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Reception

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Introduction

The study of reception started with Classical Reception, which was practiced as early as the Renaissance. Then the Classicism of the eighteenth century brought this Reception to the fore. The nineteenth century with its developing philology made Classical Reception one of the cornerstones of learning in the forms of Greek, Latin, and Ancient History. Classical Reception faded with the reforms of the twentieth-century higher education systems, only to be brought back to life by the foundation of the Classical Reception Studies. This type of Reception has been studied not only in Europe, but also in the United States,[1] Canada,[2] and in the Antipodes (see: Johnson, 2019).

The twentieth century extended the range of reception to the reception of various literatures, not exclusivsely those of the ancient world. Medievalism emerged as a form of reception of the medieval. Renaissance culture, in this issue exemplified by Shakespeare's plays, started to be analyzed from the perspective of how it was received by the audiences and readers contemporary to Shakespeare and those who lived later. The eighteenth century, itself fascinated with Classical Reception, became the subject of research on reception.

Marguerite Johnson refers to the Classical Reception as returns to "the Greek and Roman canon as well as the classically-inspired works of later writers" (Johnson, 2019: 2). T. A. Shippey defines medievalisms as "responses to the Middle Ages at all periods since a sense of the mediaeval began to develop" (Shippey, quoted in: Matthews, 2015: 1). How Shakespeare's plays are reworked is a recurrent theme in Shakespeare studies.[3] The eighteenth and nineteenth-century literatures also keep returning in various forms.

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[1] Neo-Classicism as the prevailing architectural tendency in the United States architecture remains the most recognizable aspect of the Classical Reception there; John M. Ganim writes that "Neoclassical urban planning . . . dominated rapidly growing cities, especially in North America, where it was claimed to encourage civic virtue" (Ganim, 2016: 37).

[2] For a discussion of Canadian neoclassical architecture see Maitland's study (Maitland, 1984).

[3] For example, various special issues of the journal *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* discuss ways in which the plays are "translated" into the modern theatrical language, appropriated by various cultural perspectives, and performed in many countries (see, for example, Heijes and Thompson, 2020).

This monographic issue of the *Romanica Silesiana* journal not only treats reception as the aim of reception studies, but also addresses what Michael Alexander called "reproduction or reaction in any form" to earlier literatures and cultures.[4] Furthermore, in the same email he commented that "everything is a recycling", which extends the range of the authors' investigations here to any forms of reworking and recycling of the earlier literary texts. This issue extends the meaning of reception beyond what in the 1970s was called *Rezeptionsästetik* by the Konstanz school, within which Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss became the most famous literary scholars. The exact translation of the term is not "reader-response criticism", as it functions in English, but rather "aesthetics of reception", which Paul de Man, however, calls clumsy in his *Introduction* to Jauss's essays (de Man, 1982). Wolfgang Iser famously established the field of "aesthetics of reception". He recalled Roman Ingarden's idea of concretization of a work of art (Iser, 1984: 183–186, 267–284). He diagnosed Ingarden's concretization as something that relied on the classical concept of art, in which there are "correct" and "incorrect" concretizations.[5] He extended Ingarden's phenomenological perspective by questioning the idea that there exists one correct reception of a text and argued for the existence of many receptions, since the reader's role is central in the process (Iser, 1973). Hans Robert Jauss contributed to the development of the "aesthetics of reception" by writing about, for example, Goethe's *Iphigenia* as an instance of the manner in which classical culture was received in Romanticism (Jauss, 1973).

The term "reception" must be extended here to other scholarly approaches, since it is as difficult to grasp as much as "influence" or "posthumous fame" are difficult, according to Jauss (Jauss, 1982: 4). He writes about them as specific criteria that should otherwise be measurable, but they cannot. He quotes Karl Kosík, who claimed that a literary work lives only to the extent that is has influence (Kosík, 1967, quoted in: Jauss, 1982: 15). For Jauss a literary event is more important than just the category of "work". "A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it", as Jauss maintains (Jauss, 1982: 22). Reception is necessary for the literary work (or event) to exist in the history of literature or in literary theory. Without it the relationship between a text and its audience does not last, which means that the literary work dissolves into nothingness at least up till the time when it is going to be discovered again by some future audiences.

Here the contributors do not move within the strictly assigned area of the reader-response criticism, but they address the issues that were firstly discussed by this school of criticism. The issues are how lasting the influence of specific literary and cultural periods has been, whether the periods and the texts they pro-

[4] This commentary by Michael Alexander and the next one come from the private email to Anna Czarnowus, sent on 30 October 2020.

[5] For a commentary on Iser's treatment of Ingarden's theory see Mitosek's study (Mitosek, 1983: 349).

duced can be interpreted beyond what Jauss called "the horizon of expectations" (Jauss, 1982: 22), and what fame texts achieve after the death of their authors.

The study of medievalism is getting internationally popular among scholars, as this journal issue shows in its predominance of such essays. Adrien Quéret-Podesta discusses Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson's detective novel *The Flatey Enigma* as a modern Icelandic response to the lasting importance of medieval manuscript. The Old Icelandic manuscript here is *The Book of Flatey* and returning to the historical Middle Ages is presented by Ingólfsson as a gesture that has a didactic function. Furthermore, like all forms of medievalisms, this one comments on the present of the novel as well, which here are the relations between people. Andrzej Wicher's essay "Some Boethian Themes in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*" complements the previous critical perspectives on Tolkien as a medievalist (Chance, 2003). Wicher studies Tolkien's medievalism in the form of his possible responses to Boethius. Wicher notices the crypto-Christian plot, similarities in the construction of characters, such as Galadriel, Frodo, and Tom Bombadil, and the importance of religious beliefs for Tolkien.

Carl Sell's essay sees the novels and short stories of the *Dragonlance* setting as modern-day examples of Arthurian reception due to the presence of knights, honour, and codes of chivalry in them. Sturm Brightblade follows the code of honour in the medieval past, which is characteristic of Arthurian knights, and he has "Arthurian" qualities. Also some narrative arcs and the backstory are redolent of the King Arthur legend. The influence on the medieval on the modern is shown as valid in Dominika Ruszkiewicz's essay. She interprets Joyce Carol Oates's *Carthage* as a modern-day version of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Both of the two narratives are about war, love, and loss. Oates responds to Chaucer's poem in her choice of names and in the manner she develops the plot. The novel also uses political medievalism in that crusades are evoked in the discussion of the war on terror. Ruszkiewicz notices that both Chaucer's narrative and Oates's novel see rage as central for the characters' experience of war.

The last two articles in this section of the journal issue discuss responses to the medieval and the Renaissance from the critical perspectives of, respectively, animal studies and disability studies. Anna Czarnowus's essay on the *Intermedium* from the eighteenth-century *Graudenz Codex* examines the tradition of holding animals on trial as both a continuation of medieval animal trials and something that is a form of medievalism, since the trials are humorously reworked in the interlude in question. Animal trials were embedded in the folk anthropocentric approach to animals, but it appears that the eighteenth-century anonymous playwright already distances himself from this approach by means of the humour he uses. Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik argues that the many contemporary stagings of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* show not only how dis/ability shapes interpretations of the play, but also how the play's reception changes due to the changing paradigms of thinking about dis/ability. Kowalcze-Pawlik emphasizes that in performances of *The Tempest* Caliban's stigmatization is often presented through his bodily difference.

The *Varia* section includes an essay by Paweł Matyaszewski, where he discusses Sylvain Maréchal's *Apologues modernes* (1789) as a type of the eighteenth-century prophesy of the revolutionary events to come. This essay does not treat of reception as such, but it clearly sees prophesy as an older manner of writing and this older manner returns at the end of the eighteenth century.

All of the essays above present reception as a current problem in literary studies. Literary epochs and cultural phenomena characteristic of them reverberate in the ensuing centuries. Texts only have to be read as not merely representing the times when they were written, but also something relevant for the future generations.

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Essays

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Les manuscrits islandais médiévaux dans les romans islandais contemporains : l'exemple de *L'Énigme de Flatey*[1]

Medieval Icelandic Manuscripts:
The Case of *The Flatey Enigma*

Abstract: In the rich history of Icelandic literature, the most famous literary genres are undoubtedly the medieval sagas and the contemporary criminal novels. However, those genres are as not as far from each other as one may think, since masterpieces of Icelandic medieval literature are sometimes summoned by contemporary authors, as is shown in *The Flatey Enigma* (Icelandic: *Flateyjargáta*), a criminal novel by Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson which is built around the story and the contents of the *Book of Flatey*, a famous fourteenth Icelandic manuscript. The present article provides an analysis of the place and function of the manuscripts and the medieval texts it contains: the results obtained show that their main function is to help the development of the plot, although some intertextual references also have a didactic dimension, whereas others provide information about the relations between the characters and the *Book of Flatey*.

Key words: Criminal novels, Iceland, manuscripts, Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson

Introduction

Dans la longue et riche histoire de la littérature islandaise, les genres les plus connus du grand public sont certainement les sagas et poèmes épiques mé-

[1] Viktor Arnar Ingólfsonn, *L'Énigme de Flatey*, traduit par Patrick Guelpa, Seuil, Paris, 2013. Texte original : *Flateyjargáta*. Mál og menning, Reykjavík, 2002. En raison de notre méconnaissance de l'islandais, nous avons, sauf mention contraire, utilisé les traductions françaises des œuvres citées dans le cadre de la présente étude.

diévaux ainsi que les polars et romans noirs contemporains. Ces deux genres ne sont d'ailleurs pas si éloignés que l'on pourrait le croire, puisque les chefs-d'œuvre de la littérature islandaise du Moyen Âge sont parfois convoqués par les auteurs actuels, comme l'illustre notamment le cas du roman policier *L'Énigme de Flatey*, de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson. L'intrigue de cet ouvrage est ainsi centrée autour du *Livre de Flatey*, célèbre manuscrit islandais réalisé au XIV^e^ siècle et comportant pas moins de 80 textes différents.

L'intrigue de *L'Énigme de Flatey* se déroule en une semaine, du mercredi 1^er^ août 1960 au mercredi 8 août 1960 ; elle a lieu essentiellement sur l'île de Flatey, dans le Breiðafjörður, au nord-ouest de l'Islande[2], mais certaines scènes ont pour cadre les îlots environnants ou encore la capitale du pays, Reykjavik. Le roman débute d'ailleurs par la découverte d'un cadavre sur l'île inhabitée de Ketilsey, au sud de Flatey ; le défunt, qui se nommait Gaston Lund, était un professeur de l'Université de Copenhague venu sur l'île pour essayer de résoudre la solution de l'« énigme de Flatey ». Cette énigme est une devinette très élaborée composée d'une série de questions sur le contenu du *Livre de Flatey*, un célèbre manuscrit médiéval islandais rassemblant de nombreuses sagas et autres récits qui doit son nom au fait qu'il fut conservé un temps à Flatey avant d'être emporté au Danemark ; il y est encore à l'époque du récit[3], mais une édition en fac-similé contenant les feuilles volantes sur laquelle est écrite le texte de l'énigme se trouve dans la petite bibliothèque de l'île. Kjartan, un employé de la préfecture de Patreksfjörður, est chargé de l'enquête sur place ; il est aidé dans sa tâche par plusieurs insulaires dont Grímur et Högni, respectivement bourgmestre et instituteur de l'île, mais aussi de la doctoresse Johanna Thorvald – à laquelle il est lié de manière tragique puisqu'il est en partie responsable de la mort de son fiancé, Einar, ce qui lui valut plusieurs années de prison –, mais le mystère s'épaissit encore avec la découverte d'un second cadavre mutilé selon un ancien rituel viking et abandonné dans le cimetière de l'île.

Le présent article a pour but de proposer un essai d'analyse de la réception du *Livre de Flatey* et des textes qu'il contient dans *L'Énigme de Flatey* de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson. Afin de mener à bien cet objectif, nous analyserons tout d'abord la place et l'usage des textes islandais médiévaux évoqués dans le roman à travers le prisme de l'intertextualité, puis nous nous intéresserons au rôle du manuscrit en tant qu'objet symbolique avant de nous interroger sur le rapport entretenu par les personnages des romans d'Ingólfsson et d'Indridason avec le manuscrit et les textes qu'il contient.

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[2] Ces précisions ne sont pas inutiles car il existe en réalité deux îles nommées Flatey (l'île plate, en islandais) au large des côtes islandaises ; la seconde île se trouve près de la côte septentrionale de l'Islande.

[3] Le *Livre de Flatey* et plusieurs autres célèbres manuscrits islandais ont été rendus à l'Islande par le Danemark en 1971.

La place des textes islandais médiévaux dans L'Énigme de Flatey

Bien que *L'Énigme de Flatey* de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson contienne quelques brèves références à des œuvres littéraires (essentiellement islandaises ou scandinaves) du XX^e^ siècle et à des journaux, la très grande majorité des cas d'intertextualité présents dans ce roman concernent des textes islandais médiévaux, qui sont évoqués en 67 occasions. Une analyse détaillée des œuvres employées démontre que 62 des 67 occurrences – soit plus de 90% – proviennent de textes contenus dans le *Livre de Flatey*, ce qui s'explique naturellement par la présence de l'« énigme de Flatey » dans cette œuvre. Le récit de la résolution de cette énigme, qui se déroule durant la nuit du dimanche 5 juin au lundi 6 juin, est divisé en fragments situés à la fin de chaque chapitre du roman ; rapporté sous la forme d'un dialogue entre Johanna et Kjartan, il commence par un long monologue dans lequel la doctoresse donne une longue description de la genèse, du contenu et de l'histoire (quatorze fragments) et se poursuit par trente neuf questions, qui permettent chacune de trouver une lettre alors que la 40^e^ question délivre pour sa part la clé d'un code qui permet d'accéder, en plusieurs étapes, à la réponse de l'énigme. La narration de la résolution de l'« énigme » constitue donc ainsi une histoire dans l'histoire en même temps qu'elle constitue la raison d'être du roman tout entier : en effet, c'est la présence de l'énigme sur l'île qui entraîne la venue de Gaston Lund à Flatey, un évènement dont les conséquences seront notamment sa mort et celle de son fils caché, Bryngeir. Cette devinette savante constitue donc le cœur du récit et l'on peut penser que c'est l'importance de ce texte fictif qui explique pourquoi ce dernier, et non pas le manuscrit qui en est l'objet, a donné son nom au roman, bien que l'hypothèse d'une volonté de jouer sur les différentes interprétations du mot « énigme » pour créer une allusion au mystère représenté par les deux décès tragiques survenus à Ketilsey et Flatey ne puisse être totalement exclue.

Le récit de la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey » en elle-même contient environ deux tiers des cas d'intertextualité provenant du *Livre de Flatey* (42/62) et plus de 60% du total des références à des œuvres médiévales ; on peut encore ajouter à ce chiffre deux mentions de la *Heimskringla*, ou *Saga des rois de Norvège*, une énumération de cinq œuvres du *Livre de Flatey* et trois proverbes cités par Johanna dans sa description de ce manuscrit précédant la résolution de l'énigme, ce qui donne pour cette seule narration enchâssée dans le roman 52 références textuelles sur 67, soit plus de trois quarts de l'œuvre. Le fait que le chiffre de références, à savoir 42, ne soit pas identique au nombre de questions, c'est-à-dire 40, s'explique par la présence de deux références en deux occasions : ainsi, le père de Johanna, Björn Snorri Thorvald, et l'universitaire danois Gaston Lund, dont les réponses diffèrent en plusieurs occasions, ne sont pas d'accord sur l'œuvre d'où vient la réponse à la troisième question (*Saga des Groenlandais*

pour le premier, tandis que le second penche visiblement pour la *Saga d'Olaf Tryggvason*) alors que la résolution finale de l'énigme contient une citation de la *Saga de Håkon l'ancien* et une autre de la *Saga de Sverrir* (réponse finale).

Les cas d'intertextualité concernant les œuvres contenues dans le *Livre de Flatey* semblent essentiellement provenir d'une petite quinzaine de textes, mais le fait que la provenance de certains fragments est difficile à établir suggère que ce chiffre pourrait être plus élevé : ce total demeure cependant relativement modeste au regard du nombre total d'œuvres contenues dans le manuscrit, qui se compose d'environ 80 textes différents. La très grande majorité de ces œuvres sont des sagas et des « dits » (en islandais *þaettir*[4]), mais le manuscrit contient également quelques autres textes, comme des annales, qui sont évoquées dans la description du *Livre de Flatey* par Johanna. Le nombre de sagas et de dits évoqués dans le roman forme un certain contraste avec la composition du manuscrit, puisque la liste des textes identifiés contient neuf sagas (*Saga d'Olaf Tryggvason*, *Saga de Saint Olaf*, *Saga de Sverrir*, *Saga de Håkon l'Ancien*, *Saga des vikings de Jómsborg*, *Saga des Groenlandais*, *Saga des frères jurés*, *Saga de Magnus* et *Saga des Orcadiens*) sur un total de treize dans le *Livre de Flatey* mais elle ne comporte que quatre dits (*Dit de Sneglu Halli*, *Dit de Sörli*, *Dit de Norna-Gestr* et *Dit d'Ormur Stórólfson*) alors que le manuscrit en contient une cinquantaine : cette différence peut s'expliquer par le fait que les dits sont parfois intégrés aux sagas, mais aussi par la plus grande popularité des sagas auprès du grand public.

Cette notion de popularité est peut-être aussi à l'origine des références aux quatre œuvres ne figurant pas dans le *Livre de Flatey*, à savoir la *Heimskringla*, la *Saga de Grettir*, la *Saga d'Egil, fils de Grimr le Chauve* et la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé*. En plus de leurs fonctions spécifiques, la présence de références à ces trois œuvres dans les deux romans s'explique peut-être par leur grande popularité : ainsi, la *Heimskringla*, ou *Saga des rois de Norvège*, compilation de sagas royales (à l'exception de la *Saga des Ynglingar*, placée au début de l'œuvre) réalisée par le célèbre écrivain islandais Snorri Sturluson[5], auquel on attribue également la rédaction de la *Saga d'Egil, fils de Grímr le Chauve* et parfois celle de la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé*, est l'une des œuvres les plus importantes de la littérature islandaise médiévale. L'analyse conduite par Emily Lethbrige démontre en outre que la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé* et la *Saga d'Egil, fils de Grimr le Chauve* sont les deux sagas des Islandais apparaissant le plus souvent dans les manuscrits islandais antérieurs à la Réforme (Lethbridge, 2014 : 66) et la chercheuse de Cambridge affirme également que la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé* est « la plus connue

[4] Un *þáttr* (pluriel *þaettir*) est un récit en ancien islandais : les *þaettir* sont généralement plus courts que les sagas.

[5] Né en 1179 et mort en 1241, Snorri Sturlurson s'est distingué par son activité littéraire (outre les textes mentionnés ci-dessus, nous lui devons également une *Edda en prose*) et politique.

et la plus estimée » des sagas des Islandais[6] (2014 : 55). Quant à la *Saga de Grettir*, elle apparaît également dans la catégorie des sagas le plus souvent recopiées avant la réforme dans l'étude d'Emily Leithbridge (2014 : 66) et son principal protagoniste est évoqué dans plusieurs autres sagas islandaises : la cause de cet intérêt est sans doute liée au fait qu'il vécut proscrit pendant 19 ans, ce qui est la plus longue durée de survie pour un hors-la-loi dans l'ancienne Islande[7].

Par ailleurs, une analyse détaillée de l'ensemble des sagas contenues dans le *Livre de Flatey* et mentionnées dans le roman permet de constater que cinq sont des sagas royales alors que deux autres (*Saga des vikings de Jómsborg* et *Saga des Orcadiens*) sont parfois classées dans cette catégorie et que les deux dernières sont des sagas des Islandais ; si l'on inclut les sagas ne figurant pas dans le manuscrit, le nombre de sagas royales passe à six alors que celui des sagas des Islandais monte à cinq, ce qui atténue l'écart entre ces deux. Cette répartition par genres correspond à la composition du *Livre du Flatey*, qui ne comprend que ces deux types de sagas, mais elles reflètent également leur grande popularité parmi l'ensemble des sagas islandaises.

Intertextualité et fonction des textes islandais médiévaux dans L'Énigme de Flatey

En nous appuyant sur la classification des formes d'intertextualité proposée par Gérard Genette (Genette, 1982 : 8) et en l'adaptant aux spécificités de *L'Énigme de Flatey*, nous pouvons constater que ce roman contient 58 citations, parmi lesquelles il faut distinguer 47 citations de textes, 21 citations de titre d'œuvres littéraires, dont environ la moitié sont associées à d'autres formes d'intertextualité, et 1 citation de genre littéraire ; le récit de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson contient également 45 cas de reformulation ou de paraphrase, lesquels sont associés à des citations en 41 occasions, ainsi que 3 allusions onomastiques créées à partir de noms de personnages et/ou d'auteurs de sagas, dont deux sont accompagnés.de citations de titres d'œuvres littéraires.

Comme dans le cas de la nature des œuvres citées, la fréquente association des citations et des cas de reformulations ou de paraphrases au sein de *L'Énigme de Flatey* résulte de la présence du jeu littéraire qui a donné son nom

[6] En islandais *Íslendingasögur*. Les spécialistes distinguent en effet plusieurs grandes familles au sein des sagas scandinaves. La classification établie par le grand spécialiste Sigurður Nordal en 1953 distingue ainsi cinq familles : les sagas royales, les sagas des Islandais, les sagas des contemporains, les sagas des chevaliers et les sagas légendaires. Par la suite, une sixième catégorie, celle des sagas des évêques, a été ajoutée.

[7] On en trouve notamment une mention dans la *Saga de Gísli Súrsson*.

au roman. En effet, tous ces cas d'association figurent dans le récit de la résolution de l'énigme, dont les réponses, présentes à la fin des chapitres du roman, se composent d'une reformulation de l'épisode dans laquelle figure la réponse à chaque question ainsi que d'une citation du texte original : cette dernière est généralement assez courte et se limite parfois au mot contenant la lettre devant servir, grâce à l'usage d'un code, à trouver la solution de l'énigme. Par ailleurs, cinq réponses mentionnent aussi le titre de l'œuvre dont est titrée la solution à la question : les cinq œuvres mentionnées sont la *Saga des Vikings du Jómsborg* (1re question), la *Saga des Groenlandais* (3e question), le *Dit de Sörli* (6e question), la *Saga de Håkon l'ancien* (40e question) et la *Saga de Sverrir* (réponse finale). En raison de cette faible proportion de textes dûment identifiés, le nombre de cas où chaque lecteur est en mesure d'identifier l'œuvre dont provient la réponse à chaque question dépend naturellement du niveau de ses connaissances sur la littérature islandaise médiévale, mais l'identification de ces œuvres n'est pas nécessaire pour comprendre le déroulement de la narration concernant cette énigme.

Le récit de la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey » au sens strict (c'est-à-dire sans le prologue consacré à la description du *Livre de Flatey*) contient donc pas moins de 42 citations et 41 cas de paraphrase, soit presque 80% des occurrences de chacune de ces formes d'intertextualité dans le roman ; une telle proportion montre clairement que leur première fonction dans *L'Énigme de Flatey* est de faire avancer la résolution d'un des mystères de l'intrigue du roman. Afin de mettre ce résultat en perspective, il convient désormais de se pencher sur la fonction des autres cas d'intertextualité présents dans le roman. Pour ce faire, nous allons commencer par les cas de citation et de paraphrase ne figurant pas dans le récit concernant la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey » *stricto sensu* : ce groupe comprend un total de neuf éléments, parmi lesquels on remarque 5 citations et 4 cas de paraphrases d'épisodes contenus dans les textes figurant dans le *Livre de Flatey*.

Le premier cas de citation intervient lors de la découverte du rapatriement du cadavre de Gaston Lund, puisque Grímur, le bourgmestre de l'île, récite une phrase de la *Saga de Grettir* : « ça ne sent pas très bon, fit Grettir le Fort en pénétrant dans le tertre » (Ingólfsson, 2013 : 49). Quelques chapitres plus loin, Johanna explique à Kjartan qu'elle admire « les annalistes islandais » et cite en guise d'exemples trois proverbes figurant dans le *Livre de Flatey* et passés dans le langage courant : « Des phrases comme "La bière est un autre homme", "C'est toujours le plus sage qui cède", "Les fêtes font du bien" » (2013 : 71).

La dernière citation provient de la *Saga des Vikings du Jomsborg* : vraisemblablement écrite au début du XIIIe siècle, cette œuvre relate les hauts faits d'un groupe de guerriers établis dans la forteresse de Jómsborg, un toponyme également utilisé dans la Scandinavie médiévale pour designer la localité de Wolin, située sur l'île du même nom, au nord-ouest de la Pologne (Morawiec,

2017 : 135). Dans le roman, ce récit a inspiré la création d'un club d'étudiants appelé « Les Cousins des Vikings du Jómsborg » ou l'« Association des Vikings du Jómsborg » (Ingólfsson, 2013 : 312), dont faisaient partie Bryngeir, Kjartan et Einar, le défunt fiancé de Johanna. Ainsi que l'expliquent Johanna et Kjartan au cours de leurs interrogatoires respectifs, les membres du club devaient subir une épreuve initiatique, à savoir un simulacre de décapitation à l'épée inspiré par un épisode tiré du récit de l'exécution des vikings du Jómsborg dans la saga du même nom : en effet, le récit rapporte que Svein Buáson retira sa tête du billot avant le coup fatal et fut finalement gracié. Dans le roman, la scène n'a pas une fin aussi heureuse puisque le nouvel entrant, Einar, est décapité par Kjartan après que Bryngeir, jaloux du fiancé de Johanna, a mis son genou dans le dos de ce dernier pour l'empêcher de reculer, ce qu'il n'avouera que des années plus tard à la doctoresse après avoir laissé Kjartan assumer seul la responsabilité du drame. Durant son interrogatoire, Kjartan rapporte que la lecture du récit de l'exécution des vikings du Jómsborg d'après la saga homonyme faisait partie de la cérémonie ; il cite les deux phrases de la saga qui décrivent les préparatifs de l'exécution manquée de Svein Buáson et précise que les mots « frappe vite » sont le signal pour le « bourreau », qui doit alors abattre son épée sur le billot (2013 : 330).

Si Johanna précise que les trois proverbes sont utilisés « à tout bout de champ » (2013 : 71), les deux autres citations possèdent un contexte bien déterminé : ainsi le bourgmestre cherche-t-il à masquer son trouble en citant un passage de saga approprié aux circonstances alors que le fragment de la *Saga des Vikings du Jomsborg* est utilisé comme texte de cérémonie. Ces cinq cas de citations suggèrent que les enseignements du *Livre de Flatey* peuvent être utiles dans différentes situations : elles fournissent donc des informations sur le rapport que les personnages entretiennent avec les textes contenus dans le manuscrit, mais les trois citations de proverbes par Johanna possèdent également une fonction didactique, en particulier pour le lecteur islandais.

Les quatre cas de paraphrases de textes figurant dans le *Livre de Flatey* apparaissent seulement dans deux passages de *L'Énigme de Flatey*, à savoir les interrogatoires respectifs de Sigurbjörn et de Johanna par les policiers Þórólfur et Lukás ; les textes utilisés relatent d'ailleurs tous des récits de morts brutales, ce qui explique leur étroite association à l'enquête. Ainsi, durant son interrogatoire, le fermier Sigurbjörn demande à Þórólfur s'il le croit vraiment capable de découper un « aigle de sang » dans le dos de Bryngeir : devant l'incompréhension du policier, il raconte le récit de ce supplice dans le *Dit de Norna-Gestr* et ajoute que la *Saga des Orcadiens* et le *Dit d'Ormur Stórólfson* l'évoquent également (2013 : 275). Sigurbjörn dresse également une analogie entre la mort de Gaston Lund et le récit d'Eyvindur Kelda, qui avait voulu tuer le roi Olaf, dans la *Saga d'Olafur Tryggvason* (2013 : 275–276), mais celle-ci est imparfaite car Eyvindur Kelda meurt noyé avec ses compagnons, alors que Gaston Lund est mort

de froid sur l'île déserte de Ketilsey, où le vieillard Jón Ferdinand l'a conduit par erreur.

Au cours de son interrogatoire, Johanna mentionne à son tour deux récits de supplice tirés respectivement de la *Saga des vikings de Jómsborg* et du *Dit d'Ormur Stórólfson*. Le premier récit concerne l'exécution manquée de Svein Buáson dont elle rapporte qu'elle a donné naissance à l'épreuve d'initiation des nouveaux membres de l'Association des Vikings du Jómsborg (2013 : 312) ; la doctoresse qualifie d'ailleurs cette épreuve de « cérémonie imbécile » (2013 : 312) et ce jugement est évidemment à mettre en rapport avec le fait que cette pratique a causé la mort de son fiancé, Einar. Un peu plus tard, lorsqu'un des enquêteurs insinue que Johanna s'en est peut-être pris à Kjartan, elle perd patience et demande à l'enquêteur s'il croit qu'elle l'a « attaché à un poteau » et lui a « arraché les tripes ou quelque chose dans le genre » (2013 : 319) ; ainsi que Grímur, le bourgmestre de Flatey, l'explique ensuite aux policiers, il s'agit peut-être d'une allusion à la mort d'Ásbjörn Prúdi, qui est rapportée dans le *Dit d'Ormur Stórólfson* (2013 : 319–320).

Les cas de morts non naturelles dans le roman sont donc systématiquement rattachés, à tort ou à raison, à des épisodes sanglants contenus dans le *Livre de Flatey*. Ce dernier semble constituer un prisme pour comprendre des évènements *à priori* incompréhensibles, mais il fonctionne aussi comme une source d'inspiration puisque c'est la *Saga des Vikings du Jómsborg* qui a entraîné la création de l'association du même nom et de sa dangereuse cérémonie d'entrée, alors que le supplice de l'« aigle de sang », évoqué à plusieurs reprises dans le manuscrit, a été pratiqué par Þormódur Krákur sur le cadavre noyé de Bryngeir afin que le *Livre de Flatey* revienne en Islande. L'évocation de ces épisodes sert donc avant tout à étayer le récit de l'enquête sur les morts de Gaston Lund et Bryngeir, mais les réponses de Johanna, tout comme, dans une moindre mesure, celles de Sigurbjörn et de Grímur, fournissent également des informations sur le rapport entretenu par certains des personnages avec les textes figurant dans le *Livre de Flatey*. Par ailleurs, les explications que Sigurbjörn et Grímur donnent aux policiers de Reykjavik sur les récits de morts violentes figurant dans le manuscrit permettent de renseigner les enquêteurs mais aussi le lecteur sur ce thème et l'on peut donc affirmer qu'elles possèdent aussi une dimension didactique.

Les onze citations de titres d'œuvres médiévales islandaises non associées à d'autres formes d'intertextualité concernent huit ouvrages, à savoir la *Heimskringla* (deux occurrences), la *Saga d'Olaf Tryggvason* (une occurrence), la *Saga de Saint Olaf* (une occurrence), la *Saga de Sverrir* (deux occurrences), la *Saga de Håkon l'Ancien* (une occurrence), les *Annales du Livre de Flatey* (une occurrence), la *Saga des Orcadiens* (une occurrence) et le *Dit de Sneglu Hali* (deux occurrences). Les deux mentions de la *Heimskringla* figurent dans les explications que Johanna donne à Kjartan sur le *Livre de Flatey* avant que tous deux n'entreprennent de résoudre l'« énigme de Flatey » : la doctoresse de

l'île raconte ainsi que « le *Livre de Flatey* est une sorte de monstre comparé à la *Heimskringla* de Snorri Sturluson qui traite une matière semblable » (2013 : 41) et ajoute un peu plus loin que « La *Heimskringla* de Snorri a probablement dû être un best-seller en Norvège » (2013 : 58). Ces deux références, qui figurent dans l'exposé que Johanna improvise sur le *Livre de Flatey*, ont pour but de fournir des éléments d'information sur l'époque et les circonstances de la création de ce manuscrit en utilisant une œuvre très connue comme point de comparaison.

Juste après la première apparition de la *Heimskringla*, l'exposé de Johanna contient une énumération assez fragmentaire des textes contenus dans le *Livre de Flatey* : en effet, elle ne mentionne que cinq œuvres, à savoir la *Saga d'Olaf Tryggvason*, la *Saga de Saint Olaf*, la *Saga de Sverrir*, la *Saga de Håkon l'Ancien* et les *Annales du Livre de Flatey* (2013 : 42). Malgré le caractère très lacunaire de cette liste, sa fonction est, comme du reste l'ensemble de l'exposé de Johanna, de fournir des informations sur le manuscrit.

La seconde mention de la *Saga de Sverrir* apparaît lorsque le fermier Sigurbjörn, fin connaisseur du *Livre de Flatey*, raconte à Kjartan qu'il s'est disputé avec Gaston Lund dans la bibliothèque de l'île au sujet du lieu où doit être conservé le manuscrit et qu'il a posé des questions au professeur danois pour évaluer ses connaissances sur cette saga, sans grand succès, notamment à cause de difficultés linguistiques (2013 : 134). Le choix de cette saga comme élément du petit test concocté par Sigurbjörn n'est évidemment pas anodin, puisque la solution de l'« énigme de Flatey » est une phrase contenue dans une strophe insérée au sein de cette saga : « Échappe à la mort constant, y va tout inconstant » ; par ailleurs, le mot « constant », qui figure dans cette phrase, est à la fois le mot tracé avec des pierres par Gaston Lund à Ketilsey et… le nom du bateau de Sigurbjörn.

Quelques pages plus loin, Egill, le réceptionniste de l'hôtel Borg à Reykjavik, réussit, à la demande de Dagbjartur, à identifier grâce à une photo de presse l'homme qui l'a interrogé au sujet de Gaston Lund : il s'agit de Friðrik Einarsson, ancien collègue et ami du père de Johanna mais aussi père du fiancé de cette dernière, qui a fait paraître dans un journal une « étude sur les meurtres dans la *Saga des Orcadiens* » (2013 : 138). Cette mention de la *Saga des Orcadiens* et des meurtres qu'elle relate doit naturellement être mise en rapport avec le fait que cette œuvre contient notamment, ainsi que Sigurbjörn l'explique aux policiers, une description de l'aigle de sang.

Les deux dernières citations de titre d'œuvre médiévales islandaises non associées à d'autres formes d'intertextualité sont celles du *Dit de Sneglu Halli* : cette œuvre, qui appartient au genre des *þaettir*, nous raconte l'histoire de Halli, un Islandais à la langue bien pendue, qui entre au service du roi du Norvège Harald Hardrada en tant que scalde (poète) mais se retrouve rapidement en concurrence avec un autre scalde islandais, Thjodolf (Turco, 2015 : 194). Lors de son interrogatoire par les policiers, Johanna Thorvald explique que Bryngeir a décidé de la courtiser après avoir lu dans le journal de leur lycée un exposé

que Johanna avait écrit sur le *Dit de Sneglu Halli* (Ingólfsson, 2013 : 311) car « il trouvait quelque part affriolant et sexy qu'une lycéenne de dix-huit ans écrive un texte pareil » (2013 : 315). À en croire Johanna, sa décision d'écrire un sujet sur ce thème a pourtant une explication des plus prosaïques, puisqu'elle explique à propos du *Livre de Flatey* :

> J'ai utilisé de temps en temps ce livre comme sujet d'exposé au lycée quand je ne voulais pas trop me fatiguer. J'en connaissais la matière tellement bien après avoir écouté mon père donner quantité de conférences en cinq langues que j'étais capable d'écrire un devoir convenable sur n'importe quel sujet contenu dans ce livre.
>
> (2013 : 311)

À l'intérieur de ce groupe de mentions, on peut clairement distinguer deux sous-ensembles, à savoir les mentions figurant dans la description du *Livre de Flatey* que Johanna fait pour Kjartan et celles apparaissant à d'autres endroits du roman. En effet, les sept mentions contenues dans l'exposé de la doctoresse ont toutes une fonction didactique alors que les quatre autres mentions fournissent des informations sur le rapport des personnages (ici Johanna, Sigurbjörn et dans une moindre mesure Gaston Lund) aux textes contenus dans le manuscrit. Par ailleurs, la seconde mention de la *Saga de Sverrir* figure dans le récit de la rencontre de Sigurbjörn et de Gaston Lund, ce qui contribue à faire avancer l'enquête sur les faits gestes et du savant danois à Flatey avant sa mort tragique à Ketilsey, alors que la mention de la *Saga des Orcadiens* apparaît lors de l'identification de Friðrik Einarsson, qui est un ami proche des Thorvald et connaît également Gaston Lund, ce qui fait de lui un témoin précieux pour le policier Dagbjartur.

Ainsi que nous l'avons mentionné ci-dessus, *L'Énigme de Flatey* contient une seule citation de genre littéraire et celle-ci concerne les sagas des Islandais : en effet, lors d'une conversation à propos des elfes et de leur existence, le sacristain Þormódur dit à Kjartan que les gens « doutent trop » et « doivent croire ce que racontent les sagas d'Islandais [*sic*] et la Bible, et ce que les anciens transmettent » afin que leurs rêves et leurs souhaits se réalisent (2013 : 89). Cette mention des sagas des Islandais fait donc référence au rapport que le sacristain entretient avec les textes anciens et prouve que cette relation se caractérise par une très forte croyance dans les récits des sagas, auxquels il semble prêter des pouvoirs presque magiques.

La première des trois allusions onomastiques créées à partir de noms de personnages et/ou d'auteurs de sagas intervient lorsque le sacristain Þormódur lit dans cette œuvre un chapitre *La Saga des frères jurés* qui parle de son homonyme, le scalde et guerrier Þormódur Kolbrúnarskáld[8] (2013 : 74) ; le sacristain,

[8] C'est-à-dire « scalde de Kolbrún (prénom féminin) ».

visiblement fier de cette homonymie, y fait lui-même référence en une occasion plus loin dans le récit (2013 : 256). Le second clin d'œil est le pseudonyme choisi par Gaston Lund pour s'inscrire à l'Hôtel Borg : le chercheur danois choisit ainsi de s'appeler… Egil Sturluson, soit une combinaison du prénom du héros de la *Saga d'Egil, fils de Grímr le Chauve* et du nom du père[9] de son auteur, Snorri Sturluson. L'orthographe inhabituelle du prénom Egil retient d'ailleurs l'attention du réceptionniste de lui, qui porte lui aussi ce prénom, mais dans sa version moderne, c'est-à-dire avec deux « l » (2013 : 113). La dernière allusion onomastique intervient lorsque le père de Johanna, Björn Snorri Thorvald, qui est mourant, dit qu'il pense bientôt rejoindre par son homonyme, Snorri Sturluson, dont il affirme qu'il a écrit la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé* (2013 : 168).

Ces trois éléments ne contribuent pas réellement à la progression de l'intrigue, ce qui suggère que leur fonction est d'un autre type. Ainsi, la référence à Snorri Sturluson comme auteur de la *Saga de Njáll le Brûlé* peut être considérée comme possédant une fonction didactique : cette dimension semble moins présente dans l'allusion à l'homonymie entre le sacristain et le scalde Þormódur, mais ce passage constitue en revanche une source d'information supplémentaire sur le rapport que Þormódur Krákur entretient avec les textes anciens (la *Saga des frères jurés* fait d'ailleurs partie des sagas des Islandais). La mention du pseudonyme inventé par Gaston Lund ne possède quant à elle aucune dimension didactique et suppose au contraire de savoir que Snorri Sturluson a écrit la *Saga d'Egil, fils de Grímr le Chauve* ; il s'agit donc davantage d'une plaisanterie pour initiés qui requiert une certaine connaissance de la littérature islandaise médiévale.

L'analyse des fonctions des cas d'intertextualité dans *L'Énigme de Flatey* permet de constater qu'ils remplissent essentiellement trois grandes fonctions, mais il convient de souligner que certaines références peuvent avoir plusieurs fonctions. On remarque ainsi une cinquantaine d'occurrences où la fonction des cas d'intertextualité est essentiellement de faire progresser l'intrigue, en particulier en ce qui concerne la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey » et l'enquête sur les morts de Gaston Lund et de Bryngeir, mais on constate aussi l'apparition d'une dimension didactique dans une quinzaine de cas ; enfin, l'élément intertextuel fournit des informations sur le rapport entre les personnages et les textes islandais anciens, en particulier ceux contenus dans le manuscrit, dans une petite quinzaine d'occurrences.

[9] En Islande, l'usage du nom de famille tel que nous le connaissons est extrêmement rare ; la tradition veut que les Islandais portent le prénom de leur père suivi de la marque du génitif et du suffixe *-son* (fils) ou *–dottir* (fille).

Le rôle de l'objet-manuscrit

Ces trois fonctions, que l'on peut qualifier de « narrative », « didactique » et « biographique », apparaissent également dans les références au *Livre de Flatey* en lui-même. Ainsi, au-delà du fait que les textes contenus dans ce manuscrit constituent la clé de l'« énigme de Flatey », la question de son lieu de conservation est également évoquée à plusieurs reprises, et le désaccord entre le professeur Lund, fermement opposé à une éventuelle restitution de ce manuscrit à l'Islande, et certains insulaires de Flatey, chauds partisans d'un retour du *Livre de Flatey* dans le pays où il a été réalisé, est d'ailleurs brièvement évoqué comme cause possible du destin tragique du savant danois, mais cette hypothèse est écartée assez rapidement. La dimension didactique apparaît essentiellement à travers l'exposé que Johanna fait pour Kjartan dans le prologue de récit de la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey », où la doctoresse fournit beaucoup d'informations sur la genèse du manuscrit et donne même des détails techniques sur sa fabrication, par exemple sur les matériaux employés (2013 : 75, 96) ou le type d'écriture (2013 : 105–106).

Bien que seuls trois personnages, à savoir Gaston Lund, Bjorn Snorri Thorvald et sa fille Johanna, aient réellement eu accès au *Livre de Flatey*, le roman contient de nombreuses informations sur le rapport que les personnages entretiennent avec le manuscrit. Ainsi, plusieurs insulaires de Flatey sont de farouches partisans de la restitution des manuscrits à l'Islande et les habitants veillent également avec un grand soin mâtiné de fierté à l'édition du *Livre de Flatey* conservée à la bibliothèque mais aussi aux feuilles de l'énigme, qui se trouvent au même endroit et qu'une superstition locale interdit d'ailleurs de transporter hors du bâtiment. L'un des habitants de l'île, le sacristain Þormódur Krákur, va même encore plus loin puisqu'il dépose le cadavre de Bryngeir sur une tombe du cimetière local et lui taille un aigle de sang dans le dos afin de favoriser le retour du *Livre de Flatey* en Islande, selon un conseil donné par Bryngeir lui-même après que le sacristain lui eut raconté un de ses rêves (2013 : 347–349).

Si les insulaires de Flatey sont partisans d'une restitution du manuscrit à l'Islande et que Gaston Lund s'y oppose formellement, Björn Snorri Thorvald est, quant à lui, selon son ami Friðrik Einarsson, « l'un des rares Islandais qui n'avaient absolument aucun avis quant à l'endroit où les manuscrits devaient être conservés. Il voulait seulement les savoir en lieu sûr et y avoir accès facilement… » (2013 : 211). L'ami de Björn Snorri Thorvald explique également que celui-ci avait une démarche scientifique originale : « Au lieu de se focaliser sur le texte, il commença à se faire une idée des copistes » (2013 : 212). Johanna y fait également allusion lors de sa rencontre avec Kjartan dans la bibliothèque de Flatey puisqu'elle dit que son père faisait partie des rares personnes qui pou-

vaient, grâce au manuscrit, entrer en contact avec les Islandais du XIV^e^ siècle (2013 : 230).

En plus de ses grandes connaissances sur la genèse du manuscrit, Johanna est la seule à évoquer la valeur esthétique et artistique du livre ; dans son exposé sur le manuscrit, elle affirme ainsi que la richesse de ses enluminures l'a sauvé de la destruction (2013 : 93), et lorsque Kjartan la questionne sur ce qu'elle a ressenti en se trouvant en présence du manuscrit, elle répond :

> […] ce livre est le plus beau qu'il m'ait été donné de voir de mes yeux. Ces lettres couleurs anthracite sur un parchemin beige sont comme d'interminables rangées de perles dans un collier. Les enluminures sont pour moi les plus jolies fresques des voûtes du palais d'un roi.
>
> (2013 : 231)

Le rapport des personnages au Livre de Flatey

L'analyse des passages concernant le rapport que les personnages entretiennent avec le *Livre de Flatey* et les textes qu'il contient fait aisément apparaître l'existence de deux grands groupes, à savoir celui des « connaisseurs » et celui des « ignorants », mais il convient de souligner que ces deux groupes, loin d'être homogènes, se composent de plusieurs sous-groupes et cas particuliers. Au sein du groupe des « connaisseurs », on peut distinguer les savants, les insulaires de Flatey, les personnes possédant un rapport davantage symbolique, voire spirituel au manuscrit et à son contenu et Johanna Thorwald, qui ne rentre dans aucune de ces catégories.

Le groupe des savants est composé de Gaston Lund, de Björn Snorri Thorvald ainsi que de Friðrik Einarsson, l'ami du professeur Thorvald, et du poète et historien Árni Sakárias, qui raconte l'histoire de l'« énigme de Flatey » à Dagbjartur, le premier policier de Reykjavik chargé d'enquêter sur la mort du professeur Lund. Il convient toutefois de souligner que la relation de Friðrik Einarsson et d'Árni Sakárias avec le manuscrit n'est que légèrement esquissée, ce qui est sans doute à mettre en rapport avec le fait qu'il s'agit de deux personnages relativement secondaires du roman. Dans le cas de Gaston Lund, le récit rapporte qu'il est un farouche opposant à la restitution du *Livre de Flatey* et d'autres manuscrits anciens à l'Islande (2013 : 151–152), car il affirme que ceux-ci y seraient conservés dans de moins bonnes conditions qu'à Copenhague et seraient moins accessibles, ce qui lui vaut l'inimitié de ses collègues islandais ; à Flatey, le pasteur Hannes et l'agriculteur Sigurbjörn lui font également part de leur désaccord avec lui à ce sujet (2013 : 101, 134). Le pasteur raconte également

à Kjartan que le professeur Lund voulait résoudre l'« énigme de Flatey», car il était désireux d'obtenir une meilleure place dans le restaurant où se réunissent les membres de l'Académie des Sciences de Copenhague (2013 : 102–103). Au sein de ce groupe, Björn Snorri Thorvald se distingue à la fois par sa neutralité dans le débat où doivent être conservés les manuscrits et aussi par le thème de ses recherches sur le *Livre de Flatey*, puisqu'à l'inverse de ses collègues, qui se concentrent essentiellement sur le contenu des textes, il s'intéresse davantage à la genèse du manuscrit et à ses copistes. Après son renvoi du Danemark et son arrivée sur l'île de Flatey, il essaie cependant de trouver la solution de l'énigme du même nom et il n'est d'ailleurs pas loin d'y parvenir, mais ses efforts l'épuisent et accentuent les effets de la maladie qui lui fut fatale.

Les insulaires de Flatey forment un groupe assez homogène, qui se caractérise notamment par sa bonne connaissance du manuscrit portant le nom de leur île ; ainsi, lorsque Kjartan demande à Grímur qui sont les habitants capables de renseigner les voyageurs sur l'histoire du manuscrit, le bourgmestre répond :

> Tout un chacun […]. La plupart des insulaires sont capables de récapituler son histoire si on le leur demande. Sigurbjörn de Svalbarði est très cultivé et a souvent recours à ce livre, mais le révérend Hannes est meilleur en danois et est capable de s'entretenir avec les étrangers.
>
> (2013 : 65)

Grímur ne fait d'ailleurs pas exception à la règle, puisque même s'il affirme ne pas avoir « tout le livre en tête comme [son] concitoyen Sigurbjörn de Svalbarði » (2013 : 319), il est tout de même capable d'expliquer aux enquêteurs l'allusion de Johanna au meurtre d'Ásbjörn Prúdi dans le *Dit d'Ormur Stórólfson* (2013 : 319–320). Quant à Sigurbjörn, il se permet même de tester les connaissances de Gaston Lund sur la *Saga de Sverrir*, de comparer les décès de Gaston de Lund et de Bryngeir avec certains épisodes du *Livre de Flatey* mais aussi de conseiller aux policiers qui l'interrogent de lire cette œuvre ! L'attitude de Sigurbjörn est assez représentative de celle de la majorité des insulaires, qui non seulement connaissent bien l'ouvrage mais éprouvent un certain sentiment de fierté à son égard ainsi qu'une forme de mépris envers les spécialistes, qu'ils taxent souvent d'ignorance et d'arrogance : Hallbjörg, la vieille dame qui garde la clé de la bibliothèque dit ainsi des visiteurs qui veulent résoudre l'énigme que ce sont des « m'as-tu vu qui prétendent connaître *Le livre de Flatey* » (2013 : 319). La seule exception à ce jugement concerne Björn Snorri Thorvald et sa fille, qui sont installés sur l'île et sont appréciés par les habitants. Les insulaires reprochent aussi aux visiteurs de ne pas respecter leur patrimoine : Sigurbjörn rapporte ainsi le vol des feuilles de l'énigme par Bryngeir et le fait que Kjartan ait oublié de fermer à clé la porte de la bibliothèque en pestant contre « ces intellectuels de Reykjavik » qui « ne sont même pas fichus de faire attention aux objets de valeur » (2013 : 274).

Parmi les connaisseurs du *Livre de Flatey*, le rapport du journaliste Bryngeir – fils caché de Gaston Lund et responsable de la mort du fiancé de Johanna – au manuscrit est assez singulier. L'examen de cette relation permet tout d'abord de constater la présence d'un intérêt d'ordre intellectuel : ainsi, Bryngeir présente le *Livre de Flatey* comme sa « vieille lecture favorite » (2013 : 170), décide de courtiser Johanna après avoir lu son travail sur le *Dit de Sneglu Halli* dans le journal de l'établissement (2013 : 311) et éprouve une certaine admiration envers les auteurs du manuscrit, qu'il qualifie de « génies » (2013 : 171). En revanche, le nom du manuscrit lui déplait, car il « trouve très pénible que ce joyau porte le nom d'un îlot insignifiant rien que parce qu'il a été conservé à cet endroit sous un toit pouilleux pendant plusieurs décennies » (2013 : 171). Le rapport de Bryngeir au *Livre de Flatey* est également empreint d'un certain symbolisme, voire même d'une dimension spirituelle, comme le suggère sa participation à l'« Association des Vikings du Jómsborg » et surtout le fait qu'il conseille au sacristain Þormódur Krákur de tailler un aigle de sang dans le dos d'un mort et de le déposer sur une tombe du cimetière de l'île afin que le *Livre de Flatey* revienne en Islande (2013 : 347–349).

Le sacristain Þormódur Krákur est d'ailleurs le seul habitant de l'île à avoir une opinion positive de Bryngeir, dont il vante le talent pour interpréter les rêves (2013 : 278). Comme le fils caché de Gaston Lund, le sacristain, mêle volontiers littérature et spiritualité, ainsi que le prouvent sa remarque à propos de la nécessité de croire les sagas des Islandais et surtout le fait qu'il a taillé un aigle de sang dans le dos du cadavre de Bryngeir pour que le *Livre de Flatey* revienne en Islande. Le rapport très particulier que Þormódur Krákur entretient avec le manuscrit et les textes qu'il contient est à mettre en relation avec le caractère du sacristain, dont le bourgmestre dit qu'il « croit à plus de choses qu'il n'est courant de le faire » (2013 : 65–66).

Au-delà de ses connaissances sur le manuscrit, qui sont très complètes, Johanna est certainement le personnage du roman dont le rapport au manuscrit est le plus riche, puisqu'elle en vante notamment la beauté et compare les pages du livre à de vieux amis (2013 : 231) mais évoque également ses sentiments contrastés vis-à-vis de certains des textes qu'il contient : la fille de Björn Snorri Thorvald explique ainsi qu'elle apprécie peu les personnages historiques du manuscrit et ajoute que « la plupart était des ordures de la pire espèce » avant d'affirmer son admiration envers la sagesse des annalistes islandais du Moyen Âge (2013 : 71). La relation que Johanna entretient avec le *Livre de Flatey* est également la seule à évoluer avec le temps : elle commence ainsi quand son père se met à lui lire des passages du manuscrit alors qu'elle est encore enfant (2013 : 46), puis, peu après, elle se met à raconter à sa manière ses histoires favorites (2013 : 47). Par la suite, le rapport de Johanna au manuscrit devient plus pragmatique, notamment lorsque, en profitant des connaissances acquises grâce aux conférences et aux explications de son père, elle utilise le *Livre de Flatey* comme sujet d'exposé au

lycée pour ne « pas trop [se] fatiguer » (2013 : 311) ; devenue adulte, elle continue d'éprouver un fort attachement pour le manuscrit et c'est grâce à son aide précieuse que Kjartan peut résoudre l'« énigme de Flatey ».

Le groupe des « ignorants » se compose essentiellement de quatre personnages : trois d'entre eux, à savoir Kjartan, Þórólfur et Lukás sont originaires de Reykjavik et viennent à Flatey pour enquêter sur les décès qui y ont lieu alors que le dernier, le jeune Benni, habite sur l'île. Il convient cependant de signaler que parmi les deux policiers de Reykajvik, Lukás prend très peu la parole et jamais au sujet du manuscrit : le point de vue exposé est donc celui de l'enquête Þórólfur, mais le silence du second policier tend à indiquer qu'il n'en sait pas plus long sur le manuscrit. Le troisième policier, Dagbjartur, mène, quant à lui, l'enquête dans la capitale islandaise, se renseigne sur « l'énigme de Flatey » et remarque, tout comme le réceptionniste de l'hôtel Borg, l'orthographe inhabituelle du prénom « Egil » utilisé par Gaston Lund dans son pseudonyme, mais sa réponse assez vague (« Oui, je comprends que ce nom ait attiré ton attention », 2013 : 113) ne permet pas de déterminer s'il a compris la construction de ce nom d'emprunt.

Malgré sa participation à l'« Association des Vikings du Jómsborg » Kjartan ne possède pas une connaissance très approfondie du *Livre de Flatey* avant de venir dans l'île du même nom : ainsi qu'il le précise aux policiers de Reykjavik, il est devenu membre de cette association à cause de son penchant pour la « gloriole », de son goût pour la littérature contemporaine internationale et parce qu'il aimait bien faire la fête à l'occasion (2013 : 329–330). Durant son séjour à Flatey, Johanna Thorvald lui raconte, à sa demande, la genèse et la signification de ce manuscrit et l'aide à résoudre l'« énigme de Flatey » à partir des réponses de Gaston Lund et de Björn Snorri Thorvald.

Le fait que l'enquêteur Þórólfur ne connaît pas le *Livre de Flatey* est révélé par un savoureux dialogue entre Þórólfur et Sigurbjörn lors de l'interrogatoire de ce dernier : lorsque l'insulaire s'étonne de ce qu'il lui semble être une grave lacune de culture générale, le policier répond sans ménagement que le manuscrit « ne fait pas partie des lectures obligatoires pour les policiers » (2013 : 275). Þórólfur fait toutefois preuve d'une certaine ouverture d'esprit puisque lorsque Sigurbjörn lui explique que les morts de Gaston Lund et de Bryngeir présentent des analogies avec celles de plusieurs épisodes figurant dans les œuvres contenues dans le *Livre de Flatey*, le policier demande si le livre est long, puis il demande au bourgmestre s'il peut lui procurer une édition de cet ouvrage (2013 : 276). Grímur s'acquitte d'ailleurs rapidement de cette tâche, car le sacristain Þormódur Krákur amène son exemplaire personnel lors de son interrogatoire pour le prêter au policier (2013 : 278). Les bonnes dispositions de Þórólfur semblent cependant de courte durée car lorsque Grímur doit lui expliquer l'allusion de Johanna au meurtre d'Ásbjörn Prúdi et précise que cet épisode se trouve dans le *Livre de Flatey*, il lâche un « Encore ce foutu livre ? » qui témoigne d'une certaine exaspération (2013 : 319).

La méconnaissance du *Livre de Flatey* par les deux policiers envoyés dans l'île pour enquêter sur les décès de Gaston Lund et de Bryngeir semble pouvoir être rapprochée d'un épisode figurant dans un autre roman islandais, à savoir *Les Anges de l'univers* d'Einar Már Guðmundsson. En effet, dans ce livre, un personnage raconte comment, un soir, lui et deux amis ont trouvé une pioche sur un chantier de construction puis ont rencontré des policiers qui leur ont demandé ce qu'ils comptent en faire. Rognvald, le porteur de l'outil répond alors : « tuer un homme et un autre », (*hoggva mann ok annan*), ce qui constitue le dernier vers d'une strophe contenue par la *Saga d'Egill fils de Grímur le Chauve* et dont la création est attribuée au héros éponyme du récit, qui l'aurait composée pour célébrer son premier meurtre à l'âge de sept ans, mais les policiers, qui n'ont visiblement pas saisi la référence littéraire, interprètent cette réponse au premier degré, arrêtent les trois hommes et les font monter dans le panier à salade. Alors qu'ils roulent vers le commissariat, Rognvald enjoint vertement aux policiers de rentrer chez eux lire les sagas, mais l'un des agents dit que cela n'est pas nécessaire (Guðmundsson, 1998 ; cité par Turco, 2015 : 185–186).

Bien que les romans *L'Énigme de Flatey* et *Les Anges de l'univers* décrivent tous deux des policiers assez peu compétents en littérature islandaise ancienne, il n'est pas certain que ces personnages remplissent exactement la même fonction dans les deux récits. De fait, Jeffrey Turco considère davantage l'épisode du malentendu présent dans le roman d'Einar Már Guðmundsson comme la preuve de l'existence au sein de la société islandaise de deux communautés, qu'il qualifie respectivement d'« exotérique » et d'« ésotérique » en fonction de leur façon d'interpréter les sagas ; selon Turco, les autorités s'efforceraient de discipliner les membres de cette seconde communauté « à cause d'un penchant pour des références intertextuelles spirituelles et apparemment inoffensives qui toutefois sapent subtilement la hiérarchie sociale » (2015 : 186–187). Cette interprétation ne fonctionne cependant pas aussi bien dans le cas des policiers de *L'Énigme de Flatey* : si les enquêteurs sont effectivement raillés par Sigurbjörn pour leur méconnaissance du *Livre de Flatey* et ont besoin de l'aide d'autres personnages pour comprendre les allusions à cette œuvre, la communauté des connaisseurs du livre, et plus particulièrement sa composante insulaire, ne manifeste pas de désir de renverser l'ordre social et semble seulement exprimer sa désapprobation vis-à-vis du recul des traditions et du manque d'intérêt pour la culture islandaise séculaire. Dans ce contexte, les policiers paraissent davantage symboliser le monde citadin, ouvert à la modernité et peu intéressé par le patrimoine culturel national, mais il convient de signaler que ce rôle ne leur est pas exclusivement dévolu : ainsi, le jeune Benni, malgré le fait qu'il habite sur l'île de Flatey, est davantage intéressé par Elvis Presley que par le *Livre de Flatey.*

Grand admirateur d'Elvis, de Ben Hur et de la culture américaine, Benni est en effet le seul insulaire de Flatey qui ne semble pas du tout intéressé par le manuscrit : il s'étonne ainsi de l'engouement de Bryngeir pour le *Livre de Flatey*

et explique qu'il a essayé de lire mais l'a trouvé « barbant » avant d'ajouter qu'il a été un peu dérouté par son orthographe (Ingólfsson, 2013 : 170). Lorsque le journaliste s'épanche sur l'importance du manuscrit et critique le nom retenu pour le désigner, Benni répond qu'il n'a pas d'opinion sur la question et fait la vague promesse de lire le *Livre de Flatey* à l'avenir, mais cette résolution semble surtout destinée à amadouer Bryngeir afin qu'il lui redonne un peu de rhum (2013 : 171).

Conclusion

L'analyse de la place et de l'usage du *Livre de Flatey* ainsi que des textes islandais médiévaux anciens dans *L'Énigme de Flatey* de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson permet de constater que la plupart des cas d'intertextualité proviennent d'œuvres contenues dans ce manuscrit : plus de la moitié de ces références figurent ainsi dans le récit de la résolution de l'« énigme de Flatey », ce qui prouve que leur fonction principale est de contribuer à l'avancée de l'intrigue. Par ailleurs, un nombre significatif de cas d'intertextualité possèdent une dimension didactique ou bien permettent d'éclairer le lecteur sur le rapport que les personnages entretiennent avec le manuscrit et les textes qu'il contient. Les différents types de relations décrites contribuent à proposer une division en deux grands groupes, dont le premier contient ceux des Islandais qui attachent de l'importance au *Livre de Flatey* et aux textes anciens, alors que la seconde rassemble ceux qui y sont indifférents.

Cette division binaire n'est d'ailleurs pas spécifique à *L'Énigme de Flatey* de Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson mais figure également dans un autre roman islandais contemporain construit autour du destin d'un célèbre manuscrit médiéval islandais, à savoir *Le Livre du roi* d'Arnaldur Indridason[10], qui présente de nombreuses similitudes avec le roman mentionné dans cet article. Ainsi, les intrigues des deux romans se situent dans la même temporalité, puisqu'elles ne sont chronologiquement éloignées que de cinq ans (les deux récits se déroulent respectivement en 1960 et en 1955) et se placent toutes les deux dans l'intervalle de vingt-sept ans entre l'indépendance de l'Islande en 1944 et la restitution des manuscrits par le Danemark en 1971. La distinction opérée entre les personnages en fonction de leur relation des individus aux manuscrits et aux textes anciens s'étend également à leur rapport au passé et à leur attitude du monde extérieur : ainsi, les personnages connaissant bien les manuscrits démontrent souvent un

[10] Arnaldur Indridason, *Le Livre du roi*, traduit par Patrick Guelpa, Paris, Éditions Métaillé, 2013. Texte original : *Konungsbók*. Forlagid, Reykjavík, 2006.

attachement aux traditions et au patrimoine de l'Islande alors que ceux qui ne s'intéressent pas à ces œuvres sont souvent des porte-paroles de la modernité et de l'ouverture aux influences extérieures et notamment à la culture américaine. La différence d'attitude vis-à-vis des manuscrits semble donc refléter les lignes de clivage qui traversent la société islandaise durant les premières décennies suivant le retour à l'indépendance en 1944, et se manifestent notamment par des attitudes très contrastées au sujet de l'existence de la base aérienne de l'OTAN à Keflavik (Ingimundarson, 2011).

Cette dimension binaire, également présente dans *Le Livre du roi*, semble aussi se retrouver dans la réception des textes médiévaux par les lecteurs ; ainsi le fait que les cas d'intertextualité aient des fonctions essentiellement pragmatiques suggère que la plupart de ces occurrences ont un seul niveau de lecture alors que la présence de nombreux éléments revêtant une fonction didactique tend à indiquer que le « lecteur implicite » (Iser, 1985 : 60–76) du roman ne doit pas nécessairement posséder une connaissance très approfondie de la littérature islandaise médiévale pour comprendre ce récit, mais plusieurs cas précis, comme les proverbes cités par Johanna, les paraphrases d'épisodes non accompagnées de citation de titres dans les réponses à « l'énigme de Flatey » ou le pseudonyme d'« Egil Sturlurson » utilisé par Gaston Lund, nécessitent un savoir plus étendu pour en saisir totalement le contexte, ce qui semble supposer que ces passages précis peuvent être destinés à des lecteurs davantage connaisseurs des textes produits dans l'Islande du Moyen Âge. Une telle division rappelle donc non seulement celle présente parmi les personnages du roman, mais elle évoque aussi dans une certaine mesure celle postulée par Jeffrey Turco (2015 : 186–187) ; malgré l'existence de ces analogies dignes d'intérêt, il convient toutefois de souligner que ces résultats sont fondés sur l'analyse d'œuvres littéraires et ne sauraient se substituer à une enquête de fond sur le rapport que les Islandais entretiennent avec les plus anciens textes de leur littérature nationale.

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Some Boethian Themes in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*

Abstract: There appear to be quite a few parallels between Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* (*Consolatio Philosophiae*), and they seem to concern particularly, though not only, the character drawing in Tolkien's book. Those parallels are pre-eminently connected with the fact that both Boethius and Tolkien like to think of the most extreme situations that can befall a human. And both are attached to the idea of not giving in to despair, and of finding a source of hope in seemingly desperate straits. The idea that there is some link between Boethius and Tolkien is naturally not new. T.A. Shippey talks about it in his *The Road to Middle Earth*, but he concentrates on the Boethian conception of good and evil, which is also of course an important matter, but surely not the only one that links Tolkien and Boethius. On the other hand, it is not my intention to claim that there is something in Tolkien's book of which it can be said that it would have been absolutely impossible without Boethius. Still, I think it may be supposed that just like Boethian motifs are natural in the medieval literature of the West, so they can be thought of as natural in the work of such dedicated a medievalist as J.R.R. Tolkien.

Keywords: Tolkien, Boethius, consolation, the self, possession, religion, morality.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the present article is not to suggest that Tolkien faithfully followed into the footsteps of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (480–524). I basically agree with M.J. Halsall:

> Nothing in Tolkien's published works and/or Letters, nor his Biography, testifies to his incorporation of any particular philosophical model or cosmological theory in the construction of his own mythology in general, and cosmogony in particular. (Halsall, 2020: 36)

On the other hand, the popularity of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* in the Middle Ages and even in the later epochs seems to make it highly probable that Tolkien, as an expert medievalist, may have been inspired by this seminal work.

The main Boethian theme is of course that of consolation, and it is this topic I am going to concentrate upon, though not only. Let me start with the matter of consolation understood as a source of mental strength, rather than, as Samuel Johnson put it, "alleviation of misery",[1] or, in the words of Boethius himself, "medicine to ease pains"[2] (*remedium doloris*)[3] (*Consolatio*, I, 1) (Watts, 1969: 36).

2. The Consolation of Théoden

Tolkien's Gandalf, as a comforter of Théoden, the king of Rohan, unlike Lady Philosophy, who comforts Boethius, is not interested in making the king become reconciled to his downfall. On the contrary, Gandalf wants Théoden to turn against his enemies and teach them a lesson. This is something Boethius may have dreamt about; he certainly had powerful enemies whom he had no reason to love, and his sovereign King Theodoric the Great could be very cruel, but he did not even dare to admit to such dreams, let alone try to make them become a reality.

It is with the following words that Gandalf turns to Théoden in order to awaken his original better self:

> 'Now Théoden son of Thengel, will you hearken to me?' said Gandalf. 'Do you ask for help?' He lifted his staff and pointed to a high window. There the darkness seemed to clear, and through the opening could be seen, high and far, a patch of shining sky. 'Not all is dark. Take courage, Lord of the Mark; for better help you will not find. No counsel have I to give to those that despair. Yet counsel I could give, and words I could speak to you. Will you hear them? They are not for all ears. I bid you come out before your doors and look abroad. Too long have you sat in shadows and trusted to twisted tales and crooked promptings.' (Tolkien II, 1976:104)

[1] https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/

[2] The quotations from Boethius follow the English translation by V.E. Watts.

[3] The quotations from the Latin, that is, the original, version of Boethius's book follow: James J. O'Donnell, (ed.) Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0121%3Abook%3D1%3Asectio%3DP1.

Remarkably enough, in somewhat similar terms Lady Philosophy, in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*, describes and proposes to cure the disease of despair that the Narrator is suffering from:

> It is nothing serious, only a touch of amnesia that he is suffering, the common disease of deluded minds (*nihil, inquit, pericli est, lethargum patitur, communem illusarum mentium morbum*). He has forgotten for a while who he is, but he will soon remember once he has recognized me . . . The night was put to flight, the darkness fled, and to my eyes their former strength returned. In the same way the clouds of my grief dissolved and I drank in the light. (*Consolatio*, I, 2) (Watts, 1969: 38)

Boethius, like Théoden, is cured through *anamnesis*, that is through recollecting what he once was and through returning to that, temporarily forgotten, old and more genuine self.

Unfortunately, the consolation offered in this scene by Lady Philosophy has only a short-term effect. A little while later she asks Boethius: "Tell me why you are weeping and why your eyes are full of tears" (*Consolatio*, I, 4) (Watts, 1969: 40). Her philosophical medicine has to be applied several times before the patient, that is Boethius, is ultimately comforted, that is, before he produces within himself a correct, from a philosophical and moral point of view, state of mind. In this state of mind he is expected "to avoid vice and cultivate virtue" (*Consolatio*, III, 11) (Watts, 1969: 169), but we do not see whether he manages, or in what manner, to translate this principle into action. In the case of Théoden, things are much simpler: he is cured almost in an instant, and to be cured means for him to fight, which he does in great style. Ultimately, he is killed on the battlefield, but he dies contented, knowing for sure that he has been fighting for a good cause, and that he has proved his mettle. To criticize Boethius for not being specific about his cultivating of virtue would be of course grossly unfair. It is well known that when he was writing his *Consolation* he was on death row, so he really had little to look forward to. Thus the models of heroism represented by Théoden and the one embraced by Boethius must differ widely, the latter man's range of possibilities is extremely narrow, which largely justifies the difficulty with which he reaches some kind of consolation, but his attitude, nevertheless, or rather exactly for this reason, fully deserves to be called heroic.

This is just one example of Tolkien's possible use of Boethian inspiration to create some of the most memorable scenes in *The Lord of the Rings*. Such appeals to discard the ways of darkness and embrace those of light are in fact frequent enough in *The Consolation* and they may be considered as either Platonic or Christian, or both, so as such they need not be associated with Boethius. But the note of hope concerning the character of an individual, suggesting that they will be eventually able, in spite of some temporary wavering, or even oc-

casional falling into despair, to see the true light, seems specifically Boethian. And it is this motif that may have impressed also Tolkien, because in *The Lord of the Rings* we find several such characters. Apart from the already mentioned Théoden, we may naturally add Boromir, but also Frodo, Bilbo and even Gandalf and Galadriel, because they all feel, and have to overcome, the temptation of the Ring, which represents the forces of darkness and despair.

3. *The Lord of the Rings* as a crypto-Christian, post-medieval epic

According to V.E. Watts: "*The Divine Comedy* as a whole could be regarded as a great elaboration of Boethius' concept of the ascent of the soul to the contemplation of the mind of God and its return to its true home or *patria* in the scheme of the universe" (Watts, 1969: 8). If then the great medieval epic poem by Dante is inspired by Boethius to the extent of borrowing from him its basic narrative scheme, perhaps something similar can be said of *The Lord of the Rings*, a medievalist epic novel by J.R.R. Tolkien? By "Boethius" naturally we usually mean his very influential book *The Consolation of Philosophy*, written probably in 523. In the book, we have a dialogue between the author's persona and Lady Philosophy, who "descends to Boethius from on high, and leads him back through various paths to God Himself" (Watts, 1969: 21). It seems possible to think of *The Lord of the Rings* as a similar work in which the figure of Boethius is replaced by Frodo, an adept in wisdom, who travels through the inferno of Mordor and becomes morally fortified with virtue and understanding. Boethius's guide, Lady Philosophy, and Dante's guides Virgil, Beatrice and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, are represented by the mutually complementary figures of Gandalf and Galadriel, standing for the male and female, respectively, avatars of wisdom, who both lead Frodo, and the hobbits who accompany him, on the paths of wisdom, making them acquainted with both the experience of utter evil and that of supreme good. When Watts comes to the conclusion that "Boethius professed a sort of *christianisme neutralisé*" (Watts, 1969: 30), that is a doctrine that is basically compatible with Christianity without being explicitly or obviously Christian, cannot we also apply this observation to Tolkien, who saturated his great novel with Christian allusions without making it unequivocally Christian?

This point is also strongly made by K.E. Dubs, who says: "Unlike, for example Augustine, who depends on the Christian view of history as linked to scripture, Boethius presents the philosophical issues quite apart from any link to Christian history (the Creation, the Fall, the Passion and so on). For Tolkien, who

was creating his own mythos, his own history, such an independent presentation was essential" (Dubs, 2004: 134). I basically agree with this; however, it is clear enough that this statement loses much of its relevance if we apply it, instead of *The Lord of the Rings*, to *The Silmarillion*. In the latter work, there is an attempt to construct something like a Christian history, the motifs of the Creation and Fall are plainly visible, with Ilúvatar and Melkor as Tolkien's God and Satan, and Fëanor as Tolkien's Adam, but even *The Silmarillion* is far from being so explicitly Christian as, for example, C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*.

4. Lady Philosophy and Galadriel

About Lady Philosophy it is said: "Her varying height … is symbolic: sometimes she is of average height, offering the practical philosophy … sometimes she pierces the sky leading back to God from Whom she came" (*Consolatio*, I, 1) (Watts, 1969: 35–36). Cannot we say the same of the varying status of Gandalf, who sometimes plays the role of a village entertainer and a source of practical wisdom, and sometimes appears as a larger than life representative of God's glory and God's justice? Besides, Lady Philosophy is not only a woman of "varying height" but also "a woman both old and young" (Lewis, 1964: 80):

> I became aware of a woman standing over me. She was of awe-inspiring appearance, her eyes burning and keen beyond the usual power of men. She was so full of years that I could hardly think of her as of my own generation, and yet she possessed a vivid color and undiminished vigor. It was difficult to be sure of her height, for sometimes she was of average human size, while at other times she seemed to touch the very sky with the top of her head, and when she lifted herself even higher, she pierced it and was lost to human sight. (*Consolatio*, I, 1) (Watts, 1969: 35–36)

We may compare this to the presentation of Lady Galadriel, who is shown together with her husband Celeborn, but there is no doubt that she is the more important figure:

> Very tall they were, and the Lady no less tall than the Lord; and they were grave and beautiful. They were clad wholly in white; and the hair of the Lady was of deep gold, and the hair of the Lord Celeborn was of silver long and bright; but no sign of age was upon them, unless it were in the depths of their eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight, and yet profound, the wells of deep memory. (Tolkien I, 1976: 336)

The above description is naturally very idealistic: Galadriel is shown as having the best of both worlds, she is very beautiful, but she also shows signs of such wisdom that only very advanced age can grant. And it is clear enough that she is such a strongly magical creature that she can effortlessly combine extreme beauty, that is youthful appearance, with equally extreme age.

Even the artistic form of *The Lord of the Rings* combines, like Lady Philosophy, or Gandalf and Galadriel, many aspects, prose alternates there with verse, which is a generic feature of the so called Menippean satire, and it so happens that *The Consolation of Philosophy* is classified as a Menippean satire and also mixes up prose and poetry, even though the proportion of poetry in Boethius may be greater than in Tolkien. Within that prose, we see in Tolkien a combination of realistic and fantastic, or magical, motifs, elements of low and high style, comedy and tragedy, the harmonious and the grotesque, which is also the feature of the Menippean satire, even though not really of *The Consolation*. Whether *The Lord of the Rings* can be classified as Menippean satire is an interesting question, which, however, I do not pretend to be able to solve. Let it be only noticed that quite a few important modern and early modern literary works have already been described as Menippean satires, for example, More's *Utopia*, Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, Bulgakov's *Master and Margerita* and many others (Diniejko, 2016). If this category is capable of including so many very different books, one can, it seems, cast doubt on its usefulness.

5. Frodo and Orpheus

In Tolkien, we have visions of utmost degeneracy that has its grotesque aspects. It is enough to think of the Ringwraiths, Sauron, and naturally Gollum, who become degenerate owing to their obsession with power and material goods. Boethius, in this context, prefers to use the example of the classical myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, pointing to Orpheus as the one who paid dearly for his decision "to turn his eye to darkness":

> Happy the man whose eyes once could
> Perceived the shining fount of good;
> Happy he whose unchecked mind
> Could leave the chains of earth behind.
> Once when Orpheus sad did mourn
> For his wife beyond death's bourn,

His tearful melody begun
Made the moveless trees to run, (*Consolatio*, III, XII, 1–6)
. . .
As he stands the lords beseeching
Of the underworld for grace.
The triform porter stands amazed,
By Orpheus' singing tamed and dazed;
The Furies who avenge men's sin,
Who at the guilty's terror grin,
Let tears of sorrow from them steal;
No longer does the turning wheel
Ixion's head send whirling round;
Old Tantalus upon the sound
Forgets the waters and his thirst
And while the music is rehearsed
The vulture ceases flesh to shred
At last the monarch of the dead
In tearful voice, "We yield," he said:
"Let him take with him his wife,
By song redeemed and brought to life.
But let him, too, this law obey,
Look not on her by the way
Until from night she reaches day."
But who to love can give a law?
Love unto love itself is law.
Alas, close to the bounds of night
Orpheus backwards turned his sight
And looking lost her twice to fate.
For you the legend I relate,
You who seek the upward way
To life your mind into the day;
For who gives in and turns his eye
Back to darkness from the sky,
Loses while he looks below
All that up with him may go.
(*nam qui Tartareum in specus*
uictus lumina flexerit
quicquid praecipuum trahit
perdit dum uidet inferos) (*Consolatio*, III, XII, 27–58) (Watts, 1969: 113–115)

This mythical story, as retold by Boethius, does not concern a corrupt character, but rather a character that gives in to a moment of weakness, but this is enough for his world to collapse. Let it be noted that the protagonist of the story is shown as a truly angelic figure. Orpheus's melodious song introduces an element of peace and harmony into a world torn by conflicts and rivalry. His

descent into the Underworld is shown as bringing a momentary relief to such denizens of the lower world that were punished with most extreme and elaborate tortures: Tantalus, Ixion and Tityos. His song melts even the heart of the terrible Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the entrance to the Underworld, and also the heart of "the monarch of the dead".

The dramatic tension of the story is comparable to that of Frodo's difficult mission that brought him to the land of Mordor. Frodo, like the Boethian Orpheus, even though he seems to have no artistic talents, is capable, as the chief Ring-bearer, being at the same time merely a halfling, of awaking pity and sympathy, even though, unlike Orpheus, he also can awake envy in spite of his rather miserable condition. The fiercest and most domineering characters become much milder in the presence of Frodo, and this concerns even Boromir, who attempts, again in a moment of weakness, to take away Frodo's ring by force. Frodo's moment of weakness, comparable to that of Orpheus, comes naturally at the top of Mount Doom, in the Sammath Naur ("Chambers of Fire"), where he claims the Ring for himself, thus threatening the whole point of his mission at the moment when it is almost accomplished, which certainly resembles Orpheus's "turning his eye back to darkness", at the very moment of what appears to be his greatest triumph. Frodo's mission is saved, as is well known, by Gollum, who, like Eurydice, in a sense, falls back into darkness being already, in many ways, a creature of darkness.

6. The Ring as a paradoxical symbol of material possession

Boethius at some point praises simple life, which in itself may not be very remarkable, but the language he uses is interesting enough:

> But wealth does very often harm its owners, for all the most criminal elements in the population who are thereby all the more covetous of other people's property are convinced that they alone are worthy to possess all the gold and precious stones there are. You are shuddering now at the thought of club and knife, but if you had set out on the path of this life with empty pockets, you would whistle your way past any highwayman (*atqui diuitiae possidentibus persaepe nocuerunt, cum pessimus quisque eoque alieni magis auidus quicquid usquam auri gemmarumque est se solum qui habeat dignissimum putat. Tu igitur, qui nunc contum gladiumque sollicitus pertimescis, si uitae huius callem uacuus uiator intrasses coram latrone cantares*). (*Consolatio*, II, 5) (Watts, 1969: 68)

Frodo's mission, consisting in carrying the Ring into the middle of the Enemy's country, may be thought of as a Boethian experiment. Boethius seems, roughly speaking, to divide people into two groups: the covetous, who are attached to (other people's) material goods (*auri alieni avidus*) and therefore are constantly afraid of losing them; and the wanderers with empty pockets (*vacuus viator*) who trust in moral, rather than material, goods and need not be afraid of highwaymen. It seems characteristic that Boethius thinks of the materialistic and greedy people as, first of all, desiring other people's goods.

Now Frodo, the protagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*, seems to combine those two Boethian categories into one, or even to overcome them. This happens, first of all, because Frodo is a hobbit, that is, someone belonging to a race of which it can be said that "They were hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted" (Tolkien I, 1976: 14). Thus a hobbit appears as a creature that, on the one hand, is not averse to private property, on the contrary, welcomes it, but, on the other hand, does not seem excessively attached to it, or conditioned and restricted by it. Such creatures certainly were not anticipated in Boethius, but it is still very Boethian of Tolkien to foreground, already at the beginning of his great book, the problem of attachment versus non-attachment. Eventually, Frodo, who is shown as a more or less average hobbit, will become the Ring-Bearer, that is, someone who is burdened with a piece of property that awakes a most fatal and pernicious attachment. Frodo's hobbitishly playful attitude to property, or at least to some kind of property, is clearly not enough to be equal to the challenge of the Ring, but Frodo, in spite of finding it more and more difficult to resist the temptation of the Ring, remains, throughout his ordeal, a pre-eminently virtuous person. In other words, he is somebody who combines high moral qualities with having something very heavy in his pocket, and later round his neck, even though it is an object that increasingly occupies his mind. In this capacity he cannot "whistle his way past the highwaymen", on the contrary, he attracts the attention of all particularly dangerous and covetous creatures who want to get hold of the Ring. The chief "highwayman", that is Sauron, watches Frodo's movements with rapt attention and very evil intentions, but, paradoxically, Frodo and his friend Sam eventually manage to outwit him.

Lady Philosophy, concerning the subject of material possession, says, in a very satirical vein, the following:

> It seems as if you feel a lack of blessing of your own inside you, which is driving you to seek your blessings in things separate and external (*in externis ac sepositis rebus*). And so when a being endowed with a godlike quality in virtue of his rational nature thinks that his only splendour lies in the possession of inanimate goods, it is the overthrow of the natural order. (*Consolatio*, II, 5) (Watts, 1969: 67)

Also this sounds like a challenge to the situation shown in Tolkien's book. His characters are very much preoccupied with chasing material objects. Those objects, however, are usually not quite separate, external and inanimate. This can be described as another Boethian experiment in which Tolkien attempts to go beyond Boethius, though virtually in the same direction. Talking about the pernicious influence of the One Ring in Tolkien, T.A. Shippey states the following: "Gandalf insists that the Ring is deadly dangerous to all its possessors: it will take them over, 'devour' them, 'possess' them" (Shippey, 2001: 114). Thus, Tolkien seems to suggest that Boethius was unduly optimistic in believing that possessive and greedy people put their trust in "things separate and external". The Ring is basically such a thing, but it possesses the power to, as it were, turn the tables against its possessor, it is capable of repossessing its possessor, to become the owner of its owner. In so doing it is of course no longer a "thing separate and external", but this makes it even more dangerous and its influence even more dehumanizing.[4]

Anthony Kenny summarizes Boethius's argument about the highest good and the pursuit of happiness in the following way: "I cannot find happiness in wealth, power, or fame, but only in my most precious possession, myself" (Kenny, 2005: 21). Tolkien definitely does not seem happy with this piece of advice, even though he has no quarrel with the basic statement that transitory values do not give happiness. But he questions the stability of "myself", allowing for the possibility that one's self becomes, as it were, invaded, overcome and distorted by forces over which even the best and the most powerful in Tolkien's world have little or no control.

Now let me characterize briefly the figures of Tom Bombadil, Gandalf and Galadriel, who play the role of Frodo's chief mentors, that is they have a position similar to Lady Philosophy in relation to the Dreamer, that is Boethius, in Boethius's work. They are mentors and role models in relation to Frodo's great task, which is that of being the Ring-bearer. Carrying the Ring may be treated as metaphor of a basically Boethian predicament, consisting in coming to terms with one's personal great misfortune which is also a temptation. In the case of Boethius, this is mainly the temptation of falling into despair, and of doubting in the goodness or omnipotence of God, while for Frodo the temptation consists rather in yielding to the magic of the Ring, which offers great powers at the cost of losing one's integrity and identity.

Probably the most resistant to the power of the Ring is Tom Bombadil, a rather mysterious character, sometimes compared to the Finnish mythical hero and demigod Väinämöinen, but even he does not seem to possess the ability of destroying or neutralizing the Ring. He does not even try to do anything of the

[4] The paradoxical and ontologically uncertain status of the Ring is adequately discussed in: Shippey, 2003: 142.

kind, nor does anybody at first expect him to. From his own point of view, there is clearly no need for him to be able to do anything about the Ring. It is not an object that could threaten his integrity, his possession of himself.

Bombadil, however, does not seem to be able to realize that if the Ring falls into the hands of Sauron, nobody's integrity is going to be safe. Thus, Bombadil's policy may be criticized as short-sighted. And such a criticism is implied in the scene of the Council of Elrond, when at some point the motion of leaving the Ring in the hands of Bombadil is tabled, incidentally by Erestor, an Elf and Elrond's trusted counsellor:

> 'He is a strange creature, but maybe I should have summoned him to our Council.'
> 'He would not have come,' said Gandalf.
> 'Could we not still send messages to him and obtain his help?' asked Erestor. 'It seems that he has a power even over the Ring.'
> 'No, I should not put it so,' said Gandalf. 'Say rather that the Ring has no power over him. He is his own master. But he cannot alter the Ring itself, nor break its power over others. And now he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them, waiting perhaps for a change of days, and he will not step beyond them.'
> 'But within those bounds nothing seems to dismay him,' said Erestor. 'Would he not take the Ring and keep it there, for ever harmless?'
> 'No,' said Gandalf, 'not willingly. He might do so, if all the free folk of the world begged him, but he would not understand the need. And if he were given the Ring, he would soon forget it, or most likely throw it away. Such things have no hold on his mind. He would be a most unsafe guardian; and that alone is answer enough'. (Tolkien I, 1976: 254)

It might be claimed that Bombadil represents a kind of character that has been foreseen and described by Boethius:

> You cannot impose anything on a free mind, and you cannot move from its state of inner tranquility a mind at peace with itself and firmly founded on reason (*mentem firma sibi ratione cohaerentem*). The tyrant Nearchus thought he would be able to torture the philosopher Zeno into betraying his fellow conspirators in a plot against his person, but Zeno bit off his tongue and threw it into the face of the enraged tyrant. (*Consolatio*, II, 10) (Watts, 1969: 70)

Bombadil clearly is such a free mind, his perfect mental equilibrium is visible in his habit of laughing heartily even when faced with what for others is a deadly threat:

> ‘You won’t find your clothes again,’ said Tom, bounding down from the mound, and laughing as he danced round them in the sunlight. One would have thought that nothing dangerous or dreadful had happened; and indeed the horror faded out of their hearts as they looked at him, and saw the merry glint in his eyes.
> ‘What do you mean?’ asked Pippin, looking at him, half puzzled and half amused. ‘Why not?’
> But Tom shook his head, saying: ‘You’ve found yourselves again, out of the deep water. Clothes are but little loss, if you escape from drowning . . .’ (Tolkien I, 1976: 144)

Indeed, for somebody like Tom, there is nothing external that can frighten him or even make him lose his temper. His contempt for the loss of the hobbits’ clothes is a metaphor of his hermit-like contempt for all worldly possessions. But all this is not enough. Boethius’s philosopher, in the passage above, can show convincingly his contempt for the tyrant, and even his contempt for death, but the tyrant can still kill him and many other people, and the philosopher has no remedy against it. In this sense he may be compared to Tom Bombadil, who, in spite of his enormous magical powers, declares, when parting with the hobbits: “Out east my knowledge fails. Tom is not master of Riders from the Black Land far beyond his country”. (Tolkien I, 1976: 147)

But Bombadil’s stature seems far greater than that. The nature and limits of Bombadil’s mastery are to some extent explained in a conversation between Frodo and Tom’s wife, Goldberry:

> Frodo looked at her questioningly. ‘He is, as you have seen him,’ she said in answer to his look. ‘He is the Master of wood, water, and hill.’
> ‘Then all this strange land belongs to him?’
> ‘No indeed!’ she answered, and her smile faded. ‘That would indeed be a burden,’ she added in a low voice, as if to herself. ‘The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master. No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master’ (Tolkien I, 1976: 126).

Bombadil then avoids the trap of possession, he is “the Master of wood, water, and hill”, but he is not their owner. In this respect, he resembles Tolkien’s Ents, who are called the Shepherds of Trees, or tree-herds,[5] while he should perhaps be called, in a somewhat Heideggerian manner, a Shepherd of Being, even though, as an inhabitant of the Old Forest, he cares about trees too. A symptom

[5] The chief of the Ents is called Treebeard, and he, like Tom Bombadil, is called “Eldest of all” (Tolkien II, 1976: 58).

of his special relationship to the very principle of being, is that, as Goldberry puts it, nobody can catch him, he appears only to those to whom he wants to appear. In other words, he is, he cultivates his being, and only on his own terms. So presumably no Tolkienian Dark Lord can kill him or get hold of him, unless Bombadil so wishes himself. Bombadil describes himself as "the Eldest": "Eldest, that's what I am. Mark my words, my friends: Tom was here before the river and the trees; Tom remembers the first raindrop and the first acorn" (Tolkien I, 1976: 132). This seems to imply immortality. If there is no "before Bombadil", then neither can there be any "after him".

Sam, Frodo's servant and, the same time, his closest friend, calls Tom "a caution": "'I am sorry to take leave of Master Bombadil,' said Sam. 'He's a caution and no mistake. I reckon we may go a good deal further and see naught better, nor queerer'" (Tolkien I, 1976: 148). While it is possible that Sam means only that Tom is an "extraordinary person",[6] because the word "caution" can mean just this, there is also a chance that he uses the word "caution" in a rather old fashioned sense, "the person who becomes safety, a surety", and one of the examples of this sense, provided by Oxford English Dictionary, is "[Christ] becomes caution to His Father for all such as resolve and promise to serve Him". This would mean that Bombadil is a Christ-like and God-given protector of those who sincerely recognize his authority. Then he can stand surety for such persons before God's throne. As we read in St Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews:

"By so much was Jesus made a surety for a better testament . . . Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7.22–25). Indeed, it is enough, in the hour of dire need, to invoke Bombadil by means of a simple and childlike prayer:

> Ho! Tom Bombadil, Tom Bombadillo!
> By water, wood and hill, by the reed and willow,
> By fire, sun and moon, harken now and hear us!
> Come, Tom Bombadil, for our need is near us! (Tolkien I, 1976: 135)

And he will surely come and save those who call on him, as we can see in Chapter 8 of *The Fellowship of the Ring* where he saves the hobbits from a terrible Barrow-wight only a moment after Frodo sends up this devout aspiration or holy ejaculation (Tolkien I, 1976: 142), which Tolkien calls very modestly "a rhyme to sing" (Tolkien I, 1976: 135).

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[6] Such was apparently the interpretation of Maria Skibniewska, the first Polish translator of Tolkien's works, who translates Sam's "a caution" as "dziwna z niego osoba" [he is a strange person indeed] (Tolkien I, 2006: 202), whereas Jerzy Łoziński translates it as "bardzo on ostrożny" [he is very cautious indeed] (Tolkien I, 1996: 222), which is clearly a misunderstanding suggested apparently by the primary meaning of the noun "caution".

Tom Bombadil's elevated and semi-religious status is, however, limited to a certain, rather narrow, perimeter beyond which he seems determined never to venture, and beyond which his authority and influence do not extend. The trouble is there are no clear limits of that territory. As Gandalf says in the passage quoted above: "he is withdrawn into a little land, within bounds that he has set, though none can see them". One might ask how Gandalf knows that this land is "little", if no one can see its boundaries.[7] The word "little" seems relative enough, and let it be noticed that also Boethius grapples with the problem of the size of the world in which we live. And he comes to the following, scientifically correct, conclusion: "It is well known . . . that beside the extent of the heavens, the circumference of the earth has the size of a point; that is to say, compared with the magnitude of the celestial sphere, it may be thought of as having no extent at all" (*Consolatio*, II, 7) (Watts, 1969: 73). Boethius needs this motif to illustrate the smallness and insignificance of our world, and of human affairs, so also of his personal worries, however big they may seem to someone who is immersed in them, but the indeterminacy of Bombadil's habitat may serve the opposite purpose and suggest that it may be far bigger than it seems.

This hypothesis is to some extent confirmed by the rather mysterious words of Gandalf spoken at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, when the War of the Ring is already won:

> I am going to have a long talk with Bombadil: such talk as I have not had in all my time. He is a moss-gatherer, and I have been a stone doomed to rolling. But my rolling days are ending, and now we shall have much to say to one another. (Tolkien III, 1976: 242–243)

Gandalf is naturally playing on the old English proverb: a rolling stone gathers no moss, but in this way he establishes a vital link between himself and Bombadil. The difference between them is reduced to the wider range of Gandalf's activity than that of Bombadil's, but now, when Gandalf's help is no longer so much needed, this difference disappears, as a result of which Gandalf and Bombadil turn out to be, as magical helpers and possibly also as the so called Maiar,[8] avatars of each other. It is remarkable that when Gandalf declares the end of his mission, he says:

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[7] It may of course be assumed that the land of Tom Bombadil is in practice limited to the so called Old Forest, which extends more or less between the river Brandywine, which also marks the eastern border of the Shire, where the hobbits live, and the treeless Barrow-downs, behind which there is the village of Bree with its Inn of the Prancing Pony, where Frodo and his fellow hobbits, riding eastward, meet Aragorn for the first time. But it is never said that Tom would not be able to leave the Old Forest if he so wished.

[8] The Maiar belong, together with the Valar, but below them in rank, the Ainur, "who participated in the Creation and who made and ordered the world". (Tyler, 2002: 7).

> 'Do you not yet understand? My time is over: it is no longer my task to set things to rights, nor to help folk to do so'. (Tolkien III, 1976: 242)

And when Bombadil withholds further help, he says more or less the same, even though he clothes it in more colloquial terms:

> 'I've got things to do,' . . . 'my making and my singing, my talking and my walking, and my watching of the country. Tom can't be always near to open doors and willow-cracks. Tom has his house to mind, and Goldberry is waiting'. (Tolkien I, 1976: 145)

An additional link between Gandalf and Bombadil is provided by the fact that they both have what might be called female avatars: in the case of Tom it is his wife Goldberry, in the case of Gandalf it is the powerful sorceress Galadriel. She seems to be merely a friend of Gandalf's, but, in the scene of the final parting at the Grey Havens, we see Galadriel and Gandalf boarding together,[9] in the company of other immortals and Ring-bearers, the ship bound for the Undying Lands. It is striking that in this scene Tolkien emphasizes the fact that Galadriel wore Nenya on her finger, a magical ring whose symbolism was related to water, while Gandalf proudly displayed Narya on his finger, also called the Ring of Fire (Tolkien III, 1976: 273–274). It is naturally well known that the symbolism of water is both complementary and opposite to the symbolism of fire, and a combination of both elements stands behind the Chinese conception of the *yin-yang*, water being traditionally associated with femininity and fire with masculinity.

It is remarkable that Galadriel gives to Frodo, before he sets out on the most dangerous part of his journey, the Phial of Galadriel, which is potent charm which she describes as follows:

> "In this phial is caught the light of Eärendil star, set amid the waters of my fountain. It will shine still brighter when night is about you. May it be light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out. Remember Galadriel and her Mirror!" (Tolkien I, 1976: 357). Later Frodo, but also his friend Sam, will use the Phial in particularly difficult and life-threatening situations, and the proper way of using it is to dazzle the enemies with its intense light and also to utter simultaneously the words of a hymn, in the Elvish language, addressed to Varda, the wife of Manwë, the king of the god-like Valar:

A Elbereth Gilthoniel	O Elbereth Starkindler,
silivren penna míriel	white-glittering, slanting down sparkling like a jewel,

[9] It is perhaps significant that in the Grey Havens she is not accompanied by Celeborn, her husband, even though he also is a high-born Elf, she is accompanied instead by Elrond her son-in-law, and the Chief of Elves, who is also the Bearear of Vilya, the Ring of Air, "the mightiest of the Three", which controls the other two rings: Galadriel's ring Nenya, and Gandalf's ring Narya.

o menel aglar elenath!	the glory of the starry host!
Na-chaered palan-díriel	Having gazed far away
o galadhremmin ennorath	from the tree-woven lands of Middle-earth,
Fanuilos, le linnathon	to thee, Everwhite, I will sing,
nef aear, sí nef aearon!	on this side of the Sea, here on this side of the Ocean![10]

In the lair of the terrible spider Shelob, we see Sam using a shortened and simplified version of this hymn which is definitely more proper as an ejaculatory prayer in one's hour of need (Tolkien II, 1976: 301–302):

A Elbereth Gilthoniel *o menel palan-díriel,*	O Elbereth Starkindler, from heaven gazing afar,
le nallon sí di'nguruthos!	to thee I cry now beneath the shadow of death!
A tiro nin, Fanuilos!	O look towards me, Everwhite![11]

There is a rather obvious link between Elbereth, which is an epithet of Varda meaning "the star queen" (Tyler, 2002: 182), and Galadriel. It is the latter that captures in her Phial the light of Eärendil's star. The nature of Eärendil's star is a little complicated:

> The Star of Eärendil, also known as Gil-Estel, or Rothinzil by the Edain, was a light created by the Silmaril carried into the sky by Eärendil the Mariner. It was particularly visible in the morning and evening, and was referred to as the Evening Star.[12]

This sounds like an obvious allusion to Venus, called both the Morning Star and the Evening Star, but it seems more important that the light of Eärendil's star takes its origin from a Silmaril. The Silmarili are magical jewels made by Fëanor, one of the first Elves, but the light that the jewels emit comes from Varda, that is Elbereth, herself, which is why she is also called "Gilthoniel", the Kindler. Thus Galadriel's phial is also, in a sense, Elbereth's phial. In this way the relatively simple motif of soliciting a powerful protector's help, as it appears in the relationship between Tom Bombadil and the hobbits, is transformed into an almost fully-fledged religion in the centre of which there is Galadriel, the wise and graceful queen of Elves, who, on the one hand, is an avatar of the ever--busy, helpful sorcerer Gandalf, but, on the other, she represents the Queen of the Stars, that is the Queen of Heaven, herself.

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[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Elbereth_Gilthoniel. No translation of the hymn is provided in *The Lord of the Rings*

[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Elbereth_Gilthoniel.

[12] https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/Star_of_E%C3%A4rendil.

In comparison with Galadriel, Gandalf appears a definitely simpler creature. He can help only when he is present, and he quite often is, for various reasons, absent, there is not even a method of summoning him, in the way you can summon Tom Bombadil. Galadriel, on the other hand, even though she basically does not leave her enchanted forest of Lorien, can help indirectly and from a distance via the powerful magical objects, or relics, she leaves in the hands of her worshippers. This is not only the matter of Galadriel's Phial, but also the "three golden hairs" of hers that she gives to Gimli, the Dwarf; a little wooden box, with the first letter of her name, that is G, on the lid of it, which she gives to Sam. With the help of the box Sam is going to become a much more successful gardener than he otherwise would have been, while Gimli's hands "shall flow with gold" and yet "gold shall have no dominion" over him. (Tolkien I, 1976: 356–357)

7. The religious (or quasi-religious) forms and beliefs in Tolkien and Boethius

The matter of calling on a deity when some help or enlightenment are needed was not far from Boethius's mind either. There is a passage where the problem of prayer is directly addressed, even though this is done from a Platonic, or Neo-Platonic, rather than Christian, point of view:

> '. . . Since then you have realized the nature of true happiness and seen its false imitations, what remains now is that you should see where to find this true happiness.'
> 'Which is the very thing I have long and eagerly been waiting for.'
> 'But since in the *Timaeus* my servant Plato was pleased to ask for divine help even over small matters, what do you think we ought to do now to be worthy of discovering the source of that supreme good?'
> 'We ought to pray to the Father of all things. To omit to do so would not be laying a proper foundation.'
> 'Right,' she said, and immediately began the following hymn.
> *'O Thou who dost by everlasting reason rule, ...*
> *Disperse the clouds of earthly matter's cloying weight;*
> *Shine out in all Thy glory; for Thou are rest and peace*
> *To those who worship thee; to see Thee is our end.*
> *Who art our source and maker; lord and path and goal.'* (*Consolatio*, III, 1) (Watts, 1969: 96–97)

There are some similarities between Boethius's religion and the one that emerges from *The Lord of the Rings*. What they share is the assumption that an

act of admiration is close to the centre of religious experience. What they also share is the absence of any forms of institutional religion or cult.

Another thing is the belief, common to both Tolkien and Boethius, that nothing is purely accidental because everything is governed by a divine and inscrutable, though intentional, force that can be called providence. As Boethius says elsewhere: "It is the supreme good, then, which mightily and sweetly orders all things" (*Consolatio*, III, 12) (Watts, 1969: 111). We can see a belief in providence, for example, in some of Gandalf's statements in a conversation with Frodo:

> ' . . . Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and *not* by its maker. In which case you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought.' (Tolkien I, 1976: 62)

> ' . . . Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. Even the very wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that Gollum has some part to play in it, for good or evil, before this is over. The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many – yours not least.' (Tolkien I, 1976: 65)

Things are then "meant to happen", there is no such thing as pure luck or accident. Such is also, in a sense, the situation in fairy tales. Interesting adventures happen only to the hero, or heroine, and they know, intuitively, how to turn them to their advantage, even though they may also temporarily fall into trouble. And just as in the fairy tales it is impossible to say who the force that "means things to happen" is,[13] while in Boethius this force is naturally God, combined perhaps with Good, Wisdom, and Fortune. Instead, however, of a typical, in folklore, happy ending, we have, in *The Lord of the Rings*, some kind of heavily qualified happy ending shot through with melancholy and the pervasive "sic transit" motif.

On the other hand, however, the religion of *The Lord of the Rings* feels very different from that of Boethius. Principally, it seems, because it implies a personal love, or mercy, shown by semi-divine or semi-angelic figures, such as Tom Bombadil. Gandalf, Galadriel, or Frodo, figures that can be appealed to for help in specific difficult situations, in the same way as Christ was called upon by his disciples, or by others that needed his help. It is then the presence of intermediaries, those who translate the absolute into human terms, that makes the

[13] In the words of the renowned folklore scholar Max Lüthi: "The hero is the lucky one. It is as if invisible ties linked him with the secret powers or mechanisms that shape the world and fate. Without his being aware of it, his behavior is shaped by cogent laws. As though drawn by a magnet, he, the isolated one, pursues his confident course and follows the precise line of conduct that the framework of his cosmos demands of him" (Lüthi, 1986: 57).

difference. In Boethius's book this role is to some extent played by Lady Philosophy, who may be, as we have seen, compared to Lady Galadriel, but she is merely personified wisdom, and her attitude to Boethius, or rather Boethius's persona, created for the sake of this philosophical, but also literary work, is an attitude of a stern and distant teacher, benevolent only in the sense of being willing to teach.

As already a long time ago was recognized and thoroughly discussed by Shippey, the influence of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* on Tolkien's work is clearly visible in the English writer's partial acceptance of the theory, represented both by Boethius and Augustine (or rather St Boethius and St Augustine), that evil has no substance and consists in the absence of good.[14] This view is contrasted with the Manichaean conception of evil, according to which "Good and Evil are equal and opposite and the universe is a battlefield" (Shippey, 2003: 141). The cases where evil in *The Lord of the Rings* is connected with pure negativity and emptiness (both metaphorical and literal) are indeed numerous, and it is also clear that evil in Tolkien is not entirely devoid of substance, in other words, it is not entirely subjective. The War of the Ring has some aspects of "psychomachia", that is a Soul War, a conflict within one's soul or psyche, but it is also a real war, while the problems that Boethius grapples with in his treatise can be reduced to a psychomachia.

My take on the relationship between Boethius and Tolkien is a little different, even though I accept the conclusions reached by Shippey. In the present article, I am more interested in the possibility of treating Tolkien's trilogy as a source of consolation and a novel about consolation, inspired by Boethius's *Consolation*. I readily admit that these two topics are related to each other, if evil has no substance, and is, as Boethius's Lady Philosophy insists, "always bereft of all power" (*Consolatio*, III, 4) (Watts, 1969: 118), then consolation must be very easy to find. It is enough to persuade yourself that the wicked suffer horribly from their wickedness, and the realization, conscious or unconscious, that their wickedness is contrary to the laws of God and laws of nature, while the good may derive great happiness from their goodness alone, no matter how objectively miserable their life may be. This sounds simple enough, but as Boethius, the narrator, admits himself: "It is a strange thing to conclude and hard to accept" (*Consolatio*, III, 5) (Watts, 1969: 128).

Besides, such a consolation is somewhat irrelevant, it is addressed to those who can afford the luxury of contentedly enjoying their own goodness. It is of little use for those who cannot trust in their own goodness, who cannot be sure that they have turned their mind to higher things (*Consolatio*, III, 5) (Watts,

[14] See especially the subchapter "Views of Evil: Boethian and Manichean" (Shippey, 2003: 140–146).

1969: 130), or that those "higher things" are indeed higher.[15] After all, have we not been warned, by no less a person than Jesus Christ himself, that to trust in one's own goodness may easily be condemned as righteously hypocritical, that is Pharisaic (Luke 18, 9–14)? King Théoden, who appears at the beginning of this essay could have thought that he also, when he listened to Wormtongue's advice, turned his mind to higher things, such as peace, as opposed to war. And yet Gandalf (and Tolkien) condemns this pacifism as a mere mask for cowardice and laziness. When Gandalf opens Frodo's mind to the possibility that showing mercy to such a wretched creature as Gollum makes sense, he does not really turn his mind from base things to high ones, he rather turns Frodo's mind from high things, such as the sense of justice, to yet higher ones, such as mercy. This is why I suggest that in *The Lord of the Rings* we have to go beyond Boethius's *Consolation*, though basically in the same direction. It is a direction no doubt compatible with Christianity. Even though, like Boethius, Tolkien avoids explicitly Christian motifs, he offers us a much more Christian, and also much more Catholic, consolation, which is visible in the Biblical allusions and the appearance of characters modelled on saints, angels and devils, who, however, may also be suspected of owing much to Germanic or Finnish mythology.

Tolkien attempts to go beyond Boethius also in his treatment of the material world and material possessions. Thus he shows Frodo as a Boethian traveller that "whistles his way past the highwaymen", even though his purse is not empty, and also in the conception of the Ring, which is like Boethius's "external object", but it will not remain separate from his owner, on the contrary it will try to "devour" him. The Ring, as Shippey has already noticed (Shippey, 2003: 141), undermines, as an embodiment of the "substance of evil", in some degree, the purely subjective perception of evil characteristic of Boethius. So Tolkien's attitude to a broadly conceived materialism is not necessarily more tolerant than that of Boethius. He sees much more keenly the terrible temptations to which such materialism, represented by the attachment to the Ring, can lead. This is because he realizes, being after all a twentieth-century writer, that evil may take very insidious and malignant forms, and may camouflage itself as spiritual values. At the same time, he believes, like Lady Galadriel, that hands that flow with gold need not be necessarily enslaved by it.

We should also take into account the fact that Tolkien most probably was, as an Old English scholar, familiar with the Old English translation of Boethius, associated with King Alfred, who may have commissioned this translation, or was indeed himself involved in it. Shippey underlines that "[King Alfred] . . ., unlike

[15] I mean the passage: "But let us see what is decreed by everlasting law: if you have turned your mind to higher things, there is no need of a judge to award a prize; it is you yourself who have brought yourself to a more excellent state (*uide autem quid aeterna lex sanciat. melioribus animum conformaueris: nihil opus est iudice praemium deferente, tu te ipse excellentioribus addidisti*); . . ."

Boethius, had the experience of seeing what Viking pirates did to his defenseless subjects; and again unlike Boethius had taken such drastic measures against evil as hanging Viking prisoners, and rebellious monks, …" (Shippey, 2003: 141). These differences made it apparently difficult for Alfred to accept the Boethian theory of evil, known also the privation theory of evil, i.e. of evil as absence of good. The conclusion would be that for Alfred evil was all too real to think of it merely as absence. And yet it would be, I am afraid, impossible to find any statements, in Alfred's translation of *De Consolatione*, where he would openly question Boethius's way of thinking, even though he adds to this translation some passages of his own.

Let us quote one of such Alfredian passages because it may have been a source of inspiration for Tolkien and because it contains a vision of what might be called objective evil. The passage concerns the well-known Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. The reason why Boethius would not be able to refer to it is not far to seek, his book resolutely and consistently avoids any obvious references to Christianity, or to the Bible, so he prefers to talk about the rebellion of the giants against Jupiter:

> Se Nefrod het wyrcan ænne tor on ðæm felda ðe Sennar hatte, and on ðære þiode ðe Deria hatte swiðe neah þære byrig þe mon nu hæt Babilonia. Þæt hi dydon for þam ðingum þe hi woldon witan he heah hit wære to ðæm heofone and hu ðicce se hefon wære and hu fæst, oððe hwær þær ofer wære. Ac hit gebyrede, swa hit cyn was, þæt se godcunda wald hi tostencte ær hi hit fullwyrcan mosten, and towearp þone tor, and hiora monigne ofslog, and hiora spræce todælde on tu and hundseofontig geþioda. Swa gebyreþ ælcum þara ðe winð ðæm godcundanan walde. (Irvine and Godden, 2012: 264)[16]

It is remarkable that Alfred presents the story of the Tower of Babel not quite in keeping with the Biblical text.[17] He makes Nimrod, the proverbial hunter, and "the first man to wear a crown" (Calvocoressi, 1990: 177), directly responsible for the construction of the tower, whereas in the Bible it is the initiative of some anonymous crowd. Alfred also changes the motivation for this venture, it is no longer the ambition merely to "reach unto heaven" (Carroll and Prickett, 1997: 11), but rather a quasi-scientific project of examining the nature and dimensions of heaven, and even seeing what is there beyond heaven. Alfred's Nimrod would certainly have appreciated a powerful telescope.

[16] This Nimrod ordered the building of a tower on the field that was called Sennar, and in the nation that was called Deira, very near the city which is now called Babylon. They did that because they wished to how high it was to heaven and how thick it was and how firm, or what was above it. But it came about, as was fitting, the divine power scattered them before they were allowed to complete it, and cast down the tower, and killed many of them, and divided their speech into seventy two languages. So it befalls everyone who contends against divine power (Irvine and Godden, 2012: 265).

[17] Alfred's version of that story follows extra-Biblical Hebrew and Islamic traditions.

From a Tolkienological point of view, however, it is even more remarkable that Alfred's Nimrod corresponds quite well to Tolkien's Sauron. Sauron's tower from which he hopes to challenge the rule of the god-like Valar is naturally Barad-dûr, on the top of which there is the all-penetrating Eye of Sauron. Barad-dûr collapses immediately after the destruction of the Ring of Power, which suggests that it was of the same nature as the Ring and stood for the very principle of unlimited power. As we could see, Nimrod is regarded as the first powerful monarch in the Biblical history and his passion for hunting is reflected in Sauron's relentless hunt for the Ring, with the Nazgûl as his hunting hounds.[18]

However, the main question is as follows: Does the story of Nimrod, or of Sauron, contradict or undermine in any sense the Boethian privation theory of evil? Indirectly it may do so, if we concentrate on the menacing and expansive aspect of the evil power. But this is exactly what Tolkien warns his readers against. Saruman, the corrupt wizard, and Denethor, the half-mad ruler of Gondor, are spending a lot of time gazing into their palantíri, the Seeing Stones, which Sauron uses to impress his victims with visions of his apparently irresistible might. It is much better to focus on the positive catastrophe, the sudden fall of the dark tower, which shows the power of evil as more of an illusion than a reality. It could have this Biblical and Alfredian story that inspired Tolkien with the conception of Eucatastrophe. Tolkien's way out of the dilemma between Boethianism and Manichaenism consists in showing the power of evil as real and unreal at the same time.

In his essay *On Fairy-Stories*, Tolkien underlines the importance of the consolatory aspect of fairy tales, he talks specifically about the "Consolation of the Happy Ending", and introduces the notions of "eucatastrophe" and "dyscatastrophe". Eucatastrophe is a particularly ambiguous and paradoxical idea, described as follows:

> It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. (Tolkien, 1992: 33)

Indeed the ending of *The Lord of the Rings* offers such a rather catastrophic happy ending, and more or less the same can be said about *The Consolation of Philosophy*, where what is presented as a successful philosophical argument takes place in the shadow of a great personal tragedy.

[18] It is perhaps unimportant but there are nine of them, and in Alfred's version of the Babel story there is a mention of seventy-two languages, which is another un-Biblical motif, and seven plus two equals nine.

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"My Honor is My Life": Sturm Brightblade of the *Dragonlance* Saga and Middle English Arthurian Knighthood

Abstract: Arthuriana has a long history of adaptation and appropriation in medieval and contemporary works, and the tradition of such textual borrowing and reworking continues in contemporary "genre" novels, particularly those that invoke associations with knights, honor, and codes of chivalry. One such example are the novels and short stories of the *Dragonlance* setting. Sturm Brightblade is positioned as a knight who adheres to a code of honor and is given Arthurian character traits, narrative arcs, and a backstory by the various authors that have fleshed out his history. The texts in the *Dragonlance* setting knowingly use appropriated elements from Middle English Arthurian works and assign them to Sturm Brightblade to give him proper positioning as a knight that would fit in with Arthur's legendary Round Table.

Keywords: Arthurian, *Dragonlance*, appropriation, fantasy, knighthood

Fantasy novels that are not written by J. R. R. Tolkien, especially those published under the *Dungeons & Dragons* moniker, are often derided as "pulp," implying that they are "mere beach reading." To paraphrase a scholar I once spoke with: they are a good read for a long afternoon, but are not seen as analytically stimulating or intellectually composed. This scholar echoes a sentiment expressed by Umberto Eco, who states that "we are looking for 'reliable Middle Ages,' not for romance and fantasy, though frequently this wish is misunderstood and, moved by a vague impulse, we indulge in a sort of escapism à la Tolkien" (Eco, 1986: 65). Eco's harsh reaction to popular representations of the medieval in fantasy has helped establish their place on the outskirts of any critical inquiry. Indeed, there is next to no critical work on such novels, and what can be found is often critical in terms of why they should be devalued rather than valued. However, these works are no different from the fantasy works which scholars consider "literary." The same process of invoking mythic tem-

plates occurs in these popular fictions, and the mythic template of King Arthur proves to be a fruitful source for such invocations. I see the study of Arthurian appropriations in popular fictions as a way to bridge a perceived gap between Arthurian scholars and the "casual" audiences of new Arthurian adaptations and appropriations. Raymond H. Thompson asserts that

> modern retellings, whether they be translations from foreign languages, or modernizations of archaic forms of their own languages […] encourage an interest in the legend that can lead readers back to study original texts or to read other versions, modern as well as ancient. They help create the audience without which a legend fades from sight.
>
> (Thompson, 1985: 12)

In short, new Arthurian works – whether adaptations or appropriations – serve as entry points for many new readers to encounter other Arthurian texts, including the medieval sources upon which these "modern retellings" draw. My addendum to Thompson's words is that, for those readers who have already read or familiarized themselves with other Arthurian works, these entry-points, allusions, and sign-posts serve as markers of influence, of source-borrowing, and the reworking of previous versions of these Arthurian characters and themes adds value to these popular fictions.

The authors of such works use the popularity of their intended form and their source material to their ultimate benefit: they are aware that their genres lean on literary giants, and they appropriate both eagerly and effectively, entering into the larger discussion of the Arthurian adaptive tradition. However, the signals of association work differently in these popular texts, as they often *rework* Arthurian material so that their own characters and settings have a strong, popular groundwork from which to diverge and build. Yet, it must be noted that the Matter of Britain still exists in these works, and it is Arthur who is the strong, mythic base from which such fantasies often spring. As a result, they must be studied alongside more established appropriative works, as their literary merit exists as long as Arthur proves useful and the Once and Future King's usefulness has long been proven.

A key signature of the appropriation – rather than "adaptation," which these works most assuredly are *not* – of Arthurian material in otherwise non-Arthurian novels is that many Arthurian characters are often hybridized into a single character in the course of the appropriation. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders defines an appropriation as a text that "frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement from one genre to others" (Sanders, 2016: 35). I argue that the critique presented by appropriations is not always of the contemporary culture, as some critics might suggest; instead, it is rather a commentary on

what Arthurian elements should be included, shifted, reinterpreted, or recontextualized for each genre and medium. Sanders also acknowledges that “appropriation may or may not involve a generic shift and it may certainly still require the kinds of ‘readings alongside’ or comparative approaches that juxtapose (at least) one text against another” (Sanders, 2016: 35). Truthfully, Arthurian appropriations are very difficult to read in a critical manner without the knowledge of the texts they draw from and rework. What separates appropriation more fully from adaptation, I argue, is the remolding of the source material in such a way that it *radically reworks and revises* Arthurian content to fit a new – in this case, fantasy – setting. Linda Hutcheon argues that, rather than adapting for the sake of sharing a story in a new context, “the name of the new adaptation game” is “world building,” using adapted material to create one’s own setting for new and varied adventures (Hutcheon, 2013: xxiv). Sanders, however, would say that this is different than adaptation, and I personally agree. Thus, taking material to build one’s own world is not adaptation, but, rather, *appropriation*. However, this act still necessitates the side-by-side readings that both Sanders and Hutcheon call for, but more fully embraces Sanders’s later ideas on the use of a “mythic template” that is constantly reworked and reused to create new works that are linked to previous traditions, yet are also a part of a new textual lineage (Sanders, 2016: 81) – which is exactly where the *Dragonlance* novels situate themselves. It is then the use of Arthurian elements in a wholly new setting and amalgam which makes these novels wholly new products that remain tied to their sources.

I argue that it was a conscious decision for the authors in question to combine primarily Middle English Arthurian texts, themes, and characters into one or possibly two characters in the appropriation to enact a revised Arthurian plot. The dual act of combination and reworking prevents the Arthurian material from entirely overwhelming the rest of the novel while also presenting a representative figure (or figures) that a reader can and should associate with Arthuriana. Often, these characters are knights, kings, or heroic warriors, and serve a purpose that in some way mirrors their status as an Arthurian appropriation, most frequently in a fight for an ideal, living by a code of honor, a certain quest or series of adventures, a meaningful death, leaving a lasting legacy, or all of the aforementioned functions. Sturm Brightblade – a hero of the *Dragonlance* setting for both the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game and its companion novels – enacts all of these Arthurian functions and, in so doing, reveals himself as an amalgam of not just one or two Arthurian figures, but four: Perceval, Gawain, Lancelot, and Arthur himself.

The *Dragonlance* setting was originally created by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman in the early 1980s as a new setting for the ongoing, TSR-based *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game. Weis and Hickman, along with other important players like Michael Williams, Paul B. Thompson, and Tanya C. Cook

(née Carter), also began to expand upon the campaign setting via the long-lasting novel line begun by TSR and taken over by Wizards of the Coast when they purchased TSR in 1997. The novels themselves have garnered little scholarly attention, likely due to their "pulp" status, and the only real critical study of the setting and its novels is Benjamin J. Robertson's study "From Fantasy to Franchise: *Dragonlance* and the Privatization of Genre," a genre-based approach that, rather unfairly, examines the *Dragonlance* novels as a nearly impossible – or at least improbable – undertaking for critics. Robertson is concerned with viewing certain texts "as representative of a larger abstraction" (Robertson, 2017: 129) rather than taking aim at a single line of critical inquiry. This is not to say that Robertson is incorrect in his assessment of the enormity of the task for critics looking at *Dragonlance* – though his own study could profit from some degree of close reading, as character names are incorrect and others are forgotten about altogether. However, a way of proceeding that establishes a clearer framework for tracing themes and narratives in the *Dragonlance* novels is to find the tropic appropriations which are inherent to every novel in the fantasy genre. To apply Julie Sanders, perhaps, is a better option: in an attempt to find the mythic template used by various authors in specific *Dragonlance* novels, one must simply know where to look and what to look for.

Robertson does ask an important question, however. The *Dragonlance* series of novels is made up of well over three hundred individual books; Robertson, rightly so, queries, "How do you even trace a single character's 'arc' across inconsistent texts written by multiple authors over many decades, much less the evolution of an entire story world? After all, they can't *all* be necessary texts – or even worthwhile ones" (Robertson, 2017: 129). Robertson may overlook a fairly obvious, but no less ingenious answer: it depends on what character one attempts to trace, or even what author – or authors, in the case of Weis and Hickman – created that character. Weis, Hickman, Williams, and other vital authors and editors released annotated versions of the first two "core" (written by Weis and Hickman) trilogies, *Dragonlance Chronicles* and *Dragonlance Legends* in 2002 and 2003, respectively. *The Annotated Chronicles* in particular provides many answers that Robertson raises in his article as well as common questions and concerns raised by fans, editors, other authors, and even the company. Even though some authors are not represented in these annotations – or are only given annotations for the included poetry and songs, as was Michael Williams – these annotations give many references to other *Dragonlance* novels. One of the keys to answering the question of "which novels and why" may be answered by the annotations, as novels that are not considered "core" are referenced, creating a kind of canonical lineage of both thematic content and character development.

My exploration of Sturm Brightblade as an Arthurian amalgam begins with an investigation into annotations. My own argument that Weis, Hickman, Wil-

liams, and Thompson and Cook have appropriated Arthurian content into their conceptualizations of Sturm Brightblade has evolved from various levels of communication with authors and editors involved in the *Dragonlance* series as well as my own observations of Arthurian mythic appropriation. While Sturm first appeared in print in the novels of Weis and Hickman, a study of Sturm's Arthurian representation must begin with explorations into his early years, which were published after his death in the main *Dragonlance* continuity. It was established early on that Sturm was raised far away from the courts of the Knights of Solamnia due to their fall from favor in the eyes of the commoners they swore to protect. It is with the (unconfirmed) death of Sturm's father, Angriff, during the siege of Castle Brightblade by his own subjects that Sturm is sent far from the nation of Solamnia for his own protection, so that he may one day live to reclaim his birthright and become a knight. Sturm is brought up in Solace, a town amongst the forests and trees, where knighthood is virtually unknown – however, Sturm's mother instructs him in proper Solamnic ways and prepares him to one day become the knight he was born to be. Sturm's journey from Solamnia to Solace is chronicled in the short story "The Exiles" by Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter. Lady Ilys Brightblade takes her son into hiding and Sturm's firm belief in the oath of the Solamnic Knights, "est sularus oth mithas" [my honor is my life], is exhibited for the first time. This knightly oath is modeled on the Arthurian Pentecostal Oath, the Arthurian code of chivalry in Sir Thomas Malory, where Arthur:

> charged them [his knights] never to do outerage nothir mourthir, and allwayes fle treson, and to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy, upon payne of forfeiture of theire worship and lordship of Kyne Arthure for evir More; and always to do ladyes, damsels, and jantilwomen and wydowes soccour, strengthe hem in hir ryghtes, and never to enforce them upon payne of dethe. Also that no man take no batayles in a wrongefull quarrel for no love ne for no worldis goodis.
>
> (Malory, 2017: 97)

While the Solamnics live by a much-abbreviated version, the word "honor" to them encompasses all of the above, and Sturm in particular takes the parts about defending women to heart, as he defends his mother and her maid in "The Exiles" and later assists Goldmoon in her quest and protects Lady Alhana Starbreeze in the *Chronicles*. To Sturm, knighthood and honor denote protecting others when they need it most and, for him, the ends most certainly justify the means. When Sturm decides that he must defend his mother from bandits who serve Takhisis, the goddess of darkness, he reflects on his father "standing on the battlements of Castle Brightblade with only a few loyal retainers while a mob of madmen howled around them. Lord Brightblade would meet this foe face to face, head to head, to conquer or to perish. It was the knightly way. It

was the Brightblade way" (Thompson and Carter, 1987: 198). Aside from foreshadowing his own death in *Dragons of Winter Night*, Sturm realizes at eleven years old that living by the knightly honor code often involves dying for a cause, dying in pursuit of an ideal. The Solamnic ideal of honor and protection of those who cannot protect themselves is similar to the code that T. H. White names "Might for Right" in *The Once and Future King*, what Malory himself refers to as Arthur's desire "unto his lords and the comyns for to be a true kyng, to stand with true justice fro thens forth the dayes of this lyf" (Malory, 2017: 111). The Solamnic oath, as well as their codified Measure, which shall be discussed later, has a firm basis in the Arthurian ideal not just for himself as a king, but for his knights of the Round Table as well. While all knights are alleged to be bound by a code of honor, the Solamnic Knights, and Sturm in particular, live and die for honor, and do their utmost to uphold the Solamnic Order.

Laura K. Bedwell writes that Malory, in his portrayal of Arthur as a just king, "was following the views of the people of his day, when King Arthur was already known for his justice" (Bedwell, 2011: 3), as well as for his desire to protect the weak via force of arms. Bedwell, however, argues against the perception that Arthur "is perfectly just" (Bedwell, 2011: 4) and instead sees a flawed king who not only fails to keep his knights in line with their oaths to the Round Table and to the people, but also as a man who fails to live up to his own ideal, pointing out many indicators of his shortcomings. It is worth noting that Bedwell writes that Sir Torre, "though he was brought up as a peasant, is the only one of the three who competently navigates the difficulties of knighthood" when he, Gawain, and Pellinore, undertake a joint quest (Bedwell, 2011: 5). Torre, like Perceval, is reared away from court and not subject to the intrigues, politics, and learned behavior of nobles, and is thus able to devote himself solely to the ways in which an ideal knight should behave – he knows no different, as he rose from humble beginnings. Thus is Sturm Brightblade positioned in the *Dragonlance* novels. Though he is raised on stories of knightly deeds and instructed as a knight (Thompson and Carter, 1987: 185) – unlike both Torre and Perceval and more like Arthur himself – he, like them, is not subjected to courtly intrigue and politics, and is, as a result, able to more readily navigate the actual portrayal of knighthood and can begin to live up to the (Arthurian) ideal of knighthood – at least as much as any mortal man is able to live up to perfection. Sturm also knowingly bends the Measure, the written strictures by which the Knights of Solamnia live, when it benefits the saving of innocent lives in "The Exiles," as he uses a magic string to defeat the bandits holding his mother and her maid captive. Knights, according to the Measure, should have nothing to do with magic, and when Sturm lies and says that "I don't know anything about magic. It's not a fitting subject for knights," he quickly follows it up with a prayer that "Paladine [the god of light] would forgive him for bending the Measure," as Sturm may not have known what would happen, but he surely knew that he was dealing

with magic (Thompson and Carter, 1987: 207). Sturm begins his life in exile having already knowingly "bent" the Measure for good reasons, and he will continue to do so in his adult life as well, as Sturm's belief in ideal knighthood will eventually cause a reformation amongst the knights to embody "the Brightblade way," though this only comes after his death, just as a renewed sense of the Arthurian ideal only came after Arthur's loss. Bedwell notes that Arthur's "Oath is too inflexible to meet the demands of the ever-changing human situations of Arthur's realm," and continues by saying that "Instead of providing a firm foundation for justice, Arthur's Oath itself has weaknesses," the majority of which stem from the failure to fully carry out the Oath and its punishments (Bedwell, 2011: 7). Much like the Solamnic Oath and Measure, the Arthurian Oath has no room for interpretation and is met with letter-by-letter recitation and adherence; Sturm, however, sees the need to "bend" the strictures so that he can better serve the people he swore to protect. Sturm's life proves that a knight can live by the *spirit* of these codes if not by their exact, unbending wording, and his death proves that these changes must be made so that the knights can unite under a single leader once more – if only the same could be said of Arthur's Round Table.

Michael Williams's novel *The Oath and the Measure* takes a lengthier look at Sturm's adherence to the Solamnic ideal, and further cements his association with Arthurian knights by the appropriation of the narrative structure and themes of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Though casting Sturm as a Gawain stand-in for such a narrative is fairly obvious, Sturm's status as an Arthurian amalgam remains as attention is drawn to his upbringing away from Solamnia, since Perceval and Arthur were raised away from court for their own protection. Giving Sturm such recognizable and knightly origins and storylines is, of course, the type of reformatting of a legend that Julie Sanders has in mind, though Williams and the other *Dragonlance* authors who write of Sturm Brightblade most likely do not knowingly invoke critical theory; instead, they position Sturm in familiar terms for a knight of his caliber and near-mythic stature so as to be recognizable for readers of knightly fantasy and those versed in Arthurian content. The "reworking" of the Arthurian source material to fit with Sturm's own personality and with the *Dragonlance* setting at large is exactly the kind of adoption of a mythic template and outlines with alterations that Sanders writes of, and the structure of the myth, while being reassessed and adapted, remains an underlying guideline. Williams is the one to draw the clearest and most obvious attention to his appropriated sources and narrative themes. James Lowder, Williams's former copyeditor at TSR, writes that "Michael seemed to drop a lot of references to the Matter [of Britain], Chaucer, and so on into his books," particularly those about the Solamnic knights and Sturm Brightblade (Lowder, 2019). Indeed, an early appraisal of the young Brightblade reads like an abbreviated version of Perceval's or Arthur's upbringing:

> Smuggled from Castle Brightblade one winter's night in his eleventh year, [Sturm] remembered his father in images and episodes, as a series of events rather than a living person […] Sturm, though, had a fabled father from scattered memories, from his mother's stories, and no doubt from sheer imagining. Angriff grew kinder and more courageous the longer the boy dreamed, and dreams became his refuge in Abanasinia, far away from the Solamnic courts, among indifferent southerners in a nondescript hamlet called Solace. There his mother, the Lady Ilys, raised him with more tutors than friends, schooling him in courtesy and lore and his heritage […] And ruining him, Lord Stephen thought with a smile, for anything except Solamnic Knighthood.
>
> (Williams, 2003: 4)

After the disappearance of his father at the siege of Castle Brightblade, Sturm is secluded and raised far from his birthright in much the same way as Perceval, but rather than left to run wild, Sturm is well-aware of his knightly heritage, and is schooled to be the perfect knight. In this way, he is rather more like Malory's Arthur, who is also raised away from court for his own protection, and though his identity as Uther's son is hidden, he is still trained to be a knight and given an education. Truly, Sturm can be nothing but a knight, and has become useless to any farmer or woodsman in Solace, just as the young Arthur would have been useless as a stableboy – both were meant for greater things. The Arthurian associations are made explicit to position Sturm as a hero to readers, and as someone linked to heroic beginnings in chivalric literature: the tropes Williams uses are clear signals to his audience, particularly as his main contributions to the *Dragonlance* novel line were books about the Solamnic knighthood – and indeed about Sturm and his family. Williams knowingly ties his knowledge of chivalric literary forms and sources with his offerings for the *Dragonlance* world, providing a vehicle for Arthuriana to exist in a fantasy setting, albeit underneath the surface of a narrative seemingly about other characters and another storyline.

Much like when Uther dies and Arthur is revealed – or, indeed, after Perceval's mother loses her hold over him and he escapes to the courtly realm – it is only when Sturm's mother dies that the young man is brought back into the fold of the Solamnic Knighthood, at least for a brief time. After Sturm sat vigil for his mother:

> Lords Gunthar and Boniface, who had been Angriff Brightblade's closest friends, arranged to have Sturm brought back to Thelgaard Keep, where he could be further trained in the ways of the Order […] He was smart, that was certain, and the years of genteel poverty had toughened him in ways that the northern boys secretly envied: He was knowledgeable in the woods and rode horseback like a seasoned Knight. But his southern ways and old Solamnic charm seemed like relics of the last generation to the urbane younger men, squires and Knights from prominent families. They called him "Grandpa

> Sturm" and laughed at his accent, his storehouse of remembered poetry, his attempts to grow a mustache.
>
> (Williams, 2003: 4)

Sturm very obviously does not fit in to court life and perhaps would have been more at home in the knighthood of his father rather than with the new breed of knights whose only proof for knighthood was their birth. Sturm had already dealt with trials: the loss of his parents, separation from his homeland, and his inability to become a squire due to his time away from the knights. As a result, Sturm lived the Solamnic Oath while others merely paid it lip-service. Rather than see Sturm as a logical candidate for knighthood – or even to serve as a squire – because of his sense of knightly honor and duty, the knights see him as overly sheltered and idealistic, unknowing of how the world, let alone the court, works. In this manner, Sturm is indeed like the titular character of *Sir Perceval of Galles*, whose mother swept him away from Arthur's court after the death of the first Sir Perceval. The Lady Acheflour decides that:

> Schall he [Perceval the Son] nowther take tent
> To justes ne to tournament,
> Bot in the wilde wodde went,
> With bestes to playe.
> [Shall he [Perceval the Son] neither take tent
> To jousts nor to tournament,
> But in the wild wood,
> With beasts to play [with].][1]
> ll.173–76 (Braswell, 1995)

Acheflour's desire to protect her son from his father's fate meant that, though Perceval excelled in his new home in the woods, he was ill-prepared for the world of his father, the world of knighthood. When the young Perceval is thrust into courtly affairs, he is seen as a rustic, and even the lessons he learns from Gawain are not quite enough to make him the knight he so desperately wants to be. Sturm's mother, for all her good intentions, prepared Sturm for an idyllic knighthood that could never live up to his expectations, especially since the Solamnics turned away from ideal knighthood and took to courtly politics long before Sturm's arrival. While Lady Ilys has done much better than Lady Acheflour in preparing her son, she neglects to teach Sturm how to move in the world of noble intrigue and courtly affairs. Sturm is clearly set up for failure, and it is important to note that Perceval was as well: both men do not succeed at courtly life or at knighthood until their stories are nearly over, crafting a narrative structure of learning lessons and striving for excellence. A kind of lesson is imparted

[1] My translation.

via both characters and the readers are meant to take heed of their learning curves and experiences.

Like Perceval, Sturm is not made a knight until much later, nearly at the end of his adventures. Because Williams's novel was published after Sturm's knighting and the character's in-canon death in *Dragons of Winter Night*, Williams can make such parallels between Perceval and Sturm, especially as Williams is one of the originators of the *Dragonlance* setting – he wrote all of the poetry and songs for the original trilogies and modules by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, and was thus with them from the inception of the world. Margaret Weis herself, in fact, told me that she does not "see Sturm so much in Arthur as [she does] in Parsifal [Perceval]" in our early email correspondence about the creators' informing myths and legends – hence his quest for knighthood, his naïveté, and his attainment of a knighthood far later in his life than he deserved (Weis, 2019). She did say, however, that "Camelot is the largest shared world in history" (Weis, 2019), and as such is always a reference point for knights in fantasy literature – both to readers as well as to authors – perhaps most especially for Sturm and for Williams's presentation of the young knight-to-be in particular. While Weis gravitated toward Perceval more than Arthur, Tracy Hickman – who actually wrote Sturm's death – pulled from the Arthurian model, and Williams turned to Gawain for *The Oath and the Measure*.

After Williams glosses Sturm's upbringing – recapping what Thompson and Carter and Weis and Hickman had written before him – he delves into his own preferred view of Sturm: as a Gawain figure. Williams does this by appropriating the story of Gawain and the Green Knight and placing it into the world of *Dragonlance*. Williams, an Associate Professor of Comparative Humanities at the University of Louisville, knows his source, of that there can be no doubt: the appropriation of the *Gawain*-Poet is not only intentional, but also fits in with the character development and characteristics already associated with Sturm. Sturm's first Yule in Solamnia quickly becomes a test not only for himself against a version of the Green Knight, but also a test for the faltering Knights of Solamnia themselves – those same knights who no longer hold the Oath of honor in their hearts. As the Solamnics celebrate the Yule feast and pray to their hero, Huma Dragonbane, something odd occurs. A flute begins to play, "and with the music a rain of light, green and golden […] Lord Wilderness appeared in the rafters above them, bristling with music and green sparks" (Williams, 2003: 6–7). This astonishing entrance, awash in green imagery, is only the beginning of the journey upon which Sturm will embark to prove his own honor and to defend the collective honor of the knighthood he holds so dear. This entrance, however, is not unique to "Lord Wilderness," the green man who will reveal himself as Vertumnus; Williams appropriates and adapts this entrance from a more famous green man, Bertilak the Green Knight. The *Gawain*-Poet has his green man enter Arthur's court in similar fashion:

Anoþer noyse ful newe neȝed biliue,
Þat þe lude myȝt haf leue liflode to cach;
For vneþe watz þe noyce not a whyle sesed,
And þe first cource in þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,
On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe;
Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,
Half-etayn in erde I hope þat he were,
[. . .]
And alle his fetures folȝande in forme, þat he hade,
Ful clene.
For wonder of his hwe men hade, set in his semblaunt sene;
He ferde as freke were fade,
And oueral enker grene.
[Another noise that was new suddenly drew near
So that their lord might at last have leave to take food;
For hardly had the music but a moment ceased,
And the first course in the hall been served as was custom,
When there came through the portals a fearful horseman,
The mightiest on middle-earth in measure of height;
From his gorge to his girdle so square and so thick
And his loins and his limbs so long and so large,
Half-troll on the earth I know that he was,
[…]
And all his features followed in form, that he had,
In mode.
For men had wonder at his hue, set in his face and form that showed;
He passed as a fey-man fell,
And all over glowed green.][2]
ll. 132–40, 145–50 (Malcolm and Waldorn, 2008)

While the manner of their entrances is not the same, many similarities can be noted, and that is what makes it appropriations rather than adaptation: a sudden noise interrupts the feast and heralds the arrival of the intruder, the intruder is covered in green, and he acts as a harbinger of some test or travail yet to come. The physical descriptions of Vertumnus and the Green Knight are truly the most similar. Sturm is amazed at Vertumnus, and Lord Wilderness is described:

> The man’s armor glistened with the waxy, depthless green of holly. Embossed roses, red and green, intertwined on his breastplate, and leaves and scarlet berries cascaded from his gauntlets and greaves, trailing behind him like a rumor of spring in the lifeless midwinter hall. About his face, more leaves flared

[2] My translation.

> and clustered like green flame, like a glory of grassy light, at the center of which his wide black eyes darted and glittered and laughed. He was a huge green bird or a dryad's consort […] "I am Vertumnus," said the intruder, in a voice mild and low. "I am the seasons turning, and I am the home of the past years."
>
> (Williams, 2003: 7–8)

The green man, in green armor and leafy countenance, is seemingly the embodiment of spring in a lifeless, northern winter. He heralds more than just a challenge to the knights, as will be discussed later, but also the coming of spring and magical changes to both the land and to a certain young knight-to-be. The Green Knight in Arthur's court is himself "al grayþed in grene þis gome and his wedes" [All dressed in green this man and his clothes], and "Wel gay watz þis gome gered in grene" [Very gay was this man geared in green] (ll. 151, 179) (Malcolm and Waldorn, 2008). Perhaps the most startling thing about the Green Knight are his eyes, which "loked as layt so lyȝt" ["[his eyes] looked as bright as lightning"] (ll. 199) (Malcolm and Waldorn, 2008), a startling similarity to Vertumnus. Both men are seemingly fey beings, imbued with magic and with green hues: the Green Knight and Vertumnus are more than they seem, but are wrapped in the mysterious air of the woods and the green spring. Green is, of course, the color of the natural world and wild magic, which serves as a stark contrast to the grey hues of the armored knights in either court. Their outlandish appearances and their startling entries into their respective courts are challenges in and of themselves to the assembled knights, who thought only to celebrate Yule, not to receive a strange visitor.

Helen Cooper remarks on this kind of disturbance, saying that in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, there is "a clash between the ordinary human and knightly world of Arthur's court, and something that presents itself as profoundly other" (Cooper, 1997: 286). The same can be said of the disturbance in *The Oath and the Measure*, as we must remember that, though this is a fantasy setting, Thompson and Carter's story "The Exiles" establishes that magic is not something that knights should know about, nor is it something with which they should involve themselves, as Sturm paraphrases the Solamnic Measure when he says, "[magic is] not a fitting subject for knights" (Thompson and Carter, 1987: 207). While in Arthur's court, the *Gawain*-Poet has presented a world as without magic as possible for Arthur – at least in the beginning of the poem – as there is no Merlin, and no mention of anything as exotic as what the Green Knight represents. As Cooper suggests, the arrival of the Green Knight is made all the more shocking for this reason as "this has not seemed to be a world where such things could happen" (Cooper, 1997: 287). It is strange to think that a fantasy world like *Dragonlance* could have men like the Solamnics, so dead set against magic that they are unnerved by it, but this is another case where the appropriated

content is making itself known: the shock of Vertumnus is equal to the shock of the Green Knight, and their tests for Sturm and Gawain, respectively, are made all the more fantastic as a result. Both tests, again, are meant to expose shortcomings within the knights themselves, and both Gawain and Sturm fail. While many of these elements might arguably be considered adaptation, enough is changed, revised, and placed within the setting of the fantasy world to become something else as well, showing how a Middle English narrative can live on in a fantasy setting by the act of appropriation, even if many of the readers do not know the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Because the template of the Arthurian narrative is used in the modern novel, it continues on as something else, something new, while remaining tied to the Middle English Arthurian tradition.

Akin to the Green Knight upon which he is based, Vertumnus comes to expose the lack of courage, honor, and devotion to the knightly ideal they allegedly follow. Vertumnus says to the knights that “I wish to make a point near and dear to my heart […] You Solamnics gather like owls in these halls in the dead of the year […] hooting of dark times and times past and how far the world has tumbled from ages of dream and might” (Williams, 2003: 8). The green man mocks the knighthood for only looking towards themselves and talking of their past glories and honors while the world around them moves on and is in trouble, playing a role that Bedwell does not find in Arthuriana: the green man desires to correct the knights who have lost their way and do not remember their Oath, just as Arthur’s knights often fail in their own Pentecostal Oath. In this manner, Vertumnus serves as a revision to the Green Knight, as his intention was to find “ȝif it soth were / Þat rennes of þe grete renoun of þe Rounde Table” [if the great renown the Round Table [knights] earned was true] as he was charged by Morgan le Fay to do, and to perhaps cause the queen’s death by this stir of magic and mystery (ll. 2457–58) (Malcolm and Waldorn, 2008). Rather than a test to see if anyone would be willing to take up his challenge simply to verify if the Round Table was as honorable as they say – and they very nearly were not – Vertumnus wants to bring the knights low, to expose the hypocrisy they have allowed to flourish with the new generations of knights. Here, Williams provides an interesting insertion to the Arthurian tradition: a revision to a perceived lack, as Bedwell might perhaps view it. Sturm has a chance at redeeming the knighthood in a way that Gawain could not, as Bertilak’s test is revealed as simply a way for Morgan le Fay to shock Arthur’s queen and the court. Vertumnus, however, wants to prove to Sturm that the knighthood has fallen, and can be better than they are currently—the test is a way of correcting the course of events, and Sturm, though he does not yet know it, will go on to unite the knighthood through his courageous death, thereby eventually succeeding in Vertumnus’s ultimate test of the knighthood’s virtues. The appropriation, then, is the matter of revision to the extent of the test, and the overarching scope of it: while Gawain wears a garter forever more, Sturm pays a real price but is triumphant in the end.

Unlike Arthur's court, a few Solamnic knights do attempt to take up Vertumnus's challenge, but they are all older knights of Angriff's time, not the young knights of the new generation. The only young man who takes up the challenge is not yet a knight: it is Sturm Brightblade. In the name of his father and the ideal Order of knighthood that only he seems to follow, he challenges Vertumnus. The green man reveals that he knows of Sturm's father, and "With a swift turn of the wrist, as bright and elusive as summer lightning, Vertumnus's sword flashed by Sturm's uncertain guard and plunged deep into his left shoulder" (Williams, 2003: 14). The wound heals before his very eyes, though the pain does not subside; in turn, "[Sturm's] blade drove cleanly into [Vertumnus's] chest" (Williams, 2003: 15). This trade of blows is similar but not exactly the same as the "game" the Green Knight proposes in Arthur's court. However, Vertumnus's wound heals as miraculously as Sturm's own, and Vertumnus says:

> You have entered my game. Which, alas, you must now play to its end, as your shoulder will tell you daily and nightly […] Meet me on the first day of spring […] In my stronghold amid the Southern Darkwoods. Come there alone, and we shall settle this – sword to sword, knight to knight, man to man. You have defended your father's honor, and now I challenge yours. For now I owe you a stroke, as you owe me a life […] If you fail to meet me at the appointed place, on the appointed night, your honor is forever forfeit.
>
> (Williams, 2003: 17)

Indeed, not only are Sturm's and the knighthood's honor at stake, but Sturm will die from his magic wound should he fail. This game is much the same as the one in which Gawain finds himself: though Gawain's life is never in real danger, he does not know this and believes he is to die at the hands of the Green Knight, as Sturm believes himself doomed by Vertumnus. Like Gawain, Sturm is tested along the way, and both young men never know what is and what is not a part of that test – nor whether they can live up to it or not. Gawain must deal with Bertilak's wife while Sturm has many encounters with bandits, traps set by a traitor knight, and obstacles that Vertumnus himself throws in Sturm's way. Both men are tested as a part of the game, and though both men keep their oaths, they fail in other ways. Though the alterations to the Gawain narrative are many, the reworkings make the same general framework fit both in the corpus of Arthurian literature and in the fantasy setting of *Dragonlance* – aligning with Sanders's ideas on mythic appropriation. The changes to the overall structure, however, are what makes *The Oath and the Measure* an entirely separate product, created to fit into a fantasy setting that exists with its own separate rules, as indeed the *Dragonlance* setting must follow the *Dungeons & Dragons* basic rules and formats. Due to these nuances and structural guidelines, while the narrative can be generally followed, there are too many changes in the order of events, character actions and names, and even the basic plot structure to call this

an adaptation. Indeed, only the introduction to the test itself and to Sturm’s journey can be easily recognized as a strong link to the Middle English Arthurian narrative poem it uses as a source.

Gawain’s failure is well-documented and well-known: he keeps the girdle that Bertilak’s wife assures him will save his life rather than give it to his host, as their deal required. Sturm’s failure is more subtle even than is Gawain’s. Sturm’s failure is perhaps even less of one, as he believes that he fails to keep his appointment with Vertumnus, but, in truth, Vertumnus was with Sturm at this time. Sturm is forced to fight a treant, a literal green knight made of trees and other greenery, and is wounded (Williams, 2003: 202–07). Sturm’s wound is healed while Vertumnus himself watches over Sturm and gives him three dreams of his father, Angriff, whom Vertumnus served under as a knight (Williams, 2003: 233). These three dreams are the equivalent of the three “strokes” given to Gawain by the Green Knight in the medieval poem. Gawain is not killed, and the Green Knight reveals the truth to him, just as Vertumnus reveals the truth about Sturm’s father and Boniface’s betrayal to the young man. While Sturm is technically correct when he wakes and muses that “I have missed my appointment with Lord Wilderness, or squandered it dreaming” (Williams, 2003: 243), it is Vertumnus’s “fault” that Sturm was not awake to meet the green man, just as the Green Knight knew and did not blame Gawain for keeping the girdle that would save his life. Both Gawain and Sturm fail, but only fail *a little*; their failures are miniscule when compared to the knighthoods’ failures at large, as no one else even attempted to live up to their respective Oaths and take on the “game” proposed by the courtly interlopers.

In case the Gawain appropriation was not clear enough, Williams makes his Middle English connections more explicit when he introduces Druidess Ragnell, a woman who is at certain times ugly and old and at other moments beautiful and young (Williams, 2003: 226). “The Marriage of Gawain and Dame Ragnelle,” an anonymous fifteenth-century poem which shares a source with Chaucer’s “Wife of Bath’s Tale,” tells of Gawain’s marriage to a “loathly lady,” Ragnelle, who is able to change her appearance in a similar fashion as the Druidess Ragnell is in Williams’s novel. The tempting of Sturm differs here, as Ragnell is not meant as a choice of fates in love. Rather, Vertumnus, via Ragnell, gives Sturm a choice of fates for his own life: to remain a man and never learn the truth of his father, thereby gaining the power to expose the traitor among the Knights of Solamnia *or* to embrace his “wound,” which is in truth a way of welcoming Sturm as Vertumnus’s successor as Lord Wilderness, thereby gaining all of Vertumnus’s powers and knowledge (Williams, 2003: 236–39). Sturm bids her to “Remove this thorn from my shoulder,” and when she refuses, his response is “To the last of this and anything […] I can choose” (Williams, 2003: 239). Sturm’s choice means that his fate is sealed: his future is set, and he will not attain knighthood until long after this adventure, much like Perceval. Unbeknownst to Sturm, but known

to Vertumnus, the knight-to-be also places himself on the path to his untimely death so that he may serve as an example for the Solamnics, who must learn to embrace change and turn away from politics and back to the Oath of honor.

Though Sturm is not a knight at the end of his adventure, the traitor is exposed by Vertumnus, clearing the honor of the knights. This change from the Gawain narrative is vital to Sturm's character, and as such is important to note. Sturm, exiled once more, is destined for other adventures, and, of course, his eventual Arthurian death. Sturm's "bending" of the Measure established in "The Exiles" is not at an end; in fact, he strives to live by the meaning of The Oath and the Measure rather than its words and denotations. I argue that Williams in particular appropriates Arthurian content to not only keep the legend alive, as Sanders would argue, and provide knowing readers "aha!" moments, as Raymond H. Thompson suggests is a driving force, but also to ground his own narrative of Sturm. Because of Williams, Arthurian content is now an intrinsic part of the *Dragonlance* saga, and the appropriated content lives on for as long as the novels are read and reread by fans, even if those fans are mostly unaware of the Arthurian sources. Perhaps those fans will seek out the sources, perhaps not. Even if they do not, the act of transference from Middle English verse to *Dragonlance* novel still occurred, and the Arthurian content remains a part of the narrative structure. However, I argue that when one writes of a knight – any knight – a reader automatically recalls what he or she knows about knights of any fashion – questing in particular, and considers what in fantasy and in Arthuriana is connected to such characters. It is because Arthuriana is such a pervasive part of our culture that anyone reading of questing knights like Sturm calls to mind legends of Arthur and his Round Table, which affirms Sanders's idea of keeping the myths alive and infinitely reusable.

Williams not only preempts such an association, but he encourages it by appropriating and reworking the Gawain narrative and giving a revised version to Sturm to provide a suitably "knightly" backstory for a character who dies halfway through the original trilogy, leaving his origins both mysterious and open. Williams, as a professor himself, presents his own familiarity with Arthuriana through his work in the *Dragonlance* setting, allowing both for readers unfamiliar with the *Gawain*-Poet to, as Raymond H. Thompson argues, go back and find medieval Arthurian works to read (Thompson, 1985). It is more likely, however, that Gawain's narrative, his journey from the only knight to take up an impossible quest to a knight who, though he has failed, has seen the kind of knight he is and strives to be better than he has proven himself to be. This is also the driving force behind Sturm's character arc: a man who is a knight in all but name strives to be worthy of the legacy his father left him, to mend the shattered and overly-strict Knights of Solamnia, who have proved wayward in their duties. Gawain, at the conclusion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* serves as a corrective force for himself, while Sturm serves as a corrective force both for himself and for

the tarnished Solamnic Order he holds so dear. Just as Gawain uses his failure to remind him to be better, Sturm uses his past as a way to seek to live up to The Oath and the Measure, to live by "my honor is my life" and help others to see that only through failure and the striving to do better can anyone achieve their goal – their grail. Such is why Williams used the *Gawain*-Poet, and Sturm is now a part of a long line of famous knights who, while far from perfect, are worthy of their legacies, both in literature and to readers.

Sturm's journey does not end with Gawain's narrative, however. Sturm has, in turn, been raised as Perceval, quested as Gawain, and learned as both men. However, Sturm has two other Arthurian roles to play: he seeks the truth of the gods as does Galahad, and dies as does Arthur – as a rallying point, as a legendary figure. Sturm's search for his father and his quest to become a knight is still not completed years after Williams's *The Oath and the Measure* and Paul B. Thompson and Tonya C. Cook's *Darkness and Light*. The original *Dragonlance* novels, *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, *Dragons of Winter Night*, and *Dragons of Spring Dawning* were written long before Williams's novel of Sturm, but they take place many years after Sturm's adventure with the green man. One of the first things the reader learns about Sturm in *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* is that he has still not found his father: "I heard rumors. Some say my father is dead. Some say he is alive […] But no one knows where he is" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 42). Angriff's fate has never been confirmed, not even by Weis and Hickman. Williams, though he writes of the three dreams given to Sturm that show him the siege of Castle Brightblade, never confirms that Angriff is alive or dead. In this sense, Williams, Thompson and Cook, and Weis and Hickman engage with the mystery of Arthur. It is the same as in Malory, who refuses to say one way or another if Arthur is dead or still alive in Avalon – merely saying that the Britons believe he is alive still and will return – so Angriff's fate is unknown. Angriff, like Arthur, has cast aside his wonderful sword and left his name and his legacy in the hands of his heir. Unlike Arthur, however, Angriff has chosen an heir who is as strong – indeed, much stronger – than he himself, and it is Sturm who does what Angriff could not: unite the knights of Solamnia once again.

Sturm's quest for his father is inexorably tied with his quest for the true gods and their ability to unite the Knights under their reign. In the world of *Dragonlance*, the gods left the world after the Cataclysm, when the Kingpriest of Istar demanded to become a god himself as he believed he knew better than the gods themselves. Angriff Brightblade still believed in the gods centuries after their alleged abandonment of the races of the world, and he passed that belief down to the young Sturm, who so fully conflated his father with the gods that, to him, finding one inevitably meant finding the other. As a result, Sturm chose to help Goldmoon, the first priestess of the true gods in hundreds of years: originally, he was merely helping a woman who needed aid, fulfilling his knightly Oath, but when she brought word of the gods, Sturm finally found the faith he had

been searching for, and took time away from his quest for knighthood to help spread word of the gods of light (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 40–41). While there is no physical Grail associated with this quest, the search for confirmation of faith makes Sturm a Grail Knight in much the same way as Galahad: though far from perfect, Sturm allows his faith, both in the gods and in the knighthood of his father, to guide his actions. And yet, during all of this, he is still not yet a knight. Like Perceval, he acts as one, follows their code of chivalry to the best of his abilities, but he is not made a knight until his deeds are nearly done. This amalgamation of Arthurian characters in one knight, while complicated both to trace and to explicate, is a perfect example of how Sanders's ideas of the appropriation of mythic elements works in literature. It must be remembered that, unlike Thompson, who argues that fidelity is key, Sanders states that "a myth is never transported wholesale into its new context; it undergoes its own metamorphoses in the process. Myth is continuously evoked, altered and reworked, across cultures and across generations" (Sanders, 2016: 81). The evolution of Arthuriana is not only what keeps it alive, but what causes it to remain a useful context and framework for modern and contemporary authors. Without the ability to appropriate, to use myths with inherent changes and reworkings, not only would Arthur's story die out, but knights like Sturm would have no contextual basis for their actions; he would be another warrior amongst warriors rather than a complex character with a specific destiny. Arthuriana's usefulness to modern writers, then, is its inherent knowability, its recognition to audiences. Authors, of course, use this to situate characters like Sturm in a lauded list of similar chivalric literary heroes. Sturm can thus enter into a literary conversation about knights with Arthurian contexts that can be traced to literary texts through the methodology presented herein, and a further, critical discussion of *Dragonlance* and Arthuriana can be found in the middle.

When Sturm is rejoined with his friends in Solace before their harrowing adventures which, ultimately, lead to his death, Caramon asks Sturm if he is a Knight of Solamnia. Sturm visibly reacts to this question, but does not answer: "Sturm's smile vanished. Ignoring the question, he caressed the hilt of his sword lovingly" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 42). It is important to note that *Sturm does not lie*. He never confirms that he is a knight, because he is not one; however, he also does not correct the assumptions of others, which might be seen as a lie of omission, if it can truly be called that. Perhaps this is his only real failure, and, like Gawain, he fails only a little. However, most surprisingly, it is Raistlin the wizard, the most unlikely champion for a knight, who comes to Sturm's defense in *Dragons of Summer Flame*, saying to Sturm's son:

> He lied to us. Sturm Brightblade was no more a knight than I was. He was made a knight only shortly before his death. All that time, he wore the armor, carried the sword […] and it was all a lie […] And do you know what? I liked

> him better after I discovered that […] Your father lied to every person except one – himself. In his heart, Sturm *was* a knight. He had better claim to that false title than many who held it for truth. Sturm Brightblade obeyed laws that no one enforced. He lived by a noble code in which no one else believed. He swore an oath that no one heard. Only himself […] and his god. No one would have held him to that oath, to the Measure. He did that himself. He knew himself.
>
> (Weis and Hickman, 2001: 491)

Weis and Hickman have done more here than they perhaps realize – or they have done exactly what they have meant to do. Laura K. Bedwell's issue with Arthur's Pentecostal Oath is that "Arthur is ultimately responsible for the enforcement of the Oath's penalties" should a Round Table Knight break it (Bedwell, 2011: 6), but the problem remains that "Arthur fails to carry out the Oath's provisions in full" and fails to hold the knights who break any of the strictures responsible for their actions (Bedwell, 2011: 7). Sturm has done what none of Arthur's knights – save the three Grail Knights, Bors, Perceval, and Galahad – can do, according to Bedwell: he holds *himself* responsible for his actions, for the Oath and Measure that he *was not required to follow* by anyone other than himself. Sturm becomes, if not the perfect Arthurian knight, at least a knight who can and does act responsibly when none of the true knights around him are held accountable. Much like the Pentecostal Oath of Arthur, the Solamnic Oath and Measure are not truly enforced when they should be, only when convenient. Sturm does not rely on anyone else – especially not a king – to hold him to his Oath. Sturm lived "my honor is my life," even to the point where Raistlin, a man Sturm barely tolerated in life, remarks on his resolve and knightly bearing. Like Perceval, Sturm is not a knight until the end – but he lived as one for as long as it mattered. Weis and Hickman have created a revised Arthurian knight, one who resonates with a flawed but striving humanity – and yet emerges as a near-mythic hero. What might be seen as a change to a "classic" character motif, the chivalrous knight, in both fantasy fiction and Arthurian literature can, of course, be shown to be not startling revelation at all, but an appropriated character trait from Middle English Arthuriana. Indeed, Margaret Weis's own admission that Sturm is a Perceval character could lead the reader to find that Perceval was not made a knight until his adventures were nearly over in the Middle English tradition, and so it should not shock them that Sturm is no different. What truly matters is that Sturm does not fail to act like a knight, and lives his own version of knighthood and honor, fully engaging with the rules of his own order and with the established orders of chivalry in Arthurian tradition.

In one of his more popular and oft-quoted annotations to *Dragons of Winter Night*, the second book in the *Dragonlance Chronicles*, Tracy Hickman writes of what he calls "children's tales," by saying that, "[they] have a staying power that far outlasts any other form" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 493). This proves

both their usefulness for situating other narratives as well as their ability to be easily recognized by large audiences. Hickman, in this annotation, references what Tolkien might call "fairy stories," but perhaps has a better definition in folktales, in myths and legends. Hickman states many times in similar annotations and convention interviews that he is influenced by every major mythos and legendarium and strives to adapt such stories into his work. Weis as well, in her brief correspondence with me, states that "Tracy and I were inspired by many myths and legends when writing the [*Dragonlance*] novels," and she includes the Matter of Britain in those myths and legends (Weis, 2019). One of the most famous parts of the Arthurian legend is, of course, Lancelot and Guinevere's affair, which also has a presence in the *Dragonlance* novels, but is revised in such a way as to become something more fitting with Sturm's knightly ideal.

In *Dragons of Winter Night*, Sturm comes to the defense of a mysterious elven woman in court. After their escape from the corrupt law-enforcement of the city of Tarsis, Sturm continues to assist the woman, who is revealed to be Princess Alhana Starbreeze, heir of the king of the Silvanesti elves (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 536). Because she will one day rule the elves as their queen, she is destined to marry an elf prince, a nobleman of her own race. Though she eventually does marry, uniting the two main races of elves – the Silvanesti and Qualinesti – Alhana did not marry for love. If she had, she would have married Sturm. Like Lancelot and Guinevere, Sturm and Alhana are thrown together by fate, and their attraction cannot be denied – though they can never give in to it. As Tarsis burns in dragonfire, the two are thrust together:

> Alhana, chaste maiden of a stern and rigid people, had long known when, where, and whom she would marry. He was an elflord, and it was a mark of their understanding that, in all the years since this had been arranged they had never touched […] Alhana looked up into Sturm's grieved face and saw etched there pride, nobility, strict inflexible discipline, constant striving for perfection – perfection unattainable. And thus the deep sorrow in his eyes. Alhana felt herself drawn to this man, this human. Yielding to his strength, comforted by his presence, she felt a sweet, searing warmth steal over her, and she suddenly realized she was in more danger from this fire than from the fire of a thousand dragons.
>
> (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 553–554)

Unlike Guinevere, however, Alhana does not give in to her desire. She knows that her people are more important than her own happiness, and Sturm's own destiny does not allow for such love. It is the fact that neither so much as speak of their desire to each other that makes this revised Lancelot-Guinevere affair much sadder and more pivotal to the world of *Dragonlance*: if they had given in, they would have doomed their world, just as Lancelot and Guinevere added to the downfall of Camelot. Sturm would not have united the Knights of Solamnia

and Alhana would not have united the elves. This relationship shows a courtly love situation that never reaches fruition, one that has many of the hallmarks of such twelfth-century relationships, but one that is never consummated. The love between an elf and a human, in this instance, will remain ever chaste, and perhaps purer because of it, providing a touchstone for both characters in the future.

However, Alhana does not forget about the human she loves. In *Dragons of Summer Flame*, Tanis Half-Elven, the only person who knew of Alhana and Sturm’s attraction, “wondered what Alhana, elf-queen of the Silvanesti, thought of the man she had married for the sake of politics. Had she come to love him as well?” (Weis and Hickman, 2001: 128). Alhana and her husband barely interact, and their child serves as the elven kingdoms’ heir; Tanis knows that her love is buried with Sturm Brightblade. The appropriation of the knightly love affair with a queen he cannot have is revised to become even more tragic than Lancelot and Guinevere’s: though their love caused the final dissolution of Arthur’s Round Table, they at least had each other, however briefly. Sturm and Alhana, in contrast, did not even have that. They merely have the memory of their love-at-first-sight romance that could never be, and Alhana, at least, must live with that knowledge. In this sense, the Arthurian appropriation is one of sorrow and loss. However, one of the most famous love affairs in literature helps to frame a similar narrative in the world of *Dragonlance* – a “children’s story” becomes context for a new relationship. Sturm’s true legacy, like Arthur’s, is his death and status as a unifier. The Knights of Solamnia are divided: the younger knights, led by Gunthar Uth Wistan – Angriff Brightblade’s old friend – are in favor of following The Oath and the Measure as Sturm does, holding oneself accountable and believing in the spirit of the words; the other faction, led by Sturm’s rival Derek Crownguard – nephew of Boniface, the traitor of Williams’s *The Oath and the Measure* – is in favor of the current practice of strict adherence to the politics of court and the application of The Oath and the Measure among the Solamnic nobility. According to Crownguard and his followers, Sturm has lived outside of Solamnia “for too long” (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 765) and does not understand that the knighthood is a political order. Sturm’s childhood away from court, like Perceval and Arthur, affects his way of seeing things: he is idealistic, and that ideal can only work if people hold themselves to the Oath, “my honor is my life,” and not to court politics and bootlicking. At Sturm’s trial for failing to follow Derek’s orders, events recounted in *Dragons of the Highlord Skies*, and for purporting himself to be a knight when he is not one, Sturm is unable to contend with the political situation (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 758–72). Like Perceval, he has no conception of being a knight in this scenario. In *Sir Perceval of Galles*, Arthur is astonished that Perceval’s mother has failed him so horribly, as “The childe hadde wonnede in the woode; / He knewe nother evyll ne gude,” (ll. 593–94) (Braswell, 1995). Perceval’s mother, Arthur’s own sister, did not teach him to be a knight. Likewise, Gunthar is saddened that Lady Ilys taught

Sturm how to be an ideal knight and not how to function in courtly politics. Without this training, Sturm may as well be the rustic that Derek believes him to be – at least until Sturm is made a knight.

Based on the testimony of his friends about his heroic deeds, Sturm, like Perceval is made a knight shortly before the end of his own story. Like Arthur, he helps Perceval because of his father's deeds (ll. 15773–84) (Braswell, 1995). So too does Gunthar assist Sturm because of Angriff (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 769–70), propping the younger man up on Gunthar's own word of honor and admitting him into the knighthood. Gunthar is also much like Arthur, as he is the one to use Sturm's memory as a rallying point for the restructuring of the Knights of Solamnia, as is revealed in *Dragons of Summer Flame*. It is said there that, since Sturm's death and under Gunthar's unified leadership, the knights "were now seen as protectors of the weak, defenders of the innocent. Wiser lords had risen in the ranks; the laws set down by Vinas Solamnus thousands of years ago – laws had been religiously, strictly, and some said, obtusely followed in the modern era – were being revised and modified, brought up to date" (Weis and Hickman, 2001: 173). It was not Gunthar alone that could have accomplished this, however. The knights needed a hero, a unifying mythic figure, to use as a rallying cry, and Sturm knew that such was his destiny. Just as Arthur was used as the focal point for chivalric tales and knightly quests in the twelfth century and beyond, so too was the story of Sturm used by the knights opposing the armies of darkness. The mythic narrative of Arthur is used by Weis and Hickman for their own purposes, to create a figure for the knights to look up to as a paragon. Sturm realizes that the Measure has failed the knights, but the Oath of honor remains (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 875), and his adherence to "my honor is my life" serves as the culmination of his character arc. It is only because he lived away from court that he could see the truth of the knights; he realizes that his time with Tanis and the rest of his friends from Solace has given him the perspective he needs, much like T. H. White's Arthur, whose lessons from the animals allow him to see the world like no one else, to try and fight for a better world.

Sturm's experience with other races, the poor, and his travels in distant lands force him to see that the individual is ultimately responsible for trying to fix the world, not moldy old laws. This is the knighthood Sturm's death brings into being, the same kind of unity that Tennyson sees Arthur bringing to his people in *Idylls of the King*. Sturm sacrifices himself on the walls of the High Clerist's Tower to give the knights time to regroup and for Laurana to figure out how to defeat the dragons (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 880–81). Sturm muses that "The Forestmaster said to us, in Darken Wood, that we should not mourn those who have fulfilled their destiny. Mine is fulfilled" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 881). Sturm means two things: his destiny of becoming a knight has been fulfilled with the help of Lord Gunthar, but Sturm also realizes that someone must serve as a catalyst for change in the Solamnics. Tracy Hickman writes in an annota-

tion that "Sturm's death was no whim – it was his destiny in the story and his greatest act of sacrifice. Sturm became the catalyst for the knights to finally be forged as one" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 883). Like Arthur, Sturm was destined to die. Like Galahad, he could only die after achieving his quest – for knighthood and for the true gods so that they could help the knights. Sturm is able to look back on the words of the Forestmaster from *Dragons of Autumn Twilight* and understand that she was referring to him and the fulfillment of the destiny the gods laid out for him. Sturm is killed by the Blue Dragon Highlord, his old friend – and mother of his son – Kitiara, and while "Sturm's sun shattered" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 885), his sword, the Brightblade, remains whole, proving that he did not fail in his task. As the legend goes, he may have died, but he did not break. The Brightblade endures.

Magic swords are a staple in fantasy novels, particularly those set in the worlds of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Such swords are, of course, an element of fantasy fiction made famous by Tolkien, from whom *Dungeons & Dragons* – and *Dragonlance* with it – sprung. We must remember, however, that Tolkien himself was influenced by medieval romances and appropriated their elements into his own work, most especially magic swords such as Excalibur and the sword of Galahad. These kinds of magic or holy blades are often connected to a single wielder or to a father and son as an heirloom and a sign of rightful inheritance. While Tolkien and the authors of *Dungeons & Dragons* had other such swords to draw on as well – particularly Gram, the sword of Sigmund and his son Sigurd – father and son are equally united by Uther's sword, which Arthur draws from the stone as a sign of his right to rule and as a sign of his true parentage.

In the novels of the *Dragonlance* saga, the sword of the Brightblade family, aptly called "The Brightblade," is a part of Sturm's inheritance from his father, who is lost and presumed deceased after the peasant uprising in their native Solamnia – later, the blade also serves as Sturm's inheritance to his own son, Steel. In the novel and the setting supplement *Lost Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home* by Margaret Weis, the Brightblade is given a suitable history and explanation of its powers. Weis writes that "the Brightblade is approximately 2,000 years old. Romgar Firesteel, a dwarven weaponsmith, crafted it for Berthel Brightblade as a reward for saving the dwarf's life" (Weis, 2007: 37). While a dwarven smith is no Lady of the Lake, the Brightblade, like Excalibur, has otherworldly, non-human origins, and serves as a symbol of heritage: Excalibur proves Arthur's might and right to rule while the Brightblade serves as Sturm's – and later his son's – right to the Brightblade name and the right to the honorable title of knight and hero.

Each blade is more than a mere symbol, however, Malory gives Excalibur and its scabbard special abilities: as the sword never fails Arthur and the scabbard – while Arthur has it – means he cannot be wounded (Malory, 2017: 44). The Brightblade has an edge that is "extremely keen" and can cut "through any-

thing lighter than plate armor as effortlessly as a knife cuts through warm butter […] the blade has been enhanced in a way that no ordinary weaponsmith could" (Weis, 2007: 37). While magic is not specifically mentioned – as knights would have naught to do with it – it is implied that it has been "enhanced" somehow to perform beyond the means of normal swords, and very few knightly blades, even in a fantasy setting like *Dragonlance*, are so powerful. Weis continues by saying, "Solamnic folklore says that the Brightblade cannot break as long as its wielder is pure of heart and follows the tenets of Vinus Solmanus [the founder of the Knights of Solamnia] – honor, justice, and compassion. However, if its wielder sways from the path of Good, the sword will shatter, cursing its wielder" (Weis, 2007: 38). Sturm obviously follows these tenants – embodies them, as does Perceval and Galahad – proving that he is, in fact, worthy of his father's legacy. Sturm makes mention of this "legend" of the sword in the first pages of *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, saying, "According to the legend, this sword will break only if I do" (Weis and Hickman, 2002: 42), reinforcing both the sword's mythic status as well as Sturm's own worthiness to wield it. It can be understood that only a true Brightblade is worthy of using the sword from which the family takes its name, much like the sword of Galahad in Malory, as he is the only one who can properly wield it – as Balin of the Two Swords found. The sword alone is like many other magic or blessed swords in fantasy fiction, but its association with an Arthurian amalgam like Sturm makes the connection to magic swords in the Matter of Britain.

In *The Oath and the Measure*, Sturm is given a false copy of his father's sword by Lord Boniface Crownguard, the traitor who caused Angriff's assumed death and uncle to Sturm's own rival to reclaim the knighthood for honor over politics (Williams, 2003: 52–53). Sturm does not realize that this blade is designed to break, to fail him; this is paralleled in Malory, when Arthur is forced – unknowingly – to fight Accolon, who wields the true Excalibur, as Arthur was given a fake by his sister in hopes that he would die. Though both Sturm and Arthur eventually reclaim their true swords, both men realize that there are traitors in their midst, and while Arthur overcomes his sister's plot, Sturm fails to expose Boniface on his own and is sent back into exile, all hopes of his knighthood vanishing for the foreseeable future (Williams, 2003: 292). Sturm is not, in fact, gifted with the true Brightblade until the end of Thompson and Cook's novel *Darkness and Light*. Angriff's armor and sword are left in the decayed husk of Castle Brightblade. Sturm's inheritance is conveyed by three simple words, "For My Son" (Thompson and Cook, 2003: 367). The words give him not only the armor of a knighthood he does not yet have, but the sword that proves his place as his father's heir and heir to the honor of the Knights of Solamnia – honor that Sturm will restore, in time. The Brightblade itself is Sturm's final connection with his father, just as Arthur only knew Uther by his legacy and by the sword he pulled from the stone.

The Arthurian appropriation, in the instance of the passing of the Brightblade line, signals a great change in the world of *Dragonlance*, just as Arthur’s passing heralded an end to a heroic age of chivalry. As Arthur’s Britain faded away, if indeed it ever existed, so too has the world of *Dragonlance* shifted to a world where heroes are made rather than born, where grand destinies no longer play a part in the world. In both cases, the myth has passed into the world of the real. The same can be said, perhaps of literary forms themselves: Arthurian tales took many forms over their long history of adoption and adaptation, and their appropriation into different genres and textual mediums has allowed for their continued survival. While the *Dragonlance* novels discussed here can be read without any real knowledge of Arthuriana – and, in fact, *are* widely read by such audiences – a larger understanding of Sturm’s characteristics and narrative journey can be found by paired readings with Arthurian sources. This follows the line of thinking that Julie Sanders establishes, and the ideas that I have endeavored to illustrate throughout this work by drawing connections between the works of the *Dragonlance* saga and Arthurian literature. The simple fact is that there is almost no critical work on the *Dragonlance* novels – most of the arguments of this text are my own observations and connections as I have sought to prove the appropriated content through the parallels explored herein. While plenty of work remains to be done, particularly with Sturm’s son, Steel, the enduring popularity of Arthur and the loyal fanbase of *Dragonlance* are entwined in a way that allows for the myth of Arthur to be carried forward in the legacy of Sturm Brightblade.

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Joyce Carol Oates's *Carthage* as a Modern Troilus and Cressida Story

Abstract: Both Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Joyce Carol Oates's *Carthage* are set in times of war, the Trojan War and the Iraq War, respectively, and both are associated with love on the one hand, and loss on the other. In fact, *Carthage* contains many echoes of the past, with the main characters of the novel, Juliet and Cressida Mayfield, bringing connotations with Chaucer's and Shakespeare's works, their father compared to an old Roman general, and Corporal Brett Kincaid likened to the hero of chivalric romances. The aim of this article is to argue that Oates's *Carthage* may be seen as a modern Troilus and Cressida story in that it presents aspects of medieval reality in a modern guise, with the most poignant and recurrent association being that between the "war on terror" and medieval crusades and the emotion dominating the characters' reactions being rage, an emotion which occurs in relation to the fires of passion and war in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, and Joyce Carol Oates's *Carthage*.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Joyce Carol Oates, medievalism, rage, Juliet, Cressida, war, 9/11, American society

Both Carthage and Troy are associated with passionate love, raging war, and imminent destruction. The latter was the site of the Trojan War and the setting for the story of Cressida's betrayal of Troilus, most famously narrated by Geoffrey Chaucer, Robert Henryson, and William Shakespeare.[1] The former is likewise known for the pairing of legend and romance through the story of its Queen, Dido, and her betrayal by Aeneas. It is also through the story of Saint Augustine's life that Carthage is associated with the consuming fires of passion, for it was on arrival in Carthage, a city in North Africa, that he

[1] For the development of the Troilus and Cressida story, see: *The European Tragedy of Troilus* (Boitani, 1989).

came to hear "a cauldron of unholy loves" and – being in love with the mere idea of love – felt a desperate need to fall into the snares of love (St Augustine, 1853: 29). It is the destructive ravages of passion which comes from love, grief and anger that this article is going to be concerned with, as described in Joyce Carol Oates's *Carthage* and earlier renditions of the Troilus and Cressida story.

Set in Carthage in upstate New York, the action of Oates's novel concentrates around the Mayfield family, the two Mayfield sisters in particular: Juliet, who is engaged to Corporal Brett Kincaid – a war veteran, recently returned from the Iraq War – and Cressida, who disappears under mysterious circumstances, casting suspicion on Brett. The names of the Mayfield sisters bring immediate connotations of love (Juliet) and betrayal (Cressida), as dramatized by William Shakespeare.[2] The Mayfields' firstborn child, Juliet, is presented as a twenty-two-year-old bride-to-be, while Cressida, three years her junior, as a lost girl, her mysterious disappearance in the vast expanse of the Nautauga State Forest Preserve propelling the action of the novel. The elder sister's iconic beauty contrasts markedly with the younger's androgynous appearance and comportment. The opening chapters of the novel construe Juliet as a fairy-tale heroine, filled with excitement and enthusiasm at the thought of the approaching wedding as she describes in detail the design of her bridal gown: "Ivory silk. Ivory lace. One-shoulder neckline with a sheer lace back. The pleated bodice is 'fitted' and the skirt 'flared.' The veil is gossamer chiffon. The train is three feet long" (Oates, 2014: 18). In contrast, Cressida is her direct opposite: she rejects the accoutrements of femininity as she does those of religious ritual, which is why she eschews any kind of engagement in her sister's nuptials. "She has refused to be my maid of honor," Juliet confesses, "she was scornful saying she hasn't worn anything like a dress or a skirt since she'd been a baby and wasn't going to start now. She laughed saying *weddings are rituals in an extinct religion in which I don't believe*" (Oates, 2014: 24). Associated through her name with instant and intense passion, Oates's Juliet is a sincere and avid worshipper of the religion of love, as well as of the Christian religion, her premarriage vow to her fiancé partaking of them both: "I pledge to you to be *your loving wife forever & ever Amen*. I pledge to you as to Jesus our Savior *forever & ever Amen*," she says (Oates, 2014: 17). Associated with betrayal through Chaucer's and Shakespeare's stories of faithful Troilus and unfaithful Criseyde/Cressida, Oates's Cressida too is not destined to find solace in the arms of her

[2] In *American Chaucers*, Candace Barrington notes the priority given to Shakespeare over Chaucer when it comes to the reception of English literature in modern American culture (Barrington, 2007: 1).

beloved.[3] Neither does she find solace in the Christian faith; instead, she dismisses religion as "a pastime for 'weak-minded' people" (Oates, 2014: 43).

The stark contrast between the two Mayfield sisters is underlined from the very beginning of the novel through the antonymic pairs of expressions used to define them. It is on numerous occasions that "beautiful Juliet" is contrasted with "cruel Cressida" (Oates, 2014: 44). While Juliet is "*the beautiful one*," Cressida is "*the smart one*" (Oates, 2014: 37). The elder sister is "always unfailingly courteous, and sweet" (Oates, 2014: 45), whereas the younger is resentful and "steeped in the ink of irony as if in the womb" (Oates, 2014: 36). From the perspective of their parents, Juliet is a bright and happy child, while Cressida is dark and twisty (Oates, 2014: 37). Their father, Zeno Mayfield, the fifty-three-year-old former mayor of Carthage, refers to the elder daughter as "his sweet honeybunch Juliet" (Oates, 2014: 40); Cressida, in contrast, is "a challenge to love" (Oates, 2014: 36). In an interview, Oates acknowledged her intention to create a fairy-tale situation in the novel through polarizing the main female characters into "beautiful" and "smart,"[4] and, in fact, both Juliet and Cressida are compared to "the daughters of a fairy-tale king" early in the novel (Oates, 2014: 36). This shows that Oates's medievalism creates a binarized view of the world, based on clear-cut oppositions, only to dismantle the binaries and re-create the world anew.

The first distinction created in the novel is that between the two Mayfield sisters and it echoes the twofold dimension of life as problematized in medieval romances: the idealistic and romantic vs the realistic and tragic. On the one hand, there is a taste of medieval romanticism in the description of Brett's instantaneous passion for Juliet (Oates, 2014: 140) and in the description of Juliet's growing love for Brett, which brings to mind the allegory of the *Roman de la Rose*: "Like a flower she'd opened to him. One of those roses with many petals wrapped around one another, enclosed in a tight little bud and then, who knows why, the warmth of the sun maybe, the petals begin to open, and open" (Oates, 2014: 141). On the other, there is a taste of medieval tragedy in Cressida's deep, secret, and unreciprocated attachment to Brett and her alienation from her family.[5] Another binarized distinction is drawn between "us and them," applying to the differences between religions, nations, and civilizations, differences that we

[3] The convention of spelling the heroine's name is Criseyde for Chaucer's and Cressida for Shakespeare's characters. I follow the convention while writing about a particular work, either Chaucer's or Shakespeare's; in other instances (i.e. when the heroine appears as a byword for inconstancy), I use the more common Cressida.

[4] An interview: Joyce Carol Oates discusses Carthage with Isaac Fitzgerald. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgN_GjAh3lg.

[5] Among other ancient and medieval echoes in the novel, there is a comparison between Juliet and the Unicorn of medieval Christian legend, between Zeno Mayfield – the father of the Mayfield sisters – and an old Roman general (Oates, 2014: 422), and between Brett Kincaid – Juliet's fiancé – and a "heraldic figure in an ancient frieze" (Oates, 2014: 368).

are "invited" to see by those politicians who – in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks – tend to deploy the analogy between the "war on terror" and medieval crusades. Bruce Holsinger addresses the question of why the attacks provoked such an immediate and deliberate appropriation of the crusading rhetoric in the following way: "the medievalism of 9/11 conspires with the white-hat–black-hat rhetoric of the war on terrorism by simplifying the complexities and binarizing the multiplicities that in reality subtend geopolitics" (2008: 471). The resulting dualism mobilizes the later medieval trope of *translatio imperii*, which Holsinger defines as "the translation or carrying-over of the Roman empire and its culture into a Christian guise" (Holsinger, 2008: 481), and turns it into the modern trope of the "clash of civilizations," staging a collective trauma (Biddick, 2017: 252).

In *Carthage*, Oates acknowledges the persistence of crusader medievalism and shows how the tendency to romanticize the reason behind the American engagement in the Iraq War is used in war propaganda and disseminated through the media.[6] Captured into a novelistic account, the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center is presented in the following way:

> Since the terrorist bombings of 9/11 the media had been filled with propaganda speeches by politicians, news of "weapons of mass destruction" hidden in Iraq, the horrific dictatorship of Saddam Hussein who'd seemed to be mocking his American enemies, daring them to declare war and invade. On TV Cressida had seen newsreel footage of President George W. Bush declaring to his American viewers that the terrorist enemy that had struck the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, was part of a vast fundamentalist-Muslim army determined to destroy our *American way of life*; gazing into the TV camera as if he were addressing very slow-witted and credulous individuals, the President said, deadpan: "They want to come into your home and kill you and your family" (Oates, 2014: 368).

Presented as inevitable and defensive, the war on terror – as described in the novel – draws thousands of young recruits, who join the army on the wave of patriotic fever.[7] Enlisting twelve days after 9/11, Brett Kincaid, Juliet's fiancé, is among the first soldiers to join the army (Oates, 2014: 146). Together with his fellow soldiers, Corporal Kincaid finds himself "in the land of the dead," which is the expression Oates uses in the title of Chapter Six, in which the atrocities

[6] Horswell defines crusader medievalism as "the use and memory of the crusades and crusading rhetoric and imagery in the modern period" (Horswell, 2018).

[7] On how medieval and ancient history has been used to lead people into war, see: Amy S. Kaufman and Paul B. Sturtevant, *The Devil's Historians. How Modern Extremists Abuse the Medieval Past* (Kaufman and Sturtevant, 2020). The rhetoric of the crusades in the context of the war on terrorism is discussed in the section "Medieval 9/11" (Kaufman and Sturtevant, 2020: 64–67).

of war are described (Oates, 2014: 130–171), and is repeatedly reminded by his commanders of his almost religious duty to save Christianity:

> The fight against terror is a fight against the enemies of U.S. morality – Christian faith. Somewhere in this God-forsaken place were the *imams* of the Al Qaeda terrorists who'd blown up the World Trade Center. Out of a pure hateful wish to destroy the Christian American democracy like the pagans of antiquity had hoped to do, centuries before. Ancient imperial Rome in the time of the gladiators – you would be required to die for your faith. It had been explained to them by their chaplain – this is a crusade to save Christianity. General Powell had declared there can be no choice, the U.S. will never compromise with evil. No choice but to send in troops before the *weapons of mass destruction* are loosed by the crazed dictator Saddam – nuclear bombs, gas and germ warfare. (Oates, 2014: 132)

As described by Oates, ideals such as "*Loyalty. Duty. Respect. / Service. Honor. Integrity. / Personal Courage*" (Oates, 2014: 303) prove nothing more than mere propaganda clichés or covers for privileged violence, which was perpetrated by medieval and modern "crusaders" alike. Writing about "the privileged practice of violence" in the Middle Ages, Richard W. Kaeuper provides historical and literary examples of barbaric actions committed by the crusaders (Kaeuper, 2006: 141, 147) and asks the provocative question if the medieval "army of God" should be referred to as *militia* or rather *malitia* (Kauper, 2006: 64)? He notes the prescriptive rather than descriptive nature of the chivalric ideals, such as prowess, generosity, helping the weak and poor, and argues that such high ideals were often drowned in the rage of the battle, which left seas of blood in its wake (Kauper, 2006: 145). Similarly, in his account of the historical precedents of Chaucer's Knight, Terry Jones refers to the crusaders as the angels of death, merciless and efficient killers, responsible for horrifying massacres (Jones, 1994: 87).

In *Carthage*, the dark side of modern crusading is revealed through Brett Kincaid's memories which are too vivid to erase, for they contain images of savage assaults on women – "Jesus! What they'd done. What they'd done *was*. Held her down. Jammed a rag into her screaming mouth. Taking turns with her. Grunting, yelping like dogs" (Oates, 2014: 130), children – "The girl was just a child not a teenaged girl like they'd been expecting, of which so many had been speaking *A girl! Sexy babe!* […]. In the culvert they dragged her about one hundred feet from the end of the village road and tried to bury her beneath mud-chunks and rocks and slats of a broken fence. One more God-damned task to be done once the high was over" (Oates, 2014: 135), as well as dead bodies – "From one of the (dead, blasted) insurgents they'd taken trophies: eyes, thumbs, ears. Entire faces sliced off though rarely in one place" (Oates, 2014: 133).

The war on terror, as experienced by American soldiers and described by Oates, creates "an army of the walking wounded" (Oates, 2014: 404), disabled veterans who are unable to return to the world of the living, for it is not possible for them to draw the line between the present and the past. Presented as cruel perpetrators of violence while in combat, they return from their "mission" with wounded bodies and souls. As revealed in the scraps of conversation between him and his wife-to-be Juliet, Brett Kincaid suffers from impairment of neurological function – "The doctor – neurologist – says it is a matter of *neuron-recruiting*. It is a matter of *new brain cells learning to take over from the damaged cells*. It is *neurogenesis*" (Oates, 2014: 21), as well as sexual – "We will do it. We will surprise them. In the rehab they have promised – the older doctor said, to me – *If you love your future husband and will not give up but persevere a pregnancy is not impossible*" (Oates, 2014: 22). His physiognomy is changed and his facial features may only be restored through multiple reconstructive surgeries – "the ears, the scalp, the forehead, the lids of the eyes. The throat beneath the jaw, on your right side. Except in bright light you would think it was an ordinary burn – burns" (Oates, 2014: 19). Moreover, injuries sustained during military operations leave him with a limp – "*You do not limp.* Only just – sometimes – you seem to lose your balance – you make that sudden jerking movement with your legs like in a dream" (Oates, 2014: 21). Inasmuch as they undermine Brett's self-image, physical injuries, however, are not as damaging as the post-traumatic stress disorder, from which he suffers and which is one of the social concerns that Oates addresses through her medievalism.

By incorporating the idea of the soldier crusader in *Carthage*, the American novelist may be drawing on a similar "cultural capital" that inspired medieval and early modern accounts of love and war, and yet in her narrative Oates does not appropriate Chaucer's and Shakespeare's storylines. Instead, she makes references to medieval characters and places them in a uniquely American context, "illustrating the adaptability of Chaucerian narratives and characters to key features of American ideology" (Barrington, 2007: 2). In the previously mentioned interview with Isaac Fitzgerald, Oates recalls how – while staying in a small town in West Virginia – she was emotionally moved by the sight of a number of young men in wheelchairs or on crutches and decided to model the character of Brett on such young war veterans, to whom she pays tribute in the following section of the novel:[8]

> Veterans: the country was filling up with them. In obscure rural areas of Appalachia, in Hispanic communities in the West and the Southwest, in the Great Plains states as in western and upstate New York veterans of the crusade against terror: the barely-walking-wounded, the (visibly, invisibly) maimed,

[8] An interview: Joyce Carol Oates discusses Carthage with Isaac Fitzgerald. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgN_GjAh3lg.

> 'disabled.' Driving along the river and into the city and through the working-class neighborhoods of west Carthage he [Zeno] saw them ever more frequently, young men, old-young men, on crutches, in wheelchairs. Dark-skinned, white-skinned. Casualties of war. Now that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were winding down, the veterans would be returned to civilian life, litter on a beach when the great tide has gone out. (Oates, 2014: 459)

In the same interview, the novelist also evokes Nina Berman's disturbing portraits of returned veterans, Marine Wedding in particular,[9] even though the wedding Oates refers to in her novel does not eventually take place, the engagement between Juliet and Brett Kincaid being broken off. Thus, if *Carthage* may be understood as a modern Troilus and Cressida story, it is in the sense of evoking the effect of war on the main characters and the repercussions of violence on the society. Oates addresses problems and concerns that are well familiar to the American audience, such as patriotism, sacrifice, and national duty. She explores the relationship between violence and masculinity, but does not fail to reflect on the notion of femininity either. In fact, Oates's medievalism relies on an attempt to recreate the traditional gender roles that were upheld in medieval romances, an attempt which again reveals a strong binarizing tendency.

Writing about nineteenth-century American medievalism, Amy S. Kaufman observes a tendency to imagine the medieval era as "a pristine space in which whiteness and masculinity assume a prevalence naturalized by the soft focus of medievalism's pseudo-historical lens" (Kaufman, 2017: 199). This kind of medievalism enforces rigid gender roles which are constructed in a very traditional way with heroes fighting to prove their manhood and heroines "remaining sheltered in their homes and serving as moral and spiritual centers of the family in order to enable the nobler sensibilities and chivalrous instincts of their sons and husbands" (Kaufman, 2017: 202). Kaufman notes that this fantasy of the Middle Ages, based as it is on male authority and female submission, is evoked to remedy society's ills and anxieties, such as the precarious status of masculinity and the threats to female purity, among others (Kaufman, 2017: 204). In fact, Oates's medievalism works to expose such anxieties and the danger of social classifications that assign meanings and roles to individuals and may lead to stigmatization, including self-stigmatization. In the novel, the Mayfields with their privileged place in the social system are construed as those who embody the spirit of superiority, which is denounced by those whom they disparage as "worse," such as Brett Kincaid: "*The Mayfields are snooty people living up there on the hill. They will look down on you like a dog – trained little mongrel-puppy*," his mother warns him (Oates, 2014: 136). It is Zeno Mayfield in particular who is characterized by what his daughter Cressida refers to as "delusions of grandeur"

[9] See Nina Berman's Photography, Marine Wedding, at: https://www.ninaberman.com/marine-wedding.

(Oates, 2014: 38), which also motivated his choice of her unusual name. And yet, as will be shown below, Zeno himself – however powerful he likes to see himself – proves much more fragile than his wife when faced with the disappearance of their daughter.

Also the story of Juliet and Brett reveals how the romantic dream of a future life together collapses under the weight of post-war reality, with their pre-war identities compromised. From the beginning of the novel Juliet identifies her primary role as that of a wife and – even though she hopes to find fulfilment in a teaching profession (Oates, 2014: 27, 45) – it is planning her wedding to Corporal Kincaid that is referred to as "the consuming passion of her life" (Oates, 2014: 45). She refers to sexual purity before the wedding (Oates, 2014: 18) and is prepared to play the role of the "angel in the house." What this means in reality, however, is being victimized by male violence – "*Don't* – please" (Oates, 2014: 20) – and excusing it in front of others: "What did I tell them, I told them the truth – it was an accident. I slipped and fell and struck the door – so silly" (Oates, 2014: 23). Cast in the role of a soldier crusader, Corporal Brett Kincaid is no Romeo. Neither is he a knight clad in a shining armor whose male authority is asserted through military actions against the enemy, but is instead a stress-disordered war veteran, prone to gratuitous violence against his beloved: "He could not comprehend, why he'd hurt her, then. […] First, knocked her away from him. A sharp little cry like an animal kicked. And her jaw bruised, dislocated" (Oates, 2014: 141). When seen from this perspective, the previously mentioned description of Juliet's wedding dress, with its aura of romance and magic, may evoke nostalgia for the "unspoiled" past, for the period of innocence which had been irrevocably lost. It is the experience of loss, which generates feelings of disappointment, grief and frustration, that is the catalyzer of events in the novel and it is feelings which reach the extremes such as rage that represent the reaction to the social concerns addressed in the novel.The initial words of the novel, "*Didn't love me enough. Why I vanished*," reveal that Cressida's rage grows out of a sense of rejection, which has been in fact inscribed in her unusual, but very telling name:

> Reporting to her parents, incensed: '"Cressida' – or 'Criseyde' – isn't nice at all. She's 'faithless' – that's how people thought of her in the Middle Ages. Chaucer wrote about her, and then Shakespeare. First she was in love with a soldier named Troilus – then she was in love with another man – and when that ended, she had no one. And no one loved her, or cared about her – that was Cressida's fate." (Oates, 2014: 38)

Feeling inferior to her sister Juliet, "*the beautiful one*," Cressida – "*the smart one*" – is overcome with a sense of injustice: "Why should her sister have so many friends, even these shallow, silly friends, while Cressida had so

few friends? – it was unjust" (Oates, 2014: 358). Cressida's feeling of alienation brings her closer to Brett, with whom she identifies, referring to both of them as "*misfits, freaks*" (Oates, 2014: 171). When she follows him to the Roebuck Inn and reveals her feelings only to be rejected, this marks the beginning of the catastrophe. As Oates says in an interview: "I wanted to write about a really serious and complex relationship that's basically one-sided – how much he means to her, and how he's almost like a lifeline. She sees him from a distance, and then at some misguided point in her life she approaches him, and that precipitates a catastrophe" (Labrise, 2014). In a later part of the novel, Cressida experiences another disappointment when she attends a university course and tries to attract Professor's Eddinger's attention – "*He is aware of me. He knows me*" (Oates, 2014: 372) – but is devastated when she does not obtain a passing grade for failure to meet the deadline (Oates, 2014: 375). Rather than grievance against the professor, she feels self-loathing and – running out of his office – hears a voice of disapproval in her head: "*Run run run you are so stupid, so ugly*" (Oates, 2014: 375). Unable to forgive herself for not being able to measure up to her own standards, Cressida longs for self-annihilation: "*Because the project is late it must be penalized. / Better for you to die. Never to have been born*" (Oates, 2014: 376). This shows that Cressida's rage is inwardly directed and may be described as a kind of "agitation that exists within" (Crabb, 1818: 654), which is characteristic of a soul in anguish and which grows out of resentment and intensifies with each disappointment that Cressida experiences. When she reveals her feelings to Brett – "*Brett please I know this*: *no one can love you like I can*" (Oates, 2014: 171) – only to be pushed away, she says: "*Never the one loved. Never the one adored. Better*, *then. Better to be carried away in the river like trash*, *and gone*" (Oates, 2014: 304).

Oates's description of Cressida's feelings brings to one's mind Chaucer's and Shakespeare's renditions of female rage which in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is related primarily to grief – this is shown in Criseyde's reaction to the news about her forthcoming exchange. On learning about the decision of the Trojan Parliament, Criseyde decides to wear black clothes as a sign that she no longer belongs to this world (*TC*, IV, 778–780) and she makes a bequest of her heart and "woful goost" (*TC*, IV, 785) the way a dying person disposes of his/her possessions – and in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* to personal disappointment with the beloved person and a feeling of being rejected.[10] While Chaucer's Troilus tries to find a way of resisting the decision of the Trojan Parliament and even considers creating uproar in Troy, killing Diomede and stealing Criseyde away (*TC*, V, 43–49), in Shakespeare's play Cressida's beloved makes no such attempts, which leaves the heroine devastated. "I have forgot my father. / I know

[10] Quotations from *Troilus and Criseyde* come from Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer.*

no touch of consanguinity; / No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me / As the sweet Troilus" (*Troilus*, IV, ii. 97–100), she says, unable to believe that her beloved is giving her up without a fight.[11] Not only that, but he also starts questioning her sense of loyalty and truth. His repetitive and almost mantra-like reiteration of "Be thou true" (*Troilus*, IV, iv. 58–67; 74), which she finds offensive – "O heavens, 'Be true' again?" (*Troilus*, IV, iv. 74), leads straight to the culmination of Cressida's rage and frustration, as seen in her bitterly accusatory "O heavens! You love me not" (*Troilus*, IV, iv. 82). This construes Cressida's rage as a reaction to feeling doubly betrayed, first by Troilus's inaction against her exchange, and secondly by his doubts concerning her loyalty.

It is the sense of multiple betrayal and rejection that has been inscribed in the name "Cressida" that Oates assigns to her heroine, together with the feeling of rage against it. Inasmuch as the modern Cressida succeeds in escaping from home – albeit to be later reunited with her family – she cannot escape her doomed reputation, for – paradoxical as this might sound – in her attempt to reject the associations implied in her name, she proves to embody them all. Thinking of herself as betrayed and unloved, she finds it difficult to realize that she is in fact a betrayer herself, with her decision to abandon her family being an act of utter selfishness. As Cressida runs away from her life, she leaves behind "a river of grief" (Oates, 2014: 474) and a desperate search for her begins, which generates extreme emotions. When Cressida's father, Zeno Mayfield, spots a shape that resembles a girl lying motionlessly on the bank of the stream, he breaks into a heedless run that takes him to the carcass of a partly decomposed deer. In his breathless run, Zeno is like a wild beast: "Rivulets of sweat ran into the father's eyes burning like acid. He was running clumsily downhill, sharp pains between his shoulder blades and in his legs. A great ungainly beast on its hind legs, staggering" (Oates, 2014: 14). On seeing the hideous carcass, Zeno cries out in horror and collapses under the weight of his rage and grief: "It is a terrible thing how swiftly a man's strength can drain from him, like his pride" (Oates, 2014: 15). One of the witnesses of his collapse explains to Zeno's wife the dramatic physiological changes that come with an onslaught of violent passion: "Zeno had gotten overheated. Over-tired. Dehydrated" (Oates, 2014: 33).

In her account of Zeno's emotions and states of mind after his daughter's disappearance, Oates may be drawing upon her own experience of bereavement, which she describes in *A Widow's Story: A Memoir*, written in memory of the novelist's deceased husband, Raymond Smith, and published three years before *Carthage*. Describing the raging despair she felt after her husband's death of complications following pneumonia, Oates refers to herself as "shivering in a rage of futility" (Oates, 2011: 108), a rage which is also directed at

[11] Quotations from Shakespeare's play, referred to in parenthesis as *Troilus*, have been taken from David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare.*

her late husband himself, whom she reprimands for being careless with his life. She conceives grief as an emotion of epic proportions, requiring "the strength of an Olympic athlete" (Oates, 2011: 119) and likens her bout of fury to an animalistic rage. This is how Oates describes her feelings after an incoherent conversation with her doctor, in which he suggests that Raymond Smith was too tired to fight off the infection and gave up to die: "Then suddenly, I am so angry. I am so very angry, I am furious. I am sick with fury, like a wounded animal. A kick of adrenaline to the heart, my heart begins thudding rapid and furious as a fist slamming against an obdurate surface – a locked door, a wall" (Oates, 2011: 159).

The novelist may also have been inspired by medieval and early modern accounts of violent emotional outbursts, which were often presented in animalistic terms, the animals most frequently evoked in this context being lions, wolves, bears, boars, and bulls (*OED*, 1989: 116).[12] Chaucer's Troilus, for instance, having learned about Criseyde's imminent departure, hurries home, locks himself in his chamber and rages like a wild bull pierced by a spear: he roars in lamentation about his fate, flings himself around the room, beats his breast with his fists and – in an attempt to destroy himself – repeatedly pounds his head against the wall. In "the furie and al the rage" (*TC*, IV, 253), the lover resembles a wild beast. The carefulness with which he barricades himself against the outside world might testify to the intensity of his pent-up feelings, but it also demonstrates his selfishness and inadequacy of his response. After all, it is a time of war and people are dying. Would it not be more appropriate for Troilus, the son of Priam, King of Troy, to assume responsibility for the city and his people (Turner, 2019: 273)? While it is true that the rush of energy that comes with rage leads Troilus on a battlefield and he is indeed described as mad in arms (*TC*, I, 479), his fighting fervor is short-lived. Inspired by a desire to impress the lady rather than to protect the town against the Greeks, Troilus fights only "[t]o liken [please] hire the bet [better] for his renoun" (*TC*, I, 481). Other than that, he neglects his knightly duties and discounts all responsibility (*TC*, I, 444). When Pandarus visits his

[12] Such a conceptualization of rage is based on a belief, commonly held in the Middle Ages, that the human passions arise in the irrational or appetitive part of the soul, which belongs to non-rational animals and is by definition indifferent to reason (Plato, 1973: 130). And even though emotions should be ruled by reason in the same way as a good horse obeys the charioteer in Plato's famous parable, often they are not. While Plato described rage as "the upshot of the charioteer of Reason losing control of the spirited white horse of the passions" (Hacker, 2018: 260), modern psychologists talk about emotions "hijacking" our rational thinking processes (Goleman, 1995: 13–29). In both medieval and modern literature, men experiencing outbursts of rage or any other sudden, explosive discharges or psychic tension are described in animalistic terms, drawing upon Plato's idea that when reason is asleep, "then the wild beast within us […] starts up and having shaken off sleep, goes forth to satisfy his desires; and there is no conceivable folly or crime […] which at such a time, when he has parted company with all shame and sense, a man may not be ready to commit" (Plato, 1973: 264).

lovesick friend, for instance, he finds him lying in his chamber "as style as he ded were" (*TC*, I, 723). His rage, therefore, can be seen as a repetitive, albeit episodic, phenomenon. It appears as an immediate and direct response to occurring events and is channeled into short-lived action.

As presented in *Carthage*, rage is triggered by events that threaten the Mayfield family's safety and directed against those who are said to be associated with these events, such as Corporal Brett Kincaid, in whose company Cressida was last seen, as well as Brett's mother, Ethel Kincaid, with the most emotionally reactive person being Zeno Mayfield. As he approaches Ethel Kincaid to receive information about Brett's whereabouts, Zeno feels "pent-up fury" (Oates, 2014: 81–83) and in fact, his rage against the Kincaids never abates. He feels it when Brett is suspected of Cressida's murder, when he confesses, and finally when he finds out that his wife has been diagnosed with cancer: "Zeno was sick with fury anew, at Kincaid. Who'd killed his daughter, and now was killing his wife" (Oates, 2014: 439). Furthermore, Zeno's rage turns against anyone who might try to excuse Brett, including his own wife, Arlette, whose attitude towards Kincaid is much more forgiving. Her words "He's sick – he's a victim, too. […] We must try to forgive him" pierce him through and he blunders out of the room (Oates, 2014: 433). "A wounded bear on its hind legs baited and blinded beyond endurance, desperate to escape but where to escape?" (Oates, 2014: 433–434). Zeno's rage against his wife turns into hatred, for he cannot forgive Arlette for "forgiving" their daughter's suspected murderer (Oates, 2014: 453) and likewise he cannot forgive himself for being too weak to take revenge, even though he cannot erase his vengeful feelings: "the feeling of outrage, the wish to exact blood-revenge, is not easily quelled" (Oates, 2014: 454).

Similarly to Chaucer's Troilus, Zeno Mayfield is described as particularly prone to excess – "Zeno Mayfield was a man who had to be prevented from pushing himself too hard. As if he had no natural sense of restraint, of normal limits" (Oates, 2014: 35) – including excessive feelings which "rose in him like bile" (Oates, 2014: 62), giving him a primitive, animalistic appearance. His reaction to the account of Brett Kincaid's testimony at the Sheriff's Department is described in the following way: "Zeno was trembling with rage, indignation. His hands clenched and unclenched like the claws of spastic sea-creatures" (Oates, 2014: 105). Interestingly, he can only justify such intense, disproportionate feelings in himself, but not in others, especially not in his wife, in whom they amount to catastrophizing, hysterical alarms (Oates, 2014: 74). Zeno's propensity for strong feelings in reaction to unforeseeable occurrences is described as resulting from his meticulousness and desire to control and oversee things (Oates, 2014: 12). That is why his rage is immediately channeled into action; it provides the energy needed to overcome a sense of helplessness that comes with loss. While he likes to think of himself as strong and protective (Oates, 2014: 12), Zeno's greatest worry is that he will not be able to safeguard the welfare of his family (Oates,

2014: 31), while the truth is that it is his wife who is like a fortress with her arms offering him protection against the outside world, as well as against his own self-destructive impulses: "Indignant and belligerent in public, Zeno was susceptible to weakness and trembling in the privacy of his home, in his wife's consoling arms" (Oates, 2014: 107). It is Arlette that heals his wounds, for Zeno is often described like a wounded animal (Oates, 2014: 109, 114), and filters information that may reach him: "I didn't want to wake Zeno, you know how excitable he is …," she tells Juliet when she finds her sister Cressida missing (Oates, 2014: 72); "*You must prepare Zeno. He will not be able to prepare himself*," she tells herself after she learns of Brett Kincaid's testimony (Oates, 2014: 182); "I didn't want to worry you, Zeno. You've been so – you have a tendency to be so –," Arlette explains why she did not share the cancer diagnosis with him (Oates, 2014: 439).

Through the example of Zeno's emotional outbursts, Oates also shows the propensity of rage to blind the eye of judgement when he wrongfully assumes that his daughter had been murdered by Brett:

> As a political person, as a liberal, Zeno Mayfield was sympathetic with their [the veterans'] lot. He knew, the federal government could never begin to repay the veterans for all they'd sacrificed in the naivete of their patriotism. Yet, as a father, he felt an unreasonable rage. They'd learned to kill in the wars and they'd brought their killing-appetite home with them and his daughter had been murdered by one of them, a killing machine gone amok. (Oates, 2014: 459)

Even though Brett Kincaid confesses to having perpetrated the crime, giving what is referred to as "a long disjointed candid and self-incriminating confession" (Oates, 2014: 459), he does so because his disordered mind produces fake images of killing Cressida – "Must've been a dream he had buried her alive. Mouth filled with earth but trying to scream. He woke screaming in terror struck at her with the shovel" (Oates, 2014: 155) – images which, when interlaced with the memories of atrocities he actually witnessed in Iraq, are situated on the same plane of reference and taken for real.

The story of Corporal Brett Kincaid's rage slowly unfolds itself through third-person accounts, such as the already mentioned scraps of conversation between him and his wife-to-be, Juliet, as well as through the reports of his behavior while being detained – "he'd been 'agitated' and 'belligerent' and tried to fight the deputy who restrained him" (Oates, 2014: 85) – and interviewed at the police headquarters: "His behavior was 'erratic.' Several times he broke down sobbing. Several times he flew into a rage" (Oates, 2014: 103). His is a clinical kind of rage diagnosed in patients with post-traumatic stress disorder:

> The victim of the stress disorder often tends to react with rage and guilt. The rage exists simultaneously at many levels. It is partly the result of the narcissistic injury at contemporarily being an incompetent individual. […] Behaviorally, the rage almost seems to take the form of a need for revenge, i.e., to reverse feelings of helplessness and impotence so that another is now the victim. (DeFazio, 2012: 39)

Related to stress disorder, Brett's rage is directed at anyone who, albeit unintentionally, implies his limitations or inadequacies, be it his fiancée, Juliet, or her sister Cressida, who comes to the Preserve with him, uninvited and unwanted: "Laying a hand on his arm, rousing him to desire. The angry desire of the cripple, whose potency is fury charged hotly in the throat" (Oates, 2014: 178).

Seen as a consequence of his war experiences, Kincaid's outbursts of rage are momentary and out of character for him. In the Clinton Correctional Facility at Dannemora, where he serves his sentence, he is liked and trusted, regarded as "cooperative" (Oates, 2014: 404), which is why "[f]irst time anyone saw him in a rage – cell mate, fellow inmates, COs who'd come to trust and to like him – was astonished, disbelieving. *Kincaid*? *Him*?" (Oates, 2014: 403). While there is not enough evidence in the novel to show that Brett had what the specialists refer to as a premorbid personality that "predisposes them to developing posttraumatic stress disorder" (Austrian, 2005: 15), we learn of his sense of instability – "[w]ithout both parents you don't feel confident you know what *normal* is. Like walking on a tilting floor but you can't gauge in which direction the floor is tilting" (Oates, 2014: 137), and deference or inferiority with respect to the Mayfield family, which might have enhanced his resentment of them.

Through the story of Brett Kincaid's military engagement in Iraq and later guiltless imprisonment, Oates raises important social issues when she describes how Cressida, during her absence from home, visits a Death Row at the Maximum Security Correctional Facility for Men at Orion, Florida. Accompanying the Investigator, as Professor Cornelius Hinton is known, Cressida, now under the name of Sabbath McSwain, serves as his assistant on a project whose aim is to end capital punishment through exposing the inhumanity of botched executions and creating "intellectual outrage" (Oates, 2014: 249). Fighting for social justice on behalf of Hinton, Cressida realizes the injustice of Brett's incarceration for the crime he had never perpetrated. The experience of the execution chamber, which she is made to visit, has a transformative effect on her, resembling a symbolic death and resurrection: "Since having entered the execution chamber at Orion, she was beginning to see differently. She was beginning to wonder if her behavior had been a primitive sort of revenge for their failure to love her" (Oates, 2014: 328). By the time Cressida returns home, however, her family has dissolved, for her parents have separated and her sister Juliet has left behind her life with Brett and moved away to be married to another man.

If the Mayfield family may be seen as a microcosm of the society, their family problems represent ills that beset society, with the central weakness being lack of love. "Encrypted in Oates's narrative is perhaps a warning of the decline of America and the West's own empire. The lost child reveals (or 'betrays') the vacuum within this empire: an absence of love that generates deceit and betrayal, and ultimately violence and death," as Froud notes (2017: 98). Accordingly, if *Carthage* may be seen as a version of the Troilus and Cressida story, it captures a self-destructive impulse which may be observed in both cities, the ancient Troy and the modern Carthage, New York. In her analysis of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Marion Turner conceives Troy as a deeply divided city, reminiscent of Chaucer's London, in which individual allegiances were as complicated as in ancient Troy, and the gap between the surface and the underlying reality equally pronounced. She says: "Throughout *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer goes out of his way to emphasize the negative aspects of Troy, focusing much more attention than Boccaccio does on Troy as a city that is internally divided and responsible for its own destruction, and insistently reminding us of the Trojans' wilful ignoring of the ominous example of Thebes and its fall" (Turner, 2019: 271). A similar point has been made about Oates's *Carthage*. Referring to the connotations that the title of the novel carries, Robert A. Douglas writes about the salt that the Romans ploughed into the fields of ancient Carthage so that nothing could grow on them and compares the Roman destruction of Carthage with the impact of war on the modern American town described by Oates. The story "is about the damage individuals inflict on one another and the toxic repercussions of war in a small American town," he says. "The individuals most affected are either forcibly relocated or move away so that they can get on with their lives. Metaphorically, Carthage has become covered with salt" (Douglas, 2014).

Oates's Carthage is a place, in which the horrors of war, albeit hidden behind the propagandist clichés, affect not only the soldiers, but their families too and, in a broader sense, the whole American society. War, even if fought in a good name, produces multiple casualties and a confusion of moral categories, with the boundary between the betrayer and the betrayed or the victim and victimized becoming less and less clear. To a larger extent than Chaucer, Oates focuses on a collective rather than individual trauma and exposes the distance between high ideals in the service of a moral cause and the awful actuality of war, with lives sacrificed in the fulfilment of these ideals. By situating modern warfare in the context of medieval crusading, the novelist universalizes the problem of violence and asks the question if evil will ever end. From one perspective, evil is inscribed in the history of man in a similar manner that the idea of destruction has been inscribed in the *loci* of Chaucer's and Oates's stories, for it is perhaps not coincidental that Carthage rhymes with breakage and wreckage while Troy with destroy and that the concept of rage is encrypted in the title of the modern novel (c-a-R-t-h-A-G-E). From another perspective, Oates does highlight

the transformative and therefore redeeming potential of extreme experiences in making Cressida return home a changed person, even if she had to be "murdered" in order to be born again. Thus, there are no partial measures when it comes to repairing wrongs, Oates seems to be saying, and a complete renewal is not possible without a prior and complete destruction.

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Echoes of Medieval and Pre-Modern Animal Trials in the Interlude Declamatio sub forma iudicii (1735)

Abstract: *Declamatio sub forma judicii* can be found in the *Graudenz Codex* (1731–1740). It is an interlude that jokingly reports an animal trial. The interlude is a humorous treatment of the historical trials on animals that continued from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. On the one hand, such eighteenth-century discussions of animal trials continued the medieval tradition. This would confirm the diagnosis about the existence of the "long Middle Ages", especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where the cultural trends could be somehow belated in comparison to those in the West. On the other hand, perhaps writing about animal trials in the eighteenth century was already a form of medievalism. High culture propagated anthropocentrism in its thinking about animals, while folk culture entailed anthropomorphism. In animal trials animals are treated as subjects to the same regulations as humans, which means that they were seen as very much similar to humans. The eighteenth-century interlude recreates this tradition, but it is a source of satirical laughter.

Keywords: animal trials, human-animal divide, interlude, anthropomorphization

Medievalism is going to be understood here as "manifestations of the middle ages in postmedieval times" (Matthews, 2015: 1). The cultural phenomenon has had a long history. It may safely be assumed that it existed in all the historical periods that followed the Middle Ages, since there were returns to the cultural period from the Renaissance onwards; furthermore, even the late Middle Ages had its medievalisms. Although "medievalism can exist perfectly independently at any point in time", as Amy S. Kaufman maintains (Kaufman, 2010: 2), its versions were always marked by the cultural period in which they were created. It is debatable whether *Declamatio sub forma judicii* from the *Graudenz Codex* (1731–1740) is an instance of medievalism, defined by Thomas A. Prendergast

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and Stephanie Trigg as a form of return to the Middle Ages "activated by a desire to connect in some way with this period" (Prendergast and Trigg, 2019: 3). On the one hand, the tradition of holding animals on trial continued from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century (Dinzelbacher, 2002: 405), and in Central and Eastern Europe the so-called "long Middle Ages" was observable, probably due to the belatedness of various cultural trends in the part of the world. This would mean that the eighteenth century continued the medieval tradition as far as animal trials were concerned. On the other hand, if medievalism "embraced playful, . . . imaginative and creative practice" (Prendergast and Trigg, 2019: 3), the interlude in question was a playful recreation of the historical animal trials and it imaginatively dealt with the tradition by showing it from the humorous perspective. The play thus both continued the historical animal trials and saw them from a more Enlightenment than medieval perspective, since *Declamatio* satirized the trials and returned to what was treated very seriously in the past, while this seriousness waned in the eighteenth century. The legal form of trials, which could otherwise be discussed as one of the many legal perspectives on animals, found its literary expression in this manner.[1]

If we treat the play as a form of medievalism, this *intermedium*, as it is called in the text, returns to the medieval question of what the human-animal divide is like. The interlude presents an attitude to how humans and animals are similar to each other and how they differ. Consideration on the human-animal divide, also called the Great Divide, already started with Aristotle and his discussion of how humans differed from animals. Aristotle attributed a rational soul only to humans, while animals had a vegetative soul (Preston, 2019). The vision of animals as different from humans was continued by some philosophers, such as Francis Bacon, and inside the culture of the courts, while folk culture attributed human qualities to animals in the form of their anthropomorphization. Within the folklore part of the medieval and pre-modern culture it was believed that animals were not radically different from humans. This line of thinking was continued by another set of philosophers, with Michel de Montaigne as the most famous representative of the affirmative attitude to animals.

In the Middle Ages beasts lived closer to humans than animals do now and they had various practical roles to play in human lives. Susan Crane called the co-existence of humans and animals in this world "cohabitation" (Crane, 2013: 11–41). In the household the role of such insects as bees was invaluable, hence this is probably why they were introduced as characters into the eighteenth-century interlude. Horses were, on the one hand, an important workforce, but, on the other, their coexistence with humans in chivalry was theorized in manuals and

[1] For a different legal perspective on animals, i.e. the literary animal testaments that assumed that animals had the right to bequeath their bodily parts to other creatures, see: Taylor (2015: 270–290).

treatises, as they were deemed as the most noble of animal species.[2] In courtly literature they were seen as not subservient to humans, but similar to them in diverse ways. Various other species were domesticated, while the practice of pet-keeping became an established fact. At first hunting dogs started to be taken care of when they grew older. Already ancient philosophers, such as Lucrece (97–55 BC), saw that humans had a debt to pay back to dogs, since infirm dogs should be protected in return for their previous service (Preston, 2019). Medieval aristocracy, but not only them, started to protect their elderly dogs, which began the practice of pet-keeping.[3] Affection was not attached to this pet-keeping yet, but it gradually changed, as the example of Chaucer's Prioress shows. Chaucer famously recorded Prioress's affectionate attitude to dogs as pets in his *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales.* The Prioress was endowed with sentimentalism in the treatment of her lap dogs:

> Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
> With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
> (*CT* I: 146–147)

She treated her dogs as if they were her children. She fed them wastel-bread, the second in quality after *demeine*, the Lord's bread. Wastel-bread was a fine wheat bread, probably white, found only on the tables of the well-to-do (Bowden, 1967: 99). Giving roast meat to dogs was unthinkable at the time, as Muriel Bowden explains (Bowden, 1967: 99).

The type of pet-keeping that the Prioress practices is condemnable, but it simultaneously appears to be an inseparable part of courtly life in the Middle Ages. As a representative of clergy, the Prioress is chastized for the practice of pet-keeping, which was frowned on in the case of courtly ladies and forbidden in the case of nuns (Bowden, 1967: 98). The belief in the separateness of humans and animals was not an impediment in keeping close physical contacts with one's pets or the conviction that emotional contact with them was possible. Preston summarizes this by claiming that on the one hand "medieval minds" were anxious "in the pursuit of delineating the separation between human and animal", but on the other the physical closeness with animals led to the spiritual (and ultimately emotional) closeness (Preston, 2019). Animals were loved by medieval people, as the evidence of bestiaries and religious texts shows (Alexander, 2008: 15), whereas there existed prohibitions as to who should keep pets and how pets should be treated.

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[2] For a discussion of many of the medieval sources on horsemanship see Anastasija Ropa's monograph (Ropa, 2019); also Jill Mann writes that "the relation of knight and horse is the most densely represented of all cross-species interactions" (Mann, 2013: 137).

[3] Albrecht Classen discusses the situation of hounds and dogs in the life of a medieval court (Classen 2010: 27–28).

The folkloristic attitude to animals was different from the conventional courtly one, since anthropomorphization was permanently present in it. In antiquity the approach existed in beast fables. Aesop may have been a physical person who lived in Athens in the sixth century BC (Mann, 2009: 2), even though there are no texts composed by Aesop preserved. The first "Aesopian" collection was written in Latin in the first century AD by Phaedrus (Mann, 2009: 3). The function of beast fable was to warn against some action in a specific historical situation (Mann, 2009: 5). In the Middle Ages the tradition of beast fable was continued, among others, by Marie de France in *Fables*, while other authors wrote beast epics, bestiaries, animal debates (such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*), and animal narratives. All of them included elements of anthropomorphism. The texts about Reynard the Fox, written in "branches", were animal narratives, but not beast fables. They were first put down as the cycle *Romans de Reynart* (1175–1250) by various authors and some of them included the topic of putting the mischievous Reynart on trial. Jill Mann calls the whole cycle "the comic tales of Reynardian trickery (renardie)" (Mann, 2009: 221). In *Jugement de Reynart* he was to be punished for the sexual intercourse with a married she-wolf, and he went through the accusation and trial, at which he gave a defense speech (Dufournet, 1985).[4] In *Le siege de Maupertuis* Reynart was to be captured and tried for his crimes, but it ended only with his victory and him hurting the lion who laid siege as king (Dufournet, 1985). The narrative humorously treated the question of how animals, behaving like humans, should be punished for their crimes. The historical animal trials were not humorous at all, but they evolved around the same question: how culpable animals were for what they did.

Animal trials undoubtedly belonged to folklore with its treatment of animals as similar to humans; hence it may be assumed that the folkloristic attitude did not consider the Great Divide to be valid. In the study *Premodern Animal Trials as Ritual Drama* Andrzej Dąbrówka lists four types of trials against animals. Animals were usually tried for murdering humans, bothering them as pest, and being subject to sexual intercourse by humans, which was known as the sin of *bestialitas*, bestiality (Dąbrówka, 2002: 23–24). The tradition of putting animals on trial did not start in the Middle Ages, but it developed at the time. Holding trials over animals started in the Greek antiquity, since already Plato in *The Laws* advised his readers to put animals on trial, execute them if they were guilty, and then dump their corpses behind the borders of the polis (Ossowska, 1983: 399). Then the tradition of animal trials was continued in the early Middle Ages, since in 824 AD in the Italian Aosta

[4] *The Vox and the Wolf* from MS Digby 86 is a Middle English version of one of those animal narratives, Branch IV of *Le Roman de Renart* (Mann, 2009: 229) and yet another beast epic (Mann, 2009: 230).

region moles were sentenced to death (Dąbrówka, 2002: 23). Both secular and ecclesiastical trials were held. In the secular ones single representatives of the animal world were sentenced, while the ecclesiastical trials put on trial pest and insects as those which plagued humans.[5] This is how Peter Dinzelbacher writes about them:

> Two forms of animal trials must be distinguished. The first comprised lawsuits brought against domestic animals for wounding or killing a human being . . . [408]. The other form of animal trial comprised lawsuits against collections of noxious insects, mollusks, and rodents who were capable of large-scale damage to such victuals as grapes, fish, grain etc. These pests, among them locusts, leeches, rats, and mice were nearly always summoned before an ecclesiastical tribunal, which, after due deliberation, usually resorted to excommunication and exorcism. Contrary to secular trials, ecclesiastical ones never dealt with an individual animal (Dinzelbacher, 2002: 407–408).

The trials were utterly serious, since they were carried out by professional lawyers, validated by bishops, and then often discussed by university professors (Dinzelbacher, 2002: 406).[6] Whether or not in the eighteenth century those trials, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, were "medieval" or "forms of medievalism" did not matter so much. What is more important is how high culture, in the form of theatrical pieces and texts that could be found in codices and other literary forms, responded to the phenomenon of animal trials later within this tradition. The historical trials had a specific reception in the world of creative writing, as literary texts on animal trials demonstrate it. Real-life trials were responded to by the later imaginary trials in literary texts. Over the two hundred trials held on animals echoed in the literary tradition (Dąbrówka, 2002: 23).

Declamatio sub forma iudicii is a macaronic literary text that reports such an imaginary trial. The *Graudenz Codex*, in which the interlude is preserved, can now be found in the Ukraine Library of Sciences.[7] The text is an *intermedium*, i.e. a type of interlude that was to be played between other theatrical pieces. Its dating is late, but it undoubtedly echoes the earlier medieval tradition. Julian Lewański defines the Old Polish genre *intermedium* as a short independent scene, whose plot was comic and which could be inserted in the middle of acts or other parts of a drama (Lewański, 1990: 352). Other terms for the genre were *interludium*, *facetum interstitium*, and *scena iocosa* (Lewański, 1990: 352)

[5] For other discussions of the historical animal trials see, for example, Evans (Evans, 2009).

[6] Adam Krawiec discusses *bestialitas* as one of the *peccatum contra naturam* (sins against nature), which in this case was *ratione generis* (Krawiec, 2000: 233).

[7] The manuscript is signed as Bawor. 297 and the page numbers of the interlude are from 108 to 117.

and the terms signaled humorous nature of the plays with the concepts *facetum* and *iocosa*. In the Old Polish culture most of the interludes were written in the vernacular and the Latin ones were rare (Lewański, 1990: 353). The *intermedium* from the *Graudenz Codex* distinguishes itself from this tradition since it uses the Latin and the Polish phrases interchangeably.

Declamatio (1735?) satirizes the trials that happened in the real world. The maccaronic play was a part of the larger corpus of serious and humorous trial reports. In Poland a similar collection was printed in 1611 under the title *Processus iluris Ioco-serius* (Dąbrówka, 2002: 33). In the interlude in question the trial is held against flying insects: flies, bees, and similar ones. This confirms that the tradition of ecclesiastical trials against insects was still widely known in the eighteenth century. The continuing physical closeness between humans and insects made writing about holding the insects on trial possible. In practical terms, the insects were a huge problem, even though among them there were species whose existence was very useful in the household, such as bees. Beekeeping, however, does not appear here as something valuable, since bees are grouped with other insects that bother humans.

The whole idea of excommunicating (and banishing) insects was unpractical, since this could not be done in real life. However, the historical animal trials did not take this into consideration, since even the terminology used in them was serious. As Dinzelbacher summarizes it, "[t]he terminology in the legal documents dealing with animals in identical with that used to describe the criminal offenses of humans" (Dinzelbacher, 2002: 407). In *Declamatio* the playwright uses the same terminology. The insects are sentenced to banishment, but before this happens there is a long procedure. Dąbrówka claims that the report is playful from the start and does not postulate any change in the situation in which flies, bees, and similar insects will fly around and bother humans (Dąbrówka, 2002: 33). The insects are catalogued, which shows the literary nature of the account. Already Homer's epics included numerous catalogues, not to mention such texts as Hesiod's *Theogony* or Virgil's *Aeneid*. The list in *Declamatio* does not derive from the tradition of court trials, but rather from literary texts that focus on listing various characters and creatures.

In the historical animal trials there were specific procedures to which the animals under trial were subjected: there was arrest, questioning with tortures, the duty to turn up, and a possible postponement of the trial. The animals could not only be executed or banished, but also declared innocent and freed (Dąbrówka, 2002: 34). The latter does not happen in *Declamatio*, but freeing the insects would be too close to life there: everyone knew that insects went where they chose to go instead of subjecting themselves to any form of human control. On the other hand, the closeness to life is visible in the figures that appear in this humorous account. They are the real-life figures from court proceedings: *Patronus* and *Iudex*.

The interlude is written in learned Latin, but Latin is not the only language there, since Latin was in retreat in the Polish literature of the time. The play was composed for Polish audience, since such phrases as *Proszę Mospanie* [I beg you, sir] appear there as well, as if in order to account for the reality of Poles speaking the vernacular at real-life trials. A lot of scope in the text is devoted to the defense of the accused. The defense is carried out by *Patronus*, a barrister. The trial is chaired by *Iudex*, a judge. All the procedure is carried out in accordance with *iustitia*, the law. The Latin phrases, such as *ex reiestri criminalium* [from the criminal register] authenticate the trial. It appears that the authentication is necessary in order to present the tradition, but what follows is a satire on such court proceedings. The historical trials are reworked into light entertainment, since the audience must be aware of the theatrical nature of what they observe. The interlude plays with the old cultural tradition and ridicules humans who think that they can fully control animals. Distancing oneself from the tradition of medieval origin is a form of medievalism and the element of play enhances this impression.

A play that includes the humorous account of an animal trial is yet another form of creative writing about animals, which are treated like humans. Jill Mann's list of medieval genres about animals has to be extended to plays about animals if we treat the text as belonging to the "long Middle Ages", and if it is a form of medievalism for us, then it does not extend the list, but creatively uses the medieval literary tradition in order to produce a more modern satire. Like in beast fable, beast epic, bestiary, animal debate, and narratives about animals, in *Declamatio* animals are treated as being similar to humans. Anthropomorphization of animals, which was so widespread in folklore that it even influenced medieval hagiography,[8] is continued in this eighteenth-century humorous retelling of animal trials.[9] The flying animals are found guilty of bothering humans. They resemble human outlaws in this sense. Banishment means that they acquire the status of outlaws in the human world. Outlawry that links humans and animals is also a concept of medieval origin. Medieval outlaws were described as those who could be characterized with the phrase *gerere caput lupinum* [bear a wolf's head]. According to Timothy S. Jones the phrase was "a legal synonym for out-

[8] Various texts, including hagiographical ones, on animals as friends of humans, have been anthologized by Gabriela Kompatcher, Albert Classen, and Peter Dinzelbacher (Kompatscher, Classen and Dinzelbacher, 2010).

[9] In *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* Dominic Alexander discusses various hagiographic instances of coexistence of humans and animals, some of which include a degree of anthropomorphization of animals (Alexander, 2008); for a classic anthology that included such hagiographic texts see: Waddell (Waddell, 1946); the question of relationships between saints and animals was summarized by Classen (Classen, 2010: 12–20); in the eighteenth-century culture, anthropomorphization of animals can be found in the beast fables, such as de La Fontaine's (De la Fontaine, 2007).

lawry in northern Europe, and the metaphor echoes throughout the English tales of outlawry as well as the other literatures of the North" (Jones, 2010: 27). Both the behaviour and the status of outlaws in the human society made them similar to ravenous wolves, which attacked humans and therefore had to be dealt with unscrupulously. In this case human outlaws got closer to animals and had to be treated like animals. In animal trials animals got closer to humans through their crimes against people and this is why they deserved a severe treatment on the part of the human legal system. The eighteenth-century interlude presents it as comic and departs from the idea that the animals can be blamed for doing harm to humans.

Both the historical animal trials and *Declamatio* as their eighteenth-century theatrical recreation were founded on the assumption that animals were endowed with reason, which had its consequences. In contrast, in *De Animae* Aristotle claimed that the rational soul was reserved to humans. The theory of the Great Chain of Being derived from this thinking, since it assumed that there was a hierarchy of beings, with God as the highest being, human in the middle, and animals as lower creatures (Lovejoy, 2001). The theory was in use from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, but there were specific cultural approaches with a folkloric background that went against it. Even though animal trials belonged to the same period as the belief in the Great Chain of Being, they placed animals on the same level as humans and assumed that animals were also reasonable. In contrast, medieval thinkers, such as John Moschus in Chapter 107 of *Pratum Spirituale. Vita Abbatis Gerasimi*, deliberated on the possibility of animals being reasonable, but ultimately abandoned the idea, since they thought that what looked like reason was obedience to humans (Alexander, 2008: 31). In the eighteenth century the Great Chain of Being theory started to assume a slightly different shape. Such philosophers as Leibnitz believed that there was a plan in nature and the plan was grounded in the mutual adjustment of all creatures to one another, hence the human was no longer thought to be superior to animals so considerably (Lovejoy, 2001: 144–182). The eighteenth century was the time when the theory reached its highest form: the links in the Chain started to be seen as existing not only for one another, but also for themselves, while the position of the human started to be seen in the middle of creation. On the other hand, there were philosophers, such as Henry More, who criticized the perspective on, for example, insects as low creatures (Lovejoy, 2001: 183–207). The eighteenth-century interlude does not look down on the flying insects that are under trial, either. They are not low in the hierarchy of beings, since they are seen as capable of some reasoning. After all, they chose to bother humans, and thus they are subjects to the same legal procedures as humans.

Dinzelbacher saw the ecclesiastical trials, such as the one satirized in *Declamatio*, as a cultural phenomenon that had "some precedent in the religious ideas

of pre-Enlightenment Christianity" (Dinzelbacher, 2002: 417). The satirical trial in the interlude, however, treats the questions of the human-animal divide more lightly and it needs to be stated that anthropomorphization of animals in this procedure is closer to folkloristic beliefs than to the Christian ideology of subservience of animals to humans. The Christian beliefs stemmed from the concept that humans were superior to animals. Yet, already Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) discussed humans as those who should not be presumptuous in their treatment of other creatures. In Chapter XII of Book II of *Essai, Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde [Apology for Raimond de Sebonde]* he famously questions the concept of the Great Divide by writing:

> La plus calamiteuse et fragile des toutes les créatures c'est l'homme, et quant et quant, la plus orgueilleuse. Elle se sent et se voit logée ici parmi la bourbe et le fient du monde, attachée et clouée à la pire, plus morte et croupie partie de l'univers, au dernier étage du logis, et le plus eloigné de la voûte céleste, avec les animaux de la pire condition des trois: et se va plantant par imagination au-dessus du cercle de la Lune, et [191] ramenant le ciel sous ses pieds. C'est par la vanité de cette même imagination qu'il s'égale à Dieu, qu'il s'attribue les conditions divines, qu'il se trie soi même et sépare de la presse des autres créatures, taille les parts aux animaux ses confrères et compagnons, et leur distribue telle portion de facultés et de forces, que bon lui semble. Comment connaît-il par l'effort de son intelligence, les branles internes et secrets des animaux? par quelle comparaison d'eux à nous conclut-il la bêtise qu'il leur attribue? (Bjaî, Boudou, Céard, and Pantin, 2002: 190–191)
>
> [The most wretched of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest. He feels and sees himself lodged here in the dirt and filth of the world, nailed and riveted to the worst and deadest part of the universe, in the lowest story of the house, and most remote from the heavenly arch, with animals of the worst condition of the three, and yet in his imagination will be placing himself above the circle of the moon, and bringing heaven under his feet. 'Tis by the vanity of the same imagination that he equals himself to God, attributes to himself divine qualities, withdraws and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, cuts out the shares of animals his fellows and companions, and distributes to them portions of faculties and force as he himself thinks fit. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the secret and internal motions of animals? And from what comparison betwixt them and us does he conclude the stupidity he attributes to them?] (Montaigne, 1569).

This discussion alludes to the Great Chain of Being as well, but the presumption of humans in treating themselves as equal to God is criticized. Humans place themselves high on the ladder of creation, but they are lower on it than they think and closer to animals, who are their "fellows and companions". Montaigne means here both the domestication of animals and the practice of

pet-keeping. He rejects the religious concept of humans as the only ones with the rational soul. Instead, he famously proposes the image of a female cat that plays with us when we imagine that we play with her: "si elle passe son temps de moi plus que je ne fait d'elle" (Bjaî, Boudou, Céard, and Pantin, 2002: 191).

For Montaigne humans are an important part of nature, which makes them close to animals in their status. It is not only the physical closeness between humans and animals that makes them close, but also the similarities between the two groups. Such texts as *Declamatio* also stress this similarity: you can banish insects as much as you can banish humans, since animal outlaws are as dangerous for the society as human ones. Even if some of the insects can be useful, such as bees, they should be made controllable. If not, human justice, here in the form of an ecclesiastical trial, is able to deal with them radically, at least in theory.

The time when the interlude was recorded marks the end of animal trials. In the latter half of the eighteenth century industrialization by necessity imposed a different perspective on animals. Their role as a work force increased. Domestication of animals became widespread, perhaps also due to Sentimentalist ideas. At the same time ostracism was not directed against certain types of pet-keeping any longer. As Susan Crane writes: "What changed in the modern industrial era was the gradual dominance of affectionate pet-keeping over all other kinds of animal keeping and the ideological configuration of pet-keeping as a morally upright and socially prestigious behavior" (Crane, 2012: 178). Reception of medieval traditions that included animals acquired different forms. Animal trials became an oddity, since the thinking behind them stopped being understandable. Trials over animals as either a lasting tradition or a medieval tradition that kept returning with some cultural differences were gone once modernity had started for good.

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On "Savage and Deformed Slave": Bodily Difference in Selected Contemporary Productions of *The Tempest* in Poland

Abstract: Dis/ability is a dynamic category produced in a complex constellation of factors that includes not only stigmatised mental and physical constraints or physiological differences, but also a manifestation of incapacity that is recognised or produced by law, social norms and the very way of thinking about the nature of bodily vulnerability. The meanings of dis/ability are thus culturally and historically dependent. Therefore, the manner in which dis/ability is presented on a theatrical stage can be considered not only as an important factor influencing the interpretation of a given production but also as a test for the dominant thinking of disability at a given point of time, in a given culture. The departure point for this paper is a brief discussion of the visibility of medieval models of dis/ability in Shakespeare's plays and a reflection on how the reception of these dramatic texts has changed over time depending on the paradigmatic shifts in thinking about dis/ability, especially with the emergence of disability studies and the growing theoretical reflection on the position of dis/ability in theatre. An especially interesting case in point is the reception of Caliban as a character whose stigmatisation can be expressed through bodily difference. Thus, the paper focuses on what seems to be a systematic aberrant decoding of *The Tempest* in three twenty-first century Polish productions of the play.

Keywords: Caliban, Polish theatre, disability studies, *The Tempest*, Shakespeare in performance

Dis/ability in theatre is a complex topic that can be approached from many angles that might or might not include the ethical and therapeutic aspects of art therapy, participation of actors with dis/abilities in theatre, as well as the representation of dis/ability on the page and on the stage. At the same time, dis/ability in itself is a category whose application to texts produced in the past constitutes a certain interference in the patterns of reading and spectating. Paul Longmore writes in *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* that dis/ability

is produced in a dynamic game of a complex constellation of factors that includes not only stigmatised mental and physical constraints or physiological differences. The definition proposed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines disability as a manifestation of incapacity, a physical or mental state that limits a person's actions or sensory perception, especially their ability to work (OED online). This in/ability is recognised or produced by law, social norms and patterns of thinking about what the body is, what health is, and what bodily vulnerability might be; to a large extent, then, dis/ability is an issue of perception and reception of the body considered as non-standard or non-normative. Dis/ability in theatre seems then to work as a multiple construct: what it means depends on how characters with disabilities are presented on the page, on the stage, and also how they are received by the spectators, revealing a dynamic and mutable constellation of meanings instead of one stable category.

In the performance history of *The Tempest*, a lot of attention has been given to Caliban, whose role in the play was downplayed before the nineteenth century but who becomes a figure of central importance in de-centring, postmodern, postcolonial readings. These tend to accentuate the ontological, political, and social disadvantage "Monsieur Monster" is pushed into by Prospero, Miranda and the castaways. This disadvantage has been addressed in modern productions in a variety of ways, which fashioned Caliban into a wild man, a human-fish hybrid, a black slave, and recently also a person with disabilities.[1] Even though, arguably, one would not note a "critical avoidance" (Bolt, 2012: 287) in the discussion of disability in Shakespeare's plays, *The Tempest* does not present itself as a text falling within the immediate perimeters of disability studies analysis. However, as the recent papers presented at the SAA 2021 *Shakespeare's Other Disability Plays* seminar suggest, interpreting *The Tempest* through such a lens is possible and productive.[2] Jeffrey Wilson, who discusses stigmatisation of Caliban in the play, notes accordingly:

> The ambiguous and therefore amorphous nature of Caliban's deformity has been a perennial problem in both dramaturgical and critical studies of *The Tempest* at least since George Stevens's edition of the play (1793), acutely since Alden Vaughan and Virginia Mason-Vaughan's *Shakespeare's Caliban:*

[1] For Caliban's reception history, see Wilson (1873); McCloskey (1940); Hankins (1947); Sharp (1981); Griffiths (1983); Nixon (1987); Hall (1995); Franssen (1997); Burnett (2007); Rundle (2007); Jaczminski (2009); Kowalcze-Pawlik (2011); Wilson (2018); and above all, Vaughan and Vaughan (1993).

[2] *Shakespeare's Other Disability Plays*, Shakespeare Association of America 2021, Seminar 44, organised by Bellee Jones-Pierce and Lindsey Row-Heyveld. Caliban's disability was discussed by Leslie Dunn, "Disabling Caliban" and Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik, "'Not Honour'd with a Human Shape:' Malignant Things, Skin-Deep (T)error and the Promise of the Monstrous in *The Tempest*."

> *A Cultural History* (1993), and enduringly in recent readings by Paul Franssen, Julia Lupton, and Mark Burnett. (Wilson, 2018: 146)

This essay discusses the production of bodily difference in Polish productions of *The Tempest* that focus on Caliban as the character whose imperfect subjectivity is emphasised throughout the play and whose bodily difference, for a long time read as monstrosity, has lent itself to manifold interpretations, re-visions and critical re-tellings. The interest in dis/ability in Shakespearean drama is a relatively new trend, reaching back to such pre-disability studies publications as Herbert Covey's "Shakespeare on Old Age and Disability" (Covey, 2000), a seminar on bodily and metaphorical deformities at the Shakespeare Association of America conference (2009), and the special issue of *Disability Studies Quarterly* (2009) entitled *Disabled Shakespeares*. As Covey already points out in his sketch discussing the theme of disability and old age in Shakespeare's drama, characters with disabilities are constructed around their dis/ability "to add dimension to characters and set them apart" (Covey, 2000: 169) – something that within the disability studies paradigm has been called a "narrative prosthesis" (Mitchell and Snyder, 2000). In his rather sketchy essay, Covey establishes a mistaken link between Trinculo's description of Caliban in Act 2, scene 2 and "raree shows" instead of a fair with elements of what should be more properly called an early modern equivalent of a freak show;[3] he is correct, nonetheless, in recognising a connection between the gaze of the spectator, "the entertainment value of characters with disabilities or deformities," and the exploitation of staged disability (Covey, 2000: 181).

These issues were engaged and critically explored in *Disabled Shakespeares*. Already in this collection, a wide thematic spectrum of research on disability in the works of the Stratford playwright was apparent. The articles emphasised the importance of the discourse of disease and deformation both for the metaphorical language of the drama and for the very construction of the characters, often focusing on a bodily change or disability leading to a stigmatised, defective subjectivity, whose beginning is a wound, blindness, lameness, epilepsy, intellectual disability, or a nervous breakdown. This research focused, however, on the non-normative bodies of Caesar, Katherine, Richard III and Othello, whose humanity, albeit "dysfunctional," remained relatively safeguarded and was never unequivocally negated. In her insightful analysis of *Henry VI, Part II* performed in the context of the St Albans miracle, Lindsey Row-Heyveld discusses the

[3] "What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? […] Were I in England now as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man: any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. (*The Tempest*, 2.2.24–31); as Plunkett demonstrates, raree show, or peepshow originated rather later, towards the second half of the seventeenth century (Plunkett, 2015: 7–30).

presence and transformation of the medieval approaches to dis/ability in early modern England, whereby the "non-standard body served as a conduit for God" (Row-Heyveld, 2009), allowing the congregation to bestow acts of benevolence, such as alms upon the disabled in order to aid rich sinners in the task of salvation. Row-Heyveld addresses the charges of fraudulent dis/ability and false miracles in the high Middle Ages and towards the beginning of the early modern era, pointing to anxiety and fear as reactions to vagrancy, and the *threat* of disabled beggars who were believed to dissimulate their ailments, the belief perpetuated by much of the rogue literature of the time. Significantly for the presentation of Caliban as a lazy slave in *The Tempest*, the onset of Reformation put a stop to the spiritual and monetary exchange between the rich and the disabled, changing the predominant attitudes toward those unable to work: "with this shift came an increased emphasis on the necessity of separating the deserving poor from the undeserving poor. Disability was central to this distinction. The undeserving poor were categorised as those persons who were able but unwilling to work while the deserving poor were defined as those who were willing but unable to work" (Row-Heyveld, 2009). This cultural anxiety surrounding dis/abled bodies seems to have been additionally fuelled by the fear of effeminisation brought about by the presence of strong women vying for power and the fact that in the context of "highly unstable early modern masculinity, even jesting at the possibility of physical emasculation was enough to ensure social emasculation" (Row-Heyveld, 2009). To be recognised as one unable to perform labour meant especially for a male to have one's identity reduced; social recognition of able-bodiedness was therefore dependent upon acts of bodily reading and reception/rejection as (non-)masculine.

In her reflection on the history of disability in the early modern England, Row-Heyveld makes an important caveat that dis/ability is a modern term and that to use it with reference to the texts of the past is to perform an act of anachronistic reading; such a practice points specifically to the project of dis/ability studies as distinct from the study of monstrosity. It is, however, important not to bypass the connection established in various societies between dis/ability as something that is perceived as non-normalcy and monstrosity. A genealogy of dis/ability has already been sketched through the historicising reflection on the "abnormal" undertaken by Michel Foucault. In his 22 January 1975 Collège de France lecture, Foucault discussed three figures central for the understanding of the notion of abnormality that arose in the nineteenth century: the "human monster," the "individual to be corrected," as well as the "masturbating child" (Foucault, 2003: 55). The human monster, "the fundamental figure around which bodies of power and domains of knowledge are disturbed and reorganised" (Foucault, 2003: 63), is doubly transgressive, as it represents a deformation at the natural and societal level. The medieval bestial man, the early modern two-bodied individual (Siamese twins), and the classical age hermaph-

rodite all constitute different forms of monstrosity that ultimately arises only where "the confusion comes up against, overturns, or disturbs civil, canon, or religious law'' (Foucault, 2003: 63), contradicting the existing religious and legal classifications.

According to Foucault, the post-Enlightenment era saw a paradigm shift in the treatment of monstrosity, attributable to two major changes: one in the development of psychology and the other in the emergence of the corrective state that seeks to transform and normalise the deviant individual. Monstrosity thus slipped the unalterable natural order of things and moved into the regions of the abnormal. Foucault's views on abnormality were preceded by his insight into the nature of disease in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) and the views of his teacher, Georges Canguilhem, for whom "the normal type [was] the degree zero of the monstrosity" (Canguilhem, qtd in Lawlor and Nale, Kindle) and who, following in the footsteps of such theoreticians as Claude Bernard and Kurt Goldstein, transformed the thinking on the norm and the normative, especially in medical epistemology.[4] He reflected on its historical indebtedness to the idea of the natural that, together with the onset of industrialisation and the advance of social sciences, was replaced by the concept of normality. Canguilhem's thinking on the ontology of the norm in the sphere of medicine revealed a continuum between the normal and the pathological. On the strength of this logic, Foucault constructed his own argument that modern societies create an apparatus for a transformation of irregularity and extended it to discuss the emergence of modern medicine and its connection with disease as a function of life. In the sphere of medical science, the emphasis on the sense of a continuum between normality and abnormality translates into the emergence of the medical gaze that scrutinises the body for signs of failure to comply to the normative model of health and treats disease as functional deviance. This allows for a broad reading of illness, mental illness included, as a pervasive state, prevented only by a continuous regimen of care and control. The ab-normal becomes thus a function of the normative:[5] "Disease loses its old status as an accident and takes on the internal, constant, mobile dimension of the relation between life and death […] Deviation in life is of the order of life, but of a life that moves towards death" (Foucault, 1973: 191).

A reflection on the normal and the pathological and the paradigm shift in the understanding of the nature of health, disease and dis/ability as a continuum of life, has, as I would like to argue, some bearing on the way that the figure of Caliban has been constructed in modern theatre, both in Poland and abroad. The shift in the understanding of the individual subject and its constituent "abnormality" seems to add another interpretive layer to the ways in which the character

[4] See: Pasquinelli (2015: 79–89).

[5] See: Canguilhem (1962: 27–43); Canguilhem (1991); Davidson (1991: 36–68); Sharpe (2010); Elden (2001: 91–105); Rai (2004: 538–570).

of Caliban has been envisioned, staged, but also alluded to in diverse contexts.[6] Here I would like to focus on dis/ability as a major defining feature shaping Caliban on the stage in selected Polish productions of *The Tempest*. A cursory glance at these stagings suggests that it is possible to envision interpretations of the play that bring to the fore the paradigmatic shift from monstrous to pathological as a social construct and underline Caliban's "deformity" in bodily terms even more than it is visible in the playtext or in the majority of productions read alongside the post-colonial key. Such an approach is substantiated in a number of twentieth and twenty-first century theatrical and film productions which move away from the presentation of Caliban as a human-animal hybrid or a plant-like racialised Other and accentuate his state of in/ability instead.

In Krystyna Skuszanka's 1989 Teatr Mały production in Warsaw, Caliban (Paweł Galia) is described in the programme as "a living sign of tormented humanity with its unknown future" (Skuszanka, 1989: cover) and presented as a non-distinct figure wrapped in bandages, which allows for a number of free associations with disease, be it syphilis, leprosy, or other affliction affecting the whole of the body, with the skin as the area that seems to be most affected by the condition. Caliban's "deformed" state seems to have been fashioned into the most decisive marker of his humanity; the continuity of the pathological spectrum, from disease/disability to health, can be traced in the way all the three characters of Miranda, Ferdinand, and Caliban – misfits in the empire of Prospero – are dressed, as only they wear white. A sense of continuum between the norm and the abnormal is visible also in the 2015 production of *The Tempest* by Krzysztof Garbaczewski, where Caliban (Paweł Smagała) is fashioned into a carnivalesque-grotesque with a hunchback, whose main desire is to be humped by Miranda (Małgorzata Gorol). The character copulates with a spine and fragments of a backbone that he claims are his mother's and seems to fit into all the three categories described by Foucault as the "human monster," the "individual to be corrected," as well as the "masturbating child." Still he remains the most virulent of all the island inhabitants, whose malaise is accentuated by the claustrophobic setting consisting of a reversed black island hanging over the characters' heads. Even the female ruler of the island, Prospera, is touched by the sense of the post-apocalyptic demise and suffering: coughing, with her bold head and pained movements, she rules over/under the island with the quiet desperation of a dying cancer patient. According to Paweł Soszyński, this post-dramatic adaptation investigates the broken character of performatives, pointing to the crucial significance of Caliban as the figure through whom *The Tempest* reaches back to the nineteenth century comedy conventions, but also brings to

[6] Lennard J. Davis notes that where dis/abled characters appear in literature "the disabled character is never of importance to himself or herself. Rather, the character is placed in the narrative 'for' the nondisabled characters – to help them develop sympathy, empathy, or as a counterbalance to some issue in the life of the 'normal' character" (Davis, 2002: 45).

the fore associations with the "not fully formed, aborted embryo-monster" who "deforms Shakespearean poetics" (Soszyński, 2016).[7] The dramatic theatre rules are playfully broken by Smagała's flickering in and out of his role in the video installation interludes: these create an overall sense of fluid identity. The state of generalised pathology in this production with Caliban as the focal point can, as Lennard Davis points out, indicate that "disability may prove to be the identity that binds everyone else together" (Davis, 2002: 26–27).

The 2016 staging of *The Tempest* by Anna Augustynowicz (Teatr Współczesny, Szczecin), pushes the disabled/diseased imagery further: in this theatrical production, all the characters are hospital patients, while the wheelchaired Caliban (Arkadiusz Buszko) is pushed around by his heavily pregnant mother, listed as Sycorax's Ghost (Ewa Sobiech). Despite his very pronounced in/ability to move, Buszko's Caliban remains one of the most active characters on the stage; his wheelchair does not seem to function as much of an obstacle in the virtuoso scheming he is preoccupied with throughout the performance. The reviewers paid heed to the dis/abled presentation of Caliban in Augustynowicz's production: where Ewa Podgajna describes this Caliban simply as "a disabled monster desiring freedom to primitively take the power over and avenge himself" (Podgajna, 2016), Joanna Ostrowska discovers far more nuance in the use of dis/ability in Caliban's portrayal and underlines his full participation in the cynical powerplay on the island as a major political player (Ostrowska, 2016). The in/ability, which rather significantly leaves Caliban untouched but which affects all the islanders and the castaways alike, is the gradual loss of language, whose artfulness is audible from the onset of the play when the characters are manipulated into speaking by Prospero. In the epilogue, it is Prospero that loses control over his body and his voice, and succumbs to echolalia: his body contorts, his voice spills out of control, and his final words become inarticulate. Thus, his master's voice is gone.

Just like Skuszanka's and Garbaczewski's productions, Augustynowicz's version offers a re-contextualisation that pushes Caliban into the realm of the pathological; this shift seems to be tied to a paradigmatic change which has occurred firstly in the modern approach to the Western understanding of the nature of diseased states, as discussed by Georges Canguilhem in his *The Normal and the Pathological* and secondly in a changing response to *The Tempest* as a play whose utopian hope is dimmed by the modern preoccupation with (post)humanity and the problematic definitions of life and death, disease and health, in/ability and ability.[8] Even though dis/ability of Caliban is performed by able-bodied actors, the context of the performance allows a subversive reading of thus marked body.

[7] If not otherwise indicated, all translations are mine, A. K-P.

[8] I have written more about the reception history of the play in: Kowalcze-Pawlik (2021: 121–138).

As Toby Siebers writes, such representations of disability are a part of a "symbolic process [that] removes individuals from the ranks of quality human beings, putting them at risk of unequal treatment, bodily harm, and death" (Siebers, 2010: 23). Skuszanka, Garbaczewski, and Augustynowicz lay the process bare, showing its artificiality. This, however, is not without its own risks: dis/ability is thrown at our faces as a universal human condition to warn us against our own monster within. At the same time, however, the diagnosis of sick art/sick culture is built on the strength of a representation of dis/ability that by using dis/ability as a mode of representation seems to bypass individuals with dis/ability, thus disqualifying them as individuals exactly because able bodied actors simulate dis/ability as *inability* pushing dis/ability back towards the discourse of the pathological.

Are other scenarios, other ways of representing dis/ability possible? The answer to this question is provided by the amateur production *Rozbitkowie* [Castaways], directed by Justyna Łagowska and based on *The Tempest*, staged at the Teatr Ludowy in Krakow in March 2020. This is not a show to be watched; rather, it is a predominantly haptic and aural performance, which seems to heal the excess of visual stimuli that the theatre offers on a daily basis to its spectators. Maciej Namysło plays the role of Ariel, who organises the stage space as an air-borne intermediary between the actors and the audience, leading the non-seeing cast to their seats around the big round table in the middle of the stage and walking along the rows of chairs set against the walls to initiate dialogue with the audience members, encouraging them to touch the props. Namysło discusses the project as follows:

> We have created a value that is neither a radio play nor a theatre performance. It's something in between. You can participate in the performance as a seeing person and in the same way perceive the performance while being blind or partially sighted. (Namysło qtd in Kalęba, 2020)

Castaways was the culmination of the two-year "Guides of the senses" workshops for the visually impaired: the overall aim was to "create a new form of a theatrical event, rejecting the sense of sight and provoking viewers to perceive the performance with their other senses" (Namysło, 2020). The set design, props and the sound were focused on performance reception through hearing, touch, and smell. Reliance on such senses demanded a largely immersive theatrical experience, whereby the surroundings acquired a new and changed meaning. Hence, the insistence on the continued process of taming the space, rendering it friendly and safe to all the participants in the performative event: the audience, dis/abled and able-bodied cast alike. The tempest in this project is not yet there and the island in itself is presented as a pre-lapsarian space, untouched by the presence of the castaways, as the ship bringing forth change is only looming on the horizon. The project participants speak through their chosen non-human *alter egos,* taking

the form of small animals and, most of the time, concentrate on discussing what the island means to them. Through these *impromtu* exchanges the *oikoumene* of the non-human characters is therefore established not as a place of exile but as their home. Prospero, who initially does not seem to share the sentiment and who controls the visually impaired Miranda out of concern for her, gradually seems to come to a realisation that his constant care does not render her happy, nor does it lead to her independence or freedom. In this performance, it is hard to miss out on the central importance of Ariel, who not only discreetly takes care of the needs of the island's residents, but also teaches the audience that you do not have to use your sight to understand the performance or to participate in it.

Out of Shakespeare's original characters populating the island at the beginning of the play, Caliban is the one who seems to be missing most conspicuously. This absence from the stage, however, seems only provisional. The audience, shyly exploring the space in which the remaining "castaways" feel at home, is at odds at first and very clumsily tries to accommodate to a changed environment peopled by vulnerable, fragile, beautiful bodies that welcome the audience as guests. The attempt to find a language to describe this new reality is *their* predicament. In this scenario, it is the audience that seems to assume the role of Caliban and is faced with the possibility of making the island their home, while trying to find a new language to describe the different theatrical experience.

The discussion of the representations of dis/ability in selected Polish theatrical adaptations of *The Tempest* would not be complete without asking about the reception of dis/ability on the stage. Just like any other analysis of the portrayals of disability in culture, the reflection on the significance of Caliban in the three theatrical performances discussed above is shaped by a reading making use of the disability studies methodology. Even though theatrical criticism in the form of theatrical reviews can be sourced for examples of expert approach usually devoid of the disability reception component, it would be even more useful to know what regular theatre-going public makes of dis/ability on the stage, as the recognition of the cultural presence of disabled figures is only partial without the knowledge of the audiences' reactions and the result of interventionist projects, such as *Castaways*.

Castaways is a potent contributor in shaping an approach to dis/ability which is devoid of the "teratological impulse" ushered by the very use of disability in the productions, where able-bodied actors produce it to obtain a specific effect. Even if in the process disability is critically interrogated as a social and political construct, the fact of non-visibility of dis/abled actors remains a given in the Polish theatrical world. Thus, even such critically minded productions as the adaptations of *The Tempest* by Garbaczewski and Augustynowicz do not provide a break from the normative model. Both of them cast ability as the "norm," and create dis/ability as in/ability, i.e. a failure disappointing the predominant cultural expectations that concern the "productive, useful, unified citizen's body" (Hadley, 2014: 6).

As Bree Hadley argues in her major contribution to the understanding of the presence of dis/ability on the stage, *Disability, Public Space, Performance and Spectatorship*, when dis/ability is created as "all that is Other," the audiences do not truly "encounter" the disabled, while still relying on the pre-existing "violence of recognition, categorisation and comprehension" (Hadley, 2014: 7). What seems to be missing in the two productions, but what emerges as a focal point in *Castaways*, is what Hadley calls "ethical encounters." Spectators watching the performance might develop various understandings of the position dis/ability occupies on the stage, but the very fact of bringing dis/ability to the fore in the public sphere of theatre might open them to a re-evaluation of their own approach towards disability (Hadley, 2014: 26). The invitation to participate in the production not through the visual medium but through other senses and the consistent use of the tactile and the aural in the performance allow for a change in perspective, which stems from a major difference in participation in the theatrical experience, creating a sense of *bodily difference* in the audience, thus possibly also affecting the understanding of disabled and non-disabled bodies, "the social relationships, scripts and rules that inform these reactions, casting the disabled body as sources of curiosity, discomfort, stigma or pity" (Hadley, 2014: 2). This performance effect was further strengthened by the post-performance reception, during which the audience members were introduced into the project and the production cast and theatre staff had the opportunity to engage into a very informal Q&A, where the project team very subtly steered the event to include everyone and to facilitate discussion. The audience's post-performance reaction suggests a very favourable reception, but from the room dynamics it was clearly visible that the majority of spectators were somehow connected to the cast members, family, friends of theatre supporters. Dis/ability in this particular instance seems to have been fashioned into a "positive symbol of difference" (Hadley, 2014: 31), which asks important questions about the significance of theatrical space as a site that can be intervened into to accommodate the presence of bodies with dis/abilities without the risk of exposing them to a non-dis/abled gaze assuming its regular hegemonic position.

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« Ci-gît, enfin, un tyran ! », ou une épitaphe en tant que prophétie dans les *Apologues modernes* de Sylvain Maréchal (1789)

"Here rests, at last, a tyrant" – an epitaph as the prophecy in Sylvain Maréchal's *Apologues modernes* (1789)

Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to analyse a forgotten work by Sylvain Maréchal, a French political writer of the Enlightenment. Written on the eve of the French Revolution, his *Apologues modernes* heavily criticize the socio-political system of the French monarchy of Louis XVI. The analysis of his work proves that the author does not limit himself to criticising the situation before 1789, but he clearly predicts events of the forthcoming revolution and the resulting change. One could say that, like a true prophet, he foresees the end of the monarchy as such and proclaims the arrival of a new social and political order, a universal republic, not only in France, but in Europe in general.

Key words: Sylvain Maréchal, *Apologues modernes*, French Revolution, Republic versus Monarchy

Quand on rappelle les écrits de Sylvain Maréchal (1750–1803) d'avant la Révolution, on a plutôt tendance à n'en mentionner qu'un titre, voire à réduire son œuvre au seul *Almanach des honnêtes gens* de 1788 (Matyaszewski, 2020b). Sans doute, il s'agit d'un ouvrage révélateur où, par l'idée de substituer aux noms des saints et des patrons de l'Église catholique ceux des hommes « honnêtes » (bienfaiteurs de la civilisation humaine, anciens et contemporains, philosophes, artistes, savants, littéraires, hommes politiques, bref de nouveaux modèles de valeurs à imiter), l'auteur peut être considéré, d'ailleurs avec beaucoup de justesse, comme précurseur du calendrier révolutionnaire de 1793 (Dommanget, 1938). Néanmoins, l'almanach de Maréchal, tout prophétique soit-il, ne devrait pourtant pas éclipser ses autres textes d'avant 1789 qui, tous, méritent également une

attention particulière. Il faudrait rappeler non seulement ses premiers recueils de poésie plutôt légère, de style pastoral, tels *Bergeries* (1770) ou *Chansons anacréontiques du Berger Sylvain* (1788), mais aussi des poèmes philosophiques, comme *Le Tombeau de J.-J. Rousseau* (1779) ou *Fragments d'un poème moral sur Dieu* (1781), où il dévoile des idées athées et républicaines. Ses *Costumes civils actuels de tous les peuples connus* (1788) et ses *Tableaux de la Fable* (1788), sous prétexte de décrire les mœurs des peuples anciens ou la mythologie antique, offrent une sorte de manifeste communiste ; l'auteur y suggère ouvertement, en utopiste, le modèle d'une communauté agraire, où les biens sont partagés par tous et l'égalité sociale et politique reste assurée (Skrzypek, 1973 : 121–122).

Exactement à la même époque, juste à la veille de la Révolution, Sylvain Maréchal a rédigé encore un autre ouvrage important dont on parle décidément moins que de son fameux almanach de 1788. Il s'agit de ses *Apologues modernes à l'usage du dauphin. Premières leçons du fils aîné d'un roi*, texte publié à Bruxelles, dépourvu non seulement du nom de l'éditeur, mais aussi de celui de l'auteur. Ce dernier se cache derrière la personne énigmatique et anonyme d'« un député présomptif aux futurs États-Généraux »[1]. Quant à la date de la publication, sur le frontispice figure celle de 1788, tandis que la page de titre est datée de 1789. On peut en déduire que le texte, commencé encore en 1788, a été achevé et publié dans les premiers mois de l'année suivante, ce qui paraît prouver l'allusion faite aux États-Généraux, convoqués par Louis XVI le 5 mai 1789, mais préparés beaucoup plus tôt, dès août 1788[2]. L'anonymat de l'auteur semble s'expliquer aisément par les persécutions judiciaires sérieuses dont il est devenu victime après la publication de son *Almanach des honnêtes gens*, l'ouvrage étant condamné par le Parlement de Paris, selon l'usage de l'époque, à être lacéré et brûlé, tandis que Sylvain Maréchal a été incarcéré entre janvier et avril 1788 à la prison Saint-Lazare à Paris (Matyaszewski, 2020b : 106–108). Depuis, il a préféré faire paraître ses textes sous l'anonymat, du moins jusqu'à la Révolution qui allait bientôt faire de lui l'un de ses militants les plus farouches.

Avant d'aborder la question du message philosophique et politique des *Apologues modernes*, il serait intéressant de s'arrêter brièvement sur la forme littéraire de l'ouvrage. Ce dernier, à l'exemple du *Décaméron* de Boccace, se compose de

[1] L'auteur ne laisse-t-il pourtant pas sa signature dans l'apologue XCVIII, intitulé : *Le roi-berger, conte pastoral, par le Berger Sylvain,* où le nom idyllique de l'auteur renvoie directement au pseudonyme dont Maréchal se sert souvent dans ses ouvrages poétiques d'avant 1789 ?

[2] Cette hypothèse semble d'ailleurs se confirmer pleinement dans la première édition du *Jugement dernier des rois*, la seule pièce de théâtre de Sylvain Maréchal, publiée en 1793 pendant la Terreur. On peut y lire un bref éclaircissement, fait soit de la main de l'éditeur soit par l'auteur lui-même : « L'idée de cette pièce est prise dans l'apologue suivant, faisant partie des *Leçons du fils aîné d'un roi*, ouvrage philosophique du même auteur, publié au commencement de 1789 et mis à l'index par la police ». Cf. S. Maréchal, *Jugement dernier des rois*, Paris, 1793, p. II. La note fait allusion à l'apologue XXVIII, intitulé : *Vision. L'île déserte*, dont il sera encore question dans la suite de la présente étude.

cent apologues, appelés ici leçons, chacun portant un titre autonome distinct. Leur longueur, toute variable soit-elle, ne dépasse pas en général, à quelques exceptions près, la dimension de deux pages, parfois se laissant facilement réduire à quelques phrases à peine. Le recours à la forme brève n'est point fortuit chez Maréchal, mais résulte de la fonction pratique bien précise qu'il assigne à son texte. Il s'agit de se servir d'un court récit narratif amusant et ironique où, sous forme de petits contes à la fois agréables à lire et faciles à saisir, il tient à proposer une série d'observations politiques, sociales et philosophiques instructives. Par là, il recourt à la règle classique de « placere et docere », tellement répandue chez des auteurs tels que La Fontaine, Perrault ou Fénelon. Dans son cas, il s'agit sans doute moins de fables au sens propre du terme que de contes, petites histoires argumentatives à visée démonstrative et à portée philosophique, ce que l'on rencontre surtout à l'époque des Lumières chez Voltaire ou Diderot. Comme chez ces derniers, l'objectif de Sylvain Maréchal est moins la mission d'un moraliste à l'exemple d'un La Bruyère que celle d'un auteur politique qui tient à dénoncer les défauts de la monarchie française, jusqu'à critiquer ou même remettre en cause, en vrai républicain, les valeurs de la royauté même. Au postulat littéraire classique de « plaire et instruire », il ajoute décidément l'impératif politique révolutionnaire de « accuser et changer ».

C'est pour cela que le titre et le sous-titre de l'ouvrage ne devraient tromper personne. Au premier abord, on serait effectivement prêt à croire qu'il s'agit d'un recueil d'apologues qui, rédigés pour un dauphin, héritier présomptif de la couronne, auraient à lui servir de premières leçons de sagesse morale et politique. L'allusion au *Télémaque* de Fénelon, tant à sa fonction instructive et didactique d'un ouvrage d'apprentissage qu'à la personne d'un élève royal, son destinataire direct, est ici plus qu'évidente. Néanmoins, bien qu'il partage sans doute plusieurs opinions de Fénelon, lesquelles, il ne faut pas l'oublier, ont coûté à l'auteur du *Télémaque*, vers la fin du XVIIe siècle, d'abord sa disgrâce et, ensuite, son bannissement de la cour de Louis XIV, Sylvain Maréchal n'entre pourtant pas dans un rôle de précepteur royal, ni à distance ni en théorie. Contrairement à ce que pourrait suggérer le titre de son ouvrage, il ne pense pas à la personne du dauphin concret qu'est à cette époque le fils aîné de Louis XVI, Louis-Joseph-Xavier-François de France, ni encore moins à l'idée de lui offrir des leçons de morale et de politique. Ces dernières, le titre ne servant plutôt qu'à embellir son texte et, peut-être, aussi à duper la censure[3], Sylvain Maréchal les adresse,

[3] Le fait que les *Apologues modernes* ont été mis à l'index par la police (voir la note 2 du présent article) prouve non seulement que la censure ne s'est pas laissé duper, mais que l'ouvrage, publié à Bruxelles, s'est assez vite trouvé en France. D'un côté, cette vitesse témoignerait de la facilité avec laquelle les livres interdits circulaient à cette époque-là sur le territoire de la monarchie française, ce que l'on sait beaucoup mieux depuis le remarquable ouvrage de Robert Darnton *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982). De l'autre, pourrait-on en conclure que le lieu d'édition des *Apologues modernes* soit fictif et que l'ouvrage ait paru illégalement

de propos délibéré, à tous les lecteurs de son texte, voire à tous les sujets de la monarchie française. C'est vers eux qu'il dirige son message en vue de les éclairer et de les inviter à réfléchir par eux-mêmes, car l'opinion qu'aurait pu en tirer un monarque ne l'intéresse tout simplement pas. Il semble le dire implicitement à l'aide d'une remarque acerbe, mise en exergue sur la page de titre de son ouvrage : « Aux femmes et aux rois, il faut parler par apologues ». L'ironie, pour ne pas dire la méchanceté de cette maxime est claire, car elle vise, par son ton moqueur, à mettre en doute les capacités intellectuelles de celles et de ceux qui en sont l'objet. Or, son sens devient encore plus compréhensible quand on se rappelle que, sa vie durant, Sylvain Maréchal réduit, en misogyne, à l'instar d'un Jean-Jacques Rousseau, l'éducation de la femme à l'espace étroit de la domesticité, en s'opposant fermement à toute instruction féminine solide qu'il trouve à la fois inutile et dangereuse[4]. Si, selon lui, instruire un monarque est sans doute une mesure désirable en soi, il s'agit pourtant, dans le cas concret de la monarchie française de Louis XVI, d'un acte d'apprentissage inutile, pour ne pas dire trop tardif en 1789. Maintenant, à la veille de la Révolution, il n'est plus ni temps, ni question de présenter au roi des leçons de morale et de politique, celui-ci n'ayant, dès lors, qu'à obéir à ce qu'elles lui dévoilent et imposent.

Ce qui éloigne Maréchal encore plus de Fénelon[5], c'est aussi le fait que, contrairement au *Télémaque* et au monde de la mythologie antique, où est située l'action de cet ouvrage de l'âge classique, l'auteur des *Apologues modernes* propose à son lecteur un univers fictif complètement imprécis et indéterminé. À vrai dire, il est tout à fait impossible d'identifier l'espace géographique présenté à travers tous les apologues ; ils se passent à la fois « partout et nulle part », l'auteur n'en donne jamais de détails topographiques précis[6]. En cela, il fait penser très fort au procédé littéraire que l'on rencontre dans un conte traditionnel, où le monde servant de cadre géographique reste le plus souvent fictif

non à Bruxelles, mais chez un éditeur parisien anonyme ? Hypothèse impossible ni à prouver ni à exclure aujourd'hui.

[4] Cf. Sylvain Maréchal, *Projet d'une loi portant défense d'apprendre à lire aux femmes*, Paris, an IX (1801).

[5] Il faut remarquer que l'allusion que Maréchal fait clairement à Fénelon, malgré toutes les différences littéraires qui séparent leurs ouvrages, est surtout un hommage qu'il rend volontairement à l'auteur du *Télémaque*. Dans son *Almanach des honnêtes gens*, où il répertorie tous les grands hommes de la civilisation humaine, le nom de Fénelon apparaît même deux fois, aussi bien à la date de sa naissance (le 6 août) qu'à celle de sa mort (le 7 janvier). Il s'agit d'un procédé honorifique exceptionnel dont Maréchal se sert parfois dans son calendrier pour mettre encore mieux en valeur la personne d'un « honnête homme », pour ne pas dire afin de doubler son importance.

[6] Rares sont les exemples où apparaissent les noms de lieux concrets : ne sont mentionnés que ceux de Siam, de Pégu et d'Ava (leçon XXXV), ainsi que celui de Babylon (leçon LXXIX), mais ils semblent plutôt jouer le même rôle d'embellissement oriental que l'on rencontre dans les contes philosophiques de Voltaire.

et indéfinissable. Sans doute, chez lui aussi, il s'agit d'exprimer la même valeur fonctionnelle de cette imprécision, selon laquelle effacer toute trace identificatoire contribue à rendre le message plus universel. Néanmoins, comme cela se passe aussi fréquemment dans la littérature de l'époque des Lumières où, à l'aide d'une apparence universalisante, l'auteur fait allusion à un pays concret, il est sûr que c'est la France de Louis XVI qui est ici la cible de Sylvain Maréchal. On comprend que derrière « la capitale d'un grand empire », motif topographique qui se répète souvent dans son ouvrage comme un lieu presque privilégié de ses apologues, on voit la ville de Paris, l'encadrement géographique indécis et vague ne sachant que voiler à peine les intentions de l'auteur de la rendre l'objet principal et unique de son ouvrage[7]. Il s'agit d'un masque littéraire embellissant la vérité qui reste pourtant claire et explicite. Le lecteur ne s'y laisse pas prendre, et encore moins au temps fictif des apologues qui, dans presque chaque leçon, commencent par la même formule « en ce temps-là », comme si leur action s'était déjà passée et que toutes les histoires décrites aient eu lieu auparavant. Le temps rétrospectif du récit est trompeur, car l'ouvrage de Sylvain Maréchal est ancré dans le réel et concerne aussi bien « ici » que « maintenant », son véritable contexte spatial et temporel étant décidément celui de la monarchie française à la veille de 1789.

Mis ensemble sous le même titre de leçons, les apologues ne représentent pourtant pas un tout cohérent, et cela non seulement à cause de leur longueur faible mais variable, ce dont il a été question plus haut. Décidément, il s'agit d'un recueil de contes tout à fait indépendants les uns des autres, dépourvus de tout lien narratif consécutif, sans aucune suite logique de l'action. Chaque leçon constitue un récit autonome qui ne résulte nullement du précédent et n'annonce guère le suivant. De plus, comme dans les contes philosophiques d'un Voltaire, la majorité des apologues sont racontés à la troisième personne, mais l'auteur fait parfois intervenir le « je » d'un autre narrateur qui relate une histoire de son propre point de vue. Mieux encore, tout en proposant un conte comme dessein privilégié de son ouvrage, Sylvain Maréchal se sert simultanément de formes littéraires différentes, comme visions, contes de fée, prédictions, épitaphes, hyperboles, dialogues, ces derniers ayant tous les traits d'un vrai entretien tiré d'une pièce de théâtre. Parfois, un apologue prend la forme d'un petit récit narratif formant un conte entier, parfois il se résume en une anecdote, parfois encore il ne ressemble qu'à un brin de maximes.

En dépit du caractère hétérogène des formes littéraires utilisées, la majorité des apologues se caractérise par un schéma de récit similaire. Dans la plupart des leçons, leur brève action se passe dans une société indéterminée, un État sans

[7] Il est d'ailleurs révélateur que la leçon LXXXV, où le narrateur décrit « la capitale d'un grand empire » d'une manière toujours imprécise et brouillée, porte le titre *Tableau de Paris*, par quoi elle offre une exception topographique inattendue mais significative.

nom, dont on voit surtout le milieu de cour, notamment le roi, appelé parfois prince ou souverain, aussi bien son palais que ses courtisans, gentilshommes, gouverneurs, écuyers et valets. Presque à chaque fois, l'auteur introduit simultanément la figure d'un sage ou d'un philosophe, observateur lucide et critique de la réalité du royaume, derrière qui on peut sans doute deviner l'*alter ego* de l'auteur. Sa fonction est très claire et constante dans l'ouvrage : contrairement au milieu royal, univers du mensonge et de la déraison, c'est lui qui incarne la vérité et professe la sagesse : « Il veille aux portes du crime. Il s'est approché du domaine du vice, pour le démasquer et le peindre » (leçon LXXXV)[8]. De manière très symbolique, afin de mieux accentuer cette opposition, le philosophe porte un pauvre manteau usé et plein de trous, tandis que celui du roi est riche et somptueux, mais couvert de taches (leçon XVIII). Dans cette antinomie philosophique « roi-valet », le sage des *Apologues modernes* a tous les traits d'un nouveau Figaro et annonce déjà clairement la revanche que la république va bientôt prendre sur la monarchie.

Tout l'ouvrage de Sylvain Maréchal est d'ailleurs construit autour de ce schéma dualiste et dialectique à la fois : de l'opposition de deux mondes dont l'un revêt le mal, tandis que l'autre dépeint le bien, il résulte que le premier doit être contrarié par le second qui, dans chaque situation, l'emporte sur celui-là. La monarchie représente en effet l'image d'un État malade et défectueux, à commencer par la personne du roi qui, indépendamment des apologues où il apparaît, incarne presque toujours le même type de défauts et de vices. Vaniteux et orgueilleux, entouré de courtisans flatteurs, « un peuple de nains » (leçon V), il se croit, dans un esprit louis-quatorzien, « pétri d'un autre limon » que tous les autres (leçon III), prêt à « prétendre aux honneurs divins » qui lui vaudront « des autels et de l'encens » (leçon XVII). Comme son « vice héréditaire » est d'être « enclin à la débauche, même à la crapule » (leçon IV), il exploite sans remords ses « pauvres sujets » (leçon XXI), « épuisés d'impôts » (leçon XXVI). L'image binaire de l'inégalité sociale, matérielle et politique, est d'ailleurs dominante dans le tableau que se fait Maréchal de la monarchie française de Louis XVI. Celle-ci est un pays, où l'on voit « le quart des hommes servi par les trois autres quarts » (leçon XCI), et dans lequel « la classe la moins nombreuse des habitants, c'est-à-dire des maîtres » exploite et opprime « la classe la plus nombreuse » (leçon XXXI), voire le peuple, en le réduisant au rôle d'« esclaves » (leçon L), ce qui rend ce dernier « semblable aux enfants qu'on oblige à faire les frais de leur propre châtiment » (leçon XXXIII). Appuyé sur « le luxe, l'égoïsme, la dureté, l'impudence » des maîtres (leçon XXXI), le système socio-politique du royaume reste abusif et injuste, de même que les critères des valeurs sont complètement renversés, car les plus pauvres travaillent en faveur des plus riches et contribuent

[8] Tout au long de la présente étude, nous respectons l'orthographe du français moderne et non celle de la version originale de l'ouvrage.

à leur bien-être, ce que l'auteur semble résumer le mieux en constatant amèrement qu'« un monarque tient tout de ses sujets, et ils n'ont rien à hériter à sa mort » (leçon LVI).

Réduit à une simple diatribe contre la monarchie de Louis XVI, l'ouvrage de Maréchal ne différerait pas beaucoup d'autres textes de l'époque, dont les auteurs, surtout à la veille de la Révolution, dévoilent les imperfections de l'État, ce qui leur coûte parfois des problèmes avec la censure, ou même des persécutions judiciaires graves (Peignot, 1806 ; Hermann-Macard, 1968). Il va beaucoup plus loin dans sa critique de la monarchie française, jusqu'à remettre en doute autant son fonctionnement que son utilité, ou même en prévoyant, en futur révolutionnaire, sa disparition. En prophète, Sylvain Maréchal semble préparer son lecteur à ce qui va bientôt se passer en France, où la royauté tombera en 1792 sous les coups de la Révolution.

Il développe sa vision de l'avenir à quelques niveaux différents, mais qui travaillent tous en faveur d'un seul but argumentatif. Il le fait d'habitude à l'aide d'un conte de fée, d'une vision ou d'une prédiction, mais ses intentions n'en sont pas pour cela moins réelles. Parmi les images inventées, il présente par exemple la personne d'un roi qui se rend compte de l'inutilité de la monarchie et, de son propre gré, est prêt à abdiquer : « D'après ma propre expérience, je m'apperçois que le roi le mieux intentionné n'est pas nécessaire aux hommes, ses semblables, ses égaux ; lesquels peuvent très bien se conduire eux-mêmes, puisqu'ils ne sont plus des enfants » (leçon XXX). Une autre fois, il imagine un conte pastoral, où un roi se déguise en berger pour une fête bucolique, mais se plaît tellement dans son nouveau rôle d'homme libre et heureux qu'il renonce à retourner à celui du monarque : il se sent « plus à [son] aise sur ce siège de gazon que sur un trône d'or […] ; quand on a été roi et berger, et quand on a le choix entre l'un et l'autre, on reste berger » (leçon XCVIII).

Dans sa vision politique de la fin de la monarchie, Sylvain Maréchal ne se limite pourtant pas à développer des images de fables, plaisantes et agréables à lire, mais il va beaucoup plus loin, où les exemples qu'il donne deviennent sérieux et graves. Il n'hésite pas à présenter des scènes métaphoriques parlantes, comme celle du squelette d'un tyran décapité, servant de démonstration pour une leçon d'anatomie (leçon IX), ou le tableau d'une statue d'un prince renversée par le tonnerre (leçon XI). Cette image d'une statue abolie se trouve d'ailleurs dans un autre fragment, où sa signification symbolique est encore plus explicite, car elle annonce clairement une révolution qui mettra fin à la monarchie : « Les dieux ont déjà vu leurs statues d'argent métamorphosées en vaisselles plates. Un jour pourra venir où l'on fera du sceptre un hochet, une marotte dont le peuple s'amusera » (leçon XCIII). Parfois on tombe aussi sur les images des esclaves qui se mettent en grève et « cessent tout à coup et de concert leurs travaux et leurs services » (leçon XXXI), ou des soldats refusant de piller le peuple et désobéissant aux ordres de leur roi tyran qui, dans une scène pénétrante, « abandonné

de tous, affamé au milieu de ses trésors, dans sa rage impuissante se déchira de ses propres dents et mourut dans les tourments du besoin » (leçon XXXII). Sans doute, Sylvain Maréchal prophétise la Révolution de 1789 : si, dans un apologue burlesque (leçon XLIII), un despote ordonne de remettre à la rubrique de la mythologie ancienne le terme d'insurrection, rangé jusqu'à présent dans son dictionnaire comme notion renvoyant à l'histoire ancienne, l'auteur des *Apologues modernes*, tout au contraire, le situe dans un avenir bien proche de la monarchie française. Le terme de l'insurrection, loin d'être un simple mot encyclopédique d'un dictionnaire poussiéreux, semble apparaître inévitablement parmi les actualités politiques de la France.

On le voit le mieux, et de manière directe, dans l'apologue XXVIII, intitulé *Vision. L'île déserte.* Comme on l'a déjà remarqué plus haut, il servira à Sylvain Maréchal, en 1793, de canevas principal de sa pièce de théâtre, *Jugement dernier des rois.* Il s'agit d'une vision où, suite à une révolution européenne, commencée pourtant en France, un tribunal républicain international prend la décision de déporter les monarques détrônés dans une île déserte, où ils devront demeurer jusqu'à leur mort (Matyaszewski, 2020a). S'il n'est pas surprenant de voir un motif pareil dans un texte révolutionnaire rédigé en pleine Terreur, il est pourtant inattendu, presque invraisemblable, que l'on ait pu en dessiner le fondement encore avant la Révolution. Surtout que la vision que l'on voit dans l'apologue XXVIII est doublement prophétique, car non seulement elle annonce l'abolition de la monarchie, mais aussi, sinon surtout, le châtiment des rois :

> En ce temps-là, revenu de la Cour bien fatigué, un visionnaire se livra au sommeil, et rêva que tous les peuples de la terre, le jour des Saturnales, se donnèrent le mot pour se saisir de la personne de leurs rois, chacun de son côté. Ils convinrent en même temps d'un rendez-vous général pour rassembler cette poignée d'individus couronnés, et les reléguer dans une petite île inhabitée, mais habitable ; le sol fertile n'attendait que des bras et une légère culture. On établit un cordon de petites chaloupes armées pour inspecter l'île, et empêcher ces nouveaux colons d'en sortir […] ; il fallut que chacun, pour vivre, mît la main à la pâte. Plus de valets, plus de courtisans, plus de soldats. Il leur fallut tout faire par eux-mêmes. Cette cinquantaine de personnages ne vécut pas longtemps en paix ; et le genre humain, spectateur tranquille, eut la satisfaction de se voir délivré de ses tyrans par leurs propres mains.

Il est à remarquer qu'aussi bien dans les *Apologues modernes* qu'à travers le *Jugement dernier des rois*, la mort des monarques dans l'île, sans doute attendue et désirée dans le texte, n'est quand même pas le résultat d'une exécution directe, mais arrive d'une manière plutôt naturelle, conformément aux intentions de l'auteur qui veut, par là, insister sur la générosité des révolutionnaires. Si, dans l'apologue XXVIII, c'est la méchanceté naturelle des rois qui provoque leur auto-destruction mutuelle, la pièce de théâtre propose une solution différente,

mais résultant de la même logique des choses : c'est un volcan, voire les forces de la nature, qui engloutit les monarques et sonne le glas de la royauté. Or, dans ses *Apologues modernes,* Sylvain Maréchal propose pourtant une autre scène qui, cette fois, semble annoncer directement le sort futur de Louis XVI et son exécution dans le Paris révolutionnaire. Il s'agit de l'apologue XXXIV, intitulé *Épitaphe*, où un sage découvre, sur une pierre tombale, une inscription funéraire explicite : « Ci-gît, enfin, un tyran ». Plus bas, il peut lire aussi : « Le peuple las de souffrir, versa le sang de ce mauvais roi, pour en écrire son épitaphe ». Si l'épitaphe est, en elle-même, suffisamment révélatrice, elle reste, de plus, accompagnée d'un commentaire non moins significatif de la part du sage : « Si de pareils honneurs funèbres attendaient tous les tyrans, la race en serait bientôt épuisée ». Décidément, Sylvain Maréchal développe sa vision d'une révolution désirée et prophétise la mort violente du roi, voire la fin de la monarchie, qui en seront la conséquence logique car nécessaire.

L'apologue *Le Tombeau des rois* (leçon XCVII), déjà bien métaphorique par son titre, est capital autant par la force du récit qu'il contient qu'à travers le message qui en découle. On y voit un vieux mausolée d'une famille souveraine, dont un berger nomade s'est fait, en esprit pratique, sa propre demeure, pour lui et son troupeau. On est impressionné de l'invention utile du nomade qui non seulement « partage la sépulture des rois », mais en exploite l'intérieur d'une manière étrangement pratique : « le caveau funéraire de la reine est aujourd'hui une étable à vache […], la cendre d'un grand roi servant à la lessive […], son urne cinéraire convertie en ruche à miel, et son buste de marbre suspendu derrière la porte d'une chaumière ». Derrière ce pragmatisme macabre du berger se cache la vision d'une révolution républicaine qui construira l'avenir sur les débris de la monarchie, celle-ci, ne représentant que « de belles ruines d'un édifice antique », n'appartient plus qu'au monde du passé. La figure du berger nomade devient le porte-parole d'un peuple qui revendique ses droits et construit un nouvel ordre des choses. Afin de le dire encore mieux de manière explicite, Maréchal se sert des fameux propos exprimés par Sieyès en janvier 1789 dans son célèbre pamphlet politique, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat ?*, que, travestis légèrement, il met dans la bouche d'un sage : « je ne serai plus rien quand mes semblables redeviendront quelque chose » (leçon XXXI).

Il est capital d'observer que le motif d'une future révolution se traduit dans les *Apologues modernes* en la vision du retour à l'ancien univers, celui de l'« *âge d'or ou siècles héroïques* », archétype du bonheur primitif, perdu mais à reconquérir, époque de la liberté et de l'égalité parmi les hommes, ordre d'avant la royauté ; il s'agit d'« un temps où il n'y avait sur la terre ni maîtres, ni valets, ni souverains, ni sujets : chacun se servait soi-même » (leçon XXXI, souligné par l'auteur) et où, du fait que les hommes n'avaient pas de rois, « ils n'en étaient que plus heureux, et n'en vivaient que plus longtemps » (leçon XLIII). Parti de cette vision des temps du bonheur d'antan, Sylvain Maréchal en conçoit une

prophétie, celle de l'apologue XXXI, *Prédiction véritable et remarquable*, où il envisage de « rétablir pour toujours les choses sur leur ancien pied, sur l'état primitif ; c'est-à-dire sur la plus parfaite et la plus légitime égalité […] que tous les hommes d'un bout du monde à l'autre ne forment plus qu'une chaîne composée d'anneaux tous semblables ; et crions d'une voix unanime : vivent l'égalité et la liberté, vivent la paix et l'innocence ». Si l'auteur qualifie sa prophétie de « prédiction », il veut renforcer sa probabilité par deux adjectifs « véritable et remarquable » qu'il y ajoute. Comme tout prophète, il semble être convaincu, ou même sûr, du caractère certain, voire inévitable de sa vision : « Tout ceci n'est qu'un *conte*, à l'époque où je le trace. Mais je le dis en vérité ; il deviendra un jour une *histoire*. Heureux ceux qui pourront reconfronter l'une à l'autre » (leçon XXXI, souligné par l'auteur).

En guise de conclusion, on doit constater que, si l'on suit l'ordre chronologique de leur publication, les *Apologues modernes* de Sylvain Maréchal se situent entre son *Almanach des honnêtes gens* et son *Jugement dernier des rois*, et cela non seulement au niveau temporel. Paru à peu près un an après le fameux archétype du calendrier républicain et plus de quatre ans avant sa pièce de théâtre qui prédit le nouvel ordre des choses que la république introduira en France, ou même en Europe, son ouvrage de 1789 semble en constituer un texte de transition, voire une prophétie intermédiaire. Si le premier ouvrage annonce la refonte du temps qu'apportera la Révolution, tandis que le dernier sonne le glas de l'ancien monde des valeurs, les *Apologues modernes* insistent surtout sur la fin de la monarchie, condition indispensable de ces changements. Déjà en 1789, il clame la disparition de la royauté comme objectif principal d'une future révolution, phénomène naturel et nécessaire du cours de l'histoire; par cela, sa prophétie devient plus qu'une simple vision, mais elle doit prouver, auprès du lecteur, la sagesse politique de son auteur.

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