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RIDDARASÖGUR: CHANGING MEDIEVAL NORWAY WITH FRENCH ROMANCE LITERATURE

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Introduction

The driving force behind chivalric pursuits is love. Love inspires one to hope for and achieve feats of nobility once considered impossible. Infused with themes of love, Arthurian romances capture the imagination with ample portrayals of all things good and beautiful or base and ugly in human relating. Just as love brings to light what is hidden inside the heart, so chivalric tales reveal to us what is hidden within our own hearts as we journey with fictional characters whose true character emerges in romantic encounters. For this reason, both love and the stories of love invite us to become more fully alive, even noble. Striving for nobility in turn influences those around us, and therefore makes its broader impact on human society and culture. Not only does the portrayal of love in literature reveal the culture of a particular time and place, it can also leave a lasting impact on a society. When a society reflects on the best and the worst depictions of desire and love, its people can be transformed by the power of love.

In this study, I will compare and contrast two French chivalric legends with their Norwegian adaptations, part of what is known as the *riddarasögur*. Two subgenres, the translated and indigenous, characterize the *riddarasögur*. Texts of the first group include those French narratives that were redacted into Old Norse during the 13th century, such as the *Ívens saga* and the *Erex saga*. Per the etymology of the word, *riddarasögur* translates to “sagas of knights” or “chivalric sagas” and often depict tales of chivalry and the court (Kalinke, “Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*)” 316-317). Many of Chrétien de Troyes’ adapted works fall into the *riddarasögur*, as do *chansons de geste*, *romans courtois* (courtly romances) and Marie de France’s *lais* and *fabliaux* (Glauser, “Romance (Translated *riddarasögur*)” 374).

Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au lion* and *Erec et Enide* will be contrasted in this paper with the Norwegian *Ívens saga* and the *Erex Saga*. By analyzing the depictions of love in each version, a portrait of medieval French and Norwegian culture emerges, particularly between the French characters Laudine and Yvain and Erec and Enide and the Norwegian characters Laudine and Íven and Erex and Evida, a contrast emerges. To better analyze this contrast, the concept of love requires some clarification. With its multiplicity of meanings, love can be an ambiguous term and would remain an amorphous concept were it not for Greek philosophy. C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* offers an insightful treatment of the classical concepts of love. As this project draws upon Lewis's work to assist in defining the types of love that one encounters in the legends; *the Four Loves* provides the context in which comparison of the French and Norwegian versions of *Le Chevalier au lion* and *Erec et Enide* will proceed.

Defining Love

The classical Greek concepts of love presented in *The Four Loves* differ dramatically. *Storge* is the term used to describe natural affection as, for example, between parent and child, whereas *phileo* describes love between friends (Lewis, 31 and 57). *Eros* is an element of love which inflames the heart with passion and often stands in sharp contrast to the unconditional, sacrificial love of *agape*, the truest kind of love that leads to the laying down of one's life for the beloved (91 and 116). For Lewis, these classical loves have three modifiers: appreciative love,

need-love, and gift-love.¹ These types of love and their modifiers appear throughout *Le Chevalier au lion*, the *Ívens saga*, *Erec et Enide*, and the *Erex saga*, with *agape*, *storge*, and *eros* predominating in both versions of the two tales. Through the lens of Lewis's definitions, we can see in the French and Norwegian texts how each type of love manifests differently in each work. A striking example of this is found in the scene from *Erec et Enide* wherein the duke forcibly marries Enide shortly after the apparent death of her husband, Erec (Chrétien, ll. 4764-4849). The same scene is found in the *Erex saga* but with a decidedly different twist.

Eros in the form of need-love motivates the duke when he ignores Enide's refusal of the marriage, weds her against her will, and becomes violently angry when she refuses to eat the feast prepared in her honor. He bears no true care or affection for Enide, only a desire to have her as his wife. In this episode, the reader sees *eros* shift from love to lust, for it is not truly an expression of love. The Norwegian version of this episode plainly presents this expression of *eros* as lust. The text makes clear that Evida's name remained unknown to the earl yet he "wanted to bed her so badly that he felt as though ignited by sparks of fire" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 26). Objectification of Evida for the satisfaction of desire is the fruit of the earl's erotic need-love in the *Erex saga*.

Looking at *Le Chevalier au lion*, we find ample illustration of *agape*, *eros*, and *phileo*. In its Norwegian counterpart, the *Ívens saga*, these same types of loves are captured. Both French

¹ C.S. Lewis provides three additional definitions of love which provide a foundation for understanding the four Greek loves. Need-love is based on necessity while gift-love is that which seeks to serve (Lewis, 17). Appreciative love leads a lover to admire and appreciate with gratitude that which has caught the lover's attention (17). These loves function as lenses through which the classical concepts of love receive modification.

and Norwegian versions showcase *agape* when Yvain/Íven humbly returns to make amends with his wife (Chrétien, 933 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 83). Yvain's/Íven's willingness to die for his beloved is not merely figurative, as Laudine's reaction is entirely unpredictable. Will she simply reject him or will she kill him? Laudine had promised Yvain that her love would turn to hate if he failed to return to her within the year, promise failure which indeed came to pass. (Chrétien, 795 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 59). Yvain's/Íven's uncertainty as to how Laudine will respond to his reappearance is evident when he meets Lunete/Luneta in the forest. In this scene, Yvain/Íven learns that his inadvertent betrayal resulted in the sentencing to death of Lunete/Luneta on account of treason (Chrétien, ll. 3623-3624, 3648-3650, and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 66). Despite the grim possibility of being put to death, Yvain nonetheless attempts to reconcile with his wife. He is willing to risk death for the sake of his beloved. Expecting the worst, he bravely enters her court to address her with all the humility of a remorseful heart brimming with *agape*.

Gaps in the Field

An analysis of love and chivalry through the lens of Lewis's *The Four Loves* addresses a gap in available research pertaining to French and Norwegian Arthurian legend. Discussions on love seem in general to be a relatively recent development in Arthuriana while virtually no work has incorporated C.S. Lewis and his ideas. A single academic paper, "Beyond the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis as Closet Arthurian" by Fiona Tolhurst, presents C.S. Lewis as an Arthurian enthusiast who infused some of his works with themes from Arthurian legend. Tolhurst's work appears to be the closest the field has come to studying the Arthurian romances through the lens of Lewis's

work. Therefore, this project directly addresses and paves the path for future study of love in Arthuriana and comparative cultural studies.

Moreover, until now, much of Arthuriana has focused on fundamental analysis of the works by comparing and situating the adaptations in cultural environments, and developing historical and literary understanding of the adaptations; however, study of the Norwegian adaptations, according to Kalinke, is a relatively new branch of Arthurian research that has developed only within the past 40-50 years (Blaisdell and Kalinke, ix). Glauser supports this assertion in McTurk's *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, in which he states that the *riddarasögur* "have been neglected and little researched" (Glauser, 372). It is time to delve into and further expand this branch of Arthuriana that deals with the Norwegian *riddarasögur* .

Socio-literary study adds a level of sociological importance to this project. Through Arthurian literature, a clearer understanding of the histories and cultures of France and Norway may be seen. Understanding the portrayal of love in the French and Norwegian adaptations can provide clues as to how the societies truly functioned. How did men and women, family members, friends and enemies treat one another? What were the prevailing concepts of excellent or ignoble character? Beyond this, how did the social norms related to honor inform political relations between Norway and France? How did these relations change with literary exchange and how did this exchange impact neighboring countries? This study is designed to address some of these questions and open the door for consideration in future studies.

Socio-Literary Perspective

Analysis of each country's history reveals how culture affected the writing of the tales and also how the literature may have shaped society. In *The Arthur of the North*, Marianne Kalinke reveals that King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway formally requested that the chivalric tales be translated into sagas for his people (10). It seems that this genre, referred to as the *riddarasögur*, was an attempt by King Hákon to civilize 13th century Norwegian society in general and the royal court in particular. According to Margaret Ross's research presented in *The Old Norse-Icelandic Saga*, the *riddarasögur* encompasses "a number of genres in Latin, French and Anglo-Norman [literature]" (Ross, 81). Many of the works recount tales of chivalry, such as the *Ívens saga* and the *Erex saga*, while others include translations of French *lais*, *fabliaux*, and *chansons de geste*. The *Tristrams saga*, a translation of Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*, is included in this genre. Ross states that despite the conglomeration of genres, the works constituting the *riddarasögur* all contain "a courtly setting, interest in kingship, and concern with the ethics of chivalry and courtly love" (80-81). In this explanation of the genre, Ross suggests that King Hákon intended these translations to serve as guides for "modernizing" his court and his kingdom (81).

Kalinke supports Ross's supposition in *The Arthur of the North* by explaining that Norway had a reputation for receiving guests poorly. Kalinke recounts how one man, Cardinal William of Sabina, received advice to avoid Bergen because of a lack of food, drink, and all that implied a favorable welcome. Ignoring the advice, the cardinal continued to the coronation of King Hákon in Norway and found a rather different welcome in the form of a well-catered feast (Kalinke, 10). From this historical anecdote, one can infer that 13th century Norwegian society held an

unfortunate reputation, one that King Hákon sought to improve with the influence of courtly literature.

Love as both Theme and Style

To understand the prevalence of love in medieval culture and literature, one need only read a portion of an Arthurian legend. As a romance genre, the theme of love permeates the literature. Through word choice and composition, Chrétien de Troyes' use of language lends itself well to a romantic atmosphere. Detailed embellishments create a poetic atmosphere in the lengthy French versions which spark the imagination with sumptuous descriptions. For example, in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au lion*, the reception of King Arthur by Lady Laudine and her new husband Yvain garners a long and beautiful description of the scene. Chrétien infuses the text with an almost mythic quality as he details the "silken cloth" and tapestries lining the streets, and the "bells, horns, and trumpets" that could have drowned out thunder (Chrétien, 788). Conversely, the Norwegian *Ívens saga* gives little detail about this meeting between Arthur, Yvain, and Laudine. A brief mention is made of there being "costly materials" decorating the castle and a feast lasting seven days (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 58). Overall, the texts of the Norwegian *riddarasögur* are frank and concise, lacking detail in the episodes not dealing with chivalric escapades. This stylistic shift infuses the literature with an action-focused sensation and treats love as a more secondary element. These differences in the treatment of love lead one to conclude that medieval French culture esteemed love in an idealized and emotional way whereas 13th century Norway maintained a more stoic view of love in the context of a society focused on achievement through action.

These ideas are supported at the plot level of the works. Though love is treated differently in the French and Norwegian versions, the theme still appears intrinsically tied to chivalric development and the definition of chivalry as a whole. One could say that while chivalry impacts love, love is the driving force of chivalry. The works of *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga* illustrate this well when Enide/Evida laments over her husband's decline in chivalric fame. Her love for him prompts her sorrow upon hearing the accusations against her husband. When Erec/Erex learns of this, he immediately departs in search of adventure to prove his knightly prowess. If not for the words of his wife, which were rooted in love, Erec would not have embarked on this journey of chivalric character development. Chrétien's tale of *Erec et Enide* is one in which love plays a pivotal role but presents itself in a more demure manner. At the center of Erec's pursuits of chivalry and Enide's unwavering fidelity, the story is a chronicle of the strength of love.

Literary Context

One needs some knowledge of the social and literary history in order to better understand the literature and its connection to a culture. According to Maddox and Sturm-Maddox in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, *Erec et Enide* is the first Arthurian romance. It "marks a new departure in medieval vernacular narrative" (Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, 103). In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, Bruckner clarifies that *Erec et Enide* was in fact Chrétien de Troyes' first romance (79). She goes on to say that though the origin of this work is unclear, similarities between the Arthurian court and that of Henry II, as well as references to Marie de Champagne and Philippe d'Alsace, date *Erec et Enide* between

1160 and 1191 AD (79). Approximately 50 to 60 years later, during the 1200s and no later than the 1300s, *Erec et Enide* was translated into Old Icelandic/Old Norse at the behest of King Hákon Hákonarson of Norway (Glauser, 375). During the translation process, the original story remained predominantly the same, but the redactor removed much of the detail, intensified the episodes of chivalric prowess, and created the Norwegian adaptation known as the *Erex saga*.

The *Ívens saga* seems to have followed a similar path as that of the *Erex saga*. Translated during the 13th century as part of King Hákon Hákonarson's quest for civilizing influences for his people, the *Ívens saga* is considered another member of the Norwegian *riddarasögur* (Glauser, 373). Again, the tale of Sir Íven, the Lion Knight, remains largely faithful to the French original, but loses much of its detail and appears to focus more on the chivalric pursuits of the main character. Overall, with its stoic quality, the tale appears less emotional than the French version and more physical in its concentration on the chivalric quest.

Conversely, the original, French counterpart of the *Ívens saga*, which initially entered Arthurian legend much later than *Erec et Enide*, seems to present a slightly different, emotional approach to the court. Emotion and detail enrich the text of Chrétien's telling of Sir Yvain's adventures in *Le Chevalier au lion*. At its core, *Le Chevalier au lion* is a love story. It chronicles the classic events of two people meeting, falling in love, entangling themselves in some form of heartbreak, reconciling, and then living happily ever after. This is, of course, a rather elementary summary of the tale, and one must look deeper to unearth its more delicate treasures. *Le Chevalier au lion* explores the psychological, emotional, and spiritual meanings of love as well as the physical. This is easily seen in Yvain's choice to save the lion, a

representation of all that is good. Furthermore, Chrétien's sumptuous details fill the story with a level of care that indicates the author's love for his work, further deepening the amorous atmosphere of this Arthurian legend.

The Heart of the Matter

At the core of the Arthurian romances involved in this study, one finds love to be the motivating or driving force that propels the plot. As previously stated, *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga* are primarily stories of love. Though the *Ívens saga* tends to focus more on knightly feats of arms, the story maintains its core status as a romance. Analysis of Sir Yvain's/Íven's character, relationships, and sacrificial actions reveals that he is a knight primarily motivated by *agape*. Yvain/Íven regularly and willingly risks his life for the love of goodness. An example of this is found in Yvain's/Íven's encounter with the lion (Chrétien, 821-824 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 64-65). His choice to save the lion from the serpent is not only chivalrous but, moreover, it serves as a spiritual allegory for the ultimate choice between good and evil. As Guillaume le Clerc points out in *Le Bestiaire divin*, the lion was a symbol of Christ and all goodness during the Middle Ages, while the serpent represented the Devil and all wickedness (Guillaume le Clerc, 75 and 149). By defending the lion, Yvain/Íven proves to the Medieval reader that his heart is filled with desire for the highest good and a passion to uphold and protect it even unto death. In this particular scene between the lion and the serpent, Yvain's/Íven's agapic choice brings his heroic virtue to full flowering and reveals to him his own identity. This liberates him to do what is necessary to begin his journey back to his wife, Laudine. When Yvain/Íven saves the lion, he rediscovers his life. He chooses to accept and

correct his own faults, while also resolving to reconcile with his wife, heal her broken heart, and show her true love. His defeat of the serpent in honor of the Christ-figure lion is a clear moment of redemption for him. This turning point in the plot leads him to true love, which is shown to be the pinnacle of true chivalry. Furthermore, because the lion stays with him as he goes on to defeat a terrible giant and three knights, the lion functions also as a source of strength and knightly virtue for him. Although Yvain had shamefully broken his contract with Laudine, he arises to true knightly character with the lion by his side. This reflects the patristic influence upon Medieval literature, and particularly, the concept of chivalry as sacrificial love.

Throughout *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga*, other scenes make evident that Yvain's character is motivated by true love. At the beginning of *Le Chevalier au lion*, it seems that Yvain's initial decision to part from his wife sprung from an expression of *storge* or *phileo*. Yvain/Íven asks leave of Laudine at the behest of his cousin Gawain and therefore out of platonic and familial affection for him (Chrétien, 794). One ought to note here a difference in the French and Norwegian versions of this tale. In the *Ívens saga*, Sir Gawain persuades Íven by counseling him against settling too quickly into a life of leisure which would lead to ruin of his reputation as a knight (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 58). Here, Íven's motivation appears to originate more in his desire to uphold the chivalric ideal than out of consideration for his kinsman. From this, one observes a difference in the cultural prioritizing of values. In one, the accent is on acts of valor whereas in the other, it rests on acts of personal love.

In *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga*, the story opens with the hunt for the white stag (Chrétien, 62 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 4). This hunt includes a special tradition by which the winner of the hunt declares the most beautiful lady of the land by presenting her with a kiss.

This episode in the story demonstrates how the theme of love propels the plot forward.

Demonstrating Lewis's concept of appreciative love, the kiss is meant as a sign of appreciation of the lady, or more specifically, of her beauty. In this way, the men of the court recognize a lady as worthy of receiving the "honor of the white stag." This element of the story is so pivotal for the remainder of the story that neither *Erec et Enide* nor the *Erex saga* could have existed without the hunt and this theme of love. In fact, the presence of the stag recurs in French chivalric literature. For example, in one of Marie de France's *lais*, *Guigemar* (*Guiamars ljóð* in Norwegian) the stag is a primary catalyst for learning how to love. When Guigemar shoots the white stag, the arrow rebounds and strikes him in the leg. Upon its final breath, the stag curses him, saying that his wound can only be healed by a true experience of love, particularly, sacrificial love for a beloved (*agape*). Prior to this encounter, Guigemar had shown himself to be incapable of feeling love. In this way, the white stag guides him to the one who becomes his beloved and thus introduces him to love. Similarly, Erec/Erex discovers true love by means of a stag hunt. Although he does not participate, he accompanies the queen, encounters the wicked knight and his dwarf, and thereby receives a wound, the avenging of which leads him to chivalric glory and the profession of undying love for Enide/Evida.

Overall, *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga* seem to demonstrate more overtly the driving force of love in the story's events. Take for example the beginning of the hunt when Erec/Erex accompanies Queen Guinevere and fights the knight with the dwarf (Chrétien, 67 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 5). Each action he takes is motivated by the mixture of loves that he has for his queen and her lady. Erec/Erex presents *agape* in his willingness to avenge the harm done to the queen's maid as well as *phileo* and appreciative love in his loyal fondness for the wife of his

king. By following the path of chivalric love, Erec/Erex finds Enide/Evida who soon becomes his wife and beloved. After the wedding, Erec/Erex settles into his new life with such a degree of leisure that his reputation begins to decline. Once Enide/Evida learns of her husband's defamation, she becomes distraught and laments Erec/Erex ever meeting her (Chrétien, 141 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 15). Her sense of guilt originates from the *agape* she has for Erec/Erex. She would die to self and wish away all her joy if it meant the good of her husband. From this state of love the rest of the story proceeds. If not for Enide's/Evida's obvious display of *agape*, Erec/Erex would have remained oblivious to those who discredited him. He would never have felt the need to prove himself as a good and faithful knight. Were he not compelled by love, Erec/Erex never would have embarked upon his quest and the tale would have ended as soon as it began.

Conclusion

The definition of what is noble in a society relies in part on society's conceptions of human relationships. Love relationships are particularly indispensable experiences of human life and therefore shape a society in far-reaching ways. This study endeavors to illustrate quantifiable impacts of Arthurian legend on 13th century Norwegian society. King Hákon's efforts to "modernize" his kingdom were in fact successful. Emerging from the backdrop of the Viking age of exploration, Hákon's reign and patronage of the *riddarasögur* propelled Norway into a new era during which political, social, and international exchange flourished, driven by improvements to social and political manners gleaned from romance literature. This demonstrates the immense importance and impact of the *riddarasögur*.

Yvain and Íven: Love and Adventure, Two Parts of the Same Whole

The Matter of Style

Love permeates Chrétien de Troye's tale of *Le Chevalier au lion* so entirely that one could aptly label it a love story. Admittedly, *Le Chevalier au lion* initially appears focused on adventure with the recollection and pursuit of chivalric escapades; however, per the discussion of the various forms of love in C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves*,² the chivalric quest for adventure may also be considered as an expression of love, proving more fully that the tale is truly a romance. Aside from the transparent proof in the plot, Chrétien's writing style further supports love's ownership of the text through the poetic details and descriptions one would typically expect from an amorous poet. Take for example the scenes when King Arthur and his knights visit Laudine and Yvain and when Gauvain and Lunete meet.

Following Yvain's reunion with King Arthur and the knights at the spring, the king and knights travel to the castle of Laudine and Yvain (Chrétien, II. 2315). It is here, in the detailing of the arrival, where one finds the rich descriptions of Chrétien de Troyes and the care he takes to craft his literary work. He writes of the king's arrival:

...on couvre le sol de tapis.

ensuite ils prévoient un autre apparat

² As discussed in the introduction, C.S. Lewis posited appreciative love, need-love, and gift-love as modifiers of the four Greek loves of *agape*, *storge*, *phileo*, and *eros*.

qui consiste à recouvrir les rues de tentures

pour se protéger de la chaleur du soleil.

Les cors et le son des clairons

résonnent tellement dans le château

que l'on ne saurait y entendre le tonnerre.

Et tandis que chantent les jeunes filles,

les flûtes à bec, les flûtes de Pan,

les tambourins, les cymbales et les tambours retentissent. (ll. 2344-2353)

Carpets cover the ground of the street. Draperies stretch overhead to shield the king and his knights from the heat of the sun. Horns and bugles resonate through the castle, loud enough to drown out the sound of thunder. Music fills the air with songs of voice, flute, tambourine, cymbal and drum. Chrétien crowns this great and pompous event with a stunning description of Laudine as she personally welcomes Arthur and his knights. He says:

...la dame sort,

revêtue d'un habit digne d'une impératrice,

une robe d'hermine toute neuve ;

Sur sa tête elle avait un diadème

serti de rubis tout autour.

...elle l'avait [son visage] si gai et si souriant

qu'elle était, à mon avis,

plus belle qu'une déesse. (ll. 2359-2367)

Chrétien paints an image of imperial dignity by clothing Laudine in a new dress of ermine and placing a crown of rubies upon her head. She comports herself as an empress, with a welcoming smile that add to her immense beauty. Chrétien goes as far as to call her “more beautiful than a goddess” in line 2367. Through this rich and intentional detailing of the text, Chrétien creates a mythic and romantic air that evokes a dream-like atmosphere. As such, he infuses the pages of the work with love, for he takes the same care in his writing that a lover would take in addressing the beloved. Chrétien’s artful illustrations remind the reader of how a lover might describe the beloved, which demonstrates the depth with which love transcends the plot of *Le Chevalier au lion* and enters the material structure of the text.

Another example of this amorous style follows in the episode of the court celebration, during which time Lunete and Gauvain meet. Poetically, Chrétien refers to this moment as “la liaison qui s’est nouée en privé entre la lune et le soleil/the meeting between the moon and the sun” (ll. 2401). Gauvain offers Lunete his services as a knight, saying he will come to her aid at any time. Other knights and ladies of the court pass the time sitting near one another, embracing, talking, and regarding one another. This revelry lasts a week, during which time virtuous leisure prevails in the form of passing time in the woods or by the rivers near the castle (ll. 2468). Furthermore, by dwelling on these lovely details of leisure, Chrétien creates an atmosphere of leisure from which a culture in which appreciation of other may arise.

By contrast, one fails to find the same level of romance in the Norwegian adaptation of the *Ívens saga*. Of course, much of the plot and the attraction between certain characters such as Lady Laudine and Sir Íven remains, but it manifests as a point of lesser importance in the plot, for it is treated briefly and with little flourish. Take for example the wedding of Íven and

Laudine. In the *Íven's saga*, the author states plainly that “bishops, barons, earls, and knights were invited, and the wedding was celebrated with all honors, great pomp, and abundant provisions. It lasted until Saint John’s Eve” (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 56). From this, the reader infers the happiness of the wedding but has no clear detail on which to ponder that would clarify the magnitude of celebration. In contrast, *Le Chevalier au lion* contains elements that help the reader imagine the visual marvel of the wedding in lines 2156-2165:

Le jour même, sans retard,
Il l'épousa et ils célébrèrent leurs noces.
Il y eut en abondance des mitres et des crosses,
Ses évêques et ses abbés.
Il y avait beaucoup de gens et un luxe
Tant de joie et d'allégresse incomparable,
Que je ne saurais vous en faire le récit,
Même après y avoir réfléchi longtemps ;
Je préfère m'en taire que d'en parler rapidement.

In this description, Chrétien imbues the wedding episode with so much beauty that he even says at the end that there was “so much joy and incomparable enthusiasm, that [he] cannot tell the story, even after long reflection; [he] prefers not to talk about it in haste” (Chrétien, ll. 2161-2165). The marvelous nature of the nuptials in this excerpt comes from the “abundance of mitres and crosses” that indicates the plentiful number of bishops and abbots (ll. 2158-2159). With these details, one can begin to envision the splendor in this scene. Such visualization through imagination fails to present itself in the Norwegian version due to the frank statement

of the sort of attendees and the presence of “great pomp and abundant provisions,” which tells little about the atmosphere of the wedding (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 56). Such short treatment of the wedding in the Norwegian version raises the question of whether the aforementioned pomp is joyous or reasonably solemn and whether the spoken of provisions tantalized the guests’ senses or simply satisfied the requirement for food.

Overall, the Norwegian adaptation pares the tale to half its original length by removing much of the detail and presenting a piece of literature that stylistically resembles an action-packed adventure tale. As a result, depictions of leisure that give *Le Chevalier au lion* such an amorous quality are simply not present in the *Ívens saga*. Take, for example, the scene of the arrival of King Arthur and his knights at Laudine’s and Íven’s castle. The author briefly writes that the castle was prepared and “hung with costly materials” (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 58). No detail treats Laudine’s comportment or appearance. Her name does not even grace the page. Her only title is “the lady” and the reader knows only that she goes to meet the king and “holds his stirrup herself” for his dismount (55). In the following scene concerning the feast, Gawain and Luneta meet, as they do in *Le Chevalier au lion*, but the only detail about this meeting is that the two characters promise love to each other. Furthermore, little mention is made in reference to the events that occurred during the seven days of feasting (58). The minimal detailing diminishes the impact of the scene and removes a quality of importance that one finds in the French version. Without the long, elegant descriptions, the Norwegian version lacks an air of leisure and romance. Lasting no more than a paragraph, this episode of the King’s arrival, feasting, and departure presents itself as nothing more than a plot point to finish before

continuing to more exciting, captivating adventures.

Though less apparent than the overall atmosphere of each work, variations in style create character differences between the French and Norwegian versions as well. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier au lion*, Yvain appears as a generally good-natured knight who upholds chivalry to the best of his abilities and falls into a state of severe depression when he fails to act rightly. In the *Ívens saga*, Sir Íven is less expressive and more stoic though the character remains committed to chivalry and righteousness. These stylistic differences create a gap in character dimensionality. A reader can more tangibly connect with Yvain because of the three-dimensional quality of emotion and humanity. Chrétien creates this more realistic character through the descriptive details of the text. For example, when Yvain realizes his failure to keep his word to Laudine, sorrow and shame seize him and he becomes lost in his thoughts until Lunete arrives. One sees this in lines 2695-2703:

A ce moment là, Yvain commença
à penser : depuis le moment où
il avait pris congé de sa dame,
il n'avait pas été à ce point envahi par une pensée
comme par celle-ci, car il se rendait bien
qu'il avait violé sa promesse compte
et que la date limite était complètement passé.
Il avait beaucoup de mal à retenir ses larmes,
Mais un sentiment de honte l'y contraignait.

When Yvain recognizes his violation of his promise to Laudine, sorrow grips him to such a degree that he struggles terribly to “hold back his tears,” as is said in line 2702, and shame fills him enough to prevent the flow of his tears. Shortly after this horrific realization, in line 2796, Yvain leaves his companions. He then descends into despair, lamenting and isolating himself in the woods, appearing mad (ll. 2827-2828). Chrétien’s style of description allows the reader to feel a little of Yvain’s pain and makes his character more real. As a result, Yvain becomes a three-dimensional character, one whom the reader can imagine as a real person.

In the *Ívens saga*, the lack of detailing limits the character of Sir Íven. He responds sorrowfully to the realization of his mistake, even to the point of feeling mad, as is clear on page 59 where the author states that “... it occurred to Íven that the period had elapsed which his lady had set for him. He was now so filled with remorse that he nearly went out of his mind, and he felt great shame before other knights... Íven sat sorrowfully thinking about this matter.” In contrast with the French version, the Norwegian text lacks a level on which the reader can personally connect with the character of Íven because of the stoic language. By mentioning tears in *Le Chevalier au lion*, Chrétien gives the reader a concrete image that carries with it certain sentiments that help the audience feel Yvain’s sorrow. Without this imagery, the reader of the *Íven’s saga* gleans only a superficial sense of the character’s emotion. The author loses concrete emotion in the abstraction carried by words such as “remorse,” “shame,” and “sorrow.” Though used to describe feelings, these words alone do not provide a relatable sentiment that evokes emotion or the memory of emotion in the reader. This idea is found on page 60 of the *Íven’s saga* in the line “a great madness came over him then that he wanted to take vengeance upon himself.” Again, the textual style provides a very limited experience of the

character's response and fails to elicit the same character-reader connection garnered by the small detail of tears in *Le Chevalier au lion*. As such, to the reader of the Norwegian version, the character of Íven remains a two-dimensional figure. Though his heroism is just as morally upright, Íven does not rise from the page to become the same heroic figure or that Yvain becomes.

The Knightly Characters of Yvain and Íven

Apart from the difference in tangibility, the moral tenors and the character developments of Yvain and Íven remain cohesive. Both commit themselves to protecting and upholding that which is good. They are, in short, lovers of good who primarily allow *agape* to motivate and propel their actions. To the Medieval reader, the most apparent example of this is in the episode when Yvain/Íven saves the lion from the serpent. From the symbolism of the lion and serpent in Chrétien's writing,³ Yvain's/Íven's choice to save the lion clearly tells the Medieval audience that the character of Yvain/Íven is that of a man who chooses to offer his life for the sake of goodness. He rejects and defeats the wickedness represented by the serpent.

Taking this allegory one step further, one could say this episode allegorizes the interior battle in Yvain's/Íven's heart that began with his failure to fulfill his promise to Laudine. By

³ As mentioned in the introduction, Guillaume le Clerc presents the lion as a symbol of Christ and all things good in *Le Bestiaire divin* (Guillaume, 75). Conversely, the serpent represents the Devil and all things wicked (149). To the medieval reader, these concepts would have been clear because of the pervasive Medieval symbolism presented by bestiaries.

forgetting his wife, Yvain/Íven becomes a traitor and a liar, figuratively killing his wife by inadvertently breaking her heart and her trust and subsequently killing her love. One infers this from Laudine's statement before Yvain's departure in which she says her love will turn to hate if he fails to keep his word and return to her in a year's time. Chrétien elucidates this in the exchange between Laudine and her husband in lines 2562-2569:

“Je vous accorde ce congé, lui répond-elle,
pour une période de temps limitée.
Mais l'amour que j'ai pour vous
deviendra haine au cas où vous dépasseriez
le délai que je vais vous fixer,
soyez-en sûr et certain,
car sur ce point je ne transigerai pas.
Si vous manquez à votre parole, moi, je tiendrai la mienne.”

Laudine clearly makes her promise in lines 2564 to 2566 wherein she says, “the love I have for you will become hate in the case that you stay past the allotted time.” She reveals this to Yvain in no uncertain terms. Yvain then heartily and tearfully agrees to the terms governing his absence, saying in lines 2579-2581 that the time without Laudine would be far too long. On pages 58 and 59 of the Norwegian *Ívens saga*, Laudine says of the matter:

I will permit you to do this on one condition, that you return no later than at the end of twelve months. If, however, you fail to do so, if you forsake me and break your oath, then you shall forfeit all my love and friendship all the rest of your life.

You shall be dishonored among all those valiant men who honorably take a wife for themselves – if you are not here with me then.

Just as in the French version, the Laudine of the *Ívens saga* makes unmistakable the terms of Íven's absence and her promise that failure to maintain his word will not go unnoticed. Though the language is less harsh than in *Le Chevalier au lion*, the line in which Laudine tells of the forfeiting of love and friendship delivers the same message of love turning to hate. Again, Íven agrees to his wife's expectations, saying that the time would be far too long (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 59).

Yvain's/Íven's awareness of his allotted time and his own responsibility to uphold his word is undeniable. As such, his failure belies his predominant character flaw which rests in the realm of forgetfulness and inattentiveness. Chrétien says of this that the entirety of the year passes and only then does Yvain think of the time, thus realizing his fault (ll. 2677, 2695-2699). The Norwegian author writes that while sitting in the presence of the king at a tournament, "it occurred to Íven that the period had elapsed which his lady had set for him" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 59). Cowardice then sprouts as Yvain/Íven chooses pitiful solitude and does not attempt to heal the rift caused by his sins. Lines 2796-2809 of *Le Chevalier au lion* indicate this by Yvain's departure from court and his descent into senseless solitude, traversing the land with the comportment of a madman. Instead of returning home or remaining in the presence of friends, Yvain shuns all society and all semblance of an upright and orderly life of chivalry. In the Norwegian version, Íven does the same and the author writes that "he wanted to go somewhere where no one knew him" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 60).

To many in the 21st century, the gravity of these flaws of forgetfulness, inattentiveness, and cowardice seems miniscule and diminished, but as indicated by the stories of *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga*, such flaws received the same treatment as blatant deceit or treachery during the Middle Ages. One knows this from the surfacing of the theme in other Medieval literary works such as Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* and Renaut de Beaujeu's *Le Bel Inconnu*. However, even with the near fatal flaw of Yvain/Íven, his character remains chivalrous and desirous of the good, just as occurs with the character of Perceval in *Le Conte du Graal*. In this tale, the hero forgets to attend Mass for five years, breaking his promise to his mother through inattentiveness, yet heartily seeks repentance from his hermit uncle and renews his vow to frequent the Mass when he recognizes the error of his ways (Chrétien, 6146-6433). As with every person, the fronts of good and evil battle for control in the heart of Yvain/Íven. Along the road back to sanity, Yvain/Íven encounters a serpent trying to eat a lion (Chrétien, ll. 3344-3390 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 64-65). By choosing the lion over the serpent and by choosing to protect the lion instead of ignoring the cries of good, Yvain/Íven wins his interior battle and proves himself as a true knight not only to the reader and the medieval world but to himself. He allows agapic love of the good to lead him into danger where he fights wickedness and his own selfishness arising from cowardice.

French and Norwegian Portrayals of Love

In this discussion on love, C.S. Lewis's discourse in *The Four Loves* proves useful. As noted in the introduction of this paper, C.S. Lewis presents appreciative-love as that which

leads a lover to admire and appreciate with gratitude that which has caught the lover's attention (Lewis, 17). Lewis names other modifiers of the Greek loves as need-love, which is based on necessity, and gift-love, which seeks to serve the beloved (17). The three primary Greek loves are explained in the following manner: affection defines *storge* (31); *phileo* would be considered the least natural because it is that which would be found between friends as a love of the mind or soul (57); the most natural and elemental form of love is *eros* (91); and the deepest, truest, and all-encompassing of the loves is *agape*, which motivates self-sacrifice for the sake of the beloved and stands the tests of time and strife (116). With this reminder of love's facets, the analysis of the love theme in *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga* proceeds more easily.

As previously mentioned, Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au lion* bears a romantic and poetic countenance while the *Ívens saga* is a more stoic telling of adventure. Stylistic differences in writing ultimately affect the portrayal of love in each work. Episode lengths in each work indicate that the plot of *Le Chevalier au lion* focuses more on the heart and relationships while the *Ívens saga* is more concerned with adventure and great deeds. Take for example Yvain's/Íven's declaration of love for Laudine and their wedding scenes in *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga* (Chrétien, ll. 2010-2175 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 53-56). In the French version, Chrétien's vivid detailing lengthens and blurs together the scenes so they span 165 verses, stirring the hearts of the readers to invest themselves more fully in the story. These scenes focus on Yvain and Laudine, the court advisors, their responses to each other and to the events. Chrétien places importance on the wedding by describing the event in detail. For example, he explains that Laudine is the daughter of Duke Landudet about whom a *lai* is sung

(Chrétien, ll. 2153-2155). On the other hand, the *Ívens saga* presents these scenes in succinct, frank sections. Though still interesting, the scenes merely convey new plot points that will prove important later in the narrative. Certainly, the writer places importance on the wedding by saying that “bishops, barons, earls, and knights were invited” but the entirety of the episode is short, lasting no more than a page (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 56).

Even with the stylistic variations, love remains a motivating force in both the French and Norwegian versions. Though adventure garners more importance than the person-to-person relationships in the *Ívens saga*, the tale remains a love story. Each adventure, each escapade of Íven ultimately leads him to his beloved. In the beginning before he meets Laudine, his love of adventure is colored with appreciative-love mixed with love for his kinsman. This mixture of *phileo* and *storge* leads Íven to the spring which in turn proves as the conduit to Laudine and Íven’s first meeting. Then, when he sets his eyes on Laudine, her beauty ignites his heart with *eros*. One finds this on pages 47 and 48 of the *Ívens saga*:

It was the greatest sorrow for Sir Íven that he could not speak with her. [...] She was as fair as the dawn, her color as if the snow-white lily and the red rose had been mingled together, and her hair as if it contained gold. Her eyes shone like those stones which people call *carbunculi*.⁴ Íven wished to see her all the more and loved her with all his heart. He wanted very much to speak to her. So great was his love for her that he wished to die there rather than not speak to her at all, or at least try to win her love.

⁴ The term *carbunculi* refers to gemstones.

In these lines, the author presents the beauty of Laudine and how she captures Íven's attention. Per C.S. Lewis's discussion in *The Four Loves*, this scene aptly depicts the attractive force of *eros* and the subsequent desire to be near the beloved. As the tale continues, the desire for adventure, a different form of *eros*, pulls more strongly on Sir Íven than that type of *eros* which ties him to his wife. In the *Ívens saga*, this is where Sir Íven metaphorically takes a wrong turn. He chooses a thing, an adventure, instead of a person, his wife. Take for example the scene in which Sir Gawain convinces Íven to join King Arthur and the other knights. The author writes of the exchange:

When Arthur was preparing to leave, Sir Gawain told Íven that he ought to go along with the king and not remain in the castle any longer. If he remained there and immediately entered into a life of ease, he might ruin his knightly reputation and accomplishments. Gawain was able to convince Íven, so that he agreed to accompany him, provided he got leave from his lady (58).

One finds the convincing element to be concern for chivalric reputation and accomplishment; in other words, a thing, a concept. By leaving the castle, Íven opens himself to the possibility of great adventure, daring deeds, and a life of chivalric displays. One finds further evidence of this quest for adventure on the following page where the author writes of tournaments and banquets that consume and exceed Íven's allotted absence of one year. During the encounter with the lion and serpent, however, Íven's character matures to the level of *agape* by his choosing to risk his well-being to save the lion. From that point on, serving people, especially his wife to whom he wishes to return, becomes the primary aim of his quests. The story returns to the place of the spring where Íven again encounters Luneta, now locked in the chapel and

awaiting execution (65). In this revisiting of the place where it all began, the author gives the sense of a fresh start for Íven's purpose at the spring is now that of saving Luneta's life instead of seeking marvels. No more does Íven display his prowess in tournaments for the sake of competing. Pages 69 through 71 detail Íven's feats against three knights in order to save Luneta from burning. *Agape* leads Íven to focus on the person. This agapic change of heart brings Íven back to his wife and allows for their reconciliation. In a way, Luneta's rescue functions as proof of Íven's change when he finally faces Laudine.

The development of love in *Le Chevalier au lion* mostly matches that of the *Ívens saga*. Beginning with a desire to avenge his kinsman's disgrace, Yvain starts his journey.⁵ Then Laudine captivates him. When Yvain first sees her, it takes much discipline to refrain from running to her as Chrétien writes in lines 1302-04 :

C'est bien difficilement que
Monseigneur Yvain s'abstient de courir
lui tenir les mains, quelles qu'en soient les conséquences.

As Yvain continues to watch Laudine from a window, he wishes more deeply to speak to her and falls more in love with her. Chrétien writes:

C'est Amour qui lui a inspiré ce désir,
lui qui l'a saisi à la fenêtre.

⁵ Yvain learns of the fountain from Calogrenant who recounts how the knight of the fountain shamed him through defeat. The plot of the romance proceeds from Yvain's promise to avenge Calogrenant's dishonor by defeating the knight of the fountain (Chrétien, II. 175-587).

Mais son désir le désespère,
car il ne peut ni imaginer ni croire
qu'il puisse se réaliser. (ll. 1427-1431)

Just as in the *Ívens saga*, it is made clear that *eros* inspires in Yvain desire for Laudine by inflaming his heart upon this initial sighting of the lovely lady in *Le Chevalier au lion*. Love then follows the same path as in the Norwegian version of the tale.

Just as in the Norwegian version, love of adventure and love of chivalric acclaim persuades Yvain to ask leave of his wife. In lines 2484-2506, Gauvain encourages Yvain to join them by discussing the decline in fame suffered by those who gave up proving their prowess to stay with their wives. He further provides a remedy to this potential problem saying,

Rompez le frein et le licol,
et nous irons courir les tournois avec vous,
pour qu'on ne vous appelle pas un mari jaloux.
Maintenant vous ne devez pas rêvasser,
mais plutôt fréquenter les tournois
et vous engager dans des joutes vigoureuses,
quoi qu'il doive vous en coûter.
C'est un songe-creux, celui qui ne sort pas
Assurément il vous faut partir, de chez soi.
Sans que j'aie à vous fournir d'autre preuve. (ll. 2500-09)

Poetically, Gauvain tells Yvain to go to the tournaments and not spend his time at home daydreaming about the jousts. In this, Gauvain thoroughly influences Yvain's decision to join

the knights. Love of adventuring motivates and propels Yvain. Again, the turning point in the story arises in the choice to save the lion. Yvain moves forward from this encounter in response to agapic love.

Conclusion

In sum, the style of the Norwegian *Ívens saga* focuses more on action and physical prowess and less on relationships. Love certainly exists in this work, but it guides the direction and development of the plot more than creation of a love story. From the frank and stoic style, one may reasonably assume the text likely reflects the cultural priorities of medieval Norway. On the other hand, *Le Chevalier au lion* most probably represents medieval France's cultural tendency toward emotional affect as demonstrated by the characters through the rhetorical style of Chrétien de Troyes. With rich detailing and sumptuous descriptions, the focus of love as a guiding force in the plot definitely surfaces but concentrates more in the development of a romantic atmosphere. Such romance builds a poetic tale brimming with all the characteristics of a love story.

Erec and Erex: Love as the Driving Force of Development

The Presence of Love

Though far more overtly adventurous in intrigue, love propels the plots of Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* and the Norwegian *Erex saga* just as in *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga*. As the motivating force, the theme of love presents itself at the start of both the French and Norwegian texts with the chase of the stag, more specifically a white stag in *Erec et Enide*. Per the custom stated in both works, he who catches the stag gains the privilege of bestowing a kiss upon the most beautiful maiden at court (Chrétien II. 45-48 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 3). This tradition serves as an example of the appreciative-love spoken of in C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves*, for the kiss is a recognition of the maiden's beauty. This is analogous to the savoring of a good wine or a lovely flower as a form of appreciation. Through the kiss, the knight honors the maiden with the title of the loveliest at court.

Curiously enough, Erec – Erex in the *Erex saga* – refrains from the chase, opting to escort the queen in the forest (Chrétien, II. 105-110 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 4). Reasonably, one would question the absence of the knight in the chase, but the answer presents itself in an understanding of the medieval symbolism surrounding the stag. Per the writing of Guillaume le Clerc de Normandie in *Le Bestiaire divin*, the stag represents Christ and is the antithesis of the serpent, which represents the Devil (Guillaume le Clerc, 171-173). In choosing not to hunt the stag, the authors immediately establish the moral goodness of Erec's/Erex's character. By

choosing not to pursue the stag's death, Erec/Erex proves himself a knight who protects and upholds what is good and right.

This quality of Sir Erec/Erex further presents itself in his accompanying the queen and avenging the injury inflicted on the queen's lady-in-waiting by the dwarf of the rude knight, called Ydier in *Erec et Enide* and Malpirant in the *Erex saga*. By harming Guinevere's lady-in-waiting, the dwarf⁶ presents himself as having not only an uncouth and unchivalrous character but also one disrespectful to the queen. His master, the knight Ydier/Malpirant, displays the same lack of chivalry when he fails to stop or reprimand the dwarf and furthermore when he refuses an apology to Queen Guinevere and her maid. In *Erec et Enide*, this scene spans lines 163-233. The insidious character of the dwarf first reveals itself when he insults Queen Guinevere's lady in lines 172-76:

« Vous n'avez rien à faire par ici.
Reculez ! Vous n'avez pas le droit
De parler à un si bon chevalier. »
La demoiselle s'est avancée

His vile temper manifests when the dwarf physically injures the lady in lines 179-186:

Et le nain soulève le fouet,
Quand il la voit s'approcher de lui :
Il voulut la frapper en plein visage,
Mais l'autre s'est protégée de son bras.

⁶ Dwarves tend to have base or flawed characters in Medieval literature. According to Ziolkowski, their ugly physical appearances represent moral wickedness.

Il revient alors à la charge, et voilà qu'il l'a
à découvert, sur la main nue ; frappée
Et c'est avec une telle force qu'il la frappe sur l'envers de la main,
Que celle-ci en devient toute bleue.

As the lady tries to approach the knight, the dwarf rudely addresses her, saying that she “has no right to talk to such a good knight” (ll. 172-174). Trying to do as her queen requested, the maid continues toward Ydier to speak with him on behalf of Guinevere. Growing more ill-tempered, the dwarf strikes the lady with his whip and turning “her hand all blue” as a result (ll. 184-186). The juxtaposing of good and bad in this scene is much like the episode of the slap found in *Le Conte du Graal*, another of the Arthurian romances whose translation joined the *riddarasögur* genre. In this episode, the seneschal Keu, known for his wickedness, slaps a lady out of anger. Perceval vows to avenge this wrong and then embarks on a journey of chivalric development, similarly to Erec/Erex in *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga*. In the *Erex saga*, the scene unfolds as follows:

“Good dwarf,” the maiden said, “let me proceed so that I can carry out my errand.”

The dwarf in turn became angry and struck such a blow with his whip that her hand was spattered with blood. (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 5)

Just as in the French tale, the *Erex saga* illustrates a rather wicked image of this dwarf. In both versions of the tale, the knight remains silent and makes no effort to restrain the dwarf, nor does he rebuke him after harming a queen’s lady. By not rebuking the dwarf, Malpirant seems to support the dwarf’s words and actions, thus proving himself a rather arrogant man of low

character. This idea is further supported in the *Erex saga* when Erex reproaches the dwarf and he claims in return, “my master will avenge me at once if you do me harm” and then lashes Erex across the neck with his whip (5). In *Erec et Enide*, the dwarf makes no statement that would indicate the favor of his knight, but one finds the same sentiments as those found in the Norwegian version. Not only does the knight allow the dwarf to strike a queen’s lady, he says nothing when the dwarf whips Erec, a knight, across the neck (Chrétien, ll. 219-224).

Once the dwarf and knight have moved on, Erec/Erex parts from the queen and follows them to exact justice (Chrétien, ll. 265-276 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 5). Erec’s/Erex’s desire to avenge the harm done, both to him and to the maid, arises from the love of *phileo* in which loyalty is rooted. As such, *phileo* motivates Erec/Erex to follow the knight, thus propelling the plot and bringing Erec/Erex to the castle of a poor *vavasour*,⁷ the father of Enide/Evida. Here the two versions depart in the detailing of Erec’s and Enide’s/Erex’s and Evida’s meeting and reveals the first difference in the portrayal of love.

The Verity of Love

Chrétien de Troyes infuses *Erec et Enide* with far more detail and more romance than does the author of the *Erex saga*. As in *Le Chevalier au lion*, Chrétien’s flowery descriptions lend a poetic air to the text, infusing it with the sense of a lover describing the beloved. Due to this

⁷ The present usage of *vavasour* is in place of “knight.”

more emotive writing style⁸ used by Chrétien, one might expect a truer depiction of love in the French version, one that grasps more fully the depth and breadth of love. Contrary to such presumption, one finds a more idealized, less substantial version in *Erec et Enide*, while the *Erex saga* depicts a more holistic and real image of true love. This difference first presents itself at the time of Erec's/Erex's and Enide's/Evida's first meeting.

In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien immediately indicates Erec's attraction to Enide by granting her a lengthy and ravishing description and saying of Erec's response: "Quant à Erec, il fut tout ébloui/ par le spectacle d'une si grande beauté; As for Erec, he was all dazzled/ by the spectacle of such great beauty" (Chrétien, ll. 448-449). Chrétien speaks of Enide's beauty and grace over the preceding lines, 409-441, as utterly unrivaled by all others for "Nature y avait mis tous ses soins en la créant; Nature had put all care into creating her" (ll. 412-413). He further writes:

Je vous assure que les cheveux d'Iseut la Blonde,
Aussi dorés et luisants qu'ils fussent,
N'étaient rien en comparaison de ceux-ci.
Son front et son visage étaient
Plus lumineux et plus blancs que n'est la fleur de lis.
.....
Les yeux répandaient une telle lumière
Qu'ils semblaient être deux étoiles.
Jamais Dieu ne sut mieux faire

⁸ For an analysis of Chrétien's writing style, see "The Matter of Style" in the "Yvain and Íven" chapter. The previously discussed poetic manner remains the same in *Erec et Enide*.

Le nez, la bouche ou les yeux. (ll. 424-28, 433-36)

In lines 424 and 425, Chrétien begins his description of Enide by likening her hair to that of Iseut la Blonde, the love interest of Tristan in *Tristan et Iseult*, and going as far as to say that “even the hair of Iseut la Blonde was nothing in comparison to that of Enide.” He adds to the lady’s image by discussing the perfection of Enide’s figure. Her eyes shine as two stars and Chrétien says that “Jamais Dieu ne sut mieux faire/ le nez, la bouche ou les yeux; Never did God know to make better the nose, the mouth or the eyes” (ll. 435-436). Through imagery and intertextuality, Chrétien imbues Enide with a celestial quality and makes undeniable Erec’s interest in the lady, yet no word passes between them.

Per the discourse on Greek loves in *The Four Loves*, one would identify *eros* as that which enflames Erec’s heart upon meeting such a lovely lady and later influences his request for Enide’s hand in marriage. Despite the guidance provided by *eros*, Erec’s request is shrouded in the guise of necessity. He ultimately frames his request to Enide’s father in the terms of upholding his loyalty to Queen Guinevere and the maid by avenging the harm done by the wicked knight. Erec claims he requires a lady of beauty in order to compete against the knight and win the sparrow hawk, he thus asks for Enide and “proposes” in this manner (ll. 641-642). Accepting Erec’s offer of marriage, the *vavasour* gives Enide to Erec and the whole exchange seems more like a business deal than two people agreeing to share their love for the rest of their lives. One clearly finds this in lines 674-680, as the *vavasour* says:

« [...] vous n’essuierez de ma part aucun refus :

C’est à votre entière disposition

Que je remets ma fille si belle. »

Et la prenant aussitôt par le poing,

Il lui dit : « Tenez, je vous la confie. »

Erec la reçut avec plaisir :

Maintenant, il avait tout ce qu'il lui fallait.

Enide's father begins by saying that he will accept no refusal on Erec's part and that he, taking Enide by the fist, entrusts his daughter entirely to Erec. Pleased, Erec accepts her with the final line of this exchange reading "now he had all he needed" (ll. 680). This final line, in conjunction with the rest of the scene, gives a sense of a business transaction rather than a heartfelt marriage proposal. Furthermore, the lack of conversation between the betrothed suggests need-based *eros* as the foundation of the marriage.

In the Norwegian version of the tale, this meeting and arrangement occurs quite differently. The *Erex saga* text says that Erex and Evida both fell in love with each other upon first setting eyes on the other. As the author writes on page 6, "Erex immediately fell head over heels in love with her. When she saw Erex, she, too, fell in love with him." To Evida, however, "it seemed strange that she should be able to love a stranger" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 6). Immediately, the reader identifies a difference in the portrayal of love in the *Erex saga*. Not only do we have a clear mutual interest from both Norwegian characters, we have the thoughts of Evida who clearly asserts her dignity as a person, and as more than just a lovely maiden. She is presented as a character equally as important and as capable of thought as that of Erex, making her a character in the marriage arrangement which is driven by more than the attractive force of *eros*. The Norwegian author maintains Evida's beauty and grace – providing the attractive scenario in which *eros* initially develops and draws together the two characters –

but gives little detail as to her appearance, saying only that “[...] she had such a bearing and such fine manners that Nature herself marveled that she was so lovely in form” (6). By doing so, the overwhelming importance of beauty that so permeates *Erec et Enide* fails to present itself in the *Erex saga*. Beauty becomes more an attractive attribute than the entirety of a lady. The author further alters the meeting scene so that Erex and Evida converse while her father tends to Erex’s horse, thus providing an opportunity for the two of them to explore one another’s minds. As such, the affectionate love, *storge*, is given opportunity to bloom and sets the stage for *phileo* and a relationship rooted in friendship. The mixture of loves, particularly that of *eros* and *storge* at the beginning, compels Erex to request Evida’s hand in marriage. Evida’s father responds quite favorably to the request. Overjoyed with such a marriage prospect, he would readily give Evida to Erex; however, he concretizes the importance of Evida’s personhood by leaving the answer to her, saying, “I suspect that my daughter possesses no less intelligence and womanly skills than beauty. Now let her speak her own mind” (7). Through this radical change from the French text, the author emphasizes the autonomy of Evida through the father’s recognition of her intelligence and the necessity of her own opinion on the matter. Such acknowledgement and deferral to the lady in question significantly departs from the tone of Chrétien’s tale in which the lady bears no sway in the decision. She is presented more as an object of physical beauty and less like a person capable of decision-making. This variation in the Norwegian version shifts the focus from a need-based love to one of appreciation and gift. This movement from an objectifying depiction of a woman to a more holistic respect for her dignity may arise from the shift in respect for women which Duby suggests arose between the 12th and 13th centuries.

Respect, Marriage, and the Subsequent Commentary on Love

Erex's and Evida's betrothal is just one example of how *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga* differ in portrayals of love, particularly that pertaining to marriage. Take as another example the episode in which Erec/Erex is pronounced dead and Enide/Evida receives an offer of marriage from the duke who found them. In *Erec et Enide*, Enide receives little respect and her status as an intelligent person is lowered to that of an object of compelling beauty as a result of *eros* in the base form of need-love, untempered by any other form of love. One sees this in lines 4766-68, where the duke who found Enide lamenting the "death" of her husband forcibly marries her. Chrétien writes:

Car elle lui opposa un refus catégorique.

Mais le comte l'épousa malgré tout,

Parce que tel était son plaisir.

He continues by highlighting her extreme unhappiness at the loss of her husband and the unwelcome marriage to the count.

Enide était en plein désarroi

Et, alors que sa douleur ne connaissait pas de répit,

Le comte ne cessait de la presser,

A force de prières et de menaces,

De retrouver sa sérénité et son sourire. (ll. 4774-78).

Details of the count's mounting frustration follow, culminating in insult and injury:

« Dame, fait-il, il vous faut abandonner et oublier ce chagrin.

.

Je vous donne un conseil,

Le meilleur que je sache :

Maintenant que je vous ai épousée,

Vous devez laisser éclater votre joie.

Evitez de me mettre en colère

Et mangez, je vous l'ordonne ! »

.

Le comte la frappe alors au visage (ll. 4786, 4802-07, 4820).

Here, the duke blatantly ignores Enide's flat refusal of the marriage and weds her against her will. Throughout the scene, Enide continues to oppose the marriage and all that the duke wishes for she grieves the loss of her husband and has received neither consolation nor understanding for her sorrow. In lines 4766 and 4767, one finds evidence of the basest form of *eros* modified by need-love roiling in the heart of the duke and motivating his actions when Chrétien explains that "despite everything, the duke married Enide because it was his pleasure." His desire for Enide consumes him so entirely that his pleasure quickly turns to anger when he fails to exact what he wants. When Enide refuses to forget her hours-dead husband, smile, and partake in the feast supposedly prepared in her honor, the duke becomes violently angry. First, he warns her in line 4816 to "avoid angering him," then he strikes his new wife in line 4820 when Enide continues to refrain from the food. Ultimately, the duke bears no true care or affection for Enide, only a desire to have her as his wife. As such, he degrades Enide's

dignity to that of an object to be had and held. Neither her mind nor her grieving heart is of importance in the situation but only her physical beauty. This much is clear from the duke's refusal to accept Enide's "no" and his violence when she does not fulfill his wishes.

In the Norwegian version of this episode, *eros* as need-love obviously presents itself as lust. The text makes clear that Evida's name remained unknown to the earl yet he "wanted to bed her so badly that he felt as though ignited by sparks of fire" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 26). In the *Erex saga*, the earl's erotic need-love is more a lecherous objectification of Evida for the satisfaction of a desire than it is a wish to express real love in the truest of ways. Though the earl again reduces Evida to a beautiful object which he desires and fails to respect, as in *Erec et Enide*, Evida's status as a dignified person remains intact and the author restrains this base form of *eros*. One finds on page 26 of Blaisdell's and Kalinke's translation of the *Erex saga* that the earl "asked the chaplain to marry them on the spot, but his retainers told him that it would be contrary to God's law unless Evida herself gave permission to do so." Here the text makes clear that Evida must accept the marriage and give her agreement in order for the marriage to be lawful in both the realms of religion and society, which were one and the same during the Middle Ages. Requiring such emphasizes the intrinsic dignity of Evida as a person possessing autonomy in society whose mind is as important as her beauty while also implying the necessity of another form of love to validate the foundation of marriage. One finds further support of this idea when the earl grows so angry that he "boxes her ears and orders her to eat" (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 26). The hall erupts in protest against such disgraceful and displeasing behavior that originates in lustful *eros*.

There is perhaps another reason this is so disgraceful. According to Georges Duby's *Medieval Marriage*, the institution of marriage was changing and evolving between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Duby, 2-3). The treatment of marriage and marital love in these works may in fact be a reflection of these changes, chief of which is what Duby calls "the conflict between two radically different and antagonistic models – the lay model of marriage, created to safeguard the social order, and the ecclesiastical model, created to safeguard the divine order" (3). In the lay model, the marriage and family unit included everyone involved in the practical affairs of the household, that is the domestic servants. These servants were to respect not only the head of the household – in most cases, the man – but also his wife who, as the "lady" of the household and the mother of progeny in the ancestral line was to be shown special respect (4-5).

Duby goes on to contend that the ideology of courtly love arose from economic complexities associated with marriage as a means of joining households and inheritances. This "lay" approach to marriage tended to make the prospect of marriage available only to the eldest, leaving many brothers in the family bachelors, unmarried men which Duby described as "meandering" in search of what became the redeeming experience of courtly love (13). The ecclesiastical model of marriage intersected with the situation of bachelor whoring by promoting the restraint of carnal impulses through the development of knightly virtues. Marriage as a social contract became not only the realm of the elite few for economic reasons but something more. It became a reflection of the divine household with Christ and his Bridegroom at its center. According to Duby, the ecclesiastical model promoted not only the dignity of *agape*, or Christ-like sacrificial love, but also the dignity of women who were

otherwise subjugated to an unredeemable life like their bachelor counterparts in the lay model of marriage contracts. Chivalry gave people a chance at love and marriage, the bedrock of the social establishment (16-17).

Love and Chivalric Growth

Apart from the depictions of love associated with marriage, *Erec et Enide* and the *Erex saga* differ in the realm chivalric love and development. The French version maintains a poetic element with Chrétien de Troyes' lengthy and detailed descriptions. These illustrations lend an almost fairy-tale quality to the text, creating a sort of mythical story with a dashing hero. The Norwegian version, however, foregoes much of the elegant detailing for a more action-centered piece. Just as with the *Ívens saga* and *Le Chevalier au lion*, the *Erex saga* is considerably shorter than *Erec et Enide* with a tendency towards frankness. This said, the most telling differences occur within the plot of the two stories, particularly during Erec's/Erex's quest to reestablish his chivalric prowess.

Love functions as the through line of Erec's/Erex's questing, beginning with Enide's/Evida's sorrow over slanderous accusations of her husband's decline in chivalric fame because of the ease with which he entered domestic life. Take for example Chrétien's explanation in lines 2455-2464:

Les barons affirmaient tous

Que c'était un grand malheur et un grand dommage

Qu'un baron tel qu'il l'avait été,

Dédaignât de porter les armes.
Il fut tant blâmé par toutes sortes de gens,
Chevaliers comme valets d'armes,
Qu'Enide les entendit dire entre eux
Que son seigneur abandonnait lâchement
Armes et chevalerie :
Il avait profondément changé sa manière de vivre.

Chrétien writes that the “barons thought it a great misfortune and pity that a baron such as Erec had given up arms. He was blamed greatly by all sorts of people, knights and servants alike” (ll. 2455-2460). Enide hears of this talk and grows distraught from the blame placed upon her husband. Wishing not to cause harm to her husband she withholds this information until her sadness and guilt overflows – for she believes Erec’s decline in fame to be her fault. In lines 2489-2504, Enide weeps over her husband, falsely presuming him to be asleep. Hearing his wife’s muted lamentations, Erec wakes and asks after his wife’s sorrow in lines 2505-2519, saying, “Dites-moi, ma très chère amie,/ qu’avez-vous à pleurer de la sorte ?/ Quelle est la cause de votre chagrin et de votre douleur ?” Enide responds “tout effrayée et tout alarmée” that she did not want to trouble Erec with the knowledge of his defamation (ll. 2519). This desire to guard him originates in Enide’s great love for Erec and demonstrates a mixture of *storge*, *phileo*, and *agape*, arising from her affection for her husband and her willingness to suffer on his behalf. The motivation of love remains in the *Erex saga* just the same. Though the scene is greatly eclipsed, the sentiments remain:

Although he was esteemed by all his countrymen, he nevertheless brought upon himself some reproach for his complacent way of life.

It distressed his wife to hear others speak harshly of him and one morning, as she was lying in bed beside her husband and thought that he was sleeping. (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 15)

Agape further presents itself when Erec/Erex sets out with Enide/Evida to reclaim his fame. Enide/Evida blames herself for any possible harm that may find her husband as the result of her admittance of other's slander (Chrétien, ll. 2585-2611 and Blaisdell and Kalinke, 15). The couple begins their journey with Enide/Evida riding before Erec/Erex and instructed to say nothing to her husband, even if danger may appear. As they advance, they encounter numerous trials and with each one Enide/Evida calls out to her husband to warn him upon noticing him looking unaware of danger. Each time, Erec/Erex threatens that she will regret speaking and not to repeat such mistake, but she refuses to allow harm to touch her beloved. Through this, she sacrifices her own well-being in expectation of ill-favor for the sake of Erec/Erex, demonstrating to the fullest the love of *agape*.

Conclusion

All in all, the French and Norwegian texts are unified by the maintenance of love as the motivating force for it is Enide's/Evida's sorrow for her husband's decline in fame and subsequent malignment that alerts Erec/Erex to the need for chivalric growth. Enide/Evida displays agapic love for upon learning of her husband's plans, she would wish away all her happiness for his protection and the sake of his reputation. This theme presents itself

throughout the quest as Enide/Evida notifies her husband of the enemies even when he orders her to hold her tongue. She goes against his wishes out of love for him, doing what she can to protect her husband.

The emphasis on action in the Norwegian *Erex saga* sets it apart from *Erec et Enide*, much like in the *Ívens saga*, where one finds the brave feats of chivalry heightened by various situational enhancements such as the addition of the dragon episode in the *Erex saga*. However, despite this important difference and unlike the discussion of *Le Chevalier au lion* and the *Ívens saga*, the Norwegian version of *Erec et Enide* seems to place a greater importance on relationships and on the person as a whole than does the French version. This may be because of the idealization of marriage as a reflection of the divine order during the 12th century, as suggested by Duby in *Medieval Marriage*. While the *Erex saga* is less a romantic and poetic tale than that of *Erec et Enide*, the writer of the Norwegian text alters the plot so the characters and their relationship receive significant attention in a down-to-earth manner appropriate for 13th century Norwegian society. This particularly presents itself at the end of the *Erex saga* in the continuation of the tale after the death of Erex and Evida and describing their legacy of peace and the manner in which their sons maintained the kingdom (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 33). Instead of idealizing marriage and particularly the woman as an object of beauty, as occurs in *Erec et Enide*, the *Erex saga* presents the lives of the protagonists as a beautiful model of love that continues in the legacy of their children.

Conclusion

The French and Norwegian texts are unified by the central theme of love as a power that transforms individuals and societies. The rhetorical style of Chrétien de Troyes, with its rich detailing and sumptuous descriptions, focuses on love as a guiding force in the plot, but concentrates more on the development of an idealized romantic atmosphere than on the people themselves. On the other hand, the Norwegian texts express a heightened cultural taste for action and feats of strength plus integrity in interpersonal relating. In the *Erex saga* as in the *Ívens saga*, one finds emphasis on brave feats of chivalry. However, whereas the *Ívens saga* takes *Le Chevalier au lion* to a new level of dynamic action, the Norwegian version of *Erex et Enide* seems to place a greater importance on interpersonal relating and on the person as a whole than does the French text. Driven by his love for Enide, whose sorrow over his decline in fame he seeks to rectify, Erex pursues chivalric feats and attains not only to acts of valor but moreover to a true belief in Evida's love for him. It is a victory for interpersonal relating. Unaware in the beginning of the depth of her love, he tells her in the end, 'I have experienced your true love, virtue and faithfulness' (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 27). Though their separation has been a test for them both, they emerge victorious over the obstacles which could have separated them. The story revolves around Evida's love for her husband as each twist and turn in the plot reveals that she would sacrifice all her happiness for his protection, safety and success. Her love is manifest not only in many displays of tears on his behalf, but moreover, in true acts of valor, a notable example of which is her effort to notify him concerning the

whereabouts of his enemies. She rises to new levels of courage by doing so, as he himself had strictly forbidden her to get involved. She had to overcome not only the dangers associated with such a deed, but also the fear of his disapproval of her. She risked it all to save his life, the life she ardently and truly loved with the complete array of loves.

While the *Erex saga* is less a romantic and poetic tale than that of *Erec et Enide*, the writer of the Norwegian text goes so far as to alter the telling so that the characters and their relationship receive significant attention. This particularly presents itself at the end of the *Erex saga*. The tale continues beyond the end of the plot, passing beyond the life of Erex and Evida to the legacy they leave. *Erec et Enide* ends with the coronation, but the Norwegian author does not feel the story can end there. Additional details describe their happily-ever-after life during which they ruled in their own home “with honor and glory during a period of complete peace” (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 33). Their sons are named after their grandfathers and described as kings who were “distinguished men, valiant and chivalrous like their father” in carrying on the kingdom (33).

The focus on interpersonal integrity in the Norwegian texts goes even deeper in the elevation of the dignity of women. Take for example the scene of Erex’s marriage proposal in the *Erex saga*. This scene provides a modern cultural view of marriage and womanhood with which the 21st century reader is arguably far more familiar than the Medieval French reader. First, Evida’s freedom to accept or reject a proposal of marriage is a significant element of the plot; however, in the French version, the marriage is more like a business deal arranged by her father. Enide is idolized and her beauty described at great length in flowery language, yet her dignity as a person capable of consenting to or rejecting a proposal in marriage is not captured

in the French version. Chrétien tells the reader that Enide finds the match agreeable in the lines, “la jeune fille gardait le silence, mais était tout heureuse et comblée de lui avoir été accordée” (Chrétien, ll. 685-687); however, her freedom to choose appears culturally irrelevant. Furthermore, only after the betrothal does the Norwegian tale continue with Erex explaining the adventure that leads to the defeat of Malpirant and his dwarf. The matter is entirely separate from Erex and Evida’s desire to marry, unlike in *Erec et Enide* wherein Erec’s request to have Enide is framed in the context of being a means to the end of winning the sparrow hawk. By separating the two plot points, the *Erex saga* sets apart the marriage and places a certain importance upon it. The marriage is more a matter of love and friendship than an arrangement between two people in order to achieve a goal.

Erex’s and Evida’s betrothal is just one of the examples of the Norwegian concept of a lady’s autonomy, of the respect given her views, and the differences in this regard between Medieval French and Norwegian societies. Another example in the texts here addressed involves the episode in which Erec/Erex is pronounced dead and Enide/Evida receives an offer of marriage from the duke who found them. The silence of the barons, except when the duke strikes Enide, indicates a lack of social sensitivity in the scene. One wonders whether the occurrences in the scene are shocking to the Medieval French society or not. By contrast, in the Norwegian version, when the earl grows so angry that he “boxes her ears and orders her to eat” (Blaisdell and Kalinke, 26), the hall erupts in protest. This display of violence against one intended to be gently loved is clearly seen as disgraceful in Norwegian society.

Deeper exploration of Norwegian and Icelandic literature of the era reveals that respect for feminine dignity prevailed as a value in Medieval Norway and Iceland. In Geraldine Barnes’s

The Bookish Riddarasögur, Barnes recounts the details of a tryst in the *Dinus saga* between the proud Dinus and the shrewd Philotemia of Blaskonia, who, though not particularly in love with Dinus is nonetheless clearly getting the better of him in the story (Barnes, 59-60). Although he overpowers her with brute force later, the text highlights nonetheless the power of feminine strengths. On the other end of the spectrum of medieval literature is *The Response* to Richard de Fournival's 13th century work, *Le bestiaire d'amour*. Jeannette Beer in her translation of *The Response to Master Richard's Bestiary of Love* states that the author of the work is "a woman of exceptional ability who could reason with cogency and argue with style." She goes on to say that the author's "feminist defense of woman may have been a personal response directed specifically against Richard de Fournival" (Beer, xxii). In this account, the author seems bent on defending the dignity of woman, which perhaps was in need of defending in Medieval French society. Perhaps this was the reason for the development of what Margaret Schlauch calls the "woman-worship" and the "chivalrous adoration" of woman in French romance. As Schlauch comments, this new concept "seemed strange to an Icelandic visitor, [but] he was no doubt ready enough to retail accounts of them at home, and to reproduce the stories he had heard" (Schlauch, 149-150). In this way, Norwegian concepts of woman as strong, beautiful and free intersected with the French romantic idolization of woman to produce a still yet more beautiful and true rendering of the feminine sex.

Considering the nuances of detailing about women in the *riddarasögur*, King Hákon's project to civilize his court through the translation of French chivalric romances seems to have met with success. In fact, the *riddarasögur* may have exceeded the French understanding of true and noble love. At least the writers of the Norwegian texts seemed to have surpassed – at

least for the modern reader – the French appreciation for the beauty, dignity and integrity of love. Whether the literature transformed King Hákon’s court is more difficult to say. What one can say is that his court was found much more hospitable than its reputation had first caused Cardinal William of Sabina to expect. Hákon’s patronage of the *riddarasögur*, coupled with his commitment to the noble ideals they espoused, propelled Norway into a new era of prosperity as Harald Næss maintains in his critical work, *A History of Norwegian Literature*. The success of the first *riddarasögur* translations is evidenced by the wave of indigenous *riddarasögur* that followed, the crowning work of which was the *King’s Mirror*, which was “a pedagogical mirror of good manners and pious conduct for royalty” (Næss, 35). For King Hákon’s kingdom and generations to come, political, social and international exchange clearly flourished, driven perhaps by the same theme that drives the plots of chivalric romances: glorious love.

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