

Representation of Emotions in Indigenous Icelandic *Riddarasögur*

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Abstract

The article is devoted to analysing the representation of emotions in Old Norse chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*). Unlike the characters of French romances, who express their feelings in highly expressive monologues, the heroes of Old Norse *riddarasögur*, are portrayed as seldom showing their emotions and acting only after careful consideration of the implications of their deeds. In *riddarasögur*, changes in the representation of expressions of feelings remain within the Old Norse tradition of family sagas and kings' sagas; it can be accounted for by the influence of indigenous models of behaviour and by the desire to satisfy the expectations of a contemporary Scandinavian audience. The subgenre of indigenous *riddarasögur*, which appear in Iceland, the so-called *meykongr sögur* (maiden-king sagas), is characterized by an inversion of gender roles, influencing the expression of emotions. Feelings are verbalised by men, whereas the heroines of maiden-king sagas prefer to act, verbally and physically humiliating their suitors (in *Nitida saga* the representation of emotions is used to distinguish a real maiden-king from a false one). The way the emotions of the heroines are implied by their actions in maiden-king sagas can be traced back to indigenous Scandinavian literary traditions.

Key words: riddarasögur, maiden-king sagas, French romances, translations, gender, emotions.

The term chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*) is usually applied to Norwegian translations of medieval French romances, which were made on the orders of the Norwegian king Hakon Hakonarson (1204-1263), as well as to indigenous chivalric sagas composed in Iceland in the 14th and 15th centuries. Although romances themselves borrowed plots and motifs from many literary traditions including Classical antiquity, Celtic folklore and Medieval Greek romance, the final result is usually homogeneous, both stylistically and conceptually. Unlike the genre of romance, originating from a courtly milieu and reflecting the ideals of feudal aristocracy, the genre of *riddarasögur* is far from being homogeneous, since at all stages of its development it depends on indigenous literary traditions². Not only in Iceland but also in Norway, feudal chivalry never emerged, and therefore the semiotics of courtly culture remained alien to the Norwegian translators of the 13th or the Icelandic creators of chivalric sagas of the 14th and 15th centuries. In Norway the influence of chivalric culture on *riddarasögur* was greater than in Iceland, where not only the courtly milieu but the court itself did not exist. What did exist, though, was an extremely fertile indigenous literary tradition, which, through contacts with chivalric romances, was enriched by new plots, motives, images and stylistic traits.

Indigenous *riddarasögur* were composed in Iceland under the influence of Norwegian translations. The mere fact that Icelandic *riddarasögur* were preserved in a great number of manuscripts (unparalleled in world literature if the size of the country and of its population is taken into account) and published in popular magazines even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, testifies to the stability and viability of the new genre no less than the quantity of

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² Issues related to translations of French romances into Old Norse are discussed in: Kalinke, 1981, 2011; Glauser, 2005, pp. 372-387; Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, 2012; Glauser & Kramarz-Bein, 2014; Johansson & Mundal, 2014. K. Seidel, 2014.

rhymed epic poems (*rímur*) drawing on *riddarasögur* as their sources. In *rímur* the prosaic plots of *riddarasögur* drawn from poetic romances once again received the embodiment in verse essential for the transformation of an impersonal saga tradition into authored literature.

The reception of the genre and its inclusion into a different literary system, ensured that the plots of *riddarasögur* have remained popular in Iceland to the present day. Although in Iceland indigenous *riddarasögur* continued to be composed after the Middle Ages, the present article is based on a representative group of Icelandic *riddarasögur*³, which survive in manuscripts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but possibly pre-date those by at least a century⁴.

In contrast to Icelandic chivalric sagas, Norwegian *riddarasögur* (such as *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, a translation of Thomas of Britain's *Tristan*; *Möttuls saga*, a translation of *Le mantel mautillé*; the *Strengleikar*, a translation of Marie de France's *lais*; *Elis saga ok Rósamundu*, a translation of *Elie de Saint-Gilles*; *Ívens saga*, a translation of Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au Lion*; *Erex saga*, a translation of Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*; *Parcevals saga*, a translation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*), have often become the objects of scholarly studies⁵, especially in so far as principles of translating emotions are concerned. It has been established that psychological analysis present in the original is usually omitted in Norwegian translations, and following the Old Norse tradition of family sagas and kings' sagas, emotions are often manifested through actions or physical movements rather than through words. As pointed out by scholars, Icelandic family sagas, kings' sagas and legendary sagas are 'notorious for [their] lack of emotional display <...> internal emotions are frequently translated into actions, exhibited through involuntary physical reactions (reddening, swelling or sweating) or conveyed through verbal retorts that are intended to hide the emotional turmoil that evoked them. While somatic description is fairly rare in the sagas, it is nevertheless used efficiently to convey underlying emotions that the character is unable to contain or suppress' (Sif Ríkharrðsdóttir, 2015, 167). The heroes of Norwegian translations less often articulate their emotions but tend instead to consider in practical terms the implications of possible actions⁶.

In indigenous *riddarasögur* emotions are referred to more often than in the Old Norse family and kings' sagas, but are represented in much less detail than in the translated sagas⁷. Thus the Norwegian translator of *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* of Chrétien de Troyes reduces the number of words denoting emotions and descriptions of feelings in comparison with the French original. At the climax of Chrétien's romance, Yvain declares the degree of his love, saying: 'my heart never wanders from you or is to be found elsewhere; so that I cannot think of anything else; so that I surrender myself entirely to you; so that I love you more than myself; so that if it is your pleasure, I wish to live and die wholly for you'⁸ ('Mon cuer, n'onques ailleurs nel truíz; / En tel qu'ailleurs pensser ne puis; / En tel que tout a vous m'otroy; / En tel que plus ai que moy; / En tel que pour vous a delivre / Veil, c'il vous plaist, mourir ou vivre', 2025-2033).⁹ The translation into Old Norse is shorter; structurally it consists of two long clauses in place of five short exclamations: 'With such vehemence', said he, 'that it could in no way be greater, so much that no matter what I do, my heart dwells always with you; I do not wish to be in any other place so much as I wish to live and die with you' ('Með svá miklum ákafa', sagði hann, 'at engum kosti má meiri, svá mjök at hvat sem ek at höfumz, þá býr hann allr með þér; líkar mér at vera ok aldri í öðrum stað svá mjök at með þér líkar mér at lifa ok deyja', kap. 6).¹⁰ The phrases omitted in the translation include the most passionate expressions: 'I cannot think of anything else'; 'I

³ *Nítíða saga*, *Victors saga ok Blávus*, *Valdimars saga*, *Ectors saga*, *Saulus saga ok Níkanors*, *Sigurðar saga Þoggla*, *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, *Adonias saga*, *Vilhjálm's saga sjóðs*, *Sigrarðs saga Frækna*, *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrands*. For texts used, see Loth, 1962.

⁴ Exact dates of composition of Icelandic *riddarasögur* are not known. For some of them there is no scholarly edited text, and the relations between extant MSS are complicated. According to Marianne Kalinke (1985, 329), 'Some scribes condensed and omitted, others expanded and interpolated <...> a variety of contrary scribal approaches could and did coexist even in one and the same work.'

⁵ Old Norse translations of Chrétien's romances have been discussed by: Sif Ríkharrðsdóttir, 2012, 76–112; Bornholdt, 2011, 98–122; Layher, 2011, 123–44; Seidel, 2014; Jordan, 2007, 141–66; Hanna Steinunn Þorleifsdóttir, 2007, 167–76; Lodén, 2014, 91–106; Kjesrud, 2014, 225–44.

⁶ Cf. Jónas Kristjánsson (1988, P. 338): 'there is little sentiment and no attempt to describe the personal feelings of the characters.'

⁷ For a study of Old Norse words denoting emotions see: Larrington, 2015, 74–94.

⁸ Translations of Chrétien's romances in the present paper are quoted from Owen, 1993.

⁹ The text of Chrétien's romances in the present paper is quoted from Hult, 1994.

¹⁰ Translations of *Ívens saga* in the present paper are quoted from Kalinke, 1999.

surrender myself entirely to you'; and 'I love you more than myself'. In the Old Norse paraphrase ('with you I wish to live and die') of the French exclamation ('I wish to live and die wholly for you'), 'die for you' (pour vous) becomes 'die with you' (með þér), narrowing courtly hyperbole to commonplace. As well as weakening the emotion, the translation also loses the tone of courtly love because the explicit deference to the wishes of the lady in 'if it is your pleasure', 'c'il vous plaist' is omitted. An ironic intertextual reference in the phrase 'my heart never wanders from you', to the wanderings that cause Yvain to return much later than the twelve months he promises (the single crucial failing in an otherwise perfect knight), is ruined when 'my heart never wanders from you' ('mon cuer, n'onques ailleurs nel truz') is paraphrased in the observation, 'I do not wish to be in any place else so much' (líkar mér at vera ok aldri í öðrum stað svá mjök, kap. 6). The heights of emotional expressions in courtly love are reduced in *Ívens saga* to laconic statements of the hero's wishes.

In *riddarasögur*, as in the native sagas of Icelanders, the desire to avenge an insult, to restore honour and good name, becomes a moral imperative. The emotions of a saga hero are related to his pursuit of honour, revenge against an enemy, regaining a legacy appropriated by an adversary, finding a suitable bride. Thus in *Ívens saga*, Kalebran, narrating the story of his defeat in combat of a knight guarding the spring, is grieving not that he made his shame publically known (unlike Calogrenant in Chrétien's romance, 579) but that the conquerer damaged his honour: Nú þó at ek fengi þar svívirðing, þá skal ek þó segja satt, 'Now though I left in disgrace from there, I shall tell you the truth', Nú hefi ek yðr sagt, hversu heimsliga ek fór, eða hverja svívirðing ek fekk af minni ferð, 'Now I have told you how foolishly I behaved and what disgrace I received from my journey' (Kalinke, 1999, 44). Whereas in the romance *Erec and Enide* the knight is asking for sympathy, saying that nobody should reproach him as he had no weapon (*Erec et Enide* 238), in *Erex saga* when the hero tells the queen about the incident he confesses that the worst of it for him was his inability to avenge (en sú þó einka verst, er ek þorða ekki at hefna mín, 'but what is worst is that I did not dare to avenge myself', Kalinke, 1999, 224). The right to revenge and the importance of honour are the main driving forces in Icelandic family sagas, whose influence was no less important for chivalric sagas than the influence of French romances.

Unlike French romance, which 'ascribes emotion frequently <...> and assigns an array of both positive and negative emotions to its characters <...>: amours (love), angoisse (anguish), douleur (suffering, pain), joie (joy), ire (anger), anui (distress, sadness, sorrow), paour (fear), duel (affliction, sorrow), mescheoir (to fall into depression, sorrow), rage (madness, furore, pain), melancolie (melancholy, sadness), esbahir (feel bewildered), maulelent (resentment, angry), aimer (to love), a bele chiere (cheerful, with a radiant face), lié (joyous), esjoier (to be joyous), tenir chiers (cherish, hold dearly)' (Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, 2017, 35-36), Old Norse translations are dominated by actions. In them descriptions of the internal world of an individual are displaced with detailed narratives of events, mostly battles and single combats. Emotions are only mentioned in *riddarasögur* as providing motives for the main conflicts. Introspective emotional monologues disappear, internal speeches are not retained, any kind of reflection is carefully cut out, and descriptions of mental processes are omitted, as they do not further the development of the narrative (Kalinke, 1977, 125-144). Direct speech is reduced to the aphoristic short statements characteristic of indigenous sagas. Descriptions of feelings, not fully appreciated by the translators and their public, are ignored.

In contrast to the characters of romances who easily become furious, expressing their feelings in highly expressive monologues, the heroes in chivalric sagas are always shown as serious, never acting in an emotional outburst but only after prudently considering the implications. Thus unlike Chrétien's *Yvain*, who grows angry when he discovers that King Arthur wants to lead an expedition to the magic spring of Esclados because he is worried that the glory of the victory could go to Kay or Gawain and therefore rushes into danger without thinking (677-722), the hero of *Ívens saga* first gives careful consideration to everything he has heard and only after that decides to go by himself. The further heroic feats of the Scandinavian warrior are motivated by desire to prove his courage and valour. Thus the warriors of chivalric sagas are represented as being as unemotional as the characters of Icelandic family sagas.

Words denoting passions expressed by heroes of French romances are simplified and often cut out from the Old Norse translation but are reduced further in indigenous Icelandic *riddarasögur*. The emotions in Icelandic *riddarasögur* are usually signified by a single word, such as 'grief' (sorg, harmr), 'anger' (reiði), 'love' (ast), 'joy' (gleði). In the eleven sagas under analysis emotions are mentioned comparatively rarely in direct speech: of the eighteen times words such as 'grief' or 'sorrow' (sorg, harmr) are used, thirteen occur in indirect speech and only five come from the mouth of the suffering person. Even when emotions are referred to in direct speech, the feeling itself is rarely developed.

In *Nítíða Saga*, for example, when a servant woman, Íversu, who is being used as a magical substitute for a maiden-king, is asked by the King's sister: 'My Queen, why do you neither wish nor are able to speak with anyone, and what brings that bitter weeping which never leaves your eyes' ('Drottning mín, hvað veldur því er þér vilið eða megið við öngvan mann tala, eður þann beiska grát er aldrei gengur af yðrum augum'¹¹, kap. 3), her reply first just paraphrases the question and then merely states the facts of the case: 'What causes my tears and bitter grief is that the maiden-king has separated me from my husband and children, and I will never see them again' ('Það veldur mínum gráti og þungum harmi að meykongur hefur skilið mig við bónda minn og börn og mun ég hvorki sjá síðan', kap. 3). The dialogue between the two characters tells the audience more than the emotive noun, 'grief' (harmr), but develops through the combination of physical action (weeping and tears) and verbal statement of fact: 'I will never see them again' ('mun ég hvorki sjá síðan', kap. 3). The primary narrative function of the dialogue is not to give deeper insight into the feeling of the servant girl but to inform the king, who is hidden behind a tapestry, that the speaker is not, as he believed, the maiden-king he wants to persuade into marriage. King Ingi shows his anger at being deceived by the maiden-king through physical action: he jumps out of his hiding place and strips the servant girl of her royal robes. The narrator of *Nítíða Saga*, who does not mention any feelings expressed by the maiden-king, comments on the king's fury and disappointment.

Distribution of the different kinds and causes of emotion reflects dependence on gender. Grief is far more often experienced by women than by men, whereas anger is usually associated with male protagonists. On the occasions when only one gender is affected, grief is felt by women eleven times, by men only four times. Grief caused by death affects both sexes: for example, in *Sigrarðs Saga ok Valbrands*, at the murder of Sigrarð's two sons, everyone alike, men and women, young and old, mourns. Other causes of grief reflect the differences of gender roles and status. In *Saulus Saga ok Nikanors*, Potentiana is described, at two different stages in her persecution, as downcast at the prospect of marriage to Matteus, to which she does not consent, and again as sorrowful and in tears as she sits at her marriage feast. Her sorrow emphasised through synonymic repetition is not unjustified, since in the social codes of Medieval Iceland (although marriages were proposed by men, normally either the would-be bridegroom or the woman's senior male relative) the consent of the woman was regarded as a *conditio sine qua non*. As Marianne Kalinke puts it, 'Unlike fathers in continental romance, [those in *riddarasögur*] do not ordinarily dispose of their daughters in marriage without consulting them' (Kalinke, 1990, 190). A contemporary audience would have understood that Potentiana faces in effect a life of institutionally licensed rape.

In the world of men, the relationship of lord and follower had an importance equivalent to that of marriage, and this is manifested in *Saulus saga ok Nikanors*, in the 'sorrow' of Villifer at having to part from his lord, Nikanor. Another bond which was part of the male code of honour is that between allies who have assisted each other in battle. This is reflected in the more complex scene in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, when Jarlmann leaves a host he has aided and whose daughter, Ríkílát, has tended his wounds, in order to return to his lord, Hermann: 'Not even the hardest man's eyes are dry at [his] departure' (enn þeirra skilnad uar eingi suo hardur karlmaður at oklauckuande uæri, kap. 14). Jarlmann has been sent by Hermann to woo Ríkílát on his behalf, and her father has indicated early in his mission that he would not be unwilling to have Jarlmann for his son-in-law; however just before his departure Jarlmann re-affirms his refusal to accept the offer to remain and marry Ríkílát himself. His choice to adhere to the lord/follower relationship rather than to the host/guest bond reflects his observance of the code of honour but casts into doubt his inclusion into the unanimity of grief among the 'hardest' of men at the parting (implying the feelings he experienced as a result of his own decision). Although the complexity of the feelings expressed in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns* is uncommon in the *riddarasögur*, it is conveyed only through physical reaction and understatement. Jarlmann's situation constitutes an essentially tragic conflict, but the conventions of the code of behaviour followed in *riddarasögur* do not encourage its development into the expression of tragic emotions¹².

Whereas grief is most often a female emotion in the indigenous *riddarasögur*, anger is almost always attributed to men. In the only two sagas, in which women's anger is represented (*Sigurðars saga þögla* and *Sigrarðs saga frækna*), the women concerned are maiden-kings¹³.

¹¹ The text of *Nítíða saga* in the present paper is quoted from McDonald Werronen, 2016, 221-248.

¹² Cf. Kalinke (1990, 173): 'Unlike Tristram and Roðbert, Jarlmann does not betray his lord and foster-brother, although he is given ample opportunity to do so. Jarlmann's steadfastness thus precludes the possibility of tragedy arising from his person.'

¹³ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2012, 130): includes a clear explanation of the term: 'a young, noble, unmarried woman, usually haughty and cruel... She rules her own kingdom, rejects all her suitors and mistreats them physically, verbally or both.'

In the latter, Ingigerðr, who is cursed by her stepmother Hlégerðr to be cruel to her suitors, is angry at her lover's apparent impotence, but since the audience has already been informed that the cause of his failure is the magic used against him, her anger cannot be taken at face value. In *Sigurðars saga þögla*, Sedentiana turns pale with rage on receiving a proposal of marriage to a king's son, put to her courteously by his brother (kap. 10). Although the heroine is female by nature, her social status makes her adopt a male role: she is a sole ruler of her land, thus, in effect, king. Since marriage proposals were made by the wooer or his nominee to a male relative (though subject to final decision by the woman), the audience could perceive that the maiden-king was acting here in her male role, in which case her anger would not be unmotivated.

In Icelandic *riddarasögur* anger experienced by men occurs as a prelude to attack (which either leads to a fight between armies or is offered as a way of avoiding multiple bloodshed), or during combat or a duel, or in response to an undesired outcome of warfare. Male anger arises from the competitiveness which is a necessary consequence of the epic and romance convention that a true hero must excel to the point of being the best in all respects. The hero of *Saulus saga ok Nikanors*, Saulus cannot stand hearing anyone else being called his equal, which leads to his escalating anger against Nikanor. The question as to who is best sets off a contest of boasting between the respective followers of the two heroes, Saulus and Nikanor, which degenerates into a drunken brawl (kap. 6). When Saulus hears of this, his reaction is to take offence and express anger at the very idea of comparing the two of them: it is improper and intolerable that he, a king's son, should ever be likened to a mere duke (kap. 6). Saulus challenges Nikanor to a game of chess, a form of contest used in the *riddarasögur* to establish intellectual superiority; defeated in that, he becomes so angry that he strikes Nikanor in the face (kap. 7). In the ensuing tournament both are severely wounded and fall exhausted to the ground; yet as soon as they have been revived by the best physicians, both are again full of desire for vengeance (kap. 7). The escalating sequences of anger and physical contest are only halted when the emperor intervenes and proposes that reconciliation should be sealed by Nikanor's marriage to Saulus's sister Potentiana (who agrees with the proposal) and a kiss of peace between the contestants. From then on, following conventions of Icelandic *riddarasögur*, they become, utterly and till death, loyal brothers-in-arms. Thus anger is inevitably both a driving force and an accompaniment to modes of life in which competition between individuals (for glory, for power, for desirable women, for riches, in both personal and social areas) plays an important role.

Yet at the same time, anger is frequently seen in indigenous *riddarasögur* as undesirable and self-defeating. A person who is angry is represented as losing control of himself, or as being taken over by something outside his normal self. In *Adonias saga* King Marsilius can no longer repress his anger and in the ensuing scuffle is killed by his rival Constantius (kap. 12); later Constantius is in turn overcome by anger and lust for revenge (kap. 21). In *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrandr* the situation is made even more impossible by the heroine's vow only to marry a man who has overthrown Valbrandr, whom no one is able to stand up to in tournaments and duels, and who has been refused by both the king and Florida herself (kap. 6). Unsurprisingly, Valbrandr is greatly enraged at this and kills or permanently injures the next thirty suitors who challenge him (kap. 6). The rage takes such hold on him that he is unable to break out of it when Sigrarðr overthrows him. He goes home meditating revenge, the final stage of anger, which takes the form not of another formal duel in the public eye, but of the cowardly murder of Sigrarðr in his marital bed and later of the twin baby boys born to Sigrarðr's wife, Florida, whom he throws into the sea (kap. 16). The description of Sigrarðr's murder could have been influenced by the indigenous heroic epic tradition, i.e. the account of Sigurðr's murder in his marital bed in several Eddic lays such as *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*, *Guðrúnarhvöt* and *Hamðismál*, as well in such prose sources as *Snorra Edda* and *Völsunga saga* (in the latter Sigurðr's three-year-old son is also killed, after the death of his father, by Brynhildr)¹⁴.

The positive emotions such as love and joy occur much less frequently in the indigenous *riddarasögur* than those with negative effect such as grief and anger. Joy is expressed almost exclusively on occasions of reunion, just as grief is felt most often at partings, including death. In *Valdimars saga*, when the princess is abducted by a dragon, all joy is turned to sorrow, and her brother rides off to rescue her, to the sorrow of all (kap. 1); but when the heroes meet again, there is a joyful reunion (kap. 2). In *Saulus saga ok Nikanors*, when Potentiana is reunited with the two heroes, she was 'kissing both her brother and her betrothed with great joy' (... sinum brodr og festarmanni kyssandi þa bada uidr mikilli gleði, kap. 22). Marriage in particular promotes joy, both at the new bond but also, since there are often obstacles to marriage which cause parting, at reunion as well.

¹⁴ Other Eddic lays, i.e. *Guðrúnarkviða I*, *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* state that Sigurðr was murdered in the woods, and it is this version that is reflected in the *Nibelungenlied*.

In *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns* King Hermann expresses happiness at seeing his bride Ríkilát brought to him by his friend Jarlmann: ‘the king was extremely glad and greeted them with great joy and happiness’ (‘og varð konungurinn við það furðu glaður og fagnaði þeim með mikilli gleði og blíðu’, kap. 13). In *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrands*, at the marriage feast, there is a joyful reunion with tears and embraces, which includes relatives and followers, creating a general and shared celebration in joy (kap. 21). At the marriage feasts which conclude several Icelandic *riddarasögur*, even when joy is not specifically mentioned, it can be inferred from the descriptions of the food and entertainments provided, as well as from the length of time they continue. Outside such reunions the unstated mood one can infer (among those not grieving or feeling anger) seems to be closer to the tonality of lines from *Hávamál*:

Glaðr ok reifr
Skyli gumna hverr,
Unz sinn bíðr bana.

(‘Glad and cheerful / should each man be / till his dying day.’)

For a genre which owes so much to Norwegian translations of French romance, indigenous *riddarasögur* contain scarce descriptions of love between the sexes. The courtly love expressed by Íven in the translated version, let alone the noble and passionate feelings of Yvain in Chrétien’s original (cf. 2025-2033) hold little attraction for the creators of Icelandic sagas. The verb ‘unna’ is sometimes used of the feelings of a people towards a just ruler or an assumed successor likely to prove good. In *Saulus saga ok Nikanors* the queen is loved (‘unna’) by everyone and all the people greatly love her son Saulus (kap. 1). The bond between two future relatives is explicitly referred to by the word ‘love’ (‘unna’): it is used of the feelings of a maiden-king Nítíða for princess Sýjalín (the sister of her suitor who will win her affection and become her husband): ‘each came to love the other like her own mother <...> and the maiden-king took the King’s daughter Sýjalín and set her in the high-seat next to herself, both of them drinking from the one cup, and she parted from her neither in sleep nor during meals’ (Tók hvör að unna annari sem sinni móður <...> tekur meykóngur Sýjalín kóngs dóttur, og setur hana í háseti hjá sér drekkandi af einu kerri báðar og skilur hvorki svefn né mat við hana, kap. 4). In *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrands* the hero’s (Sigrarðr’s) feelings for the heroine (Florida) are represented with the help of both the noun ‘ást’ (love) and the verb ‘unna’ (to love) used in a periphrastic Classical reference: ‘however, then the fair bird Venus pierced his heart with her love-dart so that he loved the young maid from his heart and firmly decided in his heart to win the young maid, cost what it will’ (‘Enn þo skjitur fagre fuglenn Venus sinni astar oi hans hiarta ad hann unnj meyunj þegar af hiartans as tog stadfesti það j synu hjarta ad hann skilled þessa jomfru fa huad sem gillte’, kap. 7). In the same saga the verb ‘love’ (‘unna’) is unexpectedly used of the feeling of Valbrandr for Florida (kap. 6), although he is the bully who has to be defeated before the hero Sigrarðr can win her.

An extended treatment of potentially reciprocated feelings between the sexes is found in *Sigrarðs saga frækna*. In the first half of this saga the real issues for Ingigerðr are Sigrarðr’s prowess in fighting and his sexual potency, although before she consents to sleep with him they do ‘exchange secret kisses’ (fara nú í launkossar, kap. 4). At the very end of the saga, after Sigrarðr has fulfilled all Ingigerðr’s tasks and has fully conquered her, ‘she crawled to [his]... feet and wanted to kiss them’ (þá skreið hon at fótum ... ok vildi kyssa á þá, kap. 15), but he responds very cruelly and ‘wanted to tread on her face if Hörðr had not prevented him’ (en hann vildi stíga í andlit henni ef Hörðr hefði eigi bannat honum, kap. 15). All sense of personal honour is disregarded in her complete self-abasement; she tells Sigrarðr’s friend Hörðr: ‘But you must pass on these requests to him, together with the golden ring which he gave me the first time; I give myself and my whole kingdom into his power, and will be what he wants, either his concubine or his wife. I prefer to be his concubine than the wife of any other king’s son, whom I know’ (‘En þau boð skaltu mega segja honum með fingrguli því er hann gaf mér fyrsta sinni, at ek gef mik ok allt mitt ríki í hans vald, ok vera hvárt sem hann vill frilla hans eðr eiginkona. Ok heldr vil ek vera frilla hans en eiga nökkurn þann konungsson er ek veit’ kap. 15). Maiden-kings’ feelings are conveyed more through action than through words: ‘She welcomed all those who had come, then she walked up to Sigrarðr and sat herself on his knee, threw both her arms round his neck and kissed him and begged his forgiveness for the struggle and resistance she had for him’ (‘Hon fagnaði öllum vel þeim sem komnir váru, en síðan gekk hon at Sigrarði ok settist í kné honum ok lagði báðar hendr um háls honum ok kyssti hann ok bað hann fyrirgefningar um stríð ok mótgang þann sem hon hafði veitt honum’, kap. 16). To this demonstrated submission and warmth of feeling, his only response is to inquire whether his two companions could marry her two sisters. It is difficult to feel confidence in the concluding assurance from the narrator that Sigrarðr and Ingigerðr’s ‘love was good’ (‘Ok váru astir þeira góðar’, kap. 16). No mutuality of feeling, on which a lifetime together could be based, has been established between them.

Like all shrewish brides of Thrush beard-type folktales (Aarne-Thompson-Uther type 900), the maiden-king in *Sigrarðs saga frækna* is fully tamed, her self-esteem is entirely destroyed, and she is prepared to do anything for the man who conquered her, but whether there is any love from her or his side remains unclear. Her pride, which led to aggressive behaviour, has been broken; but the consequence for him is that he has become the oppressor in their relationship.

Pride in indigenous *riddarasögur* causes extreme emotions, both positive and negative. An objectively justified feeling of dignity, preventing a person from committing actions he would consider unworthy of himself, is central in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, which is remarkable for its skilful interaction of emotions within a tight group of people. Jarlmann acts with dignity and self-esteem, which will not allow him to transgress the code of loyalty between master and follower (Hermann is king and Jarlmann is an earl in his kingdom, and they have in addition sworn an oath of brotherhood). At the wedding feast, Ríkilát, well-liked by everyone, does not take enough care to conceal the fact that she favours Jarlmann above all others. Then she notices that Hermann has become silent and naively asks Jarlmann to find out the reason ('Góði vin', sagði hún, 'hvað mun valda, konungur er svo ógláður?', 'Good friend,' she said, 'what can be the reason for the king being so gloomy?', kap. 12). When it emerges that Hermann is actually jealous, to the point of being 'afraid that Jarlmann will seduce' Ríkilát ('En nú uggir mig, að hún unni þér betur en mér, og munt þú fífla hana fyrir mér' – 'And now I am afraid that she loves you more than me and you intend to take her away from me', kap. 13), Jarlmann becomes justifiably angry, and after reminding Hermann that he has in fact already been offered Ríkilát's hand and refused it as an act of honour, he rides away. Ríkilát is so upset by his departure that she cannot even speak with him (Hún bað hann vel fara, og gat hún ekki fleira við hann mælt fyrir harmi', 'She wished him to fare well and she could not say anything more to him because of sorrow', kap. 13), and everyone at court is sad when he has gone, except Hermann who becomes cheerful again and even then does not pay much attention to his wife's grief. Thus Jarlmann's dignity causes two opposite emotions: the grief of the woman who values him and the joy of his lord.

The contrast between dignity and pride is portrayed in the opposition of the two leading characters of *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrands*. Sigrarðr is not only the son of a king, but brought up in the company of all the great men who are invited to the court through the generosity of his father. Taken care of in infancy, he is first taught by the most excellent masters all the knowledge that can be found in books, then instructed in knightly accomplishments such as archery, swimming, table games and tourneying. Yet in spite of his excellence in all respects, Sigrarðr is friendly and modest in his dealings with old and young alike. He greets his superiors, his father, uncle and the emperor, formally and courteously; but on winning at a tournament, he immediately donates the prize of 500 marks to the poor. Although his accomplishments surpass those of all his contemporaries, he does not flaunt them, but uses them worthily. In order to win Florida Sigrarðr must defeat his opponent Valbrandr, who in uncontrollable anger executes cowardly revenge on a sleeping man and two new-born babies, and whose view of courting a bride essentially by violence culminates in a threat to rape Florida if she continues to refuse marriage.

Before the fight with Valbrandr, Sigrarðr is quietly confident (the narrator has told us that regarding Florida he shows no sign of emotion, and the emperor has noticed he has been silent recently). While Sigrarðr quickly mounts his horse without supporting himself on anything, Valbrandr flaunts his feelings about his appearance ('tremendous, black and of terrible aspect'), already thinking of how he will triumph in front of the whole army, having every intention of bringing Sigrarðr to an ignominious death. Yet despite his resort to the treacherous use of poison on his lance, it is Valbrandr who ends up somewhat comically stuck, because he is stout, in a narrow drainage ditch, so ashamed that he would have preferred death to such ignominy. While he goes home fuming, Sigrarðr calmly rides off to meet Florida's other requirement, which will reflect his indoor accomplishment and culture, excelling her at playing the harp, and he does it so well as to give delight, not only to all the nobles of the court, but to ill old women and even crowds of animals streaming in from the forest. His self-esteem and dignity bring joy to all, in a civilised competition with Florida, which so strengthens the bond between them that they are betrothed immediately. Only Valbrandr, with a sense of hurt pride, sits alone, glum and scowling. *Sigrarðs saga ok Valbrands* is an overtly Christian saga (the emperor on return to Greece first goes to church; the marriage takes place in the main cathedral; Sigrarðr's body is laid in a sarcophagus in the church), so dignity and pride can be distinguished, according to the Augustinian schema followed throughout the Middle Ages.

Pride is shown to be the cause of negative emotions in the sagas of the three 'maiden-kings' (meykóngr), Nítíða, Ingigerðr and Sedentiana, women who are unmarried and rule their lands with the power of a male king. Although their individual characterizations differ, each is introduced as having the desire to rule and dominate.

In *Sigrarðs saga frækna* Ingigerðr is ‘so domineering and commanding and incurred such fear that no one dared to go against her will’ (Hon var ríklynd ok stjórnösöm ok stóð svá mikil ögn af henni at engi vogaði öðruvís at gjöra enn hon vildi, kap. 3). She has many would-be suitors killed before allowing into her presence Sigrarðr, whom she subjects to a series of tests, but who finally reduces her to a state of complete submission. Her pride develops from lust for dominance to violence; it is destroyed, but succeeded only by submission in turn to complete domination.¹⁵ Ingigerðr’s pride is shown as self-defeating from the very beginning of the narrative because she became so ‘feared for her contrivances that there was no one who dared to seek her hand or to have anything to do with her’ (stóð nú svá mikill ótti af hennar tiltektum at engi vágaði hennar at biðja, eðr nökkur viðskipti við hana at eiga, kap. 3). Even with Sigrarðr, whom she is attracted by, her aim is to put him in her power through humiliating him: inviting him to bed and then by magic rendering him impotent, so that she can mock him for his lack of virility. After the second night she has succeeded in making him feel humiliated: ‘Sigrarðr now goes to the table both red in the face and angry by taunting words which the maiden-king uttered to him in front of all men’ (Sigrarðr gengr nú til borðs ok er bæði rjóðr ok reiðr af þeim svívirdingar orðum sem meykönungrinn hafði valit honum á allra manna færi’, kap. 5). However the hero’s humiliation brings her no joy either: ‘the maiden-king was in a bad temper’ (‘Meykönungrinn ...var í illu skapi’, kap. 5); on the third night she has recourse to violence, and he has to kill thirty men to escape. All through the narrative, the chief aim is domination and the main means is violence, whether verbal or physical. According to the explanation suggested by Marianne Kalinke (1990, 78), ‘the maiden-king’s reaction to [the] proposal of marriage is a physical and psychological maltreatment of the wooer which appears to be entirely undeserved. Her overreaction seems to be quite irrational and an expression of an innate misogamy.’

Like Ingigerðr in *Sigrarðs saga frækna*, the heroine in *Sigurðar saga þogla* is a proud and domineering maiden-king: Sedentiana was so beautiful as a young girl that she grew arrogant and overbearing. When her parents withdraw from the world to serve God alone, she inherits the throne, insists on being called king, and rules sternly and despotically. When she is approached by two brothers, Hálfðan and Vilhjálmr, as suitors, she becomes pale with fury and proceeds to treat them with extreme violence. Their heads are shaved and covered with tar, they are branded on the fronts and backs of their bodies, and she dismisses them with insults: she knows they are degenerate weaklings, and she has no need to make them swear not to take revenge. Vilhjálmr warns that her arrogance will one day be punished, and, already escalating the violence by retaliating, Hálfðan throws a pole at Sedentiana, hitting her on the breast so hard that at first she is not expected to recover. A third brother, Sigurðr, in effect takes revenge for his brothers, humiliating Sedentiana by making her believe she agrees to sleep with three revolting figures, a swineherd, an ugly dwarf and a terrible giant.¹⁶ The humiliation destroys her pride, and she agrees to marry Sigurðr, although the route to this resolution, based heavily on revenge (humiliation for humiliation), is unfortunate. Sedentiana, similarly to Ingigerðr, behaves very much like the heroines of the Eddic lays, performing heroic deeds: Brynhildr, conceiving Sigurðr’s death, Guðrún, killing her husband Atli in revenge for her brothers Hamðir and Sörlr. As in Eddic poetry, it is the female characters who determine the course of action and therefore the course of narrative in *meykóngr* sagas.

The contrast between the endings of these two maiden-king sagas (*Sigurðar saga þogla* and *Sigrarðs saga frækna*) and a third (*Nítíða saga*) can be illuminated by the discussion of the emotional bond uniting a hero with his animal companion, a lion, which appears in several sagas and is considered to have entered the Icelandic tradition via the Norwegian translation of Chrétien’s romance, *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion*, where one of the most valiant and courteous knights of the Round Table becomes so attached to the lion as to make it permanently part of his own name¹⁷. The emotional bond in Chrétien’s romance originates from the scene when Yvain debates in his mind whether to intervene in the contest between a serpent and a lion, and decides on saving the lion because the serpent is treacherous, venomous and spitting out fire. Although some scholars considered the scene to be a ‘weighty allegory’ (Owen, 1993, 518), for a Medieval audience it was hardly allegorical, as a treacherous, poisonous serpent, full of evil, would be immediately identified as a devil.

¹⁵ Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2012, 241): ‘The meykóngr-narrative can be seen as a case of cross-fertilisation, emerging out of a dynamic between romance and native tradition: a striking, independent Brynhildr-type put in a new context in which she eventually ended up humiliated, subservient and comic, deflecting the threat she posed within the conventions of heroic texts.’

¹⁶ Schlauch (1973, 93): In *Sigurðar saga Þogla* ‘the humiliation inflicted on the cruel lady is thorough and unsparing.’

¹⁷ Driscoll (1992, lxxiv): ‘Versions of [the ‘grateful lion’ delivered from a dragon] appear in several other native romances, viz. *Ectors saga*, *Gregga saga*, *Konráds saga keisarasonar* and *Vilhjálmss saga sjóðs*. These episodes are all based, directly or indirectly on *Ívens saga*.’

In the description of the lion's act of humbling himself to his rescuer, room is left for the audience's decision on how to balance the touching humility in pressing its fore-feet together, holding them out and bowing its face to the ground, with an element of irony inseparable from such an image. The lion's profound gratitude and humility causes the hero's response with an entirely noble, civilised cluster of feelings. The knight and the lion become perfect foster-brothers and brothers-in-arms, and represent the closest male-to-male relationship in the romance tradition¹⁸. In its relationship with Yvain, the lion enacts the attributes of a true knight, both valiant in battle against evil and courteous in all his dealings with good people.

In the Norwegian *Ívens saga*, the lion's adversary is not an immediately recognisable devilish creature but a romance monster: a fire-spewing, creeping dragon (*ormr*). Íven saves the lion not because the dragon is treacherous and evil, but because he realises that the lion was calling on him for help, which might imply association of its status with that of a maiden in distress. Instead of the image of humility in Chrétien's lion's clasped paws, the lion in *Ívens saga* rolls belly up and nonetheless manages to crawl towards Íven, 'as if he wished to beg for peace with tears and so gave himself into the power of Sir Íven' ('sem hann vildi biðja sér friðar með tárur ok gaf sik svá í vald herra Íven'). The lion surrenders, but there is no mention of gratitude or humility, or any other emotion.

The lion has been adopted into several indigenous Icelandic sagas, including *Vilhjálms saga Sjóðs* (chapter 13) and *Sigurðar saga þogla* (chapters 15-16). In the former, the lion, represented as less active than in Chrétien's romance, is rescued by the hero, Vilhjálmr, from a flying dragon's claws and becomes inseparable from him for the rest of its life. As in the translation from Chrétien, the flying dragon (*flugdreki*) in *Vilhjálms saga Sjóðs* is essentially a romance monster and is not characterised with any religious vocabulary. The relationship between the knight and the animal is described in the saga in highly emotional language. When the knight has to leave the lion for some time, he kisses it and they both weep bitterly as they take leave of each other. When they are reunited, the lion is still grieving over its master's absence, but bounces joyfully to meet him. When the lion dies of wounds suffered after aiding the hero in battle, the latter feels such grief that he faints; later he lays the lion in a stone coffin and has a golden inscription made. Thus the feelings on both sides, especially the knight's, substantially exceed in emotional intensity the attachment between man and woman in any of the *riddarasögur* discussed in the present paper.

In *Sigurðar saga þogla*, however, the relationship between man and lion is rendered mostly in terms of actions rather than emotions. Sigurðr tends to the lion's wounds, feeds it and pats it, while the lion crawls up to him, guards him and helps him climb cliffs. Considerable prominence in the saga is given to the explanation of the function of the lion in the structure of the narrative. Soon after its introduction, in the context of some remarkable natural gifts such as sleeping with its eyes open and dragging its tail in order to obscure its tracks, it is stated that its cubs are born dead and only come to life on the third day, when the male breathes on them. The narrator tells his audience that 'in this is symbolised God Himself'. Although the lion in the saga does nothing to justify this explicitly religious symbolism, its behaviour can be viewed as an embodiment of an important element of the chivalric code, which the hero of the saga learns from it. Lions, it is said, will only attack in self-defence: if a man gives himself up into a lion's power, it lets him go as freely as it will; it will do no harm to anyone who wishes it well. This is the lion of the saga concerning the maiden-king, Sedentiana, who is carried away by the violent emotions arising from pride, turning her hostile to potential suitors before they make contact, and who treats them with violence if they do approach. She acts aggressively towards the two brothers, Hálfðan and Vilhjálmr, which provokes them to respond with violence. When the third brother, Sigurðr, approaches, he uses the pseudonym Amas (from Latin, 'amare') which already announces that he intends love, not violence. Sedentiana checks through messengers whether he comes with peaceful intentions, and when they confirm that he comes as a friend, she invites him to stay all winter. Like the relationship with the lion, the emotional bond created between them is based on mutual trust, in which violence has no place.

A narrative pattern based on the rejection of force and acceptance of peaceful intent is followed in *Nítíða saga*: a maiden-king, Nítíða rejects a sequence of wooers who presume too much and resort to violence (in three cases ending in their own death), until finally one (Líforinus) approaches with respect and civilised behaviour, and wins her consent to marry him. The heroine of the saga does not have the negative form of pride shared by other maiden-kings.

¹⁸ A rescued lion's gratitude in the romance tradition is predated by the extant narrative of Androcles and the Lion which dates from the second century AD, though there are likely to have been earlier folklore versions.

She replies to the first of the potential wooers not with aggression, but with courteous firmness: ‘I do not intend to give myself up to any king now ruling, and I am well off regarding men, and you have no need to pursue this matter again’ (‘Nenni ég og ekki að fella mig fyrir neinum kóngi nú ríkjanda, en fullboðið er mér fyrir manna sakir, en þó þurfú þér ekki þessa mála að leita oftar’, kap. 2). Like the lion in *Sigurðar saga þøgla*, she reserves the right to self-defence, and resorts to it when needed. The successful wooer, Liforinus, has to prove himself on the battlefield as a strong defender, but equally importantly he shows himself throughout a winter spent at Nítíða’s castle to be good company indoors, at peace: he plays the harp well and talks interestingly about the countries he has seen on his travels, so that ‘the queen had the greatest joy in his company’ (Drottning þótti að honum hin mesta gleði, kap. 5). As was pointed out by Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2013, 129): ‘*Nítíða saga* suggests that wooers should not proceed with force and the intention to dominate, but win a noble maiden’s trust and love through courtly and restrained behaviour.’ The heroes of *Nítíða saga* meet each other in an emotion found rarely in the indigenous Icelandic sagas, joy. The audience is left with a confidence in the long-term future of this relationship, which is lacking in *Sjörgarðs saga frækna*.

As in other indigenous Old Icelandic *riddarasögur*, the world of *Nítíða saga* is not one in which strong emotions are in evidence. Those that are depicted are more often negative (grief, anger, pride) than positive (love, joy), though the latter are present occasionally. Where positive feelings do occur, they are more often expressed in the form of an action than in that of an emotion. King Liforinus makes ‘his marriage proposal to the maiden-king with an eloquent speech and excellent judgement’ (Byrjar Liforinus kóngur nú bónorð sitt við meykóng með fagurlegum framburði og mikilli röksemd, kap. 5), but there is no reference to love. The words ‘great joy’ (mesta gleði) are used near the end of *Nítíða saga*, but the word ‘love’ does not occur, and companionship seems a more apt word to describe their relationship. Emotions are named more often in the *riddarasögur* than in the kings’ sagas and the family sagas, but not developed or much explored.

Thus, unlike the heroes of the French and Latin romances, who usually express their feelings in highly emotional monologues, the heroes of Old Norse chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*) seldom verbalise their feelings and never act in emotional outbursts. In *riddarasögur*, changes in the representation of expressions of feeling remain within the Old Norse tradition of family sagas and can be accounted for by the influence of indigenous models of behaviour, as well as by the desire to satisfy the expectations of a Scandinavian audience. On the contrary, the subgenre of indigenous *riddarasögur* which appears in Iceland, the so-called *meykóngr sögur* (maiden-king sagas) is characterized by an inversion of gender roles, influencing the representation of emotions. Feelings are ascribed to men by the narrator of the saga, which brings to mind the heroes of continental romances. The heroines of maiden-king sagas do not express their feelings (in *Nítíða saga* the display of emotions is used to reveal a bondswoman pretending to be a maiden-king) and prefer to act, verbally and physically humiliating their suitors. The use of actions to imply emotions in maiden-king sagas can be traced back to indigenous Scandinavian literary traditions.

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