



Virgile Reiter, Raphaëlle Jamet (Eds.)

Arthur in Northern Translations

Material Culture, Characters, and Courtly Influence

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Abstracts

Kristina Hildebrand: *The Trappings and Trimmings: Clothes, Food, and Decoration in Hærra Ivan*. The Swedish 14th-century romance *Hærra Ivan* presents an ideal noble world by portraying courtly manners, feasts, and battles, including scenes that are not present in the French *Yvain* by Chrétien de Troyes. This article focuses on the portrayal of elegant clothes made from expensive fabrics and the usage of fabrics in furnishing homes. Here the author often expands on the original, and also tends to define the materials used as expensive and rich (*kostelik, rik, dyr*) – while the terms have the wider meaning of ‘valuable,’ ‘spendid,’ they are also closely associated with the amount of money one would have to pay for the item in question. Some of the materials are, in fact, so expensive that it is doubtful whether they were in use even among royalty at the time. In presenting these rich items, the author suggests how the nobility should aspire to the correct forms of consumption to display their nobility and wealth, and uphold their social standing.

Ingvil Brügger Budal: *The Unbearable Stench of Tristram: Female Healers, Injuries, Remedies, and Medical Techniques*. The popularity of the Norse thirteenth-century translation of Thomas’ *Tristan*, *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, is not only attested by its long manuscript tradition, but also by the numerous Nordic recreations of Tristan-material, as well as the reuse of names, motifs and situations from the saga. This article examines the image and skills of the female healer in three Norse Tristram-texts, the types of traumas treated, and the healers’ repertoire of medical aid. An added emphasis is given to the vocabulary referring to herbs, poultices and ointments, in particular to the hitherto unexplained Norse simplex *sinsingarplástr*, and these “compresses of sinsing,” turns out to be remnants from the Anglo-Norman source to the translation, left unaltered by Norse copyists and text redactors through centuries.

John-Wilhelm Flattun: *In Chase of Dragons: Warburg, Collective Memory and the Myth of Heroes*. What makes a hero, or a monster? The dragon image has been appropriated as a national symbol for both Wales and England, the dragon as monster to St. George in England, and as Arthurian royal emblem and prophesy to Wales. In this paper, I pursue the appropriation of the dragon myth, its religious and symbolic nature of images of prophecy and power, and the use and reuse of the hero-monster motif. I discuss the appropriation of the dragon myth, its religious and symbolic nature of images of prophecy and power, and the use and reuse of the hero-monster motif. In this discussion, a central line of questions arises, what makes a hero, what makes a monster, and to whom? My main theoretical concern is visual migration, a concept of how social memory and forgetting plays a vital role in symbolic adaptation. I explore the function and interplay between art and power, a key element to this function of political power images is the formation of collective memory and the ability to hold two opposite meanings of the same symbol. The power of these images is rooted in their abilities to change and be readapted, or in Aby Warburg’s terms, to be actualised and inverted. I focus on how familiar motifs, specifically the dragon, change meaning while still staying in their same form, known and recognised across cultures, time and space. What hap-

pens when the dragon has two opposing meanings at the same time, used by the same people?

Heidi Støa: Sem Lifandi Væri: *Lively Ekphrasis and Automata in the Riddarasögur*.

Scholarship on medieval visual culture has frequently noted the tendency of medieval art to concern itself not just with the illusion of life, but also with the idea that an art object might cross from lifelikeness into actual animation. However, less attention has been directed towards the language authors of ekphrastic texts use to create the impression of objects that seem excessively lively: objects that seem so moving, vibrant and three-dimensional that they are “as if alive.” In this paper, I examine the trope of liveliness in a series of Old Norse/Icelandic *riddarasögur* (Arthurian and non-Arthurian), looking at the language and descriptive detail used to convince the reader of the extraordinary liveliness of animal automata and animals represented in two-dimensional artworks. My examples include the extended description of Tristram’s dog in *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, the magnificent Trojan bowl described in *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr* and the animal automata that tempt the maiden-king Serena in *Clári saga*. The narrators of these texts pay intense attention to both the fine craft and cost behind these figures and their strong projection of actual animation, thus questioning the origin of the figures’ liveliness while constructing sumptuous texts filled with flying birds, moving lions, and people who cannot resist what they see. I argue that these texts exhibit a particular literary mode compelling diverse audiences: lively ekphrasis.

Virgile Reiter: “Einn Dag Þá Er Parceval XII Vetra Gamall” *The Young Heroes in Parcevals Saga and Flóres Saga ok Blankiflúr*.

This article aims to study the representation of youth in two Old Norse translations of continental romances: *Parcevals Saga* and *Flóres Saga ok Blankiflúr*. Those two works share the theme of young male heroes starting their adventures as young men before raising through the ranks of society, helped by their natural qualities, and taking their intended place in society. We intend to show how age, while a factor, is not always a relevant variable when it comes to advancing in social status in romance. The actions of the protagonists and how they envision their relationship with their parents are much more important to their social status than their young age, and only a successfully concluded quest can allow them to advance to the next stage of their life. We will also show how the theme of young men learning how to act in courtly environment could have been a factor when choosing which texts to adapt in 13th-century Norway.

Claudia Tassone: *The Changing Discourse on Female Fickleness from the Old French Yvain to the Old Norse Ívens Saga*.

In Chrétien de Troyes’s romance *Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion* women have an important, generally positive status. Nevertheless, some statements of the work, dealing with the stereotype of female fickleness, led critics to postulate a misogynistic temper of the author. This paper will analyse these statements, considering them in the medieval and literary context and comparing them with their possible source, Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*. In a second step, the paper will focus on the elaboration of the stereotype in medieval translations of *Yvain*, particularly the Old Norse *Ívens saga*.

Anne Berthelot: *Le Merlin nordique*. Cette communication s'intéresse à l'image de Merlin dans la littérature médiévale scandinave, à partir des deux textes qui seuls mettent en scène le personnage : d'une part la *Breta Sögur*, d'autre part la *Merlinúsþá*. Pour ce dernier texte, je m'interroge surtout sur ses conditions d'énonciation affichées, adaptées à une tradition littéraire reposant sur la vision et la prédiction. Pour la *Breta Sögur*, j'étudie un épisode inédit, celui où Uter doit faire appel aux services de Merlin après la conception d'Arthur pour surmonter la résistance d'Ygerne qui refuse d'épouser le meurtrier de son mari bien-aimé. Je conclus que dans les deux cas, on a affaire à une tentative d'acclimatation d'un personnage totalement exotique dans la culture scandinave en le rapprochant des praticiens du surnaturel que l'on rencontre ailleurs dans cette culture.

David Brégaint: *Royal Patronage of Courtly Literature: Asserting Domestic Cultural Status in High Medieval Norway*. The present paper examines the issue of cultural prestige at the court of the Norwegian kings in the 13th century. It argues that Norwegian kings and queens undertook literary patronage in order to cultivate their cultural prestige and reputation to their own courtiers. In positioning themselves as central intermediaries in the cultural transfers that affected their courtiers, the Norwegian kings and queens achieved preeminence over their own court, but also over a broader aristocratic environment.

John M. Sullivan: *The Ending of Herr Ivan*. This essay analyzes how the *Herr Ivan* poet substantially modifies *Yvain*'s problematic ending. The Swedish master makes that conclusion arguably more satisfying and more final by massaging the general contours of the principal characters, by adding and deleting gestures, and by adding several important plot details. The essay also demonstrates how the success of *Herr Ivan*'s ending owes much to the poet's expertise in using one of the most characteristic structuring tools of Arthurian romance, thematic analogy.

Arthur in Northern Translations is a compilation of some of the articles presented at two conferences organized by the Nordic Branch of the Arthurian Society. The volume aims to showcase the richness and broad appeal of the contemporary research on Nordic translations of courtly literature, featuring articles on the Arthurian tradition in Medieval Scandinavia. As such, the articles compiled here will be of interest not only to specialists of the Medieval North, but to all interested in courtly literature and Arthurian material in general.

V. Reiter is an independent researcher with a PhD in Scandinavian Studies (Sorbonne), he now works on editing his translation of the Swedish Flores och Blanzeflor in modern French.

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