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“Oh Lord, My God, Forgive Me”:

Comparing the Psychological Effects of Religious Shame in Le Conte du Graal (Perceval) and Parcevals Saga

Ritgerð til MA-prófs í Íslenskum miðaldafræðum

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship between religion and shame as portrayed by characterizations of Perceval in the original French text of *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*) by Chrétien de Troyes and in the Norwegian translation *Parcevals saga* (author unknown). This will provide an examination of how shame is represented, what its portrayal means for the narrative itself and why it may be represented this way due to religious and cultural influences in Norse and French society. The main focus will be on the association of shame and sin and how the relationship between the two is viewed in both cultures as depicted in the two narratives. The portrayal of emotions other than love in the romances has not often been examined by scholars, particularly in a psychological context. Leah Tether's Master's thesis, "Beyond the Grail: The Roles of Objects as Psychological Markers in Chrétien de Troyes' *Conte du Graal*," examines Perceval's perception of objects in the story and their gradual acquisition of deeper, symbolic interpretation as he matures. Sylvester George Tan similarly explores the idea of unconscious sin and asks whether or not Perceval is unfairly castigated for his actions within the narrative in his article, "Perceval's Unknown Sin: Narrative Theology in Chrétien's Story of the Grail." However, these works do not consider theology and its psychological influences on an individual and, by extension, his culture as represented in literature. I will examine Perceval's psychological state as it relates to his shame in two versions of the narrative in order to argue that the Norse-Icelandic audience placed much less importance on religion in general and on shame at committing a sin specifically. In conclusion, this project will examine the emotional and mental trials of Perceval in the French and Norse-Icelandic versions of the story after committing a great sin in order to shed new light on this element of *Parcevals saga* and the Scandinavian culture it represents.

ÚTDRÁTTUR

Markmið þessarar ritgerðar er að skoða tengsl milli trúarbragða og skammar eins og hún er sett fram í persónu Parsifals í upprunalegum frönskum texta Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*) og þýðingu hans, *Parcevals sögu*. Með þessu má rannsaka birtingarmyndir skammar og hver merking hennar er í frásögninni sjálfri og hvers vegna slík framsetning gæti verið vegna trúar- og félagslegra áhrifa í norskum og frönskum samfélögum. Áhersla verður lögð á tengsl skammar og syndar, og hvernig litið er á samþættingu þessara þátta félagslega samkvæmt þessum tveimur textum. Framsetning annara tilfinninga en ástar í ástarsögum hefur ekki verið mikið skoðuð af fræðimönnum, sérstaklega í sálfræðilegu samhengi. Meistararitgerð Leah Tether, “Beyond the Grail: The Roles of Objects as Psychological Markers in Chrétien de Troyes’ Conte du Graal,” skoðar skynjun Parsifals á hlutum innan sögunar og þróun þeirra yfir í djúpstæð, merkingarþrungin tákni samhliða vaxandi þroska riddarans. Sylvester George Tan skoðar á sama máta hugmyndina um ómeðvitaða synd og spyr hvort að Parsifal hafi hlotið óverðskuldaðar skammir fyrir gjörðir sínar í frásögnum í grein sinni “Perceval’s Unknown Sin: Narrative Theology in Chrétien’s Story of the Grail.” Engu að síður taka þessi verk ekki tillit til guð- og sálfræðilegra áhrifa sem Parsifal verður fyrir, og þar með framsetningu menningar hans sem skynjaðrar innan þessara rita. Ég mun skoða sálfræðilegt ástand Parsifals og tengingu þess við skömm hans í þessum tveimur ritum og setja fram þá kenningu að norrænir áheyrendur hafi lagt minni áherslu á trúarbrögð yfirhöfuð og sérstaklega skömm tengda syndinni. Skoðaðar verða sagnfræðilegar ástæður fyrir þessu. Meðal annars áhrif kirkjunnar og samfélagslegar venjur eða hefðir sem enn voru ríkjandi í Norræna-Íslandi eftir kristnitöku sem voru ekki til staðar í Frakklandi á tímum Chrétien de Troyes og skrifa hans. Með þessu verður leitast við að varpa ljósi á þjáningar Parceval sem eru afleiðing af syndum hans innan sögunnar, bæði í frönsku og norsk-íslensku formi sögunnar, í þeim tilgangi að útskýra þennan hluta *Parcevals sögu* og þá norrænu menningu sem hún stendur fyrir.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to examine the relationship between religion and shame as depicted by characterizations of Perceval in the original French text of *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*) by Chrétien de Troyes and in the Norse translation *Parcevals saga* (author unknown). This character study will allow an examination of how shame is represented, what its portrayal means within the context of the romance and why the relationship between shame and religion may be represented this way due to social and cultural influences in Norse and French society. This research will allow us to consider the *riddarasögur*, and particularly *Parcevals saga*, in a new way. For a long time, *riddarasögur* were largely ignored by scholars of Norse literature, who preferred to focus on indigenous works rather than imported materials; most overviews of Norse-Icelandic literature include only small sections on the translated *riddarasögur* and somewhat more extensive discussion of the indigenous versions.¹ However, that is not to say that no one has taken an interest in the *riddarasögur* as a genre. *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* by Norris J. Lacy contains an extensive commentary on scholarly work in the Arthurian genre, including chapters on Scandinavian and French Arthurian Literature, designed to survey “the work of those who are the acknowledged giants – past and present – of our field.”² Two such giants in the field are Geraldine Barnes and Marianne E. Kalinke. In Geraldine Barnes’ work “Romance in Iceland,” she notes that the *riddarasögur* are

frequently dismissed as the inferior, ‘escapist,’ dreary and depressing products of a gloomy period in Iceland’s history following the surrender of its autonomy to Norway in 1262-4 and subsequent deterioration in its economic and political status, the *riddarasögur* have proved the least appealing form of Old Icelandic prose narrative to modern scholarship, which has tended to regard them as something of an embarrassment to the Old Norse literary corpus.³

In recent decades, thanks in part to the work of Kalinke, Barnes, and scholars of their ilk, interest in the *riddarasögur* has flourished. Geraldine Barnes’ 1989 article, “Some Current Issues in *Riddarasögur* Research,” provides excellent context on the transmission, translation and genre identification of the *riddarasögur*.⁴ Marianne E. Kalinke’s “Arthurian Literature in

¹ See e.g. Heather O’Donoghue, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 102-104; Rory McTurk, ed., *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 380-385.

² Norris J. Lacy, ed. *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), vii.

³ Geraldine Barnes, “Romance in Iceland,” in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 266.

⁴ Geraldine Barnes, “Some current issues in riddarasögur research.” *Arkiv för Nirdisk Filologi* 104:1 (1989): 73-88.

Scandinavia,” also provides excellent background information on translated and indigenous *riddarasögur*, including notable differences in the translated versions, ostensibly due to social and cultural influences.⁵ Her work “King Arthur, North-by-Northwest: The *Matière de Bretagne* in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances,” contains a thorough examination of manuscripts and editions for this material.⁶ Her article “Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*),” in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, edited by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow,⁷ continues this research with detailed description of genre characteristics for the *fornaldarsögur* and *riddarasögur* (or *lygisögur*, as they are sometimes known). In comparing the *riddarasögur* to their originals, Kalinke was one of the first to conclude that “Norwegian translators reproduced more of the content of their sources more accurately than standard editions have in the past led us to believe,”⁸ whereas previous scholarly opinion had focused on the copious excision of lines from the Norse-Icelandic translations. It is from these scholarly origins that this paper takes its cues, focusing not on how much was cut or changed but *what* in particular was altered and, most importantly, *why*. The present thesis aims to use this information to construct a cross-cultural understanding of the relationship between shame and religion in medieval Norse-Iceland and France around the time that each story was written.

⁵ Marianne E. Kalinke, “Arthurian Literature in Scandinavia,” in *King Arthur Through the Ages, Volume I*, eds. Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day (London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), 127-51.

⁶ Kalinke Marianne E., “King Arthur, North-by-Northwest: the *Matière de Bretagne* in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances.” In *Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana XXXVII*. Edited by Marianne E. Kalinke. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Boghandel A/S, 1981.

⁷ Marianne E. Kalinke, “Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*),” in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, eds. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 316-63.

⁸ Kalinke, “Norse Romance (*Riddarasögur*),” 335.

METHODOLOGY

The guiding research questions are: What is the progression of Perceval's mental and emotional state in the original French text as compared to the Norse-Icelandic *riddarasaga*? How do we define guilt or shame in regards to religion and how were these emotions perceived in medieval times? How do the concepts of guilt and shame in religion differ between the French and Norse-Icelandic cultures? Finally, what is the psychological relationship between religion and guilt? With these questions in mind, we can examine what the differences in the portrayal of Perceval's character in the French and Norse versions of the story reveal about the cultures from which they originated.

The research will be conducted using a three-tiered methodological approach: close textual analysis of the primary source material using English translations where possible; historical contextualization of the influence of the Church and related cultural norms using primary documents and broader social and cultural knowledge through research and secondary historical sources; and finally, interpretation of primary texts through theoretical frameworks; in particular, the cross-cultural psychology of emotions framework put forth by Richard A. Shweder, Jonathan Haidt, Randall Horton and Craig Joseph. This framework maintains that

emotional experience is not analytically dissoluble from either the conditions that justify it or the social meaning systems that sustain it. This model offers a context-rich, maximally inclusive characterization of emotional experience – one in which elements of sociocultural and linguistic context provide the necessary background against which one can perceive local variations and transformations of the figural center of emotive processes.⁹

Schweder et al. assert that the ability to feel emotions is a "content-laden and culture specific mental process"¹⁰ that is not a universal, basic or an intrinsic mental process. These categories are useful to this research because they examine the inherent connection of emotion to the social structures (e.g. religious belief) which support it. By its definition, this model provides for a combination of language, of which the written narratives are a tangible expression, and socioeconomic evidence that can be discovered within historical and religious contexts I wish to explore.

The use of the word "universal" in the preceding explanation may lead some to conclude that I am refuting the idea of universal emotions in facial expressions put forth by

⁹ Richard A. Shweder, et al. "The Cultural Psychology of Emotions: Ancient and Renewed," in *Handbook of Emotions*, eds. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones, and Lisa Feldman Barrett, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 415.

¹⁰ Shweder, et al. "The Cultural Psychology of Emotions: Ancient and Renewed," 411.

Dr. Paul Ekman. Ekman's work postulates the existence of these basic emotions:

“amusement, anger, contempt, contentment, disgust, embarrassment, excitement, fear, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, sadness/distress, satisfaction, sensory pleasure and shame,”¹¹ which are displayed in identical facial expressions recognizable by others, regardless of culture and social conditioning. This is not in dispute. What is being suggested by this thesis is that the events which prompt displays of emotion vary between cultures; once the emotion is displayed through facial expression or other physical indicators, it can be interpreted and understood to some extent by others, regardless of the cultural milieu. John W. Berry et al. notes that “psychological processes (emotions) are similar across cultures but that their behavioral manifestations (emotion-based behavior) can vary substantially from one culture to another.”¹² Simply put, what precipitates great shame in one culture may be of little interest in another, depending upon the morals and values of the particular groups under consideration.

Shame is defined in this work according to Gunter Bierbauer's cross-cultural study of emotion and religion, which states “shame is defined as a reaction to criticism from others and as a fear of rejection and withdrawal from love. ... Shame results from the existence of a real or imagined audience of one's misdeed.”¹³ Under these conditions, an individual experiences shame rather than a similar, but distinct, emotion such as guilt. To further examine the emotion of shame within the two cultures, eight components are suggested by Schweder et al.'s cross-cultural framework, of which I will use the following five to examine evidence from secondary historical sources and in the narrative texts:

1. *Environmental determinants*. Are people alike or different in the antecedent conditions associated with the emotion (e.g. winning the lottery, a remark from a subordinate, birth of a child, physical contact with a member of an outcaste group)?
2. *Appraisals of significance*. Are people alike or different in the appraisals of the antecedent conditions that elicit the emotion, and in the ongoing construals that may inflect, extend, transform, or truncate the experience (e.g. others' actions were intentional, unwanted, goal enhancing, expected, disrespectful, or status-degrading; the outcome can or cannot be changed)?
3. *Normative social appraisals*. Are people alike or different in the extent to which showing, displaying, or merely experiencing the emotion has been socially designated as a vice or virtue or as a sign of sickness or health?

¹¹ Paul Ekman, "Basic Emotions," in *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*, eds. Tim Dalgleish and Mick Power (Chichester, England: Wiley, 1999), 55.

¹² John W. Berry et al., eds., *Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 158.

¹³ Gunter Bierbrauer, "Reactions to Violation of Normative Standards: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Shame and Guilt," *International Journal of Psychology* 27:2 (1992): 184.

4. *Self-management*. Are people alike or different in their impulses to action and plans for self-management that get activated in association with the emotion (e.g. to celebrate, to attack, to disengage and avoid the other person, to engage in problem solving)?
5. *Social management*. Are people alike or different in the ways they respond to and manage the communication and symbolization of the emotion by *others* (e.g., empathically mirroring the emotion, cowering, withdrawing, discussing an individual's behavior with others, and collectively shaming the individual)?¹⁴

The remaining three components are unusable for the purposes of this evaluation because they rely upon physical markers (e.g. facial expressions) or internal reactions (e.g. changes in blood pressure) which are impossible to assess based on textual descriptions.

By removing those which cannot be adjusted for textual interpretation, I can then apply the remaining five criteria to the narrative. In order to do this effectively, I will rely upon specific displays of emotion and reactions described in the text, evaluating the diction of such examples for their clarity and severity of meaning. This will be most evident in the French version of the narrative, for reasons relating to a literary tradition which supported more effusive displays of emotion through the language of the story and the actions portrayed therein. The Norse translation may be more notable for its lack of emotions in comparison, as observed by Philip Mitchell, who points out “the translators displayed a tendency to omit the detailed descriptions and the subtleties of emotion in order to get forward with the plot. The emphasis on narrative content would seem to have satisfied the king and his court and reveals a failure to appreciate some of the essential qualities of the literature which he sought to introduce into Norway.”¹⁵ With this general understanding as a foundation, I will then apply these theories of analysis as closely as possible to the text. For example, in order to evaluate social management, I will examine the ways that other characters react to Perceval's actions based on textual descriptions of their actions and dialogue. I will attempt to find a literary, historical, cultural or religious reason for the given example of emotion, particularly shame, in the story. Barring that, it may then be considered a device of the literary genre, in which some elements are not remarked upon because they do not represent important factors of the romance.

This framework also draws on ideas of religion put forth by Emile Durkheim, which holds that social institutions such as religion exist in order to meet certain needs in a given society: “It may be said that all the great social institutions have been born in religion. Now in order

¹⁴ Shweder, et al. "The Cultural Psychology of Emotions: Ancient and Renewed," 415.

¹⁵ Phillip M. Mitchell, "Scandinavian Literature," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis, by Phillip M. Mitchell, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 465.

that these principle aspects of the collective life may have commenced by being only varied aspects of the religious life, it is obviously necessary that the religious life be the eminent form and, as it were, the concentrated expression of the whole, collective life.”¹⁶ W.S.F. Pickering has interpreted this statement as follows: “Crucial to the notion of morality is the authority that supports it: in traditional societies this authority is based on God or some equivalent concept. ... This very close relationship between society and morality, between society and religion, encourages Durkheim once again to state that God is society hypostasized.”¹⁷ By examining the construction and reception of religion in a society, we can then extrapolate the values and principals of the society which it is designed to support. By examining the role of shame as it relates to religion, we can postulate upon the role of shame in society at large within the two narratives.

Lacanian and Freudian ideas of psychosexual development in human psychology will be used to better understand the characters as they are portrayed, with emphasis on the character of Perceval and his mental state throughout the two narratives. While psychoanalysis is intended to illuminate the complex interrelationship of the id and ego that stem from development in a living, physical entity, we may apply psychoanalytic principles to literature with the assumption that psychoanalysis can help to clarify literary structures put in place consciously or unconsciously by the author in an attempt to realistically depict the world of the narrative. Céline Suprenant observes that while there are many schools of thought within the field of literary psychoanalysis,

all variants endorse, at least to a certain degree, the idea that literature (and what closely relates to it: language, rhetoric, storytelling, poetry) is fundamentally entwined with the psyche. Hence, understanding psychoanalytic approaches to literature requires us to reflect on the various ways in which this close connection is conceived. It requires us to question the putative proximity of, or even the identity between, unconscious psychical and literary processes as one of their most common theoretical assumptions.¹⁸

Furthermore, Morton Kaplan and Robert Kloss observe that “fictional characters are representations of life, and, as such, can only be understood if we assume they are real. And this assumption allows us to find unconscious motivation[s] by the same procedure that the

¹⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 5th ed., trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1964), 418-9.

¹⁷ W. S. F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: James Clark & Co., 2009), 73.

¹⁸ Céline Suprenant, "Freud and Psychoanalysis" in *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 200.

traditional critic uses to assign conscious ones."¹⁹ Most critics of a character study-based approach to literary psychoanalysis, such as Norman Holland, who points out that a writer "hovers between *mimesis*, making like, and *harmonia*, the almost musical ordering of the events he depicts."²⁰ Character studies using psychoanalytic principles, then, neglect *harmonia*, the idea that the character acts not only like a real person, but like a person in a story, whose actions and behaviors must serve to advance the plot in some way. Bernard Paris comments upon this criticism, noting:

No study of character should ignore the fact that characters in fiction participate in the dramatic and thematic structures of the works in which they appear and that the meaning of their behavior is often to be understood in terms of its function within these structures. The less mimetic the fiction, the more completely will the characters be intelligible in terms of their dramatic and thematic functions; and even in highly realistic fiction, the minor characters are to be understood more functionally than psychologically.²¹

For this reason, this work will limit analysis to the protagonist, Perceval, alone. Other characters that may be considered will only be useful for their actions in relation to the main character. W.J. Harvey believes that it is possible to apply psychoanalytic theory to literary protagonists because they are the "characters whose motivation and history are most fully established, who conflict and change as the story progresses."²² Harvey supports this reasoning by observing that "most great novels exist to reveal and explore character."²³ With this in mind, we may now consider whether the characters created by Chrétien are finely drawn enough to constitute a reasonable psychoanalysis. Frederick B. Artz comments that "Chrétien is not content merely to narrate events, but he also tries to interpret them. At the center of his romances and beneath all the descriptions of armor and costume, of tournaments and battles, of castles and nature, there is a systematic analysis of love and of human action. ... As one of the first great explorers of the human heart, he must be numbered among the founders of the modern novel."²⁴ D.D. R. Owen characterizes Chretien's writing skill thusly: "We are left with the impression of a strikingly superior and many-sided talent. Chrétien has bequeathed to us a brilliant portrait of the society that gave him his livelihood. Much of his

¹⁹ Morton Kaplan and Robert Kloss, *The Unspoken Motive: A Guide to Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 4.

²⁰ Norman Holland, *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 306.

²¹ Bernard J. Paris, "Psychology: Characters and Implied Authors," in *A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 3.

²² W.J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 56.

²³ W.J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 23.

²⁴ Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages: An Historical Survey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 348-9.

detail is drawn from life.”²⁵ Michel Zink notes “The action of each romance is concentrated in time and around the central character. ... The Arthurian world is thus an unchanging given framing the evolution and destiny of the protagonist.”²⁶ John W. Baldwin points out the unreality of Chretien’s depiction of society:

Even if situated at the courts of Troyes and Flanders, Chretien nonetheless wrote romances that remained totally oblivious to the political, matrimonial and martial events of his day, just as they ignored the governmental achievements within the three surrounding principalities and the king’s domain ... Never did Chrétien let slip an explicit allusion to an event that can be identified from contextual sources. His *monde événementiel* remains that of his own imagination.²⁷

Chrétien chose to root the progress and meaning of the narrative within the trials of the protagonist rather than social and political elements, theme or style, and so it is within the protagonist that we must search for evidence of shame.

We will use these theories of psychosexual development of the individual to show Perceval and his ascension from ignorant child through the mirror stage of self-discovery to early sexual awakening. This awareness is then arrested in favor of spiritual refinement rather than bodily concerns. This allows us, the reader, to see through the lens of Perceval’s experiences and interactions with others. We may also examine what are the guiding cultural values for each particular group, French and Norse-Icelandic, to help us define the specific relationship in each culture between commission of sin and the experience of shame as presented in these stories.

²⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. D.D.R. Owen (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 1993), xviii.

²⁶ Michel Zink, *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*, trans. Jeff Rider (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1995), 55.

²⁷ John W. Baldwin, "Chretien in History," in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 12.

1. AUTHORSHIP AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WRITING

In order to understand the purpose and effect of the two narratives from a literary perspective, we must first consider what is known about the authorship of these narratives and the historical context in which they were written in order to understand what social mechanisms influenced the contents of this tale and its Norse-Icelandic counterpart. Generally speaking, Frederick B. Artz notes that “unlike the earlier epics most of the romances seem to have been composed primarily for an audience of women, and written to be read rather than recited. They glorified the aristocratic way of life and tried to offset the monotony of feudal existence with fabulous adventures.”²⁸ While this may have been true of the original French, we must analyze the extent to which this stated purpose appealed to a Norse-Icelandic audience. We shall first consider the patronage of each manuscript and whatever clues may be available to explain their *raison d'être*, including an examination of King Hákon Hákonarsson's motives in their transmission into Norwegian society and whether or not it was meant for entertainment or to import cultural values of chivalry and monarchical society. First, we must discover the extent to which the narrative seemingly reflects the society at the time of its writing before we may make any statement about the relationship within the culture between religion and shame. What is not in dispute, however, is the fact that Chrétien and those who translated his works in the centuries after, were a product of their individual cultures. Suzanne Marti asserts that “the potential influence that the target culture exercises on the translator, and thereby also on the translation process, must also be borne in mind. Since the translator and his work are, at least to some degree, always determined by his native culture, certain transformations must be ascribed to the translator's adaptation of his material to his own cultural and literary environment.”²⁹ In other words, no one writes in a vacuum.

1.1 The Matter of France

As early as the eleventh century, the kings of Western Europe found themselves competing with the popes of the Christian church. By the time of Chrétien's writings, the Church was deeply entrenched in the daily lives of the people of France. As J. H. Burns notes, Pope Gelasius I had originally “put forward the view that the world is governed by two separate authorities, that of the pope in matters spiritual and that of the emperor in matters temporal, both being subordinated to the lordship of Christ”³⁰ in 494 AD. Justinian, the Byzantine

²⁸ Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 345.

²⁹ Suzanne Marti, "Translation or Adaptation?: *Parcevals Saga* as a Result of Cultural Transformation," *Arthuriana* 22:1 (2012): 48-9.

³⁰ J. H. Burns, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought C. 350-c. 1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 46.

emperor in the 6th century AD, rejected this concept, and because of his contention it would be debated throughout the Middle Ages. This idea became known as Gelasian dualism, in which power was represented using a metaphor of two swords, one which gives power from God (kingship) and the other which is imbued with the power to act on behalf of God (the Church). Pope Boniface issued a decree in 1302 saying that: “Both [swords] are in the power of the church, the material sword and the spiritual. But one is exercised for the church, the other by the church, the one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and soldiers, though at the will and sufferance of the priest.”³¹ This cleverly asserted the power of the Church over the state, while keeping them tied to one another.

It was into this social and political climate that Chrétien wrote his seminal romances of chivalry and knights devoted to their ladies riding off on adventures. This tension between the powers of church and crown is a large part of *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)* and much less visible in *Parcevals saga*. The brief training scene with Gornemant provides an interesting lesson in the origins of noble talent to Perceval and the audience in addition to advising the hero on knightly decorum. Perceval’s skill with weapons comes as a result of his noble birth, for although he is completely unpracticed at using knightly arms,

Le jeune cavalier porta tout de suite la lance et l’écu avec autant d’adresse que s’il avait toujours vécu dans les tournois et les guerres, comme s’il avait parcouru tous les pays en quête de bataille et d’aventure. En effet, c’était un don de Nature, et quand c’est Nature qui enseigne, et quand le cœur y met toute son application, l’apprentissage n’est pas difficile. (722)

[he began to carry the lance and shield as properly as if throughout his life he had frequented the tournaments and wars, and wandered through every land seeking battle and adventure, for it came naturally to him; and since Nature was his teacher and his heart was set upon it, nothing for which Nature and his heart strove could be difficult.] (399-400)

His skill as a knight cannot be attributed to anything else at this point due to his lack of education. Keith Busby notes in his critical analysis that “the mother’s attempts at cutting her son off from the world were doomed to failure because ‘nobility will out,’ Moreover, Chrétien had made it quite clear that human destiny must be fulfilled within society, not without.”³² No doubt these details were especially pleasing to Chrétien’s aristocratic patrons, as they convey a certain unavoidable fate which is completely out of Perceval’s control. He will be a great knight, then, because his noble heritage precludes anything else. This, too, shows France’s legacy from the Roman Empire; according to J. H. Burns, early Christian lawmakers and

³¹ Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

³² Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes Perceval*, 19-20.

philosophers ensured that “subsequent political thought would be controlled by a greater debate, namely about the nature and destiny of man.”³³ Thomas Aquinas was a highly influential theologian and philosopher who, though working slightly after the time of Chrétien’s writing, perhaps best typified the arguments of the day with his *On Kingship*, appearing in the mid-13th century, which held that hierarchies are natural, and so government and society should be also. Natural order was decided by God and therefore sacred. Frederick B. Artz notes a central idea of Aquinas’ *On Kingship*: “the very existence of a ‘common good of many’ makes government, in addition to society, necessary and natural.”³⁴ This concept, together with ideas such as Gelasian dualism, required nobles to uphold the idea of a natural order defined by God, leading to the idea of divine right to rule in the later medieval period.

Frederick B. Artz notes that chivalry and courtly ritual had ancient origins in the Germanic tribes known to Tacitus in the 1st century AD, but grew into “a movement intended to improve society”³⁵ in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, driven by an increasingly wealthy society able to fund and support expensive knights and by noble women who popularized the notion of the romantic knight-errant, devoted to his lady love. But men repeatedly sent out to seek their glory on the battlefield often gain reputations for violence, and their armor made them tough and experienced in battle. John W. Baldwin comments that Chrétien’s time was plagued with much political strife: “Chrétien’s political world was framed by the Second and Third Crusades (1147-90). These four decades witnessed a three-cornered competition among the families of Champagne, Flanders, and the Anglo-Norman Angevins that revolved around the Capetian court.”³⁶ June Hall McCash notes that *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)* was composed “sometime between 14 May 1181, the date of [his patron, Philippe’s] military alliance with Countess Marie and her brothers-in-law, and September 1190, when Philippe left on Crusade.”³⁷ Perhaps Chrétien sought to criticize the societal ills caused by constant warring and a large class of well-trained men, likely returned from Crusades or other engagements, whose behavior was governed only by an ideal of kindness to others. By the thirteenth century, Frederick B. Artz notes that public opinion of knighthood had changed;

³³ J. H. Burns, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought C. 350-c. 1450*, 19.

³⁴ Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25

³⁴ Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 34.

³⁵ Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 344.

³⁶ John W. Baldwin, “Chretien in History,” in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 8.

³⁷ June Hall McCash, “Chrétien’s Patrons,” in *A Companion to Chrétien De Troyes*, eds. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 23.

“Churchmen frequently condemned chivalry, pointing out the laziness, cowardice, arrogance, brutality, and lechery of the knights.”³⁸ This may have been due to the fact that they had lost control of these warriors. Warren Brown comments that

Knights by this point also had their own law, namely the “law of arms”. This law consisted of formalized traditions about what was legitimate behavior and what was not. . . . In theory, the law of arms had roots in Roman and canon law as well as in custom. In reality, however, it lived in the memory of its practitioners. . . . Knights did not easily accept the laws of kings and their legal advisors. The monk Matthew of Paris, in his *Chronica majora*, notes in his entry for 1247 that according to the members of the French nobility, the kingdom had been won not by the learned written law (*ius scriptum*), nor through the arrogance of clerics, but by the sweat of war (*per sudores bellicose*).³⁹

Chrétien’s work appears to reflect this idea as well. All of his heroes, though ostensibly Arthur’s men, make their own decisions about who to aid and when to attack. Even the ignorant and untrained Perceval never takes orders from his liege nor is advised by those at court. Though originally ruled by the Church in a battle of wills between church officials and kings, the plight of the knightly class in medieval France shows the process of decline we will see uniquely reflected in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*.

Originally, Chrétien wrote his Arthurian romances under the patronage of Marie de Champagne, but, by the time he penned *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, his patron was Philippe d’Alsace, Count of Flanders. Like Chrétien’s previous post at the court of Champagne, Flanders was also known for its literary tradition as early as the tenth century, though it was mainly factual accounts containing genealogical information undoubtedly preserved for questions of lineage and inheritance.⁴⁰ It was not before Philippe ascended to power that the first pieces of courtly literature were produced for the House of Alsace. Mary D. Stanger notes, “Philippe has been described as the first Count of Flanders known to have taken an active part in encouraging literary production.”⁴¹ Philippe and Henri and Marie de Champagne had an appreciation for the arts in common. However, Philippe was also ambitious and vain. While he was an intelligent man who was placed in charge of his demesne in his father’s absence on Crusade as young as fifteen, Mary D. Stanger also notes that he deliberately attempted to cultivate the admiration of others “by keeping near him experienced knights, brave in war and skillful in tournaments, and by encouraging in his

³⁸ Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 345.

³⁹ Warren Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 259.

⁴⁰ Reto R. Bezzola, “Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident (500-1200). Troisième partie. La société courtoise: Littérature de cour et littérature courtoise.” in *Tome II: Les cours de France, d’Outre-Mer et de Sicile au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1963), 408-9.

⁴¹ McCash, “Chrétien’s Patrons,” 17.

castles the presence of jongleurs and minstrels of distinction, he wished to impress his contemporaries with the brilliant, and almost royal, atmosphere of his court.”⁴² Therefore, his appreciation of the arts was no doubt driven partly by a desire for social status as well as any personal affinity he or his family may have had. In contrast to King Hákon of Norway, Philippe’s role as the Count of Flanders was not in dispute politically and the dominance of the Church in Europe had already been established by this time, though, as we have seen, debate raged in law courts over questions of jurisdiction and right to rule between the two factions, and would continue to do so for centuries. Philippe himself was a devoted Christian and military leader, going on Crusade twice and dying during an epidemic after the Battle of Acre during the Third Crusade.⁴³

Le Conte du Graal (Perceval) was written in the 1180s and left unfinished, probably due to his death.⁴⁴ In the opening of the story, Chrétien praises his patron in a prologue known as the Parable of the Sower. This section stands as a fine example of rhetorical speech and contains many examples of figurative language, a popular oratory technique since Antiquity which was brought to medieval Europe via texts such as Cicero’s “De inventione.” By the 12th century, copies of Cicero’s “De inventione,” exceeded Virgil’s *Aeneid*.⁴⁵ Cicero’s “De inventione” is unique in that it recommends using emotional appeals to the audience to strengthen the quality of one’s arguments, whether they were delivered orally or in writing. Augustine’s “De doctrina christiana,” was probably well-known in Chrétien’s time and advances the idea that rhetorical skill and structure is to be used for religious education or entertainment of those who have come to listen. In this text, Augustine articulates three types (“styles”) of oration; plain, used for educating the ignorant masses, middle, used to entertain the already learned, and high, used for grand speeches intended to arouse passions and inspire conversion.⁴⁶ From this, we can see that rhetoric in Europe in the Middle Ages was a tool of the learned clergy, mostly used for religious affect. Keith Busby notes that the Parable of the Sower shows “an indisputable debt to the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition,”⁴⁷ as do all Chrétien’s prologues, which introduce the story, identify its origins and provide tantalizing hints of its themes while praising his patron who made the writing possible. Chrétien performs

⁴² Mary D. Stanger, “Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders,” *French Studies* XI 3 (1957): 216.

⁴³ McCash, “Chrétien’s Patrons,” 23.

⁴⁴ Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes Perceval* 54.

⁴⁵ Rita Copeland, “New Critical Approaches 2015: Rhetoric and the Emotions in the Middle Ages” (seminar presented at University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland, May 11-15, 2015).

⁴⁶ James D. Williams, *An Introduction to Classical Rhetoric: Essential Readings* (Chichester, Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell), 505.

⁴⁷ Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes Perceval*, 12.

all three of these tasks at once when he says, “la charité les dons faits par le bon compte Phillippe, car il n’en parle jamais à personne sauf à son cœur noble et généreux qui lui conseille de faire le bien”⁴⁸ [“the gifts given by the good count Phillippe are gifts of charity, for he consults no one except his noble, honest heart, which urges him to do good.”⁴⁹]

Chrétien uses his skill to expand upon religious themes, particularly in *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*), while portraying a segment of society designed to delight his patrons, who were both noble and members of the French court. Therefore, Chrétien’s stories focus upon the elite members of society and their heroic adventures in serving their lords and securing land or a bride to further their lineage. This is not to say that Chrétien wrote only superficial amusements for his audience, to be enjoyed at court and quickly forgotten. Chrétien takes these elements of courtly life in France and uses them to ask probing questions about the nature of identity. This theme recurs in all five Arthurian stories, though never as strongly as in the dilemma of Perceval, who is shown in the process of becoming a man and then a gentleman and, perhaps, something more, if the story had been finished. In terms of the language of writing, John W. Baldwin notes that fifteen of the existing thirteenth-century manuscripts of Chrétien’s writings were in the Picard dialect, suggesting that they were written in the north-eastern region of France, where the court ruled, and that this was his intended audience.⁵⁰ Given that the author’s choice of setting, plot and language of writing was designed to appeal most to his esteemed patrons and their peers, it is perhaps best to say that any conclusions drawn from this text about the relationship between French culture and religious shame should reflect an aristocratic viewpoint rather than a general cultural attitude of all French people.

Generally speaking, the economy of the medieval period in France and most other pre-modern nations was greatly influenced by its military conquest of other territories, which resulted in the behavioral trade which followed the development of courtesy and courtly social conventions. In John W. Baldwin’s words,

By waging endemic warfare, these leaders amassed great wealth from pillage and booty. They secured authority for themselves through distribution of these riches to their military supporters and churchmen. ... Lords channeled wealth through gifts, and the latter were expected to respond with counter-gifts, thus creating a vast network of

⁴⁸ Daniel Poirion, ed., *Chrétien de Troyes Œuvres Complètes* (Paris, France: Éditions Gallimard, 2004), 686. Further citations from this source will be noted with page numbers following the quotation.

⁴⁹ Carleton W. Carroll and William Kibler, trans., “The Story of the Grail (Perceval),” in *Chrétien de Troyes Arthurian Romances* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 381. Further citations from this source will be noted with page numbers following the quotation.

⁵⁰ Baldwin, “Chrétien in History,” 4.

gift exchange. Wealth was distributed ostentatiously, without restraint. The supreme virtue in this economy was largesse, or generosity.⁵¹

The mores of this culture are reflected in all of Chrétien's Arthurian works. John W. Baldwin remarks, "Chrétien is mute as to where Arthur found his riches, but the king is credited with maintaining the best knights in his kingdom,"⁵² a feat which would have required a massive amount of wealth to feed, house, clothe and equip the hundreds of men Arthur is credited with knighting and showering with gifts throughout Chrétien's five romances. This seigniorial economy depended on the lord having large amounts of land with which to generate income, or to give away in fits of generosity, which was maintained by a huge force of peasant labor.⁵³ Chrétien leaves these pedestrian matters out of his narrative, focusing instead on the adventures of the upper class, either as a nod to his aristocratic audience or due to the fact that descriptions of agricultural economy do not make for an interesting narrative.

The upper class mentality is reflected in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)* through several examples of largesse and gift exchange. As defined by Baldwin above, largesse is a display of wealth without expectation of reciprocation, whereas gift exchange requires the receiver to respond with a similar gift of land, clothing, arms or treasure. Baldwin further notes, "These Arthurian celebrations appear on the surface to be entirely gratuitous and disinterested, but as in Germanic gift exchanges, each gift requires acceptance and a counter-gift from the receiver, so that society becomes enmeshed in a complex web of mutual obligations."⁵⁴ Perceval first seeks out gifts when he journeys to King Arthur's court, leaving his mother against her wishes. He wants to be a knight, and has heard that King Arthur makes knights, and therefore wishes to go there. In fact, Arthur is famous for his acts of largesse in other Chrétien stories. In *Érec et Enide*, he gifts 100 knights with robes of silk, weapons and armor to celebrate Pentecost.⁵⁵ At Christmas, he repeats this generosity by knighting 400 noblemen and lavishing gifts of clothing, horses and weapons upon them.⁵⁶ In *Cligés*, Arthur knights the young prince Alexander and his 12 men, also giving them extravagant gifts, with the queen

⁵¹ John W. Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France: The Romances of Jean Renart and Gerbert De Montreuil, 1190-1230*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 98.

⁵² Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*, 99.

⁵³ Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*, 110.

⁵⁴ Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*, 99.

⁵⁵ Carleton W. Carroll and William Kibler, trans., "Erec and Enide," in *Chrétien de Troyes Arthurian Romances* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 62.

⁵⁶ Carroll and Kibler, "Erec and Enide," 118-9.

also gifting them with personal items.⁵⁷ So it now seems that Perceval was logical to seek knighthood and armor from King Arthur himself, just as it benefits King Arthur to bestow knighthood upon Perceval, despite his ignorance at the start of the tale:

Although these gifts are offered with seeming disinterest, they nonetheless serve to recruit new knights, who circulate throughout the Arthurian world performing exploits that enhance the glory of the mythical king. Arthurian largesse thus generates and perpetuates chivalric society. The loyalty of the knights is controlled through acts of creation and gift giving. Largesse reinforces the equality of the Round Table, thus preserving peace within the Arthurian realm, since no knight could raise economic or preferential excuse for picking a quarrel with another.⁵⁸

For Perceval, this normally expedient method of gaining the knighthood and the trappings which accompany it fails due to the fact that the Red Knight has insulted the queen and stolen the king's wine cup. The queen has left the hall and the king is depressed and silent (393). Thus, Perceval is unable to depend on the king's largesse and must seek out his own path to knighthood. In doing so, this difference between Perceval and the other knights at court has the potential to cause problems. Unlike those who received gifts from Arthur, Perceval is required to win all that he has in feats of endurance and skill; in fact, we see this almost immediately when a maiden at court laughs at Perceval: "Cette jeune fille ne rira que lorsqu'elle verra celui parviendra au plus haut rang de la chevalrie" (711) ["The maiden will not laugh until she has seen the man who will be supreme lord among all knights," (394)] a distinction which angers Keu (English: Kay) so that he strikes the maiden and kicks the court jester into the fireplace. In addition, King Arthur's "compagnons se sont dispersés pour se loger dans les meilleurs châteaux, et il n'en pas de nouvelles" (706) ["comrades have returned to their own castles where it is more pleasant to live," (391)] indicating a general state of decline. Some scholars, such as Keith Busby, believe this and other elements of vague and threatening sense of doom in the story may indicate that the Arthurian world depicted here is at an end.⁵⁹ By the events in the story, both Perceval and Gauvain are in a position to claim sovereignty over the Grail Castle and La Roche Canguin, respectively, through matrilineal birthright, which would cause them to abandon Arthur's court and the duties of chivalry. Brigitte Cazelles notes that "for Arthur to recover his previous preeminence therefore depends entirely on the king's ability to convince his companions of the value for them of belonging to

⁵⁷ Carleton W. Carroll and William Kibler, trans., "Cligés," in *Chrétien de Troyes Arthurian Romances* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 136-137.

⁵⁸ Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*, 99.

⁵⁹ Keith Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes Perceval (Le Conte du Graal): Critical Guides to French Texts* (London: Grant & Culter, Ltd., 1993), 18.

his chivalry.”⁶⁰ Arthur is ineffective, as he cannot even convince the naïve and uneducated Perceval to stay at Logres. The young man, seeing that the king is hardly interested in his service, leaves to seek his own fortune. Where Arthur was famous in Chrétien’s other stories for his extravagant gifts, Perceval asks the king for the armor of the Red Knight and then must get it himself (394).

Other examples of largesse occur throughout the narrative, as charity is the overreaching theme of the story. Firstly, the Parable of the Sower is included as an exultation of charity and the charitable qualities of Chrétien’s patron, Philippe of Flanders. Of the count, Chrétien says, “Il est plus généreux qu’on le croit, car il donne sans hypocrisie et sans calcul” (685-6) [“He is more generous than one realizes, for he gives without hypocrisy or deceit” (381)]. In fact, charity (or lack thereof) drives the plot of the story. After Perceval seeks out aid from King Arthur and fails to receive it, he meets the gentlemanly Gornemant, who trains him and gifts him with clothing, ultimately knighting him. It is with the skills and knowledge that Gornemant instills in his charge that Perceval meets the Fisher King, who gives a fine meal and a wondrous sword in a gesture of hospitality to his guest. Despite these demonstrations of proper chivalrous behavior, Perceval takes Gornemant’s advice too literally and fails to show charity or pity for the Fisher King, which is a disastrous failure on his part to serve the king and thus heal the land, just as he failed to show appropriate concern for his mother’s pain when she fainted and fell as he rode away on his quest for an exploration of Perceval’s development as a character throughout the narrative). Baldwin points out, “notwithstanding that Chrétien prefaces his last romance with an encomium to Count Philippe's generosity; the ensuing story contains fewer examples of largesse than his previous writings.”⁶¹ This coupled with the general feeling of decline in the depiction of Arthur and his court suggests that Chrétien was focusing his story not on earthly concerns, but rather a presumed spiritual purpose of the writing.

1.2 The Matter of Norse-Iceland

In order to fully appreciate the cultures of France and Norse-Iceland, as they are portrayed by the content of the two narratives, it is important to understand those historical political and religious circumstances which made these cultures, of which the writers are a product. Cultural realities which are taken for granted can have longstanding historical effects which alter the degree to which some element, e.g. the influence of the Church is relevant to

⁶⁰ Brigitte Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes’s ‘Conte du Graal’* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 117.

⁶¹ John W. Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France: The Romances of Jean Renart and Gerbert De Montreuil, 1190-1230*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 107.

the analysis. Likewise, historical context can illuminate subtle differences between two cultures which can help to understand these two examples of writing which, though remarkably similar as one is a translation of the original work, stem from quite different cultures.

At its heart, the early Germanic culture from which Scandinavia springs is individualistic in nature. Frederick B. Artz notes that “the early Germanic theory of rulership combined a number of ideas not commonly held in classical times. One of these was the idea of consultation between the ruler and his people – ‘what touches all must be approved by all.’”⁶² Even though representative government would not be a reality in states such as Spain, France and England for centuries, this early form was established in Iceland in 930 AD, after the first settlers left Norway, as a General Assembly which met once each year.⁶³ This period established a schism between Iceland and Norway. Orri Vésteinsson notes that “a pervasive notion in saga literature is that many of the settlers of Iceland were Norwegian noblemen, who for either practical or ideological reasons could not live under the tyranny of Haraldr hárfagri (‘Finehair’), the king who was credited by tradition with unifying Norway under his sole rule in the late ninth century.”⁶⁴

Fight scenes are one element which is rarely omitted from the Norse-Icelandic translation, unlike the many references to religion which have been cut. In fact, in this particular area, the translator is more likely to add or embellish the prowess or heritage of the knights involved in battle. Fighting terminology such as battle, rather than jousting, is the primary mode of engaging the enemy in *Parcevals saga* as tournaments and jousts were relatively unknown in Scandinavia. Rather than engaging in mock warfare, the Scandinavians of the time used feud as a method of addressing matters of honor. Suzanne Marti asserts that,

Due to the weight that is added to the endowments of Perceval and other knights, also the institution of chivalry appears to benefit from a favourable representation. Moreover, the importance that the translator seems to attribute to a positive illustration of chivalry is indicated by the faithfulness with which he renders many of the passages I examined, not least when instructions in a knight’s appropriate behaviour are concerned.⁶⁵

⁶² Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, 278.

⁶³ Gunnar Karlsson, “Social Institutions” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 509.

⁶⁴ Orri Vésteinsson, “Archaeology of Economy and Society” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 10.

⁶⁵ Suzanne Marti, “Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the Perceval Matter: An Analysis of the Old Norse and Middle English Translations of Le Conte du Graal” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2010), 160.

Through the many details lavished on scenes of violence and their participants, in comparison to the relatively sparse attention given to religious matters, this was of particular interest to the Norse-Icelandic audience. While the aggressive natures of the knights in search of fame and fortune became a problem in the later medieval period in France and were condemned by the very church officials who fostered chivalry in the first place, a love of fighting fit in well with the culture of Norway and Iceland, where feud dynamics were still common. This is due to the fact that Scandinavia traditionally had an honor-based society, in which one's value to the group was determined by his individual reputation and others' perception of such. William Ian Miller explains the role of shame within society thusly:

Shame has its obvious role in the socialization of honorable people and in maintaining social control. In the sagas, the norms of honor, the norms of proper behavior, in fact, are often expressed negatively in terms of shame avoidance as they are positively in terms of honor acquisition. And shame - as *skömm*'s synonyms *óvirðing* (literally un-honor) indicate - is conceptualized as the negation of honor. Shame is seldom, if ever, described as a feeling. As a linguistic matter, people are not said to be shamed or to feel ashamed or shame. Shame, rather, is something done to people, or people endure it or suffer it, or it will come to them, or they simply have it. *Skömm* is also often used to label the moral negativity of certain types of action.⁶⁶

According to Miller, some examples of actions which bring about shame in Norse society are taking back what you have been given (*Njáls saga*), failure to show up for a duel (mentioned in three different sagas), for men to engage in an unfair fight of three against one, for a man to be struck by a woman, and to have an outlaw escape your clutches and, of course, failure to act with courage when the situation called for it.⁶⁷

Though feud was perhaps historically not as bleak and bloody as portrayed in the sagas, it was a cycle of revenge-taking which had the potential to involve the entire community, from children and wives to the *goðar* who represented the people in parliament. In order to maintain one's honor, and thus avoid shame, one could not afford to let a slight to one's integrity pass. An insult demanded a response, and as such, feud was taken seriously by both men and women in Norway and Iceland, which left its mark on both cultures through the many sagas which feature feuds. This societal problem came to a head in the 1200s when the number of *goðar* decreased and popular chieftains began an outright battle for power. The period 1220–62, characterized by struggles between chieftains, is called the Age of the Sturlungar, which Helgi Þorláksson notes “is appropriate, because the Sturlungar were not only in the lead and among the most turbulent of those involved, but also fought among

⁶⁶ William Ian Miller, *Humiliation: And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 119.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Humiliation*, 119.

themselves.”⁶⁸ Open warfare broke out between these factions in 1235 and continued in various forms until 1262 and an inability to slow the killing or maintain the expected give-and-take of a typical feud, took its toll on society. Of the covenant which was penned between the people of Iceland and the king of Norway in 1262, Helgi Þorláksson comments, “the word ‘peace’ occurs no fewer than four times in this settlement, indicating that the Icelanders were exhausted by prolonged war and ready for peace.”⁶⁹ Iceland was settled by those who wished to escape the power-mongering of Norwegian lords and destroyed by that same urge for dominance by its highest-ranking families nearly 4 centuries later.

It was the same Hákon who commissioned the translated *riddarasögur* that brought Iceland back under Norwegian control with the covenant, *Gamli sáttmáli*, described above, though he died before he could have more official governance over the island. Hákon himself was born into a period of civil war in Norway, and so forming alliances and gaining territory for the state was undoubtedly seen as the best way for him to maintain his throne and compete with the great courts of Europe. Incidentally, the decision to import great literature such as the popular French romances could only increase the prestige of Hákon’s *hirð*.

Of all the countries in Europe, the most powerful at this time were Byzantium, and the German Empire. Anglo-Saxon England was also strongly Christian and popular as a trading and raiding destination, but its difficulties forming a united defense against such outside invasions prevented England alone from providing enough incentive for Norway to become a Christian land. Sverre Bagge notes the relative power of these three nations:

All three countries were integrated in Western Christendom, apparently without Eastern Christendom being a serious alternative. The two western centres were both important but in different ways. The German Empire was the great power of Europe in the tenth and 11th centuries. Depending somewhat on political conjunctures, gaining the friendship or avoiding the enmity of its powerful ruler would make strong incentives to adopt Christianity. In a similar way, Christianization of the neighbouring countries formed part of imperial policy, whether it was pursued by military or diplomatic means. By contrast, Anglo-Saxon England was a relatively weak power, united under one king in the late ninth century, largely as a reaction against the Scandinavian attacks on England and in the early 11th century even conquered by Denmark. In between, it had its periods of greatness as well as decline, but was never strong enough to pose a threat to the Scandinavian countries. Thus, fear of Anglo-Saxon power was unlikely to be a motive for conversion.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Helgi Þorláksson, “Historical Background: Iceland 870-1400” in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 149.

⁶⁹ Helgi Þorláksson, “Historical Background: Iceland 870-1400,” 150.

⁷⁰ Sverre Bagge, “Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 30 (2005): 113.

Hákon's attempts to court those of high-rank at these other centers of power were highly successful. According to Suzanne Marti, In addition to maintaining important trading connections with England, "he was well accepted by other powerful leaders. This is, amongst others, reflected by the French king Louis IX's request of Hákon's assistance in the matter of crusades, and by the German emperor Friedrich II's intervention on Norway's behalf against the city council of Lübeck."⁷¹

Within Norway, it also made sense to push for the adoption of Christianity due to the civil war. Hákon was based in Western Norway, while his chief rivals, the Eirikssons, likely controlled Eastern Norway and were supported by Denmark. Sverre Bagge comments, "It must therefore have been essential for Hákon to have a good relationship with the mighty ruler of Trøndelag and Northern Norway; otherwise, he would have to fight a two-front war. Trøndelag was the centre of paganism in the country."⁷² While this might be expected to cause a problem, it was not a religious conflict in the making. Though paganism was still a popular religion at this time, not a rigid system of belief which precluded all others; in Iceland, the people officially converted to Christianity in the year 1000 AD. After a series of disputes between pagans and Christians, Bagge notes that the lawspeaker at the *þing* "proposed that all should abide by the same laws, and this was accepted. He then announced his decision, and in the new laws that he recited it was stipulated that all people should become Christian."⁷³ This was done to avoid more strife, and possibly feud, rather than being born from religious fervor. Bagge encapsulates the situation succinctly as follows: "It seems pretty clear that we are dealing with a mixture of religion and politics, with conversion as a collective more than an individual process and as a change in rituals and external behaviour rather than in morality or intellectual conviction."⁷⁴

Norway was considered Christian from the 10th century onward, with the appearance of two men who embodied both political and religious concepts and were immortalized in Icelandic sagas in a later era:

The two missionary kings, Olav Tryggvason (995–1000) and St Olav Haraldsson (1015–1030), are described in great detail and often in the form of dramatic and violent struggles between the old and the new religion. To the saga writers, the missionary kings were, of course, fighting on God's behalf, whereas to modern historians, their accounts lent themselves to a political interpretation: Christianization

⁷¹ Marti, "Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the Perceval Matter," 75.

⁷² Bagge, "Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway," 116.

⁷³ Helgi Þorláksson, "Historical Background: Iceland 870-1400," 145.

⁷⁴ Bagge, "Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway," 112.

was a political more than a religious process, the new religion served as a power base for the monarchy, but the “hearts” remained the same.⁷⁵

In doing so, Norwegians lost some of their unique cultural values as they assimilated to European social norms. In comparison, the isolation of Iceland in the North Atlantic would have ensured their cultural identity was stronger for a longer period of time due to less influence from European societies. Orri Vésteinsson characterizes the cultural identity of Iceland as follows:

The Norse of the Viking Age clearly had a strong cultural identity which set them apart from other Europeans, whether Christians to the south or other pagan peoples to the north and east. The introduction of Christianity gradually reduced this distinctiveness, replacing indigenous art styles and tastes with more universal decorative fashions in the course of the twelfth century. The introduction of Christianity gradually reduced this distinctiveness, replacing indigenous art styles and tastes with more universal decorative fashions in the course of the twelfth century. These changes signify the incorporation of Norse society into the larger sphere of European Catholic culture. The Norse ceased to maintain a divergent identity and instead adopted new building styles, new decorative styles and new learning.⁷⁶

Although his country became more culturally homogenous, King Hákon accomplished much of what he set out to do by elevating his kingdom to the heights of sophistication typified by courts like those in France and Italy. Philippe d'Alsace, it seems, desired the same thing with his efforts to introduce literature in Flanders.

Though the Parable of the Sower, which crowns the French version of the Perceval story, allows scholars to speculate on the relationship between Chrétien, the author, and his patron, the noble Count of Flanders, any bibliographic information has been left out of the Norse-Icelandic version in favor of a more typical saga opening. This has led to much speculation as to the true purpose of the translations and the scholarly debate which maintains that the stories were merely brought into the literary corpus for the sake of entertainment, as Marianne Kalinke asserts in her work, or if it was part of a larger attempt to educate the populace on styles of behavior and deference to the monarch typical in the European courts, as Barnes believes.⁷⁷ Whatever the motivation, credit for their importation goes to King Hákon Hákonarson, a man characterized in contemporary writings by Matthew of Paris as

⁷⁵ Bagge, "Christianization and State Formation in Early Medieval Norway," 108.

⁷⁶ Orri Vésteinsson, "Archaeology of Economy and Society," 20.

⁷⁷ Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 99; Kalinke, "Arthurian Literature in Scandinavia," 129.

“vir discretus et modestus atque bene litteratus”⁷⁸ [“a discreet, modest, and perfectly literate man,”⁷⁹]. He was an educated man, described in *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar* as having both Latin stories and Old Norse literature read to him on his deathbed: “Í sóttini lét hann fyrst lesa sér látínbækur. En þá þótti honum sér mikil mæða í at hugsa þar eftir hversu þat þyodi. Lét hann þá lesa fyrir sér norrænubækur nætr ok daga”⁸⁰ [“In the sickness he let Latin books be read to him at first. But then he thought it great trouble to think over what that (the Latin) meant. Then he let be read to him Norse Books, night and day”⁸¹]. At the very least, these small details about this figure reveal an educated man who loved a good story, lending credence to Kalinke’s opinion that he may have wanted them translated simply for the enjoyment of his court. The translated lai *Möttuls saga* contains a prologue which seems to support this conclusion “En þvílík sannindi sem valskan sýndi mér þá norræna<ða> ek yðr áheyrendum til gamans ok skemtanar svá sem virðuligr Hákon kóngr, son Hákonar kóngrs, bauð fákunnugleik mínum at gera nokkurt gaman af þessu eptirfylgjanda efni”⁸² [“I have translated into Norwegian as entertainment and diversion for you, the listeners, since the worthy King Hákon, son of Hákon, asked me, ignorant though I be, to provide some entertainment through the following story”⁸³].

The best guess we have about the scribe who copied *Parcevals saga* comes from the prologue of the Norse version of *Tristram and Isolde*, which states that the story was written at the request of King Hákon in 1226, when he was approximately 22. Because of his young age, scholars assume this was therefore the first of his translations, which included at least four additional works.⁸⁴ Brother Robert, who is named in the same prologue as the man responsible for the writing, is almost completely unknown to scholars. Henry Goddard Leach believed that, based on his non-Norwegian name, Brother Robert was likely an English cleric who travelled North to join a monastery there.⁸⁵ According to Claudia Bornholdt, it is

⁷⁸ Henry Richards Luard, ed., “Matthæus Parisiensis, Monachi sancti Albani, Chronica Majora,” in *Rerum Britannicarum medii ævi scriptores, Volume 4* (London: Longman, 1877), 652.

⁷⁹ Richard Vaughan, *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris: Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life* (Cambridge: Alan Sutton, 1993), 45.

⁸⁰ Sturla Þórðarson, *Hákonar saga hákonarsonar II: Magnuss saga lagabætis*, Íslenzk Fornrit XXXII, ed. Sverrir Jakonsson, Þorleifur Hauksson and Tor Ulset (Reykjavík: Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 2013), 261.

⁸¹ George Webbe Dasent, trans., *Icelandic Sagas and Other Historical Documents Relating to the Settlements and Descents of the Northmen of the British Isles, Volume 4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 366.

⁸² Marianne E. Kalinke, trans., “*Möttuls saga*,” in *Norse Romance Volume II: The Knights of the Round Table*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 6.

⁸³ Kalinke, trans., “*Möttuls saga*,” 7.

⁸⁴ Kalinke, “Arthurian Literature in Scandinavia,” 128.

⁸⁵ Henry Goddard Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 179.

reasonable to assume Brother Robert is the same person as Abbott Robert, mentioned in prologue of *Elis saga*.

It has been suggested that the same Robert who names himself *bróðir* and *abóti* in *Tristrams saga* and *Elis saga* (deriving from the *chanson de geste Elie de St. Gille*) respectively, is also responsible for the translation of Chrétien's *Perceval*. While this is difficult to prove with certainty, there can be little doubt that the translation was completed either by Brother Robert or by translators working after him at the Norwegian court. The language, syntax and style of *Parcevals saga* and *Valvens þáttr* clearly indicate the translator was a Norwegian who worked in the same environment as the translator(s) of *Tristrams saga*, *Möttuls saga* and *Ívens saga*.⁸⁶

Nothing is known of the men who later copied these translations in Iceland, providing the manuscripts that we use today when discussing these works beyond a tentative dating to before the fourteenth century.⁸⁷ However, when considering the translated *riddarasögur* as a group, some notable differences can be seen. Marianne Kalinke notes that *Parcevals saga* and *Erex saga* “differ markedly from the other translations and it is reasonable to suppose that the texts as we know them today bear the marks of an Icelandic redactor's creative pen.”⁸⁸

Unfortunately, it cannot be known exactly what creative changes were made by the Icelandic scribes in comparison to the lost Norwegian versions and to what extent these reflect a purely Icelandic culture as opposed to a more general Norse-Icelandic one.

It is not clear what training or rhetorical skill the copyists who created *Parcevals saga* may have brought to the endeavor. We only know that they did their work under the patronage of the King of Norway, who, it is commonly believed, wished to import the chivalric values of the Continent to Scandinavia; namely, the pomp and circumstance afforded to royal lineage through characters such as King Arthur and Érec (Norse: Erex), son of King Lac who ascends the throne in the course of his story, *Érec et Énide*.

Viking Age Scandinavia was more community-based than the highly structured class systems of Europe and less concerned with rank in general. Ideas of nobility had reached the Iceland, specifically, by the later medieval period. This distinction is important due to the fact that the extant saga was created in Iceland; all other manuscripts have been lost. While Icelanders were integrated at the court of Norway and so participated in the courtly culture of Europe, it is unclear to what degree they internalized these notions and it can be said that these class-based social designs applied were much more uncommon in Iceland. By 1300,

⁸⁶ Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 101-2.

⁸⁷ Mitchell, "Scandinavian Literature," 470.

⁸⁸ Marianne E. Kalinke, "Arthurian Literature in Scandinavia," 130.

however, Iceland had developed aristocratic leanings in some of its citizens, which are present in the literature. Sverre Bagge notes, “the drama of *Heimskringla* is played out against a background of political institutions, with the king on top of them. There is a difference of rank between the king and the magnates which makes the ‘game of politics’ somewhat different from open competition between men on the same level.”⁸⁹ By packaging these ideas of obedience and service to noble lords within these entertaining stories, Hákon had perhaps found an effective way to suggest a society in which he was (or should be) master of all. The existing manuscript of *Parcevals saga* falls within this same time period. Phillip M. Mitchell notes that, “we do not know precisely when the Arthurian translations made their way across the ocean, but the transfer must have taken place before the fourteenth century.”⁹⁰

From a historical point of view, scholars such as Geraldine Barnes and Liliane Irlenbusch-Reynard believe that the translated *riddarasögur*’s purpose was to illustrate ideals of kingship that the Norwegian monarch, Hákon Hákonarsson, sought to instill in his people. But above all the Norwegian king was greatly influenced by European political culture. Scholars such as David Brégaint agree he “aimed to be a monarch in the western fashion and to resemble his German, French, and English counterparts.”⁹¹ Scandinavian culture valued identity (typified by lineage and reputation) and status (characterized by vast lands or riches) in much the same way as the French, but lacked the centralized authority of the French monarch. The example of King Arthur, the greatest of all kings whom every knight is pleased to follow, may have been used to introduce this idea into the society. Liliane Irlenbusch-Reynard maintains that “translations completed under Hákon Hákonarson’s reign were not chosen randomly – they form a carefully planned and highly selective programme. Some literary works were selected, some were intentionally ignored and remained not translated; some values were promoted and some others were not.”⁹² Given this, it will be important to examine the historical context in which the *riddarasögur* were translated in order to understand what changes were made to the narrative and possible reasons for those changes.

Though some scholars cite King Hákon’s instrumental role in their transmission to Norway and the possible political reasons for it, not all scholars choose to focus on his reign

⁸⁹ Sverre Bagge, “Snorri as a Political Historian,” in *Snorri Sturluson and the Roots of Nordic Literature: Papers of the International Conference Held at “St. Kliment Ohridski,” October 14-16, 2002*. Edited by Vladimir Stariradev (Sophia: University of Sofia, 2004), 114.

⁹⁰ Phillip M. Mitchell, “Scandinavian Literature,” in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 470.

⁹¹ David Brégaint, “Conquering Minds: *Konungs skuggsiá* and the Annexation of Iceland in the Thirteenth Century” *Scandinavian Studies* 84: 4 (2002), 442-3.

⁹² Liliane Irlenbusch-Reynard, “Translations at the Court of Hákon Hákonarson: A Well Planned and Highly Selective Programme,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36:4 (2011): 397.

as a flashpoint for their introduction to the North. Marianne Kalinke, for one, does not believe they were intended to indoctrinate the masses in courtly European culture; instead, she contends that they were merely entertainment. In her work “King Arthur, North-by-Northwest: the Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances,” she explains that like the French originals, the translated *riddarasögur* were “models as literature of fantasy and escape intended to amuse and distract,” and were “successful forms of diversion”⁹³ rather than instructive materials. Claudia Bornholdt sums up the leading scholarly ideas of past decades about transmission of these materials in her article “The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes’s Romances: *Ívens saga*, *Erex saga*, *Parcevals saga* with *Valvens þátr*,” saying, “For decades, the critical debate concerning the translated *riddarasögur* ... was split between the two positions that either consider the translations as entertainment and ‘primarily escapist fiction’ or as didactic models for the Norwegian and Icelandic audiences, positions that are most vehemently presented in the work of Marianne Kalinke and Geraldine Barnes respectively.”⁹⁴

Regardless of the purpose of importing these literary works into Scandinavia, the translation and adaptation of the Arthurian material in the Scandinavian realm was a daunting task that nonetheless had far-reaching effects on literature produced thereafter, particularly with regard to the Icelandic *fornaldarsögur*. As Marianne E. Kalinke states, while the translated romances did not inspire a particularly vibrant Scandinavian Arthurian genre as it did in Germanic cultures, their influence was still felt. The influence of the translated *riddarasögur* is felt “in both the Sagas of the Icelanders and the indigenous romances by incorporating certain motifs and episodes from the corpus. To judge by some of the Arthurian motifs not found in the translations, acquaintance with the *matière de Bretagne* in the North also seems to have been translated through oral tradition.”⁹⁵ In fact, Torfi Tulinius maintains that the indigenous romances and especially their later cousins, the *fornaldarsögur* or legendary sagas, were born out of a time of adjusting to new societal norms brought from the addition of Iceland to the Norwegian Commonwealth: “While Icelanders were adjusting to their incorporation within a monarchically-governed society for which the figure of the knight

⁹³ Marianne E. Kalinke, “King Arthur, North-by-Northwest: the Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances,” in *Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana XXXVII*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Copenhagen : C.A. Reitzels Boghandel A/S, 1981), 45.

⁹⁴ Claudia Bornholdt, “The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission of Chrétien de Troyes’s Romances: *Ívens saga*, *Erex saga*, *Parcevals saga* with *Valvens þátr*” in *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus’ Realms*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 98.

⁹⁵ Marianne E. Kalinke, “Arthurian Echoes in Indigenous Icelandic Sagas,” in *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus’ Realms*, ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), 145.

stood as a model of aristocratic conduct, they elaborated an original body of literature.”⁹⁶

Therefore, though the Arthurian genre was not as enthusiastically embraced in Scandinavia as elsewhere, it still had wide-ranging and meaningful effects over time.

Rather than speaking of the genre as a whole, some scholars have chosen to focus on one or more specific elements of Arthurian lore that were changed, added to or deleted from Norwegian versions for social and cultural reasons. One such element that did not survive in translation is King Arthur’s Round Table, the implications of which are discussed in Hermann Reichert’s article, "King Arthur’s Round Table: Sociological Implications of its Literary Reception in Scandinavia." Reichert discusses the first mention of the Round Table in Wace’s *Brut*, after which it spread throughout Europe together with the fame of Arthur; therefore, its omission from the Norwegian translation must be significant, because “even in a culture where only a little is known about King Arthur, it could hardly be unknown that he ate at a round table with his most trusted knights who were therefore called ‘the Knights of the Round Table.’”⁹⁷ Another such variation is described in F. Regina Psaki’s work, which looks at the narrative from the point of view of the female characters and their role as advisers to Parceval as he undertakes his journey to become a knight. Psaki concludes that “the Norse translators had the option of subtly modifying the relative weight and ethical alignment of a woman’s discourse, and ... on the whole, in the *riddarasögur*, the counsels of women are warmer than in the indigenous sagas.”⁹⁸ In examining specific elements, it is perhaps easier to see cultural differences emerge; for example, a more embracing attitude toward women’s wisdom in Scandinavia than in France.

In attempting to separate variations in the text which were deliberately made for cultural reasons from those which resulted from scribal error, methods of copying and transmission in the Middle Ages must be considered. In her article “Scribes, Editors and the Riddarasögur,” Marianne Kalinke provides a detailed examination of the approximately ninety Old Norse-Icelandic romances, known as *riddarasögur*, written in Norway and Iceland during the Middle Ages. They survive in 800 or so manuscripts, mostly Icelandic and date

⁹⁶ Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-century Iceland*, trans. Randi C. Eldevik (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002), 187.

⁹⁷ Hermann Reichert, "King Arthur’s Round Table: Sociological Implications of its Literary Reception in Scandinavia," in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature*, ed. John Lindow et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 396.

⁹⁸ F. Regina Psaki, "Women’s Counsel in the Riddarasögur: The Case of *Parcevals Saga*," in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays*, eds. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 202.

from the thirteenth into the twentieth century.⁹⁹ In Phillip M. Mitchell's chapter, "Scandinavian Literature," in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, the author also references the efforts made by Icelandic copyists to preserve these works: "Thus we are indebted to the island for preserving much medieval literature which has disappeared from the Scandinavian peninsula."¹⁰⁰ Peter Hallberg's article, "Is there a 'Tristram-Group' of the Riddarasögur?" considers several of these manuscripts for linguistic commonalities, grouping seven texts under the label of the Tristram-Group due to "a striking resemblance in their vocabulary and style as a whole."¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Foster W. Blaisdell, Jr. disputes this idea in his response "The So-Called 'Tristram-Group' of the Riddarasögur"¹⁰² where he questions methodological practices when the manuscripts deal very differently with certain verbs such as *kveða*. Our modern perceptions of the Scandinavian version of the narrative may be colored by not only Norwegian cultural considerations, but the linguistic proclivities of those who wrote the existing Icelandic manuscripts that will be used for our analysis, as well.

For this reason, both Norwegian and Icelandic cultural, social and historical considerations will appear in the analysis of *Parcevals saga*. As Claudia Bornholt points out, "Any interpretation that exclusively reads the extant saga in the context of the Norwegian court in the thirteenth century operates on dangerous ground, since the preserved text of the saga might in fact more closely represent the context on later Icelandic society and the literary environment of the indigenous Icelandic sagas."¹⁰³ Therefore, it may be more reasonable to say that the literature and its accompanying analysis reflects a more general Norse-Icelandic cultural attitude toward religion and shame than one specifically Norwegian.

In addition to answering questions of class divisions visible in the style and mechanics of the two stories, the more spare, restrained style of *Parcevals saga*, devoid of the prologue which displays such rich heritage from the rhetoric of Antiquity as it was passed down to contemporary Europe also suggests a fundamental cultural difference in manners of speaking. While in France, such intricate use of hyperbole was a demonstration of one's regard to the one being addressed, and pleasing to the ears of the listeners as well, it was considered highly complementary. Scandinavian culture, on the other hand, took the opposite view. This idea is

⁹⁹ Marianne E. Kalinke, "Scribes, Editors and the *Riddarasögur*," *Arkiv för Nirdisk Filologi* 97 (1982): 36.

¹⁰⁰ Phillip M. Mitchell, "Scandinavian Literature," 470.

¹⁰¹ Peter Hallberg, "Is there a 'Tristram-Group' of the Riddarasögur?" *Scandinavian Studies* 47:1 (1975): 1.

¹⁰² Blaisdell, Jr., Foster W. "The So-Called 'Tristram-Group' of the Riddarasögur." *Scandinavian Studies* 46:2 (1974): 134-139.

¹⁰³ Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 106-7.

explained in the prologue of *Heimskringla*, where Snorri Sturluson tell us that “En þat er háttir skálda at lofa þann mest er þá eru þeir fyrir en engi myndi þat þora at segja sjálfum honum þau verk hans, er allir þeir er heyrði, vissi, að hégómi væri ok skrök, ok svá sjálfur hann. Þat væri þá háð en eigi lof”¹⁰⁴ [“it is [to be sure] the habit of poets to give the highest praise to those princes in whose presence they are; but no one would have dared to tell them to their faces about deeds which all who listened, as well as the prince himself, knew were only falsehoods and fabrications. That would have been mockery, still not praise”¹⁰⁵] Snorri here voices the idea that, if one is too careless with words of praise, one strays too far in the direction of a lie, which mocks the object of praise rather than emphasizing his greatness. In Iceland, insults such as this could lead to outright feuding if it is taken seriously enough. Therefore, what is desirable in one culture is considerably restrained in another, as is clearly reflected in both romance and saga.

¹⁰⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla I*. Íslenzk Fornrit XXVI, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnson (Reykjavík: Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1941), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), *xix-xx*.

2. ANALYSIS OF *LE CONTE DU GRAAL (PERCEVAL)*

Chrétien's text underwent a marvelous transformation at the hands of those who attempted to finish the tale as well as those who translated it. Joseph Duggan concludes his comparison of Chrétien's heroes in *The Romances of Chrétien De Troyes* by asserting that even within Chrétien's personal corpus, Perceval is unique, perhaps reflecting an evolution in the author's skill as a writer: "Perceval is the only one of Chrétien's heroes whose conduct is explained through sin, and this difference is all the more striking when one considers that not even Lancelot's adultery is ever referred to as sinful."¹⁰⁶ For some reason, Chrétien's final work seems special even in comparison to his other works, focusing more on spiritual matters and concepts of sin as defined by the Christian faith. This shift, and the possible socio-cultural reasons for it, provides the material which will be used to illustrate the relationship between sin and shame in the French culture of the Middle Ages.

Perceval is the lens through which the reader or listener will identify with the events of the story and as such, his viewpoint and interactions with other characters define the narrative. In this analysis, we shall pay homage to the skill of Chrétien de Troyes in writing a vivid character so lifelike in his motivations and actions as a part of the Arthurian setting while also bearing in mind that it is a narrative intended to entertain and illustrate the value of charity, chivalry and dutiful service to one's king and God, because these were the values which underpinned the society of France at the time of its writing.

2.1 The Psychology of Perceval in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*

The character of Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)* is a particularly compelling portrait of the path to self-actualization and the formation of the self within the constraints of medieval chivalric culture. This reading will provide an analysis of these key aspects of the story in relation to Freud's four stages of psychosexual development and Lacan's theory of the mirror stage to show the development of the character over the course of the plot. Of particular importance for this thesis will be the range of developmental stages through which Perceval ascends on his way to becoming a fully realized, independent adult and the personal, spiritual and social implications of each one, which play a large role in his emotional reactions to the commission of great sin which forms the central conflict of the story. Based on work submitted to Torfi H. Tulinius for the Fall 2014 class *Chrétien de Troyes and the Chivalric Romance in Medieval Culture* at Háskoli Íslands.

The Mirror Stage

¹⁰⁶ Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien De Troyes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 122.

The first step in Perceval's personal development is to experience the mirror stage, a theory developed by Jacques Lacan which, in his work, is precipitated by a child's first look in a mirror, and the accompanying realization that he or she is a distinct being apart from his or her mother. Without this important psychological event, the individual will remain cut off from this understanding of him or herself as an individual. Jacques Lacan describes this event thusly:

It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification*, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the ... 'imago'.¹⁰⁷

The imago, Lacan clarifies, establishes “a relationship between an organism and its reality.”¹⁰⁸ Slavoj Žižek interprets this idea to mean that individuality therefore “arrives only at the moment of the mirror stage, and the formation of the ego.”¹⁰⁹ Using Žižek's definition, it can be inferred that at the start of the romance, Perceval's identity is tied to his mother's; he does not have one of his own. He is nameless at his first appearance in the romance, identified only as “le fils de la Veuve qui avait pour domaine la Gaste Forêt” (687) [“the son of the Widow Lady of the Waste Forest” (382)].¹¹⁰ In fact, Perceval is not named until approximately 2/3 of the way through the story, which instead uses epithets such as “jeune homme” [“the boy”] to refer to the main character.

The story begins with the boy's defining moment, his first step toward individual motivation in his personal and spiritual life, when he sees a group of knights travelling through the forest. Centuries before the work of Lacan and the theory of the mirror stage, Chrétien unwittingly uses language which suggests mirrors and reflective surfaces in his description of the knights. He is amazed at the sight of “les hauberts étincelants et des heaumes clairs et luisants, et des lances et les écus qu'il n'avait encore jamais vus, avec des couleurs vertes et vermeilles brillant sous le soleil, et l'or, et l'azur et l'argent” (688) [“glittering hauberks and their bright, shining helmets ... green and vermilion glistening in the

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 76.

¹⁰⁸ Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 78.

¹⁰⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London: Verso, 2006), 387.

¹¹⁰ For this analysis, all French quotations come from the Chrétien de Troyes *Œuvres Complètes*, edited by Daniel Poirion, which is based on MS Bibliothèque Nationale f. fr. 794, called the Guiot manuscript after the scribe who copied it in the mid-1200s and a slightly later version, P8 (MS Bibliothèque Nationale f. fr. 1450). All English quotations come from Carleton W. Carroll and William Kibler's translation “The Story of the Grail (Perceval)” in *Chrétien de Troyes Arthurian Romances*, which is also based primarily on the Guiot manuscript. Quotations will be followed by page numbers corresponding to these editions. In some cases, the English translation deviates sharply from the French text, and for those few instances I have substituted my own translation.

sunshine, and the gold, the blue and the silver,” (382)]. In this moment, Perceval witnesses the image which allows him to define his own relationship with reality. He realizes that his viewpoint of the world is limited, and there are things, such as the knight, which he does not know or understand. He realizes that, unlike his mother, he would like to leave the forest and become a knight. This moment precipitates the spiritual and social education Perceval will go on to receive.

The narrative almost immediately illustrates how ill-equipped Perceval is to face his newfound reality. He disassociates himself with his mother by ignoring her teachings to make the sign of the cross in the presence of devils, but the scene shows that he lacks the experience to know how to properly interact with others on his own. He first hears the knights as they pass through the forest, their armor clinking and rattling as they ride. Thinking they are devils, Perceval says, “Elle disait cela pour m’enseigner que l’on doit, quand on les rencontre, faire le signe de croix. Pourtant je dédaignerai cet enseignement...” (688) [“She instructed me to make the sign of the cross to ward them off, but I scorn her teaching...” (382)]. This sets the tone in the rest of the narrative, where Perceval spends much time not listening to others, or listening but not understanding what he has been told. Ann McCullough asserts that Perceval’s early behavior shows that “not only is he socially inept, but he is also unable to learn.”¹¹¹ After Perceval poses a series of rapid-fire questions about his arms and armor, the leading knight comments that “Il ne connaît pas tous les usages ... que Dieu m’assiste” (691) [“He doesn’t know his manners, so help me God” (384)].

His rudeness continues in the following scene with his mother and we are not told if this is new behavior resulting from his newfound sense of separateness, in which he asserts his own will over that of his mother for the first time, or if this is Perceval’s usual childish treatment of his mother. She expresses no emotion to suggest that it is unusual; instead, she is portrayed as clingy and overprotective in the extreme. When Perceval comes home, his mother runs to him, saying, “Beau fils, l’angoisse étreignait mon coeur parce que vous étiez en retard. La douleur m’accablait au point que j’ai failli mourir” (694) [“Fair son, my heart was most distressed because of your delay. I’ve been overwhelmed with grief and almost died of it. Where have you been for so long today?” (385-6)]. Perceval was not delayed for hours in his meeting with the knights, and so it is possible to see his mother’s flawed characterization: though she loves her son very much, she is smothering in her attentions. It thus becomes reasonable, even desirable, that Perceval should separate from her.

¹¹¹ Ann McCullough, “Criminal Naivety: Blind Resistance and the Pain of Knowing in Chrétien De Troyes’s *Conte Du Graal*” *Modern Language Review* 101 (2006): 48.

Perceval's behavior toward his mother implies that he, too, desires to part from her overbearing presence. He asserts his dominance by silencing her even as she agrees with him about the beauty of angels. "Taisez-vous, mere! N'ai je pas vu aujourd'hui les plus belles creatures du monde, allant à travers la Gaste Forêt" (695) ["Hush, mother! Have I not just seen the most beautiful things there are, going through the Waste Forest?" (386)]. Hearing his plan to become a knight, Perceval's mother attempts to rectify the situation, explaining for the first time how Perceval's father and older brothers died, all of injury incurred in service to their respective lords. Perceval's father was gravely wounded, but died of grief for his departed sons. Following these tragedies, Perceval became his mother's only source of happiness, and to protect her son from sharing this sad fate, she kept all knowledge of knighthood and his noble lineage from him (386-7). Perceval's mother concludes the sad tale of her husband's death with the words, "Quant à moi, j'ai dû mener une vie plein d'amertume depuis sa mort. Vous étiez le seul réconfort que j'avais, la seule richesse; j'avais perdu tous les miens" (697) ["I have suffered a very bitter life since he died. You were all the consolation that I had and all the comfort, for all my loved ones were departed" (387)].

True to form, Perceval does not listen to this implication of what may happen if he leaves his mother, saying, "Donnez-moi un manger ... Je ne sais de quoi vous parlez, mais ... j'irais quoi qu'il en coûte à d'autres!" (697) ["Give me something to eat ... I don't understand your words, but ... I will go, no matter what" (387)]. This could indicate his readiness to pass into the next stage of development, known as the oral stage, and is the first of several references to the mouth and eating. The foreshadowing of his mother's speech is realized when Perceval leaves her and sees that "sa mere était tombée à l'entrée du pont, de l'autre côté, et qu'elle restait évanouie, comme si elle était tombée morte" (700-1) ["his mother had fallen at the head of the bridge and was lying in a faint as if she had dropped dead" (389)]. The diction of this scene seems to underscore Perceval's level of selfishness; anyone would be moved to check on someone who appears to drop dead in front of them, let alone one's mother; Perceval still does not know his manners. In fact, Perceval's total lack of concern for the deaths of his father and brothers, and his disregard of his mother's loving attempt to protect him from a similar end, can also be seen as consequences of his mother's overprotective parenting. Keith Busby characterizes the mother aptly: "The desire to stifle the feelings and inclinations of her son is at best misguided, and at worse, selfish and lacking in charity."¹¹² Ann McCullough supports this conclusion, laying the blame for Perceval's initial

¹¹² Keith Busby, *Chrétien de Troyes Perceval (Le Conte du Graal): Critical Guides to French Texts*, 19.

ignorance squarely at his mother's feet: "Perceval's complete lack of social skills is a result of the strange education his mother gave him. She has instructed him on the values central to the Christian tradition, but at the same time has kept him in complete ignorance of all chivalric tradition."¹¹³ His ill treatment of his parent sets him up for failure as he moves past the mirror stage to Freud's oral stage.

The Oral Stage

The oral stage is a phase of sexual development in which desire is centered on the oral cavity, causing a preoccupation with the lips and mouth. A child experiences this phase early in life, but as we have seen, Perceval is developmentally delayed and will have only experienced the first part of oral fixation, not the latter. Freud explains,

The first object of the oral component of the sexual impulse is the mother's breast, which satisfies the hunger of the infant. By the act of sucking, the erotic component which is also satisfied by the sucking becoming independent, it gives up the foreign object and replaces it by some part of its own body. ... Further development, to express it most briefly, has two goals - first, to give up auto-eroticism, and, again, to substitute for the object of one's own body a foreign object; second, to unify the different objects into a single impulse, replace them by a single object. To be sure, that can happen only if this single object is itself complete, a body similar to one's own.¹¹⁴

Perceval's mother confirms that he was breastfed in her description of his family's flight from the kingdom of Uther Pendragon: "Vous étiez encore tout petit ... Vous étiez alors encore un nourrisson" (696) ["You were tiny, still being nursed," (386)]. The natural progression of psychosexual development begins with one's mother and ends with the selection of a new love-object over time. His mother began the process, but left her son unprepared and ill-equipped to interact with others. Perceval locates another female almost immediately, finding a young lady alone in her tent while her handmaids have gone out to pick flowers. Perceval kisses the woman against her will, mistaking his mother's advice that "cette un grande faveur qu'un baiser de jeune fille" (699) ["he who kisses a maiden gains much" (388)] for an imperative to do so, missing the detail that the lady must "accorde" (699) ["grant" (388)] her kiss to a suitor. He adds insult to injury by taking the lady's ring and eating the lord's lunch. With both kissing and eating, the scene is replete with oral imagery.

Perceval's adventure begins with blunders aplenty and disastrous consequences for those around him, which will culminate at the Grail Castle later in the story. Leonardo

¹¹³ Ann McCullough, "Criminal Naivety: Blind Resistance and the Pain of Knowing in Chrétien De Troyes's *Conte Du Graal*" *Modern Language Review* 101 (2006): 48.

¹¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Translated by G. Stanley Hall (New York, Horace Liveright, Inc., 1920), 142.

Olschki comments, “it is here that the pure fool, without guile or experience, appears as the victim not only of his mother’s well-intentioned advice, which he has not understood, but also of a blind fatality that drives him towards adventure and sin.”¹¹⁵ Because Perceval is too foolish and untrained to understand the gravity of what he has done, he continues on his way without concern. His blissful ignorance and proclivity for unwitting sin would surely endear him to the audience and would make his eventual redemption all the more satisfying, if Chrétien had been able to deliver it.

Achieving his primary goal, Perceval journeys to King Arthur’s court, but is unimpressed by what he finds there. The king is “pensif et il ne fait pas entendre un seul mot,” (708) [“pensive and he does not hear a single word,”¹¹⁶] too preoccupied with thoughts of a knight who has insulted him to pay much attention to the boy. Perceval continues to embarrass himself, knocking the cap off the king’s head and rudely demanding to be made a knight. Arthur, generous despite his anxieties, chides Keu for speaking sarcastically to the boy, saying, “Ce jeune homme a beau être un peu sot et simplet, il n’empêche qu’il peut être de tres bonne famille. Et si la faute en revient à son education, pour voir eu un mauvais maître, il peut encore acquérir mérite et sagesse” (710)[“Though the boy is naïve, still he may be of very noble line; and if his folly has come from poor teaching, because he had a low-bred master, he can still prove brave and wise” (393). In Arthur, we have a model of charity and chivalry, despite his distraction and shabby treatment by impolite guests. Perceval resolves to get the Red Knight’s armor himself, killing the experienced warrior with a single blow. He does not have experience with armor, though, and struggles to remove his enemy’s helmet and sword.

Thus, we have our next example of oral imagery in the French romance. While struggling with the dead knight’s clothing, he says, “Je pensais que votre roi m’avait donné ces armes, mais il faudra que je mette le mort en morceaux comme pour faire des brochettes avant d’emmener aucune de ses armes” (713) [“I think I’ll have to carve up this dead knight into scraps before I can obtain any of his armor” (395)] creating feasting imagery in the parallel between his fallen enemy and a meat to be carved from the bone before eating. The implied meal is carried out in two feasts in the story, one with Gornemant of Gohort, and the fateful dinner at the Grail Castle, in which Perceval concentrates on enjoying the food rather than displaying proper courtesy to his host.

¹¹⁵ Leonardo Olschki, *The Grail Castle and Its Mysteries*, trans. J.A. Scott, ed. Eugène Vinaver, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 7.

¹¹⁶ Translation mine.

Gornemant is a character of great significance to Perceval's journey of identity and self-actualization. Perceval has no father figure, as his father died when he was only two years old, and Gornemant fills this role in their brief time together, teaching Perceval how to use his weapons properly. Perceval is grateful and happy to learn from Gornemant, enjoying demonstrations of skill by the talented knight: "Le jeune homme eut beaucoup de plaisir et de satisfaction à voir tous ces exercices" (721) ["The young man was delighted and satisfied to see all these exercises"¹¹⁷]. Perceval, like many boys who admire a male role model, wants to be just like Gornemant, saying "il ne souhaitait pas vivre un jour de plus ni posséder un terre ni quoi que soit pourvu qu'il sût aussi faire cela" (721) ["he would not care to live another day, nor possess lands and riches, until he had mastered this ability as well." (399)]. Gornemant uses his influence to encourage Perceval to behave more properly by accepting the advice of someone other than his mother, urging him to "suiviez les conseils de votre mère en me faisant confiance" (720) ["believe both your mother's advice and mine" (399)]. With this prasing, Gornemant positions his advice as equal in value to Perceval's mother, as a co-parent. However, the next morning he knights the young boy, cautioning Perceval to disregard his mother's advice and cast off his last tangible link to life in the Waste Forest, imploring him to leave the crude Welsh clothing his mother fashioned for his journey. As Rupert Pickens points out, here "Perceval puts away childish things and begins to accept manhood in chivalry."¹¹⁸ Gornemant continues his teachings, cautioning Perceval that if he continues to proclaim his mother's advice, people will take him for a fool. Perceval happily agrees to "ne citera jamais plus personne de sa vie, sinon lui" (727) ["never again as long as he lived refer to the words of any other master than the vavasour himself" (402)]. In doing so, Perceval takes a great step toward the world of men: No longer under a sole female influence, Perceval has learned much about how to act and look like a knight in his time away from his mother. Like a courteous knight, he decides to immediately return home to see how his mother fares, when before he was not concerned at all.

Now more prepared to interact with others than ever, Perceval continues on his way to the castle of Biaurepaire, where he experiences another manifestation of the oral stage. At last, Perceval has an object for his affections in the form of the lovely Blancheflor. He is at first paralyzed by indecision, remembering his mentor's words not to talk too much, for "Qui parle trop tombe dans la péché" (726) ["he who talks too much commits a sin" (402)], but when the lady comes to his room at night, weeping for her castle under siege, Perceval knows

¹¹⁷ Translation mine.

¹¹⁸ Pickens, "Le Conte du Graal: Chrétien's Unfinished Last Romance," 181.

what to do. He is courteous enough to give her a comforting embrace. It is unclear whether or not the two make love, as Chrétien uses only kissing imagery to describe their time together: “Et il lui donnait des braisiers en la tenant serrée dans ses bras ... et elle se laisse embrasser. Elle connut cette nuit-là toute la douceur de dormir bouche contre bouche” (736) [“And he kissed her and held her tightly in his arms ... and she let him kiss her ... He brought her so much comfort that they slept with lips pressed to lips” (407)]. Perceval finally understands what it means to help a damsel so clearly in distress, and how to navigate the matter of kissing a lady, unlike the earlier debacle with the lady in the tent. The next morning, Perceval defeats the knight who harrows the castle, continuing on his way home after sending the enemy to Arthur’s court. Having correctly performed the oral stage and elected a new love-object in the form of Blancheflor, Perceval continues to develop as an individual and moves on to the next stage of development.

The Anal Stage

According to Freud, those who become preoccupied with the anal stage of development share certain characteristics.

During our studies of the pregenital phases of the libido we have also gained a few fresh insights into the formation of character. We noticed a triad of character-traits which are found together with fair regularity: orderliness, parsimoniousness and obstinancy; and we inferred from the analysis of people exhibiting these traits that they have arisen from their anal erotism becoming absorbed and employed in a different way.¹¹⁹

Roberta R. Greed clarifies these ideas further in her description of the anal stage:

The locus of erotic stimulation shifts to the anus, and personality issues center around eliminatory behavior, the retention and expulsion of feces. Again, the manner of resolution of the stage becomes the prototype or pattern for adult behaviors. Freud’s idea that anal erotism can appear, though sublimation, as an adult character trait (e.g. strict toilet training leads to compulsive traits such as stinginess and tidiness, popularly called “anal retentiveness”) is well known.¹²⁰

We see this in the story of Perceval, as he certainly becomes anal retentive in his adherence to Gornemant’s advice, “holding in” the words he should say. Upon meeting the injured Grail King, he is invited to share a fine meal. As it is set out, Perceval witnesses the puzzling Grail procession, which includes a lance which bleeds and a Grail which is illuminated like the sun. Perceval is curious but says nothing as the objects are carried in front of him more than once;

¹¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1965), 127.

¹²⁰ Roberta R. Greene, ed. *Human Behavior Theory and Social Work Practice*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 70.

“Le jeune homme les vit passer sans oser demander à qu’il on destinait le service du graal, car toujours Il gardait en mémoire les paroles de son noble et sage maître” (765-6) [“The young knight watched them pass by but did not dare ask who was served from the grail, for in his heart, he always held the wise gentleman’s advice” (421)]. Perceval continues to make the mistake of relying too heavily upon one person’s advice; in the beginning, he listened too often to his mother, and now he listens too much to Gornemant.¹²¹ There is a difference between his adherence to his mother’s words and his silence in the company of the Fisher King; where Perceval is blissfully ignorant in his treatment of others before his instruction by Gornemant, he now wants to ask the question, but “il craignait, en posant cette question, de se conduire grossièrement” (765) [“he was afraid that if asked, they would consider him uncouth” (420)]. Perceval has an inkling, then, that he should ask, but keeps silent out of fear. His behavior can therefore not be attributed to ignorance, but a deliberate choice, and this knowledge can lead to emotional trauma when it is revealed. Freud notes that neurosis is “the result of conflict between the ego and the id,”¹²² and so Perceval’s attempts to develop his own identity are clear, though his mistake causes internal strife.

The Grail procession itself may offer other meaningful symbolism. The Grail and the bleeding lance, have sexual representations which may provide a different interpretation of Perceval’s inability to display proper behavior. Jessie L. Weston examines the possibility that the Grail and the Bleeding Lance are symbolic of a pagan fertility ritual. “Lance and Cup (or Vase) were in truth connected together in a symbolic relation long ages before the institution of Christianity, or the birth of Celtic tradition. They are sex symbols of immemorial antiquity and world-wide diffusion, the Lance, or Spear, representing the Male, the Cup, or Vase, the Female, reproductive energy.”¹²³ As fertility symbols, they have the power to reinvigorate the kingdom if the ritual is completed, in this case, by asking the proper questions about their purpose. Perceval, however, is mentally and emotionally unequipped to face the deep sexual connotations of this scene, as he has not yet acquired an individual identity nor completed sexual development.

Latency Period

After Perceval’s romantic interlude with Blancheflor, he enters a period of latency, which Freud defines as “a period of inactivity in regards to sexual development; dams against

¹²¹ Pickens, Rupert. “Le Conte du Graal: Chrétien’s Unfinished Last Romance” in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 181.

¹²² Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis: The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 27.

¹²³ Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 71.

sexual instinct emerge during the latency period," or a time of "organic repression."¹²⁴ As I will show, the remaining plot will prevent any further sexual development for the young knight. So far, Perceval has realized his status as an individual during the mirror stage, in which he developed a longing for something other than life with his mother: to become a knight. Though initially boorish and harmful in his interactions with others, he found a mentor in Gornemant and a new love-object in Blancheflor. However, Freud tells us that in order to become individuals, boys must "overpower their father"¹²⁵ as well as separating from their mothers. Though Perceval has done the latter, he still clings too closely to Gornemant and his teachings. Ann McCullough notes the paramount importance of this father figure is reflected in Perceval's very name: "In response to the demand of a fatherly figure, Perceval provides a name within which the very name of the father, père, is inscribed: Père-ceval."¹²⁶ Perhaps this is why Perceval struggles so with imposing his own judgement when needed over that of Gornemant.

Shuli Barzilai articulates the psychological importance of a father or other male role model: "Identification with the father brings about the formation 'called the ego ideal' and produces sublimation; on the other, aggression directed against the father strengthens the preexisting agency 'called the superego' and also deepens repression."¹²⁷ This definition can explain Perceval's relationship with Gornemant and its inherent problems; Indeed, we have seen that Perceval has sublimated, or matured, replacing his socially unacceptable behavior with more desirable actions. He has sacrificed his own desires to serve others, such as when he delayed his journey home to help Blancheflor and when he vowed to restore the reputation of the maiden Keu slapped. Both King Arthur and Gornemant have expressed their approval in words and in making Perceval a knight, respectively; it seems that he is doing well in his development as an adult and a knight. Freud believed sublimation, or maturation, to be the key to civilization: "it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life."¹²⁸ Perceval's new development is highlighted by his willingness to save the lady in the tent from her lover's abuse when he meets up with them again on the road to Arthur's court. In doing so, Perceval demonstrates his desire to correct his earlier wrongs. However, Perceval is not given an

¹²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents: The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 5.

¹²⁵ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 55.

¹²⁶ McCullough, "Criminal Naivety: Blind Resistance and the Pain of Knowing," 59.

¹²⁷ Shuli Barzilai, *Lacan and the Matter of Origins* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 40.

¹²⁸ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 74.

opportunity to rebel against his father figure, as Gornemant does not appear again in the story, and so this transition is incomplete; as Freud describes it, “In order to be individuals, sons must ‘overpower their father.’”¹²⁹ Without this opportunity to separate from his mother and Gornemant, Perceval repeats the advice of others without ever considering *why* he should do so and so he lacks a critical understanding of the ethics and morals of the society in which he lives.

After Perceval has failed to ask the all-important questions at dinner with the Fisher King, he awakens to find himself alone. Setting off again, he meets a woman weeping over the body of her beloved. After so long, Perceval is able to introduce himself, as the romance says, “Et lui, qui ne connaissait pas son nom, le devina comme par enchantement et dit qu’il s’appelait Parceval le Gallois, sans être sûr de dire la vérité, mais il dit vrai, sans le savior” (773-4) [“And the youth, who did not know his name, guessed and said he was called Perceval the Welshman. But although he did not know if that were his name or not, he spoke the truth without knowing it” (425)]. The hesitation with which Perceval names himself suggests an incompleteness or uncertainty about his identity. Acquiring a name has put Perceval closer to a complete, adult identity, as he has now achieved Freud’s *Einzigiger Zug*, called the *trait unaire* by Lacan, in which a combination of letters such as a name, imbue the thing with meaning; the name *is* the thing. Lacan says, “Letters make collections; letters are, and do not designate, these collections; they are to be treated as functioning like the collections themselves.”¹³⁰ Shuli Barzilai describes this concept in more detail:

Lacan thus redefines primary identification as a linguistic operation of exclusion or negation. For what does it mean, for instance, to call a cat a cat? It is not /k/ is /k/ but /k/ is not /m/ that endows the fabled cat-on-the-mat with an existence. The unitary trait (also translated as the ‘single stroke’) of the subjects primary identification marks the place of nothing, an absence, a lack, and becomes accessible only retroactively, *après coup*, through secondary identifications.¹³¹

In other words, Perceval has now defined himself by establishing himself and his relation to others with language: a name. In choosing a name, Perceval declares what he is, and what he is not. Perceval is Perceval, thus all other persons are *not Perceval*, by definition. Readers will have another experience with naming at the end of the story. At that point, Perceval has confessed his sin to the priest and is no longer burdened with shame; now, he no longer attaches negative emotions or uncertainty to who he is: “Ah! Bel ami, dis-moi quel est ton

¹²⁹ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 55.

¹³⁰ Jacques Lacan, “De la psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité,” in *Scilicet* 1 (Paris, Seuil, 1968), 58.

¹³¹ Barzilai, *Lacan and the Matter of Origins*, 140.

nom. 'Perceval, seigneur, ' répondit-il" (842)[“‘Ah, dear friend,’ said the good man, ‘now tell me your name.’ And he answered: ‘Perceval, sir’” (459)].

Perceval's psychological journey continues as he returns Arthur's court. He is hailed by the king and queen for his many successes in combat and welcomed by all. The next morning, he experiences what appears to be psychological trauma. Perceval witnesses an injured goose fall to snow, leaving three blood drops there, which he becomes enraptured with.

Perceval ne vit que la trace de la neige foulée là où l'oie s'était abbatue, et le sang qui était encore apparent. Il s'appuya sur sa lance pour contempler cette image, car le sang et la neige formaient une composition qui ressemblait pour lui aux fraîches couleurs qu'avait le visage de son amie; et il s'absorba dans cette pensée. Il comparait le vermeil sur le fond blanc de son visage avec des gouttes de sang qui apparaissaient sur la neige. Toute à cette contemplation il s'imaginait, dans son ravissement, voir les fraîches couleurs du visage de sa belle amie. Perceval passa tout le début de la matinée à rêver sur les gouttes de sang... (789)

[When Perceval saw the disturbed snow where the goose had lain, with the blood still visible, he leaned upon his lance to gaze at this sight for the blood mingled with the snow resembled the blush of his lady's face. He became lost in contemplation: the red tone of his lady's cheeks in her white face were like the three drops of blood against the whiteness of the snow. As he gazed upon this sight, it pleased him so much that he felt as if he were seeing the fresh colour of his fair lady's face. Perceval mused upon the drops throughout the hours of dawn ...” (432-3)]

The fact that Perceval stares for hours suggests he has developed a fixation, which Freud says is possible when “one instinct or instinctual component fails to accompany the rest along the anticipated normal path of development, and, in consequence of this inhibition in its development, it is left behind at a more infantile stage.”¹³² This could be due to his personal struggle to disassociate his own desires from those of Gornemant, or it could be an internal sign of his shame upon committing a great sin, which the Weeping Maiden in the forest has just informed him of, or some combination thereof. Perhaps Perceval, who has just received a hero's welcome from the court, feels shame because he knows he has sinned and is thus undeserving of their praise. The knowledge may have manifested in this fixation and resulting neurosis. His choice of envisioning Blacheflor is perhaps symbolic; she is described in terms of her purity and beauty as one of God's creations, which may at this point contrast with Perceval's impurity. The romance says, “Dieu avait fait d'elle une telle merveille; et depuis il n'en a pas fait de pareille, non plus qu'il n'en avait fait auparavant” (730) [“God had made her

¹³² Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1991), 20.

an unsurpassed marvel to dazzle men's hearts and minds; never since has He made her equal, nor had He ever before" (404)]. Alternately, the blood could also recall the wounds of the Christ, the Fisher King or even Perceval's father, who like the Fisher King was wounded through the thighs. Medieval connotations of blood could also apply to this scene: Peggy McCracken asserts "two kinds of blood are intimately associated with the grail: The blood of the wounded Christ who appears in the grail, and the blood of the wounded man who is charged with keeping the grail."¹³³ Perceval could also be interpreted as having a religious experience. David M. Wulff defines this as "diverse practices that heighten bodily movement and sensory stimulation rather than reducing them ... the culmination is frequently a state of non-hallucinatory trance, if not also physical collapse."¹³⁴ In any case, Perceval is a man marked by inner turmoil at this point in the story.

Following a scene in which Gawain escorts Perceval back to court, breaking his obsessive contemplation of the blood drops, the Hideous Damsel arrives and makes Perceval's failure public knowledge. She announces to the court:

C'est toi le malchance, toi qui ayant rencontré l'occasion et lieu de parler es reste silencieux! Malchance que d'avoir été alors aussi sot! Malchance que d'être resté silencieux, alors que sit u avais pose une question, le riche roi qui es si mal en point aurait été guéri de sa blessure et gouvernerait en paix cette terre dont il ne sera jamais plus le maître. (800)

[And you are that wretched man, for you saw it was the time and place to speak, yet you kept your silence! You had plenty of time to ask! Cursed be the hour you kept silent since, if you had asked, the rich king who is suffering so would already be healed of his wound and would be ruling in peace over the land he shall now never again command. (438)]

This forces Perceval to fully confront the sin he has committed. Rupert Pickens notes that, as a consequence, "his sense of guilt for keeping silent at the Grail Castle, apparently served by the Hideous Damsel's words, has driven him to a form of insanity."¹³⁵ The fact that he was already aware of his sin due to his earlier meeting with the Weeping Maiden suggests that the Hideous Damsel and her ugly appearance might instead be a manifestation of Perceval's emotional state rather than a character intended to advance the plot; the audience, as well as Perceval, already knows the enormity of his mistake. In fact, the The Hideous Damsel uses

¹³³ Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 92.

¹³⁴ David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 69.

¹³⁵ Pickens, "Le Conte du Graal: Chrétien's Unfinished Last Romance," 180.

the same words as Weeping Maiden when she calls him “malchance” (800) [“wretched” (438)]. In addition, Pickens notes, “her version of the Grail question is the same as his and, more significantly, she shares the narrator’s insights into Perceval’s motivation in maintaining silence, which contradicts the Weeping Maiden’s notion of sin.”¹³⁶ The Hideous Damsel places blame for Perceval’s woes on his inability to ask the charitable questions, while the Weeping Maiden states that his transgression at the Grail Castle was caused by his initial sin against his mother.

Perceval responds by vowing to wander the land performing knightly acts “au sujet du graal à qui l’on en fait le service, et jusqu’à ce qu’il ait trouvé la lance qui saigne, et entendu la véritable explication du sang dont elle saigne” (802) [“until he had learned who was served from the grail and had found the bleeding lance and been told the true reason why it bled” (439)]. Because of this vow, Perceval is led away from civilization and the society which allowed him to learn and grow as an individual. As a result, he loses everything he knows about himself: “Perceval, raconte l’histoire, a si bien perdu la mémoire qu’il ne souvient pas de Dieu. . . . C’est ainsi qu’il usa son temps pendant cinq ans, sans jamais se souvenir de Dieu” (839) [“Perceval, the story relates, had lost his memory so totally that he no longer remembered God . . . So he passed five years without ever thinking of God” (457)]. Ann McCullough notes that the severity of his self-punishment “repeats and amplifies his initial error, his wandering away from the mother and her religious teaching. Perceval is thus punished for his error by being condemned to err, to wander, always further away. And it is at this point, when he has forgotten everything including himself, that, paradoxically enough, he might finally know his original crime.”¹³⁷

Perceval is accepted back into society, and back into his identity as Perceval the good knight, when he meets a group of pilgrims on Good Friday and is inspired to speak to a holy man. Freud notes the importance of voicing one’s troubles, saying, “speaking is itself the adequate reflex, when, for instance, it is a lamentation or giving utterance to a tormenting secret, e.g. a confession.”¹³⁸ Perceval finds comfort in his time with the hermit, who restores his knowledge of his mother by revealing that she commended him to God and prevented further harm from befalling her son before her death. Also, Perceval takes the first step toward spiritual forgiveness by taking Communion and is brought into line with religious practices of

¹³⁶ Pickens, “Le Conte du Graal: Chrétien’s Unfinished Last Romance,” 180.

¹³⁷ Ann McCullough, “Criminal Naivety: Blind Resistance and the Pain of Knowing”: 61.

¹³⁸ Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (London: Basic Books, 1957), 8.

the day: though his lack of father figure was responsible for many of his blunders as a developing psyche, he now has a heavenly Father who will provide further guidance.

Communion is an important Christian ritual which invites adherents to drink wine and eat bread in place of Jesus's blood and body, thereby renewing one's commitment to the faith.

The King James version of the Holy Bible describes the process:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (Corinthians 11:27-32)

Perceval's part in the story concludes with the detail that "Le jour de Pacques, il reçut la communion en toute humilité" (845) ["on Easter Sunday Perceval very worthily received communion" (461)]. With this act, Perceval is seemingly put on the path to a new identity: a worthy Christian serving God rather than his own selfish interests. This ending suggests that Chrétien had something more spiritual in mind for Perceval than earthly concerns of acquiring wealth and marrying a noblewoman. June Hall McCash writes, "Perceval (and his later permutations) in search of the Grail captures the essence of the spiritual quest, greater than self and the material world, which Chrétien's death left for later continuators to interpret."¹³⁹

These later continuators transformed Perceval from a man in search of identity to one of a being guided by the ethics of divinity: a figure of moral purity who serves the spiritual order. Perceval would become a symbol of chastity in medieval works, joining other figures like Christ, St. John and Galahad.¹⁴⁰ In the *Continuations of Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, written after Chrétien de Troyes had abandoned the tale, the spiritual elements of the story are heightened; for example, the bleeding lance is revealed to be the one used to pierce Christ's side at the Crucifixion (496). In these added chapters, Perceval manages to achieve both spiritual and earthly rewards. After many more adventures, Perceval returns to the castle of Biaurepaire, where he is reunited with Blancheflor, and "they renew their love for three days" (498) before Perceval must continue his quest. Perceval's quest continues through Menassier's Third Continuation, where spiritual matters again take the fore; here, the Grail is finally revealed to be the cup used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch Christ's blood after it was pierced by the lance. In the course of his quest to find out whom the Grail serves, Perceval

¹³⁹ McCash, "Chrétien's Patrons," 25.

¹⁴⁰ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay. (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1994), 24.

also battles the Devil himself and is victorious. The Fisher King is eventually healed and Perceval is revealed to be his nephew. Having thus combined all aspects of his earthly psyche (spiritual, mental and physical), Perceval now achieves the penultimate position of chivalry and medieval society: taking the throne of the Fisher King. As soon as the land is restored, Perceval retires to his hermitage where he is “sustained only by the Grail,” (498) symbolizing his departure from human concerns as he becomes a holy figure. After Perceval’s death, the Grail, lance and trencher from the Grail procession accompany his soul to heaven and are removed from the earthly plane (498). Obviously, there is no way to know if Chrétien himself would have made a Christian figurehead of Perceval, but it seems clear that the cultural and social environs of early thirteenth century France lent itself to such a representation, as all the authors of the Continuations chose to highlight the religious element over Perceval’s psychological journey to construct an identity as a true knight in a chivalrous society, as Chrétien seemed to be doing.

Though Perceval at first seems a buffoon compared to Chrétien’s other heroes such as Lancelot and Gawain, it can be said that he achieves far more. While Lancelot and Gawain, along with others of noble blood, are gifted with spectacular abilities through their training and family names, Perceval was obliged to prove himself as a knight and a person. First, he achieved the mirror stage when he decided to pursue the goal of becoming a knight against his mother’s wishes. Then, he is able to learn and grow socially and spiritually through his meetings with King Arthur, Gornemant and Blancheflor. Unfortunately, his journey through the psychosexual stages of adulthood is arrested in the latency stage due to his inability to understand when to display charity and when to maintain silence. Through the events of the story, Perceval learns to display contrition, charity and purity as a knight and these events define him as a knight. After a period of emotional trauma and self-imposed exile, Perceval begins his journey to identity anew, as a knight of God.

2.2 Portrayal of Other Important Figures in *Le Conte du Graal* (Perceval)

In a cross-cultural analysis of emotion, it is important to not only consider Perceval’s emotional health but the reactions of those around him. For this analysis, I have narrowed my attentions to the women of the story. This was done deliberately because women are particularly influential in Perceval’s development and the story has a large number of active female characters rather than the damsels in distress one expects to find in romance (though some of these characters fulfill that function as well). Investigation of these secondary characters will not only inform what is known about Perceval, but clarify our understanding of women’s roles and the ruling elite in these two cultures.

As we have discussed, Perceval's mother in *Le Conte du Graal* set a terrible precedent as a mother, depriving her son of any knowledge of his noble birthright and actively trying to keep him from it when he decided independently to seek it out. The women of Chrétien's corpus are, generally speaking, weak and viewed as property by the men of the story, which the Norwegian and Icelandic translators often chose to change.

Whereas Chrétien de Troyes depicts a giant in *Yvain* who has already killed some and threatens to kill more of a maiden's brothers unless he obtains her as a whore for his stableboys (vv. 3860-69), the giant of the saga has become more civilized, at least in one respect: he threatens to kill the maiden's four remaining brothers unless he receives her in marriage (chs. 10-11). Nowhere are the differences in attitude toward marriage and women more pronounced than in *Erex saga*, which must be considered an Icelander's thorough reworking of the original translation, be that Norwegian or Icelandic. Unlike Énide's father in the French romance, who unilaterally decides what is to happen to his daughter, the father in the saga will not give a response to Erex's proposal of marriage until he has consulted Evida, as she is called in Icelandic. Similarly, in the Count of Limors episode, the Icelandic counterpart does not force Evida to undergo the marriage ceremony because his court has informed him that it would be contrary to God's law if she has not consented. Changes in both *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga* seem to reflect the work of copyists/redactors concerned with proper or acceptable behavior in accordance with Scandinavian customs and religious as well as legal codes.¹⁴¹

Conversely, by acknowledging these changes made to the texts as far as the idea of obtaining consent before marriage and abstaining from sexual violence, it is suggested that in France, consent was less of interest to the audience of the romance and thus left out of the tale. The extent to which female consent was a part of culture is a notable issue, but cannot be determined by the contents of the two narratives alone and lies outside the scope of this research. It is possible to locate examples of contemporary thinking about women in a Church-dominated society, such as in the writings of Bouchard of Worms, a bishop who wrote a collection of didactic texts known as the *Decretum* between 1007 and 1012.¹⁴²

The manuscript was copied, and versions modified to fit local conditions found their way into all the episcopal libraries, where they remained in use until the middle of the twelfth century. Bourchard's *Decretum* was then superseded with Gratian's. But meanwhile the bishop of Worm's collection was immensely successful in the empire, Germany, Italy and Lotharingia, whence it reached northern France. There it was in common use.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Marianne E. Kalinke, "Arthurian Literature in Scandinavia," 139-140.

¹⁴² Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 59.

¹⁴³ Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest*, 61.

According to Bourchard, women were portrayed with typical weakness and susceptibility to sin, as was common in the teachings of the Church in the Middle Ages. “The *Decretum* insists above all on the need to take account of female perfidy. A wife is naturally deceitful and should be kept, even as a matter of justice, under the strict control of her husband.”¹⁴⁴ This perhaps explains why most women in Chrétien’s portrayal of the characters are weak and ineffectual, like his widowed mother, lost without her husband’s guidance, or completely subject to the whims of one’s husband or lover, as the maiden in the tent. As I have noted, Perceval comes upon the maiden in the tent alone and, mistaking her beautiful quarters for a Church, decides to enter, as his mother instructed him to do. Perceval steals a kiss without permission, takes the lady’s ring from her finger and eats the lord’s lunch which he finds nearby, ignoring the woman’s protests. When her lover returns, he immediately condemns her actions, silencing her protests that it was against her will with the words, “Dites plutôt que cela vous convenait et que vous y avez trouvé du plaisir” (705) [“No, you liked it and were pleased by it!” (391)]. Later, when Perceval meets the pair again, the lady having suffered physical abuse for her nonexistent crimes, Orguellus, the Haughty Knight, elaborates further: “Une femme qui abandonne sa bouche accorde facilement le surplus, si on insiste pour l’avoir; et elle a beau ce defendre , on sait bien sans l’ombre d’un doute qu’on femme toujours vaincre sauf ... car elle veut qu’on la prenne de force” (781) [“A woman who lets herself be kissed easily gives the rest if someone insists upon it; and even if she resists, it’s a well-known fact that a woman wants to win every battle but this one” (428)]. D.H. Green notes the significance of the scene in his description:

But we have witnessed the previous encounter between Perceval and the damsel and are privy to a possibility unknown to Orguellus and not even considered by him. We know in fact that the naive, inexperienced lad had done no more than clumsily kiss her (and take her ring), that his physical appetite had extended no further than some meat pies he found in the tent, and that in all this she had resisted strongly and genuinely, if in vain.¹⁴⁵

Chrétien seems to have personally disagreed with some gender and social norms in Christian France and often chose to portray relations between men and women this way in his story; though women may be harshly criticized by men for their actions, the story reveals they are often innocent of wrongdoing, making the men appear foolish and ignorant. Michel Zink notes his unusual portrayal of characters,

¹⁴⁴ Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest*, 65.

¹⁴⁵ D.H. Green, *Women and Marriage in German Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 83.

Chrétien stands out much for his unique tone, style, and type of narration as for the new orientation he gave to romance. The predominant component in his tone is humor, manifesting itself in the distance he puts – not constantly, but lightly, from time to time – between himself and his characters and the situations in which he places them. By means of an aside or a remark, he underlines the contradictions or the mechanical aspect of a behavior or situation, shows what is unexpected or too expected about them, lucidly exposes a character’s blindness.¹⁴⁶

One character notably different from the other women in the story is Blancheflor. Though young and unmarried, as a noble woman, she defends her own castle with the help of her men-at-arms for a long, arduous period; the soldiers are described as men who “connu tant d’épreuves en jeûnes et en veilles que l’effet en était étonnant” [“experienced many trials in fasts and vigils that the effect was amazing”¹⁴⁷]. As the lady of the castle, she courteously takes Perceval in for the night, despite the hardships she and her people have endured under siege from Anguingueron. She has been in charge of her men, apparently alone, for “tout en hiver et un été” (735) [“an entire winter and summer” (406)]. Later, she manipulates Perceval into defending her keep in exchange for her love, but this deceitful use of feminine wiles is not condemned by the author, as we see the Haughty Knight do with the lady in the tent (407). In fact, she is praised with the words “Sa ruse est habile car elle lui a mis dans la tête ce qu’elle lui interdit si vivement” (738) [“she acted cleverly, by discouraging him from doing the very thing that she had planted in his heart to do” (407)]. Leadership appears to have been acceptable for noble women in times of necessity, when there were no males available to properly defend a keep. Historically, Flanders, the demesne of Chrétien’s patron Philippe, was known for placing women in important roles, and attitudes toward noble female leadership must have been similar in other parts of France and beyond. Karen S. Nicholas notes,

The countesses of Flanders played important political roles in the history of the country from the time of Carolingian origins. They brought their husbands not only the prestige of their natal families but often even experience in ruling, as several came to Flanders as widows of other princes. Because of deaths at war and on crusade, Flanders passed through the female line nearly as often as through the male line, and three countesses ruled by hereditary right.¹⁴⁸

In general, the culture of France appears to be repressive of women as was typical in the medieval period due to prevailing religious views that women were a different species than

¹⁴⁶ Michel Zink, *Medieval French Literature: An Introduction*, 56.

¹⁴⁷ Translation mine.

¹⁴⁸ Karen S. Nicholas, “Countesses as Rulers in Flanders” in *Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 111.

men, “frivolity personified, fickle,”¹⁴⁹ who must always be watched for signs of sin. Chrétien appears to have enjoyed turning this idea on its head by having his most misogynistic characters be proven wrong by the events of the story.¹⁵⁰ Though Chrétien may have been sympathetic to his female characters, the culture of France was heavily mired in religious belief, and its laws and beliefs were guided more often by bishops and lawmen such as Bourchard of Worms.

2.3 Portrayal of Religion in *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*)

The first mention of religion within the romance is made by Perceval’s mother, who told him “l’on doit croire en Dieu et l’adorer, le supplier et l’honorer” (689) [“one must believe in God and adore, worship and honour him” (383)]. Later, she embellishes his scanty religious education by vaguely explaining the purpose of church and the story of Christ’s death (388). This seems odd in a story which so venerates God, but the advice may have served another purpose. According to Joseph J. Duggan,

Chrétien may, however, have wished to portray Perceval’s mother as assenting to heretical tenets, perhaps in the manner of a sect like the Passagini of Northern Italy, who followed both Jewish and Christian practices but did not believe in Christ’s divinity. If one accepts this second alternative, Perceval would progress from ignorance of Christianity, through a state of belief in articles of heretical faith, to orthodox Christian belief attained when he hears about the essential mysteries of faith from the pilgrims whom he meets on Good Friday. Unfortunately, the text provides us with no more than evidence for surmise.¹⁵¹

Beyond his mother’s poor teachings, the most famous religious item within the narrative is of course the Holy Grail (French: Graal). More focus is given to that object than any other representation of religion in the story. Perceval’s failure to ask whom it serves is the source of his great shame; asking this question about the Grail would have restored the Fisher King and his land. As we have noted, this story contains fewer mentions of charity than any of Chrétien’s other works. Mentions of religious customs such as not carrying weapons on Good Friday, daily prayer and the importance of attending church are made, but other common acts of medieval Christian charity are absent. For example, John W. Baldwin notes that “Perceval acquires the habit of attending mass each morning before setting off on a new venture, [but] he is never depicted as making offerings.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest*, 65.

¹⁵⁰ Green, *Women and Marriage in German Medieval Romance*, 234.

¹⁵¹ Joseph J. Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien De Troyes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 120.

¹⁵² Baldwin, *Aristocratic Life in Medieval France*, 105.

Instead, great detail and importance is bestowed upon on the Grail and the procession which introduces it to Perceval and to the readers. But what is this Grail? What purpose did it serve for Chrétien and his contemporaries, e.g. the audience for his story? By examining just a few of the possibilities suggested by scholars over the centuries since its first appearance in the literature, we may make a guess as to what Chrétien's religious message for the people of France might have been. There are dozens of scholarly theories as to what the Grail represents and its origins in French, Welsh or Anglo-Saxon lore, among other possibilities; therefore, this exploration shall be limited to four representative theories which were contemporary to Chrétien's writing and therefore more likely to have influenced the writing than other, more far-flung ideas. In all four theories, the Grail is representative of ritual behavior.

Several theories posit that the Grail is representative of the pagan past, absorbed into the Arthurian material through folkloric motifs and themes common to many cultures worldwide. We have already mentioned Jessie L. Weston's belief that the Grail and the Bleeding Lance are symbolic of a pagan fertility ritual. As support, Weston references the cultural practices of the Shilluk, an African tribe who also believe that the health and well-being of the land is inextricably tied to that of the ruler, just as the Fisher King is to his kingdom; in fact, to protect the crops and livestock, this tribe ritually kills its ruler when signs of old age and feebleness appear (55-6). Pagan practices within Europe also support this theory; for example, the Fisher King's castle is located near water, specifically a lake which he uses to fish to take his mind off the pain of his injuries. Weston notes that water is known throughout the world in pagan practices for its life-giving and restorative powers, either by drenching with, drinking or throwing an offering into it, one can enact all manner of sympathetic magic.¹⁵³ Since this theory was introduced by Weston in 1920, scholars such as Norris J. Lacy have noted that the author's "immense and detailed knowledge of the text and her recognition that the final version of the legend owed as much, if not more, to Christianity as to the pagan past, has been overlaid by the powerful images that she unleashed."¹⁵⁴

Moving from origins of cultural osmosis, we can now consider a more concrete source for the Grail legend. Joseph Ward Goering's book, *The Virgin and the Grail: Origins of a Legend*, notes that "the object and the image that would become the Holy Grail in the hands of Chrétien de Troyes and his successors originated in the high Pyrenees, in the late eleventh

¹⁵³ Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Norris J. Lacy, ed., *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 30.

or early twelfth century, as an otherwise unattested attribute of the Virgin Mary.”¹⁵⁵ Goering maintains that this mysterious image, first found in a church in the Pyrenees in the south of France, depicts “the Virgin, at the head of the college of Apostles, holding a radiant dish or platter - a "gradal" in the local dialect - in her covered hand. ... Eight other churches in the region display similar paintings of the Virgin and a sacred vessel or grail, all of them painted or sculpted in the years before Chrétien composed his famous story.”¹⁵⁶ The author believes that a famous bishop, St. Raymund of Roda, may have travelled in 1123 to consecrate one of these churches and seen the fresco of the Virgin Mary and the enigmatic *gradal*.¹⁵⁷ From there, the bishop’s ties through marriage to the French court may have carried the story of the radiant vessel to Chrétien, who was so inspired by the narrative possibilities that he included it as a mysterious supernatural relic. It is likely, therefore, that no one actually knew the function of the item depicted in the artwork, and so it was easy for the Grail, as it became known, to capture the imaginations of all who heard the story.

The final two theories of the Grail include elements of historical and religious strife contemporary to the Court of Flanders in the twelfth century.

Eugene Weinraub, in *Chrétien's Jewish Grail*,¹⁵⁸ argued that there were close parallels with the seder feast at the Passover, in which symbolic objects were brought in, and the youngest person present asks questions about them, which lead to the recounting of the Passover story. There is a possible analogy with the girl who bears the Grail, in that in modern Jewish usage the first question is prompted by the removal of the *seder* plate before the meal by a girl of marriageable age; and the candelabra are familiar images from Jewish ritual.¹⁵⁹

Some have suggested that Chrétien himself was Jewish, raising the question of whether or not we are viewing the narrative through the lens of Judaism rather than Christianity. This conclusion is further compounded by the fact that in a fourteenth-century compilation of Ovid's *Philomena*, part of which is called the *Ovide moralisé*, which Chrétien names as one of his works in the prologue to *Cligés*. According to research from Joseph J. Duggan, the author is identified as "Chestiens li Gois." This appellation was later interpreted by Oliver Collet to mean "Chrétien the Jew," perhaps influenced by the fact that Troyes, where he is thought to be from, housed a flourishing Jewish community in Chrétien's time. However, other scholars

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Ward Goering, *The Virgin and the Grail: Origins of a Legend* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), xi.

¹⁵⁶ Goering, *The Virgin and the Grail: Origins of a Legend*, xi.

¹⁵⁷ Goering, *The Virgin and the Grail: Origins of a Legend*, 157.

¹⁵⁸ Eugene J. Weinraub, *Chrétien's Jewish Grail: A New Investigation of the Imagery and Significance of Chrétien de Troyes's Grail Episode Based upon Medieval Hebraic Sources* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), 50-6.

¹⁵⁹ Lacy, *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 31.

such as Harry F. Williams have refuted this idea due to the fact that no interpretation of “Gois” or *goy* as either “Jew” or “Gentile,” meaning a convert to Christianity from Judaism, existed in Old French. The generally accepted translation of this phrase is “Chrétien de Gouaix,” referring to a town near Provins in Brie where Chrétien may have been born or originated before his association with Troyes, which, if not his place of birth, was the site of one of Marie de Champagne’s castles during her patronage of Chrétien.¹⁶⁰ Norris J. Lacy is skeptical of the idea that Chrétien or, by extension, Perceval was a Jewish hero, noting “The logic of the importation of Jewish imagery into a romance where the Grail is called 'such a holy thing' with evident *Christian* connotations - it contains a single host - remains inexplicable.”¹⁶¹ In fact, the story corroborates the anti-Semitism of the day when Perceval approaches a group of pilgrims who are walking on Good Friday to make penance for their sins. They tell him casually, “Les Juifs rendus cruels par leur jalousie – on devrait les abattre comme des chiens – firent leur proper Malheur, et notre Bonheur, quand ils Le mirent en croix. Ils se sont perdus et ils nous ont sauvés” (840) [“The wicked Jews, who we should kill like dogs, brought harm to themselves and did us great good when in their malice they raised Him on the Cross: they damned themselves and saved us” (458)]. It seems unlikely, given the vehemence of this statement, that Chrétien was making a case for religious equality, especially in light of what Paul E. Szarmach describes as “anti-Semitic tonalities”¹⁶² present in Chrétien’s other works.

A final, more radical idea comes from Leonardo Olschki, who believes that features such as the secular setting and unconsecrated host of the Grail procession is meant to criticize the religious rituals of the Jewish community, in accord with “the religious policy of Philippe of Flanders, [which was] aimed at the extermination of all Jews and heretics.”¹⁶³ For Olschki, the Grail was significant and undeniably Christian.

The episode of the Grail shows us that he wished to bring into play, discreetly and yet with sufficient emphasis, the religious aberrations that menaced the orthodoxy of courtly society, not only in his own country but in the whole of contemporary Christian Europe. . . . The total Christianization of his 'Graal' did not begin until after his death. It was the work of men who wished to erase every suspicion of heterodox or heretical elements.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien De Troyes*, 9.

¹⁶¹ Lacy, *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 31.

¹⁶² Paul E. Szarmach, ed., *Aspects of Jewish Culture in the Middle Ages: An Overview and Synthesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1979), xix.

¹⁶³ Olschki, *The Grail Castle and Its Mysteries*, 62.

¹⁶⁴ Olschki, *The Grail Castle and Its Mysteries*, 45.

Like the previous theory of Jewish influence, Lacy is not convinced, citing the positive portrayal of the Grail and its procession within the story: “Even discounting the dangers of interpreting Chrétien in light of the way in which his story was developed, it is clear that the Grail ceremony is a test that leads to Perceval's spiritual awakening, and to make of it something he must later reject is to strain the meaning of the text beyond credible limits.”¹⁶⁵ While Chrétien was a fine storyteller with an appreciation for human interaction and higher emotion which shines through his work, it is not clear whether or not he intended to engage in social commentary of any kind regarding the persecution of Jews in twelfth century France.

These theories provide cultural and historical evidence for the inclusion of the Grail in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, an entirely new element in an otherwise typical chivalric romance. Though some are viewed with skepticism by scholars today, it should be noted that all four explanations for the origins of the Grail and its accompanying relic, the Bleeding Lance, suggest a cultural blending of elements from the shared pagan past to those inspired by elements French culture, from the artwork of a few small churches in the Pyrenees in the south to the Jewish communities of northern France. Though these other belief systems, such as Judaism, were considered heretical at the time, they undoubtedly had an impact on culture and religious ritual. Though Chrétien was probably not Jewish himself nor writing deliberately about the Jewish faith, he may have heard of certain elements of their worship via the community of Troyes and found inspiration for his mysterious Grail procession therein.

¹⁶⁵ Lacy, *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, 31.

3. ANALYSIS OF *PARCEVALS SAGA*

To begin, *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* provides valuable general information on the saga and its source material, concluding that “*Parcevals saga* focuses on the educative aspect of the story, with detailed and sometimes amplified attention paid to those episodes where the hero receives instruction in chivalric theory and practice.”¹⁶⁶ Another work by Barnes, “*Parcevals saga: Riddara Skuggsjá?*,” highlights this very notion, arguing that the story is not a tale of religious failing and (possibly, due to its unfinished state) redemption, as the French version is, but a prince’s mirror: “What we get in the Old Norse version of *Perceval* is a laudatory account of the education of a hero who passes all tests with flying colors, not one who remains almost as ignorant at the end of the work as he does at the beginning or who proceeds from blunders through follies to spiritual crises.”¹⁶⁷

In the article “The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*,” Henry Kratz notes the lack of scholarly interest, saying that the only detailed examination of the relationship of saga and *báttur* to their source before his work is in articles by Eugen Kölbing dating from the 19th century.¹⁶⁸ Kratz went on to conclude that, in total, the translation of *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*) to Norwegian is approximately 2/5 as long as the French original, which “may reflect the impatience of the courtly audience in Norway with tedious detail.”¹⁶⁹ Cultural influences with regard to reception of chivalry and other late medieval social norms are also discussed in Carolyne Larrington’s “A Viking in Shining Armour? Vikings and Chivalry in the *Fornaldarsögur*.” One example of such is that “The identities, behavior and status of knight and of Viking hero are largely divorced from economic and political considerations – how much land they hold or how much silver they possess. Identity and status are established in the first instance through lineage and then maintained by their word-of-mouth reputation in battle, almost always known by those whom they encounter.”¹⁷⁰ In other words, the chivalrous and sophisticated society of France was not so different from the rougher Scandinavia in many ways.

Suzanne Marti’s dissertation “Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the *Perceval* Matter: An Analysis of the Old Norse and Middle English Translations of *Le Conte du Graal*” studies portrayals of selected elements within the narrative to conclude “*Parcevals saga* was

¹⁶⁶ Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf, eds., *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1993), 497.

¹⁶⁷ Geraldine Barnes, “*Parcevals saga: Riddara Skuggsjá?*,” *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 99:1 (1984): 61.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Kratz, “The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 49:1 (2009): 13.

¹⁶⁹ Kratz, “The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*,” 45.

¹⁷⁰ Carolyne Larrington, “A Viking in Shining Armour? Vikings and Chivalry in the *Fornaldarsögur*,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 4 (2008): 278.

composed with an aim of introducing chivalric ideals and popularizing a feudal organization of court,¹⁷¹ siding with Barnes. However, in her work "Translation or Adaptation?: *Parcevals Saga* as a Result of Cultural Transformation," Marti maintains that, no matter which of these two hypotheses are the correct, "an examination of *Parcevals saga* in relation to its Old French model reveals that the translation was by no means made as haphazardly as has sometimes been suggested. In addition to remaining faithful to the source text, the translator displays a systematic attempt to render the material in such a way as to make it accessible and acceptable to his audience."¹⁷² Careful examination of how and to what extent this material was made accessible allows us to understand how different the approach to these concepts of chivalry, charity and religious trials in French and Norse-Icelandic societies may have been.

The Parceval of *Parcevals saga* is a very different individual from his French counterpart. Though the overall portrayal of Parceval is remarkably similar to the original French material, small differences can be noted throughout the narrative. Major changes include the lack of the famous prologue and significant departure from the source material during the climactic scene between the knight and the priest who grants him partial salvation from his great sin.

3.1 The Psychology of Parceval in *Parcevals saga*

In examining *Parcevals saga* for emotional and religious content, it is important to note that it is an adaptation and hence relies on the original. Therefore, our investigation must rely upon variations from the French text and the possible motivations for those amendments. The examples discussed here are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather a representative sample meant to show the difference in Parceval's psychology as compared to his French counterpart. In general, the Norse Parceval is a much more educated and courtly individual throughout the story than Parceval, based on several changes made to the text.

The Mirror Stage

As we have stated, Parceval's development cannot begin until he has experienced the mirror stage; however, there is every reason to believe that the Norse Parceval has already experienced it. The saga begins: "Hér byrjar upp sögu ins prúða Parcevals riddara, er enn var einn af Artús köppum. Svá byrjar þessa sögu at karl bjó ok átti sér kerlingu. Þau áttu son at einberni er hét Parceval." (108) [Here begins the story of the proud knight Parceval, who was

¹⁷¹ Marti, "Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the Parceval Matter," 224.

¹⁷² Suzanne Marti, "Translation or Adaptation?: *Parcevals Saga* as a Result of Cultural Transformation," *Arthuriana* 22:1 (2012): 49.

another of Arthur's champions. The story begins like this: there lived a man and he had a wife. They had a son, an only child, who was called Parceval" (109)].¹⁷³ Already, the Norse Parceval is on much more solid mental ground. His name is given immediately, unlike the long search for identity that encompassed two-thirds of the French narrative.

Moreover, Parceval's father was an impressive man "var bóndi at nafnbót, en riddari at tign"(108) ["who was known as a farmer, but in rank was a knight" (109)]. More detail is given of the Norse Parceval's parents: "Hann hafði verit allra kappá mestr. Hann hafði tekit kóngsdóttur at herfangi ok settiz síðan í <ó>bygd þvíat hann þorði eigi millum annara manna at vera"(109) ["He had been the greatest of all warriors. He had taken captive in war a king's daughter, and had later settled down in the wilderness because he could not risk being among other people" (109)]. This stands in contrast to what we know of the French Parceval's family, who were forced into exile amid political strife following the death of Uther Pendragon. Parceval's parents were very well respected and wealthy, but chose life away from society when their "eyddiz þá ok okkarr kost" (110) ["resources were exhausted"] (111).

Gone, too, are the childish responses Parceval makes in conversation with his mother. Rather than the impetuous rudeness of his French counterpart, Parceval responds to his mother's statement that he is "ofveykr verðr þú í vápnaskipti" (110) ["too feeble for combat" (111)] with a logical and practical point: "Móðir," sagði hann, "engi er með slíku borinn, ok nám kennir fleira en náttúra. Mikit kennir ok venja, ok dirfiz maðr af manni" (110) ["Mother, no one is born with such abilities and nurture teaches more than nature. Practice too teaches much, and one man grows bold from another's example." (111)] In the French version, Parceval is sorely lacking a male role model until he meets Gornemant, but Parceval has already had the instruction of his own father, counted "var æ talin með inum beztum riddurum er í þessu landi váru" ["among the best knights in this land," (111)] who taught him "skot ok skylmingar" ["archery and swordplay" (109)] and, presumably, how to "gaflokum at skjóta svá at þrjú váru á lopti senn" (108) ["throw javelins so that three were in the air at once" (109)]. When Parceval's father is taken into account, his effect on his son's psyche can only be substantial in comparison to the French Parceval, whose father died before he was born and all information about whom was kept from him by his fearful mother. Indeed, the

¹⁷³ All quoted material herein comes from the translation "*Parcevals saga with Valvurs þáttr*," by Helen Maclean, edited by Marianne E. Kalinke. This version is based primarily on the manuscript Stockholm Perg. 6 4to (ca. 1400, Royal Library, Stockholm) with some material taken from NKS 1794b 4to (ca. 1350, Royal Library, Copenhagen) to replace a missing leaf between 45v and 46r. Quotations will be followed by page numbers corresponding to this edition.

implication in the Norwegian story is that Parceval father has died relatively recently, as Parceval is 12 years old and “sem faðir hans var andaðr, þá hefði Parceval þat til siðar, at hann reið á skóg með fola sinn ok gaflök ok skaut dýr ok fuga” (108) [“after this father’s death, he was in the habit of riding into the woods on his pony with his javelins and killing animals and birds” (109).] Parceval is still hunting as a way of expressing his grief, which would indicate that his father’s death is not so far in the past that he does remember him and mourn his loss. Freud was clear on the importance of one’s father in the early years of one’s development: “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.”¹⁷⁴ Hank Hillenaar and Walter Schönau elaborate this idea, noting “Freud described the positive and loving feelings toward the father during the pre-Oedipal years in boys as well as in girls; he also linked the need to be protected ... to the relationship with the ‘Oedipal’ father ... contributing to the development of conscience and ideals in the son.”¹⁷⁵ According to Abelin, the father’s earliest role is to provide an ‘early triangulation’ for the child when it is around eighteen months. In this way, the child becomes aware of a set of relations, involving himself, his mother, and another person (e.g. his father). The father as the third party of this triad helps the son transition from mirroring by providing an early example of something Other than mother and child, which the child can use to understand the outside world of which he will become a part.¹⁷⁶ Hillenaar and Schönau conclude “this internalized representation is ... related to characteristics attributed to the father, and [will affect] the self-image, feelings and behavior of a person ... orientating the subjects interactions with other people later in life.”¹⁷⁷

Taken together, these events could indicate that self-actualization has already occurred in Parceval before the beginning of the story, judging by the more practical upbringing he seems to have received from both parents. He seems comparatively more mature in his responses to others. Though the scene with the knights in the woods remains significant, rather than being the moment of Parceval’s mirror stage, it could instead be evidence of the latency period, placing the Norse Parceval further along in his psychosexual development than Perceval.

¹⁷⁴ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Hank Hillenaar and Walter Schönau, eds., *Fathers and Mothers in Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 176.

¹⁷⁶ Hillenaar and Schönau, *Fathers and Mothers in Literature*, 176; Michael J. Diamond, “Fathers with Sons: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on ‘Good Enough’ Fathering Throughout the Life Cycle,” *Gender and Psychoanalysis* 3 (1998): 261.

¹⁷⁷ Hillenaar and Schönau, *Fathers and Mothers in Literature*, 176.

Perhaps, in viewing the magnificently attired knights, it awakens a desire in him to join their ranks and be counted as a noble and good knight of the court, as his father once was. Freud supports the idea that a child would be moved to do so, saying, “These new object choices, however, are still under the influence of the early choices, so that there remain similarities between the desired objects chosen after puberty and the child’s earliest object choices, the parents.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, the father traditionally has tremendous psychological impact upon his children and the memory of his departed father’s accolades may have motivated Parceval to leave home and seek out a new life as a knight, seeking renown in the manner of his patriarch. In the latency stage, the child has already separated from his mother, the first love-object of his life, and formed a healthy bond with his same-sex parent, as we have seen that Parceval was able to do before the death of his father. David S. Nevid notes “the latency stage is so named because of the belief that sexual impulses remain latent (dormant) during this time - a time when the child’s psychological energies are focused on other pursuits such as ... making friendships and acquiring skills.”¹⁷⁹ Because there is no obvious sexual component to Parceval’s desire to become a knight, we can conclude that this is what he is doing.

The scene where Parceval encounters the knights is entirely different than the French version. Where Perceval is driven to ask questions without bothering to listen to the answers, Parceval avoids the knights out of simple shyness (109). The exchange between knight and boy is far more matter-of-fact, ending when Parceval asks the knight if King Arthur might be willing to gift him with arms. The knight says, “Þess mátt þú freista” (109) [“You can try it,” (110)] and Parceval goes home to tell his mother the news. There is no judgment on the part of the knight, who in the French original declares that “Les Gallois sont tous par nature plus bêtes que le bétail des pâturages” (691) [“all Welshmen are by nature more stupid than beasts in the field” (384)]. Instead, it reads as a straightforward request for information by one who is uneducated in the ways of chivalry, but not stupid.

Parceval’s relationship with his mother is also quite different in the Norse story. Where Perceval is impatient and rude, cutting off his mother’s near-hysterics at the idea of his departure, Parceval and his mother engage in a reasonable conversation, where she attempts to dissuade him from leaving due to his ignorance and lack of training, to which he sensibly replies that he will try to learn as well as he can (111). Parceval’s mother is resigned if not

¹⁷⁸ Jean-Michel Quinodoz, *Reading Freud: A Chronological Exploration of Freud's Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 62.

¹⁷⁹ David S. Nevid. *Psychology: Concepts and Applications*, 4th ed. (New York: Cengage Learning, 2013), 483.

enthusiastic about her son's departure. Having accepted its inevitability, she makes clothes to keep him warm and dispenses her advice, whereas the French mother faints multiple times and clings to her son, doing all she can to delay him in his journey. The Norse Parceval says thank you upon leaving her, a small display of courtesy where Perceval had no kindness at all for his mother at this time. One can almost imagine that Parceval's mother fainted and died due to an undiagnosed heart problem rather than grief, so rationally does she handle their parting in comparison to the French character.

The Oral Stage

Just like the markers I have noted for Perceval's mirror stage, his experience with the oral stage is also changed drastically in the Icelandic manuscript. The initial references to oral fixation, such as when he asks his mother to make him something to eat before he sets out to find King Arthur, are omitted. Descriptions of food and eating are trimmed and edited for content, as are Parceval's experiences with the fairer sex. Instead, Parceval is revealed to be focused on his goal of achieving knighthood rather than ignorantly following his mother's advice without applying logic to the task.

The Norse-Icelandic scribe, possibly realizing the unreasonable notion of Perceval kissing the maiden in the tent after she has told him no, because "c'est ce que m'aa enseigné ma mere" (702) ["my mother instructed me to," (389)] when in truth his mother told him to accept a kiss from a maiden only "si elle vous accorde un baiser" (699) ["if she gives it" (388)] changes his mother's advice to be more explicit on the matter. In the Norse version, she instructs Parceval that it he should "en þó at þik lysti til nokkura konu, þá tak eigi meira af henni nauðigri en einn koss" (110) ["take no more from her than an single kiss," (111)] changing the character from a boy, incapable of understanding what he has been told and intent on sexual assault, to a young man bound by a cogent code of behavior, who heeds his mother's advice well.¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, when Parceval defeats the Red Knight, he no longer resorts to a lusty eating imagery wherein he says he will carve the knight into "steaks" to get at his armor, instead saying that he will have to burn the knight to cinders to get the armor off. This is possibly a translation choice made by the scribe; the French *Perceval* uses the word "brochettes" (713) ("skewers"¹⁸¹) or pieces of meat grilled on an open fire for which the Norwegian translator substituted the more common Icelandic expression of burning: "En nú

¹⁸⁰ Barnes, "*Percevals saga: Riddara Skuggsjá?*," 55.

¹⁸¹ Translation mine.

verð ek at brenna þann er dauðr er at köldum kolum, áðr ek ná þeim” (118) [“I shall have to burn the dead man to cold ashes,” (119)].

Another instance of oral imagery is the many sumptuous feasts Perceval and Gawain enjoy over the course of their combined journeys. Henri Kratz notes,

In keeping with the terse style of the indigenous sagas, long descriptive passages in Chrétien are generally reduced quite drastically. Often they have to do with eating and drinking, for Chrétien appears to enjoy descriptions of the sumptuous meals replete with choice viands and exotic drinks. The saga sometimes omits these descriptions altogether, or reduces them to a laconic announcement that a meal took place. Often the details are changed – one dish substituted for another, etc. Possibly in some instances the objects described were unknown in the less sophisticated Scandinavian countries; or, if known to the translator, possibly he thought they would be unknown and therefore incomprehensible to the bulk of his audience. Or – and I think this most likely in many instances – he either did not understand the French words, or could find no Norse equivalents for these products of a different culture.¹⁸²

For example, the feast between the Fisher King and Perceval describes “venison cooked in its fat with hot pepper,” (421) clear, strong wine, loaves of flat bread and more. Though these changes were made for practical reasons, their loss reduces the juicy gustatory pleasure of the scenes in which the meals occur and also moderates important characterization of Perceval, who is caught between his guileless experience of new things and his sudden duty to obey the dictates of chivalry, which he is still in the process of learning. Hélène Cixous notes, “Perceval is absolutely happy, eating extraordinary delicacies, as he can be,”¹⁸³ but that the Grail problem exists within the realm of absolute law and not the simple pleasures of food. There is little of this moral juxtaposition in the Icelandic version, which simply states, “Komu þá fyrir þá almargir réttir með inum bezta drykk” (150) [“There came before them a great many dishes together with the finest drink” (151)].

The final example of oral fixation from the original text is Perceval’s kissing of Blanche-flor the night before he defends her castle from the villainous Clamadeu. Chrétien makes a point to explain that “l’on peut trouver dans un lit sont donc offerts au chevalier cette nuit-là, à l’exception du plaisir qu’aurait pu lui offrir une jeune fille que lui aurait plu, ou un dame, s’il en avait eu. Mais il était encore innocent, et n’y pensait pas le moins du monde” (733) [“the knight had all the comfort and delight one could hope for in a bed, except the pleasure of a maiden’s company, if he pleased, or a lady’s, had it been permitted. But he knew nothing of these pleasures, and never thought of them at all” (405)]. This was possibly made explicit in order to downplay what occurs between Perceval and Blanche-flor next: “Et il lui

¹⁸² Kratz, “The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*,” 31-2.

¹⁸³ Hélène Cixous, *La risa de la medusa: ensayos sobre la escritura* (Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial, 1995), 176.

donnait des baisers en la tenant serrée dans ses bras. Puis il l'amise sous la couverture, très doucement et délicatement. Et elle se laisse embrasser, je ne pense pas que cela l'ennuie. Ils sont restés couchés ainsi côte à côte, bouche à bouche, jusqu'au matin, à l'approche du jour" (736) ["And he kissed her and held her tightly in his arms. He placed her gently and comfortably beneath the coverlet, and she let him kiss her, and I do not believe it displeased her. Thus they lay side by side with lips touching all night long, until morning came and day dawned" (407)]. In his other stories, Chrétien does not shy away from writing about sex; therefore, his decision to be ambiguous in the case of Perceval and Blancheflor must have been deliberate. In *Érec et Énide*, the author writes at length of the physical pleasure the two find in the marriage bed, which only *began* with kissing. The scene ends with the words, "Before she arose again, she had lost the name of maiden; in the morning she was a new lady"¹⁸⁴ leaving no doubt as to their sexual relationship. Again, when Lancelot and Guinevere consummate their adulterous love, it is clear to the audience what has occurred:

Now Lancelot had his every wish: the queen willingly sought his company and affection, as he held her in his arms and she held him in hers. Her love-play seemed so gentle and good to him, both her kisses and caresses, that in truth the two of them felt joy and wonder the equal of which has never been heard or known . . . Lancelot had great joy and pleasure all that night, but the day's arrival sorrowed him deeply, since he had to leave his sweetheart's side.¹⁸⁵

It is possible, then, that Chrétien wished to demonstrate Perceval's inadequacy in this area as compared to his other heroes. Even if Perceval and Blancheflor engaged in sex, as scholars such as Barnes hold true,¹⁸⁶ it could not have been the transcendent emotional experience between two adults as it was between Érec and Énide or Lancelot and Guinevere; instead, the election of Blacheflor as a love-object this early in Perceval's psychosexual development (where he has only achieved the Oral Stage) would be an opportunity for anxiety and neurosis at best. Freud's psychoanalysis maintains that a person can only choose a love-object once the individual has reached psychological maturity, otherwise problems are likely.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Freud might attribute Perceval's "precocious sexual maturity" in this scene to "an excess of parental affection,"¹⁸⁸ which we have seen his mother exhibit in her doting.

¹⁸⁴ Carroll and Kibler, trans., "Erec and Enide," 62.

¹⁸⁵ Carleton W. Carroll and William Kibler, trans., "The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)," in *Chrétien de Troyes Arthurian Romances* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 264-5.

¹⁸⁶ Barnes, "Parcevals saga: Riddara Skuggsjá?," 55.

¹⁸⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Martino Fine Books, 2011), 91.

¹⁸⁸ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 89.

For the Norse version, Parceval's innocence is not remarked upon, suggesting that he is better equipped, psychologically, to elect a love-object. The rest of the story supports this idea, as I have shown that the Norse Parceval is at least at the latency stage of development when the story begins. In fact, it is possible to see that Parceval is better equipped to deal with things of a sexual nature as well as emotional trauma than his French counterpart. The Hideous Damsel, who takes Parceval to task in front of the entire court who witnesses his shame, is greatly reduced in the Norse version. Henry Kratz notes,

The Laide Pucele, [English: Hideous Damsel] when she addresses Parceval, curses him for six lines (4646-51), details his failings at the Grail Castle for 18 lines (4652-69), and then for an additional 14 lines (4670-83) outlines what the results would have been if he had acted properly. The saga compresses this entire tirade into five lines.¹⁸⁹

As I have noted in my analysis of the French story, the zeal with which the Hideous Damsel castigates the hero may in fact be a psychological manifestation of the depth of his shame, since he had already been told at that point in the story. Therefore, its reduction in the Norse version indicates that perhaps Parceval did not feel such overwhelming shame or that by this time in the story, he may have been able to deal with it in a more emotionally healthy way than the French Parceval.

Parceval finishes his tale in the Norse adaptation by claiming his noble destiny as lord and ruler of Blankiflur's kingdom (183). This, the story suggests, is a more fitting end for Parceval than to be charged with the search for the Grail. Of the holy artifact, the hermit says in the Norse adaptation, "En þat er einn heilagur hlutr, er inn ríki maðr lætr bera fyrir sér til hugganar ok upphalds sálu sinnar ok lífs; er þessi inn heilagi hlutr andligr, en eigi líkamligr" (180) ["That is a holy thing which the mighty man causes to be borne before him as a consolation and sustenance for his soul and his life; the holy thing is of the spirit, not of the flesh" (181)]. The dialogue here suggests that the burden of the Grail and the injured Fisher King is a spiritual one that belongs to him alone and is not Parceval's responsibility. It is implied that Parceval should instead be concerned with his own personal salvation, not in saving the Fisher King: "En þú, frændi, gæt nú héðan af sálu þinnar ok gakk jafnan til kirkju fyrr en í nokkurn stað annan ok hlýð messu með lítillæti til guðs. Ver lítillátr ok þjónustufullr öllum þurftugum" (180) ["But you, kinsman, take care of your soul from now on and always go to church before you go to any other place, and hear Mass with humility towards God. Be humble and obliging to all needy people" (181)]. The story suggests that Parceval is

¹⁸⁹ Kratz, "The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*," 31.

successful in these endeavors with the words, "Ok svá gerði hann ... ok lifði síðan sem góðr kristinn maður" (182) ["And so he did, ... and lived ever after as a good Christian man" (183)]. Claudia Bornholt comments on this scene,

The epilogue supplies a satisfactory and harmonious ending to the story of Parceval, an ending that is lacking in Chrétien's unfinished romance. It explicitly stresses the husband's worldly achievements as husband, king and model knight. As happens in Chrétien's account, Parceval's spiritual journey had already come to a conclusion at the end of his stay with the hermit on Easter Sunday. ... In the French romance the account of Parceval's adventures ends abruptly after the hero has received communion. The plot then returns to Gawain's adventures and never returns to Parceval. The Norse version remedies this unresolved ending of Parceval's story by inserting an epilogue that lists all of Parceval's accomplishments in respect to God, his wife, and his role as a king and a knight. It thus combines the two realms that are central to the subject matter, and confirms that the hero has achieved an understanding of and success in both.¹⁹⁰

Where Parceval's story is left unfinished, with Parceval still bound by his vow to search for the Grail Castle until he can once more ask the necessary questions, Parceval is a fully realized, independent adult who has reached all necessary personal, spiritual and social goals in life. He has made peace with God and become a good person, a good Christian, a good husband and "ágætr höfðingi" (182) ["splendid ruler" (183)] of his land.

3.2 Portrayal of Other Important Figures in *Parcevals saga*

In contrast to Parceval's mother in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, the Norse Parceval's mother was made of sterner stuff. She does not faint at the notion of her son's departure, nor does she cling to him and try to dissuade him from his objectives by drowning him in her tears. Like her French counterpart, she does not like her son's plan, but once she accepts that he intends to go, she makes no further attempt to delay his leaving. As a result, the tone of her scenes in the story, including the dispensation of her famous advice, is altogether different than the French version. Carolyne Larrington notes

The advice of Parceval's mother in *Parcevals saga* perhaps comes closest in terms of imparting an understanding of the ethics of chivalric behavior, yet, as Geraldine Barnes has shown, the wisdom the mother offers in the saga is largely derived from such texts as *Hugsvinnsmál* (the Icelandic translation of the Latin *Disticha Catonis*) and the Norwegian *Konungs skuggsjá*, both strongly influenced by European didactic literature. Thus she departs considerably from the advice given in the *Contes del Graal*, equipping her son with a 'highly practical code of conduct'.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 105-6.

¹⁹¹ Larrington, "A Viking in Shining Armour? Vikings and Chivalry in the Fornaldarsögur," 279.

For this section of the story, much is changed from the original French in reflection to their differing cultures of their respective audiences. Larrington finds the mother's advice in *Parcevals saga* to be a reflection of the *vikingalög*, a set of ethics developed in the later medieval period which is similar to the chivalric code of behavior and designed to align them with behaviors of the courts to the south.

Parceval's mother's advocacy of restrained behaviour with respect to women is ostensibly a good parallel to the chivalrous treatment of women in the *vikingalög*, but in fact it is the one piece of counsel which survives from Chrétien. Yet her more (forcefully), and on the importance of granting mercy to one's opponents recall the provisions of both *lög* and Malory's oath.¹⁹²

Henry Kratz asserts that this information was edited by the translator to fit the expectations of the Norse audience, and the more level-headed, task-oriented nature of this advice fits what we have seen of women in the indigenous sagas, as I have explained above.

The mother's advice in the Norse version is much broader and more practical. ... Of the original advice, little remains intact except the injunction not to take anything more than a kiss from a girl by force. The acceptance of a ring or purse in Chrétien the translator changes to (presumably) the taking of property willy-nilly from a woman, but then adds the strange rationalizing sentence that he must then promise to recompense her. The advice having to do with taking another's lover or taking up with prostitutes has no counterpart in the original and sounds decidedly unchivalric. The advice not to kill someone bested in combat is gratuitous on the part of the translator and is more adapted to real life in Norway than to the Arthurian romance. The translator removes many of the more extravagant details of a chivalric nature, or at least those aspects which must have seemed too unnatural, or perhaps too unpalatable for his audience.¹⁹³

Changes to the women of the story, particularly Parceval's mother, could have been made by either the original Norwegian adaptors or the Icelandic copyists who came later; therefore, we can assume that in a general sense, both Norway and Iceland's scribes viewed women differently than those in France. As Claudia Bornholt points out,

The new beginning of the story has been situated in the realm of folklore tradition, not least because of the specific choice of words, as Parceval's father and mother are introduced as *karl* (man, commoner) and *kerling* (woman, wife). It has been suggested that the new introduction was not part of the original Norwegian translation, but instead that it is a later Icelandic addition that was modeled after Icelandic tales of abducted brides in which the couple are forced to live in exile, such as, for example, in *Viglundar saga* and *Orkneyinga saga*. This explanation is quite plausible and, yet again, is nearly impossible to locate these changes with certainty in Iceland. The motif of the abducted bride could have just as well have been borrowed from one of the

¹⁹² Larrington, "A Viking in Shining Armour? Vikings and Chivalry in the Fornaldarsögur," 279-280.

¹⁹³ Kratz, "The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*," 23-4.

bridal-quest stories in *Piðreks saga*, a saga that was certainly known and presumably also composed in Norway in the mid-thirteenth century.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, Parceval's interactions with other females are altered in this version of the tale, such as the crying maiden he meets in the woods the morning after his spiritual gaffe, who is revealed to be his cousin and informs him not only of his sin but also that his mother has died. In the dialogue of the scene with his grieving cousin, F. Regina Psaki notes

The translator links the deaths of Parceval's mother and the red knight as instances of his single-minded pursuit of knighthood without charity. Even once Parceval had learned to care about other people, he still did not care about God in a way that confers meaning on love of neighbor; and this imbalance results in the self-absorbed lack of compassion to which the cousin links his failure to ask about the Grail.¹⁹⁵

In addition, there is also the Hideous Damsel who exposes Parceval's shortcomings before the court, though as we have noted, it is significantly changed from the French version. Scholars such as Psaki believe that, when taken as a whole, the women of *Parceval's saga* are the "primary voices and advocates" of the version of chivalry it espouses to its Norse-Icelandic audience.

Parceval's saga offers a skeptical view of knighthood and knight-errancy, of education and training, and of a paradigm associated uniquely with masculine traits and behavior. It offers as well a subtly-inflected presentation of Christianity veiled in Parceval's mother and the hermit, both tellingly isolated from the social and chivalric order which Parceval values above all. While the representation of Christianity is not entrusted in the saga uniquely to women, they are its primary voices and advocates, as well as (perhaps) its primary beneficiaries; Parceval's mother enjoins him to serve maidens and women, imposing upon him the Christian ideology of the Beatitudes over and against a martial ideology of conquest.¹⁹⁶

This may be reflected in the culture of Viking Age Norway and Iceland in several ways, any of which would support the idea that women had a potentially advantageous position in culture in Norse areas. First, the Scandinavian and Germanic tribes had a tradition of female leaders in pagan religious cults which were replaced by men when Christianity was adopted in these areas. In folklore and other sources, Freyja was, for example, an important goddess and priestess who embodied both culture and religion. *Ynglinga saga*, which dates to approximately 1225, describes Freyja with the words "Hon var blótgyðja Hon kenndi fyrst

¹⁹⁴ Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 104-5.

¹⁹⁵ Psaki, "Women's Counsel in the *Riddarasögur*: The Case of *Parceval's Saga*," 209

¹⁹⁶ Psaki, "Women's Counsel in the *Riddarasögur*: The Case of *Parceval's Saga*," 217.

með Ásum seið, sem Vönum var títt”¹⁹⁷ [“She was a *blót* goddess. She taught the Æsir magic, which was usual for the Vanir”].¹⁹⁸ According to these beliefs, the Æsir, or Nordic gods, would know nothing of sacrifice and magic, which at that time comprised the central tools of religious worship, without this woman’s help. Existing accounts of early Germanic culture, such as Tacitus’ *Germania*, written in the 1st century AD, have several examples of female-led cults of worship such as the Germanic tribe Æstii. “[They] use the same customs and attire with the Suevians; their language more resembles that of Britain. They worship the Mother of the Gods”¹⁹⁹ a title which later became associated with powerful goddesses such as Freyja. Though the time of female-led worship was long over by the time Parceval and the women of his saga appeared, this would have impacted the culture and made it more open to female influence within the community and in the home than perhaps one which was more strongly dominated by men and the Church. There are, however, notable exceptions to these rules even in France, such as Marie de Champagne, Chrétien’s first patron. The daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, herself one of the wealthiest and most powerful queens of the Middle Ages, Marie acted as regent when her husband and son were away on Crusade and again after her son’s death.²⁰⁰

In terms of secular culture, women in Norway and Iceland historically had the ability to participate in social and political decisions indirectly, and could potentially wield great influence. Though they were denied the ability to approach ruling bodies such as the *þing* in Iceland without a male to speak for their interests, “strong type women” could be involved in politics, according to Helgi Þorláksson; he notes “They are active, not subordinate, and can be of the older Scandinavian model as found, for example, in the Icelandic sagas.”²⁰¹ A lack of direct access to law, possibly coupled with society’s unspoken approval of these strong type women, seen in the relative breadth of rights granted them in comparison to France, may have led women to encourage blood vengeance in so many of the sagas. Susan Elizabeth Rivenbark believes this is due to the fact that “they had little economic incentive to seek compensation compared to the incentive they had for protecting their familial honor. Men, in contrast, stood

¹⁹⁷ Snorri Sturluson. *Ynglinga saga*, Íslenzk fornrit XXVI, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnson, 4th ed. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2002), 13.

¹⁹⁸ Translation mine.

¹⁹⁹ Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. Thomas Gordon (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 18.

²⁰⁰ Fiona Swabey, *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Courtly Love, and the Troubadors* (Westwood, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 14.

²⁰¹ Helgi Þorláksson, “Friends, Patrons and Clients in the Middle Ages” In *Friendship and Social Networks in Scandinavia, c. 1000-1800*, eds. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Thomas Småberg (Turnhout, Belgium: Turnhout Brepols Publishers, 2013), 308.

to gain honor in public life by settling a case amicably and peaceably.”²⁰² In other words, wives and mothers would use whatever methods were available to them in order to accomplish their duty of defending the family honor; denied the right to approach the *þing* for judgement, they saw no value in achieving compensation or peace through lawful means. It is reasonable to assume that these cultural values which were developed over centuries of religious worship and social interaction still held sway, even as Scandinavian society began to conform to the norms set forth by medieval Europe. The reason for this is that, culturally, women in Nordic culture, particularly Iceland, had a different societal role than those in continental Europe. Jesse L. Byock notes, “To a degree unusual in continental medieval regions of the West, women maintained a measure of independence and control over their own lives, including the right to own property.”²⁰³ Under the Viking Age Icelandic law code *Grágás*, women also paid the same tithes as men, and received the same punishments for murder as a man regardless of the gender of either victim or perpetrator.²⁰⁴ The very structure of society allowed women this independence. The reason for a lack of aristocracy and manor-holding systems in Iceland was due to a lack of need to bind together in defensive units under an aristocratic (presumably military-commanding) lord; therefore, the early huge farmsteads slowly broke apart over time into many farms with little to separate farmer from chieftain in terms of power or obvious wealth.²⁰⁵ It seems natural that this social equality in Iceland, at least, potential for it, should be extended to women in the absence of another model which would force them to take submissive roles. Byock comments, “The Icelandic writings expose the multiplicity of women’s roles. They offer portraits of women involved in contention, coping with insult, injury, and limited resources while practicing a form of Realpolitik.”²⁰⁶ Carol J. Clover echoes the general consensus of scholars that women had a specific role to play within feud dynamics of Iceland and early Norway to remember insults and encourage vengeance, a job no less important than the duty of men to act in defense of their honor: “Failure to extract due vengeance for a slain kinsman occasions some of the choicer insults of cowardice in Icelandic literature. If this was the common ethic, it is no surprise that women should share it, and that they should further perceive themselves, and be perceived by others,

²⁰² Susan Elizabeth Rivenbark, ““Ek Skal Hér Ráða”: Themes of Female Honor in the Icelandic Sagas” (MA thesis, Appalachian State University, 2011), 13.

²⁰³ Jesse L. Byock, "Defining Feud: Talking Points and Iceland’s Saga Women," in *Feud in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Jeppe Buchert Netterstrøm and Bjørn Poulsen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2007), 103.

²⁰⁴ Byock, "Defining Feud: Talking Points and Iceland’s Saga Women," 103.

²⁰⁵ Jesse L. Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988), 56.

²⁰⁶ Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas and Power*, 111.

as having their own role to play in the task of just retaliation.”²⁰⁷ Cultural opportunities to influence in the actions of men would have afforded women a clearer voice than in other cultures, where men were unquestionably dominant. Perhaps that is why the Norse *Parceval*’s mother and other female characters do not hesitate to voice their thoughts to him in a clear, practical manner. Though women did not have overt social power in law and government, by the time Christianity was adopted in 1000 A.D. in Iceland, women had had a long tradition of being important members of the household and community, in a way that was different from the women of France.

3.3 Portrayal of Religion in *Parcevals saga*

In general, religious references and phrasing are removed from *Parcevals saga* entirely, with no attempt to replace or change the content for a Norse-Icelandic audience, implying that this audience placed less value on Christian material in comparison to listeners in France.

Examples include the description of what a church is and who Jesus is, explained to *Perceval* by his mother and the hermit’s prayer, which he teaches to *Perceval* to be used only in times of dire need. Both scenes are greatly condensed in the Norse-Icelandic version.²⁰⁸ Suzanne M. Marti identified 84 formulaic expressions relating to religious matter in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, of which “almost 2/3 have no counterpart”²⁰⁹ in the Old Norse translation. While it is easiest to point to cultural differences and say that the Norse-Icelandic court did not place the same emphasis upon this didactic material, other reasons for its deletion include deference to the more spare style of saga writing, which does not allow for long soliloquies or emotional language, unfamiliarity with some of these expressions which would have been easily understood in France, references that Chrétien may have included for dramatic effect but that the translator considered redundant, or even the fact that scribes left out more and more material with each copy, as approximately 150 exists between the time it was imported to Norway and the writing of the Icelandic manuscript currently used for analysis.²¹⁰

In a similar fashion, the Norse-Icelandic version seems to have stripped away much of the mystical elements related to *Perceval*’s destiny, such as the Grail and the inhabitants of the Grail Castle. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf note

²⁰⁷ Carol J. Clover, “Hildigunnr’s Lament” In *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism VC3*, eds. John Lindow et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), 144.

²⁰⁸ Kratz, “The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*,” 29.

²⁰⁹ Marti, “Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the *Perceval* Matter,” 199.

²¹⁰ Marti, “Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the *Perceval* Matter,” 200-1.

The Norse version eliminates the blood tie between his family and the Grail King's, and, although providing a conclusion to the story, offers no answer to Chrétien's unresolved question of the restoration of the Fisher King's health and lands. The saga's perplexing definition of the Grail as a *gangandi greiði* (possibly "walking purveyor of hospitality") has elicited a number of suggestions as to how the saga writer conceived it.²¹¹

It may or may not be significant that the Norse translator was so baffled by the Grail that he simply referred to it as "þeir í völsku máli kalla braull" (148) ["something which they call in the French language a grail" (149)]. Because this story marks the origin of the Grail, Phillip M. Mitchell believes that it can only be assumed that the French also misunderstood this heretofore unknown relic.²¹² Overall, Suzanne Marti suggests that the continual omission of religious material from *Parcevals saga* indicates "a diminished emphasis, on the more institutionalized aspects of faith, such as visiting places of worship and attending mass;" in general, it can be concluded that religious instruction was not considered necessary by the translator, who may have had a different objective in mind.²¹³

²¹¹ Pulsiano and Wolf, eds., *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, 496.

²¹² Mitchell, "Scandinavian Literature," 468.

²¹³ Marti, "Kingship, Chivalry and Religion in the Perceval Matter," 201-2.

4. PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND ITS APPLICATIONS

Many studies support the conclusion that religion has specific and measurable effects on the individual (or group) psyche, though the field of psychology of religion is a relatively new one, unexplored until the 20th century. Selvam tells us that early psychologists were concerned with the relationship between the two, but that Freud's generally negative outlook on religion may have dampened the scholarly discussion until more recent times.²¹⁴ Allport's *Individual and his Religion*, published in 1950, could be considered a turning point in the way of thinking about religion within the field. In his work, Allport criticized previous psychologists and methodologies for failing to properly examine "psychologically healthy religiousness,"²¹⁵ implying that it is indeed possible to integrate religion into one's life in a way that does not cause mental or emotional distress. In 1976, psychology of religion became a division within the American Psychology Association (APA) under the name Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues.²¹⁶

Early scholarly consideration of religion and psychology was dominated by Freud's views that God is nothing more than a representation of the Oedipal father figure to be dealt with.²¹⁷ However, with this acceptance of religion as a viable area of study, the question became how to scientifically record what is generally a private and therefore unverifiable matter. David M. Wulff's *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary* explains that religion is quantified "either as observable behavior or as the outcome of biological processes. Modelled more or less after the physical and biological sciences, the psychologies in this cluster aspire to explain, predict, and control behavior,"²¹⁸ before describing notable experts, methods and findings in this field. In acknowledgement of the idea that religion does not lend itself well to pure scientific study, Faith Martin's "Psychology, Religion and Development: A Literature Review" states that "It is obvious that psychology alone cannot explain religion, though psychology has a role to play in understanding beliefs and practices and differences between individuals. ... The study of psychology and religion must be embedded in the

²¹⁴ Sahaya Selvam, "Positive Psychology as a Theoretical Framework for Studying and learning about Religion from the Perspective of Psychology." (Lecture, Teaching and Studying Religion Symposium: London, January 1, 2011).

²¹⁵ Andrew Reid Fuller, *Psychology and Religion: Eight Points of View*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 115.

²¹⁶ Mary Reuder. "A History of Division 36 (Psychology of Religion)." Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality: Division 36. Accessed February 4, 2015.

²¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), 293.

²¹⁸ David M. Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 18.

cultural and historical and not solely in individual perspectives.”²¹⁹ This is why a cross-cultural framework is being applied to the examination of religion and shame in two cultures rather than another, more universal theory of emotion; without taking into account possible historical, social and cultural effects, the experience of religion is too nebulous and ephemeral to analyze with any meaningful results.

4.1 Guilt vs. Shame

For the purposes of this analysis, we must define shame and guilt before we may make a judgment regarding the presence of such emotion in the two narratives of Perceval. The reason for this is that although shame and guilt are similar emotions, they differ in origin and purpose. As we have noted, respected scholar Paul Ekman classifies them as distinct emotions in his work, though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably elsewhere in scholarly discussion. Michael Ferrari and Robert J. Sternberg write,

The close relationship between shame and guilt is indicated by the fact that the different individuals may respond to the same event with either shame or guilt, whereas some individuals are prone to one or the other response. The primary cognitive factor differentiating the response seems to be the actor's perception of his or her own competence or incompetence, responsibility or lack of responsibility for the violation. This differentiation is consistent with the notion that shame is akin to overwhelming, helpless fear leading to flight or freezing, whereas guilt is akin to moderate but manageable fear leading to appeasement gestures.²²⁰

Therefore, we see that Perceval, in both versions of the narrative, feels shame rather than guilt, as his extreme reaction to confrontation by the Hideous Damsel over what he has done is to flee Arthur's court after making a vow never to rest until he has asked the rightful questions.

The key element of Perceval's reaction is the audience. Again, Perceval is actually confronted twice with his great sin; the first time, he is informed by the crying maiden in the woods, who is revealed to be his cousin. As her horror mounts at realizing that he asked no questions in the presence of the Grail, she calls him “wretched” and “unlucky,” in the same manner of the Hideous Damsel later. As I have already noted, Perceval takes her condemnation in stride, only displaying emotion at the “bien triste histoire” (775) [“terrible news” (425)] that his mother is dead and quickly deciding that there is no reason to continue his journey home. Therefore, it is not the weight of the sin itself which causes Perceval such

²¹⁹ Faith Martin, “Psychology, Religion and Development: A Literature Review,” *Religions and Development Research Programme* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2008), 12.

²²⁰ Michael Ferrari and Robert J. Sternberg, *Self-awareness: Its Nature and Development*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 125.

pain, but the knowledge that his grave error has been witnessed by the king and his court.

Ferrari and Sternberg comment:

In contrast to guilt, shame engenders feelings of sadness and depression. Unlike guilt, shame is associated with feelings of helplessness owing to fundamental inability or defectiveness or incompetence. It seems to impel its experiencers to avoid those who have witnessed their shameful appearance or deed, and thereby to reduce contact with them. It may also impel its experiencers to change their behavior by avoiding the appearance and actions that elicited their shame. The worst aspect of shame comes from the experiencers' feeling that they are irreparably, overwhelmingly or globally inadequate and therefore unable to remedy the situation. In extreme cases, shame may lead individuals to exile or even suicide.²²¹

Though there is no mention of suicide in Perceval, Chrétien was no stranger to using it as a literary device, and both Lancelot and Yvain attempted suicide in times of despair within their own stories. At the very least, it is easy to see how Perceval's manic pursuit of chivalric and knightly deeds in the five years he spent away from Arthur's court, forgetting God, could have been motivated by a desire to regain his feeling of adequacy and worthiness which were lost that day at court in which his personal spiritual failings were laid bare. Indeed, the scene appears to underscore that Perceval's feeling of shame is something he feels is being levied against him, but which is not reflected in the outward behavior of those present. No one acknowledges Perceval's deeds for good or ill verbally or through gestures. In fact, Perceval's leaving is not noted in the French version of the story; presumably, he leaves with the other knights, who have all sworn to take up various adventures remarked upon by the Hideous Damsel.

Perceval is partially able to reclaim his self-worth with the help of the hermit in *Le Conte du Graal*. Certainly it is this character who inspires Perceval to reenter the civilized world by seeking forgiveness for his sins through confession, which the pilgrims he encountered on the road told him he would find with the hermit (458). The episode ends after Perceval has received emotional comfort and spiritual healing from the ministrations of the hermit and has taken communion. However, it is clear that Chrétien did not consider Perceval's journey complete; this section ends with the words "Le conte s'arrête ici de parler de Perceval; vous m'entendrez beaucoup parler de monseigneur de Gauvain avant que vous m'entendiez de nouveau parler de Perceval" (845-6) ["The tale no longer speaks of Perceval at this point; you will have heard a great deal about my lord Gawain before I speak of Perceval again," (461)] implying that there was more Perceval must do in order to become a

²²¹ Ferrari and Sternberg, *Self-awareness*, 111-3.

true spiritual hero and that seeking forgiveness and being indoctrinated into the Church was only the first step.

In contrast, *Parcevals saga* treats this scene not as another step in the hero's journey but as the end of it altogether, allowing Parceval to settle into the role of king, knight, and husband now that his spiritual crisis has been solved by doing penance for his sins, not by locating the Grail and asking the necessary questions. Claudia Bornholt attributes this as a desire to create a true ending by the original translators:

In the French romance the account of Parceval's adventures ends abruptly after the hero has received communion. The plot then returns to Gawain's adventures and never returns to Parceval. The Norse version remedies this unresolved ending of Parceval's story by inserting an epilogue that lists all of Parceval's accomplishments in respect to God, his wife, and his role as a king and a knight. It thus combines the two realms that are central to the subject matter, and confirms that the hero has achieved an understanding of and success in both. *Parcevals saga* harmonizes both realms inasmuch as Parceval first makes peace with God and then settles into secular life as husband, king and exemplary knight.²²²

The reasons for the Norse Parceval's shame are effectively laid to rest within the saga. Though the hermit in both versions explains the relationship between the Fisher King and the Grail, specifically it is he who is served by it, answering one of the charitable questions at last, only the Norse version seems to make a distinction between spiritual matters and worldly duties. Parceval's psychological path to self-actualization and also his spiritual voyage to rid himself of shame may still be ongoing, while for the Norse Parceval, he is both a psychologically healthy adult and spiritually unburdened by the shame of his actions.

4.2 The Relationship between Shame and Religion

When speaking of modern psychoanalysis and emotion, one feels obligated to begin with Freud, if only to acknowledge his great contributions to the field and to recognize that many of his suppositions have been discredited over time. Freud rarely commented directly on emotions such as shame, except to say that they stemmed from psychical trauma; "Any experience which calls up distressing effects - such as those of fright, anxiety, shame or physical pain - may operate as a trauma."²²³ However, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud acknowledges shame as a singularly adult burden, linking the existence of shame within the psyche and the influence of culture:

The age of childhood, in which the sense of shame is unknown, seems a paradise when we look upon it later, and paradise itself is nothing but the mass-phantasy of the childhood of the individual. This is why in paradise men are naked and unashamed,

²²² Bornholdt, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Transmission," 105-6.

²²³ Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (London: Basic Books, 1957), 6.

until the moment arrives when shame and fear awaken; expulsion follows, and sexual life and cultural development begin.²²⁴

After religion was established as a concept worthy of psychological study, scholars began to turn to specific emotions such as shame and their effects in social relationships and religion, a construct which is communal in structure and behavior. Thomas J. Scheff's "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory," named shame as "the premiere social emotion"²²⁵ and called for "systematic empirical studies of the effect of individual and collective shame on social solidarity and alienation."²²⁶ Lisa Guenther's article "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life," is one such work which explored the social impact of "the burning feeling of shame, the sense of being out of place, judged by others as unworthy, unwanted or wrong—not only in this or that particular action but in one's very existence—leaves the shameful subject nowhere to be, and yet nowhere to hide or escape."²²⁷ Thomas J. Scheff's earlier piece, called "Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System," takes this idea further, using Durkheim's work to assert that society exists as a "complex and highly efficient system of informal sanctions that encourages conformity," using emotions like shame and pride to continuously regulate and enforce proper behavior even in the absence of obvious rewards and punishments.²²⁸ The book, *Self-awareness: Its Nature and Development* verifies our intense "desire to understand and be understood, to be part of a group – whether it be the village, school, family, or kibbutz – [which] would appear to be as universal a trait of the human species as any."²²⁹ If the desire to belong is universal and the degree to which we belong manifests itself in feelings such as shame and pride which guide our behavior, then the experiences of Perceval and Parceval in both versions of the story of the Grail can show readers what qualities are needed, generally speaking, to belong to their respective cultures and what penalties may be levied on those who do not conform. Richard A. Shweder notes,

Cultural communities differ in their ideas about what is good, true, beautiful, and efficient and in the customary social, political, economic, and family life practices (the "way of life") that they value and endorse because of those ideas. Different ways of life and different ways of thinking about the world may well occasion greater or fewer

²²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A.A. Brill, ed. Janet B. Kopito (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2015), 186.

²²⁵ Thomas J. Scheff, "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory," *Sociological Theory* 18:1 (2000), 84.

²²⁶ Scheff, "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory," 98.

²²⁷ Lisa Guenther, "Shame and the Temporality of Social Life," *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011): 23-4.

²²⁸ Thomas J. Scheff, "Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System," *American Sociological Review* 53:3 (June 1988): 395.

²²⁹ Michael Ferrari and Robert J. Sternberg, *Self-awareness: Its Nature and Development*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 38.

opportunities (what some psychologists call "affordances") to experience some culture-specific manifestation or variety of a mental state such as "shame."²³⁰

Though religion can often bring comfort and a sense of community in times of emotional upset, it can also be a source of negative feelings and even darker compulsions due to these feelings of shame, which we see in the story when Perceval exiles himself from Arthur's court. Julie Juola Exline, Ann Marie Yali and William C. Sanderson's "Guilt, Discord and Alienation: The Role of Religious Strain in Depression and Suicidality," focuses on serious depression and suicide resulting from a feeling that one has failed God, saying, "Depression was associated with feelings of alienation from God and, among students, with interpersonal conflicts on religious domains. Suicidality was associated with religious fear and guilt, particularly with the belief in having committed an unforgivable sin."²³¹ Without the aid of modern science, Chrétien correctly predicted his character's feelings of despair upon committing his great sin, providing an emotional portrait we can use to evaluate how closely connected each culture considered God to be in their lives, and therefore, how devastating alienation from God would be.

Going further, Gunter Bierbrauer's article "Reactions to Violation of Normative Standards: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Shame and Guilt," attempted to find cultural markers for feelings of shame and guilt by examining German, Lebanese and Kurdish peoples and their relationships to religion. Drawing on ideas from T.S. Lebra's article "The Social Mechanism of Guilt and Shame: The Japanese Case,"²³² to look for cultural effects upon individuals when feeling guilt or shame, Bierbrauer concludes:

Across these cultures, it seems that individuals who are more collectivistic show more shame than guilt reaction. Again this supports the notion that shame functions basically for those individuals who define their identity in terms of their ingroup. In this case individuals react to criticism from others in terms of shame rather than guilt. Also independent of culture, religious individuals show a higher degree of guilt and shame than non-religious individuals.²³³

Though Perceval is a fictional creation, in the French and Norse-Icelandic versions of his story that he, too, feels alienated from the Heavenly Father and goes mad in response to what he perceives as his unforgivable sin.

²³⁰ Richard A. Shweder, "Toward a Deep Cultural Psychology of Shame," *Social Research* 70: 4 (2003): 1116.

²³¹ Julie Juola Exline, Ann Marie Yali and William C. Sanderson, "Guilt, Discord and Alienation: The Role of Religious Strain in Depression and Suicidality," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 56:12 (2000): 1481.

²³² Lebra, T.S. "The Social Mechanism of Guilt and Shame: The Japanese Case." *Anthropological Quarterly* 44 (1973): 241-245.

²³³ Bierbrauer, "Reactions to Violation of Normative Standards": 192.

Existing research gives a number of reasons to propose a link between religious strain and negative emotion. Religion centers on existential issues that can have a profound psychological importance. Beliefs about the nature of God, the meaning of life, and the possibility of an afterlife are often central to a person's view of the world. Positive religious coping often involves the perception of a close, collaborative relationship with God. In fact, some have argued that feelings of attachment to God can take the place of other interpersonal attachments.²³⁴

The notion that feelings of attachment to God can supersede other relationships is reflected in Perceval's exile, in which the story tells us that he forgot God. This appears to be the most significant detail, as others left behind are not mentioned. In the details and subtle variations of the translation, it is easy to see that the Norse Parceval does not have quite the same experience after failing God.

4.3 Cross-Cultural Psychology: Religion and Emotion in French and Norse Culture

As a general rule, Perceval and the Norse Parceval feel and display the same emotions at the same points in the narrative, it is only a matter of degree which defines their emotional experiences. As discussed below, the Scandinavian romance reflects an undemonstrative attitude toward emotion, with greater emphasis placed upon correct actions when circumstances demand them. The French version features Perceval neglecting to ask the question because ““il craignait, en posant cette question, de se conduire grossièrement” (765) [“he was afraid that if he asked they would consider him uncouth,” (420)] showing his desire to be seen as courteous. On the other hand, the Norse Parceval's reasons for staying silent show a desire that his behavior not reflect badly on others: he recalled what Gormanaz had taught him about not talking too much, “ok fyrir því hræddiz hann at spyrja ok vildi eigi angra þá er honum viettu beina” (148) [“and for that reason he was afraid to ask; and furthermore he did not wish to trouble the man who had granted him hospitality” (149)]. Parceval, then, wishes to be seen as courteous out of respect for his teacher and host. Though the emotions (fear of asking a question) and the antecedent conditions (a desire to be thought courteous) are the same, Parceval does not wish to offend his host. This may also support Paul Ekman's theory of universal emotions, though we have no physical evidence to support these ideas which are instead based on literary analysis.

Second, we must perform appraisals of significance to evaluate the manner in which people of a given culture evaluate the situations which cause emotions and the way they interpret those situations that may change, extend or shorten the emotional experience. In Perceval, characters are notably uniform in the speed and vociferousness with which they

²³⁴ Exline, Yali and Sanderson, “Guilt, Discord and Alienation,” 1483.

condemn Perceval for his infractions. With the changes that have been made to the Norse narrative, characters are equally unemotional and ambivalent to religious matters; however, other differences become apparent. The Weeping Maiden, the French Perceval's cousin, is the first to inform him of his failure at the Grail castle. She tells him that his mother "car elle est mort de la douleur" (774) ["who has died of grief" (425)] on account of his leaving, but in the Norse version this has been changed to the more active "þú drapt móður þína af harmi, þá er þú hljópt frá henni at óvilja hennar" (152) ["you killed your mother with grief when you ran away from her against her will" (153)]. According to F. Regina Psaki, this fits what we know of Norse-Icelandic culture, because "the active verb not only emphasizes Perceval's culpability,"²³⁵ but it underscores the fact that Perceval did not take the correct action that was needed to preserve his personal honor, and so now he is shamed. As we have previously discussed, the moderation of the Hideous Damsel's diatribe against Perceval seems to mitigate the importance of his task and therefore the feelings of shame which may result from it. Finally, the hermit appears less judgmental of Perceval upon meeting him in the Church, and places fewer conditions upon his forgiveness in the eyes of God.

Another significant element of this scene is the fact that neither Perceval nor his Norse cousin seem particularly troubled to hear that his mother has died, apparently causing the grief of losing a loved one to be cut short because it cannot be changed. While this fits with the Norse trend of unemotional response to antecedent conditions, It is not clear why Perceval does not display outward evidence of mourning beyond commenting on this "terrible news" and stating the hope that God will have mercy on her soul. Interestingly, Perceval is slightly more explicit in the saga, declaring that these are "hörmulig tíðindi" (152) ["sad tidings" (153)]. Both Percevals immediately decide there is no point in going home, and turn back to Arthur's court.

Thirdly, we must perform normative social appraisals to see if people of a given culture are alike or different in the social value of displaying the emotion; namely, is it acceptable to acknowledge the emotion that is felt, and to what extent or depth is it acceptable? The literary audience of France appears to value displays of emotion as signs of religious contrition, based on the high emotions of the confession scene with the hermit. In contrast, the Norse Perceval appears much more unemotional. K.T. Kanerva notes "In saga culture, the face and body were directly connected to the person's inner state. It was typical for the saga authors to describe only what could be seen, whereas emotions and other inner, mental states could not be easily

²³⁵ Psaki, "Women's Counsel in the *Riddarasögur*: The Case of *Percevals Saga*," 209.

described, if at all.”²³⁶ One example is Perceval’s meeting with the abused maiden, whose suffering he caused as a result of kissing her in her tent and taking her ring in the beginning of the story. The display seems odd because Perceval blushes with shame even as he denies any knowledge of her identity. In the saga, the Norse Perceval’s reaction seems more a subconscious acknowledgement of his wrongdoing, as he says "eigi minnir mik at ek hafa fyrr sét þik" (154) ["I do not remember that I have seen you before," (155)] rather than the French narrative’s line, “je ne pense ni que ne crois vous avoir jamais vue ou vous avoir nui en quoi que ce soit” (779) ["I’m absolutely certain I have never seen you before or done you any harm” (427)]. In another example, the hermit of *Le Conte du Graal* sighs upon hearing Perceval’s name, having recognized him as his nephew. The Old Norse hermit simply declares their kinship. This stoicism in the face of great trials has led some scholars to conclude that the Norse culture had an entirely different concept of emotions. William Ian Miller declares the gentler emotions all but dead. “One might well wonder whether the cultivated nonchalance and understatement in the face of death that is the hallmark of the heroic style does not reveal a socialization very successful in killing some of the softer types of sentiment rather than simply covering genuinely felt feelings with cool wit and taciturnity.”²³⁷

The women are the more emotional of the sexes, suggesting that in either culture female displays of emotion are more acceptable than those of men. Still, the emotional displays of women in the Norse version are also toned down in comparison to the French. In the French original, Perceval’s mother is quite emotional, first expressing joy upon his return home for the day, fainting when she hears he has seen the knights, and expressing despair upon her revival, “Ah! Woe is me, what misfortune!” The tent maiden reacts similarly to her abuse at the hands of the Haughty Knight in both tales, "ok hún full angrs ok tára, þvíat hún hafði þolt allskyns vesöld" (154) ["overwhelmed by grief and tears because she had suffered every kind of misery” (155)]. Blancheflor and Blankiflúr both weep piteously at the thought of another day at war with Clamadeu/Klamadius and his men. Perceval’s cousin, the Weeping Maiden, and the Hideous Damsel both use similar language in both stories when condemning his actions, or lack thereof, at the Grail Castle. This is reflective of both a similar psychological purpose in levying judgement on Perceval privately in the case of the lady and publically by the actions of the Damsel, and a comparable tolerance for women expressing emotion in both cultures. In fact, the diatribes of the two women may have been seen as

²³⁶ K.T. Kanerva, “Ógæfa as an Emotion in Thirteenth-century Iceland,” *Scandinavian Studies* 84:1 (2012): 6.

²³⁷ Miller, *Humiliation*, 97.

analogous to the role of the lamenter and the whetterer, respectively, in saga literature to the Norse audience, who was accustomed to these tropes in the literature. Sarah M. Anderson believes that, by doing so, these women “are engaging in one of the few speech acts represented by the literature open to them, and they are speaking on behalf of the customs of their society – not in monstrous aberration from them.”²³⁸ In both stories, the Weeping Maiden bemoans the knight’s choices with sadness and regret. The Hideous Damsel is a whetterer in the sense that she comes to court specifically to harangue Perceval and spur him and the other knights to action as she lists many unresolved crimes and people in need in various kingdoms which the knights could aid. The Hideous Damsel’s actions here, appearing and doling out disdain for Perceval as well as announcing that “s’il veult faire un prouesse chevaleresque: qui la cherche sûr de la trouver en cet endroit” (801) [“anyone wishing to perform deeds of chivalry will find opportunities there for the asking” (438)]. In so doing, she passive-aggressively shames the knights of Arthur’s court, who should have been out searching for deeds of chivalry already. Tellingly, the knights immediately begin boasting loudly that they will go and return victorious. Joseph J. Duggan notes,

In cultures in which responsibility is collectively shared according to societal conventions such as the solidarity of the kin group, shame often plays a dominant role in the sanctioning of good and evil. Twelfth-century French society is just such a culture. Guilt is present in Chrétien’s romances, but it plays a peripheral role compared to shame. It is a question, not of opposing the concepts “guilt culture” and “shame culture” but of which of the two, shame or guilt, is the most common and important sanction in a given society or depiction of society. For the Arthurian world as Chrétien depicts it, shame is by far the most forceful and most frequent sanction.²³⁹

Again, guilt is an inner notion of wrongdoing. If the knights had felt guilt over their inaction, they would have gone out to seek adventure and made the attempt to correct the problem on their own. Perceval, in particular, would have felt guilt upon meeting the Weeping Maiden. Instead, King Arthur’s men required a woman to point out their unmanliness before they were moved to act.

The most introspective scene in the story is found in the scene in which Perceval enters a trance upon viewing three drops of blood on the ground. This scene can be interpreted as either a latent sexuality or a burgeoning shame in Perceval, due to its connections to both Blacheflor’s physical beauty and the religious connotations of blood. However, the Norse Parceval reacts in a typically more taciturn fashion than the French character, telling Gawain

²³⁸ Sarah M. Anderson, “Introduction: ‘Og eru köld kvenna ráð,’” in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, eds. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson (New York: Routledge, 2002), xii-xiii.

²³⁹ Duggan, *The Romances of Chrétien De Troyes*, 128-9.

that Keu and Sagremor, who approached him in order to fetch him to the king and became angry at his unresponsive state, robbed him of his meditation. In contrast, the French Perceval gushes that he had a “une belle enluminure” (795) [“most pleasing thought”(435)] about his lady love which he proceeds to describe for the other knight. Both cultures support the idea that, when Perceval is approached by unknown parties who “vildu nauðga mér at fara til kóngs, sem þeir hefði mik hertekit ok vápmsótt” (164) [“wanted to force me to go to the king, as though they had captured and conquered me,” (165)], it is acceptable to respond to this threat with immediate violence. This scene also illustrates the importance of being able to respond to a threat with proper skill to defend oneself. Both Keu and Sagremor’s first response to the unreactive Perceval is to yell and threaten him. In turn, Perceval reacts by knocking Sagremor from his horse and breaking Keu’s arm.

Proper courtesy is modeled for the audience immediately. Gawain reacts with empathy toward Perceval and approaches him kindly, guessing that “le chevalier avait peut-être perdu quelqu’un et cela le rendait triste, ou bien son amie lui avait été enlevée, et cela lui causait peine et chagrin” (793) [“the knight was contemplating some loss he had suffered, or perhaps his lady has been carried off and he is sad and dispirited” (434)]. Gawain engages in problem solving before he approaches Perceval after he has seen the results of Keu and Sagremor’s decision to rush the armed man. As a response to his words, Arthur praises the knight for speaking “most courteously” (435). Valvur, the Norse Gawain, does not attempt to guess at what is bothering Perceval and merely greets him as a brother and explains his purpose. Valvur is instead praised for being “vitr” (164) [“sensible” (165)] and “vel stiltr” (164) [“level-headed” (165)]. This suggests that while empathy and awareness of emotion was optimal in courtly France, it was possibly more valued in Norse culture to be rational and goal-oriented. In terms of shame, though both Percevals are motivated to leave society as a form of self-punishment, the details of their return to civilization in the scene where the character seeks confession reveal slightly different motivations. The Norse Perceval’s words to the hermit imply that his reaction is motivated more by problem solving whereas Perceval is possibly engaging in seeking approval from the hermit due to the fact that he begs and cries, perhaps showing remorse more clearly for the benefit of the audience.

To diverge from unhappy emotions, which generally mark the narrative, Perceval does feel happiness during his time with Gornemant in both stories, finding a mentor in the skilled, generous knight. However, a critical difference in the text appears. In the French romance, Gornemant’s skill with weapons came from nature and his own heart, implying a divine origin for his nobility and the expertise that supposedly came with it. The saga character names

something different as the source of his skill: “Allt má nema, sagði hann. Ef maðr leitar við og leggur hug á. En með því at þú hefir eigi fyrr sét að slíku farit, þá er þér þat engi skömm, at þú kunnir eigi. En nú síðan þú hefir sét, þá hefir þý skömm ok skaða ef þú neitar at nema” (124) [“Everything can be learned,” said he, “if a man tries hard and puts his mind to it. But inasmuch as you have not seen such things done before, then it is no disgrace to you that you are ignorant of it. But now since you have seen it, you will incur disgrace and injury if you refuse to learn” (125)]. This presents a sharp deviation between the two cultures. Where in France, Perceval’s prowess is a random gift of Nature (or divine reward) due to his noble destiny, The Norse Parceval has the opportunity to learn whatever skill he wishes to know and earn much renown if he is able to learn it well. This sentiment clearly exposes the entrenched class values of the nobility in France, whereas in Norway and especially Iceland, it was likely easier to succeed without the aid of noble lineage if one could prove his worth in other ways.

Finally, we must decide if people are alike or different in the ways they respond to displays of emotion in others, such as mirroring the emotion as a show of empathy, withdrawing or, most interestingly to this research, collectively shaming an individual. The prime example of this is Perceval’s reaction to his mother’s extreme upset when he informs her of his intention to seek out knighthood at Arthur’s court. Her weeping and fainting is mostly ignored by her uncouth son, who changes the subject to his own selfish needs when he asks for something to eat. Typically, the Norse Parceval and his mother set aside emotions and engage in a discussion. Both mothers believe that their sons will come to grief as they are uneducated and ill-equipped to appear at court, but the French Perceval tells his mother that he does not care, whereas the saga character patiently informs her that he will learn what he should know eventually. Another added detail is that the Norse Parceval thanks his mother before leaving, displaying a modicum of courtesy despite his greater sin of abandoning her. A woman’s tears as well as her laughter provoke a response in men. Women can use emotion to manipulate men for their own purposes in either; both Blancheflor and the Norse Blankiflúr cry and promise to kill themselves at the dawn of another terrible day under siege, stirring a sympathetic response in their respective Percevals, who comfort them with kisses and embraces as well as promises to help. It can be surmised from this episode that, while it is not advantageous for a Viking to show emotion in public or in the company of other men, it is not a problem to show the softer emotions in private.

Earlier in the story, a maiden at court who laughs upon seeing Perceval in accordance with a prophecy that she will laugh in the presence of the supreme lord of all knights (394). The Norse translator omits the laugh. When the Norse Kæi kicks the fool, it is because he has

said the same thing as did the girl (117).²⁴⁰ The French version allowed Keu to take out his anger at a perceived insult from the girl not only on her, but on an innocent bystander. The saga changes this to a more reasonable reaction on the Norse Kæi's part; he is "mundi springa af angri ok reiði" (120) ["bursting with anger and rage" (121)] because both have insulted the court by declaring that Perceval will one day be the greatest knight in the world.

From this analysis, we can see that while the culture of France and Norse-Iceland have common elements as displayed in the two narratives, there are also alterations made to the Old Norse version which highlight the differences between the two cultures. While Perceval does not ask charitable questions for fear of seeming ill-mannered, the Norse Parceval also does not want his actions to reflect poorly on his host and teacher. In the same manner, while the Hideous Damsel condemns both Percevals, the character may have taken on the added significance of the feud whetterer, a familiar duty of women in Norse culture. Religious matters and the commission of sin is paramount to the French culture as portrayed in the story, whereas the Old Norse version downplays its role considerably. Likewise, non-verbal expressions of emotion such as sighing and weeping are important forms of expression to the French, whereas the Norse-Icelandic culture seems to have preferred to keep these elements to a minimum or, if necessary, bound by private spaces. In general, the French original seems to value emotional expression and empathy among characters, whereas the Old Norse characters treated each other fairly and rationally, earning praise for their wisdom and level-headedness instead.

4.4 Durkheim and Role of Religion and Shame in Shaping Society

Now we can explore ideas of religion put forth by Emile Durkheim, which holds that social institutions such as religion exist in order to meet certain needs in a given society; in effect, the way a society conceptualizes God illustrates the ideal form of that society.²⁴¹ By examining the construction and reception of religion in the societies of France and Norse-Iceland as portrayed in the two versions of the Perceval romance and supported by secondary historical sources, we can then evaluate the relationship between religion and shame in each society. In addition to definite ideas about religion and its role in society, Durkheim strongly believed that emotions and collective sentiments were responsible for the creation of social solidarity through moral community.²⁴² In essence, the emotions we feel and the commonality

²⁴⁰ Kratz, "The *Parcevals Saga* and *Li Contes del Graal*," 27.

²⁴¹ W. S. F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories*, 73.

²⁴² Scheff, "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory), 84.

of when we feel them creates a sense of community and togetherness through this shared experience. Thomas J. Scheff notes,

Durkheim bequeathed to modern social thought a theoretical building block: the idea that the force of social influence is experienced by individuals as exterior and constraining. Although he argued that the individual experiences social influence as an absolutely compelling force exterior to self, he did not spell out the causal sequence implied. What are the steps that lead individuals to experience social control as exterior and constraining? This is an important question because exterior constraint has become a basic premise for modern sociologists.²⁴³

Durkheim also believed shame to be a social emotion, levied against those who have acted immorally by others in the society. In the story, Perceval is not bothered upon committing the sin of silence when he does not ask the Grail questions, for he is ignorant of his crime. Even upon being told of his wrongdoing by the crying maiden in the woods, Perceval is not particularly anguished; it is only upon being insulted in front of the entire court by the Hideous Damsel, an exterior source of judgement rather than an interior one, that Perceval is motivated to make amends for his actions. It is significant, then, that the Norse Perceval does not place the same importance upon the Hideous Damsel as the French Perceval. In downplaying her hideousness, he seems to be less disturbed by her presence and by the physical embodiment of his wickedness.

Once Perceval has been made aware of his breach of morality, he exiles himself and leaves society as a form of punishment, even though his audience in both versions of the tale makes no comment on his actions. Arthur, the head of the court, makes no judgment on Perceval, nor does anyone ask him to leave. This, too, is supported in Durkheim's notions of shame as a mechanism of conformity in society. Scheff articulates that conformity to social norms can be levied against a person even without obvious censure:

There is wide agreement that conformity is encouraged by a system of sanctions: we usually conform because we expect to be rewarded when we do and punished when we do not. However, conformity usually occurs even in the absence of obvious sanctions. Durkheim's formulation refers to the ubiquity of conformity. The reward of public acclaim and the punishment of public disgrace rarely occur, yet the social system marches on. Formal sanctions are slow, unwieldy, and expensive. In addition to the formal system, there must be a complex and highly efficient system of informal sanctions that encourages conformity.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Scheff, "Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System," 395.

²⁴⁴ Scheff, "Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System," 395.

This is illustrated several times in the story of *Le Conte du Graal*, from the aforementioned scene in which the hero is condemned by the Hideous Damsel and again, when he meets pilgrims on the road on Good Friday and is encouraged by them to conform to the social ritual of confessing one's sins on this holiday. Perceval feels some emotion deep in his heart and is moved to enter the church.

However, the scene is presented differently in the French and Norse versions of the story. In the French romance, Perceval sighs "au fond du cœur, parce qu'il se sentait coupable envers Dieu, et il s'en repentait" (841) ["deep within his heart because he had sinned against God and was very sorry for it" (459)]. This Perceval is also more emotional than his Norse incarnation, crying because he is very afraid "d'avoir offensé de Dieu" (842) ["that he has sinned against Almighty God" (459)]. Perceval begs the hermit for help and absolution, "car il en a grande besoin" (842) ["for he felt in great need of it" (459)]. The hermit seems harsher with this Perceval, informing him that he would "il n'aura de remission qu'après confession et dans le repentir" (842) ["never be forgiven if he did not first confess and repent" (459)]. Here, the hermit seems to be the arbiter of social approval, the gatekeeper waiting to levy judgement upon Perceval and decide if he should be allowed to return to the civilized world. Likewise, it seems that Perceval has been driven here to seek society's approval by a number of negative emotions. Emotional upheaval is common with religious belief, particularly when one believes that he has committed an unforgiveable sin; in fact, the scene may have been intended to show Perceval's spiritual growth. According to Julie Juola Exline, Ann Marie Yali and William C. Sanderson, "A certain degree of strain may be inherent in religious life. ... In fact, most major religions would contend that such hardship contains the seeds of spiritual maturity: Growth results not from a lack of suffering, but from a constructive response to it."²⁴⁵ In coming to the priest, Perceval was able to make a constructive choice rather than continuing to punish himself in exile.

In contrast, the Norse Perceval is similarly "þá komzt hann við mjök í hjarta sínu" (180) ["touched in the heart" (181)] by the same urge to visit the hermit, but it is not attributed to distressed feelings at having sinned. Instead, a more logical explanation that it "ok kom honum í hug hversu ferliga hann hafði lifat" (180) ["came into his mind how abominably he had lived," (181)] and he took action to change this element of his life. Rather than begging, Perceval declares to the hermit that he is in need of "hans heilræða til umbóta sinna synda" (180) ["his healing counsel for the amending of his sins" (181)]. The hermit assents to hearing

²⁴⁵ Exline, Yali and Sanderson, "Guilt, Discord and Alienation," 1493-4.

his confession without a need for threats that he would never be forgiven if he did not follow instructions. In general, Parceval appears less affected by emotions, which is typical for Old Norse literature. This implies that clear-headed, unemotional decision making was preferred, even in the case of religion, whereas it may not be the case in France. There, it seems, one is meant to subjugate oneself before the priests and, by extension, God, begging instead of asking and being denied the ministrations of the Holy Church unless one has obtained forgiveness. Durkheim's work supports this idea, due to the fact that "social control involves a biosocial system that functions silently, continuously, and virtually invisibly, occurring within and between members of a society. Cultural taboos on the acknowledgement of pride and shame seem to lead to pathological states of shame, which give rise to the rigid or excessive conformity."²⁴⁶ As we have seen, French culture in this period of history was particularly subject to the dictates of the pope and Church as that institution vied for power against the emerging states of Europe.

In order to maintain its impact in society, religion must not only dictate proper behavior through shame and praise, but it must also be possible to repeat those experiences so as to create positive feelings in its adherents and reinforce the value of maintaining its – and society's – dictates. Durkheim writes,

Whoever has really practiced a religion knows very well that it is the cult which gives rise to these impressions of joy, of interior peace, of serenity, of enthusiasm which are, for the believer, an experimental proof of his beliefs. The cult is not simply a system of signs by which the faith is outwardly translated; it is a collection of the means by which this is created and recreated periodically.²⁴⁷

At his moment of greatest need, Perceval experiences some relief when he participates in the Christian ritual of confession and receives forgiveness from the hermit; though it is not explicit, he does not cry or display distressed behavior afterwards, conversing normally with the hermit. Presumably, should Perceval sin again, he could recreate his feelings of peace by confessing again. In the course of his ministrations, the hermit also gives Perceval a list of daily activities which he should perform as a demonstration of his remorse: He should go to church each day to do penance, hear Mass, and stay there until the priest has "ait tout dit et chanté" (844) ["said and sung it all" (460)]. He must also honor noblemen and women, and help widows, orphans and maidens. The hermit tells him that only after all this will he earn true forgiveness: "Si tu en as volonté, tu pourras encore rentrer en grâce et trouver place au paradis" (844) ["If you do this with a true heart, you will yet improve yourself and win

²⁴⁶ Scheff, "Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System," 406.

²⁴⁷ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 417.

honour and salvation,” (460)]. The priest tells him he must do all these things in order to complete full penance and to “retrouver la grâce de Dieu comme autrefois” (844-5) [“regain the graces you used to enjoy,” (460)] implying that Perceval is not forgiven until he does them all. Unfortunately, Perceval’s part in the the story ends without the audience knowing if Perceval is completely forgiven or if he is forever doomed to be an outcast and sinner. Again, though the Norse Parceval also participates in confession and Communion, the general omission and shortening of religious elements in his story supports the idea that religious rites, and any peace granted by their performance, are not meant to be the focus of his actions. The hermit’s list of directives is reduced to a instructions to “take care of his soul,” and to always attend Mass and help those in need. After spending two days with the hermit Parceval departs and lives “siðan sem góðr kristinn maðr” (182) [“forever after as a good Christian man” (183)]. In Norse society, forgiveness appears to have been easier to obtain or, perhaps, unconditional once it is obtained.

One idea from Durkheim which seems to illuminate one of the central themes of Perceval story is that a society which leads man to act in order to change the society for the better “has made him acquire the need of raising himself above the world of experience and has at the same time furnished him with the means of conceiving another.”²⁴⁸ Perceval experiences this through the trials of his romance, in which he begins as an ignorant fool unaware of the rules and strictures of human civilization. In learning and becoming “the greatest knight in the world,” he has raised himself to a position above that of other men, and may now conceive of an ideal world, personified by God and the ideology of Christian religion. Though Chrétien was unable to finish Perceval’s progression, those who later penned the famous Continuations thought this was the case, sending Perceval on all manner of spiritual adventures until he ascends to a kind of divine being and removes himself from humanity altogether. On the contrary, the saga promotes the idea that the ideal of manhood is not to move beyond humanity by becoming closer to some divine principle, but to successfully integrate all parts of the self into one capable, powerful person. Rather than having the power to rise above the world of experience, the Norse Parceval can now lead others in making it better. Taken as a whole, Perceval’s story appears to advocate leaving behind the world of men for divine ideals whereas the Norse Parceval champions the idea of self-actualization which allows us to make the world better. This can only be speculation, due to the unfinished state of the story.

²⁴⁸ Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 423.

5. CONCLUSION

There were many reasons why a given element was changed in the course of translation or adaptation into a new audience. Variations may appear for reasons of information change, in which an element is changed to fit more closely the expectations of the audience, as changes to jousts and tournaments were adapted to use the general language of battle for the Norse-Icelandic audience, for whom large-scale tournaments and related activities such as jousting were unknown. A second reason for change would be to make certain details of the story more explicit so that the audience would understand possibly unfamiliar aspects. Another reason for change is emphasis change, in which the importance of a given element is made more or less important. The translator of *Parcevals saga* chose to emphasize scenes of education, particularly in battle and weaponry. The Norse Parceval's journey as a man elevated from the status of idle farmer in the forests outside of civilization to a well-respected and powerful lord with his own lands and hall, a fine wife, and reputation as a good Christian and good man.

This particular example of emphasis change appeared to be so deliberate and sharply defined that it led to decades of scholarly debate, led by Geraldine Barnes, who believes that the story was intentionally created as a king's mirror, like *Konungs skuggsiá*, meant to educate its audience as to how to properly carry out the duties and social expectations of Parceval's rank. On the other hand, Marianne Kalinke advocates the position that it was intended only for entertainment in a culture which thrived on the adventures of saga heroes. I would argue that, in a general sense, all stories are meant to entertain the audience, but that Chrétien's intended purpose for all his works was to educate his audience of truths he considered worthy. He declares as much in the prologue to *Érec et Énide*, wherein he says, "a man does well to make good use of his learning according to whatever standing he has, for he who neglects his learning may easily keep silent something which would later give much pleasure."²⁴⁹ A common theme of his other works is to find balance between two essential forces in one's life, such as love of one's wife and duty to one's liege, though the focus of this essay is restricted to Parceval's tale. This moral would seem to fit the plot of *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)* as well. Parceval is at first ignorantly blissful and must enter the world of the court and find a balance between the demands of human society and the spiritual realm, in order to transcend from one to the other. Chrétien maintains that the guiding factor in such a journey is Nature, possibly another word for divine favor, and his noble lineage. The

²⁴⁹ Carroll and Kibler, trans., "Érec and Enide," 39.

translator, tasked with adapting this material to a Norse-Icelandic audience, did so faithfully and by his actions, the educational purpose remains. However, the emphasis changes which caused the religious didactics to be toned down severely have changed the moral.

The Norse Parceval is a man who must integrate these same elements within himself in order to achieve what is best in life: to defeat his enemies in honorable combat and live as a good husband, good Christian and capable lord. The progression of his character shows that education from an early age is invaluable in achieving one's goals. Perceval's education seems designed to allow him to move beyond the trappings of the material world on his path to spiritual understanding, illustrated by the fact that, with the knowledge he has gained through suffering and confession, he is now equipped to ask the questions properly when confronted once more with the Grail. Though it is difficult to be definitive with an unfinished manuscript, the fact was noted and embellished by those who wrote the Continuations. By contrast, the Norse Parceval's journey and his triumphs seem firmly rooted in the physical realm, in the manner of all practical Nordic heroes who define success as earning their own lands and leadership gained through courage, rational action and reputation.

This knowledge informs the second half of this work, in which we examine the romance and the translated saga for its depiction of guilt or shame in relation to religious failing. In doing so, we find that guilt is more private, often triggered by inner acknowledgements of wrongdoing which motivate the person to make changes to solve the problem. Shame is considered to be a "social emotion" in which judgment comes from an outside source (e.g. one's family or friends). As such, the impact of shame can be overwhelming and cause one to feel alienated from one's community, which we see is true in *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*. Even in the absence of shaming words or actions by the court, the fact that the people have witnessed the accusations of the Hideous Damsel is enough for Perceval to flee in disgrace and separate from society for five years before a chance meeting allows him to achieve a partial sense of peace. In Norse-Iceland, though, shame is conceived in another way, not as an emotion but as a circumstance which must be taken seriously to prevent loss of reputation or feud. Shame is something which happens to you, not something you feel. Because of this, it is something that can be countered with decisive action rather than a more indirect process of confession and forgiveness from God.

Modern research on the connection of shame and religion suggests that it is common for serious adherents to feel shame if they feel they have disappointed God or behaved improperly. It is not so much the seriousness of their actions but the feeling that they are cut off from God's love due to their failure that causes anguish. These feelings often lead the

person to commit suicide if he or she feels the relationship between them cannot be salvaged. From the text, we can infer that the concept of shame relating to religion was similar in medieval France, as Perceval behaves just this way upon revelation of his great sin, leaving the court behind and isolating himself from their (perceived) judgment and “forgetting God” for five years, after which he is able to, in his own perception, reconnect with the divine. Though the romance does not mention suicide, it is not unknown for the hero to attempt such in other works by this author, particularly Lancelot and Yvain.

As already stated, the relationship between shame and the individual in Norse-Icelandic was quite different as a concept. It was not so related to violation of God’s law, but in dishonorable action toward fellow man. The Norse culture had a much less entrenched Church, being a mix of pagan and Christian until at least the middle medieval period (and likely unofficially well beyond). Though Christianity was increasingly appealing as Norway and Iceland sought to restructure its society to include an aristocratic class like that of France and other European courts, the old ideals of the value of small communities, strong alliances, and the right to earn one’s place in society through merit still held sway on the culture. With this reorganization, the Church became increasingly appealing, not only because it had power and influence it could wield on behalf of a king such as Hákon, who wished to cement his claim to kingship, but because ideas of divine right to rule had already become ingrained in the aristocracies of Europe. To be the true king, one must have the King of Heaven in one’s corner. For the majority of society in Iceland, however, meaning those not vying for power at the end of the Commonwealth period, their adherence to Christian rituals was less rigid and performed for social and political reasons rather than in response to a large-scale moral or intellectual shift. This may also have been the case for France and other states of Europe, due to the long history of the Church’s presence in political matters stretching back to Antiquity. However, by the time the French romance was written, religious practice had become a deeply ingrained part of the cultural tradition and therefore, more based on feelings of connection to the past and the comfort of repeated rituals.

Though this research is brief and only compares the French romance *Le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval*) and the Norse translation, *Parcevals saga*, the topic could easily be expanded to include other translations of this story, or similar comparisons between Chrétien’s other works and their translations. Chrétien was a popular author and his works were translated and adapted into German and Welsh as well as Old Norse. It would be interesting to see what interpretations could be made of emotions within those cultures. Additionally, it would be useful to focus on emotions other than guilt and shame, to advance

psychological and sociological understanding of the medieval psyche. Another avenue of study opened by this work is a comprehensive evaluation of the state of decline in Arthur's Court, which is depicted in glowing terms in Chrétien's earlier works but troubled by the time of Perceval's arrival at Logres. By examining the five stories as if they were part of a deliberate and collective story arc, we may discover some deeper purpose to the author's seemingly pessimistic portrayal of Arthur's reign in *Le Conte du Graal* as it reaches its end. In trying to understand what statement Chrétien may have been making about society, chivalry and the apparent fall of the once and future king, we may enhance our understanding of Arthurian literature and contribute to the field of literary analysis as a whole.

With the evidence I have presented, it is possible to conclude that, according to the worldview presented in the characters and behaviors of the two Perceval stories, the cultures of France and Norse societies as depicted in the narratives show a different expectations for displays of emotion, societal structure and attitudes toward religion. Culturally, the noble class of France was entertained by stories with much more emotion-based and spiritual response to hardship while the Norse audience for the Perceval story appreciated practical wisdom and taking action to solve problems. In France, it is possible for Perceval to achieve greatness by simply having noble lineage, natural talent and a willing heart, while the characters surrounding the Norse Perceval expected hard work on the part of the young man to learn the necessary skills to form alliances, face enemies and win a good reputation. The Norse society and particularly Iceland was designed to be a community of interdependent family groups surviving via strong friendships and displays of wealth. In France, a deep-seated devotion to God at the highest levels of politics and society created an expectation that shows of emotion were the proper way to show one's admiration and love for one's leige, one's lady love, or God; conversely, shows of negative emotion revealed the truth of one's convictions and abhorrence of wrongdoing as the knight rode into battle to vanquish an enemy. This reasoning did not hold true in Norway and Iceland, though. There, actions were more desired than emotional displays, although courteous treatment would take you far. Unsurprisingly, it appears that it was acceptable for the Norse male to be more expressive in private, away from the eyes of those whose judgment could lead to insults and violence. While a Frenchman might be so overcome with emotion that he composes a beautiful piece of rhetoric, brimming with the eloquence of the ages, in the spirit of such luminaries as Aristotle and Gelasius, to express the fullness of his thoughts on fate, the Divine, and the nature of

man, a Norseman might simply say, “Hver er sinnar gæfu smiður” [“Each one makes his own luck”²⁵⁰].

²⁵⁰ Translation mine.

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