage, as the leaf containing the majority of it and the beginning of *Lanval/Janual* in DG 4–7 has been cut out, leaving a fragment of the story, corresponding to the first 14 lines of the *Lai du Lecheor* as found in the largest extant collection of lais, the late thirteenth-century manuscript Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris: Nouvelles acquisitions françaises 1104 (S), containing a total of 24 such short stories.[2] *Lecheor*, the title of the lai, means 'glutton', 'debauched person', 'the lover of a married woman', 'trickster', and possibly 'minstrel', but is pejorative and a term associated with "food, sexual activity, ruse and musical performance" (Burgess & Brook 1999: 57–58). The title *Lecheor* in S is scratched out, but still legible, and it is thus perhaps another indication of the daring content of the tale, whether it is

2 Available online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105326322

in Old Norse or French. However, as this manuscript (S) postdates both the main manuscript of Marie de France's lais (Harley 978) and the Norse De la Gardie 4–7 – it can't be the direct source of any of these (see also Tveitane 1972 and Cook & Tveitane 1979).

The editor of *Strengleikar*, Tveitane (1972: 15) suggests that the subject's coarseness likely led to the meticulous removal of a leaf from the Old Norwegian manuscript:

> Here a single leaf, no. 4 of the sixth gathering, has been cut out, tidily and carefully, without doing any damage to other parts of the volume. It seems likely that there was some special reason for this 'careful' vandalism, and the only one that fits the case is that the text on the lost leaf, the rather coarsely obscene *Lai du lecheor,* proved altogether too offensive for some medieval reader.

In their discussion of genre, Burgess and Brook (1999: 51), point out that even though the subject-matter of *Lecheor* is rather bawdy, it is presented as a Breton lai, something that is emphasized by the repeated use of the word *lai,* including two paratexts: The title and the author's concluding line where he tells his audience that *Vos ai le lai einsint feni* (v. 122) [I have thus brought the lay to an end for you]. Burgess and Brook thus conclude that it "is therefore evident that reference to human sexual organs in short narrative is not the exclusive preserve of the fabliau and that the construction of a lay does not need to revolve around the theme of love or a personal *aventure*" (1999: 51).[3]

Similarly, the tale of *Le Mantel Mautaillié* [The ill-fitting mantel], also known as *Lai du cort mantel* [The lai of the short mantel] (ON *Mǫttuls saga* [The saga of the cloak]) stands in a characteristic betwixt-and-between position. It is often classified as a fabliau but appears with the title *Lay du cort mantel* in the same thirteenth century collection (S) of lais as *Lecheor* (Cook & Tveitane 1979: XXII). As Tobin points out in her edition of the French text, it has "peu de points communs avec les autres lais de ce recueil. Il ne s'agit pas d'une aventure, ni d'une rencontre amoureuse" (1976 : 349).

The two Norse tales of the cloak, *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur* [The rhymes of the cloak] most likely originate from a version of *Le Mantel Mautaillié*, translated and adapted from one medieval vernacular, French, into another, Norse, during the 13th century.[4]

The prose tale *Mǫttuls saga* is dated to the thirteenth century, and the oldest of the narratives examined. Even though the saga probably was translated in Norway, it is transmitted only in Icelandic manuscripts and known from fourteen

3 The lais *Trot*, *Lecheor,* and *Nabaret* do not fit easily into the corpus of Breton lais. See for instance Burgess and Brook (1999: 10–11) for a summary of the discussion and references.

4 The pre-history of the cloak is told in *Samsons saga fagra*, that refers to *Möttuls saga* as *Skikkju saga*. *Samsons saga fagra* is Icelandic and quite late, fourteenth-fifteenth century. It was widely popular, as is attested by the 40 surviving manuscripts. See Magnúsdóttir & Tétrel (2020).

manuscripts dated from ca. 1300 to the nineteenth century (see Kalinke 1987 and 1999). If we, in accordance with Burgess and Brook (1999) classify *Lecheor* and its fragmentary translation *Leikara lioð* as *lais*, *Mǫttuls saga* is the only known Norse translation of a fabliau. Nevertheless, all the Norse translations from French are collectively placed in the genre *riddarasǫgur* (see Budal 2014, 2015 and 2016 for a discussion). The purpose of these translations has been seen as didactic or entertaining (see, for instance Budal 2014, 2015, 2016; Kalinke 1981, 2011; and Barnes 1974, 1989). Regarding *Mǫttuls saga*, Simek remarks that it "surely does not aspire to the educative purpose ascribed to the other works of this genre" (1993: 427).

At some point, the Norse *Mǫttuls saga* was adapted into the *Skikkju rímur*, usually dated to the fourteenth century. The *rímur* are transmitted in three manuscripts: one dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, the second to 1695, and the last dated to the second half of the seventeenth century. The term *rímur* points to an epic narration in verse, and the genre is Icelandic, rather than Norse. *Rímur* literally translates into 'rhymes', and the metre of these romances are usually the four-lined *ferskeytt* or 'square metre' (Driscoll 1991: 107–108; Kalinke 2021). This ballad is an adaptation of *Mǫttuls saga* that also seems to contain some elements from *Erex saga* and a version of the Round Table (Reichert 1986; Kalinke 2021). Driscoll (2019: 6) notes that most *rímur* adhere closely to their sources, "even slavishly". In this respect, the *Skikkju rímur* are unusual, incorporating elements from other sources and containing "lengthy additions and significant omissions" (Driscoll 2019: 6).[5]

From irony to burlesque

The three versions of the tale of the cloak, *Le Mantel Mautaillié*, *Mǫttuls saga*, and *Skikkju rímur*, are all distinct iterations of the same narrative, each version reflecting a significant shift in emphasis through textual transmission, adaptation, and rewriting (cf. Friesen 1983: 186ff. for an analysis of the shift in the narrators' stance).

The narrator of the *Le Mantel Mautaillié* claims that his intention is to tell the truth, *la verité* (v. 5), and downplays the magical aspects of the cloak, making the test to be a real test of the court.

The primary objective of *Mǫttuls saga* is explicitly stated in the opening chapter, where the translator declares the intent as *til gamans ok skemmtanar* [as entertainment and diversion], aiming to *gera nǫkkut gaman* [make some entertainment]:

> En þvílíkr sannindi sem valskan sýndi mér þá norræna<ða> ek yðr áheyrendum til gamans ok skemtanar svá sem virðuligr Hákon kóngr, son Hákonar kóngs, bauð fákunnugleik mínum at gera nokkut gaman af þessu eptirfylgjanda efni.

5 There is also a Middle High German translation of this lai, entitled *Der Mantel*, that will not be part of this study, but is available in Schröder, W., ed. Das *Ambraser Mantel-Fragment nach der einzigen Handschrift neu herausgegeben*. Sitzungsberichte der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main 33, 5. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995.

> [And this true account, which came to me in French, I have translated into Norwegian as entertainment and diversion for you, the listeners, since the worthy King Hákon, asked me, ignorant though I be, to provide some entertainment through the following story.]
>
> (*Möttuls saga,* 6–7)

A similar emphasis on entertainment is evident in the closing line of *Skikkju rímur* (ed. Driscoll 1999), which states that *Svo skal lyktast þetta spil* (III, 85), translated into "So ends this entertainment". The noun *spil* (n.) ('game, play'), a loan word from Low German (Jónsson 1926–1928), evokes the same associations as the variations of the tautology *til gamans ok skemmtanar* [as entertainment and diversion], also commonly used in the *riddarasǫgur.*

In her doctoral dissertation, Friesen (1983: 15 and 84) labels the French "a study in irony" and describes the Norse as "an attempt to amuse". Regarding *Skikkju rímur*, Driscoll (2019: 6) finds an added emphasis to the "burlesque element of the story, at the expense of any serious critique of *courtoisie* which underlies the humor of La (sic) mantel mautaillé (sic)." Thus, the narrative shifts from an ironic critique of courtoisie in the French text, via comedic entertainment in the Norse saga, to heightened burlesque in the *Skikkju rímur.* (Friesen 1983; Driscoll 2019).

The variation of female power and agency in these texts becomes apparent when we take a closer look on two objects from the texts: the button and the round table.

The Button

The narrator of *Lecheor* is reluctant to present the real name of the lai (v. 120): *C'on nu me tort a mesprison*. [In case I am reproached for it]. And what is the nature of the daring subject matter? Why great things are done, why men adorn themselves and are good knights:

Maint homme i sont si amendé	Many men have been greatly improved by it,
Et mis em pris et em bonté,	And increased their fame and reputation,
Qui ne vausissent .I. bouton,	Who would not have been worth a button
Se par l'entente du con non	Were it not for their desire for the cunt
La moie foi vos em plevis,	I pledge you my faith,
Nule fame n'a si bel vis	No woman has such a beautiful face that,

Par qu'ele eüst le con perdu,	If she had lost her cunt,
Jamés eüst ami ne dru(i).	She would ever have a friend or lover.
Quant tuit li bien sont fet por lui,	Since all good deeds are performed for it,
Nu metons mie sor autrui.	Let us not attribute them to any other cause.
Faisons du con le lai novel	Let us compose the new lay about the cunt

(*Lecheor*, vv. 87–97)

Introducing the button

The title of this article originates in this quote, where men (...) *ne vausissent .I. bouton, | Se par l'entente du con non* [would not have been worth a button | Were it not for their desire for the cunt] (v. 89–90). The courtly lady who says this, is among *de Bretaingne la flors*, [the flower of Brittany] (v. 57). The proverbial "not worth a button", still in use, is found in other texts, both French and contemporary to the lai, and in Middle English ones, the first occurrence being in *Tristrem* from around 1300.

The few surviving lines of the corresponding Norse *Leikara lioð* tell of the yearly feast in honor of Saint Pantelion, ending with the words *þar var þa mart rœt með korlvm ok konum. ok langar rœður gorvar* (...) [Many things were then discussed there between men and women, and long speeches made (...)] (209), indicating that these discussions and speeches are the subject matter of the story. Turning to the French *Lecheor*, this assumption is affirmed. The lai highlights the significance of the spoken word – it is a tale of storytelling, and of choosing the best story. A group of eight women makes themselves heard. These women are described as follows:

Sages erent et ensaingnies,	They were wise and well-bred,
Franches, cortoises et proisies:	Noble, courtly and esteemed.
C'estoit de Bretaingne la flors,	They were the flower of Brittany,
Et la proesce et la valors.	Its finest and most worthy women.

(*Lecheor*, vv. 55–58)

Even though most of the Norse text is lost, some of this description of the women still exist:

> allar hinar firðaztu frúr. ok meyiar er i þui fylki varoi, sva at engo frú var su er nockorrar fegrðar var. at ei ko*m* þar rikolegia buin a þeim degi.
>
> [And all the most beautiful ladies and maidens who were in that country, so that there was no lady of any beauty who did not come there, splendidly dressed, on that day.]
>
> (*Leikara ljoð*, 209)

Their suggestion is approved, and a lai is composed. This song is *cortois et bon* [fine and courtly], has a melody, and each of the eight flowers of Brittany contributes:

Chascuns i mist et son et chant | Et douces notes a haut ton [Each one put music and song to it | And sweet notes with a high pitch.] (vv. 104–107). They – and the lai – are much loved by both clerics and knights.

To be or not to be worth a button

If we look at these texts according to their internal chronology, the oldest one is *Leikara lioð*, where women are agents in power of men, lust, and the story itself, the *lai*.

Unlike most other lais, there is no male protagonist in *Lai du Lecheor*: The men are observed and characterized as a group: they dress well for the occasion, talk about love and chivalry, and react positively to the newly composed lai, even though it is a generalization (not only flattering) of their *entente*, their drive or eagerness – they are inspired and dominated by something outside themselves. The lai is also a meta-lai, narrating the process of composing and performing lais. The editors Burgess and Brook (1999: 57) point out that the text is linking "sexuality to textuality" – *con* to *conte*, a pun found in several fabliaux. And as it revolves around an observation of male behavior, it has been suggested that it was composed by a woman (Burgess & Brook 1999: 62). It shows women in a good light, a generalization that men, both clerics and knights, accept, is perhaps a daring balancing act. Women are not only objects of love, as in the courtly texts, but also objects of lust – and this gives them power, as their bodies control (k)nightly activities. It is a story of female agency, where men are presented as an appreciative, and somewhat submissive, collective, rather than individuals. This is a completely different take on women and sexuality than is found in *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur*.

In *Mǫttuls saga* women are the objects of scrutiny, their transgressions are made public, and they are shamed, both collectively and as individuals. But they are still agents in the text and have a voice. The ladies, and especially the queen, are praised in their own right. As is fitting, the queen is the very first to try the cloak and fails the chastity test. She is shamed and exposed, but her reaction is nevertheless crucial for the following events. Her choices and reasoning are made explicit, *Þá íhugaði dróttning ef hún angraðiz eða reiddiz nokkut við þetta at þá mundi henni vera virt til skemmdar og til svívirðingar er hún hafði mistekit fram hjá þvílíkum höfðingja* [The queen thought that if she got angry or became enraged about this in any way, that she would earn shame and disgrace for having been unfaithful to such a ruler], and she therefore *sneri (…) þessu öllu til gamans ok skemtanar, hlátrs og leiks og hlægiligra orða* [turned everything into entertainment and diversion, into laughter, jest and ridicule] (16–17). By deliberately choosing this approach, she remains in charge of her status, the situation, and the court's reactions. The contrasting effect of the tautologies *til skemmðar ok til svívirðingar* [for shame and disgrace] and *til gamans ok skemmtanar* [for entertainment and diversion] is striking.

This being said, the distress of all the members of the court, both women and men, is noticeable. King Arthur's agreement of a boon to the messenger, leaves them with no escape, and, even though some shame is cast on men by the revelation of their girlfriends' lacking loyalty, the major shame belongs to the women, being exposed in front of the entire court: this is repeatedly characterized as *spott ok svívirðing* [derision and disgrace] and *skǫmm ok svívirðing* [shame and disgrace] (18–19) The king attempts to alleviate the stress of the ladies by calling off the

game, but is bound by his promise to the messenger. Both men and women have some agency in *Mǫttuls saga*, the events are to some extent funny, perhaps because the queen decides that this is funny, but all participants feel the shame and disgrace and the rather tense ambiance, as does the reader. The laughter is becoming increasingly strained.

The ambiance of the third and youngest text, the *Skikkju rímur*, is thoroughly misogynic, and judgment is repeatedly passed on women even before the chastity test starts, for instance by the proverbial *sjaldan bregðir mjaldur mið;| misjafnt verður om kvenna frið* [the leopard cannot change its spots; woman's favor is fickle] (II, 4). Here, women are brought before the court, ridiculed, discarded and dismissed, and, in contrast to *Mǫttuls saga*: they hardly utter a word. The agency is primarily male, and: *Fljóðin koma til hallar heim; | hvörgi fannst nú á þeim keim;* [The ladies come to the hall without a hint of suspicion;] (II, 40). And when they know what to expect, there is no escape: *Engin vildi auðar gná | yfir sig leggja möttul þá, | heldur en ganga á heitan eld* [None of the women then wished to try on the mantle any more than to walk over hot coals;] (III, 54).

The women of *Skikkju rímur* are brought forward, one by one, ridiculed – and the men are gloating. In *Mǫttuls saga* men and women are caught in this strange 'party game' together, dealing with it with a mix of laughter, shame and discomfort. In *Skikkju rímur* men decide, laugh and judge – women obey and endure, not worth a button.

They were very well served

And how do these tales end? With a rather tense dinner in *Le Mantel Mautaillié*, where *(…) maint bon chevalier | i sist plain de courrouz et d'ire!* [many a good knight (...) was filled with anger and resentment.] (vv. 880–881). The narrator is gloating, stating that *Du mangier ne voil je plus dire | fors que molt bien furent servi,* [I do not wish to say anything more about the meal, except that they were very well served] (vv. 882–884).

Mǫttuls saga resembles *Le Mantel Mautaillié* by telling that *þar sat margr góðr riddari angraðr sakir sinnar unnustu* [many a good knight sat there distressed on account of his beloved] (28–29). Nevertheless, there is a remarkable shift in tenor from a personal rage in the lai to a discomfort on behalf of a loved one, in the saga. The king reasserts control over the rather uncomfortable situation, he *lét veita hirð sinni með svá miklum kostnaði at hvergi hefir verit önnur þvílík veizla veitt né þegin*. [let his court be entertained at such great cost that never had there been such entertainment either offered or enjoyed] (28–29).

The situation is quite different in *Skikkju rímur*. There is no feast nor a meal, but it is told that *Þetta var þeim drykkjar dvöl; | drengir kenndu síðan öl* [All this had delayed the drinking; | later the men had ale] (III, 75). While the men are drinking ale, King Arthur pass explicit judgment over the women and their transgressions:

Fylkir talar við fljóðin öll	The king speaks to all the women:
'Fari þér burt úr minni höll;	'Go now from my court;
lotning fáið litla hér;	you will be afforded little honor here,
þér lífið við skömm, sem maklegt er.'	but will live in shame, as you deserve.'

(*Skikkju rímur*, III:76, 312–313)

After banning the women from court, he addresses his heroes, who will seek honor in battle and will find themselves "better women":

Kóngurinn talar við kappa sín:	The king speaks to his heroes:
'Kunnig sé yður ætlan mín;	'Let my plan be known to you:
þér munuð vekja vigra skúr,	you will go into battle,
því vér skulum sækja oss betri frúr'	for we shall find ourselves better women.'

(*Skikkju rímur*, III:77, 312–313)

The pun on *con* and *conte* links "sexuality to textuality" in *Lechor* (Burgess & Brook, 1999: 61). Both the cloak and the heroes of the *Skikkju rímur* are deeply misogynistic. Throughout the rímur, the women are shamed visually by the garment, verbally by these so-called heroes. The verbs used, such as *hlæja* ('laugh') (III, 31) *gabba* ('mock') (III, 34), and *kalsa* ('to utter mockingly, ironic') (III, 41), are strong signals of the increasingly misogynistic and mocking ambiance.

The round table

The egality of the knights of King Arthur is signaled by their equidistant seating to their king, thanks to his famous round table. The pivotal character, the king himself, is seated in the middle, and has the role of *primus inter pares*, the first among equals.

The *kringlótt sess*

Even though Arthurian legends were translated into Norse during the 13th century, the concept of the round table, first described in Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155), is lacking from all of the surviving manuscripts. However, a version of the round table reappears in *Skikkju rimur*, where the king has a *kringlótt sess*, a round seat. As the manuscript dates to the 17th century, this reference can originate from elsewhere:

Því var kringlótt kóngsins sess,	Therefore the king's throne was round,
komið á miðju gólfi;	and placed in the center of the floor;
allir áttu jafnt til þess	all were equidistant from it,
upp og niður frá hvólfi.	up and down from the vaulted ceiling.

(*Skikkju rímur* I:20, 276–277)

The description of a round throne rather than a table is somewhat puzzling. Should we picture a seat suspended from the ceiling, allowing the king to be a pivot in his court?

A circle of women

A close reading of *Skikkju rimur* reveals that the knights' round table is mirrored by a circle of women on several occasions in the text. The following stanza is when the cloak is presented to them:

Meyjarnar tóku hið mæta klingur;	The maidens took the splendid object;
mjúkir voru þeirra fingur;	their fingers were soft;
þar var sleginn í höllu hringur,	they formed a circle in the hall,
og herligssveina leikurinn kringur.	surrounded by the young lords.

(*Skikkju rímur*, II:42, 294–295)

Arthur and his men have their circle, and then we are presented with this image of concentric circles where the ladies are surrounded by the lords. Being encircled can be understood as protection, but also as confinement. Either way, it is a physical demonstration of power and authority, where the protected or imprisoned is the weaker part with quite limited options.

As the ladies fail the test, they are led from this concentric common circle to a separate female one, and the verb *húka* ('huddle') paints a striking picture of the humiliation:

Valven leiddi víf til sess;	Gawain led the woman to her seat;
var þeim ætlað rúm til þess	a place had been made for them
að þær mætti húka í hring;	so they could huddle there in a circle;
heitir þetta kvenna þing.	that's what is called a women's forum.

(*Skikkju rímur*, III:37, 276–277)

The mockery and humiliation are not only accentuated by the alliteration *húka-hringr*, but the noun *sess* ('seat') mirrors the *kringlótt sess*, the round throne of king Arthur (I, 20). This is quite a different kind of *sess*, it is a collective circle of *skǫmm ok svívirðing*, of shame and disgrace, that the men have prepared for the women beforehand. The *kvenna þing* is translated to "a women's forum", but the prime connotation of the noun *þing* (n.) is evidently the public assembly of the Norse world. Used in this stanza, it serves to underscore the lack of free will and autonomy of

the courtly women; in this text, the *kvenna þing* conveys no female agency, and is nothing but mockery.

Svo skal lyktast þetta spil – So ends this entertainment

The entertainment that ends is not only that of *Skikkju rímur* (III, 85), nor that of coming to the end of an article but also coming to the end of a specific way of reading these texts. The working title of this article was "exposure of female frivolity," and I returned to these texts with the expectations of light-hearted amusement, the *til gamans og skemmtanar*. I remembered from my initial reading of these texts some decades ago. However, revisiting these texts, I found the mockery far more misogynistic than I remembered. The laughter appears become more forced, and as reflects how deeply ingrained the male gaze on female sexuality has been in our culture.

The article's examination of two circular objects – the button and the round table – reveals more about gender and agency than of mere frivolity. Most of the Norse translation of oldest text, *Lai du Lecheor*, is lost, and when I claim that this is *the* text of female agency and of sexuality and textuality, it is based on the French source. The women are in control, they are outing men – everybody is amused, regardless of sex and profession, and the entertainment continues over time.

On the other hand, the misogyny present in the cloak-texts seems to intensify through translation, transmission, and time. According to Friesen (1983), the irony of *Le Mantel Mautaillié*, transforms to comedy in *Mǫttuls saga*, and becomes burlesque in *Skikkju rímur*, as noted by Driscoll (1991, 2019). While this may hold some truth, there is also a palpable discomfort linked to the increased and explicit misogynic tone in these tales, in particular in the ridicule, the mockery and humiliation of the women in *Skikkju rímur*.

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Part II
Food and Feast as Narrative Elements and Devices

Introduction

David Brégaint

What past rituals were and what their descriptions in past texts reveal about them are two different things. In his influential work, *The Dangers of Ritual*, Philippe Buc precisely stresses the challenges posed by the textuality of rituals and by authorship, which offer an 'interpretation' of rituals and virtually prevent us from accessing past reality at all (Buc 2001). Feasts and banquets in Arthurian works were no exception. Their descriptions were literary constructions which provided a range of possibilities for use and interpretation as well as for reuse and reinterpretation. In the following section, Alban Gautier, Jonathan Hui, Victor Barabino, Jens Eike Schnall and John-Wilhelm Flattun have all explored the different facets of banquets' descriptions in a wide spectre of Arthurian romances showing that narratives of courtly banquets could be restated in different contexts.

In his study on the tale of the massacre of the long knives, Alban Gautier explores the fate of a narrative sequence originally relating to a dramatic banquet which ended in a bloodshed in a corpus of texts on the history of Brittany in the twelfth century. The author reviews different versions mainly from the *Historia regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, through the *Gesta regum Anglorum* of William of Malmesbury and the *Breta sǫgur*. This massacre is that of Briton nobles by Saxons during a meeting, an assembly, or festivities of some sort in an almost mythical past, but probably in connection with the Saxon invasion of Britain in the sixth century. The circumstances of the massacre remain unclear as to its protagonists and the events themselves, not to mention whether this massacre took place during a banquet or not. Indeed, the very existence of this episode remains hypothetical.

If the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Monmouth – the oldest source, alludes to the festive nature of this meeting, it is especially the later version of William of Malmesbury that places this massacre in the context of a banquet. Later versions will also elude the festive context. As Gautier points out, the choice of Malmesbury may have been dictated by the fact that the banquet was a space conducive to 'betrayal and violence' in part because it was defined as a moment of peace, communion and dialogue. Did this choice reflect a new reality, and more particularly a more important place and role for banquets and festivities in the political landscape at William's time than at Geoffrey's or at later times? It seems more relevant

to Gautier to see in William of Malmesbury the expression of moral and ethical considerations. Thus, placing the massacre of the Britons in the context of a banquet allows the author to morally stigmatize the Britons, who would have exposed themselves to their fate due to their extreme inebriation. The banquet, as a place of debauchery and excess, more particularly through the excessive consumption of alcohol, under William becomes an instrumental narrative sequence to convey a negative judgment on the Britons; *in fine* they simply get what they deserved.

Like Gautier, Hui's "Romancing the Giant's Wedding Feast" addresses feasts as a device to build up a new narrative. In his exploration of *Samsons saga*, a late fourteenth-century romance, he observes how the author merged the well-known theme of the Arthurian chastity-testing mantle from *Mǫttuls saga* with the wedding feast of Þrymr, a myth elaborated in the Eddic poem *Þrymskviða*. A new banquet narrative emerges, compiles elements from both traditions. In *Samsons saga*, a wedding feast is held during which the famous mantle of *Mǫttuls saga* is to be stolen. However, the author includes the journey of the thieves in a chariot, a central element of *Þrymskviða*. True, the saga does not comprise many details about the banquet. However, this latter rather works as a general interpretative framework, which is nourished from the audience's collective memory and culture. Ultimately, Hui's study underscores how narratives of festivities constituted an inexhaustible reservoir of themes, ideas, and references which could be drawn from different sources. Eventually, they provided medieval authors with a literary context which was malleable enough to provide practical foundations for new stories.

Victor Barabino's contribution highlights the potential for understanding food culture and food symbolism at the court of the Norwegian kings and queens based on the Norse translations of Arthurian romances. The present study on influences of Arthurian romances in the food symbolism of the *riddarasǫgur*, more particularly underscores its challenges. He notices clear discrepancies between the descriptions of banquets in the original romances and in their Norse versions, showing that original Arthurian food symbolism was not uncritically transferred but adapted to reception's context. If this trait is far from being limited to food, but rather a definite characteristic of Norse translations, it remains puzzling to understand what was kept from the emission's culture and what was adapted to the Northern courtly context. Barabino's systematic progress through the different phases of a banquet, from the reception of guests to the preparation of the meals to their consumption, brings some key insights

Finally, critics of court life and courtiers are as old as courts themselves. The twelfth-century writer, Walter Map was not tender with the English court, which he compared to hell in his *De nugis curialium*. In a contemporary work, the *Policraticus* by bishop John of Salisbury, the author compares society to a human body where courtiers constitute the intestines and stomach, the realm of excrements and the source of ailments. Jens Eike Schnall and John-Wilhelm Flattun's contributions to this volume each develop a critique of the world of court and courtly meals. First, Schnall explores how deviant food consumption, or "other eating", in Arthurian and medieval Scandinavian literature functions as a narrative tool to criticize courtly ideals. While feasts and banquets at court symbolize order and hierarchy, transgressive eating practices such as gluttony, rustic manners, and even cannibalism, expose underlying social tensions. Schnall demonstrates that courtly

norms, as codified in texts like *The King's Mirror* [*Konungs skuggsjá*], stand in stark contrast to anti-courtly behavior, such as *þorparaskapr*, were violations of food etiquette signal moral or status failures. Arthurian romances, including *Ívents saga* and *Erex saga* use food to mirror identity: Erec's deficient meals reflect his personal crisis, while Yvain's consumption of raw meat marks his descent into madness. Norse sagas, too, deploy table manners as a device either to shame characters or reveal their true status. Deviant eating could also serve didactic and comic purposes, from the sexualized pear in *Diu halbe bir* to Parzival's clumsy hunger. Whether rustic or monstrous, such scenes reinforce courtly values by excluding or reforming offenders. Ultimately, Schnall shows that food symbolism structures narrative conflict, illustrating the precarious balance between culture and instinct, elite and commoner, in medieval imagination.

In the same vein, Flattun's study demonstrates how medieval feasts and banquets offered elites exquisite opportunities to address the ills of their time. There are no Arthurian novels in this context. Instead, we find *Le Roman de Renart*, which presents a parallel universe, that of Renard and his fellow lions and wolves. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century, these tales parodied, and even mocked, the world of the courts and their culture, so imbued with moral values and virtuous standards. In this animal world of Fox, where everything is inverted and reversed – good becoming evil, justice becoming injustice, and moderation becoming excess, banquets are transformed into orgies where gluttony is elevated to virtue. Of course, only the prism of allegory, which juxtaposes human and animal characters, allows the enunciation of an often-severe criticism of the social order, and particularly that of the elite throughout the Middle Ages. Banquets and feasts, as an exceptional showcase for the courtly world, were easy victims of transgressions and outrage.

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

The Massacre of the Long Knives from 'Nennius' Onwards

Alban Gautier

Killing your neighbor during a feast, an assembly or a negotiation was never accepted behaviour, even in the so-called 'Dark Ages'. Such gatherings were supposed to be moments of peace, and both halls and assembly sites were considered as spaces from which weapons were banned. Many examples in early medieval British and English history bear witness to this rule, in laws – see, for example, the provisions of the late seventh-century law code of the Kentish kings Hlothhere and Eadric which establish a fine for violence "where men are drinking" (§9, in Oliver 2000: 132–133) –, in heroic poetry – in *Beowulf*, when the hero and his companions have to leave their weapons in a kind of antechamber before entering the main hall of Heorot (vv. 395–398, in Fulk et al. 2008: 15; Gautier 2006: 210–213) – or in chronicles and histories – Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, for example, tells how King Edwin of Northumbria was wounded during an audience by a murderer who had *concealed* a sword under his cloak (§II.9, in Crépin et al. 2005: 334–337).

A massacre told and retold

It is such an episode of violence in a normally unarmed space and time, reserved for peace, which I would like to present and analyse here. Chapters 45 and 46 of the *Historia Brittonum* – a work written in the early ninth century and whose author, sometimes known as Nennius, should perhaps rather be called Pseudo-Nennius (Dumville 1975–1976; but see also Field 1996 and Guy 2015) – tell the highly colourful story generally known as the "Massacre of the Long Knives". The killing takes place during a parley – which, as will be explained below, may or may not be a feast – between, on one side, the war leader Hengest and his Saxons, and on the other one King Vortigern and three hundred British nobles: at Hengest's signal, each one of the Saxon warriors draws his knife and kills the man who sits next to him; then the Saxons capture Vortigern and force him to ransom himself with the gift of three provinces, Essex, Sussex and (only in the later Vatican' recension) Middlesex (Mommsen 1898: 189–190; Morris 1980: 32 and 72–73).

This episode does not appear in earlier accounts of the origins of the British-Saxon conflict such as those of Gildas and Bede. It means we do not know what precise source (or sources) the author of *Historia Brittonum* may have used. Did he create a story based on some kind of folktale, on classical or Biblical references, or even on a hypothetical lost written source? There is evidence in many cultures of such stereotypical narratives of treachery during a supposedly peaceful

encounter: in her commentary of this particular episode, Alheydis Plassmann observed for example that "concealing a knife under a smile" is one of the "Thirty-six Stratagems" of Chinese tradition (Plassmann 2006: 67). Indeed, many examples of stories of a 'massacre at a feast' or a 'massacre at a parley' exist, both in history and fiction, though most of them are later in date, from the 'Black Dinner' of 1440 in Scotland to the 'Red Wedding' in George Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* (adapted into the series *Game of Thrones*), through stories John Gower's *Tale of Constance*, and several other occurrences.

There are, though, earlier instances of this motif, and closer to the world of 'Nennius'. In historical records, there is the story, told by several sixth-century sources of how Theodoric the Ostrogoth killed his rival Odoacer during a feast of reconciliation in Ravenna in 493 (Wolfram 1988: 283). In classical literature, one may mention the death of Penelope's suitors in the *Odyssey*, or the killing of the Lapiths by the Centaurs at a wedding feast, told in Book 12 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the Bible, there is Queen Esther's feast during which Haman and his supporters are killed (Esther 7: 1–10), and a feast to which all the sons of King David are invited and during which Absalom kills his brother Amnon. This last episode could be particularly relevant since it contains a detail that is also present in most versions of the 'Long Knives' story: before the event, the leader of the killing party instructs his men and tells them to strike at his signal (2 Samuel 13: 23–29). Nevertheless, none of those earlier stories may reasonably be identified as a direct 'source' for *Historia Brittonum*'s 'Massacre of the Long Knives'. Rather than its reliability or historicity (which are, to say the least, doubtful), it is the very essence of the scene, its legal and even psychological 'absurdity', that explains its popularity: massacres in a sacred precinct marked for peace, even if they sometimes happened, were effectively unthinkable, and it is because of this that is was told and retold with a degree of *Schadenfreude*.

The popularity of this story in later centuries has been fluctuating: it does not appear in several narratives such as those of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Henry of Huntingdon (*Historia Anglorum*) or Geoffrey Gaimar (*L'Estoire des Engleis*), even though we know that some of them made use of versions of *Historia Brittonum*, but it was retold in many other reworkings of the 'history of the Britons'. I have selected here eight works composed from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, which will allow me to retrace the earliest variations of this narrative in Arthurian and non-Arthurian literature. Of course, this selection can only be patchy. In particular, given the popularity of the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, himself one of *Historia Brittonum*'s main imitators, many authors made use of his narrative, both in and out of the 'Brut' tradition (for an overview, see: Tétrel & Veysseyre 2015; Tétrel & Veysseyre 2018; Rajsic 2019): for example, it would be quite useless to analyse all the English abbreviators and compilers such as Ralph de Diceto, Richard of Devizes or Gervase of Canterbury, who based their narratives on Geoffrey's. In chronological order, the eight works which will be considered here are:[1]

1 Here are mentioned, as and when relevant, book, chapter, year and/or line numbers, along with the editions I used and the page numbers where the episode is found.

- *Lebor Bretnach*, an eleventh-century adaptation of *Historia Brittonum* in Middle Irish (§40, in van Hamel 1932: 64–65).
- William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum*, a history of the kings of England written in the 1120s (§I.8, in Mynors et al. 1988: 26–29).
- Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, released in the later part of the 1130s (§103–105, in Reeve & Wright 2007: 132–137). For this particular episode, there aren't any significant differences between the 'Vulgate' and the 'First Variant' versions.
- Wace's *Roman de Brut*, an early French adaptation of Geoffrey's *Historia* from the 1150s (vv. 7207–7308, in Weiss 1999: 182–185).
- Laȝamon's *Brut*, a Middle English adaptation of Wace from the early thirteenth century (vv. 7544–7685, in Brooks & Leslie 1963: 390–395).
- *Breta sǫgur*, an Icelandic adaptation of Geoffrey's *Historia* composed sometime in the first half of the thirteenth century. The episode is not retold in the version recently edited by Hélène Tétrel from manuscript AM 573 4to (Tétrel 2021), but it appears at least in the *Hauksbók* version from manuscript AM 544 4to (Black 2014: 52–53).
- Matthew Paris's *Chronica maiora*, a Latin chronicle completed in 1253 that incorporates many passages from Geoffrey's *Historia* (*s.a.* 461, in Luard 1872: 195). Though published under Matthew's name, this chronicle was the result of teamwork in the abbey of St Albans, beginning *c.* 1220 with the *Flores historiarum* compiled by Roger of Wendover, the content of which was fully integrated in Matthew's *Chronica maiora* (Weiler 2019: 324–326). I use it as an example of the work produced by the St Albans school of history in the mid-thirteenth century.
- The 'Cleopatra Version' of *Brut y Brenhinedd*, a Middle Welsh adaptation of Geoffrey's narrative, incorporating elements from Wace, probably produced in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (Parry 1937: 118–119). Though it is but one of many versions within the complex and multifarious tradition of the Welsh 'Bruts', a full assessment of all versions would have been fastidious: being "the most clearly compiled and edited version" (Roberts 2018: 157), the 'Cleopatra' narrative will serve here as an example of vernacular Welsh treatment of the episode.

Variation and amplification: shifting details

After its creation by the author of *Historia Brittonum* in the early ninth century, the story went on growing, and though it kept its fundamental structure, it took on new details through processes of translation, adaptation and amplification. It is not always easy to explain why this or that detail – a personal name, a place name, a number, etc. – was added or let aside, but it should be said that many of our authors, and most of all Geoffrey of Monmouth who emerges as the most important adapter and transmitter of the story, were making use of the rhetorical devices of amplification and abbreviation (Baltzell 1967): in a way, the shifting details in the successive versions of the story can be seen as part and parcel of a kind of 'natural breath' of medieval narrative, in an age when copyright, plagiarism and modern notions of authorship did not exist.

The techniques of *amplificatio* were especially explained in the classical Latin treatise *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (wrongly ascribed to Cicero), which itself was well-known and much followed in the early and high medieval periods (for other insular examples: Winterbottom 1977: 62–63 on the works of Aldhelm; Corona 2009 on the works of Ælfric). Additions and increments were ways of improving a given narrative, adding vivid details or useful precisions which would appeal to the emotions and intelligence of the readers, particularly exploiting their prior knowledge. And indeed, the tendency of the shifts in our story is often towards *amplificatio*, the narrative becoming more complex, richer and more efficient than in the bare outline contained in *Historia Brittonum*: figures get higher and more dramatic, heroism and wickedness become more conspicuous, etc. As for *abbreviatio*, it was used almost as frequently as "a means of compressing certain parts of the narrative raw material so as to render them relatively inconspicuous and minimize their effect" (Baltzell 1967: 35). This is especially visible in the works of compilers whose main interest was not the same as that of their main source: for instance, an English chronicler (and his audience) may not be interested in the names of all the British protagonists mentioned by his British source, hence the cutting out of what was identified as unnecessary details. Let us now have a look at some of those shifting details: participants, number of victims, location, date and contexts.

Participants

In the original version, only two participants have names: Hengest and Vortigern. Hengest comes "with his troops" (§45: *cum suis turbis*), and Vortigern with three hundred British "senior councillors" (§46: *seniores* from his *concilium*), none of whom are given names. The two earliest derived versions of this narrative, those of *Lebor Bretnach* and William of Malmesbury, did not change anything to these basic facts.

The main *amplificatio* comes with Geoffrey of Monmouth, who seems not to have been able to accept the basic story of the Britons being slaughtered without any kind of resistance and disposed of without any Christian rites. His concept of an heroic Christian British past (Rajsic 2019: 68) and his "inventive, synthesizing approach to history" (Jankulak 2010: 27) seems to have brought about the addition of other (probably invented) characters and new developments to the plot he had inherited from *Historia Brittonum*: the result is that, under his pen, the one-sided slaughter of his main source became an epic battle. In order to enrich his narrative, Geoffrey introduced two other named Britons: a bishop called Eldad, who was not present at the massacre but who took the bodies of the fallen and had them buried in his church (§104); and Eldol, earl of Gloucester, who attended the meeting and fought bravely with only a wooden stick, escaping with his life (§105). Later on in the *Historia*, we learn that these two, who become then recurring characters, were brothers (§125, in Reeve & Wright 2007: 168–169).

All the post-Galfridian versions, which abbreviate Geoffrey's narrative or expand on it, mention Earl Eldol (his name taking different forms such as Aldulf, Eldulf, Eidol...). Conversely, even if all of them mention Bishop Eldad at some point, only one, namely the 'Cleopatra' *Brut y Brenhinedd*, mentions his role in this particular story. It is not completely surprising that a Welsh narrative would give more weight to this dimension of Christian legitimization of the Britons, but it

was not an issue for the other, English, authors. Clearly, most of Geoffrey's adaptors and imitators did not think that the bishop's action was particularly interesting and worth retelling, whereas his brother the earl's heroic stance was a chivalric feat that was almost systematically valued. Laȝamon even expanded the story with the insertion of a fifth character, an unnamed commoner from Salisbury, who happened to arrive on the battlefield with a club, providentially providing Eldol with a weapon (ll. 7629–7631).

Number of victims

The number of victims also vary considerably from one version to another. *Historia Brittonum* simply states that all three hundred counsellors of Vortigern who were present were killed; so does William of Malmesbury.

The main responsibility for variation and amplification lies again with Geoffrey of Monmouth who, as usual, proves very generous with figures and tends to include much larger numbers than the ones in his sources (for a parallel treatment of other figures, typical of an *amplificatio*, namely the number of ships in which the Saxons invaded Britain, see Gautier 2017b). So here we learn that Hengest had come back to Britain with no less than three hundred thousand warriors (§103); that four hundred and sixty Britons were killed in the massacre (§104); but also, that Eldol alone killed seventy Saxons (§105). Again, Geoffrey had made sure that the episode, though a British defeat, would not diminish the glory of the Britons.

In later rewritings, those figures proved less stable than the names of the characters: for example, there are nine hundred Britons killed in the version of *Breta sǫgur* we consider here (Black 2014: 52–53). As for Laȝamon, he gives curiously precise numbers – four hundred and five Britons and fifty-three Saxons (ll. 7260 and 7638) –, for which I can find no convincing explanation other than an intended 'real-life effect', the precision making the figures look more exact and more plausible.

Locations

Where did the massacre take place? *Historia Brittonum* mentions no location, and neither do the earliest adaptations which derive their information directly from it, *Lebor Bretnach* and William of Malmesbury.

Here again, the most significant amplification comes with Geoffrey of Monmouth, who locates the event in *Ambrius*, that is Amesbury in Wiltshire (§103). Surely, Geoffrey cannot have chosen Amesbury by chance. The village is the closest to Stonehenge, a place which mattered in his works (Loomis 1930). Yet the circle of stones cannot have been, in his mind, the setting for the meeting and for the massacre. Indeed, according to Geoffrey, the henge would later be erected by Merlin, on the instructions of Aurelius Ambrosius, as a memorial to the British nobles who had been victims of Hengest and his Saxons (§127–130, Reeve & Wright 2007: 170–175).

Except for *Breta sǫgur*, whose very abbreviated narrative does not include any placename, all later retellings mention the same place name. There is some further information in the 'Cleopatra' *Brut y Brenhinedd – yny maes maur yngkymre. ylle ygelwit gwedy hynny salisburie* [in the great field in Cambria, the place that was afterwards called Salisbury] (Parry 1937: 118) – but this amplification is aberrant

because Salisbury is clearly not situated 'in Cambria', that is in Wales: to a medieval Welsh writer, it should rather have been 'in Lloegr', that is in England (Chauou 2011). A more complete study would require a look at several other Welsh 'Bruts'.

It is true, though, that Salisbury is not far from Stonehenge and that, according to Geoffrey, it is where the bodies of the fallen had been buried by Bishop Eldad (§104), who had also founded a monastery there, where three hundred monks lived (§127). Could this last figure be an echo of the original number of victims in *Historia Brittonum*, as opposed to Geoffrey's four hundred and fifty? In this case, we would catch Geoffrey in the midst of his amplification process, through a 'visible stitching': the initial number was increased in §104, making the story more dramatic, but it also inspired an invention in §127, the story of three hundred monks praying for the (original) three hundred victims being a way to highlight the Christian identity and piety of the Britons.

Dates

When were the British counsellors massacred? As before, there is nothing in *Historia Brittonum*, *Lebor Bretnach* and William of Malmesbury. Geoffrey is the first author who mentions a date: for him, the British nobles were massacred on May 1st (*kalendis Maii*), that is May Day (§103). This detail is also present in Wace's *Roman de Brut*, in the 'Cleopatra' *Brut y Brenhinedd* and in Matthew Paris, but not in *Breta sǫgur* (whose narrative is the shortest and hence most abbreviated) and, much more surprisingly, not in Laȝamon (whose story is by far the most developed and amplified). I can find no convincing explanation as to Geoffrey's choice of May Day for the date of the massacre: it is Beltane in Celtic folklore, a time of feasting and rejoicing (Hutton 2001: 218–225), but nothing in the Beltane folklore (the fire, the Maypole, the dance...) finds an echo in this story; and the layout of Stonehenge itself is more linked to the winter and summer solstices than to mid-season Celtic festivals (Garrow & Wilkin 2022: 81–84).

The only author in my corpus who mentions a year is one of the latest: Matthew Paris's *Chronica maiora* placed the massacre in 461. Of course, this results from the nature of his work, a year-by-year chronicle, a genre which needs to pinpoint events into precise dates. Because there was no earlier known year for the massacre, the most probable explanation is that the compiler – in this case, it would have been Roger of Wendover (Weiler 2019: 326) – calculated it and placed it at the most likely juncture in his narrative. The year 461 yields no mention of this event in the main chronicle sources that the St Albans historians used for the earlier parts of their own chronicles, namely John of Worcester *Chronicon ex chronicis* (*c.* 1140) and Ralph de Diceto's *Abbreviationes chronicorum* (*c.* 1202) (Vaughan 1958: 129; Weiler 2019: 325). Interestingly, Ralph de Diceto had also written, among his *Opuscula*, an annotated list of the kings of Britain based on Geoffrey's *Historia* (Rajsic 2019: 72), but there is no information there that is not already in Geoffrey: the meeting in *Ambrius*, the Kalends of May, the four hundred and sixty Britons killed by the Saxons, the seventy Saxons killed by Eldol (Stubbs 1876, vol. 2: 228). It is probably more significant that, whereas 461 is empty in the *Abbreviationes chronicorum*, it identifies the year 460 as the date of the arrival of the brothers Hengest and Horsa in Britain, immediately followed by the death of Horsa (Stubbs 1876, vol. 1: 85). For Roger of Wendover and his team in St Albans,

it would have been quite logical to infer that the massacre had taken place the following year.

Contexts

In which context did the massacre happen? In most versions, it takes place during a meeting, the nature is rather vaguely defined. In *Historia Brittonum*, the rather neutral word *conuentus* is used and most other Latin versions (including Geoffrey of Monmouth) also use it; Matthew Paris also speaks of a *colloquium*, a parley. Adaptations into other languages (Irish, French, English, Icelandic, Welsh) also use words whose meaning is 'gathering' or 'conference'. In *Lebor Bretnach*, it is a *tínol*, an 'assembly'. In Wace's *Roman de Brut* (ll. 7220, 7229), it is a *parlement*, a 'conference', and a *plai* (similar meaning). Laȝamon uses verbs rather than nouns (l. 7578): Britons and Saxons *cumen to-somne mid sæhte & mid sibbe*, [gather with concord and peace]. In *Breta sǫgur*, the event is a *stefna*, that is an 'appointed meeting', a 'convocation'. The 'Cleopatra' *Brut y Brenhinedd* speaks of a *kyngor*, a 'council'. Locating the event in Stonehenge (albeit before it was erected) indeed conveys the impression of an outdoor meeting rather than of a feast in a hall.

Strangely enough, William of Malmesbury appears to be the only author in this corpus who explicitly states that the massacre took place during a *conuiuim* (feast), when the men were drunk *poculis frequentioribus* [because of too many drinks], which explains why they were killed unawares, *inter uina* [among their drinks]. Why is it that William's version, written about ten years before Geoffrey's, is the only one that mentions a feast and gives details about the drunkenness and table manners of the participants?

A massacre at a feast? William of Malmesbury's narrative

In fact, this question adds up to three more specific ones. First, why did William of Malmesbury describe a feast and drinking party, even if none of this was explicitly mentioned in the original story? Second, what purpose did this particular retelling of the story serve in the wider economy of his narrative? And finally, why did none of his successors pick up what may be seen as a great story?

The first question is not an easy one. A feast and a hall were quintessential spaces of peace in early medieval times, and they would of course provide an ideal setting for a story of treachery and violence: I mentioned above a few of these stereotypical narratives. But we should also recognize that the original story, even if it is told with very few details, may very well be understood as having taken place during a feast. Indeed, we read in *Historia Brittonum* that Britons and Saxons *vir juxta virum socialiter sederunt* [sat amicably, man beside man] (§46); note that the word *socialiter*, which I have translated here as 'amicably', could also be rendered as 'like allies' (*socii*), as in John Morris's translation (Morris 1980: 32). These details – sitting and being friendly or like allies – are probably the reason why William of Malmesbury felt allowed to change the original *conuentus* into a real drinking party; he may even have candidly read the original story as alluding to a feast, one of the typical medieval settings for a peaceful encounter to go wrong. We should also note that William seems to have been rather fond of feasting scenes, which are particularly numerous in his *Gesta regum Anglorum*. There is another story of

drinking and treachery in the chapter just before (§I.7, in which Vortigern is seduced by Hengest's daughter who acts as a cupbearer to him), but the following chapters provide many other narratives of feasts or stories about table manners: only in Books I and II (that is, before the Norman conquest of 1066), there are about twenty other chapters (§I.36, I.49, II.113, II.131, II.133, II.139, II.144, II.148, II.149, II.156, II.162, II.176, II.179, II.188, II.189, II.197, II.205, II.225) in which feasts, meals, food or drink are important aspects of the narrative.

What use did William of Malmesbury have of such a narrative of drunkenness and retribution? One answer is, of course, that this *amplificatio* was useful to William because it allowed him to pass a negative judgment on the Britons: the goals he pursued were completely opposed to those that Geoffrey of Monmouth pursued a decade later, hence the very different contents and results of their amplifications. This is particularly shown here in the moral insistence on the connexion between inebriation and violence, the Britons being killed to the last *inter uina* [among their drinks]. Indeed, William's version is the only one in this corpus that infers moral condemnation, not of Hengest and his Saxons but of their victims, whose drunkenness appears to be the cause of their death. Being an English chronicler, William had no kindness to spare for the Britons, and this explains why he pronounced such a harsh condemnation of their behaviour. By contrast, the pagan Saxons still appear as treacherous but can also be seen as the instruments of God's wrath over the sins of the Christian Britons.

But the connection between overindulgence in feasting and drunkenness on the one hand, and defeat and loss of territory on the other, is not confined, in William of Malmesbury's work, to this particular episode. William was writing in the 1120s, that is in the Anglo-Norman period, two generations after the Conquest of 1066, and for a mixed English and Norman audience (on this kind of rhetoric in the works of Anglo-Norman historians, see also Gautier 2009 and 2010). This is why many of the episodes which I listed above bear condemnation not of the Britons (or the Welsh), but of the English, for their gluttony and, most of all, their propensity to both drunkenness and violence, a stereotype that is not uncommon in the medieval period when describing Northern European populations such as the English, the Irish or the Scandinavians (Gautier 2012). The most significant judgment under William's pen appears at the beginning of Book III, where the Norman conquest of 1066 is explained, and indeed justified, by the drunkenness, sluggishness and excesses of the English, which is contrasted with the Normans' moderation (III.245–246). Just a few pages above, William recounts how, on the eve of the battle of Hastings, the English spent the night drinking and carousing, whereas the Normans were at their prayers (III.241–242; see also Gautier 2010). In other words, William of Malmesbury's narrative of the 'Massacre of the Long Knives' provides exactly the same kind of moral aetiology as the one about the battle of Hastings and the Norman conquest of England: because of their propensity for drunkenness and lack of self-discipline over drink (flaws that are indicative of wider moral failings), the original owners of the island were killed and lost their land to invaders.

There remains the third question: why did none of the later authors of this corpus take up and expand on William of Malmesbury's potentially 'good story' of the Britons' inebriation and death *inter uina*? One answer is that Geoffrey of Mon-

mouth's work was much more popular than William's (Rajsic 2019: 68); and maybe, in this particular case, that Geoffrey's story of a heroic fight made a much better story. Apart from the original *Historia Brittonum* and the early *Lebor Bretnach*, William of Malmesbury's work is the only one in this corpus that is not an adaptation of Geoffrey's version: down to the late Middle Ages, all those who chose to tell the story, chose to tell it with Geoffrey's words, avowedly or unconsciously reproducing Geoffrey's agenda of British heroism and Saxon treachery. This is of course explainable within the 'Brut' tradition, but even the St Albans historians, who were not part of it, who were writing a very English-centred narrative and who knew William of Malmesbury's *Gesta*, decided to go for Geoffrey's version. It looks as if Geoffrey's popularity overwrote all alternative versions of this narrative, including William's which was erased from later historical writing.

Of knives and Saxons

Despite all these changing and fascinating details, the main gist of the story is probably elsewhere, that is, in the knives and in their name, *seax* (plural: *saxas*). Maybe the most salient feature of the story told by 'Nennius' is the use, right in the middle of the Latin narrative, of a vernacular Old English phrase – *Eu Saxones eniminit saxas!* [Saxons, take knives!] – as a signal from Hengest to his men (§46). This cry is probably more well-known in the form later given by Geoffrey of Monmouth (§104): *Nimet oure saxas!*

The word *saxas* denotes a specific kind of one-edged blade (the so-called 'scramasax'), well-known through archaeological research (Näßl & Westphal 2004). But its sound also evokes the name of the Saxons: *saxas* are quintessentially the Saxons' weapons. In fact, it is quite likely that the whole story would have been initially an aetiological and etymological one, being originally built around the word *saxas*. The etymology of the ethnonym 'Saxons' is unknown, but there are two main versions in early medieval texts: on the one hand, Isidore of Seville relates it to Latin *saxum*, 'rock'; on the other one, some authors link it to Old Saxon *sahs*, 'knife' – both etymologies, indeed, conveying an idea of the hardness of the Saxons, their ruthlessness and cruelty (Plassmann 2006: 271–272; Coumert 2007: 473–474).

In Book I, chapters 6 and 7 of his *Gesta Saxonum*, the tenth-century continental Saxon historian Widukind of Corvey tells a story which, in many respects, is similar to the one found in *Historia Brittonum*. After a war between the Saxons and the Thuringians, the latter ask for a negotiation; messengers are exchanged and they agree to meet unarmed; but the Saxons come with *magni cultelli* [large knives] and, seeing that their enemies are unarmed, they kill all the Thuringians. Widukind specifically mentions that 'some people' think that the Saxons owe their names to their *cultelli*, which are called *sahs* in their own language (Hirsch & Lohmann 1935: 7; Bachrach & Bachrach 2014: 8–10). *Historia Brittonum* was composed in the early ninth century, and *Gesta Saxonum* in the late tenth: did the earlier narrative influence the later one? It is not impossible: part of the vocabulary (e.g., the word *cultelli*) and the diegesis are strikingly similar, even if there are important differences (e.g., Widukind's Saxons do not seem to be hiding their knives, whereas in the Nennius-derived stories they hide them in their boots or their

stockings). Stories from *Historia Brittonum* may have circulated in Central Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Gautier 2017a: 605–609), so why not in the tenth? But of course, it may also be an aetiological folktale of Saxon origin, common among them in the early medieval period, that found its way independently into the works of pseudo-Nennius and Widukind…

In later versions of the British story, this motif of the 'Saxon *saxas*' was not always retained. The Irish adaptor of *Historia Brittonum* omitted it: the word *saxas* had no interest whatsoever in connexion with the *Saxain*, being quite different from *scena* (sing. *scián*), the Irish word for 'knives' (van Hamel 1932: 64). Hengest's cry is not always mentioned, but the three versions that retain it are also those that provide etymological explanations, connecting the name of the Saxons with the word for 'knife'.

Here the main innovator and 'amplificator' was Wace. Whereas Geoffrey had provided a list of cities given by Vortigern, some manuscripts of the *Roman de Brut* add a rather complicated explanation on how the counties of Essex, Sussex and Middlesex were given their names *pur remembrer la traïsun / des cultels* [in memory of the treachery of the knives] (l. 7297–7298), but also in order to conceal that memory under the guise of an antiquated word: indeed, already in Wace's time, the word *cnif/knif* may have become more frequent than the old word *seax*2, which would explain why he writes that the English *les nuns des cultels tresturnerent / pur oblier la desonur / que fait orent leur ancestur* [completely changed the names for knives, to forget the dishonour committed by their ancestors] (ll. 7308–7309).

Two imitators of Wace, namely Laȝamon and the 'Cleopatra' *Brut y Brenhinedd*, included similar aetiological and etymological excursus, with complicated and even garbled variations. On the other hand, *Breta sǫgur* and Matthew Paris, who derived their information directly from Geoffrey, missed the point, even if in the thirteenth century the etymological pun *saxas/Saxons* could have been made or spotted both by an Englishman and by an Icelander. As abbreviators, they do not seem to have been interested in this particular aspect of the narrative – possibly because, by that time in the thirteenth century, this people were never called 'the Saxons', but always 'the English', making the etymological story less relevant.

Conclusion

Because its primary goal was not to tell a long story but to provide an etymology and explanation to the ethnonym 'Saxons', the original narrative as written by 'Nennius' was rather short. It was also vague, and somewhat ambiguous: only two participants were identified, the unwinding of the event was not clearly explained, the place and date were not given, and the context could be understood either as an outdoor assembly or as a feast in a hall. Most adapters chose to develop or summarize it as an assembly rather than as a feast. William of Malmesbury's understanding of the original story was the only one to include a drinking party,

2 The online *Middle English Dictionary* of the University of Michigan has 105 quotations for *knif* and only 14 for *sax*. Retrieved from: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary (accessed 29 November 2022).

because it suited his agenda of moral condemnation of the Britons, who had lost the island of Britain to foreign invaders, just as the English had more recently lost it to the Normans because of their similar behaviour. In order to extol the heroism of the Britons, Geoffrey of Monmouth transformed the same narrative into an epic battle, adding new characters, a precise location and a significant date: he was, in this respect, almost universally followed. Indeed, the St Albans historians, Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris, the only ones within the corpus who knew the works of both William and Geoffrey, chose to follow the latter. As often, the chivalric and creative imagination of Geoffrey proved stronger than the more sober and moralizing discourse of his contemporaries.

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Romancing the Giant's Wedding Feast: The Arthurianisation of the Þrymr Myth in *Samsons saga fagra*

Jonathan Y. H. Hui

The late medieval Icelandic *riddarasaga* ('saga of knights', or romance), *Samsons saga fagra* [The Saga of Samson the Fair], has long been recognised as a part of the broader picture of the transmission of Arthurian literature from Continental Europe into Scandinavia, principally on account of its detailed treatment of the Arthurian motif of the chastity-testing mantle (see, for example, Leach 1921: 231–233; Lockley 1979: xxxiv–xli; Simek 1985, 1993; Kalinke 2011: 160–161). While the ambitious suggestion was made in 1777 that the saga might even have been one of the thirteenth-century Norse translations of chivalric romances produced at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson (Kalinke 1981: 223–224), the scholarly consensus today is that the saga is an original Icelandic composition, probably from the late fourteenth century, whose depiction of the mantle motif was directly influenced by one of those Hákon-commissioned translations: *Mǫttuls saga* [The Saga of the Mantle], the translation of the Old French *Le mantel mautaillié* [The Ill-Fitting Mantle]. As in the French lay, the plot of *Mǫttuls saga* is centred upon the testing of the chastity of the women in King Arthur's court by a magical mantle, which changes shape depending on the nature and extent of the woman's sexual indiscretion. One by one, the ladies of Arthur's court fail the mantle test, until it is eventually passed by Carados' lady, who had not initially been present at the feast. *Samsons saga* explicitly purports to provide a backstory to the very same mantle from *Mǫttuls saga*, for which reason it has drawn the attention of Arthurian scholars. The nature of this backstory will be outlined later. Although *Mǫttuls saga* was likely produced at least a century and a half before the composition of *Samsons saga*, it was adapted into a set of *rímur* (rhymed narrative poems), called *Skikkju rímur*, probably in the early or mid-fifteenth century (Driscoll 1997: 227), and while *Skikkju rímur* will be discussed briefly towards the end of this essay, it suffices here to note that the story of the Arthurian chastity-testing mantle was very much a live narrative tradition in Iceland during the late medieval period, when *Samsons saga* was being composed.[1]

What has previously eluded scholarly examination is the fact that the mantle motif in *Samsons saga* has been incorporated into an episode seemingly directly inspired by a certain Norse myth, namely, the Þrymr myth, best known from

1 For a facing edition and English translation of *Skikkju rímur*, see Driscoll 1999. For a discussion on the relationship between *Mǫttuls saga* and *Skikkju rímur*, see Driscoll 1991.

the eddic poem *Þrymskviða*.[2] The poem's events revolve around the theft of Þórr's hammer, Mjǫllnir, by the king of the *jǫtnar*, the eponymous Þrymr, who demands Freyja's hand in marriage in exchange for its return. Freyja's indignant refusal leads the Æsir to agree amongst themselves instead to send the heavily reluctant Þórr disguised as Freyja, with Loki volunteering to accompany him as his handmaiden. Þórr and Loki travel in disguise to Jǫtunheimar for the wedding feast, using, it is implied, Þórr's goat-driven chariot as transportation, a vehicle attested in other mythological sources. At the feast, Þrymr is struck by 'Freyja's' voracious appetite and thirst and ferocious eyes, but Loki explains each of these away, with Þrymr comically incapable of seeing through the disguise. After a request for gold by a female *jǫtunn*, Mjǫllnir is brought out and placed on Þórr's lap to 'consecrate' (*vígja*) the bride, at which point he seizes his hammer and slaughters the *jǫtnar*.

As with much eddic poetry, no firm date of composition can be placed on *Þrymskviða* in its surviving form, and it has been variously dated from the pre-Christian period to the early thirteenth century, the latter of which comes just decades before the poem's *terminus ante quem* of c. 1270, when it was put to vellum in the Codex Regius, its earliest surviving manuscript witness (for a concise summary of the main arguments in the dating debate, see McKinnell 2000: 1–2). However, the myth that formed the plot of the poem clearly continued to remain in the Icelandic public consciousness through the late medieval period, as evinced by its fifteenth-century adaptation into a set of *rímur* (rhymed narrative poems). This particular cycle of *rímur*, called *Þrymlur*, tells a version of the myth largely consistent with that of *Þrymskviða*, although it furnishes a few extra details, such as the circumstances of Mjǫllnir's theft (I.12–13 in Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson 2020), Óðinn's ownership of the vehicle that carries Þórr to Jǫtunheimar (II.11; implied in *Þrymskviða* to be Þórr's goat-driven chariot) and the giants' barbaric banquet etiquette (III. 8–9). The existence of *Þrymlur* demonstrates that the Þrymr myth, far from being an historical relic of Scandinavia's pagan past, was still in active circulation in Iceland in the late medieval period – just as the Arthurian mantle story was – within decades of the composition of *Samsons saga fagra*. However, the general agreement between the sequence of events in *Þrymskviða* and *Þrymlur* makes it difficult to ascertain whether any single version of the myth can be definitively credited as the primary influence on *Samsons saga*; Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson rightly note that the influence could have been "by way of *Þrymskviða* itself or *Þrymlur*, or in the more nebulous form of oral tradition" (Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson 2020: xviii).

Samsons saga fagra, the (probably) late fourteenth-century Icelandic romance at the centre of this paper, begins in the vein of the romances of the Matter of Britain, with England, Wales and Ireland its primary locales. The events of the first half of the saga revolve around the disappearance of Princess Valentína in the forests of Wales, the periadventures undergone by her beloved, Prince Samson *fagri* [the Fair] of England, in the hopes of finding her, and the attempts by

2 The relevant parallel is briefly mentioned in Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson 2020: xviii. I am grateful to them for crediting me there with the original observation prior to the publication of the present essay.

the magical harpist and serial rapist, Kvintelín, to ensnare her within the forests. Despite his powers, Kvintelín's attempts are repeatedly thwarted by a Welsh noblewoman called Ólimpía, and even after coercing a dwarf named Grelent into helping him, the two of them are ultimately defeated and taken captive by the protagonists. The saga then turns into a fascinating hybrid between a chivalric romance and a *fornaldarsaga* [legendary saga], moving its action away from Wales and into Risaland and Jǫtunheimar, which fall within the geographical territory of the legendary North. This second half has sometimes been called *Sigurðar þáttr* [*Goðmundssonar*], as it turns the focus to Sigurðr, the illegitimate son of Goðmundr of Glæsisvellir, a recurring king in the Norse legendary sagas (on whom see Grant and Hui 2020). Much of the *þáttr* is spent on Sigurðr's birth and youthful exploits, which culminate in his assumption of the throne of Jǫtunheimar following his treacherous murder of its previous king, who had previously been friendly with him and had given him a certain chastity-testing mantle. It is this mantle which the saga's primary protagonists send the captured Kvintelín to steal (for no real reason besides atonement). Kvintelín and his dwarf accomplice Grelent therefore travel in Grelent's cart to Rússíaland, where the now-elderly King Sigurðr is set to marry a young Russian princess. Kvintelín captures the princess, switches appearances with her and travels alone to the wedding hall disguised as the bride. During the wedding feast, the chastity-testing mantle is passed around, revealing deceit in all the women. This is recounted in a single sentence, with no individual women named: *nu eru meyiar klæddar skickiunni ok reynduzt þær med miklu falsi* (*Samsons saga fagra,* 44) [now the maidens put on the mantle, and they were proven to be of great deceit]. The mantle is then passed to the 'bride', who promptly kills the groom and flees with the prized cloth. As is normal for Icelandic romances, a series of protagonistic weddings ensues, before the final sentences of the saga describe the fate of the mantle and establish the direct, intertextual connection with *Mǫttuls saga*, here called *Skikkju saga* (which also means 'The Saga of the Mantle'):

> enn skickia su hin goda sem S(amson) fagri atti gaf hann fru Ingiam. en þui næst var hun rænt af einum vikingi þeim er Gujmar h(iet). bar hann hana vestur j Affrika ok var hun þar leingi sidan þar til at ein rik fru ok aufundsiuk er Elida h(iet) sendi hana j Eingland Artus kongi hinum rika ok ris þar af æuentyr er kallad er skickiu saga ok lukum vær þessi saugu med so uord<n>u nidrlagi. (*Samsons saga fagra*, 47)
>
> [As for the fine mantle which Samson the Fair acquired – he gave it to Lady Ingjam. However, it was then stolen by a viking called Guimar. He brought it west to Africa, and it stayed there for a long time afterwards, until a rich and jealous lady called Elída sent it to King Arthur the Mighty in England, and there originates a story called *The Saga of the Mantle*. We close the saga with this ending.][3]

3 Unless otherwise specified, all translations in this essay are my own. A scholarly English translation of *Samsons saga* will be published in Hui et al. forthcoming.

It will be apparent from the summaries of *Þrymskviða* and *Samsons saga* that there are striking narrative parallels between their respective adventures at the *jǫtunn*-king's wedding feast. The basic plot parallels run as follow: both Kvintelín and Þórr travel to the wedding of the king of Jǫtunheimar, disguised as the king's bride and seeking to steal a precious item. Humour is generated by the dramatic irony inherent in the king's ignorance, and by the fact that the charade is about to be exposed, at which point the 'bride' seizes the item, kills the king and flees.[4] However, the *Samsons saga* adaptation of the Þrymr story is not a direct copy. Notably, it borrowed the recipe but changed a key ingredient: instead of seeking Þórr's hammer, Kvintelín seeks the chastity-testing mantle of Arthurian legend. This is not the only fusion of the Þrymr story with Arthurian elements in the scene; a separate Arthurian motif is similarly fused with an element from *Þrymskviða* in the lead-up to the wedding feast. This essay will therefore examine the Arthurianisation of the two key events within the episode: the journey to the wedding of the king of Jǫtunheimar; and the king's wedding feast itself. Although some of the basic narrative parallels are quite obvious, there are subtle nuances in the corresponding scenes in *Samsons saga* and its likely sources, which, when read together, open up ironic possibilities that speak to the rich allusive complexity of the saga.

The Journey to the Giant's Hall

In stanza 21 of *Þrymskviða*, it is implied that Loki and Þórr – who is disguised as Freyja – take Þórr's own goat-driven chariot to Jǫtunheimar for the wedding.

> Senn vóro hafrar heim um recnir,
> scyndir at scǫclom, scyldo vel renna;
> biorg brotnoðo, brann iorð loga,
> óc Óðins sonr í iotunheima. (Neckel (ed.) 1983: 114, st. 21)
>
> [The goats were quickly driven home
> hurried into the harness, they had to gallop quickly;
> the mountains burst, the earth kindled with fire,
> Óðinn's son drove to Jǫtunheimar.]

Þórr's chariot is attested in other mythological sources, including in *Gylfaginning*: *Þórr á hafra tvá er svá heita: Tanngnjóstr ok Tanngrisnir; ok reið þá er hann ekr, en hafrarnir draga reiðna* (Faulkes 2005: 23; [Þórr has two goats, which are called Tanngnjóstr and Tanngrisnir, and the chariot which he drives, and the goats draw the chariot]).[5] However, in *Þrymskviða* Þórr's humiliating bridal guise subverts his

4 There is also a faint parallel in the food and drink served at these two wedding feasts, which both serve alcohol to drink and ox to eat (Neckel 1983: 114, st. 24; Wilson 1953: 43), but this may well be incidental, as both feasts also feature other food which does not overlap – *Samsons saga*, for instance, has fruit, but features no parallel to the salmon that Þórr notably consumes.

5 This description in *Gylfaginning* immediately precedes descriptions of Þórr's impressive magical possessions, including Mjǫllnir.

reputation as a hypermasculine deity, and he himself refers to the act as *argan* (Neckel (ed.) 1983: 113, st. 17, l. 2b; 'unmanly'). It is this juxtaposition between traditional reputation – of which his goats and chariot form a part – and situational subversion that generates humour. Therefore, it might be said that part of the humiliation lies in the grandeur of the journey: where his goat-led chariot has previously driven him to heroic deeds, it now drives him into a situation of ultimate unmanliness.

This dynamic is also at work in Kvintelín's situation in *Samsons saga*, as he is a male character dressed in bridal clothes. Although Kvintelín is no paragon of masculinity in the way that Þórr is, he embodies a different, malign and more specific form of masculinity. His very introduction in the saga describes him as a serial rapist who uses harp skills – later confirmed to involve enchantment – to lure women to him:

> Son hans h(iet) Kuinntelin hann var þiofur ok la vti a skogum. hann kunni morg braugd kyndug ok margar lister hafdi hann numit. hann var mikill meistari a haurpuslâtt ok þar med villti hann margar hæueskar konur j skoginn til sin ok hafdi þær vid haund sier slika stund sem honum syndizt. sendi þær heim olettar til fedra sinna edur bænda [...] (*Samsons saga fagra*, 7)
>
> [His [Galinn's] son was called Kvintelín; he was a thief and lay out in the forests. He knew many cunning tricks and had learned many arts. He was a great master of harp-playing, and with this, he lured many courtly ladies to him in the forest, kept them with him for as long as he liked and sent them home, pregnant, to their fathers or husbands [...]]

The matter of Kvintelín's status as a rapist will be revisited later in this essay, but here it suffices to note that his association with a certain form of masculinity makes his later bridal guise ironic. Like Þórr, there is further irony in the mode of transportation used. Early in the saga, Kvintelín forces Grelent to construct a *kerra*, 'cart', with which he may ensnare Princess Valentína (*Samsons saga fagra*, 22), and Grelent later drives Kvintelín in the same cart to Rússíaland on their mission to steal the mantle (*Samsons saga fagra*, 44). The irony lies in Kvintelín having to occupy the role of the cart's passenger, when its very *raison d'être* had been to ferry a powerless victim to him. Thus, both Kvintelín and Þórr are transported to their situations of ironic unmanliness – disguised as the bride of the king of Jǫtunheimar – in the same vehicle associated with their traditional exploits.

The specific Arthurian interest in Kvintelín's journey to Jǫtunheimar lies in the mode of transportation. The cart in *Samsons saga* is not said to be drawn by goats – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the exclusive association between Þórr and that mode of transportation in Norse literature – but rather driven by a dwarf. This seems to be a clear reflex of Chrétien's romance of Lancelot, *Le chevalier de la charrete* (composed c. 1177), in which Lancelot leaps into a dwarf's cart reserved for major criminals, in exchange for information from the dwarf about the whereabouts of his abducted lover, Queen Guinevere (Roques (ed.) 1958: 11–12, ll. 321–362). Chrétien's poem on Lancelot never seems to have been translated into Old Norse as his romances of Erec, Perceval and Yvain were, and in fact there does not

seem to be any extant evidence of the poem's translation into any other medieval European language at all (Skårup 1980: 76). However, despite the absence of a surviving Norse translation, there is still some evidence that the motif of the shameful cart was known to medieval Icelanders. The presence of the dwarf-drawn cart in *Samsons saga* has been adduced as a noteworthy analogue (Simek 1982: 207–209), and an even closer analogue has been identified in *Rémundar saga keisarasonar*, another original Icelandic romance whose composition is typically dated to the fourteenth century (Halvorsen 1959: 25; Simek 1982: 205). In both Chrétien's romance and *Rémundar saga*, but not *Samsons saga*, the protagonist voluntarily enters the cart as a passenger, being motivated by his passionate love (in Rémundr's case severe lovesickness), and his public reputation is affected by it, partly through his adoption of a cart-related epithet (Lancelot becomes known as *le chevalier de la charrete*, [the knight of the cart], Roques (ed.) 1958: 1, l. 24; Rémundr becomes known as *hinn kranki kerrumaðr* [the afflicted man of the cart], Broberg 1909–1912: 63).

There are several important resonances between the cart episodes of Chrétien's *Lancelot* and *Samsons saga*. First, like Chrétien's poem, *Samsons saga* is a romance which features Britain as a prominent setting, which is only true of a handful of Icelandic *riddarasǫgur*. Although Kvintelín's cart episode does not occur in Britain, it nonetheless lies within a narrative constructed within the familiar trappings of the Matter of Britain, the milieu of Chrétien's Arthurian romances. Second, like Lancelot, Kvintelín is compelled to undergo the journey in the cart because of a debt of service. Chrétien writes of Lancelot leaping into the shameful cart at the behest of the personified *Amors* ('Love'), so desperate is he to find out where his lover has been taken (Roques (ed). 1958: 12, ll. 373–378). Kvintelín's situation is much simpler: having been defeated, captured and placed at the mercy of the saga's protagonists, he is ordered under duress to undertake the quest to steal the mantle, with the cart-driving dwarf as his accomplice. Thus, both Lancelot and Kvintelín undergo the cart journey under external compulsion. For any audience aware of the allusive connection to *Le chevalier de la charrete*, the use of a dwarf-driven cart in *Samsons saga* would have compounded the shame of Kvintelín's punishment.

The Giant's Wedding Feast

Upon Kvintelín's arrival at the wedding, the resonances with Lancelot end. The wedding feast itself becomes a fusion of the Þrymr myth (once more) and *Mǫttuls saga*, which is to be expected given that the chastity-testing mantle is the object of Kvintelín's quest. At the heart of the mantle's powers is, of course, the question of chastity, which resonates across each of *Mǫttuls saga*, *Þrymskviða* and *Samsons saga*, but in different – albeit sometimes overlapping – ways.

In *Þrymskviða*, the theme of chastity is largely humourised through the reputation of Freyja. Upon first being asked to marry Þrymr, Freyja indignantly retorts that doing so would cause her to be considered *vergiarnasta* (Neckel (ed.) 1983: 113, st. 13, l. 4b; 'most man-crazed'). To a contemporary audience this would already have been ironic because of her pre-existing reputation for promiscuity, a reputation attested in other mythological sources such as *Lokasenna*, stanzas 30 and 32 (Neckel (ed.) 1983: 102–103). Helen Damico notes of *Þrymskviða*'s Freyja that,

"Freyja's assumed attribute of virginity parodies her insatiable and licentious character in *Locasenna*" (Damico 1986: 407), and John McKinnell remarks that, "[p]romiscuity is of the essence of her character" (McKinnell 2000: 4). However, Freyja herself never goes to the wedding feast, and all those associations are subtly transposed onto Þórr, who goes in her place.

The scholarly association of Mjǫllnir with phallic symbolism dates back as early as the mid-nineteenth century (Mannhardt 1855; Lindow 1994: 489), and it has additionally been suggested that the laying of the hammer in Þórr's lap in *Þrymskviða*, which Þrymr says is to 'consecrate' (*vígja*) the bride, could reflect a ritual of pagan Scandinavian wedding ceremonies (Perkins 1994; Clunies Ross 1994b: 73; Clunies Ross 2002: 187–188). Within the humorous logic of the poem, therefore, we can assume that Þrymr believes not only that the bride sitting before him is a woman, but possibly also that 'she' is a virgin.

In *Samsons saga*, the mantle makes the expectation of virginity explicitly clear. As in *Mǫttuls saga*, the mantle's primary purpose is to test the chastity specifically of women, with its specific power revealed to involve shortening on whichever part of the body was revealed during adulterous sex. The mantle's powers of modification correspond to the precise bodily area at the heart of the sexual transgression; as Carolyne Larrington remarks with regard to *Mǫttuls saga*, "What is written on the female body becomes readable through the cloak's interpretative power" (Larrington 2011: 89). The mantle's powers in *Samsons saga* are described as follows:

> [...] hafdi hun margar natturur. hun birti fals kuenna ef þær folsudu bændur sina ok stytti suo a huerri sem hun hafdi mot horft þa hun var sordin. ok a sama hatt meyiar falsadar. enn ef þiofur klædizt skickiunni þa fiell hun a jord. nu eru meyiar klæddar skickiunni ok reynduzt þær med miklu falsi. (*Samsons saga fagra*, 44)
>
> [It had many powers. It revealed deceit in women, if they cheated on their husbands – it shortened on each woman on every place she had revealed when she had intercourse – and in the same way in unmarried women who had been false. But if a thief put on the mantle, it fell to the ground. Now maidens put on the mantle, and they were proven to be of great deceit.]

There is never any possibility of Kvintelín actually passing the mantle test. First, the mantle of *Samsons saga* has the additional power of exposing thieves, and Kvintelín has not only arrived to the hall intending to steal but had in fact been referred to as *þiofur* ('thief') seventeen times prior to this scene, including in both his introduction and the beginning of the wedding chapter. Second, the mantle is only said to work on women. Third, and perhaps most interestingly, the mantle's traditional function – which a contemporary audience would have known from *Mǫttuls saga* in addition to this passage – is to test female chastity. Kvintelín's track record of the sexually aggressive act of rape, mentioned in his introduction, would make him the very antithesis of female chastity, and most of his actions preceding the mantle quest revolve around his unsuccessful attempts to ensnare Princess Valentína as his next victim. During the wedding feast in Jǫtunheimar, therefore, it is the height of irony for the chastity-testing mantle to be imminently tried on

a character notorious for forcibly depriving women of their chastity. Therefore, just as Mjǫllnir might be read as a phallic symbol in the Þrymr myth, a symbol of masculinity ironically placed in the lap of a traditionally hypermasculine character disguised as a woman, the chastity mantle in *Samsons saga* might be read as a symbol of feminine chastity ironically about to be placed on a male rapist disguised as a woman. With Kvintelín about to fail the mantle test as a thief, a man and a serial rapist[6] – a trifecta of transgressions – will he suffer payback for the women whose chastity he had taken? The drama of the scene is heightened to pantomime levels, and the reader knows that the thief's imminent exposure means that he – like Þórr – must end the charade. Like Þórr, therefore, Kvintelín seizes the desired object, kills the king of Jǫtunheimar and escapes.

Although Kvintelín's role in the episode corresponds structurally to that of Þórr in the Þrymr myth, it is also intriguing that he also possesses characteristics of two of the other members of the myth's primary cast. These correspondences open further allusive readings in *Samsons saga*'s Arthurianised adaptation of the myth. First, Kvintelín resembles Loki in his characteristic cunning, explicitly mentioned in his introduction quoted earlier, and also his half-monstrous parentage – his father is introduced as a *madur* (*Samsons saga fagra*, 6; 'man'), but his mother is thrice referred to as a *gygr* (*Samsons saga fagra*, 7, 25, 26; 'ogress').[7] It is said of Loki in *Gylfaginning* that *hann hafði þá speki um fram aðra menn er slægð heitir, ok vælar til allra hluta* (Faulkes 2005: 26–27; [he possessed, more than other people, the wisdom which is called cunning, along with tricks for all things]), and that he is the child of a (probable) goddess, Laufey,[8] and a *jǫtunn*, Fárbauti

6 Marianne Kalinke has suggested that the disguised Kvintelín does successfully don the mantle without triggering its effects, and that his disguise as a woman may have negated the mantle's identification of thieves (Kalinke 1981: 225), but in my view there is ambiguity over whether he wears the mantle at all. The scene is described as follows: 'þui næst var hun fengin fru Hrafnborgu. en hun bad gefa ser rum medan hun kastadi yfer sik skickiunni ok so var giort' (*Samsons saga fagra*, 44; 'next, it [the mantle] was brought to 'Lady Hrafnborg', and she asked to be given room while she threw the mantle over herself, and this was done'). In my view 'kastadi' ('threw') can be read as subjunctive rather than indicative – making the donning of the mantle a hypothetical result of 'Hrafnborg's' request, rather than a completed action – and I read the implied referent of 'so var giort' ('this was done') as the requested clearance of space for the bride, not necessarily the wearing of the mantle. Undoubtedly the dramatic irony of the scene is greatly heightened if Kvintelín does not get round to donning the mantle, since the reader knows that he would fail its test on multiple counts; and Kvintelín's decision to escape hastily at this dramatic moment is certainly the action of someone expecting imminent exposure.

7 On the parallels between Kvintelín's mother and Grendel's mother in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, see Lawrence 1928 and Lawrence 1929.

8 The species of Loki's mother, Laufey, is not mentioned in any extant source, but she is frequently taken by scholars to be an *ásynja*, 'goddess' (see, for instance, Meulengracht Sørensen 1989: 153, and Clunies Ross 1994a: 101, 173), making Loki "anomalous in terms of the normal mating behaviour of gods and giants, which strongly tabus unions between goddesses and giants," in Margaret Clunies Ross' words (Clunies Ross 1994a: 173). As

(Faulkes 2005: 26). Kvintelín is therefore closer to Loki than Þórr in character and nature, and his solo infiltration into the wedding hall – *Bidur sidan duer(ginn) geyma kier(runa)* (*Samsons saga fagra*, 44; [he ordered the dwarf to mind the cart]) – conflates the character of the trickster and the role of the cross-dresser in the Þrymr myth. This conflation also explains the absence of an assistant figure to provide excuses for the 'bride' – done by Loki in the myth – and raises an interesting question about how the saga's adaptation of the myth deals with one of the key differences between Þórr and Loki. Might we read the duress under which Kvintelín undertakes his quest as a contrast to the apparent relish of his fellow half-monstrous trickster, Loki, at disguising himself as a woman for the Jǫtunheimar journey in stanza 20 of *Þrymskviða*? Under this reading, Kvintelín's role as a Þórr-Loki hybrid requires Loki's enthusiasm to be suppressed in favour of Þórr's reluctance. Alternatively, since the method of theft was not part of Kvintelín's instructions – he himself presumably decides to impersonate the bride to fulfil the quest – and since Kvintelín is never shown to feel reluctance or discomfort on the quest, is he perhaps enjoying the charade, as Loki seems to in *Þrymskviða*?

The other character from the Þrymr myth with whom Kvintelín shares a notable characteristic is Freyja. Freyja's reputation for promiscuity has previously been mentioned, and Kvintelín too is defined by a large sexual appetite – the only character in *Samsons saga* so defined. However, promiscuity is also essential to the *Samsons saga* wedding episode as the main trait that finds its nemesis in the prized mantle inspired by Arthurian legend. I have argued above that the sexually aggressive aspect of rape as the antithesis of female chastity was one of the factors because of which Kvintelín would have failed the mantle test, but the other crucial aspect is the sexual appetite itself, which might be said to be the antithesis of chastity more broadly. *Samsons saga* thereby adapts the Þrymr myth into uncharted territory by exploring possibilities that the myth only teases at: what if, instead of being conspicuously absent from the wedding as Freyja is, the famously lustful character did go to be the bride of the king of Jǫtunheimar? What if this character were to face a full, infallible test of chastity rather than 'merely' an expectation of virginity? I would suggest that the dramatic stakes and sexual irony of the scene are heightened by the echoes of Freyja's notorious sexual appetite in Kvintelín's character. Indeed, the fact that we find in the figure of Kvintelín the cunning of Loki, the cross-dressing disguise of Þórr and the sexual appetite of Freyja, allows the saga to refract the ironies inherent in the myth. The introduction of the prominent theme of chastity through the Arthurian mantle allows Kvintelín to embody not only the ironies inherent in Þórr characterisation in the Þrymr myth, but also the ironies in Freyja's characterisation that Þórr had already embodied in the myth.

Kevin Wanner notes, many of the Norse gods whose parentages are known are half-giant, though usually on the maternal side (Wanner 2009: 215).

Conclusion

The key structural correspondences outlined in the discussion can be found summarised, in simplified terms, in Figure 1 below.

Samsons saga fagra **(14th century)**	***Þrymskviða*** **(10th–13th century?)**	***Mǫttuls saga*** **(c. 1200–50)**	**Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la charrette* (c. 1177)**
Journey to Rússíaland for the Jǫtunheimar king's wedding	Journey to Jǫtunheimar for its king's wedding	-	Journey to Meleagant's castle
Journey in a drawn cart	Journey in a drawn chariot		Journey in a drawn cart
Journey with a dwarf	Journey with Loki		Journey with a dwarf
Quest to steal magical mantle	Quest to steal back Þórr's hammer Mjǫllnir		Quest to rescue abducted Guinevere
Questor disguised as bride-to-be	Questor disguised as bride-to-be		Questor in anonymous guise
Magical mantle testing sexual fidelity, laziness and penchant for theft	-	Magical mantle testing sexual fidelity	-
Mantle made by elf-women		Mantle sent by a mysterious woman	
Humour from imminent exposure of disguised questor	Humour from imminent exposure of disguised questor	Irony from continued exposure of court's shortcomings	
Questor kills king, steals mantle and escapes	Questor kills king and *jǫtnar*, steals Mjǫllnir and escapes	Mantle-fitting maiden found	

Figure 1. *The structural correspondences between the giant's wedding episode in Samsons saga and its three key influences, Þrymskviða, Mǫttuls saga and Chrétien's romance of Lancelot.*

In sum, the discussion on the giant's wedding in *Samsons saga* can be broken down into two phases: the journey to the wedding; and the wedding feast in the royal hall. The common influence throughout this episode seems to have been the Þrymr myth, but two substitutions of Arthurian motifs have created additional allusive depth in *Samsons saga*. The first is the shameful cart from the Lancelot tradition. It would have been difficult to borrow the mode of transportation in the Þrymr myth given that the mythological goats are exclusive to Þórr. The saga author seems to have recognised that there was another prominent cart which fitted neatly into *Samsons saga*'s romance context and interest in Britain, the locus of the *matière de Bretagne*, and which carried with it the appropriate allusive association of shame. The dwarf-driven cart of Lancelot was therefore an ideal substitute. The second motif is the chastity-testing mantle, which employs a similar dynamic of dramatic tension to *Þrymskviða*. The replacement of Mjǫllnir, a symbol of masculinity – and another signature possession of Þórr – with a symbol of feminine chastity frames the tension in Kvintelín's womanly disguise differently to that of Þórr and allows him to atone both for his attempted offences against the protagonists, and, symbolically, for his previous transgressions against female chastity. Creating further allusive depth is the fact that in addition to his structural correspondence with Þórr in the myth, Kvintelín also shares traits with Loki and Freyja, which opens interesting new angles from which we might read the giant's wedding in the saga.

Despite the abundant ironies in *Samsons saga*'s adaptation of the Þrymr myth, it is difficult to argue that the adaptation was parodically minded. The events of the Þrymr myth are humorous by nature, but there is no indication that *Samsons saga* has exaggerated them for augmented humour or sought to poke fun at the myth. Furthermore, many of *Þrymskviða*'s most openly humorous elements have no parallel in the saga episode, such as the reluctance of the masculine protagonist, the step-by-step description of his emasculation and the giant-king's repeated failure to see through the deception. Rather, it is the dramatic and suspenseful nature of the episode that *Samsons saga* prioritises, including through the spatial detail, when the 'bride' is about to try the mantle on, that *S(igurdr) k(ongr) var nær staddr þuiat honum var mest vm hugat* (*Samsons saga fagra*, 44; [King Sigurðr was positioned nearby, because the matter involved him the most]). The passing of the mantle around the hall for the testing of the women's chastity is recounted in a single sentence, omitting much of the humour arising from the sequential failures, the shame of the women's lovers and the dialogue in *Mǫttuls saga*. The chastity-testing mantle seems to have been used in *Samsons saga* as a useful way of exploring and resolving thematic ironies, rather than generating humour through humiliation.

As a final footnote to this discussion, it is interesting to note that *Samsons saga*, like the Þrymr myth and the Arthurian mantle story, also continued to bear significance on other narrative traditions after its composition. In fact, *Samsons saga* would go on to have a reciprocal influence, in at least two ways, on the development of the mantle tradition in later Icelandic literature. First, Marianne Kalinke notes in the introduction to her edition of *Mǫttuls saga* that some nineteenth-century versions of that saga name the woman originally in possession of the mantle as Elída, which is the name of the woman said at the end of *Samsons saga* to have

passed the mantle onto King Arthur (Kalinke 1987: LXXXIII; Matyushina 2019: 305–306). In this regard, therefore, *Samsons saga*, having been influenced by the medieval *Mǫttuls saga*, went on to influence the account of the mantle's origins in post-medieval versions of that saga. The second instance of *Samsons saga*'s reciprocal influence can be found in *Skikkju rímur*, the aforementioned, fifteenth-century *rímur* adaptation of *Mǫttuls saga*. In stanza 35 of the first *ríma*, amongst the groups invited to King Arthur's feast are the people of *Smámeyjarland*, the 'Land of Small Maidens' (Driscoll 1999: 280–281). In the surviving corpus of Norse literature, Smámeyjarland is only otherwise named in *Samsons saga* as the land ruled by the mother of Sigurðr Goðmundsson, the king of Jǫtunheimar whom Kvintelín kills to steal the mantle, and both Rudolf Simek and Matthew Driscoll have asserted that *Skikkju rímur* borrowed the place-name directly from *Samsons saga* (Simek 1985: 209; Driscoll 1991: 116). *Samsons saga* thereby constitutes not only a reflex of both the Þrymr myth and the Arthurian mantle story, not only a fusion of the feasts of *Þrymskviða* and *Mǫttuls saga*, but – to use the well-known Tolkienic analogy – an ingredient in the long-brewing 'Cauldron' of the mantle story.

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Influences of Arthurian Romances in the Food Symbolism of the *Riddarasǫgur*

Victor Barabino

Marianne Kalinke's extensive research has brought to light the Arthurian legacy that underpins the *riddarasǫgur* (Kalinke 1985, 2015, 2017). A particular area of interest in the study of these sagas is the food symbolism found within these sagas, which involves the assignment of symbolic meaning to the objects and practices associated with the preparation and consumption of food, within a specific culture or literary genre (Tomasik & Vitullo 2007). These objects and practices encompass ingredients, utensils, customary practices surrounding the act of eating, and social bonds forged through communal feasting. The article at hand examines a range of sources, including Old Norse chivalric sagas as well as French chivalric romances such as *Yvain*, *Erec et Enide*, and *Perceval* by Chrétien de Troyes. By analyzing and comparing the various ways in which Scandinavian authors drew upon Arthurian food symbolism, this article aims to elucidate the extent of Arthurian influence upon Norse chivalric sagas. These sources were primarily authored in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Iceland, while French romances emerged in the late twelfth century. While the reception of Chrétien de Troyes in Scandinavia has been extensively discussed, it is notable that Norway was likely the first location in Scandinavia where Arthurian romances were imported. In contrast to the Norwegian authors who wrote for the royal court, the *sagnamenn* aimed to emulate Western literature, which was highly esteemed at the time, and thereby to demonstrate the refinement of their own emerging literature and intellectual elite. The incorporation of food symbolism into these works likely represented an attempt to assimilate an aristocratic culture viewed as sophisticated. The identity of the *sagnamenn* who authored these works remains largely unknown, though scholarly research suggests that they included individuals from both ecclesiastical and secular backgrounds, including the local aristocracy, some of whom maintained contacts with Norway.

The corpus of Old Norse literature comprises a diverse array of works that draw upon parts of Western literature. Notably, some of the most noteworthy sagas that incorporate Arthurian themes and motifs include both original *riddarasǫgur* and translations of Arthurian romances. Commissioned by King Hákon IV Hákonarson of Norway in the first half of the 13th century, Old Norse translations of Old French romances, mainly from Chrétien de Troyes (ca. 1130, v. 1180/1190), included works such as *Mǫttuls saga* (and the derived *Skikkju rímur*), *Ívents saga*, *Parcivals saga* and *Erex saga*, which we will focus on in this article (Budal 2019). These translations were characterized by an idealized courtly setting, in which food and

feasting played a crucial role. However, it is notable that they do not necessarily incorporate all aspects of the Arthurian food symbolism, and it remains unclear whether this was due to the Icelandic *sagnamenn*'s misunderstanding of certain elements of Arthurian romances, or whether it was a deliberate omission based on their own views of food symbolism. To gain a better understanding of Old Norse food symbolism in relationship with the Arthurian world, it is possible to compare these sagas to some original Icelandic *riddarasǫgur*, such as *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Mírmants saga*, and *Hjálmþérs saga ok Ǫlvis*. Through this analysis, the aim is to elucidate which elements of food symbolism are specifically Scandinavian and which are mainly drawn from Old French romances.

The comparative approach undertaken herein constitutes the principal methodology employed in the analysis of *riddarasǫgur*, as these literary works are primarily perceived as emulations of Western medieval romances. Nevertheless, this approach has been infrequently deployed in the examination of food-related themes. Predominantly, scholarly investigations have favoured inquiries into narrative styles (Merkelbach 2022), analogies between the protagonists and original Arthurian characters (Bandlien 2013), and to a lesser extent, moral quandaries (Kjær 1991). Conversely, food has garnered substantial attention in relation to authentic Arthurian romances, including a seminal study by Anita Guerreau-Jalabert in 1992, which serves as the bedrock for our comparative analysis. In addition, a corpus of broader scholarship concerning food symbolism in the medieval West (Montanari 1983; Gautier 2009) contributes to the theoretical framework of this study.

My hypothesis here will be that the food symbolism of these sagas is widely drawn from the Arthurian world, but taking a closer look to the *riddarasǫgur*, we will see that the reception of Arthurian food symbolism is perhaps not an exact reproduction of the original romances but rather a unique interpretation of these works by the *sagnamenn* who wrote them. The article adheres to a structural progression akin to a feast, commencing with the reception of guests, followed by meal preparation, and culminating in consumption and digestion. The first section will analyze the concept of hospitality as a foundational element of the food symbolism of the *riddarasǫgur*, examined through a social lens. Next, the focus will shift to the ingredients used in the meals, with a particular emphasis on the potential presence of magical elements and providing a closer look at the material dimensions of food symbolism. The third part of the article will investigate the protocols and etiquette surrounding meals, including the management of speech and silence, in a cultural perspective on the subject. Finally, the impact of food on power dynamics and relationships will be examined, uncovering the political aspect of food symbolism. By taking this comprehensive approach, this article will aim at offering insights into the similarities and differences between these two literary worlds and provide a greater understanding of the cultural and social practices surrounding feasts in medieval Scandinavia.

Welcoming guests. Food and hospitality: the future king, the damsel, and the hermit

A good point of departure in examining this subject is to consider the commencement of a meal, wherein guests receive extended invitations and hospitality is ostentatiously displayed. It is noteworthy that in the Arthurian world, proffering food as a form of hospitality is a conventional means of procuring political backing (Guerreau-Jalabert 1992: 561–594). This phenomenon appears to have struck a chord, literary speaking, with comparable practices observed in the *riddarasǫgur*.

For instance, the fourteenth-century *þáttr Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr*, which is preserved in manuscript AM 555 h 4to, highlights the prominence of hospitality in this literary genre and its possible connection to Arthurian literature. The narrative centers around the protagonist, Oddi Helgason, an astronomer believed to have lived during the twelfth century, and his dream about the reception of a guest named Dagfinnr in Gotland. Oddi recounts the story through Dagfinnr's perspective, presenting himself as the skald of King Geirviðr, a young prince whose father, Hróðbjartr, has recently passed away. The funeral of the king and the subsequent ascension of his son to the throne culminates in a feast. While *Stjǫrnu-Odda draumr* has primarily been scrutinized as a dream narrative within the context of the *fornaldarsǫgur* (Hui 2016: 48–73; Merkelbach 2022: 6–33), with occasional links drawn between the dreamworld and astronomical themes in the saga (O'Connor 2012: 474–512), it is essential to bear in mind that the story also carries vital socio-political aspects. Not only does the *þáttr* possess an uncommon metatheatrical narrative structure, but it also provides insights into the way Old Icelandic literature depicts the welcoming of a guest at the king's table, which is also a characteristic theme of Arthurian literature. Therefore, upon closer examination of the text, certain passages of the *þáttr* exemplify the significant role that food and feasting played in political events of the time, such as the following:

> Eptir þat lét konungr taka til húsgerðar, ok gerðu menn konungi haug þann, er hann skyldi sitja á. Þá var konungr settr á stól þann, er stóð á hauginum, ok hófu menn hann svá einkum til tignar ok gáfu honum þá enn af nýju dýrar presentur ok dýrkuðu hann, sem þeir höfðu framast föng á. (*Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, 468)
>
> [After that, the king ordered construction work to begin, and people built a mound for the kin to sit on. Then the king was seated on a throne which stood on the mound; and people exalted him in his rank all the more, and once again revered him and gave him honourable presents, as far as they had the means to do so.] (transl. O'Connor 2006: 101)

During the feast, the attendees, who are the "rulers" of Gotland, pay homage to Geirviðr, signifying their acceptance of his authority over the kingdom. Following the meal, the new king is "enthroned" on the very "mound" where his father was laid to rest. This practice emphasises the immense political significance of burial mounds in medieval Scandinavia (Sundqvist 2015). Therefore, the feast acts as a prelude to a momentous official ceremony, wherein food serves as a representa-

tion of the magnanimity of the future king, aimed at securing his election by the Gotlandic rulers. This bears a striking resemblance to the way King Arthur's coronation is commemorated through an elaborate feast, as described in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, for instance:

> Cum igitur sollempnitas Pentecostes aduenire inciperet, post tantum triumphum maxima laeticia fluctuans Arturus affectauit curiam ilico tenere regnique diadema capiti suo imponere, reges etiam et duces sibi subditos ad ipsam festiuitatem conuocare, ut et illam uenerabiliter celebraret et inter proceres suos firmissimam pacem renouaret.
>
> [Now that the feast of Whitsun was imminent, Arthur, delighted at his great triumph, decided to hold court immediately, wearing the royal crown upon his head, and summoned the kings and dukes subject to him to the same ceremony, to mark it solemnly and to establish lasting peace among his nobles.]
>
> (transl. Reeve & Wright 2007: 208–209)

In a similar fashion, the coronation of King Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* is combined with a feast, which is held during a religious celebration, in this case Pentecost. However, the distinction between the two lies in the nature of the religious celebration that provides the occasion for the coronation and the feast. Pentecost, which commemorates the resurrection of Christ and the spread of the Holy Spirit, is a joyful celebration that symbolises the new king's intent to rejuvenate his power by summoning all his kinsmen and allies. In contrast, the funeral of King Hróðbjartr, while still a religious ceremony, is a sombre occasion that serves to mourn the loss of the previous king and father.

There are, however, merrier ways of offering hospitality and welcoming guests in the *riddarasǫgur*. For instance, in the Norwegian adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*, known as *Ívents saga*, which dates to the fourteenth century and is preserved in manuscript AM 489 I–II 4to (c. 1440–1460), food is offered by a woman to a knight. This saga has been extensively studied, particularly in terms of the differences between the Old French work and its Old Norse translation. While most of the original characters retain their Arthurian attributes (Bandlien 2013: 6–37), some aspects are either lost or significantly transformed in the Old Norse version. As Íven nearly kills Wadein (Esclados), the husband of the woman he loves (Laudine, not named in the saga), a damsel offers him hospitality:

> Hún mælti: 'Stíg upp í þessa sæng ok sít hér.' [Hún bar honum mat ok drykk], ok sem hann er mettr, þá heyrði hann mikit óp ok kall at herra þeira var dauðr (...)
>
> [She said: 'Get up on this bed and sit here.' She brought him food and drink, and when he had eaten his fill he heard a great hue and cry that their lord was dead (...)].
>
> (*Ívens saga*, 48–51)

In this context, food plays a strategic role for Íven, as it enables him to avoid the men of the lord of the castle, whom he has fatally wounded. Similarly to the original romance, the act of offering hospitality to a knight by a woman is portrayed as a means to win the affection of a lady:

> S'aporta .i. capon en rost, / Et un gastel et une nape, / Et vin qui fu de boine crape (*Le Chevalier au Lion,* 745)
>
> [She brought with her a roasted capon, and a cake and a tablecloth, and wine from good grapes.] (Author's translation)

The comparison of the two texts shows that the Norse version is less detailed and there can be several reasons for that. The lack of detail might be due to pragmatic linguistic difficulties in the translation of the passage by the *sagnamenn*, especially since capon was not common in Norwegian cuisine at the time, which relied mainly on fish (Hjelle 2007: 162; Spalding 2014: 19). Another explanation could be the implicit sexual connotations associated with the sensual stimulation brought about by the consumption of food in that context. This element is often present in the Arthurian literature (Classen 2007: 315–335) but may have been censored in accordance with Norwegian moral standards (Kjær 1991: 287–296). Specifically, the woman in *Ívents saga* is a servant of Laudine, the lady whom Íven loves. The erotic dimension of the passage, where the food is eaten in a bed, foreshadows the marriage between Íven and the lady later in the saga. Nevertheless, this aspect is only suggested rather than explicitly stated in this passage.

A third type of hospitality involves religious figures. The figure of the hermit is famously featured in another passage of Yvain during the protagonist's madness in the forest, a scene that has been widely studied, including from the perspective of food (Haidu 1983). This episode is also present in *Ívents saga*, with the following two verses drawing our attention to the food offered by the old man:

> De son pain et de s'eve nete / Par charité prist li prodon, / Si le mist fors de sa meson / Desus une fenestre estroite (...) D'orgë iert pertris avec paille (*Le Chevalier au Lion*, 804–805)
>
> [Out of charity, the good man took from his bread and from his pure water, and put these things outside his home, on a tight window (...) it was barley baked with straw.] (Author's translation)

Yvain is an unexpected guest in this encounter with the hermit, and it does not result in a formal meal. Instead, the hermit provides physical and spiritual assistance through food during a moment of great distress. The food offered has a rustic quality, in keeping with the ascetic way of eating (Kerbastard 2014: 229–237). Thus, food serves as a means of demonstrating hospitality and wisdom as a religious figure, revealing the status and character of the man who takes the knight under his wing. The passage is presented in *Ívents saga* as follows:

> Hann gaf honum brauð ok vatn, þvíat hann hræddiz hann ok vísaði honum á brott ok bað þess guð, at hann kæmi þar aldri optar. Íven át brauðit þó at þat væri illa bakat, þvíat þat var blautt ok sáðugt. Aldri át hann verra brauð ok þegar hann var mettr, hljóp hann aptr í mörkina.
>
> [He gave him bread and water because he was afraid of him and he turned him away and prayed to God that He [sic!] would never come back. Íven ate the bread even though it was poorly baked, for it was soggy and full of bran. Never had he eaten worse bread, and when he was full he ran back into the woods.]
>
> (*Ívens saga*, 68–69)

Encouraging Íven to hunt, the meagre hospitality of the hermit prompts him to consume food that is suitable for a knight, including meat, in contrast to the restraint in the consumption of meat by members of the clergy (Gautier 2009: 38–41): it serves as the first step towards his recovery. The hermit's hospitality is minimal, symbolizing a call to reason (Mühlethaler 1996: 7–35). In the saga, the hermit appears rather severe with Íven, wishing to never see him again, while in the original romance, he prays for God's protection over the knight: *Prie Dieu, quant aller l'en voit, / Qu'il le deffende et qu'i le gart.* (*Le Chevalier au Lion*, 805). The saga's emphasis on the poor quality of bread further underscores the austerity of the old man. Food is thus used to describe the unwelcoming way a religious man received a despairing knight, possibly reflecting tense relationships between the clerics and lay aristocracy in medieval Iceland (Vésteinsson 2003: 208–212). However, it remains unclear whether the saga was written by a member of the Norwegian clergy at this stage.

Hence, while the political and social aspects of feasts seem to remain similar, the translation and adaptation of these texts into Old Norse highlight different attitudes towards hospitality, the types of food offered, and the symbolism attached to food in each literary world. This can be further studied by analysing the specific ingredients used in the meals, to which we will now turn our attention.

Preparing the meal. Strange foods: cabbages, flesh, and magic philters

By analysing the precise ingredients used in the preparation of the meals, a deeper understanding of the symbolism surrounding food can be achieved. Typically, Arthurian food symbolism is based on oppositions (Guerreau-Jalabert 1992: 561–594), such as the contrast between knightly food (bread, wine, meat) and hermit food (bread, water, vegetables), as previously discussed, or between noble cuisine (such as game) and ecclesiastical fare (such as fish). This reflects the food symbolism predominantly found in the medieval West since the early Middle Ages (Montanari 1983). Consequently, it is worth considering what remains of this food symbolism in the *riddarasǫgur* and how the specific Icelandic and Norwegian food culture may have influenced the ingredients mentioned in the sagas, some of which may appear peculiar in a Western context.

It is important to note that some of the food items mentioned in the sagas are not uncommon or distinctive. A relevant example can be found in the *Skikkju rímur*, a fifteenth-century Icelandic text that is a versified adaptation of *Mǫttuls saga*, which in turn is a retelling of the *Lai du cort mantel* from the court of King Hákon Hákonarson (Bornholdt 2011: 77). Although scholars have observed that the Norwegian author of the saga was unfamiliar with the Arthurian world for various reasons (Driscoll 2019), there has been little investigation of food in this context. In this regard, a noteworthy passage in the *rímur* describes the knights enjoying some kind of cale soup (*að súpa kál*) at the Round Table:

> Svo leið fram yfir messu mál; / matur var þá til reiða, / sæmilegt var að súpa kál / í siklings ranni breiða.
>
> [So time passed till after Mass, / then the meal was ready; / it was seemly to sup some kale / there in the king's great castle.]
>
> (*Skikkju rímur*, I:50, 282–283)

While cale or cabbage was a ubiquitous ingredient in the culinary preparations of the Middle Ages across all classes of society, a vegetable-based course might have seemed more appropriate for peasants or ecclesiastics than for knights, given that most chivalric literature emphasizes the meat-based diet of the knights and the aristocracy. It was believed that a meat-based diet provided them with the strength required to participate in combat (Méchin 1997: 121–135; Gautier 2010: 285–303). However, cabbage was not necessarily considered a food for the lower classes. In a thirteenth-century fabliau titled *Estula*, two poverty-stricken brothers attempt to pilfer cabbages from the garden of a wealthy man, associating cabbage with wealth. This perception of cabbage might have influenced the Icelandic author of the *Skikkju rímur*. Another hypothesis is that cabbage soup could have referred to the Swedish rutabaga (Viklund 2007: 123), which was cultivated in the late Middle Ages and could have been an indication that Icelandic authors wanted to incorporate some Scandinavian flavors into Arthurian food symbolism. Moreover, although it is not specified in the *Skikkju rímur*, cabbage soup was typically consumed with cured pork in Scandinavia at that time (*flesk í kál* is mentioned in several *fornaldar-*, *fornmanna-*, and *biskupasǫgur*, see Cleabsy & Guðbrandur Vigfússon 1874: 160), so the course could have contained some meat, as was the case in other European countries (Rumble 2009: 85).

While such meals may appear commonplace, certain ingredients mentioned in the *riddarasǫgur* hold symbolic significance for the narrative. These ingredients reflect the status and attributes of the characters in romance, participating in the cultural aspects of food symbolism. An example of this is found in *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss ok Gests*, a fourteenth-century Icelandic saga that falls into both the original Icelandic *riddarasǫgur* and *Íslendingasǫgur* categories. Although the story draws inspiration from *Heimskringla* and *Landnámabók* rather than the Arthurian world (De Vries 1967: 533), its inclusion of fantastic creatures, magic, military feats, and King Óláfr conveys the world of the Round Table and King Arthur in many ways, as noted by Massimiliano Bampi in his analysis of the saga's "contamination" of later *Íslendingasǫgur* (Bampi 2017: 10). As the saga is not strictly part of

the corpus of the *riddarasǫgur*, it contains stranger foods. In one passage, a feast is held during the marriage between Þórdr, Gestr's half-brother, and a young woman named Sólrún:

> Var nú matr borinn fyrir þá Gljúfra-Geir ok hans bekkjunauta, var þat bæði hrossakjöt ok manna. Tóku þá til matar rifu sem ernir ok etjutíkr hold at beinum. Matr var borinn fyrir þá Þórd ok hans félaga sá hverjum manni var vel ætr; drykkr var þar áfengr ok lítt sparðr. (*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss ok Gests*, 32)
>
> [Now food was brought to Gulfspear and his benchmates. It was horsemeat and human flesh. They started to eat and tore the flesh from the bones like eagles and hunting bitches. Food quite edible for any man was brought to Thord and his companions. The drink there was strong and little spared.] (transl. O'Connor 2006: 218)

The consumption of horse meat (*hrossakjǫt*) and human flesh (*mannakjǫt*) by some of the guests during the feast may be interpreted as a symbol that differentiates them from the other guests who partake of 'edible' food. This may be seen as an allusion to the fact that these guests are of pagan faith and not Christian, as Gestr and his companions are later baptized at the court of Óláfr Tryggvason after the marriage. The saga thus draws on a common stereotype about pagans to create its unique food symbolism (Maraschi 2019: 153–181). A comparison of this food symbolism with that found in the *Skikkju rímur* suggests a greater degree of freedom in the former, while the latter adheres more closely to Western food traditions in its Norse adaptations of Arthurian romances.

To delve deeper into the food symbolism of the *riddarasǫgur*, it is important to note the presence of foods associated with fantastic creatures and magic characters. This could be interpreted as an incorporation of elements from Scandinavian folklore into the narrative. However, the concept of folklore is a contested one and cannot be applied without careful consideration of the source material. For instance, some scholars like Stephen A. Mitchell identify folklore as a prominent feature in the *fornaldarsǫgur*, but do not provide a clear definition beyond the presence of traditional characters and literary motifs (Mitchell 2018: 26). Meanwhile, other studies suggest that the idea of folklore is a post-medieval construct that originated from nineteenth-century interpretations of Norse literature. In this article, our focus is on the pagan elements in the *riddarasǫgur*, which contribute to a distinctly Scandinavian flavor in the food symbolism of certain sagas. For instance, *Mírmants saga*, a *riddarasaga* from the fourteenth century, deals with the central theme of the conflict between Christianity and heathenism (Kalinke & Mitchell 1985: 80–81). In this saga, Mírman murders his heathen father, and his mother uses her witchcraft to avenge her husband. This involves the use of magic and a strange philtre, as described in the following passage:

> fann hann þegar at gjörningar váru í drukkinum (...).
> (...)
> Nú tók hann við drukknum ok drakk, ok vánum bráðara fann hann at illskukvikindi rendi i háls hánum ok lá þar um stund. (*Mírmans saga*, 170+178)

> [He realized at once that there had been witchcraft in the drink (...).
> (...)
> Now he took the drink and drank; and sooner than expected he felt the evil creature slide into his throat and lie there for a while.] (transl. O'Connor 2006: 264+271)

As a witch, Mírman's mother makes her own son a leper, thus fitting the stereotype of evil women being witches and being unable of motherly love. The drink itself contains an 'evil creature' (*illskukvikvendi*) that spreads the illness in his throat, that is in the exact place where food, as well as words, are supposed to pass. The drink is therefore a vehicle of illness, contrary to normal food which is seen as something that brings energy and health to the knight. While most potions from the Arthurian romances are love philtres, such as in *Tristan and Iseult*, *Mírmans saga* interprets witchcraft as an inversion of the classic virtues of food.

Ceasing to eat. Food and silence: taboos, protocols, and tales

The portrayal of food in the sagas reveals the *sagnamenn*'s focus on its symbolic value rather than its material aspects. As highlighted by other scholars, explicit expressions of food symbolism are scarce in the sagas, and meals and feasts are rarely described in detail (Jakobsson 2009: 69). In fact, in most *riddarasǫgur*, the act of eating is mentioned, but the actual content of the meal seems to be of lesser importance to the *sagnamenn*. Some scholars suggest that this could be due to a lack of understanding of the original matter of Britain during the translation process into Old Norse (Barnes 1993: 531). However, an alternative hypothesis would be to interpret this approach as reflecting a different view of food and its importance in medieval Scandinavian culture.

For instance, in *Ívents saga*, the narrator himself offers his perspective on food description, which is a rare occurrence in Old Norse sagas (Sävborg 2017: 113). This passage is therefore a valuable indication for our understanding of the importance of food in Norse literature:

> (...) er til náttverðar var búit ok mátta ek þar þá eigi lengr dveljaz ok gerða ek þá sem herrann bauð. En um náttverð þarf ek eigi mart at tala, þvíat ek kunna eigi vildara at œskja.
>
> [(...) since supper was ready, and I could not stay there any longer and did as the lord requested. There is not much to tell about supper, since I could have wished for a better one.]
>
> (*Ívens saga*, 40–41)

To begin with, it is noteworthy that the narrator in this passage is not an omniscient narrator, but an internal character of the saga, specifically Kalogrenant (Calogrenant), a knight of the Round Table who is well-known for his mishaps in the forest of Broceliande. In this context, he recounts his visit to a vavasor's castle in the first person. Kalogrenant's perspective can be interpreted as both the character's viewpoint and that of the actual author of the saga, given that he is

frequently depicted as a storyteller rather than a traditional knightly character in Arthurian literature (Grimbert 1988: 19). Kalogrenant explains his inclination to be terse in his descriptions of food due to his fear that they may be perceived as criticism by his host. Rather than providing specific details about the food, the knight's silence implies that the food served at the lord's table is faultless in every way. Thus, his omission of mundane culinary details is intended as a gesture of respect. In essence, being invited to dine at an aristocratic table should be deemed more significant than paying attention to gastronomic intricacies. Here, the author of the saga seems to follow the counsel of Chrétien de Troyes himself in *Yvain*:

> Du souper vous dirai briefment / Qu'il fu du tout a ma devise. (*Le Chevalier au Lion*, 719)
>
> [About the supper, I'd say, in brief, that it was completely to my desire.] (Author's translation)

The significance of speech during a meal for knightly characters is evident, as it provides them with an opportunity to demonstrate their chivalrous behaviour and politeness through the classical system of gift-exchange. Thus, the scarcity of food description in the sagas is not a result of any misunderstanding of the original text. Instead, it is seen as an occasion to exhibit proper manners when sharing a meal with a member of the aristocracy, even a vavasor. This aspect is particularly important to the authors of *riddarasǫgur* as they seek to demonstrate their assimilation of Western norms of decorum, which are an essential aspect of the Westernization process that is often explored through these Norse adaptations of Old French texts. As Amory (1984: 522) observes, such scenes provide a crucial insight into the authors' understanding of courtly norms. An ideal way to display this understanding is by praising a fellow knight at the table, and it is a behaviour for which high members of the aristocracy, such as kings, often set an example, as illustrated in this passage from *Hjálmþérs saga ok Ǫlvis*:

> Lofuðu allir Hjálmþé fyrir þau afreksverk, sem hann hafði þar unnit í sinni framgöngu, mest konungr sjálfr. (...) Síðan snýr allr lýðr heim til hallar ok var mjök kátr. Var veizla in bezta ok ekki sparat, hvat sem búkrinn kunni at beiða. (*Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*, 193)
>
> [Everyone praised Hjalmther for the heroic deeds he had achieved in his attack, most of all the king himself. (...) Then all the host went back to the hall, and they were very merry and cheerful. Now there was the best of feasts, and nothing was spared that the body could wish for.] (transl. O'Connor 2006: 127–128)

This saga has been traditionally classified as a *fornaldarsaga* rather than a *riddarasaga*, although it contains numerous elements of chivalry in the story of Hjálmþér, a jarl's son who is forced to work as a thrall. It belongs to the cate-

gory of "stepmother sagas", in which a character is subjected to mistreatment by his father's new and unpleasant wife (O'Connor 2000: 1–48). The praise bestowed upon the protagonist for his chivalrous conduct during a meal carries considerable significance as a form of revenge against his stepmother's abuse. The narrative describes a break in the meal to celebrate Hjálmþér's victory over King Núdus and his berserkers. The guests are reported to have changed rooms during the tribute and reconvened in the hall where the feast is held. This indicates that the meal had already begun before the hero was honored (Gautier 2006: 87–117). The meal is thus staged as if it were a theatrical performance, with the act of eating being of lesser importance than the ceremonial honoring of heroes.

Speech can also function as a precursor to eating. For instance, in the *Skikkju rímur*, it is noted that King Arthur mandates the recounting of an adventure (*æfintýr*) before each meal, a convention found in numerous French Arthurian romances as well:

Aldrei vildi öðlíng skýr	Never would the clever prince
eta sinn mat né drekka	eat his food nor drink
utan hann frétti eitt ævintýr,	without first hearing of some adventure;
alla gleður hann rekka.	he gladdens all the men.
	(*Skikkju rímur*, I:24, 276–277)

This passage shows that specific phrases, here a whole story, are employed to signify the beginning of the meal, necessitating silence prior to its commencement. These phrases act as "stop signals", as Mary Douglas has identified (Douglas 1979: 145–170), here a tale that seems to be part of the protocols at Arthur's court. Thus, such habits create an economy of silence and speech that regulates the time when guests are permitted to eat.

Digesting. The powers of food: strength, joy, and miracles

The role of food as a symbolic element in sagas extends beyond feasting occasions (Hildebrand 2020: 9–20). Food can have lasting effects on the characters, creating new symbolic meanings beyond the moment of consumption. This will enable us to see that the powers of food touch on themes of knighthood, courtly love, and magic, that draw direct inspiration from Arthurian literature (Heng 2003: 9–16).

Within these sagas, food consumption serves three main functions. First, it is believed to provide strength to knights, enabling them to accomplish chivalric deeds. However, the precise relationship between food and knighthood is not always clear within the sagas. What is apparent, however, is that the lack of food can lead to a loss of strength. This idea is exemplified in the *Erex saga*, a retelling of Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*, which is preserved in two seventeenth-century manuscript (AM 181 b fol. and Holm papp 46 fol.) and a late 15th century fragment but was likely composed at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson in Norway (Barnes 1993: 170–171). The following passage highlights the connection between food and knightly strength:

> Hann ómætti þá fast (...) 'þvíat fast angra mig stór sár ok langt matleysi.'
>
> [He then lost all his strength (...) 'because I am suffering greatly on account of my grievous wounds and continuing lack of food.']
>
> (*Erex saga*, 252–253)

In this instance, the author of the saga closely reproduces a passage from the original romance by Chrétien de Troyes in which Erec experiences a loss of strength due to being consumed by his love for Enide. This serves as a notable example of the prevalent theme of *folie d'amour* within Arthurian romances (Legros 2019: 26). However, it is noteworthy that in Chrétien's work, there is no explicit mention of food playing a role in Erec's loss of strength. Instead, the text notes that Erec remains in bed with Enide until midday or later.

> Sovant estoit midi passez — It was often past noon
> Ainçois que de lez li levast. — before he got up from her side.
>
> (*Erec et Enide*, 137–138) (Author's translation)

The concept underlying this observation is that love has an impact on both the mental and physical aspects of a knight (Pierreville 2019: 603–616). However, the manifestation of this idea appears to differ between Old French romance and *riddarasǫgur*. Specifically, lack of food seems to be the main reason for a knight's lack of strength in the sagas, whereas being wounded seems a more important reason for it in Chrétien's romances. This is visible in the episode involving Morgan's unguent in *Erec et Enide* for example:

> Li rois mout fortment sopire — The king sighs deeply and bade
> Et fait aporter un entrait — that an unguent made by his sister
> Que Morgue sa suer avoir fait. — Morgan be brought.
>
> (*Erec et Enide*, 194) (Author's translation)

Here, healing the wound is more important than eating food to restore the knight's strength. This might be a sign that food was viewed as a crass or vulgar concern for a knight in the Arthurian world (Alchalabi 2021). On the contrary, the knights in *riddarasǫgur* take great pleasure in being satiated. But gaining strength from food is not the sole reason for this enjoyment. The feeling of satiety also brings a sense of jovial contentment that is frequently highlighted in the sagas, as demonstrated in this passage from *Ívents saga*:

> 'Nú megum vér heyra, Íven, at þú ert vel mettr. Þú hefir fleiri orð en fullr pottr víns. Þat er mælt at kátr er fullr köttr. Nú er eptir mat ok vilt þú nú drepa herra Nódan.'
>
> ['Now we can hear, Íven, that you have had your fill. You have more words than a full pitcher has wine. The saying goes that a full cat is a content cat. Now dinner is over and you now want to kill Sir Nódan.']
>
> (*Ívens saga*, 44–45)

Subsequent to the meal, Íven regains his strength and is now prepared to engage in combat with Sir Nodan (Nureddin Mahmud, Saladin's predecessor). As previously noted, food serves primarily as a source of energy to facilitate knightly pursuits. However, through comparison with wine – a beverage intrinsically linked to merriment – the copious stream of words flowing from Íven's mouth conveys a deeper sense of contentment. In this way, food not only provides strength to the knight but also elicits a state of "happiness", akin to a sort of intoxication. The proverb cited in the saga, *kátr er fullr köttr*, is an adaptation of a phrase from Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au Lion*: *'On dit que chat saous s'envoise'* (1994: 730) ['It is said that the drunk cat enjoys himself.' – author's translation].

However, it is worth noting that Chrétien does not make any explicit reference to inebriation, thereby rendering the allusion to alcohol somewhat ambiguous. On the contrary, in the *riddarasǫgur*, the emphasis on the joy of satiety, rather than on the consumption of alcohol, suggests that there may have been a nuanced attitude towards food and drink at the court of Hákon Hákonarson. While food was deemed the primary source of the knights' strength and pleasure, alcohol may have been considered a more sensitive subject. Indeed, evidence from the *Laws of the Hird* (*Hirðskrá*), a legal code from the thirteenth century, demonstrates that it was considered ill-mannered to become inebriated at the king's table:

> Þar nest at þu gæter þin fra ofðryckíu. þuí at af hænni tapar margr hælsunní bæðe *ok* vítínu. fe *ok* felogu*m*. *ok* þuí siðazt sem mæst er. at salen er tynð þar sem ðrukkín*n* maðr ma ægí sjálfs síns giæta *ok* ægi guðs ne goðra manna. (*Hirðskrá* 129)
>
> Be further on guard against drinking too much, for many persons lose both their senses, their property and their friends as a result of this; and finally, and what is worse, the soul also is lost when the drunk man is unable to attend to himself or to God or to good men.
>
> (transl. Berge 1968: 51)

The consumption of alcohol was viewed as an unbecoming behavior for knights, equated with foolish actions as well as loss of social standing and material goods, a sentiment shared in Western aristocracy (Alexandre-Bidon 2016: 28–36). The fact that such reticence regarding alcohol appears in works of fiction and not only in moral treatises suggests that Scandinavians of the time may have had stronger concerns about that issue.

Finally, the power of certain foods and culinary utensils can be expressed through a miraculous nature, such as is the case with the holy grail. This object has been the subject of much debate in Arthurian literature (Loomis 1991; Barber 2004; Wood 2012). Although the grail's exact function is still a topic of discussion among scholars, Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* describes it as a bowl or dish containing a single Communion wafer that continuously nourishes the Fisher King:

> D'une sole hoiste li sainz hom, / Que l'an en cel graal li porte, / Sa vie sostient et conforte (*Perceval* 1994: 1130, vv. 4348–4350)

> [The holy man, out of a single wafer that is brought to him in the grail, supports and fortifies his life.] (Author's translation)

Some scholars have noted the apparent confusion among the *sagnamenn* regarding the nature of the grail (Kretschmer 1982: 225; Gunnlaugsdóttir 1985: 217–234; Bornholdt 2011: 106). This is evident in a passage from *Parcevals saga*, a retelling from the court of King Hákon Hákonarson, which has been preserved in two seventeenth-century manuscripts (AM 179 fol., AM 181 a fol.):

> Því næst gekk inn ein fögr mær ok bar í höndum sér því líkast sem textus væri, er þeir í völsku máli kalla braull, en vér megum kalla ganganda greida.
>
> [Next in turn a beautiful maiden walked in, and carried in her hands, just as though it were a gospel-book, something which they call in the French language a grail, but we may call 'processional provision'.]
>
> (*Parcevals saga*, 148–149)

The grail is interpreted as a mobile table service provider for guests present in its vicinity, with no mention of the Communion wafer. It is possible that the *sagnamenn* did not regard the grail as a sacred container but rather a magical utensil capable of serving food autonomously, moving from guest to guest (*gangandi greiði* which, if we follow the interpretation given by Foote 1969, could be translated as "a service, or a help, that comes by walking"). This is reminiscent of some Scandinavian drinking horns that feature imitations of animal legs attached to them, or with animal figures holding them, as depicted in the image below (Fig. 1). In this context, the Arthurian grail could have been interpreted according to Scandinavian table utensils that are symbolically rendered able to walk on the table. However, the comparison with a *textus*, the Latin word for "gospel book," suggests that the grail was a spiritual object, carried like a sacred text, in a solemn gesture accompanied by a procession of candles (Mårtensson 2025: 39). Another interpretation of the word *textus* is "textile," there is a possibility that it might refer to the theme of the magic tablecloth that supplies food and drink, a recurring trope in several other legendary sagas, such as *Viktors saga ok Blávuss* and *Valdimars saga*[1]. In any case, the Norse version of the grail could indeed be a miraculous object, but the fact that it would be interpreted by the *sagnamenn* as completely devoid of any Christian significance, by contrast with the original Arthurian romances, remains uncertain.

In essence, the *riddarasǫgur*, drawing primary inspiration from Arthurian romances like *Yvain*, *Erec et Enide*, and *Perceval*, establish their own distinct food symbolism. This symbolism is derived from unique interpretations, occasionally resulting in misapprehensions, of the Arthurian source material. While the *riddarasǫgur* do incorporate prevalent Christian and Western food symbolism, they also integrate elements of Scandinavian folklore, such as sacrificial meat and

1 We wish to thank Jonathan Hui for bringing our attention on this motif, listed in Boberg 1966 under D1472.1.8.

witchcraft, as well as unconventional ingredients. The profound social and political significance of food and feasts within the *riddarasǫgur* manifests a growing prevalence of knightly expressions of honour and acclaim during meal gatherings, thereby reflecting the nascent aristocratic table customs that emerged in Scandinavia. Notably, the composition of Chrétien's rewritings primarily occurred in Norway, where these customs flourished. Thus, the Arthurian legacy pervades the food symbolism observed in the *riddarasǫgur*; however, it intricately intertwines with local Scandinavian culinary practices and broader regional dynamics encompassing Christianisation and the ascendency of the Scandinavian nobility. In sum, the study of food symbolism in the *riddarasǫgur* entails an investigation of literary intertextuality as well as an examination of its role as a testament to consequential historical transformations within medieval Iceland and Norway.

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

The Other Eating in Arthurian Narrative

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Introduction

The focus of this article lies on 'other eating', on scenes and imagery of deviant food consumption in Arthurian romance from French, German, and Scandinavian tradition. Food as such and meal scenes are not just frequent standard elements in courtly romances but have a multitude of functions within the narrative. Exploiting the multitude of symbolic functions connected to real world and imaginary feasts and meals, references to certain types of food and specific dishes, the ways they are eaten, and the social settings can function as a commentary on behaviour and add layers of meaning to the narrative. Food, both food stuffs, dishes and meals, do primarily appear as semantically functionalised elements within the narration. Graphic scenes of 'other eating' can thus be a cornerstone in the narrative plot and the metaphoric literary play in medieval literature, which is dealt with in the following.

A hallmark of medieval courtly ideality is, as pointed out by medieval source texts and modern scholars alike, the courtly feast. Feasts are mirrors of a given community, they are "ideal images of the society in which they take place" (Nicholls 1985: 19). According to Joachim Bumke, major courtly feasts were of great importance for the self-conception of the medieval nobility in part because (only) in the exceptional situation of the feast, the courtly elite would fully display the conduct that was regarded as particularly courtly (1992a: 12–13, cf. 2000: 4). Walter Haug's influential thesis that Chrétien de Troyes's (ca. 1130–1180/90) Arthurian romances were at their core narratively evolved discussions of the idea of the courtly feast has met some scepticism, yet the courtly feast is undoubtedly a cornerstone in courtly narrative and contrasts productively with the challenges and hardships of the *aventure*, knightly adventures and battles, the other side of the coin of the imagined lives of Arthurian heroes (Ehrismann 1995: 91–92). For the Arthurian knights, to speak in Middle High German (MHG) terminology, *âventiure* [wondrous event, adventure] means *arbeit* [labour, struggle, effort] which serves their "Erwerb von Gesellschaftsfähigkeit durch statusadäquate Anstrengung" [acquisition of the state of being socially acceptable through status-adequate effort] (Ehrismann 1995: 20–21). The *Nibelungenlied* maps out the tension between these extremes, hardships and joyful festivities, already in its first verses:

Uns ist in alten mæren wunders vil geseit von helden lobebæren, von grôzer arebeit, von freuden, hôchgezîten, von weinen und von klagen, von küener recken strîten muget ir nu wunder hœren sagen. (*Nibelungenlied 1*)[1]	In ancient tales many marvels are told us: of renowned heroes, of great hardship, of joys, festivities, of weeping and lamenting, of bold warriors' battles – now you may hear such marvels told. (transl. Edwards, 5)

In real-world courtly feasts, meals take up a central position. As under a lens, all the perfection concerning the manners and habitus of the participants and the splendour of the materiality is meant to become manifest, visible, and enjoyable to everyone present, and through various medial representations such as literature and art also to later audiences. The more striking under this lens are imperfections, flaws, and missteps. Thus, the ideal of courtly life may correspond with a considerable amount of anxiety on behalf of the people at and around the real-world courts, sparking off a long and broad tradition of didactic texts on table manners and full-scale courtesy books (e.g. Nicholls 1985, Schnell 2004 and 2005, Oschema 2011). In these didactic works, norms are rendered by the description of positive and negative examples of conduct, thus encouraging the young person to imitate courtly and shun uncourtly bearing. They demand, in other words, the control of appetites and affects on the alimentary field.

Medieval Arthurian literature often provides scenes in which courtly perfection is dented or lacking entirely. In developing the narrative potential of courtly norms and manners and experimenting with them, the texts in question frequently contain scenes with deviant behaviour, ranging from rather small mishaps or -steps over full-fledged lack of manners to what could properly be called the other eating, bestial meals of the wild. In this article, 'other eating' denotes a specific focus rather than a clearly defined term. In short, it refers to the extreme of a blatant violation of norms, i.e. non-human or uncivilised eating practised by humans. This can be relatively clearly defined in extreme cases such as human anthropophagy or coprophagy (Jakobsson 2017: 127–131), the eating of non-humans and communion with them, or the dichotomous absolutisation of the term as rustic and strikingly inappropriate within the programme of courtliness. The otherness of eating or food stuff becomes less clear with the nuanced gradations that are frequently used in the narrative dynamics of the texts under consideration. With special focus on two scenes from Arthurian romance, Yvain's madness and Perceval's encounter with the lady in the tent, this article intends to demonstrate how medieval romance makes narrative use of nuances and tensions related to the food and dishes

1 In this article, primary sources *in verse* are quoted as follows: for Chrétien's works and Hartmann's *Iwein*, verse-numbers are given; for Wolfram's *Parzival*, section- and verse-numbers (as established by Lachmann); for the *Nibelungenlied*, the number of the stanza (1, which is on p. 6 in Brackert's ed. in the case of the above quotation); for the *Poetic Edda*, the number of the stanza.

themselves, the table community itself, and the social norms surrounding communal consumption.

Table manners and the 'anti-courtly type'

While otherness can take many forms and can be functionalized in narrative in many ways, there is one 'other' standing out in the context of courtliness and romance – the *vilenie* [boorishness] (OFr; MHG *dörperheit*; ON *þorparaskapr*). The Latin term *curialitas* (from *curia*, 'court') dates to the middle of the eleventh century (Ganz 1986 and Heyworth 2011). "Interest in Romanesque cultural content", considered exemplary in the Middle Ages because it was more highly developed (Schulz 2011: 113, referencing Karl Bartsch), is reflected in the widespread reception of courtly ideology and its vocabulary across Europe. Thus, the OFr terms which correspond to the adjective *curialis* and the noun *curialitas*, *cortois* [courtly] and *corteisie* [courtliness] were both taken over as loan-translations – MHG *hövesch* and *höveschеit* (ON *hǿverskr* and *hǿverska/hǿverski/hǿverskheit/ hǿverskleikr*) – and as direct borrowings – MHG *kurteis* and *kurtoisie* (cf. ON *kurteiss* and *kurteisi*) (Bumke 2000: 58; for the term and peculiarities of its understanding, see Ganz 1977 and 1986). In Old Norse, the first term to appear seems to be the borrowing *kurteisi*; it can be found in mss. from ca. 1220 onwards, the oldest being *Þorláks saga helga* (AM 645 4°) and *Ágrip af Noregs konunga sǫgum* (AM 325 II 4°), in the second quarter of the 13th century also *Óláfs saga helga* (DG 8) written during the time of Hákon Hákonarson's efforts to promote courtly manners. These examples predate the oldest extant mss. containing courtly works proper (cf. *hǿverskr/hǿverska, kurteiss/kurteisi* in ONP).

This elitist programme word marks a socio-cultural distinction from non-aristocratic commoners, particularly those in rural areas, a distinction that is considered both essential and existential. The *vilain*, or villager, is the anti-courtly counterpart (Crouch 2019: 99–115); his customs and way of life are considered a constant, latent threat to the courtly ideal. Consequently, courtly terminology is inextricably linked to this anti-courtly other. The terms *vilain* and *vilenie* are prevalent in courtly literature and have also been adopted into German as loan-translations – MHG *dörper* and *dörperheit* (cf. ON *þorpari* and *þorparaskapr*) – or as the direct borrowing MHG *vilân* (Bumke 2000: 58).

Ideals of courtly life are addressed not only in fictional works such as romances and historical texts, but also in didactic Latin and vernacular writings, which spread throughout Europe from the twelfth century onwards, particularly from the thirteenth century. Didactic passages can also be found in narrative texts, either as integral parts of the narrative or as insertions within compilation processes. One example is the three short instructions by the mother, Gornemans de Gorhaut and the hermit given to Perceval/Parzival in the eponymous romances. Didactic works on courtly manners, and table manners more specifically, subsequently appear both as independent works (courtesy books) and Latin and German *Tischzuchten* ['rules of etiquette and decorum governing proper behaviour at the table'] and as units within larger works (e.g. Nicholls 1985: 177–197, Düwel 1989, Schnell 2005: 615–634 and Schulz 2011: 112–124). The insufficiently researched Latin tradition began in the twelfth century in monastic and clerical circles, while

the German-language tradition had a courtly background and began around 1215 with Thomasin von Zerklære's *Welscher Gast* [The Italian (or Romance) Guest] (Harmening 1995: 941).

In Scandinavia, the ON mid-thirteenth-century *Konungs skuggsjá* [The King's Mirror], a knowledge-imparting dialogue, provides a systematics of courtly bearing, and *ex negativo*, a range of mentions of the anti-courtly type (*þorpari*) and his behaviour (*þorparaskapr*). As an overarching rule, everyone who wants to become a member of the king's household must avoid all aspects of boorishness (*flyia allan þorpara skap. oc alla ó hovæsku*; *Konungs skuggsiá* 44, cf. also 50). This is picked up again in the image of the tree, which represents the three 'virtues' *manvit* [wisdom, prudence], *siðgóði* [good behaviour] and *høverska* [courtly bearing] branching off. In the first place, it is essential to understand what behaviour is uncourtly (*Þat er oc hovæska at … kunna væl at skilia hvat þorpara skapr er oc flyia hann allan vanndligha*, *Konungs skuggsiá*, 64). *Konungs skuggsjá* clearly distinguishes between *siðgóði* and *høverska*, conceptualizing their acquisition as consecutive steps, the first being generally good manners, the second courtly bearing proper. This is supported both by the systematics and corresponding passages throughout the text (Schnall 2000: 78–89 and 90–120). The court is characterized as a place of 'higher education' – as the king and his court show the very best of conduct, true courtliness is learned at the court by following the best examples – or, in the case of the anti-courtly type, *not* learned:

> 'Ef þer pærðr þæss auðit at koma til hirðar þa þarftu þat at þarazc er þa hænnder er siðlausir koma til hirðar oc hopæskulauser koma fra hirð ef þu þilt bæðe heita siðgoðr oc hopæskr.'
> (*Konungs skuggsiá,* 39)
>
> 'If it should be your fate to serve at court and you wish to be called courtly and polite, you will need to beware of what happens to those who come to court without manners and leave without refinement.'
> (transl. Larson, 165)

Konungs skuggsjá could be called a hybrid, encyclopaedically loaded *Hoflehre* [type of courtesy book] which also contains teachings on table etiquette (Schnall 2000: 80–86, 103, 110, 114), a *Tischzucht* (Schnall 2000: 15, 257, recently Brégaint 2016, section 3 and 14). In all the aspects of courtly bearing which are addressed in *Konungs skuggsjá* – speech, clothing, postures, gestures, and table etiquette – the anti-courtly type serves as an example, not just in terms of "the cause and the consequences of their disgraceful behaviour, but also to formulate the strategies to cope with them" (Brégaint 2016, section 19).

The imagination of transgression and disgust invites for literary play. Therefore, alongside 'serious' texts on table manners, there are also the ironic-satirical ones who give advice on how to excel in vulgarity or coarseness and which in the late-medieval and early modern period form a sub-genre of Tischzuchten, the so-called *grobianische Tischzuchten* [grobianic etiquettes] after the mock-saint St Grobianus (Thornton 1957: 7–11, passim, Gutzen 1985, Parsons 2011: 278–279), carnivalistic inversions of serious moral teachings.

Other eating and cannibalism

The 'other eating' par excellence, as a most extreme form of food-intake and incorporation, is met in anthropophagy. In the early modern era, the taboo and horror of humans consuming human flesh becomes manifest in not so much observations but rather imaginations of cannibalism, as a mythical discourse and metaphor (cf. Fulda and Pape 2001: 7–50: 9–10). In part, these imaginations build on older tradition, e.g. the classical and medieval learned traditions on anthropophagy within the encyclopaedic lore of monstrous races. Several of these races are imagined as cannibalistic – Anthropophagi, Patrophagi, Gog and Magog, Cyclopes, Cynocephales, Donestre, Satyrs – and as it spreads throughout Europe, Latin learning is merged with local traditions which, as for Old Norse literature, is reflected lexically in both names like *hundingjar* (for cynocephales) and *hornfinnar* (for satyrs) and conceptwise in the merger with figures known from the Scandinavian tradition (giants, ogres, trolls) (e.g. Simek 2015). Giants in medieval Icelandic literature are depicted as eaters of horsemeat and human flesh, and due to their anthropomorphic nature, thus, to be understood as cannibals (Jakobsson 2009: 191, 196, and Maraschi 2020: 3–6, 10–14).

Maraschi refers to instances of anthropophagy by giants in the medieval Icelandic *fornaldarsǫgur*, both rather early works such as *Yngvars saga víðfǫrla* and younger ones such as *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* (2020: 10–13). Anthropophagy is also conducted, or at least intended, by humans, e.g. in the fourteenth-century *Drauma-Jóns saga* where the mischievous Earl Heinrekr of Saxland tries to acquire the divinative talents of Drauma-Jón by killing him and eating his heart (Maraschi 2020: 17–18). Yet, anthropophagy in these imaginations is not always portrayed as repugnant; rather, it depends on whether the instances in question are to be understood as 'natural cannibalism' or as 'cultural cannibalism' (Maraschi 2020: 19, 23–24, also Maraschi & Tasca 2024: 191–192, and Olley 2021: 491). A special case is the kin-cannibalism to be found in Old Norse myth and legend, which in its graphic imagery and transgressive nature "represent[s] the antithesis of positive kinship: exploitative where it should be symbiotic" (Olley 2021: 513).

One of the most striking instances of cannibalism in ON Eddic poetry is Guðrún's exorbitant revenge for her brothers in *Atlakviða* [The Poem of Atli]. The ethos of the poem is high-spirited heroism, even at the cost of self-destruction, both on behalf of Guðrun's brothers Gunnar and Hǫgni and herself. As revenge, she kills her and king Atli's sons, serves their hearts as a dish to the unsuspecting father, and then tells him *coram publico* what he is just chewing and digesting:

Sona hefir þinna,	'Your own sons' –
sverða deilir,	sharer-out of swords –
hjǫrtu hrædreyrug	hearts, corpse-bloody, you are
við hunang of tuggin;	chewing up with honey;
melta knáttu, móðugr,	you are filling your stomach, proud
manna valbráðir	lord, with dead human flesh,
eta að ǫlkrásum	eating it as ale-appetizers and sending
ok í ǫndugi at senda.	it to the high seat.
(*Atlakviða* 36)	(transl. Larrington, 209)

Such a meal changes the eater. Atli has been tricked into incorporating what is taboo and disgusting, and not just does Guðrún's monstrous deed create an unbearable combination of strong emotions – love (for the living sons), pain (realizing that they are dead), and disgust (for human meat in general and that he should eat his sons in particular) – but it is not least an onslaught on Atli's identity, turning him from human to animal through his deviant eating. Guðrún's stanza combines the food-related and faecal disgust by vividly addressing the process of digestion in the same go (Larrington 2006: 147–148 for cannibalism and the two types of disgust). At the same time, the child-cannibalism affects Atli's relations to his men and thus his role as lord – the Huns groan as they hear what has happened, having unwittingly participated in a horrendous, cannibalistic meal (Larrington 2013: 144).

However, depictions of cannibalism are not unique to the 'Nordic sublime'; they also feature in learned and courtly texts from continental Europe and Scandinavia, e.g. the encounters of knights with cannibal giants in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca. 1136–38) and Wace's *Roman de Brut* (ca. 1150–55), as well as the considerably later *Roman de Perceforest* (ca. 1340–44) (Lampitt 2018: 318–319). As in the above example from *Atlakviða*, the eating of hearts – believed to be the seat of the soul's powers – is a recurring theme. In the form of the story of the husband who serves his wife her lover's heart to eat, only informing her after she has finished the meal, it is a subject that has been passed down in ever-new versions from the twelfth to the twentieth century (Bohnengel 2016). In the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century *Lai d'Ignaure*, twelve ladies are tricked by their husbands into eating her lover's heart and penis in form of a stew (for this work, see Bohnengel 2016: 8–30 and Henefeld 2018), an act which "fleshes out courtly poetry with a consummated sexual pleasure, underscoring a core carnality of courtly love" (Revelle 2023: 27).

Culinary systems of signs in Arthurian romance: Yvain

In the French Arthurian romances par excellence, *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain, le Chevalier au lion* by Chrêtien de Troyes and their German translations by Hartmann von Aue, the identity and state of mind of the eponymous heroes is in each case mirrored by food and meals and the hero's way of relating to them. As for Erec, his shortcomings show in his deviant choices of and relation to food, be it the un-courtly dishes or the rejection of food entirely, a too much or too little, or an uncourtly setting for a meal (see Pychlau-Etzli 2018: 135). Regarded from the viewpoint of spatial semantics (Schäfke 2013 on spatial semantics in late-medieval Icelandic romance), the food itself and the attitudes shown to it carry semantic values such as '+courtly' or '-courtly,' and more specifically '+greedy' vs. '-greedy,' and place the acting hero in a hierarchically layered system of spaces of values. Thus, they are an important part of the structure which generates the basis for the narrative; they indicate the proximity or distance to the centre of courtly ideality and inform the audience's reading.

Feast- and meal-scenes, the topic of food, and the use of food imagery as such are frequent in the Arthurian romances, notably *Yvain* and its adaptations. Also, metaphors of food and cooking in a stricter sense do occur in Chrétien, yet "with only occasional imitation by the other poets," and "even in *Yvain* they are rare"

(Fry 1973: 190). According to Fry, the two culinary images which stand out and are found most frequently are "a group of images centering on the idea of sweetness, and several images involving the word sauce" (1973: 190).

There is one scene that stands out in terms of the symbolic use of food – this is, when Yvain, publicly accused and shamed during a banquet at king Arthur's court, loses his wits, rips off his clothes, and runs off into the woods. Like all fools, Yvain devotes all of his energy to acquiring food (Matejovski 1996: 123):

Les bestes par le bois agueite,	(In the woods), he lay in wait for animals,
Si les ocit et si manjue	then slew them and ate
La veneison trestote crue.	their flesh raw.
Et tant conversa el boschage	And thus he lived,
Com hon forsenez et sauvage	like a man wild and savage
(*Yvain* 2824–2828)	(*Yvain*, transl. 291)

– but then, he encounters a hermit who helps him on the way to regain his identity as a human and to reintegrate gradually into the sphere of human civilization, primarily by changing his diet from 'nature' (raw) to 'culture' (cooked/baked), that is, from 'other' to 'civilized eating'.

The otherwise heavily abridged Old Norse *Ívents saga* (supposedly mid-thirteenth century) keeps this scene without significant shortenings. Thus, the complex role of food as a medium which is a characteristic of *Yvain/Iwein* and is a key element of the madness-scene can also be observed in the ON text:

> Hann hljóp þá fram frá landtjaldinu til skógar, ok týndi hann þá mjǫk svá ǫllu vitinu ok reif af sér klæðin. Ok er hann hafði lengi hlaupit, þá mœtti hann einum sveini, er bar einn boga ok ǫrvar fimm. Hann tók af sveininum bogann ok ǫrvarnar; hljóp hann í mǫrkina ok skaut dýr ok fugla ok át hrátt kjǫt þeira. Ok er hann hafði lengi hlaupit um mǫrkina, þá kom hann at húsi eins heremita. Ok er einsetumaðr sá hann, þá fann hann, at hann hafði eigi fullt vit sitt. Hann gaf honum brauð ok vatn af því sem hann fœddiz á, þvíat hann hræddiz hann, ok vísaði honum síðan í brott ok bað þess guð, at hann léti hann þar aldri koma optar. Íven át brauðit, þóat þat væri illa bakat, þvíat þat var blautt ok sáðugt. Aldri át hann verra brauð, ok þegar hann var mettr, þá hljóp hann aptr í mǫrkina. Hann mundi þá gǫrla þat gott, er hann hafði af einsetumanninum, ok kom engi sá dagr síðan, at hann fœrði honum eigi eitt dýr. En sá enn góði maðr gerði honum þat til matar ok gaf honum þar með vatn at drekka. (*Ívens saga*, 64–65)
>
> [He rushed out of the tent and into the forest. He had lost nearly all his reason and tore off his clothes. When he had been running for a long time, he met a boy who was carrying a bow and five arrows. Íven took the bow and arrows from the boy, then went rushing on in the forest. He shot animals [deer and birds] for himself and ate the meat raw. When he had run through the forest for a long time, he came upon the house of a hermit. But when the hermit saw him, he perceived that Íven did not have full possession of his

> senses. The hermit gave him bread and water [from which he nourished himself], because he was afraid of him, and directed him to be on his way. He prayed to God that he would never return. Íven ate the bread, even though it was poorly baked; it was soggy and full of bran. Íven had never eaten worse bread. As soon as he was full, he ran back into the forest. He was very mindful of the good the hermit had done to him, however, and not a day passed without him bringing in some animal. The good man prepared it for him and also gave him water to drink. (transl. Blaisdell and Kalinke, 60–61)]

In his madness, Yvain/Iwein seems to have lost his sense of taste, he does not seem to notice the unpleasant taste of the food he eats in the forest (Pychlau-Ezli 2018: 143). Later, when he has found his companion, the lion, he is on the mend and has regained it, which is explicit in the French text: The lion has hunted and killed a deer of which Yvain takes a steak: "Beginning to carve it he splits the skin along the rib, and taking a steak from the loin he strikes from a flint a spark, which he catches in some dry brush-wood; then he quickly puts his steak upon a roasting spit to cook before the fire, and roasts it until it is quite cooked through. But there was no pleasure in the meal, for there was no bread, or wine, or salt, or cloth, or knife, or anything else" (*Yvain* transl. 48). According to Pychlau-Ezli, Iwein in Hartmann's work has regained his courtly conscience and cannot enjoy the deer which the lion has procured (3883–3922) as it is not seasoned and comes without wine and bread (2018: 140). While Chrétien explicitly states that Yvain cannot enjoy the meal and thereby places it among the hardships Yvain does endure as part of his atonement, Hartmann just puts in a comment by the narrator that nothing more refined was available there and then (3908) – it is left open whether or not Iwein enjoys his meal.

In the Old Norse version, Ívent's stripping off his clothes is mentioned shortly (one sentence), while the element of hunting and sharing food with the hermit takes up most of the space in this episode. This strangely contrasts with the representation of Yvain/Iwein's madness by Schmid who maintains that Yvain's restoration as a cultural being took place "in one fell swoop" which was marked "by the restoration of the boundaries of shame inherent in courtly culture" (2010: 144–145). Schmid just refers to the application of the magic ointment that leads to the awakening of the hero from his state of madness, omitting the detailed role of food.

Yet, in all three versions, it is essentially via the medium food that Yvain/Iwein/Ívent's déroute and recovery are narrated, though also his garments and the place itself (wilderness, in contrast to courtly sphere) play a role. His madness shows in his other eating, i.e., it becomes manifest in his bestial meals (he eats raw meat from wild animals); and his recovery and reintegration in human and subsequently courtly society happens stepwise, again closely linked to and brought about by food and drink. While Yvain's way of hunting retains a bit of human culture in form of the use of tools (bow and arrows), his eating resembles that of the lion who will become his trusted companion. The hermit's house in the wilderness is an exclave of the sphere of human culture. At first, Yvain receives bread and water, by no means anything near a fine courtly meal, but as clearly human-cultured and not wild. The bread itself represents culture, as simple as it is, it is neverthe-

less prepared food, a complex product of ingredients and techniques. The bread is described as one of the poorest kinds, indicating that the hermit's diet differs from that of the commoners – it is utterly frugal and thus a symbol of a devout, ascetic life remote from worldly pleasure. By offering Yvain human food, the hermit re-integrates him into human society, a first step on the way to regain his former life and status. The French texts show Yvain having no restraint or manners – he eats the entire bread and drinks directly from the jar, in Hartmann's *Iwein* even from a bucket hanging by the wall (3310–3312). Yvain in return offers the hermit animals which he has hunted – and the hermit skins the animals, prepares them, and gives them Yvain to eat while himself sticking to his ascetic diet. In addition, the hermit sells the hides and buys bread made of barley, rye or other grain for Yvain.

Thus, with this next step, Yvain consumes properly cooked venison, a food stuff that would be indexical for his lost courtly lifestyle, would it not be for the complete lack of seasoning, and better bread, though not made of wheat. There is social interaction between the two, and the culinary patterns at the hermitage have changed. In Hartmann's *Iwein*, the hermit prepares the *wiltbrât* [venison] "by the fire", but due to a lack of seasoning as he found "pepper, salt and vinegar too expensive," he prepared the meat without these (3335–3339; the text of ms. B has 'cauldron' instead of 'pepper,' cf. ed. Millet et al.). When he starts to sell the hides, he buys salt and better bread for the two of them (3340–3344). Thus, Hartmann brings Iwein slightly closer to his original courtly identity by enabling him to salt his meat (cf. Pychlau-Ezli 2018: 142). Pychlau-Ezli refers to Jacque LeGoff's use of Claude Levi-Strauss' culinary triangle in the analysis of meal scenes in courtly epic and the conceptualization of cooked meat as representing a higher degree of culture than the more ambiguous roasted meat (cf. 142–143), which would put Yvain's diet of cooked meat above Iwein's of both cooked and roasted meat. Yet together with the seasoning in Hartmann's version, the ambiguity seems rather to lie in the hybrid character of Iwein's diet at the hermit's, marking his transitory state due to the different elements belonging to the diets of hermits, commoners, and nobles. Food stuffs have an indexical function and are characterizing the consumer to the degree that Guerreau-Jalabert juxtaposes "two symbolic triangles" against each other: "Le triangle chevaleresque: pain, vin, viande" [the chivalric triangle: bread, wine and meat] and "Le triangle érémitique: pain, eau et végétaux" [the eremitic triangle: bread, water and vegetables] (1992: 562–565 and 565–566). From this stage onwards, Yvain keeps eating properly prepared food, also when out hunting with the lion.

The, in some places detailed and elaborate, thematization of food and meals in the French *Yvain*, which is retained also in Hartmann's German translation (Fry 1973: 190–196 and 286), is sought in vain in the Old Norse *Ívents* (or *Ívens*) *saga*. There, no less than 77 verses of the French text, are summarized by seven words *ok veiddi léonit þeim dyr til matar* [and the lion hunted animals for them to eat], as Kölbing notes (1898: 78 fn). Nevertheless, the processual scheme, which marks different degrees of closeness and distance to human civilisation in general and courtly ideality specifically through the fanning out of the food-related symbolic content, is also fully preserved in the heavily abridged Old Norse version – in a

certain sense, this brings food as the central symbol of the madness-episode even more to the fore.

Lady, knight, and hermit: Perceval's meals

The prominent position of food and meal within the production of literary meaning can also be observed in the case of Chrétien's *Perceval*, its MHG adaptation *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach and the Old Norse *Parcivals saga*, again with significant differences in the literary realisation. Already the very first lines of the French original – the dedication to duke Philip of Flanders – contain food-related imagery in the wider sense as they allude to the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–23, Mark 4:1–20, Luke 8:4–15), connecting to the first scene of the main text: Perceval rides into the woods as he wants to visit his mother's farm workers: *Il pensa que veoir iroit / Herceors que sa mere avoit, / Que ses avaines li semoient* (81–83, quoted here and in the following after the edition by Olef-Krafft) [He thought he might go and visit the harrowers whom his mother had, who were sowing her oats.]. Unlike Chrétien, Wolfram does not start his version with young Perceval / Parzival, but with his father king Gahmuret and his mother Herzeloyde. When the story turns to their son Parzival in book 3, "we observe the emergence of food as a relevant element for the narrative development, for the descriptions of the various characters, and for the discussion of fundamental social, ethical, and even religious aspects" (Classen 2007: 319). In other words: Chrétien's text uses food symbolism and imagery from its very start, Wolfram first when he begins to follow his main source, Chrétien, more closely. The story shows Parzival's development from an uneducated simpleton to a courtly knight, and each stage is associated not only with him being fitted out with a new set of clothes, but also with a meal (Pychlau-Ezli 2018: 88). The topic of food and the carnal appetites of culinary and sexual desire thus could seem to stand stronger in the French work – manifest very early in the protagonist's reaction to the crash course in proper conduct given by his mother. Perceval does not listen to what she says but asks for food: *Li vallés entent molt petit / A che que sa mere li dist. / 'A mengier, fait il, me donez; / Ne sai de coi m'araisonnez.'* (489–492, quoted here and in the following after the edition by Olef-Krafft) [The boy heard very little of what his mother said to him. 'Give me something to eat,' he said. 'I don't know what you're talking about.' – transl. Bryant, 6]. In the German version, Parzival just relates to what his mother has mentioned last, namely the killing of his subjects, and promises to take revenge, without any mention of him being hungry (128, 11–12). Yet, Wolfram's passion for detailed descriptions also concerns scenes of feasting and food consumption, showing e.g. in catalogues of dishes (cf. Schulz 2011: 64–112: 65 fn. 129).

When the young and in every respect inexperienced Perceval of the French original sees a magnificent pavilion in a meadow, just a day away from home, he thinks it is a cathedral and wants to enter to worship God in his house. The tent as such – a marvel, *li plus biax del monde* (650) [the most beautiful in the world] – conveys meaning and suggests to the audience that the hero is about to enter either a space of authority, as in the tent of a noble person, or of *minne* [love], as in the tent of women (Stock 2008 for MHG epic); in Perceval's case, the single tent in the woods suggests the latter to the reader. Yet already Perceval's second thought

is about food which thus is introduced as an important theme from the very beginning of this episode. Perceval is very hungry and hopes to receive food from his creator: *'Je li irai priier par foi / Qu'il me doinst anqui a mengier, / Que j'en aroie grant mestier.'* (664–666) ['I shall go and pray to Him, by my faith, that He might give me food today, for I need it badly.' – transl. Bryant, 8]. This thematic strand continues when Perceval finds a girl asleep on a bed inside the pavilion. Now he greets, embraces, and kisses the protesting girl, who refers to her nearby friend and resists. Perceval forcibly takes a ring from her – and then feels his hunger again: He notices a barrel of wine and a silver goblet, and on a bundle of rushes a pure white cloth, under which he finds three venison pies. He suggests that they each eat one, leaving one left over – a concretisation of the constellation of three and the assault characterised by naïve and unrestrained desire. This is developed in detail over 30 verses (735–764).

Wolfram makes several changes to this episode. For instance, he adds a short scene depicting Parzival's departure into the woods, revealing to the audience, even before the tent scene, that he is unable to adequately apply his mother's brief teachings: Parzival does not cross a creek "which a rooster could wade through" (129,7–11) – as it is shaded by flowers and grass, thus very literally following his mother's instructions to avoid riding over a ford that is dark (127,15–18). He therefore rides alongside the creek for a whole day *als ez sînen witzen tohte* [as it seemed right to him in his simplicity] (129,12–13). Wolfram's version also omits the admonition by the mother that a maiden's love, kisses, and love tokens (ring, small pouch) must be given freely, a point emphasised several times in Chrétien's version. This partially exonerates Parzival with regard to his violent behaviour. Wolfram also provides a detailed, 29-verse description of the sleeping Jeschûte – the longest *descriptio* of a beautiful woman in his *Parzival* (Brüggen 2015: passim, here: 395).

Finally, most relevant for the article at hand, the food and the meal are dealt with differently in Wolfram's work. In both versions, Perceval/Parzival is hungry when he discovers the tent with the young lady, and both his culinary and sexual appetites unfold in an unrestrained, decisively uncourtly way (Nitsche 2000: 257), making him appear like a *vilain* in both attire and actions. Yet, whereas in Chrétien's version, Perceval himself detects the food and drink in the tent; in Wolfram's version, Jeschûte points it out to Parzival when he complains of hunger – thereby seizing on the opportunity to get rid of the crazy intruder and potential rapist:

der knappe klagete'n hunger sân.	The boy complained of hunger.
diu frouwe was ir lîbes lieht:	The lady was greatly relieved,
si sprach 'ir solt mîn ezzen nieht.	she said: 'You shall not eat me!
wært ir ze frumen wîse,	If you were suitably prudent,
ir næmt iu ander spîse.	you would take some other food.
dort stêt brôt unde wîn,	There is bread and wine
und ouch zwei pardrîsekîn,	and also two partridges,
alss ein juncfrouwe brâhte,	such as a young noblewoman brought,
dius wênec iu gedâhte.'	who hardly intended them for you.'
ern ruochte wâ diu wirtin saz:	He didn't care where the lady of the house was sitting:

einen guoten kropf er az,	He stuffed his cheeks,
dar nâch er swære trünke tranc.	then drank heavy drinks.
(*Parzival* 131,22–132,3)	(my transl.)

The intrusion of the naïve fool into a culturally refined milieu has all the makings of a comedy, as the English version of Chrétien's work, *Sir Perceval of Galle*, shows (Eckhard 2002, on the culinary comedy in the Arthurian romance, see Gordon 2007, ch. 2). The greed with which Perceval/Parzival gorges himself on food runs parallel to his sexual greed and his impetuous pouncing on the tent maiden. The greed for food displayed by the otherwise excellent knight Arnold after the tournament in the MHG short story *Diu halbe bir* [Half a pear], when he rudely "throws half a pear into his mouth" during a meal, later corresponds to the sexual greed of his counterpart, the young lady who shamed him publicly – she now wants to be made love to by the supposedly mute fool. In both cases, *Parzival* and *Diu halbe bir*, the fool ends up lying on top of the woman, but then does not know what to do (Parzival) or simulates not to know (Arnold). The meal described in *Perceval/Parzival* is perverted not only by the intrusion of rusticity into the sphere of courtliness and the many breaches of etiquette by the eponymous hero, but also and above all by the violence. Both the communal meal and the erotic/sexual encounter are forced. However, there is some ambiguity concerning Parzival's behaviour: on one hand, it is clearly wrong and uncourtly, and Parzival understands this later, he is genuinely sorry and tries to make amends for the mistake. On the other, Wolfram keeps the comic elements from Chrétien's version and gives them his own twist, e.g. by the having the young lady say: *'ir solt mîn ezzen nieht'* ['You shall not eat me!']. Thereby, he continues the layer of culinary comedy, not just reacting to the explicit hunger of the young boorish menace, but potentially also alluding to the quality of his kisses and invoking the notion of the other eating in extremo, cannibalism. The bawdy comment and image on what Parzival's father Gahmuret would have done in his place undermines the clear-cut verdict about the sexual attack as being wrong, no matter the remark on the young lady's suffering:

het er gelernt sîns vater site,	If he had learnt his father's way of life,
die werdeclîche im wonte mite,	which was honourably inherent in him,
diu bukel wære gehurtet baz,	then the shield hump would have been better stabbed
da diu herzoginne al eine saz	where the duchess sat alone,
diu sît vil kumbers durch in leit.	who has since suffered much grief because of him.
(*Parzival* 139,15–19)	(my transl.)

Here, the well-established imagery of warfare to describe an active male role in sexuality connects to the earlier scene in Jeschûte's tent, when she tries to fight off Parzival, and the rigor of his assault is expressed in the verse "ir was sîn kraft ein ganzes her" (131,20) [his strength was like a whole army to her].

The otherness of the above food scene is developed both spatially and symbolically. In medieval romance, the forest is a 'heterotopia,' an 'espace autre' (Foucault), contrasting with the world of the court (Brüggen 2015: 397; Bowden and Friede 2021: 5). The clearing with the pavilion represents an endangered exclave of courtly culture in the wild natural space. It is primarily a place of courtly love, more specifically: an "ambience for a refined thematization of intimacy and lovemaking" amidst a "place of potential transgression of norms" (Brüggen 2015: 397). This structural configuration provides a clear-cut spatial-semantic pattern informing both medieval and modern audiences of the texts (and inviting for an analysis in the vein of Lotman, Stock 2008; Bowden & Friede 2021: 3–8).

While the erotic / sexual aspects of this uncourtly encounter are at the forefront, the food theme adds another layer of meaning and literary play.

In Wolfram's text, the direction of the gaze plays an important role, and the stages of boundary violation are carefully constructed, as 1. looking, 2. entering and 3. touching (Stock 2008: 73). One follows Parzival who first interprets the tent as being a church and hopes to find food therein. The inside space is one of abundance – for the audience, it provides the erotic appeal of the voyeuristically portrayed young women; Parzival on his part is triggered by the teachings of his mother. However, as the rules of courtly culture were suspended in Soltane where Parzival lived with his mother, the inside space of the tent becomes a battleground between boorishness and courtliness personified in Parzival and Jeschûte.

In Chrétien's version, the pre-prepared meal is first visually discovered (the wine-barrel, the goblet, and the white cloth) and then uncovered (the pies under the cloth). The way in which food and drink are used to drive the plot makes them a prominent medium that emphasises the transgression of courtly love and gives it literary depth. It is particularly effective in making the boy's greed-driven actions narratable: The eroticism is developed through the detailed description of the half-naked Jeschûte on the bed, but the focus of desire is then directed to the food. Parzival does not, after all, eat Jeschûte, but rather the partridges. The stolen kiss as part of a forced sexual encounter is a transgression that potentially could lead to rape; however, this trajectory is left. Instead, the sexual act is medialised within the narrative and carried out vicariously on the ready-and-waiting food. The pies of the French version are initially hidden and then uncovered, like the anonymous noblewomen/Jeschûte is presented on the bed in her tent. While Chrétien's dishes and tableware are more refined, Wolfram covers the 'chivalric triangle' seemingly more conventionally (bread, wine, meat (=partridges)).

However, Wolfram's twist lies firstly in an innuendo in form of Jeschûte's exclamation which plays on the idea of 'other eating' by referring to Parzival's culinary and sexual appetites and reconceptualizing his hunger, kisses and threat of raping her as a looming act of anthropophagy. Secondly, also the partridges add to the food symbolism in this scene. Obermaier points to the characteristics of the partridge according to antique and medieval learned tradition, i.e., according to Pliny its "*intemperantia libidinis* ('boundless lechery') which sometimes leads to rape or to homosexual acts" (2019: 139–140). Also, she highlights that where Chrétien has *three* game pasties, Wolfram's text has *two* partridges, that is, a couple, invoking the idea of coupling and giving the scene "an unambiguously sexual, erotic grounding" (Obermaier 2019: 140, see in addition 154–158).

The heavily abridged ON *Parcivals saga* renders Parcival's assault on the tent lady as a brief list of his actions. First, he asks for a kiss, then for food. The woman screams and fights back, literally cursing that the evil one / the trolls take Parcival (*En hun bað tröll hafa hann allan* [...]; *Parcivals saga*, 5).

Parzival's meals mirror the stages of his development, also through the kind of his missteps – when dining with his knightly short-time tutor Gurnemanz, he shows no moderation at the table and talks too much about his mother. In Munsalvæsche, he witnesses a procession and sees the Grail, but following Gurnemanz' advice too closely, he now remains silent and does not ask what he was supposed to. And also in Parzival's encounter with the hermit Trevrizent, there is a meal-scene (485–487). Parzival learns a lot from the hermit but is also 'cured' of his pride by the very humble food that Trevrizent finds for him: roots and herbs from the wood.

Conclusion

Food symbolism plays an important role in medieval literature. In the vernacular Arthurian literature primarily addressed in this article, it can be observed in the following way: (1) in the context of the dichotomous spatial structure of the court and the surrounding non-courtly world ('court' versus 'forest', the MHG antithetical *ze hofe* and *ze holze*, see e.g. Wenzel 1986); (2) in the context of the multidimensional, hierarchically structured characteristics of courtly idealism; (3) in the juxtaposition of different social spaces within the narrative; (4) within the framework of identity discourses, e.g., in the depiction of an individual's inner qualities and values, as well as external signs such as clothing and food; and (5) within the framework of hybrid and permeable genres and their inherent conventions, as well as intertextual literary play and the production of meaning.

Therefore, the *otherness* of deviant eating depends on the respective frame of reference. In the Arthurian world, there are at least two fundamentally different types of other eating, predominantly being (1) boorish or rustic meals and manners as opposed to courtly ones (i.e. ordinary versus elite culture), and (2) bestial meals as opposed to human ones (i.e. nature versus culture, animal versus human). One could suggest a third category, (3) eremitic meals. In the texts discussed in this article, these are not othered to the same extent as the previous two categories. Characterised by frugality, they nevertheless constitute a subcategory of human eating, being fundamentally different from boorish eating in that they symbolise discipline and asceticism. If eremitic meals were to be considered 'other,' it would be due to their association with the sphere of religion. They belong to this world, yet they also represent a link to the other.

According to Bumke (1992b: 452), a courtly person is someone who has been brought up in a courtly manner – at its core, courtliness is an ideal of education. Therefore, mastery of courtly table manners can be considered an absolute norm within the context of group-oriented vernacular courtesy books, which presuppose an ideal community with shared values (Schnell 2004: 121). Only conduct that follows these norms is considered courtly; anything else is deemed rustic and must be avoided. Even a seemingly minor oversight in this context can indicate a lack of education and result in exclusion from the courtly sphere. Narrative texts can

translate this tension and the constant threat of villainization into action, making it narratively fruitful.

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

At the Banquet: Food and Excess with Reynard the Fox

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The stories of Reynard, the sly and ethically ambiguous Fox, abound with depictions of lavish meals and improper conduct. The tales contain subtle political and religious undertones which reflect contemporary medieval, as well as our own era's, tendencies towards pride, excess, greed, and corruption. The ups and downs of Reynard and his animal courtiers are often accompanied by visual representations of courtly life that use humour and satire to comment on more serious historical and epic narratives. The stories of Reynard form part of a longstanding tradition of allegorical and satirical social criticism; they frequently feature food and eating as symbols of both sacred and secular sins. These tales, alongside Arthurian legends and historical epics, explore and comment on contemporary theories of secular politics and legal philosophy. The social interactions depicted in King Arthur's and Reynard's worlds are often set within a self-centred and nearly lawless world, contrasted by their claimed courtly ideals. Their stories frequently juxtapose themes of food and gluttony with corruption, violence, and misguided courtly advice, as observed by Ferster (1996). Several of these stories approach societal topics via familiar Medieval political allegories, which depend on shared cultural memory to function as effective rhetoric, whether conveyed through visual or textual means (Astell 2002: 23).

One of the early Reynardian philologists, McKnight, claimed that the early English Reynard story did not contain any moral content and focused on the language; instead, subsequent studies devoted to Reynard in England concentrated on the linguistic and philological aspects rather than engaging in religious or political commentaries that might be present (McKnight 1908: 500). McKnight argued that the Reynardian stories were only for courtly amusement – void of complex thematic undertones. von Kreisler and Bercovitch dispute this argument; they discuss the poem's moral and satirical commentary on clerical corruption in twelfth-century England (von Kreisler 1970; Bercovitch 1966). Earlier research claimed that in England, "animal stories were religious and not secular" (Rombauts and Verbeke 1975: 61). Paul Strohm argues for the extensive use of beast epics in late medieval and Renaissance political theology, especially in the transformation of religiously focused politics into the pre-Machiavellian, modern, reason-driven realpolitik (Strohm 2005; Yun 2016).

The fall of great men such as Arthur—and more satirically, Reynard's archenemy, the Wolf—was presented in text and image closely connected to greed, avarice, and gluttony, with the latter perhaps more frequent in the Reynardian stories

than to Arthur. Allegorically, Reynard's excess of food and sinful gluttony become the carnal opposite of knightly ideals of piety and constraint with clear theological and political comments on the human world. In this article, I will discuss a possible connection between food and feasting during courtly feasts in Reynard and King Arthur, examining how the sins of greed and gluttony are represented in the Reynardian stories as commentary on politics and chivalric ideals.

Reynard and Arthur

Before Reynard entered the English literary tradition, it had developed for two centuries on the continent. The Aesopic fables had been around for centuries before the eleventh-century Latin poem *Ecbasis cujusdam captivi per Tropologiam* told of the animosity between the Fox and the wolf. Reynard entered the literary stage in the Flemish city of Ghent in 1149 in the shape of the long Latin poem *Ysengrimus*, initially thought to be by a cleric named Nivael, though the exact name of the author is still unknown (Mann [ed. *Ysengrimus*] 2013: xvii–xix). In this long Latin poem of more than 6500 lines, several short stories satirize monastic authorities and contemporary corrupt monk-bishops. The extensive French *Roman de Renart* followed the Latin poem, the first written by Pierre de Saint Cloud, which came during the 1170s, introducing many branches of the Reynardian stories. Paul Wackers connects the development of *Roman de Renart* to topics from the popular chansons de geste, the French war epics (Wackers 2000: 56–57). One of the significant changes in the French version of Reynard was their chivalric nature, the comradeship between knights in an age of Arthurian romances and crusades – mirroring the contemporary ideals of chivalry and justice (Wackers 2000: 56). Justice was at the heart of knightly romances – although reality in warring Europe rarely followed such chivalric ideals (Green 2014: 23–43). The Catalan Ramon Llull, in 1274, was the first to describe the chivalric ideal of justice in *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, translated and printed by Caxton in 1492 (Llull 1274/2015). Here, Llull explains the origin of the first thousand knights in Order of Chivalry:

> At the begynnyng whan to the world was comen mesprysion, justice returned by drede in to honour in whiche she was wonte to be and therfore alle the peple was deuysed by thousands and of eche thousand was chosen a man moost loyal, most stronge and of most noble courage & better enseygned and manerd than al the other. [1] (Llull 1274/2015, Part I, 55).
>
> [At the beginning, when misprision had arrived in the world, justice regained honour through fear, in the place where she used to be. Consequently, all the people were divided into thousands, and from each thousand, a man who was the most loyal, strong, of noble courage, and better educated and mannered than all the others, was chosen.]

Geoffroi de Charny echoes Llull's legal sentiment in his chivalrous textbook, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry*, written at the height of the Anglo-French Hundred Years War (1337–1453). The opening creed tells the knight: "there can be no evil only good", he later describes the knights' duties: "knights can do their part

with their swords, maintaining and protecting the faith, reason, and justice" (de Charny 2005: 47, 93). This chivalric notion is represented in the knightly characters of the battling wolf and Fox but also ridiculed for their corrupt and greedy nature.

The long medieval Reynardian literary tradition covers nearly three hundred years of religious and political debates across continental and English history. In English literary tradition, Reynard is first introduced in the late twelfth-century poem *Þe vox and Þe wolf* (Bodleian, MS. Digby 86, 138r–140r). The poem introduces the two characters from the familiar story of the Fox tricking the wolf into a well. Reynard appears in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales*, together with *Chanticleer the cock*, adapted from Aesop's fable with the Fox and crow telling the story of the Fox's cunning in his hunt for food and fooling his fellow animals.

Within the historical context of the late Fifteenth century and the English Wars of the Roses lies the English translations and versions of the Reynardian and Arthurian stories printed by the English printer William Caxton; both became bestsellers and feature kings and knights, commenting on the political tensions of late fifteenth-century England. Caxton's *The Historie of Reynard the Fox* (Caxton 1481/1970) was a translation and adaptation from Gerard Leeu's 1479 Dutch prose *Hystorie van Reynaert die Vos*, which was an adaptation of a version of the French Branch Two of the *Roman de Renart* and the Dutch *Reinaerts historie* from c. 1375 (Archibald 2009: 84; Bouwman and Besamusca 2009; Varty 2000a: 163; Varty 2000b; Wackers 2000). Caxton's English translation of the Reynardian stories quickly became popular during the reigns of the Yorkist Kings Edward IV and Richard III. During the reign of Edward IV, Caxton published several bestsellers, ranging from the devotional to the historical and epic genres. Several of his chivalric translations were published during his time under the patronage of Duchess Margaret of Burgundy, sister to the two Yorkist kings Edward IV and Richard III (Blake 1965, 293). The stories about Reynard, together with *The History of Troy* (1473), Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1476) and Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* (1478), *The Fables of Æsop* (1484), and Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485), were among Caxton's most famous printings.

Thomas Malory's *Le Mort Darthur*, written in 1469–70, was adapted by Caxton and printed as *Morte Darthur* (Malory 1485/1891). Malory's editing of Arthurian characters, narratives, and courtly and chivalrous ideals reflects a time of political tension. A significant topic at the time was the ideal kingship and the king's ability to rule justly. Malory's *Morte Darthur* propagated an Arthur fit for the royal debates during the war between the Lancastrians and Yorkists (Radulescu 2003: 38–40). After over a century of war between England and France, followed by decades of civil war between the two Plantagenet houses of York and Lancaster, the stories of greedy and violent barons, lusty and corrupt clergy, and the foxy trickster would have resonated in a society where the ideals of chivalry and domestic peace were at odds—akin to the stories of the outlaw Robin Hood emerging at the same time (Pollard 2004: 6).

Caxton proclaims in his prologue, calling the stories of Reynard a history of *goode lernynge*, adding that the *booke is maad for nede and prouffyte of alle god folke* [this book is made for the need and profit of all good people.] The stories should

not tempt the reader to use and follow them, but *kepe hym from the subtyl false shrewis that they be not deceyuyd* [Keep him from the cunning, deceitful scoundrels so that he is not deceived]. Although the stories need to be read multiple time, they *shall be right Ioyous playsant and prouffitable* [shall be right joyous, pleasant, and profitable] (Caxton 1481/1970, 6, lines 1–19). Reynard and his animal companions display social interaction within a self-centred and lawless world akin to a dark mirror of the Arthurian knights. Caxton, who translated Reynard's stories, concludes his translation with a commentary on the corrupt and amoral state of society, which is still filled with wicked foxes: *ther ben founden mo foxes now / than euer were here to fore* [There are more foxes now than ever were here before] (Ch. xliij, Caxton 1481/1970, 110, line: 117).1 The apparent need for a contemporary political and judicial commentary on the social politics of late medieval England might point to reasons for the Caxton's publication amid a raging war between the two houses of Lancaster and York – popularly termed the Wars of the Roses, limited roughly to 1450 to 1509 (Hicks 2010: 33) – and suggest an emphasis on good council in a time of clerical and judicial corruption.

Greed, gluttony, and lust

Discussing the culinary comedy in the French Reynard cycle, *Le Roman de Renart*, Sarah Gordon comments on the obsession with food that it "is about animal appetites", a code of "eat or be eaten" (Gordon 2007: 140). One of the oldest Reynardian episodes dates back to the first Latin version, written in 1149, and is adapted in most subsequent versions as the story of the wolf in the well (Varty 2000b: xiii). The versions change throughout the centuries, from being stark criticism of the greediness of monks and Reynard's description of heaven – since he pretends to be dead and arrived in heaven – to luring the wolf down in promise of a great cheese – the reflection of the moon in the water – and luring Isengrim's wife Arswind into the bucket for her want of fish. The turning of the wheel in the fox's favour is perhaps best described with Reynard's own words as he passes Isengrim's wife Arswind on his way up from the well he has tricked her into: *thou saidest thus fareth the world that one goth vp / and another goth doun* [you said, so goes the world, one goes up and another goes down.] (Ch. xxxiij, Caxton 1481/1970, 91, lines: 21–22).

Since ancient Greek myths and fables, the Fox has been associated with wickedness and mischievousness, often linked to the sins of gluttony, greed, and lust. In most branches of the French *Roman de Renart* and its succeeding versions, food and eating are integral to the story, with gluttony serving as a central theme and social commentary (Gordon 2007: 145–146). Eating, either in excess or forbidden food and drink during Lent or fasting times, was considered sinful and fell into the sins of the tongue of greed and gluttony – together with lying and slander – with references to Adam's sins in the Garden (Brosamer 1998).

1 All references to line numbers in Caxton's 1481 *The History of Reynard the Fox* (STC 20919) are from Norman F. Blake's EETS os 263 edition (1970), translations are from *Reynard the Fox: a new translation*. Simpson 2005: 321-336.

According to the patristic theologians Nilus of Sinai (d. ca 430) and Maximus of Turin (d. ca. 420), Adam's sin of gluttony was the reason for the Fall from paradise, and "what the first man lost by eating, the second Adam recovered by fasting", these patristic notions were later examined by Aquinas (1225-1274) in his *Summa Theologica* (Bynum 1987: 32–36). Within theological discussions on the fall narrative, Augustine of Hippo to Bernard of Clairvaux describe sinners and heretics as foxes; Martin Luther would later fuse the image of the Fox with the devil (Ziolkowski 2017: 155–156). Christian visual allegories and representations of the topics raised in the Reynardian stories would include moral aspects in high and late medieval Europe, ranging from the satirical and humorous to the grimly allegorical, depending on the artist's approach to Reynard as either an entertainer or an allegory of Satan (Wallen 2006: 52). In the beautifully illuminated edition by Jacquemart Gelée, *Renard le Noule* (1288/9), an allegorical war rages between King Noble as Virtue and Reynard as Vice. Moreover, with the adaptation by Philip Novare in the 13th century, "Reynard had become a symbol for falsehood and treachery" (Varty 1967: 22). The stories of Reynard changed throughout the High and Late Middle Ages, incorporating contemporary political and religious elements. The high medieval commentary often concerned the corruption of monks, abbots, monk-bishops, and monk-popes. One story describes the wolf's appetite and his physical attributes, where his stomach is like the pit of hell, and his greed that of a monk's, commenting on the fall and corruption of monk-bishops. Jill Mann explains that the wolf's greed symbolises a monk's, bishop's, and pope's greed: "someone who pursues profit in total disregard of morality and religion" (Mann 2000: 3–4). Among the contemporary figures were Anselm, bishop of Tournai, whose greed and hunger were like "a hungry lion…leaving only what he can't find", and Bernard, "the rag-wearer from Clairvaux […] who devours like Satan and holds like hell" (4). Reynard, depicted as the Antichrist or a devilish figure, had evolved throughout the French and later German stories. In Pierre de Beauvais's *Bestiaire*, both the Fox and the wolf are associated with the devil. The wolf is crafty and stealthy, while the Fox is devious and deceitful, becoming the symbol of gluttony and lust (Gordon 2007: 142–143).

At King Lion's banquet

Caxton's story of Reynard opens, as all good stories do, with a feast: "It was the feast of Pentecost. The lion, noble King of all beasts, wished to hold open court over the days of the feast." At this grand royal feast, the King had summoned his entire court; all beasts came, great and small, all except Reynard the Fox. The many animal characters in the beast epics of Reynard represent the typical medieval citizens, the lion Noble as King; Bruin the Bear as the landlords; the Wolf Isengrim plays knights; the clerics come in many guises, as donkeys, Bellin the Ram and Mertin the ape, whilst the ordinary public are chicken, hares, dogs, or snails. Although in the French branches, he is an aristocrat at the court of King Lion, having his splendid castle, Maleperduys is by Caxton described as the best and most secure in the land (Ch vii, "How Bruin the Bear fares with Reynard the Fox" Caxton 1481/1970, 13, lines: 19–11). Reynard himself often portrays the role of the burgher, the in-between character, which the traditional trickster figure often has.

The opening feast at the court of King Noble changes throughout the ages, from an ordinary feast, later to be set on the liturgical celebration of Pentecost, or Whitsunday. King Noble's two feasts end up being all but festive; they, too, symbolise change and departure, but into accusations of violence, lust, and gluttony, where corrupted justice is achieved by lies and greed. As with the Arthurian feasts of Pentecost, foreshadowing change and action, it does not take long before the jolly feast changes pace and mood. The absentee fox's actions lead the festivities into a criminal court, and several of the attending animals demand justice from the King against the many crimes committed by the trickster Reynard. Courtoys the Dog had, in the cold of winter, his sausage stolen; Tybert the Cat accuses the Fox of biting Cuwaert the Hare during a scholarly lesson whilst singing the Credo. Tybert describes Reynard's lust having brought him so low that he *loueth noman so wel […] so that he myght wynne as moche as a legge of a fat henne* [loved no man so much … that he might win as much as a leg of a fat hen] (Ch iij, "Then spak tybert the catte" Caxton 1481/1970, 8, lines: 8–10). The first knight to go questing for Reynard is Bruin the Bear. Because of his lust and greed for delicious honey, he is tricked by Reynard, resulting in a thorough and bloody beating by the townspeople. A similar faith awaits the next questing knight, Tybert the Cat, for his gluttonous appetite for mice. Even though renowned for his cunning rather than brute force, he is easily fooled by Reynard. It takes a more noble kinsman, Reynard's nephew, Grimbart the Badger, to bring the fox to court and his awaiting trial. Much of the fox's trickery and accusations concern the pursuit of food, and the gluttonous animalistic vices are extended to familiar moralistic imagery and portrayal of excess and avarice.

The Fox is ultimately pardoned for his and his father's violent and conspiratorial crimes at the king's court. However, they are just lies told by Reynard to implement his accusers in actions of treason, not because of a prevalence of justice, but with lies and false claims of hidden wealth. Lion's unbalanced and unjustly ruling shows the king's corrupt nature and sinful avarice; his greed for earthly wealth shifts the verdict and disregards the law. A sentiment exclaimed by Corbant the Crow after Reynard has devoured all but Corbant wife, Sharpbeak's, head:

> for tho lordes that do not Iustyce and suffre that the lawe be not executed vpon the theeuis / morderars and them that mysdoo / they be parteners to fore god of alle theyr mysdedes and trespaces (Ch xxiiij, "How corbant the roke complained on the foxe for the deth of his wyf", Caxton 1481/1970, 53, lines 13–16).
>
> [God judges lords who fail to do justice and permit the law to be ignored when it comes to thieves, murders, and lawbreakers as partners in crime.]

In Caxton's England, Jack Cade's rebellion opened its Proclamation of Grievances against the Lancastrian King Henry VI by emphasising the King's legal corruption: "They say that our sovereign is above his laws to his pleasure, and he may make it and break it as he pleases, without any distinction. The contrary is true, or else he should not have sworn to keep it" (Gairdner 1880: 94; Cook 1984: Ch. 3; Kaufman 2020). Reynard's corruption and manipulation of King Noble, as well as

God's divine justice, highlight the instability of earthly powers and the importance of a ruler to rule justly. Since the fox continues to evade political and legal justice, Reynard's self-interest "consumes everything in its way, including the ethical and political orders" (Simpson 2005: 326–327). With Reynard's temptation of worldly treasure, disguised as a condemned fox's last confession, the king's lust triumphs, and he is corrupted into letting Reynard go. The corruption at King Noble's court is seen as the fall of a moral and just society and the fall of great men. The judicial similarities in Reynard are evident in King Noble's failure to uphold law and justice—his and his court's greed and corruption ultimately lead to their downfall.

The allegories of law and politics in Malory and Reynard were influential commentaries on society in late medieval England. The representation of allegory ranges from the greedy and amoral monastic monk-bishops in the Latin poem *Ysengrimus*, written in Ghent in 1149, to the angry and lustful knights of crusading France in the *Roman de Renart* and its Dutch version, translated by Caxton. The stories of Reynard had been political and religious commentaries since their first Dutch presentation in the 1100s. Reynard has been presented as part mock-heroic, part deceitful trickster figure, familiar from the beast epic of Aesop. Reynard, Anansi, the African spider, and the Native American coyote were often archetypal cultural heroes and tricksters (Clinton 2017). Since their reinvention in the medieval literary tradition, the world of animal stories followed their classical antecedents in using animals to tell moral, didactic, and satirical stories ranging from bestiaries, fables, and beast epics. The latter type, in which we find the character Reynard, most often took on the form of satire and social criticism much more than the pedagogical fables. In England, most illiterate people heard the stories of Reynard told aloud – often from the pulpit as warning stories of sinful behaviour – and could see the many episodes carved in wood and stone. One example is from the Elder Lady Chapel in Bristol Cathedral, which juxtaposes the battle between St. Michael or St. George and the dragon with the wickedness of Reynard's lust for food and geese (Varty 1967: 26). Where the dragon above represents evil and the saint's goodness, the goose becomes the gullible congregation, tempted and deceived by the hungry fox.

Food, feast, and fast

There was a splendour at the court feasts which rivalled no other, an absolute display of power and loyalty. All of King Noble's loyal subjects came to show allegiance to their king, except Reynard, who, despite – or rather as a result of his lies and deception – goes from being an outlaw and a villain to becoming King Noble's most trusted councillor. Courtly ethics and ideals are set aside in favour of Reynard and the other nobles' desires to consume. Simpson argues for the consuming ethics in Reynard and that his stories challenge "the notion that we can ever see beyond our own desire," the self-interest of both the fox and his fellow courtiers "consumes everything in its way, including the ethical and political orders" (Simpson 2005: 326). The moral perspective, which combines gluttony and justice, reflects medieval and Arthurian feasts as a courteous and holy symbolic order and symmetry of feasting and fasting (Bynum 1987). The mirroring of a courtly feast with the Last Supper and the annual Holy Feast of the Eucharist – Feast of

Corpus Christi – reflected a ceremonial and liturgical dimension to the Pentecost courtly feasts. In *Mort d'Arthur*, some of these feasts were held on Pentecost. After Arthur pulls the sword from the stone on Whitsunday, he commands a great feast after his coronation. Another Pentecostal feast is held, which reveals to Arthur's court the Holy Grail, sending the questing knights on their way to pursue glory and honour. During his Pentecostal feast at his coronation, Arthur proclaims that he should "be a true king, to stand with true justice" (Malory 1485/1891). The Arthurian knights were a force for good, and King Arthur was the image of justice. Camelot's downfall came about because Arthur failed to uphold his Pentecostal oath and the ideals of justice (Bedwell 2011). Elizabeth Archibald explains that the early Arthurian texts and legends of the late twelfth-century debate contemporary issues of courtly ideals and the role of kingship (Archibald 2009: 145). Arthur and even Robin Hood, vow not to eat before certain events, displaying an act of moral and devotional restraint, in which Holy Mass balances the Royal Feast. This pious act is reversed in the clear presence of gluttonous feasting and continuous eating and is cynically mocked in the lies told by Reynard. His promises of fasting, acts of penance, and remorse are all but play, and the ideals of courtly rituals and knightly chivalry, so closely linked to religious self-discipline, are here portrayed as corrupted, just like the justice system (Byrne 2011: 64). Similarly, the corrupt and unjust King Lion – Rex Iniustus – who becomes ill because of his corruption and injustices in the German version of Reynard from 1170 – is a satire of the political situation in Europe during the great schism. Emperor Barbarossa broke his oath to his vassals and bishops when he recognised Pope Alexander III instead of the Anti-Pope Pascal, to which his subject turned on him (Pastré 2000: 43).

Medieval satire, as Ben Parson summarises, was widely used to reveal the naked truth about sins. Parson lists authors such as Isidore of Seville, William of Tyre, John Trevista, and Averroes of Cordova who agree that satire depicts vice to prevent sinful actions – a sentiment echoed by Caxton in his translation of Reynard (Parsons 2009: 105–109). Reynard's performance at court, as storyteller of fantastical treasures and high treason, turns the tables on the other courtiers, not only resulting in Reynard's freedom and elevation to royal councillor but also the severe punishment of his accusers. Although Reynard's role in the court of King Lion develops into that of a trusted advisor, schemes and lies dominate Lion's court, following the courtiers' gluttonous appetite for power and excess.

The political and theological topics raised by Reynard since his conception in the late twelfth century mirrored his contemporary society, with warring barons, corrupt popes, and the chivalric ideals of the Crusades. Similar to dramatic comedy, satire has long been a favoured genre to comment on contemporary issues – political and religious. Ever since the first Latin version, *Ysengrimus*, in which a dark satire shows Reynard's seemingly evil counsel to flay the wolf to cure the ailing king by wrapping him in the skin of the wolf to the entertainment of the court (Mann 2000: 2). The gluttonous behaviour of the power-hungry King Noble's court sits in contrast to the apparent chivalric ideals of the Arthurian court, the romantic life in the glamour and unity of the Round Table, though the reality of war and politics of the upper classes were far away from such idylls (Archibald 2009: 139).

The stories and depictions of Reynard have continued to fascinate and challenge the political and religious anti-heroes and their quest for justice in a dark world. The stories appropriately capture the ubiquitous allure of carnal desires and avarice, as manifested through the pursuit of gustatory pleasures, opulent attire, and territorial conquest. The depiction of animalistic traits in the tales can be encapsulated in the words of Reynard, the overambitious and ever hungry will always fall: *Ouer couetous was neuer good the beest can not be satisfyed* [Being overgreedy was never a good idea. For an animal can't be satisfied] (Ch. xxxiij, Caxton 1481/1970: 90, lines: 11–14). Caxton ends his stories with his contemporary observation about the fall of society and the many Reynards there are in courts, secular and ecclesiastical: *The rightwys peple ben al loste / trouthe and rightwysnes ben exyled and fordriuen* [The righteous people are all gone / truth and righteousness have been exiled and driven away](CH. xliij, Caxton 1481/1970: 110, lines: 117–119). The beast fable and Reynardian storytelling remain indebted to the didactic and moralising traditions of Aesop yet is suffused with theological suppositions. The greed and gluttony Reynard exploits in his fellow beasts showcase the fall into a thoroughly corrupt and sinful court. In the corpus of Reynardian narratives, the themes of feasting and food are intimately intertwined with depictions of political and religious corruption, thereby engaging in a trenchant and sardonic exploration of the sins of the tongue. In this reading, Reynard comments on how courtly obsession with food and lavish feasting, failed fasting and oath breaking form part of a consuming ethics, in which the sins of greed and gluttony dominates and drives society's powerful elite with an ever-growing appetite, in Reynard's own words *who that wold haue all/ leseth alle/ Ouer couetous was neuer good/ For the beest can not be satisfied* [Being overgreedy was never a good idea. For an animal can't be satisfied] (Ch. xxxiij "How ysengrym the wolf complayned agayn on the foxe" Caxton 1481/1970: 90, lines: 13–14).

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Part III
Materiality: Transcending Text and Reality

Introduction

David Brégaint

Strongly influenced by the *material turn*, an increasing number of studies on the matière de Bretagne are examining the objects that are part of the Arthurian world (Friede 2020; Mühlherr 2016). The Holy Grail itself, as well as the round table of knights, among others, are pivotal objects of legend, serving both as symbols and artifacts. It is therefore not surprising that, in the context of banquets, we might ask ourselves how furniture as well as other objects used in festivities were described, how they were perceived, and what functions they served in medieval texts?

Among the essential elements of court festivities were, of course, music, musicians, and their instruments. Medieval court treatises and their illuminations, such as those of the court of the Kingdom of Aragon in the fourteenth century – the *Leges Palatinae* and the *Ordinaciones*, emphasize the pivotal role of music and musicians in the daily life of courtiers (*Leges Palatinae* 1994; *Ordinaciones fetes*; Ballester 2023: 157–176). One of the most obvious functions of music and songs was to entertain, either by playing alone or by accompanying the poems of the *chansons de geste* which were sung or recited by the troubadours and other minstrels. In this regard, as Martin Aurell showed in his study of Provençal *sirventes*, the stringed instrument *vielle* should not only be perceived as a musical device but also as an intrinsic component of political propaganda activity (Aurell 1989).

The ceremonials of the most prestigious banquets were often accompanied by songs and musical pieces to signify the start of the meal and the serving of dishes. Likewise, music and musical instruments were also present in courtly literature, particularly in Arthurian novels. For instance, in *Ívens saga,* when Iven married Laudun, King Arthur organized a grand celebration with "very excellent honor and pomp, in addition likewise musical instruments, song, and all kinds of entertainment and merriment" (*Ívens saga* 1979: 70, 183). However, the presence of musical instruments in descriptions of banquets can raise certain questions. In "The Instrumentarium in the Riddarasǫgur: Remarks on a Literary Motive", Hélène Tétrel addresses the function of musical instruments in the Norse translations of certain Arthurian *riddarasǫgur* novels. Although musical instruments are indeed part of the decorum of the courtly universe, their presence in translations sometimes seems arbitrary, serving the authors simply as rhetorical devices to shape

their stories, establish a textual rhythm, and embellish their text. While Tétrel notes that this strategy seems similar to that in the original Old French texts, it still emphasizes the importance attached by actors of the courtly universe to music and its instruments in the context of court festivities.

The study by Bjørn Bandlien, "Arthurian Materiality in Medieval Norway" also questions the relationship between text and reality, but this time, in contrast to Tétrel, the other way around: it is the imagined reality of literary texts that impacted the reality of the court in its materiality.

Luxury and the display of wealth, this *conspicuous consumption* so brilliantly developed a century ago by Thorstein Veblen, played a substantial role in the construction of the system of domination of the aristocratic elites (Veblen 1994). Indeed, the establishment of rules and laws controlling this display, these famous sumptuary laws, were not necessarily intended to limit the waste of wealth, but rather to reserve these tools of social pre-eminence for the most powerful of the elite (Bartholeyns 2014: 215–232). Too, liberal access to the most precious fabrics or the most sparkling jewellery called into question the social order within the elite. For instance, when in 1301, Queen Joan of Navarre, wife of the French king Philip the Fair, entered the city of Bruges, she rightly complained about the splendor of the women of the local nobility: "I thought I was queen here, I see hundreds of them."

These social markers of clothing, jewellery, and luxury furniture were also present in the courts of Arthurian novels and, in particular, in their courtly *imaginaire*. In his analysis of precious stones, luxury clothing, and drinking horns, Bjørn Bandlien shows how these objects acquired meaning in the reality of the court through their presence and use in Arthurian translations. This demonstrates the general impact of courtly literature on Norwegian court actors in the thirteenth century. Bandlien illustrates how jewels of courtly novels and their symbolic significance became constitutive elements of the identity of courtiers. They were not merely luxury objects aimed at demonstrating the social status of their wearer but also a means of communicating one's belonging to the entire courtly culture. Finally, drinking horns, artifacts belonging to the world of festivals and court banquets, occupied an important place and a decisive symbolic role in the courtly romances translated into Norse in the thirteenth century. Whether they possessed magical properties, as in the *Lai du cor* (1170–1180), or were more prosaically used as instruments of commensality during drinking sessions, the drinking horn became an increasingly prized object among Norwegian princes and princesses in their material and cultural inventories *(Le Lai du cor*, 1998).

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

The *Instrumentarium* in the *Riddarasǫgur*: Remarks on a Literary Motive

Hélène Tétrel

Catalogues of instruments were conventional motives in French narrative literature from the first half of the twelfth century to the end of the fourteenth, in *oc* and in *oïl*.[1] So were they, soon after the twelfth century, in other European literatures like Spanish, German and English.[2] These catalogues consist in a sequence of juxtaposed names of musical instruments, sometimes only two, sometimes over a dozen. Found more often in versified romances than in other genres, this motive mostly takes place in passages describing festivities and banquets.

Though categories of medieval instruments do not correspond to modern standards and depend on genre and context, these catalogues have been investigated by musicologists and historians. Some of them have pointed out that the ensembles partially follow the late medieval opposition between *haut* and *bas* ('loud' and 'soft') instruments (Bowles 1954).[3]

> The loud category included the bombard (brass shawm), buisine (clarion), chalumeau (reed pipe), cornamuse (bagpipe), cymbals, drums, horns, and trumpets. The soft instruments comprised the cithara, douçaine (cromorne), flageolet (recorder), flute, guitar, harp, hurdy-gurdy, lute, trumscheit (monochord), panpipes, psaltery, rebec, rote (crwth), and vielle.
>
> (Bowles 1954: 121; cf. 1958: 155–169)

1 Many publications are partially or wholly dedicated to the instrumental list in Old French literature. Two standard monographies are Page (1987) and Bec (1992).

2 Pierre Bec, a specialist of Provençal and Mediterranean literature, gives an insight of Spanish and Occitan literature as well as of Northern French and Anglo-Norman romances (1992). Astrid Eitschberger (1999) gives a survey of similar occurrences of the motive in German medieval romances, and notes that this motive seems to be characteristic of versified romances. In his dictionary (1961), Henry Holland Carter makes abundant use of romances in Middle English, and so did Francis W. Galpin in his publications from the previous century (for instance 1911 [1910]).

3 This fundamental organisation is documented by poets of the late Middle Ages like Eustache Deschamps who mentions the *instrumens coys* (Ballade 23, line 18, in C. Dauphant, ed. 2014: 100–102). But this distinction is not always easy to perceive in older poems where the organological reality lying behind the name is questionable (see *infra*). Bec (1992: 64) and others nevertheless make use of this category in their interpretation of the instrumental catalogue in older narrative poetry.

Depending on the context, the lists will separate stringed instruments like fiddles, harps or rotes, accompanied by singers, reciters or poets (men or women) from brass and percussion. As for harp-like instruments, very often mentioned in these lists, they are a textbook case of cross-investigation through archaeology, iconography and studies in historiographical sources.[4] However, the instrumental list also betrays other motivations:[5] as a rhetorical motive, it is obviously chosen for rhythm, sound and words. From its frequency in European literature, one can infer that it must have been recognized by all types of audiences, authors and copyists, and therefore automatically associated with literary situations rather than everyday life.

The *Roman d'Eneas* has kept one of the earliest occurrences of the short combination of this motive, an occurrence which only associates the harp and the viol. It is found in the passage where Eneas tells his story to queen Dido (adapted from *Aeneis*, Canto 2):

Dedenz la vile fu conduit Li chevax a molt grant deduit: Devant chantoient les donzelles, Sonent et harpes et vïelles; A grant leece a a grant joie Menames nostre duel an Troie. (*Le Roman d'Eneas, 23; Eneas*, l. 1145–1150)	Inside the city the horse was led, with much rejoicing; walking in front, the young ladies were singing, playing the harp and the viol; with great joy and enthusiasm, we led our misfortune inside Troy. (My translation)

About the same period, a longer version of the sequence is represented by Wace's *Roman de Brut,* where the motive appears in two different places. The first list appears lines 3695–3706 in the standard edition, inserted in the portrait of King Blegabret, who is presented as a skilled musician. The passage corresponds to §52 of the *Historia regum Britannie*. Commenting on this occurrence, the editor Judith Weiss (2002) insists in a footnote p. 92 that Wace adds considerably to the portrait, especially regarding his command of instruments:

4 Instruments of the type of the lyre or the harp have traditions of their own. On the representation of the harp as a religious symbol in psalters, see for instance Marchesin (2000: 28) and Huglo (1981: 97–113). Alban Gautier (2006: 105–106) mentions the importance of the poet playing the harp or cithara in Anglo-Saxon poetry (first of all, *Beowulf*), and recalls that these corpuses cross the early Anglo-Saxon archaeological discoveries in burial sites like Sutton Hoo's. Attempts to give a clear definition of the harp in dictionaries and handbooks like Galpin's (1911 [1910]: 1–19) show that harp, lyre and rote are related and have complex and cross-border origins, whatever the sources consulted, literary, archaeological or iconographical/historiographical.

5 Boening (2001: 12) mentions Machaut's 'delight in words' in his long sequence of the *Remède de Fortune*.

Cist sout de nature de chant,	He knew about the properties of
Unches hom plus n'en sout, ne tant;	song; no one ever knew more nor
De tuz estrumenz sout maistrie	so much. He was master of every
Si sout de tute chanterie,	instrument and knowledgeable
Mult sout de lais, mult sout de note,	about every sort of singing. He
De vïele sout e de rote,	knew all about lays and about
De harpe sout e de chorum,	melodies; he knew how to play the
De lire e de psalterium.	viol and the rote, the harp and the
Pur ço qu'il out de chant tel sens,	choron, the lyre and the psaltery.
Diseient la gent en sun tens	Because he understood singing so
Ke il ert deus des jugleors	well, the people of his time called
E deus de tuz les chanteors.	him the god of minstrels and the
	god of all singers.

(*Wace's Roman de Brut. A History of the British,* 94–95)

The second and more well-known amplification in Wace's *Brut* takes place, in some of the manuscripts, at Arthur's court, during the celebration of the king's coronation (amplifying §155 of the *Historia regum Britannie*). The editor, Judith Weiss, specifies in a footnote that the motive of music at court has not been added in all manuscripts (2002: 265).

Mult out a la curt jugleürs,	There were many minstrels at
Chanteürs, estrumenteürs;	court, singers and instrumentalists:
Mult peüssiez oïr chançuns,	many songs could be heard,
Rotruenges e novels suns,	melodies sung to the rote and
Vïeleüres, lais de notes,	new tunes, fiddle music lays with
Lais de vïeles, lais de rotes,	melodies, lays on fiddles, lays
Lais de harpes, lais de frestels,	on rotes, lays on harp, lays on
Lires, tympes e chalemels,	flutes, lyres, drums and shawms,
Symphonies, psalteriuns,	bagpipes, psalteries, monochords,
Monacordes, timbes, coruns.	tambourines and choruns. There
Assez i out tresgeteürs;	were plenty of conjurors, dancers
Joeresses e jugleürs;	and jugglers. Some told stories and
Li un dient contes e fables,	tales, others asked for dice and
Alquant demandent dez e tables. (...).	Backgammon. (...)

(*Wace's Roman de Brut*, l. 10543–10556)

To look deeper into the history of this stereotype, one must observe that it belongs to a more general trend in poetry (sometimes prose): the art of lists, registers or inventories, which was widely shared until the end of the Middle Ages.[6] Madeleine Jeay (2006) gives a survey of the *sujets topiques* lying behind medieval lists. The most frequent are inspired by human activities and everyday life: food, illnesses,

6 Peppers (2022) investigates occurrences of our catalogue in the 16th century. Rabelais's taste for inventories has been widely commented upon, though less often in terms of a continuity with medieval usage.

items of the household or *realia* (among which musical instruments). Lists therefore appear more frequently at the occasion of festive events. Jeay (2006: 10–11, my translation) insists on the disruptive nature of this type of sequence:

> la donnée quantitative n'est pas primordiale pour signaler la présence d'une liste. L'essentiel est précisément l'effet de rupture, de présence dans l'énoncé hôte d'un bloc textuel identifiable par son hétérogénéité.
>
> [quantity is not the most important sign of existence of a list. What is essential is the disruptive effect, the presence in a textual frame of a textual piece that can be identified by its heterogeneity.]

Up to a certain extent, the instrumental lists can therefore be used as material evidence (all the more so when accompanied by an iconographic programme); but on the other hand, because they are artificially inserted pieces, the reality they describe is questionable. Bec (1992), Page (1987) and Eitschberger (1999), who have investigated an extensive number of these occurrences in several languages, all come to the conclusion that most of them do not provide a clear information on performances and musical instruments, primarily because the semiotics of medieval instruments is unstable. Not only does the organological typology of the actual instruments lack of fixity, but also the lexical matches are at fault (see, among others, Page (1987: 160); Bec (1992: 29-30); Eitschberger (1999: 9)). So do most literary critics who have dealt with the question, directly or indirectly. One can argue with Sylvia Huot (1989: 69) that the catalogue of instruments at court "generally communicate an atmosphere of festive abundance rather than a mimetic account of specific performing ensembles." Furthermore, comparing these lists of instruments with their illustrations (when they exist) only raises new questions, because literal representation is never a given.[7] Even Machaut's manuscripts do not provide a stable basis.[8]

Though generally not mentioned by the critic in this context, Old Norse-Icelandic literature has preserved many occurrences of this motive. It is not the aim of this paper to decide whether it first came to Scandinavia as a French imported stereotype.[9] At any rate, the observation can be made that many occurrences are found in chivalric sagas related to a French source: many translators, and after them, copyists, who have transmitted the *riddarasǫgur* have been confronted with

7 Marchesin (2000: 98–99) investigates illustrated psalteries. She makes a distinction between a 'litteral illustration' (a picture corresponds to a word) and the situation where the picture is symbolically related to the text. To a certain extent, this concept can be exported to our lists in profane literature.

8 Boening (2001: 12) compares *Beowulf*'s poet, Chaucer and Machaut. About the latter's *Remède de Fortune*, the critic states that the list "violates all we know about medieval performance practice", although, as he puts it... 'Machaut knew something about musical performance'.

9 The motive, being so common, could just as well have passed through German or English literature, directly or through Latin.

these sequences in the narratives they were translating, often in festive contexts, and have applied variable treatments to them.

The selection of occurrences below shows that the translated texts variably diverge from the corresponding French versions: the motive has been left out of *Erex saga*, though it appears twice in the French poem, in all known versions of it. *Karlamagnúss saga* branch VII and *Breta sǫgur* offer a different situation, since the Old Norse-Icelandic versions diverge from each other: one version has kept the motive found in the unique French manuscript of the *Journey of Charlemagne*, and one has not. In *Breta sǫgur,* similarly, the motive has been inserted in one version only. The difficulty here lies in the fact that it is an original addition, but an addition which is comparable to one of the two found in Wace's *Brut*, mentioned above. Finally, a last interesting example is provided by the *Strengleikar*, where it has been inserted as well, in several places, though it is not present in the French copies of the *Breton lais* that have come down to us. This last example shows a specificity: it is the only one not referring directly to a festive context.
The aim, through the examination of these examples, is to show that this rhetorical motive tends to be treated as a heterogeneous, detachable piece, whether or not it belonged to the original source.

Chrétien de Troyes's verse novel *Erec et Enide* has kept two instrumental lists, both of them inserted in a longer descriptive sequence. Several lists in the scenes preceding Erec and Enid's wedding can be found in Chrétien's novel, the most famous of them being the description of Enid's dress[10] and the list of heroes and knights of the Round Table.[11] Chrétien de Troyes's novels offer a complex editorial situation, generally speaking, and it is difficult to "approximate to the poet's *ipsissima verba*" in this one like in the others (Hunt 1993: 40). Therefore, much of the explanation attempted here relies on a moving manuscript history, a fact which contributes to explain the variability of the text on a lower level. Any result of a comparison must be handled with care.

Erec's first instrumental list takes place in the description of the wedding's banquet; in this tableau, the instrumental catalogue consists in two blocks separated by a description of dances and performances; there are divergences between Guiot's compilation and other manuscripts, as represented here by two editions:[12]

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10 In Jean-Marie Fritz's edition of manuscript BnF, f. fr. 1376 (1994 [1992]), the description of the dress offered to Enid by the queen appear lines 1583–1663. In Guiot's copy (Ms. BnF., f. fr. 794), as edited by Mario Roques (2009) the sequences cover the lines 1567–1647 Bénédicte Milland-Bove and Vanessa Obry's recent edition (2022) is based on Ms. fr. 794 as well and offers the same line numbers.

11 Fritz, ed., *Erec et Enide* (BnF f. fr. 1376), 113–115, lines 1685–1746; Roques, ed., *Érec et Énide* (BnF. f. fr. 794), 51–52, lines 1667–1706. Milland-Bove and Obry, ed. 216 and 218.

12 Fritz, ed., 1994[1992] *Erec et Enide*, lines 2035-2064 for the entire passage; the instrumental list specifically appears lines 2039–2042, and 2048–2050. A corresponding, though not identical passage appears in Roques's on lines 1983–2014 for the entire scene, lines 1990–1992, and 1998–2000 for the two instrumental lists. In Milland-Bove and Obry (2022) same lines.

Instrumental list 1

Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 1376 (ed. Fritz, l. 2039–2042)	**Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 794** (Guiot's copy, ed. Roques, l. 1987–1992)
Li uns sible, li autres note, Cil sert de harpe, cil de rote, Cil de gigue, cil de vïele, Cil fleüte, cil chalemele	Li uns sifle, li autres chante Cil sert de harpe, cil de rote; Cil flaüte, cil chalemele, Cil gigue, li autres vïele;
Translation[13]	
This one whistles, another plays an instrument This one plays the harp, that one the rote, This one plays the fiddle, that one the hurdy-gurdy This one the flute, that one the reed pipe	This one whistles, another sings, This one plays the harp, that one the rote, This one the flute, that one the reed pipe, This one plays the fiddle, that one the hurdy-gurdy

Description of dances and performances

Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 1376 (ed. Fritz, l. 2043–2047)	**Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 794** (Guiot's copy, ed. Roques, l. 1993–1997)	**Translation** (Carrol, l. 2009–2013)
Puceles querolent et dancent; Trestuit de joie faire tencent. N'est riens qui joie i puisse faire Ne cuer d'ome a leesce traire, Qui ne soit as noces le jor.	Puceles querolent et dancent; trestuit de joie fere tancent. Riens n'est qui joie puisse fere ne cuer d'ome a leesce trere, qui as noces ne fust le jor.	Maidens performed rounds and other dances: All outdid one another in showing their joy. Nothing that can contribute to joy or draw the heart of man to happiness was absent from the wedding that day.

13 The translation of Ms, 1376 is mine. I have borrowed the wording of Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, ed. and transl. by Carleton W. Carroll (1987: 87–88) to translate the text of Ms fr. 794 (which is edited in this publication as well, though the number of lines does not correspond exactly).

Instrumental list 2

Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 1376 (ed. Fritz, l. 2048–2050)	**Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 794** (ed. Roques, l. 1998–2000)	**Translation** (Carroll, l. 2014–2015)
Sonent timbre, sonent tabor,	Sonent tinbre, sonent tabor,	Tambourines and drums resounded,
Muses, estives et fretel	Muses, estives et freteles,	musettes, flutes and panpipes,
Et buisines et chalemel.	Et buisines et chalemeles,	and trumpets and reed pipes.

The first part of the sequence contains the most popular combination of stringed instruments: *harp*, *rote*, *gigue*, and *viele* are indeed statistically over-represented in catalogues of instruments (Bec 1992: 63–65). The divergence occurring in the two lines of the first sequence as seen in the passage above are probably random but interesting none the less. Changes in the order of lines or half-lines, in these contexts, are usually favoured by typical alternate constructions like *li uns/li autres* + verb [some...others + verb] or their equivalent. Here, we have *cil/cil* + verb [some... others + verb] (see Page 1987: 155 and Jeay 2006: 110). This type of construction favours interchangeability in lexical items and tends to weaken the referential link: any name of instrument fits in the list, if the metrical and phonological requirements are met. In our example, because of the reversed order of the two lines, the description in Guiot's copy (Ms fr. 794) mixes wind instruments with chordophones, whereas Manuscript fr. 1376 tends to differentiate between two types. The change however does not break the rhythm of the list, nor does any version help to establish a real organological consistency (not even the one found in Ms fr. 1376).

In the second part of the sequence, after the description of dances, drums and loud wind instruments are mentioned, like the *buisines* ('trumpets, horns').[14] It is possible that the recourse to loud instruments here implicitly refers to the binary opposition between *bas* and *haut*, the second one being announced by performances and dances. But we cannot be certain of this. In fact, the entire list does not say much about the music. Like other comparable occurrences, it does not betray any hint on the way instruments were played, as an ensemble or in pairs, together or successively, if they were supposed to be used with a bow or plucked, what the posture of the players looked like and especially, what could have been the shapes of the named instruments. Finally, the fact that the poet intercalates a description of dances and performances at court confirms that he is not seeking originality. The whole sequence should rather be interpreted as highlighting different moments and different moods taking place at the banquet, either simultaneously or one after the other.

Erex saga is an abridged rendering of *Erec et Enide*, and "transmits the basic plot of the French romance, but in greatly reduced form" (Kalinke, ed. 1999:

14 Bec (1992: 66) underlines the exhortative function of horns (the *busines*) in the *Chanson de Roland*, before important assaults.

219). It would lengthen considerably the present paper to comment on its textual history, but it is important to remind that its transmission raises many issues as well. There are no medieval witnesses of it, except fragmentary, and the copies that have come down to us derive from medieval manuscripts of which one, *Ormsbók*, is a very problematic collection. The issues it raises partially overlap with the ones raised by collections like Guiot's: choices might have been made in this compilation specifically and not elsewhere. Whatever the reason, *Erex saga* in the copy of *Ormsbók* as edited by M. Kalinke (1999) has no counterpart in the sequence described above. All descriptions and lists have disappeared from it, except the catalogue of invited knights, which is surprisingly different from the one(s) found in the French editions.[15] For the rest, the passage dealing with music and dances at court are reduced to a few lines:

> Stóð þetta brúðlaup yfir hálfan mánuð með allri blíðu ok allra handa gleði.
>
> [This wedding lasted over half a month with every gaiety and all kinds of good cheer.]
>
> (*Erex saga*, 236–237)

The description was probably contained in the source if it was entire, since it has come down to us in various French manuscripts, though in a diverging order. It was then probably left out for the sake of brevity, together with other descriptions, by the first Old Norse translator. However, we cannot but notice that the same translator made an opposite choice regarding the catalogue of knights and barons invited to the ceremony. From this, we can argue, without certainty, that the catalogue of instruments was regarded as a non-essential stylistic ornament, while the catalogue of knights kept its narrative function. Whatever the cause for this disappearance, there is no record of the execution of music in *Erex saga* and it changes the meaning of the scene. The wedding in *Erec and Enid* is indeed a key moment, and its length is related with its strategical importance in the novel, focused as it is on marital love.

The second instrumental list occurs at the very end of the novel, and indirectly refers to the execution of music: it takes place in the long description of Erec's cloak, which is said to have been made by four fairies.[16] The number corresponds to the division between Music, Geometry, Arithmetic and Astronomy, which are "depicted" on the cloak. Indeed, though it is associated with the other *artes* of the

15 The names seem to differ from the French versions. A reason for the list of names to be so different could be, they were hard to read in the source. However, any interpretation needs to be made cautiously, given the editorial context; we cannot know what the source looked like.

16 Fritz, *Erec et Enide*, lines 6728–6801, for the complete "descriptïon de la robe". The corresponding passages in Roques's edition are found respectively from lines 6674 to 6747 for the complete description of the cloak and lines 6708–6714, for the representation of Music. Milland-Bove and Obry, on 490–496, the cloak on 494.

quadrivium as a speculative science, Music is here represented through instruments and not treated as an abstract notion:

Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 1376 (ed. Fritz, l. 6762–6768)	**Ms Paris, BnF, f. fr. 794** (ed. Roques, l. 6708–6714)	**Translation**[17] (Caroll, l. 6724–6730)
La tierce ovre fu de Musique,	et la tierce oevre ert de Musique,	And the third work was that of Music,
A cuit toz li deduiz s'acorde,	a cui toz li deduiz s'acorde,	with which all pleasures harmonize,
Chanz et deschanz, et son de corde,	chanz, e deschanz, et sanz descorde,	song and descant and sounds of strings,
D'arpe et de rote et de vïele.	d'arpe, de rote, et de vïele.	of harp, of rote, of hurdy-gurdy.
Ceste ovre fu e bone et bele,	Ceste oevre estoit et boene et bele,	This work was good and beautiful,
Car devant li seoient tuit	car devant lui gisoient tuit	for before her lay all
Li estrument et li desduit.	li estrumant et le deduit.	the instruments and delights.

In the copy of *Ormsbók* of *Erex Saga*, the dress is offered by King Arthur to Enid ('Evida') and not to Erec. From this adaptation, once again, all descriptions are missing, but we note that the reference to its magical provenance has been kept, and even possibly extended, through an original addition (italicised here):

> En Evida gaf hann dýrliga skikkju; þar váru á skr<i>faðar allar höfuðlistir. Hún var öll skínandi ok svá dýr at engi kaupmaðr kunni hana at meta. Hún var ofin níu rastir í jörð niðr af fjórum álfkonum *í jarðhúsi, þar er aldri kom dagsljós*.
>
> [But to Evida he gave a precious robe; on it were depicted the liberal arts. It glittered all over and was so precious that no merchant could estimate its value. It was woven by four elfwomen in an underground dwelling nine leagues under the earth where no daylight ever reached.]
>
> (*Erex saga*, 258–259)

17 An interesting variant appear line 6764 in Ms. 1376, which has *son de corde* (literally 'sounds of strings' (or 'of stringed instruments'), as a probable opening to the instrumental list. Guiot's copy edited by Roques (2009) has *sanz descorde* ('without disharmony'), which is redundant with the rime *s'acorde* ('harmonizes'). The two manuscripts have a different interpretation (1376 insists on the instrumental typology, 794 on the musical harmony), but they have in common to describe executed music, not the speculative notion represented in the artes. The edition by Carroll (1987: 296) chooses the variant of Ms 1376, with a footnote to line 6726 presenting all the variants.

According to all likelihood, the list of instruments was contained in the original source here again, if the source was complete, since the Old Norse adaptation mentions the 'liberal arts' (*hǫfuðlistir*) which correspond to the four *oevres* refered to in the French texts. More interesting, the magic origin of the dress is mentioned in the Old Norse adaptation, reminding us that the choice to reduce the volume (if the hypothesis is right) does not necessarily correspond to a matter-of-fact interpretation. We cannot know whether the addition corresponding to the underlined section is original or whether the translator found it in its source. As such, it is reminiscent of a similar passage found in *Samsons saga fagra* (Chapter 15, 383), which tells of a magical cloak woven by four elf women. The comment reminds us that a strict mimetic approach was not necessarily the translator's priority and, at any rate, not a reason to avoid a non-realistic list of instruments.

All things being said, it is difficult to decide at which point the two instrumental lists were taken out, whether the direct source of *Erex saga* already lacked them or whether the translator chose to erase them from a source that contained them. But the second hypothesis remains more likely. The scenes correspond to two different situations: in the first one, instruments are referred to as (supposedly) real objects, while the second offers a representation of them (a picture in the picture, so to say); moreover, the figuration on the cloak paradoxically qualifies *Musica* as part of the *quadrivium* and makes the instruments less relevant. Could the suppression of the second be seen as more logical than the suppression of the first one? Whatever might have caused the disappearance of the motive in both cases, the corresponding passages in Old Norse show no interest from their translator for this kind of amplification.

The next example, taken from *Karlamagnúss saga*, branch VII, offers an interesting contrast, in which both solutions have co-existed: one version of the saga has kept the list and the other has not.

The poem called *Voyage de Charlemagne* or *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* is a parodic adaptation of a *chanson de geste*. It includes the description of two banquets in Constantinople at the court of King Hugon, the latter hosting Charlemagne and his barons, respectively at the beginning and at the end of the narrative. The second banquet is an exact reproduction of the first and offers a typical example of epic formulaic style.

This peculiar *chanson* has a still more peculiar textual history, as recalled by its most recent editor Alain Corbellari (2017): until 1880, when Eduard Koschwitz gave a Lachmanian edition of the text, a unique Anglo-Norman manuscript containing it was kept at the British Museum (previously British Library, 16.E.VIII). Unfortunately, this manuscript disappeared during the reedition of the poem and was never found again (Corbellari 2017: 20). Eduard Koschwitz had given three collaborators the task to establish a diplomatic reproduction of the manuscript and, with the help of these three independent copies, collated the medieval manuscript with the first edition given by Francisque Michel in 1836. The results of the collations appear in his textual apparatus and are nowadays, together with Michel's edition, the only trace left of the French medieval text.

Karlamagnúss saga's textual history is notoriously complex as well, the cycle being kept by several witnesses, which represent, as far as we know, two major versions. At least, and unlike their unfortunate French counterpart, they have sur-

vived in actual medieval manuscripts. However, Version A and version B diverge sometimes considerably from each other and are represented by incomplete witnesses (Skårup 1980; Loth 1980; Kramarz-Bein 2022; Tétrel 2022). Comparing the texts in both languages must therefore be done with caution, given their complex editorial situation on both sides.

They appear to be nevertheless strikingly similar, as far as the motive of the instrumental list is concerned. In the *Voyage*, as mentioned above, the motive is repeated in two almost identical *laisses*, except for a few dialectal marks, in the two occurrences, as shown below (last line of the laisse):

Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem, laisse XXI:

Voyage de Charlemagne, éd. A. Corbellari laisse XXI, l. 410–413	**Translation** Picherit 1984, *The Journey*: 36
Asez unt venesun de cerff e de sengler,	They get plenty of venison of deer and wild boar
Et unt grues et gauntes e poüns enpeverez.	And also cranes, wild geese, and peacocks seasoned with pepper;
A [e]spandant [l]ur portent le vin e le clarez,	Wine and clary are gushing forth in abundance;
E cantent e viëlent e rotent cil juglur	The minstrels are singing and playing the vielle and the rote

Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem, laisse LII:

Voyage de Charlemagne, éd. A. Corbellari laisse LII, lines 834-837	**Translation** Picherit, 1984 *The Journey*, 72.
Asez unt veneisun de cerf e de sengler,	They get venison of deer and boar to satiation,
Et unt grues et gantes e poüns enpevrez.	And cranes, wild geese, and peacocks seasoned with pepper
A espandant lur portent le vin e le claret,	Wine and clary are gushing forth in abundance;
E cantent e vielent e rotent cil geugler	Minstrels are singing and playing the vielle and the rote

Judging from their situation, at the beginning and at the end of the poem, the narrative function of these repetitive *laisses* is to punctuate Charlemagne's expedition and create an echo in the narrative. This impression is backed by other repetitive patterns in the song: among others, we can think of the long litany of *gabs* ('challenges', 'boasts'): during this famous episode, all the *pairs de France* promise in turn to accomplish an unrealistic (and parodic) exploit. Each *gab* is expressed in a *laisse* by a peer, in a similar style: the whole sequence is a reproduction of the epic formulaic style. If we add to these observations the fact that the parodic approach requires from the audience a thorough knowledge of the traditional epic themes

and items alluded to, of the notorious heroes, and, finally, of the *chanson* as a genre, we are bound to consider these repetitions as a consciously used stereotype.

Ms. A of *Karlamagnúss saga* has a very general wording to translate the entire strophe, saying that there were all sorts of nice food and 'all kinds of festivities': *allskonar skemtan* at the banquet (*Karlamagnús saga, VII*: 262). Here, we can suspect a deliberate choice of abridgment, like in *Erex saga*, which uses the exact same formulation.

The B version, on the other hand, like the third Norwegian fragment, has kept the sequence. In B, the motive includes both lists (food and drink for the first part, musical instruments for the second). Unfortunately, NRA62a stops abruptly before mentioning the music.

***Karlamagnús saga*, VII** **Version B** Ed. Loth: 261–263.	**Translation** Hieatt 1980, 191.
...allz konar krasir uoro þar a bordi af dyrum ok af fuglvm. þar uoro hirtir ok uilligellter traunr ok ges. hęsn ok pafuglar pipradir. endr ok elfr. ok allz kyns uilli fygli. þar uar at drecka miod ok uin ok piement. klare buzar. ok allz kyns godr drykr. allzkonar skemtan uar þar sinfonie ok horpur fidlr ok gigiur ok allz konar streingleikr...	(...) there were all sorts of delicate dishes of meat and fowl on the table – dishes of venison and wild boar, crane and geese, hens and peafowl in pepper sauce, duck and swan and all sorts of wild fowl. To drink, there was mead and wine, piment and clary, strong liquor [...] and all kinds of good drinks. There were all sorts of entertainments, symphony and harps, violins and fiddles and all kinds of stringed instruments

***Karlamagnús saga*, VII** **NRA62a** Ed. Loth: 261	**Translation** Hieatt 1980: 191
...Allz skonar krasir uoro þar a bordum af dyrum ok af fuglum. Þar uoro hirtir ok uilligelltir tronor ok gæs hæns ok pafuglar pipradir. Endr ok elptr. ok allz skyns uilli fygli. Þar uar at drekka miodr ok vin. piment ok klare cuzar *ok mure* ok allz skyns godr drykkr...	(...) there were all sorts of delicate dishes of meat and fowl on the table –dishes of venison and wild boar, crane and geese, hens and peafowl in pepper sauce, duck and swan and all sorts of wild fowl. To drink, there was mead and wine, piment and clary, strong liquor *and mulberry wine* and all kinds of good drinks...

Hieatt has chosen to translate the B text for this very part, combined with FR3. She adds (1980: 191 fn. 4) that B and FR3 have an almost identical text save the only word *mure* (Old French *more*, Middle English *mure* for 'mulberry wine'), a word added by FR3 to the list of drinks. The B version, she notes, is close to the French poem, but includes a few details not found there, notably the drink *buza*'

(also spelled *buzar*, *cuzar*), here translated as 'strong liquor' (see also Hieatt 1980: 386–397).

From the observation of the two passages in Old Norse, we can assume that Fragment NRA62a must have contained a variant originally similar to the B version (of which it is generally close). We can observe, furthermore, that both lists in them (food and drinks in B and FR3/ instruments in B) are comparable but not identical to the French poem: the Old Norse versions are longer. Though we cannot say whether this longer variant originated in the source or appeared in the translation, it suggests that, at the time it appeared, inventories and lists were already fashionable. In the French text we can find a pair of two stringed instruments: *viol* and *rote*, under verb-forms (*vielent e rotent cil jugler*). In *Karlamagnúss saga* version B, we find four names, plus a fifth and popular word, used as a hypernym (*streingleikar*) (my italics):

> *sinfonie* ok *horpur fidlr* ok *gigiur* ok allz konar *streingleikr*.
>
> [symphony and harps, violins and fiddles and all kinds of stringed instruments]

Did the Old Norse adaptor have in mind specific instruments with this list? Strictly speaking, we can doubt it. Let us study two specific names of the list: *fiðla* and *gígja*. A basic search on the entries *fiðla* and *gígja* in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (ONP) does not bring out a single quotation where they would stand alone in a sentence or be part of a specific description. Not only do *fiðla* and *gígja* always *a minima* come in pairs (together or paired to others), but also, all occurrences mentioned are a variant of the instrumental catalogue (cf. ONP). There is no description of the actual objects referred to, no precision on the way they were played or on their characteristics. As for the definitions of the two words in the ONP, the definition for *gígja* is (question marks included): '?violin/ ?fiddle'. For *fiðla*, the definition reads: 'en art strygeinstrument' ('a sort of bowed string instrument').

We can also note that, of seven sentences containing the word *fiðla* mentioned by the ONP, six combine the term with *gígja* which could be, therefore, interpreted as a synonym of it, were it relevant to speak of synonymy in the absence of a precise definition. The seventh sentence mentioned by the ONP (found in *Thomas saga Postola*) associates *fiðla* with *harpa*:

> Meyiar sungu þar a fiðlu, en sumar a haurpu
>
> [Young girls were singing and playing the fiddle or, for some of them, on harps.]

Finally, we find another sentence in the list (found in *Konráðs saga keisarasonar*), which associates *harpa* either with *fiðla* or *gígja* depending on the manuscript: [18]

18 https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o20434.

> Svmir sla horpvr eða gigior [*var*. fidlur]
>
> [Some play on their harps, or on violin [*var*. fiddle]]

The term *fiðla* seems to be interchangeable with the term *gígja* in these examples. The last two quotations, among the seven containing the word *fiðla* in the ONP, are the only ones which do not contain the hypernym *strengleikar*. The other five sentences have the word within the idiomatic expression which can, here in context, be translated as 'and all sorts of stringed instruments': *ok alls konar strengleicr*; *oc allzkonar strengleica*; *allz kyn streingleikan*, etc. In the occurrences, the expression always appears either as a closure of the motive, or at its opening. Finally, a search with *gígja* in ONP brings out very similar results, only with more occurrences. We can at least observe that all occurrences of *gígja* come within the catalogue of instruments as well, and a majority of them are associated with the generic *strengleikar* either at the end or at the beginning of the enumeration.

If we follow the literary corpuses, we are not in capacity to determine the characteristics of the instrument referred to as *fiðla*, as opposed to the one referred to as *gígja*.

To conclude on this second illustration, let us go back to the two versions: version A avoids the motive and replaces it by the same rapid (almost impatient) expression (*allskonar skemmtan*) we find in *Erex saga*. If the complete sequence was contained in its source, which is the most likely hypothesis, it was considered as unessential by the Norse translator, who decided to cut it down. Version B has kept a version of the whole sequence, but in a variant which is not identical to the Anglo-Norman witness nowadays available. If the source for Kms B already had a longer sequence, the Norse translator, then, only chose to translate it literally. I am inclined, though without absolute evidence, given the number of similar occurrences provided by the ONP, to attribute the amplification, under this very form, to the Old Norse translator. But in this case again, it does not change the important conclusion: at some point in the transmission (it does not matter when), mentioning four instruments instead of two was considered as a natural rhetorical embellishment.

As we mentioned earlier, Wace's *Brut* has kept at least two occurrences of the instrumental motive. It is important to say that Wace's *Brut*, like the examples mentioned above, has a complex textual history, but unlike the *Voyage de Charlemagne*, it is characterized by a profusion of witnesses divided in diverging families. The occurrences studied below are not present in all the manuscripts of Wace's *Brut*, but only in some of them. This fact corroborates the impression that the motive is unstable in the manuscript tradition.

The first catalogue, as exposed in the introduction of the present paper, is inserted in a portrait: in the Latin source, *Historia regum Britannie* (or, as preferred by its most recent editor, M. D. Reeve, *De gestis Britonum*), § 52, a long genealogical list appears between the reign of Elidurus and that of Beli the Great, both kings whose lives are told at greater length. Of one of these insignificant kings, King Bledgabred, a somehow longer portrait is made:

> Hic omnes cantores quos retro aetas habuerat et in modulis et in omnibus musicis instrumentis excedebat ita ut deus ioculatorum diceretur
>
> [He surpassed all previous singers in melody and in playing all musical instruments to such an extent that he was called the performers' god.]
> (*The History of the Kings of Britain*, *De Gestis Britonum*: 66–67)

This is what caused the first insertion in some versions of the *Roman de Brut*, lines 3695–3702 (here reduced to the instrumental list):

Mult sout de lais, mult sout de note, De vïele sout e de rote, De harpe sout e de chorum, De lire e de psalterium.	He knew all about lays and about melodies; he knew how to play the viol and the rote, the harp and the choron, the lyre and the psaltery.

(*Wace's Roman de Brut*, l. 3699–3702).

All the items contained in this sequence are expected in this context. The association of song and poetry, expressed through *lais* and *note* ('lays' and 'melodies') opens the motive. All instruments quoted here are 'low instruments', all chordophones. The first instruments mentioned are the *vieles*, *rote* and *harpe* (the most frequently mentioned, as seen above), after which come *chorun*[19], *lire* and *psalteriun* ('hurdy-gurdy'). All are instruments which one can expect in festive contexts and all requirements for the motive are met.

No comparable addition is found in the *Bruts* in French I know of: the *Anglo-Norman Prose Brut*, known to have made extensive use of Wace's *Brut*, among different sources, mentions the king only by name in the two edited versions (*The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle*: 106; *Prose Brut to 1332*: 55). The Continental *Estoire de Brutus*, the earliest adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth in prose French that has come down to us, has no trace of the motive either. This translation is independent of Wace's *Brut* and is usually faithful to the Latin source, as shown in this example:

> Aprés Blegabred, qui tant sot de chançons et d'estrumenz qu'il fu apelés diex des jogleors.
>
> [And then Blegabred, who knew all about songs and instruments, so that he was called performer's god.]
> (*Estoire de Brutus*: 263 (corresponding to *Historia*, 52), my translation)

To explore briefly outside the French dialects, but within the reach of Wace's transmission area, Layamon's *Brut*, the English adaptation also known to have

19 The *chorun* is a sort of cithara. The Online *Dictionnaire du moyen français* defines it as a plucked or bowed stringed-instrument (Robert Martin, augmented and revised by the ATILF, Université de Lorraine http://zeus.atilf.fr/dmf, 'choron, 1', last consulted December 2022).

used Wace, offers diverging versions, like Wace's text itself. One of the two versions edited (manuscript Caligula A. IX of the British Museum) amplifies the portrait of King Bledgabred by inserting an instrumental list containing six items. All the names contained in it refer to stringed instruments, which are listed in the following order: *harpe*, *salterium*, *fiðele*, *coriun*, *timpe,* and *lire* (La3amon: *Brut*, Caligula Version: l. 3490–3491).[20] In this occurrence, we note that the names are only partially identical to Wace's *Brut*, a fact which accredits the idea that the list had a fluctuating tradition in English as well, and was probably not translated identically in this version (if it was translated at all). Moreover, the other version of the English *Brut* follows Geoffrey of Monmouth more closely and does not include the instrumental list (La3amon: *Brut,* Otho Version: 83 and 85).[21]

The insertion found in Wace appears therefore to be the exception, followed only by one of the two versions of its English epigone.

The Old Norse *Breta sǫgur* are represented by several witnesses; if we exclude a set of barely exploitable fragments and the modern copies of the version kept in *Hauksbók*, we count three medieval witnesses and a modern copy of a fourth medieval witness. All of them are based on a text that goes back to the same initial (nowadays lost) Icelandic translation (on *Breta sǫgur*'s textual history, see Tétrel, ed. 2021: 95–357 and Tétrel 2023). Though this editorial situation is slightly more favourable than that of the sagas adapted from Chrétien de Troyes, it still raises a few issues. Only two of the four witnesses contain a longer text, and only two of them, the version contained in Copenhagen, AM 573, 4to (hereafter '573') and the version printed in *Hauksbók* (hereafter 'Hb'), have kept a translation which covers the narrative up to the Arthurian times. Since both texts are divergent from one another, for lack of a control manuscript, we are contrived to consider each one singularly from § 79 on. A third and last important difficulty is raised by the fact that the original translation, or more likely the source itself, was not Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle, but rather an abridged and remote adaptation of it: it can be difficult to find matches for Geoffrey's paragraph, sometimes several paragraphs in a row, in the Icelandic texts, whereas the French *Bruts* are generally more faithful.

The part of the narration where the regnal list appears as in § 52 is, unfortunately, a good illustration of this situation. Three Icelandic texts are at hand on this part, but the genealogy is different from Geoffrey's chronicle, and incomplete in all the manuscripts, *e.g.*, the copy of *Ormsbók*, *Hauksbók*, and *Reynistaðarbók*. AM 573 4to is lacunary here. The copy of *Ormsbók* has a list of names remotely and partially similar to Geoffrey's text, and a King 'Bledudo' could be the corresponding name in it (*La Saga des Bretons*, 478).[22] The situation is comparable in Hb, *mutatis mutandis*, with the name 'Beredabel' (*Hauksbók*, 259). In *Reynistaðarbók,* a possible match could be '[v]iledino', given its position in the list compared to the other

20 For the meaning of '*timpe*', see below.

21 Lines are numbered after the Caligula version. I judge by superficial reading, for lack of real linguistic competence in medieval English.

22 'Bledudo' has not been registered as a match to Geoffrey's character in the Index of Personal names.

two (ed. Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir 2000: 274). But the situation is uncomfortable. We have three different names, in three different lists, and there is no trace of the instrumental list in any of them; besides, none of them keeps record of King Bledgabred's musical skills. Judging by what is left of this paragraph in the remaining witnesses, each copyist has made their best with a list where names were probably barely legible, and one can hardly say that this king has been recognized.

The case is different with the second instrumental list found in Wace's *Brut*. This example, mentioned in the introduction of the present paper, is also the most famous (here reduced to the instrumental list):

Lais de vïeles, lais de rotes,	lays on fiddles, lays on rotes,
Lais de harpes, lais de frestels,	lays on harp, lays on flutes,
Lires, tympes e chalemels,	lyres, drums and shawms, bagpipes,
Symphonies, psalteriuns,	psalteries,
Monacordes, timbes, coruns.	monochords, tambourines and choruns.

(*Wace's Roman de Brut*, 10549–10552)

The paragraph amplifies Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle § 158, where a celebration is offered for Arthur's coronation. This banquet is a key passage in Geoffrey's narration: Arthur, the greatest of all Breton kings, is represented at his highest point. What follows in the narration is the story of a fall, followed by a quick decline of Breton dynasties.

As exposed in the introduction, the major issue raised by the instrumental catalogue is its *instabilité dénominative* ([unstable denomination] (Bec 1992: 30). The instruments mentioned in this passage are more numerous and more diverse, as far as organological characteristics are concerned, than in the precedent examples, and this increases the difficulty. *Vieles*, *rotes*, *harpes* open the inventory in a classical way, describing a musical accompaniment to performed poetry (*lais de…*). But we also note the presence of other categories of instruments, some of which are wind instruments, and can, in certain combinations, be categorized as loud: *frestels*, *chalemels*, both referring to a sort of flute. This insertion is a specificity of Wace's *Brut*. Nothing similar appears in the French and Anglo-Norman *Bruts* mentioned above or in Layamon's *Brut* (*Estoire de Brutus*, ca. 320–323; *The Oldest Anglo-Norma Prose Brut Chronicle,*166 and 168; *Prose Brut to 1332*, 95–96; *Laȝamon. Brut, Caligula version* lines 12199–12342).

On this part of the narration, the *Breta sǫgur* are represented by only two manuscripts: Hb and the second section of manuscript AM 573 4to (hereafter '573B'). The former has no mention of any similar addition, but seems to know there was a long banquet for Arthur's coronation:

> Hann bavð til sin at hvita svnv ollv(m) konungvm hertogvm ok iorlvm ok ollvm hofþingivm i sinv riki ok var hann þa krvnaðr ok sva drottningin ok er (sv) veizla viðfrægivz orðin a Nordrlondvm bœði at fornv ok nyiv.
>
> (*Hauksbók*, 290)

[On Whitsunday, he summoned to him all the kings, dukes, jarls, and all

> the chieftains in his domain, and he was crowned then, and so too his queen and that feast is the most far-renowned among Northmen, both ancient and new.] (transl. Patzuk-Russell 2012: 162)

Manuscript 573B, on the other hand, offers a longer sequence which includes an instrumental catalogue:

> Þa er dryckiu var lokit oc hennar varð i milli þa voro leikar oc taufl oc saugur, þar var allz kyn<s> streingleikar, fiðlur oc gigiur, bumbur oc pipur oc simphoniam oc haurpur
>
> [Around the middle of the banquet, games and chessplaying and storytelling started; there were all kinds of stringed instruments, fiddles and violins, trumpets/drums/bagpipes (?) pipes, symphonies and harps]
> (*Saga des Bretons*, 552)

The motive as kept in the 573B version of *Breta sǫgur* offers the same characteristics as all those exposed previously: in it, we find the same usual pair *fiðla* and *gígja* the sequence opens with the generic phrase *allz kyns streingleikar*, and though there is no direct allusion to performed poetry and singing, a similar idea is expressed by the term *sǫgur*. Instruments are meant to allude to soft music accompanying performed narration. However, the instruments mentioned are not exclusively stringed instruments: *bumbur* og *pípur* do not belong to the group. Thus, it would seem that the generic word *strengleikr* endorses a more global referential function than exclusively referring to stringed instruments. This detail has its importance, since the word is a keyword in Old Norse.

Pípa is a likely equivalent for *chalemel* or *frestels*. *Bumbur* normally refer to percussive instruments in Old Icelandic. But the name is also close to Latin *bumbus*, which, in Old and Middle French under the form *bombar(d)e* or equivalent forms, is a wind-instrument. It is associated with *muse* and *chalumeau* in the definition given by the Dictionnaire of Godefroy (1881–1902). The same word is to be found in Carter's dictionary of Middle English instruments, referring to the same type of instrument: *bumbarde* is quoted together with *cornemuse* and *schalemelle* (for *bombard(e)*, see Carter 1961: 50–55. See also Bowles 1954: 121). In our text combined with *pipur*, it could refer to the same kind of wind instrument, in the form of a similar pair.[23] If *bumbur* means 'drums', on the other hand, then the sequence, like in the above-mentioned line 10551 of Wace's *Brut*, is composed of all three categories: strings, percussion and brass, and the scene represents a different kind of music: a festive music, meant to accompany dances and not recited texts. The important conclusion being, we can hesitate between these two very different scenarios.

Now this example draws a little more attention than the other ones, because the similarity with the version of Wace exposed in the previous page is striking. Could the Old Norse passage show an influence of a version of Wace's *Brut* con-

23 In doubt, I chose to translate the word as '*bombardes*' ('bagpipes') and not '*tambours*' ('drums') in my translation of *La Saga des Bretons* (553).

taining the amplification? Or does this insertion, which only appears in 573B, correspond to a motive already in circulation in Old Norse literature at the time this version was copied? The question of an influence of Wace's *Brut* on the first Icelandic translation or on the whole corpus, all versions included, is a separate issue. Evidence has led me to conclude negatively to it; philological reasons would be too long to be exposed here and have been exposed elsewhere (Tétrel 2021: 355–365 and 2023). But this general conclusion does not rule out the possibility of a later, sporadic influence of Wace's *Brut* on section B of manuscript 573. This section, indeed, was copied by a different hand in the fourteenth century and offers interesting divergences with Hb. Besides, it is entirely dedicated to the reign of Arthur, which is a specificity not shared by Hb and shows that its copyist/author or compiler was focusing on another purpose. We also note that the insertion of the instrumental catalogue appears only in 573B, whereas none of the witnesses have inserted the motive in the portrait of King Blegadbred.

We do not know for sure what the exemplar of 573B looked like. In broad lines, undeniably, Hb and 573B go back to the same initial source, but the divergences are numerous, from § 81 onwards, and it is difficult to trace down the origins of these differences. We are therefore confronted with two possibilities: either the motive found its origin in the direct source of 573B, or the copyist inserted it himself to embellish the description of Arthur's coronation banquet. If the insertion was already in its source, it was either because of an influence of Wace's *Brut*, or because the instrumental catalogue was already a commonplace in descriptions of banquets in medieval literature. And the same is true of a potential spontaneous addition by the copyist to his source: Wace's *Brut* was indeed the most well-known versified *Brut* in Anglo-Norman from the thirteenth century to the end of the Middle Ages and he could have known it; on the other hand, as shown in this paper, the motive could have come to the mind of any Icelandic compiler of the fourteenth century. From whatever angle we try to approach this issue, the answer eludes us: it is, all considered, a consequence of the extreme popularity of this motive.

The last occurrences examined here take place in the adaptation of several well-known Breton *lais*, in the collection named *Ljóðabók* [Book of lais] or *Strengleikar* (ed. and trans. Cook and Tveitane 1979).

These occurrences, unlike the previous ones, do not have a correspondent in the Anglo-Norman or French texts that have come down to us, except, briefly, for *Guigemar*.

The principal manuscript which has preserved them, Uppsala, University Library De la Gardie 4–7, is a famous collection about which much has already been said, especially on the part containing the *Strengleikar* (Cook & Tveitane 1979: IX–XIV; Budal 2009 and 2014). Though the word *Strengleikar* does not appear in the prologue or as a title in the manuscript, it is recurrent in the different narratives as pointed at by Cook and Tveitane (1979: xv). Interestingly, the word in the Old Norse translation in De La Gardie 4–7 does refer to musical instruments, but to the songs, alone or in compounds like *strengleiksljóð* [lais of/for stringed instruments]. It is not the purpose of the present study to discuss the relations between the French *lai* and the Old Norse *leikr*. Phonetics might have played a part in the adoption of this keyword; besides, the word *lai* is highly polysemic, from unknown

origin and hard to translate. It is relevant to this study, on the other hand, to note that this word is partially disconnected from a realistic *instrumentarium* and reflects a metaphorical shift.

In the Anglo-Norman and Continental French manuscripts of the *Lais*, we can read one equivalent in *Guigemar*.

De cest cunte k'oï avez Fu Guigemar li lais trovez, Que hum fait en harpe e en rote ; Bone en est a oïr la note (*Lais Bretons (XIIe-XIIIe siècles), 238*).	The lay of Guigemar, which is performed on harp and rote, was composed from the tale you have heard. (*The Lais of Marie de France, 55*)

The sequences in the Old Norse translation on the other hand occur at several places, in different lays, and are presumably meant to emphasise the musical dimension of the Breton songs alluded to in the French narratives. They have therefore nothing to do with the description of a banquet, except virtually, if they reflect by connotation the context of their own performance at the Norwegian royal court.

The longest instrumental sequence in the *Strengleikar* takes place in the prologue, under a form which shows a real selection of stringed instruments at the exclusion of other types of instruments:

> Þui at af þæim sogum er þæssir bok birtir gærðo skolld i syðra brætlande er liggr i frannz ljoðsonga. Þa er gærazc i horpum gigiom. Simphanom. Organom. Timpanom. Sallterium ok corom ok allzkonar oðrum strænglæikum er menn gera ser oðrum til skemtanar þæssa lifs.
>
> [Because from the stories which this book makes known, poets in Brittany –which is in France- composed lais, which are performed on harps, fiddles, hurdy-gurdies, lyres, dulcimers, psalteries, rotes, and other stringed instruments of all kinds which men make to amuse themselves and others in this world.]
>
> (*Strengleikar*, 6–7)

In one of the other occurrences of this motive in the *Strengleikar*, *Guiamar*, we find an interesting variant: The French manuscripts say the lay is executed on *harp* and *rote* (once more, a variant of the most well-spread binary combinations). The Old Norse translator, however, has a longer variant. He partially repeats the sequence found in the prologue, rather than actually translating 'harp and rote' found in *Guigemar*:

> En af þessare sagu er nu have þer hœyrt. þa gærðu brættar i horpum ok i gigium Symphoniis ok organis hin fægrstu strænglæiks lioð
>
> [From this story which you have now heard the Bretons made the fairest lai, for harps and fiddles, hurdy-gurdies and lyres.]
>
> (*Strengleikar*, 40–41)

Here, it is reasonable to think that the Norse translator inserted an extended version of the motive on his own initiative, and considered it equivalent to the one in his source. We do not know exactly what was in the source, however, the collection of lays kept in Manuscript Paris, BnF, n.a.f. 1104 does not contain *Guigemar*, and manuscript BnF, fr. 2168[24] has a binary combination very similar to the Harley manuscript (London, British Museum, Harley 978). From this, we can conclude that the Norse translator did not work from an *exemplar* with a long sequence in *Guigemar*: he probably duplicated the names of the other instruments he already mentioned in the Prologue.

Lastly, if we try to question once more the organological consistency in this list, it is not certain that the categories of instruments were clearly distinguished from one another.

The *timpanum* will provide an illustration of this issue. The Latin *tympanum* is usually rendered under the form *timbre* in Old French texts and refers to a percussive instrument. The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* mentions only examples where *timbre* and its verbal derivative *timbrer* refer to a loud, drum-like instrument[25] and the same is true for its Latinised form *timpan*.[26] In her edition of Wace's *Brut*, in the above-mentioned quotation, Weiss (2002: l. 10549–10552) understands *tympe* as a variant of *timpe*, *timbre*, and the word translating it in her modern rendering is 'drums'. It is a very likely hypothesis in a festive context: *timbrels* ('tambourines') are classified among the loud instruments by Bowles: they were "used in conjunction with trumpets and field drums to make lots of noise outdoors" (1954: 123; see also Carter 1961: 500). The two names *tympes* and *timbes* could be a variant of the same name; besides, dictionaries of Old and Middle French define it as percussive everywhere.

On the other hand, researchers have associated the variants of *timbres*, *timbes* and *tympes* to another *tympane*, a term used for a dulcimer, especially in Middle English literature (Galpin 1911: 70). Francis Galpin describes this *timpanum* as "a curious instrument formerly used in Ireland, Scotland and England, and called the *Timpan* or *Tiompan*". He finds it mentioned, among other early authors, by Giraldus Cambrensis. Galpin adds to this description: "it has generally been supposed that in all these cases the Tympanum was the Drum: but here we surely have the Latinized form of the Irish word tympan" (Galpin 1911: 67). We are thus confronted to two alternative scenarios, whether Wace's list refers to a low chordophone or a loud percussive instrument. If the *tympes* are dulcimers, they are naturally associated with the *lires*, and, consequently, one can imagine *chalemels* playing softly. If the *tympes* are tambourines, the line in Wace's *Brut* contains three types of instruments: strings, percussions and wind. The scene that comes to mind is then very different, louder and more festive.

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24 https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525135854/f123.item (last consulted January 2023), fol. 54r.

25 https://anglo-norman.net/entry/timbre_2 (last consulted January 2023). The entry is '*timbre* 3', and its definition is 'tambourine'.

26 https://anglo-norman.net/entry/timpan (last consulted January 2023). The word is translated as 'tambourine' as well.

Now to go back to the list contained in the Prologue of the *Strengleikar*, for which we possess no French source, it seems that the second option is more likely. The context implies the accompaniment of recited poetry, and the evocative power of stringed instruments behind the title is obvious.

The *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* (ONP) provides three different occurrences (of which our passage), all very similar.[27] In them, the *timpanum* is closely associated with the *salterium*, the *simfoni[a],* and the harp. One of these occurrences even has a word *timphanum*, unknown to me or to any dictionary I can think of, which seems to conflate *simphonia* and *timpanum*.[28] For neither of these words, the ONP provides a definition. Indeed, at this stage, the relevance of a definition is questionable: always, the word comes enclosed in the same stereotyped phrase providing no asperity, no single detail where to start an investigation.

Now and to conclude on this case, if we read carefully all the examples offered by the Online *Dictionnaire du moyen français*, or the online Tobler-Lommatzsch Dictionary, we find that all the occurrences of the word *tympane* in French, defined without hesitation as a *tambourin*, take the shape of our motive.[29] That is to say, the problem of a circular referentiality is raised in the same terms: the context does not provide a firm anchor in reality. Not mentioning the fact that the word also reduplicates *simphanom* phonetically. Robert Cook was right, I think, to translate *timpanum* as a 'dulcimer' in the *Strengleikar*, thus equating it with the one in immediate succession, *psalterium* (*Strengleikar* 6–7).

What appears in Cook's translation as a choice against an expected definition in Old Norse might, in fact, reflect a broader lexicographical issue, both in Old Norse and in Old French.

Conclusion

This small selection representing the instrumental list in the *riddarasǫgur* tends to lead to this conclusion: the motive is a common, unmarked, rhetoric amplification, almost a self-reflecting cliché, used in stereotyped scenes. It therefore shows very tenuous referential support and tenuous link both to the source (when available) and the reality it is meant to describe.

The examples studied above show the instability of this specific motive in textual history, in French as in Old Norse, and often reveal divergent choices in case of multiple versions of a same text. The motive also raises important lexicographical issues: even in such a limited selection, short enquiries on the meaning of some of the most frequent instrumental names lead to uncertain conclusions. More interesting maybe, from a comparative perspective, the motive shows a remarkable consistency in the discussions it opens, both in the French field as in the

27 https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o79936 (last consulted January 2023).

28 https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?c672679 (quote from *Gibbons Saga*, last consulted January 2023).

29 http://zeus.atilf.fr (*Dictionnaire du Moyen français*, for the entries '*tympanon*' and '*tympane*'); http://as-bwc-tl.spdns.org/tl/ocr/tl10.html#timpane (Tobler-Lommatzsch for the entry '*timpane*').

Old Norse-Icelandic one. If the present study could not bring firm answers to the questions on the sources, it brings to light a fact which is not minor: the detachability of the instrumental sequence in Old Norse texts is an exact reflection of the same quality of its French equivalent. Only a more thorough investigation of the origin, the transmission and development of this specific motive would allow some progress of our knowledge on it, on a larger, European scale.

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The Bryggen Papers Main Sereies No. 12 - DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026

Arthurian Materiality in Medieval Norway

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At the end of May 1225, King Hákon IV Hákonarson of Norway (1204–1263), along with his retinue, landed aristocracy and clerical élite, celebrated his wedding with the new queen Margrét, daughter of the powerful relative and rival Earl Skúli Bárðarson (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, 197). This wedding has traditionally been linked to the first performance of a romance into Old Norse, *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (Leach 1921: 183–184). Although this early dating and social setting for the translation has been seriously questioned, it is generally assumed that the saga was introduced during the reign of King Hákon IV. Furthermore, it was part of a series of translations of romances and *chansons de geste*, as well as adaptations of texts on political theory, arts and theology during the thirteenth century.

There has been raised doubts, however, whether the translated romances had any substantial impact on the mentalities and practices of the Norwegian élite, beyond its popularity as a new and fashionable way of storytelling. Especially misunderstandings or misrepresentations of certain symbolic objects, and thus the subtleties and complexities of the originals, have been discussed. For instance, Hermann Reichert has argued that the medieval Scandinavia simply did not get the point of Arthur's round table – there existed no culture or social context that encouraged an ethos of equality among knights that would provide meaning for the table settings in the king's hall. Guests and retainers would sit closest to the king according to honour, status and heroic valour and not strive for the ethos of the round table (Reichert 1986). The royal court may have moved and turned the tables, with the high seat at the long wall in the feasting halls of the Viking Age to the elevated royal seating at the short wall within the medieval courtly royal palaces, but they remained firmly square.

Another example concerns the Holy Grail, translated as *gangandi greiði* in *Parcivals saga*, interpreted by scholars as a misunderstanding possibly derived from liking Old French *graal*, to *graduale* – a liturgical book used in mass and processions, or a conflation of Latin *grador* and *alo* – implying an object carried around as a sign of greeting, signifying hospitality and peace, related to either protection or safe space (*grið*) or with connotations to provision of nourishment (*greiði*) in Old Norse (Foote 1969; Kratz 1977; Wolf and Maclean 1999: 213 fn. 30). Ironically, as *Parcivals saga* states, the protagonist should not return to this place until he (or the audience of the text) understands the meaning of the *gangandi greiði*, it is tempting to lay the question of the translation of objects and materiality to rest and focus on strict textual, rather than broad contextual, problems.

Still, the increasing scholarly interest in the concept of material culture, as well as in the translations, adaptations, and transformations of objects in relation to ideas, narratives, practice and identity open for new perspectives on the relationship between objects and texts. This interest has been much more poignant in Scandinavian scholarship in relation to medieval religious culture, especially in relation to the Caroline Bynum's study on Christian materiality (Bynum 2011). She argues that religions are characterized by the presence of specific objects that are charged with a significance we can call sacral or sacred, such as devotional images, wall murals, panel paintings, manuscript miniatures, pilgrims' badges, relics and reliquaries. These objects provide access to and act for the divine but involve also an anxiety for or concern for matter as a means to change or transformation – pointing to the divine, but at the same time insisting on their own materiality. Gold and gems on a reliquary point to God, but an artwork can at the same time be stolen, broken, burned and destroyed – as also humans, as religious subjects, are in an ongoing negotiation between decay and eternity.

This interpretation of the importance of materiality for religious identity can also be related to courtly culture. In historical sociology and anthropology, material objects have been regarded as a 'total social system', such as in Marshal Sahlins (1972) study of cloth and other items that were fundamental in many cultures. A total social system is inspired by the anthropology of Marcel Mauss and his study of gift exchange in pre-modern societies, where such systems had economic, legal, symbolic, religious and political implications (Mauss 1990). It links material goods with social status, symbolic wealth, and practice – what is apparently voluntarily actions of gift and possessions, is more obligatory to be part of or included in the social fabric.

In her study of the performance of courtliness in medieval Europe, Susan Crane emphasises the links between especially clothing and practice, and their relation to literature and courtly rituals: "The strongly rhetorical quality of court clothing helps explain its prominence in ritual articulations of identity (...), secular rituals facilitate self-definition by interrelating material and rhetorical performance." (Crane 2002: 8)

As Herman Bengtsson (1999) has shown in his groundbreaking study, there is no lack of courtly art and material objects in medieval Scandinavia. The question is how we should understand the importance of matter in everyday practice and social contexts. This does not imply that it is necessary for an adaptation of every object in a literary space, round table and holy grail included, to relate a material item to a symbolic totality. Bynum's research suggests that single objects, like a gem, could be associated to a larger religious system of values and meanings (Bynum 2011). In an architectural perspective, it has long been emphasised that medieval churches did not need to imitate the circular shape of the Holy Sepulchre to remind the audience of the building's association to Jerusalem and the Passion of Christ. Even in cases when measurements were taken from the original round church, the appearance would still vary. Rather, elements in the buildings alluded to Jerusalem and holy topography, without exactly replicating them (Krautheimer 1942).

An example relating to romances is the numerous finger rings found during archaeological excavations or as single finds, often with short inscriptions, small

figures, and/or gemstones. Finger rings of gold and gemstones are also frequently mentioned in both the translated and indigenous romances. These rings could often have magical qualities (Schlauch 1934: 146–148) but also may relate to the identity and inner life of the protagonists. For example, in the ring Ísönd gives to her beloved there is an inscription that tells him to not forget about the love they have shared. For Tristram, the ring serves as a material reminder of their fate and his pain (Jorgensen 1999: 186; Kalinke 2009: 233). Finger rings found in medieval Norway occasionally express a similar bond of love in inscription or two hands clasping, conventionally interpreted as rings of betrothal or marriage (Hammervold 1997). with inscriptions professing love. In a finger ring, dated to the thirteenth century and found at the market site on Veøy, an island in Romsdal, includes an inscription in French: *Eric entre amis et je suis drue amie. A.M.* (Solli et al. 1992). As in the case of *Tristrams saga*, the ring seems to be a gift from a woman to a man. The spelling of the name Eric could be a hint to Erec, or Erex in the Old Norse, although Erik or Eiríkr is a very common name in Norway and a deliberate association to the romance seems farfetched. More interestingly, however, the inscription seems to put emphasis on the bond of love that unites the giver and receiver, rather than on the ties or handshake of marriage. In this respect, the Veøy ring alludes to a similar affective logic and narrative moment as the Ísönd's gift to Tristram.

A gemstone, a garnet, is set in the Veøy ring, a stone that, according to the lapidaries, had medical effects, especially effective against venom. Various metals, mineral and stones have different properties that was based on the four elements in nature, and the bodily humours. This is treated in several of the lapidaries of the thirteenth century, most notably by Albertus Magnus and Bartholomeus Anglicus. For instance, Albertus Magnus states that the virtues of the type of stone known as *hyacinthus*, or *jacinth*, of which sapphire is a subgroup, also may affect the bearer socially and mentally. Furthermore, the stone could be particularly useful for the travelling holder; if,

> ...suspensus vel digito gestatus, tutum reddit peregrinum et gratum hospitibus,et est contra pestiferas regiones. Et expertum est, quod somnum provocat propter suam frigidam complexionem. Saphirinus autem hoc specialiter habere dicitur, quod est virtus ejus contra toxicum. Aiunt etiam quod confert ad divitias, et naturale ingeniumn bonum confert et lætitiam. (Albertus Magnus 1890: 38–39)

> [...suspended from the neck or worn on the finger it keeps a traveller safe, and makes him welcome to those who entertain him, and protects him in unhealthy regions. And it is known from experience that it induces sleep because of its cold constitution. And sapphire is said to have a special property, and this is its power against poison. They say also that it confers riches and natural cleverness and happiness.] (Albertus Magnus 1967: 98).

In Norway and Iceland, the lapidary of Marbod of Rennes seems to have been particularly popular and was translated into Old Norse sometime in the thirteenth century (on the Scandinavian tradition of lapidary lore cf. ch. 3 in Schreck 2018:

57–126). Its passage on the sapphire emphasises both its religious qualities (the colour symbolizes heaven and hope of salvation), but also comments on the interplay between the bearer and the mineral:

> Saffirus heitir stein, er héfiligr er konga fingrum (...) Hann getir heils likama ok oskaddra lima, ok eigi ma þann svikia, sem hann hefir á ser,eigi ma hann ok hug-laus vera, medan berr hann, ok eigi aufundsiukr (...) hann er godr til grida ok til fridar mala. Þenna stein elska þeir, er kunna in gramatikam, bétir hann manne mein ok ofur-hita ok ofur-sveita, greidar hann sár ok auga, bétir hann hofut-verk (...) Sa madr, er hann berr, skal vera hinn reinlatasti i ollum lutum. (Kålund, I: 77–78)
>
> [*Saffirus* is the name of a stone most suitable for the fingers of kings (...) It heals the body and limbs, and he that wears it must not be deceptive, nor mindless, and not envious (...) The man who wears it, will be able to make peace and reconciliation. This stone is loved by those cunning in grammar. It improves sickness, fever and sweating, heals wounds and eyes, eases headaches (...) (T)he one who wears it should be living most pure and chaste in all manners.] (my transl.)

This gemstone is thus most effective but also requires virtuous conduct by its owner – who preferably should be learned. Of course, this would be suitable for the clergy, and a testament of a canon at St. Mary's church in Oslo from 1331 shows that he was in possession of no less than two finger rings with sapphires (DN III, 160).

This gemstone would, however, also be useful for those working as officials in royal administration, that had acquired much, in Marbod's terms, "cunning in grammar". One of the most beautiful of such finger rings with a sapphire was found outside the Tjølling church in Vestfold, south-eastern Norway (Cultural Heritage Museum, C3399; Vedeler & Kutzke 2015). This would hardly have been owned by a cleric, since its inscription is a version of the relatively common Latin 'Love conquers all' (*Amor vincit omnia*) and suggests that it was a love token in relation to a betrothal or wedding. The ring might be associated to the royal official Bjarni Auðunsson (d. c. 1320). He had probably studied law in Bologna in the 1280s and was a treasurer and commander at the castle Tunsberghus at Tønsberg, as well as being part of the royal council of King Hákon V (1299–1319) (Johnsen 1973). In Bjarni's testament, he listed several objects, among these finger rings, gifted by the king and the king's niece, Duchess Ingibjǫrg. Moreover, Hákon V's son-in-law, the Swedish Duke Erik (d. 1318) had given him a sapphire in a golden ring (DN XVI, 2). Of course, the ring found at Tjølling may not be Bjarni's own, although he had property in the vicinity and probably visited this church, situated about 30 km south of Tønsberg, several times, but illustrates what the ring he received from Duke Erik might have looked like.

Then, it is of some note that one of the oldest preserved fragments of a manuscript containing a translated romance has been associated to Tunsberghus castle. The remains of a manuscript of *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*, dated to the early fourteenth century, have been suggested to have been written by one of the same

scribes found in *Codex Tunsbergensis*, a law manuscript from Tønsberg written at the end of Bjarni Audunsson's lifetime (Oslo NA, Norr.fragm. no. 65; Storm 1895: 1). In *Flóres saga*'s description of the Paradisaic garden, there is spring with numerous types of gemstones found in the water (*Flóres saga*, 51). These gemstones and their central position in the Paradise-like Garden of the two young lovers would easily be associated to the knowledge of the lapidaries among the learned élite, with several members in the audience who could look at the rings they themselves wore on their fingers as they heard these gemstones mentioned. The medical interests in gemstones among the network of officials working in the royal administration is also confirmed by the inclusion of a short lapidary text in *Hauksbók*. This compilation was, at least partly, linked to the Icelander Haukr Erlendsson, who for decades worked as a lawman in both Eastern and Western Norway (Jónsson & Jónsson 1896: 227–228). A curious case of the interest of medical cures, including plants no less than stones, was most likely written by a scribe, on some empty leaves in an older manuscript of *Physiologus*, at Tunsberghus in the mid-fourteenth century (AM 673 a II qv; Hægstad 1913). A ring was in many ways a multi-media object; showing wealth was only a part of its purpose – an inscription of true love associated the wearer(s) with the world of romances, and had the potential of affecting the mind, virtues and bodily balance with gemstones. If not becoming invisible by wearing the ring, or moving magically between distant realms, the rings had an agency that affected their owners. This made sense for a Norwegian audience through the consumption of translated literature. Although the narrative contexts for these extraordinary gemstones would often be tales of foreign and exotic marvels, seemingly distinct form the audiences' daily lives (Schreck 2021: 187), they were also present on the hands of some clerics and noblemen, and occasionally visible in the streets of medieval towns.

The interaction between clothing, virtues, performance and identity was even more complicated. The romances abound in descriptions of valuable fabric and ornaments, and in the translated court literature of Norway these could in some cases be even more detailed than in the originals (Johanterwage 2009: 77–78). There are detailed instructions of how to dress properly at the court in the *King's Mirror*, written by a learned Norwegian in the 1250s (Holm-Olsen 1983: 45), and in *Elis saga ok Rósamundu* there is an episode of a king who offers his son and his followers, who are about to travel abroad, the best of equipment because people tend to regard others following one's appearance (Kölbing 1881: 8). This echoes the advice of Love in Guillaume de Lorris' *Romance of the Rose*, as part of a disassociation of elegance and pride:

> Moine toi bel, selone ta rente,
> E de robe e de chaucemente:
> Bele robe e bel garnement
> Amendment ome durement ;
> E si doiz ta robe baillier
> A tel qui sache bien taillier,
> Qui face bien seanz les pointes
> E les manches vestanz e cointes (...)
> De ganz, d'aumosniere de sole

> E de ceinture te cointoie ;
> E se tu n'es de la richece
> Quel puisses faire, si t'estrece
> Mais au plus bel te doiz deduire
> Que tu porras senz toi destruire
> (*Le roman de la rose*, II: ll. 2141–46, 2155–60)

> [Outfit yourself beautifully, according to your income, in both dress and footwear. Beautiful garments and adornments improve a man a great deal. Therefore you should give your clothes to someone who knows how to do good tailoring, who will set the seams well and make the sleeves fit properly (...) Deck yourself out with gloves, a belt, and a silk purse, if you are not rich enough to do so, then restrain yourself. You should, however, maintain yourself so beautifully as you can without ruining yourself.] (*The Romance of the Rose*, 60)

The problem of clothing is of course that these easily can deceive. In the case of gemstones, the effects were mostly dependent on the bearer. Clothing could, however, be bought by the wealthy and give the impression of magnitude and honour without a deserving bearer. This was not least a concern of parts of the clergy and monastic moralists that frowned upon the new fashions of courtly men and women. Maurice de Sully (d. 1196), Bishop of Paris, lashed out especially against those women:

> Celes qui leur cols et leur cheveuls descuevrent et oignent leur sorcilz et vernicent lor faces come ymage et lacent leur braz et leur costez et vont comme grue a petit pas, chiere levee que l'en les voie, cestes sont fornaises ardanz de luxure et sont mariees au deable et enfers est leur doaires, et si font meint ardoir entor euls par le jeu de luxure. (Zink 1982: 373)

> [...who bare their necks and heads and grease their eyebrows and paint their faces like images, lace up their arms and bodices and walk with mincing steps like a crane, face uplifted so as to be seen, these women are burning fires of licentiousness married to the devil, with hell as their dowry. Thy make many around them burn through their lustful tricks.] (transl. Burns 2002: 40)

Nearly a century later, the Dominican Gilles d'Orléans held a sermon in 1273 where he made similar charges against those that seemed to imitate the world of romance, especially women in the streets of Paris who acted like they were knights on their way to the Round Table. Not only did this imagery accuse the Arthurian knights of effeminacy, but also the women of seductively sharing table and jousting with men (Burns 2002: 147).

That virtues and inborn qualities triumph outward dress is assumed in *Parcivals saga*, where the young protagonist is dressed by his mother in the opening scene:

> ...þá gerði hún honum klæði eptir bónda sið svá sem kotkarlsbarni byrjaði at hafa, fekk honum drybmu nýja, stakk ok hettu ofan ífrá vindinga ok á fætr hriflinga.
>
> [...she made clothes for him in the country style, such as were suitable for a peasant lad to wear. She gave him new breeches, a smock with a hood, leg-bands, and rawhide brogues for his feet.] (*Parcevals saga*, 108–109).

The potential of the young and rather naïve boy was still recognized by King Arthur:

> Þat má vera þó at þessi sveinn sé ungr, at hann sé kominn frá góðum mönnum, þvíat hann hefir fríða ásjónu ok dringiliga. En þat er eitt at atferðum hans, at hann er eigi vanr hirðsiðum.
>
> [Though this boy is young, he may be descended from good stock, for he has a handsome and bold appearance. The only fault in his behaviour is that he is not familiar with the customs of the court.] (*Parcevals saga*, 116–117)

Scholars have discussed the didactic element in the saga, and whether it might have been used as a sort of introduction to courtly behaviour among the aristocracy and retainers in Norway (Kalinke 2002; Bornholdt 2011: 103–107). In any case, there is a tension between nurture and nature – Parceval himself, as well as his mother, point to the importance of learning from good men, but it is also stated that:

> Góð náttúra er gott nemandi þeim er at góðu eru kunnandi. Gott kemr aldin af góðum viði: svá er ok góðr máðr með góðum siði.
>
> [Good character brings a good return for those who good things can discern. Good fruit comes from a good tree: so a good man has good habits naturally.] (*Parcevals saga,* 126–127)

The contrast seems bewildered, but the sense would be that even the young growing up poor and little used to courtly customs, were able to be good knights when – and only when – they were born in a good family. However, the Lai of the mantle (*Mǫttuls saga*) also shows how those accustomed to courtly culture would not necessarily be the paragon of virtue: Even if the queen owned, and gave away, the most precious garments and jewelry found in the world, she stilled failed the mantel-test of chastity (Budal, this volume).

A contrast to this decadent milieu of the royal court in *Mǫttuls saga*, is the presentation of the young maiden Evida, daughter of an old and poor knight in *Erex saga*:

> Mærin var í einum línkyrtli fornum ok slitnum, en þó eigi at síðr var allr hennar líkami sá fríðr, at Erex þóttiz enga slíka sét hafa. Þar fylgðu allir líkamans burðir ok kurteisi, svá at sjálf náttúran undraðiz at ′hun var svá fríð

> sköpuð. (...) eigi er hún af því fátækliga klædd at hún sé þrælborin (...) en svá lengi hefi ek í hernaði verit ok ófriði at bæði hefi ek týnt eignum ok óðulum.
>
> [The maiden was dressed in an old and tattered linen dress, yet nonetheless her entire body was so beautiful that Erex thought he had never seen anyone like her. In addition she had such bearing and such fine manners that Nature herself was astounded that she was created so beautiful (...) "She is not poorly dressed because she is born in thralldom (...) but I have engaged in warring and enmity for such a long time that I have lost both my possessions and patrimony..."] (*Erex saga*, 226–227)

This appears to be a gender-reversed variant of *Parcivals saga*, with a young girl being raised in poverty by her father. Here, however, the girl has such fine manners and bodily appearance that Erex fell in love with her at once. It is Erex who initially fails to live up to her standard, even though he, when he met her, rode a Spanish horse with silver bridle, saddle of ivory, and spurs of pure gold, and wore an outer garment of red silk, tunic of precious white cloth and hose of silk (*Erex saga*, 224–225). The contrast in these opening sections of the saga between the splendid clothes and Erex' lack of abilities to fight a dwarf despite his magnificent outer appearance, is striking and sparks of the following events in order to correct the discrepancy of inner and outer qualities.

This incongruence between the individual and the clothing was fundamental in the sumptuary legislation. Regulations of use of dress related to social groups were introduced in most regions of Europe during the thirteenth century. A particular concern was the often-wealthy prostitutes that dressed in costly fabrics. In England, for instance, they were forbidden to wear the furred hoods and capes of 'reputable women', while in French cities a specially designated royal official had a special responsibility to regulate their conduct (Brundage 1987; Karras 1996: 21–22). However, these – often unsuccessful – attempts of regulation of luxurious dress, also concerned an anxiety about how social status could be constructed by dress (Burns 2002: 31–37).

In Norway, sumptuary laws regulating costly textiles, footwear and jewellery were introduced during the reign of Hákon V (*r.* 1299–1319) in the early fourteenth century. Two versions of this legislation are preserved, one for Bergen in 1314 and the other for Tønsberg in 1315 (NGL III, 109–110, 116). In the opening paragraph in this law, it is that in recent years men have dressed for pride and vanity, rather than investing in military attire. The king's realm should be built and defended, not ornamented. The king himself was to set an example for all, and none should be better dressed than the king. German fashion is strictly forbidden, especially cloth sewn together by pieces of textiles in different colours. Luxurious clothing should from now on only be allowed at dubbing of knights and in weddings, and then they shall give them away to the *leikarar* (jongleurs). A literary reflection of this is found in *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, when in the depiction of the final wedding in this romance the king jokingly offers his clothing to a *leikare*. This jongleur is rather small in stature, however, and the clothes do not fit his body. Since he is more interested in riches than in honour, he instead receives gold and gems (Bambeck 2009: ll. 2995–3005).

The clothing for women was specified a few years earlier, in 1306, in connection to the regulation of trade in Bergen (NGL IV, 360–364). Here, three groups of women were distinguished. Those of noble birth and good reputation were allowed to wear clothing worth more than 2,5 English pennings pr. *alen,* while concubines (*frillur*) were allowed up to 2,5 pennings pr alen, and prostitutes even less (1 Norwegian *alen* is about 0,5m, 1 mark is c. 240 grams, and equals 240 Norwegian, and about 150 English pennings). There were similar restrictions of silk cloth with thread of gold and silver, and "Russian" shoes (probably made of red leather, a specialty product imported by the Hansa from Novgorod) – only women of the most noble category can wear these, as well as more than one ring.

The prices of fabrics and preparation of various textiles, rings, shoes and jewelry were minutely regulated by law. In 1282 a detailed list of prices was introduced (NGL III, 12–16). A coat of good English lambskin is valued to 1 mark (240 pennings) – those made of Norwegian lambskin were valued to half the price. The lining of a hood from ermine fur is itself valued to seven *eyrir* (210 pennings). Tanners, for their preparations, should be paid two *eyrir* (60 pennings) to prepare 40 marten skins, and somewhat less for the equal amount of ermine skins. Silk thread was clearly in demand and imported in large quantities. One pound (c. 430 g) was priced for 14 *eyrir* (420 pennings), and when sold in detail 25 pennings for a *stikk* (about 2 or 2,5 meters).

The taxation of such valuables in documents, especially in inventories and testaments, shows that most people who lived and did trade in the towns – and thus also the audience of the translated romances – must have had a fairly good understanding of the monetary evaluation of material objects in literature. There is then hardly a coincidence that the Old Norse version of *Erec et Enide* added a note about the value of the queen's gift to Evida, a robe of precious material and costly ornament, *eigi minna verðr en tíu merkr gulls; þar með guðvefjar skikkju, fóðraða hvítum skinnum en reflaða svörtum safala ok gullhlöðhin* ([worth not less than ten marks of gold; along with this a mantle of precious cloth, lined in white fur and bordered with black sable and gold lace]) (*Erex saga*, 232–233). In a Norwegian town around 1300, 10 marks gold would equal 80 marks weighed (about 17 kg) silver, or over 19.000 pennings (Pettersen 2013). This seems like a ridiculously costly dress, but at the same time is something that people could – and probably was expected to – compare their own, and others', dresses, coats and hoods. It also gives an idea of what would be expected of the Norwegian court to give to the Danish princess Ingeborg, after having been brought out of a nunnery, by a Norwegian force and without the consent of her guardians, to marry the Hákon IV's son Magnús, and bringing nothing else than she wore on her at the time (*Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, ch. 306).

Ingeborg, when crowned queen in 1261 was more than likely familiar with the Old Norse *Erex saga*, including the description of Evida's beautiful and costly dress. Usually, however, a princess coming from abroad and marrying to a Norwegian king, would bring her own clothing and valuables. Although the objects of Isabella Bruce, Queen of Norway 1293–1299, and queen dowager for another five decades after her husband King Eirik Magnusson's death, are not assessed with a particular price, the description of her valuables is comparable to the clothing in the translated romances (DN XIX, 390). Already at her arrival to Bergen from Scotland,

she brought a *camelino* (bright cloth of camel hair), dresses and hoods lined with primarily white ermine fur or squirrel fur, *scarlet* (expensive woolen cloth, prepared in England), *samite* (thick silken cloth), with threads of gold, bed clothing of red wool, with linings of ermine and with *armis Francie* in golden embroidery. The values of all these items are not specified, but some of them would be compared to Evida's dress.

These royal women's dresses can be related to women in lower aristocracy and urban élites. In the inventory of the noblewoman Holmfriðr Erlingsdóttir, made at her house in Bergen in 1328, some of the fabrics and clothes are relatable, such as a scarlet cloak with furred lining, a *surcot* (over-coat) and *caprun* (short shoulder coat) with white fur (DN II, 165). These three objects alone were valued at 26 marks. The worth of all the textiles, clothes and bed linings was set to 172 marks, while other objects, such as utensils, jewelry and books, were valued at 146 marks. Although no single piece of clothing belonging to Holmfriðr was nearly as expensive as the dress given to Evida, the taxation of even fictional clothing made it possible to compare. As the prices of clothing linked status to moral, the community could either regard costly garments as proper in respect of social background, or as a potential false sign that could dupe others. In this respect, romances offered a narrative background for how to interpret and understand the deep concern and ambiguity associated to clothing.

A final inventory will be mentioned here, made in 1366 at the important manor Talgje in South-Western Norway, just north of Stavanger (DN IV, 457). Holmfriðr Ánundsdóttir and Ingimundr Utyrmsson were to be married, and the document specified what was to be her dowry. The list includes several precious items, such as a mantle made of green silk with lining of white fur worth five marks of gold, another mantle with pearls and white fur valued at three marks gold, and a *surcot* of four marks gold. In all, the items Holmfriðr Ánundsdóttir brought into the marriage were valued to 446,5 marks silver (c. 95,5 kg). In addition, Ingimundr was to give his bride 10 marks gold.

The list also includes five drinking horns, including two large with decoration in silver. These are not as highly priced as the mantles, but from the description these two horns seem to have been held in high regard and much more valuable than the three others. Drinking horns are frequently mentioned in sources connected to the Viking Age and their use is documented even earlier. However, as Vivian Etting has pointed out, there are few surviving drinking horns from the period from the early eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries in Scandinavia. Within that period, Europeanized drinking fashions at court and among the élite were more often associated to beakers and cups made of glass. From the middle of the thirteenth century and until about 1400, the drinking horns appear to be fashionable again (Etting 2013). One possible reason for this might be the influence of European fashion, often associated to the knowledge of romances and the mention of drinking horns. Most famously, stories of the drinking horn test, where men who were cuckolds were unable to drink from it, are found in the late twelfth-century *Lai du Corn*, and in the early thirteenth-century *Diu Krône*. The search for the origin of this motif of the magical drinking horn has led scholars to discuss whether the European romances borrowed from early medieval Germanic legends (Heller 1934), or alternatively, from Celtic traditions (Harward 1958: 37). However,

most of the examples in favour of the former suggestion are from late medieval Icelandic sagas that often show influence from the *riddarasǫgur* themselves. When the late Icelandic version of the Tristan-story, *Saga of Tristram ok Ísödd* transforms the vessel with the love potion into a drinking horn, this might as well indicate an association of the horn with world of romance and the new fashionable drinking gear, more than a cultural translation of something foreign into something specific Norse (Jorgensen & Hill 1999: 276–277).

In the case of Norway, the earliest of these 'new' drinking horns is dated to the first half of the thirteenth century (VM, Trondheim, T133; Kielland 1927: 138–139). A rock crystal is fitted on the horn, perhaps to use its ability to halt the drunkenness and hangover of the users. At the tip, there is a dragon in gilt bronze that has a striking resemblance to a decorative initial in Queen Margrét Skúladóttir's Psalter (Berlin, Kupferstichsammlung, MS A 78). Moreover, the psalter's scene of February depicts a feast, with a drinking horn on the table. This psalter was most likely produced in England during the first decades of the thirteenth century, and it is assumed that it was a wedding gift to Queen Margrét in 1225 (Bø 2017). Although the precise dating and provenance of the Trondheim horn is unknown, it is tempting to suggest that its use and decoration combined elements from Margrét's psalter and was on the table at her wedding to King Hákon IV, or at a later royal feast.

The inventory of Holmfriðr Ánundsdóttir from 1366, mentioned above, lists several drinking horns. Two of these, described as being of large size, can be identified with the Norwegian horns that were sent to the National Museum in Copenhagen from Iceland in the eighteenth century. One of them is known as the 'Royal Horn', as the heraldic emblems surrounding the rim includes the royal lion of Hákon V (*r.* 1299–1319). The heraldry of the other shields includes some of the most prominent men of the Norwegian realm, among them Holmfriðr's ancestor, as well as some Swedish noblemen. One of them must have been Bjarni Erlingsson who died in 1313, and details in the shield suggest that it was made after his diplomatic visit to the Scottish court in early 1312 (Steinnes 1968). This would date this horn to 1312, and the most likely occasion when these all met, was the double wedding in Oslo celebrated this year: The two Norwegian princesses Ingibjǫrg, daughter of King Eiríkr II Magnússon and Queen Isabella Bruce, and her cousin, also named Ingibjǫrg, who was the daughter of King Hákon V and Queen Eufemia of Rügen (*r.* 1299–1312) married the two Swedish dukes Erik and Valdemar. The increasing intermingling between Norwegian and Swedish noblemen from the time of the betrothals and to these marriages is associated to the three *Eufemiavisor*, written in Old Swedish.

The other horn, often named after Ívar Holm who had his name spelled on the ornamental tip, was most likely made shortly after the Royal Horn, but before 1319 (Steinnes 1968). This horn also has the royal lion at the gilded silver fitting around its rim, as well as the heraldic emblems of several royal aristocrats and councillors. The purpose of both these horns has suggested to be in use at the St. Edmund's guild (Jatmundsgildet) that, according to a fifteenth-century source, was associated to the royal chapel of the Apostles in Bergen (Kielland 1927: 183). However, this guild is rarely mentioned in the sources and the use of the horn here cannot be verified. A more likely context is the royal wedding in Oslo 1312 and the festivities

organized there, for the nobility of both Sweden and Norway. It is striking that both these horns have fittings for rock crystals on them. *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie*, one of the *Eufemiavisor* that might have been intended as entertainment at the double wedding in 1312, includes a depiction of a feast. In this text, amethysts are laid at each seating in order for the guests to drink without becoming drunk (Herzog Friedrich, ll. 380–395). Furthermore, there is a specific mention of the qualities of these gemstones, with references to both the *Letter of Prester John* (as is also referred to in *King's Mirror*), and a certain "book of lapidaries". One of the guests who most likely attended the wedding in 1312, Haukr Erlendsson, may already have translated a text on stones found in the before-mentioned *Hauksbók*, but versions of the lapidary of the thirteenth-century Dane Henrik Harpestreng may also have influenced the Old Swedish *Hertig Fredrik* (Lombardi 2021).

The idea of the link of a horn and a guild may still be relevant, as the heraldic emblems seem to create a similar context of brotherhood and drinking. Within the situation of sharing the mead or wine in the same vessel, the people who are represented around the rim would be in a fellowship with the king. The table was not round, but the drinking horn could have represented a related notion of an intimate circle, shared the king's values and expressed trust and loyalty without envy or rivalry amongst them. After the event itself, the object carried with it the memory of the event and the fellowship, showing later owners who, at least in mind, were part of this community. In such meaning, although not necessarily alluding to the test of cuckoldry, you had to be a descendant of initiated families with close relationship to the royal circle to be able to drink of the same horn.

Holmfriðr was most likely a descendant of the noble family of Talgje, among others Gautr Erlingsson and Ísak Gautsson. Both members of the Talgje-family received the title of baron in the late thirteenth century. Moreover, they were members of the royal council and acted as royal envoys in England and Scotland. At this time, the members of the council are known to have had literary interests. One example is Bjarni Erlingsson, who was both represented on the horn and is associated with the translation of one of the branches of the Charlemagne cycle. The barons of Talgje may have had a role in the Old Norse translation of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Hamptone*, as *Bevers saga* is mentioned in the inventory of Holmfriðr, along with "many other good sagas", unfortunately unnamed.

The daughter of Holmfriðr and Ingimundr Utyrmsson, Guðríðr, married Vígfúss Ívarsson, son of Ívarr Holm who was *hirðstjóri*, the highest royal official, in Iceland in mid-fourteenth century. Ívarr was involved in both the networks and conflicts in Iceland at the time but also related to literary milieus as for instance Ormr Snorrason who was involved in the production of the important, but now lost, manuscript of *riddarasǫgur*, known as **Ormsbók* (Bandlien 2013). Ívarr, the son of Guðríðr and Vigfúss, was killed in Iceland without heirs in 1433. It was most probably him that was the owner of the horn in the early fifteenth century and set his name on the fitting at the tip. His sister, Margrét, however, later became among the wealthiest and powerful women in Iceland, and owned several saga manuscripts, including the Holm perg 7 fol. that included both *Bevers saga*, and other *riddarasǫgur*. With her grandmother's background from the upper élite of Norway, she appears to have had strong share in the interest in the literature and knowledge of the wider world (Orning 2017).

Although the provenance of the two royal drinking horns from 1366 until they were sent from Iceland to Copenhagen in the seventeenth century remains uncertain, it is reasonable to at least assume that the drinking horn of Ívarr Holm was either owned by Margrét Vigfúsdóttir or at least known to her as an object of memory of her ancestry. In this respect, the drinking horn was as much of the courtly legacy of Margrét's identity in the late fifteenth century as the courtly sagas she had written in her manuscripts. This kind of material transmission may be extended to the gifts of luxurious cloth, jewelry, and spices between Norway and Iceland in the fourteenth century, as witnessed in the letters of the bishops of Bergen. One of them was Bishop Hákon Erlingsson (d. 1342). In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, he was in friendly relations with, amongst many others, Erlingr Vidkunsson (d. 1355), head of the royal council and a traveler to both Rome and England, with Jón Halldórsson, Dominican friar in Norway and later bishop of Skálholt, and assumed to be central in the literary production of tales, sermons and arguably indigenous *riddarasǫgur*, and with Raymund of Lamena, the French collector of crusading tithes and an agent in the trade of gyrfalcons to European courts (Berulfsen 1948: 61–63). Thus, Bishop Hákon Erlingsson was part of a cosmopolitan network of political, economic and cultural agents that knew courtly literature, new fashions and codes of behaviour, and wore rings, clothing and drank from vessels that were also found among Arthurian knights.

The sources still offer abundant evidence for the material echoes of the translated courtly texts in the identities of urban and aristocratic élites in medieval Norway. Even though the full potential of some elements in the French originals is less explored in the preserved translations, such as the Holy Grail and the Round Table, there were occasions and contexts that would recall the literary space of romances in the streets or at feasts. The royal weddings in the period from 1225 to 1312, that attracted the attention of a wide audience, as well as the acute awareness of the value and meaning of specific objects, are strong indications of the interest in a courtly materiality in Norway. Thus, the transfer and adaptation of literary texts in a Norse setting was not isolated from the material flow to the north.

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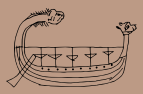

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ISBN 978-82-93904-03-8 (print)
ISSN 0805-4487 (print)

ISBN 978-82-93904-04-5 (online)
ISSN 2704-0682 (online)
DOI 10.15845/bryggen.v12.2026