Kay Okay?

A comparative analysis of two key characters in Middle Welsh and Old Norse heroic, chivalric and historiographic literature

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with characters and episodes in the medieval Arthurian tradition that appear in both Middle Welsh and Old Norse narratives, with a particular focus on the roles and characterisation of Cai and Bedwyr in the Welsh, and Kæi and Boðver/Bedondr in Old Norse. Their divergent characterisations are analysed as indicators of the different cultural, social and political issues influencing their characterisation. Only discrete examples of these characters taken from a small selection of texts are being examined closely. A number of noteworthy consistencies and variations are identified. In particular, the thesis identifies a typology of characterisations: the hero, the administrator and the prankster. By comparing the two figures in their different linguistic and cultural contexts this analysis reveals the extent to which such Arthurian narratives can be considered as malleable and reflecting the social and political circumstances in which they are produced.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

Purpose

This thesis is concerned with a small set of shared characters and episodes in the medieval Arthurian tradition that appear across a range of narratives and in two different vernacular languages, Old Norse and Middle Welsh. The material being examined is both disconnected and yet related. The two traditions and their various narrative and poetic expressions are linguistically, culturally, geographically and temporally discontinuous, with no unambiguous immediate lines of transmission connecting the Welsh material with the Norse, through which related or similar attributes might be readily and pragmatically explained. However, this thesis does not attempt to analyse lines of transmission, or possible genetic relationships. Rather, I will be comparing texts within the social, political and cultural contexts of their production; for even though the material has been produced from different milieux, the traditions share important narrative contents and concerns. Moreover, even considering just one of the two traditions, occasions arise where the narrative treatment of a given character or set of behaviours diverges considerably within that one set of texts. For the purposes of this study, these inconsistencies are examined as potential sites for exploring the nature of these narratives in the contexts of their production and reception.

The specific focus of this thesis is on the roles and characterisation of two prominent characters across various versions of the Arthurian story world: Cai and Bedwyr, as they appear in the Welsh texts, and Kæi and Boðver (plus one instance of Bedondr) as they appear in Old Norse. Through this analysis I intend to expose differences in the social and cultural conditions influencing the way these characters
vary from one tradition to another, and from one language, to another. These characters are only being considered in discrete occurrences excised from their wider narrative arcs, and the coverage of the analysis will be comparatively narrow, with only a small selection of texts being examined closely. A comprehensive study is beyond the scope of this work, and I will focus in particular on the social and historical contexts, anticipating that such contextual analysis may shed light on the variation in treatment.

While both Cai and Bedwyr enjoyed comparatively high status positions in the material that is understood as representative of the earlier Welsh oral tradition, this is not the case for their treatment in much of the other medieval vernacular Arthurian material, including in the later Norse material. Moreover, the Middle Welsh chivalric material that appears to belong in a context of Anglo-Norman Wales likewise shows a diminution of Cai’s status in particular, and Bedwyr all but disappears from the Norse narrative, whereas Cai has evolved to become a figure, who, while remaining authoritative, is often characterised in anti-social terms.

The typical academic approach to Arthurian material has tended to take Arthur as the key and central figure to the narrative rather than focus on specific members of his court,¹ or to focus on the broader concerns and characteristics of heroic, chivalric or historiographic texts in a range of contexts, whether literary, historical, or in the context of the modern reception of Arthurian myth. One clear outlier in this field of particular relevance to this study is Linda Gowan’s 1988 work² that dealt specifically with Cai in a range of insular and continental texts. Her work, however, did not extend to Scandinavian texts. Outside of this, the literature on specific

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¹ Which stands to reason: Bromwich (1983, 44) notes the growing centrality of Arthur to a cycle of stories in poetry, triads and prose, at an early date.
² Gowans (1988).
named characters is less common, except where the specifics of textual analysis calls for a greater focus on any given character, such as can be found in the specific chapter treatments in compilations such as Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (2008) or Kalinke (2011), in which the various Arthurian texts are considered and hence the focus is on the contents and characters specific to those texts.

For the purpose of this study, the divergent characterisations of specific identifiable characters are analysed for indications of different cultural, social and political issues influencing (and thereby expressed in) their characteristics. Moreover, by comparing the two figures in their different linguistic and cultural contexts this analysis reveals the extent to which the nature of these narratives, and therefore, by implication, the nature of the broader European Arthurian narrative tradition, can be considered as malleable and reflecting diverse social and political circumstances.

Scope

The main Middle Welsh sources discussed in this thesis are the heroic works Pa gur (‘What man?’) and Culhwch ac Olwen (‘Culhwch and Olwen’), the historiographic Brut y Brenhinoedd (‘History of the Kings’), and the chivalric narratives Owain, Peredur and Gereint. This selection aims to capture the two distinct forms of these characters in the Middle Welsh material.

The Norse sources discussed in this thesis are the four translated chivalric riddarasögur Saga af Tristram og Ísodd, Ívens saga, Parcevals saga, Möttuls saga and the historiographic Breta sögr. As will become evident, the translated riddarasögur contrast quite sharply from some of the Welsh versions. While the Welsh material

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3 A number of other Middle Welsh works mention the two characters. These are described in Appendix 1.

4 Other relevant Norse works include Erex saga, Skikkjurímur and Hærra Ivan. These are described in Appendix 2.
contains Cai and Bedwyr in character types best summarised as ‘heroic’ and
‘chivalric’, the Norse material does not have the equivalent characters occupying a
heroic role. Instead the most common form in the Old Norse texts is the ‘chivalric’
version.

*Matière de Bretagne* in Norse narrative

Recent decades have seen a significant expansion in academic work
concerning Arthurian narratives and the translation, adoption and adaptation of the
*matière de Bretagne* into multiple text genres of medieval northern Germanic literary
traditions.\(^5\) The *matiè re de Bretagne* is found in a comparatively small number of
thirteenth/fourteenth-century Old Norse/Icelandic translated Arthurian romance
narratives (specifically Ívens saga, Ereks saga, Möttels saga, Saga af Tristram og Isodd,
Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar, Parcevals saga and Valvans þáttr\(^6\)), Strengleikar (the Old
Norwegian translation of the *Lais* of Marie de France) and the Old Swedish poetic
*Herra Ivan*. The *matiè re de Bretagne* can also be found in two early Norse translations
of Arthurian material derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum
Britannie*, both from the early part of the thirteenth century. These are the
*Prophetiae Merlini* (becoming, in Icelandic, *Merlinuússpá*) and the translation into Old
Icelandic of *Historia Regum Britannie* (known as *Breta sögur*). Both of these are
found in the *Hauksbók* manuscript AM 544 4to. They both also appear in
AM 573 4to. *Breta sögur* appear to comprise the oldest translation of Arthurian
material into Norse, dating from the early thirteenth century. As the AM 573 4to
version has not yet been edited to date, in addition to the *Hauksbók* version, I will

\(^5\) In particular Glauser (1983) and (2005), Kalinke (1981) and (2011). Other recent work considering
the implications of translation and transmission of French literature into Norse include Síf

\(^6\) *Elís saga*, an adaptation of the Old French *chanson de geste*, *Elie de Saint Gille*, is also understood to
be one of the romances translated into Old Norse under the sponsorship of Hákon.
only consider relevant passages as edited by Jón Sigurðsson (1849), some of which are cited and discussed by Gropper (2015).

Much recent scholarship on translated *riddarasögur* has been concerned with the preparation of critical editions,\(^7\) or it has focussed on the influence of, and interactions with, medieval French narrative, in particular looking at questions relating to the direct transmission of the Old French Arthurian and romance works of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France. Much attention has been paid to the explicit manuscript evidence for the motivations behind these translations, in the context of these representing a literary expression of a newly developing thirteenth-century Scandinavian courtly cultural ideal under King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217-1263) that placed value on the courtly behaviours exemplified in the continental model in the works of Chrétien and Marie de France in Old French. The Middle High German works of such authors as Gottfried von Strassburg and Hartmann von Aue also appear to fall within this category of exported French aristocratic cultural ideals.\(^8\) Jürg Glauser notes the scholarly view that “the *riddarasögur* are seen in the context of the civilising and feudalising efforts energetically undertaken by King Hákon during his reign; the general view is that transmission of the new chivalric ideology, as deliberately targeted by Hákon, could be achieved especially effectively through the medium of literature.”\(^9\) Yet Glauser also points out that the dating and ascription of purpose to Hákon are typically based on the evidence in later post-Reformation manuscripts, and as a result the act of associating these translations with an explicit Norwegian courtly intent carries with it some degree of

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\(^7\) Such as Blaisdell (1965), Blaisdell (1979), Cook and Tveitane (1979), Kalinke (1987).

\(^8\) Such as discussed by Kalinke (2012).

\(^9\) Glauser (2005, 375).
uncertainty. For the purposes of this thesis, I am accepting the widely received notion that the translations were undertaken within the social and cultural conditions that obtained in Hákon IV’s Norway, notwithstanding possible uncertainties attendant in the manuscript evidence as noted by Glauser.

Also recently undertaken are a number of literary-critical and new philological approaches to the riddarasögur, aiming to articulate socially motivated translation as cultural exchange, through which cultural transformations occur, implicating notions of linguistic and community identity and the representation of social codes and ideology in the process of transformation into the new literary forms. Recent work in this area includes Stefka Eriksen (2014) which considers manuscript culture and locates the translation and transmission of Elíss saga in different European cultural and political contexts, and Sif Rikhardsdottir (2012), whose close comparison of French courtly works transmitted into Norse draws on a range of critical approaches to understanding contextual processes impacting the translations and textual transformation.

Beyond the comparatively small corpus of translated continental chivalric romances in the northern Germanic languages, there existed also a later indigenous tradition which incorporated chivalric elements and characteristics. Barnes (2014) argues that the indigenous riddarasögur built on learned European medieval cosmological, historiographic, ethical and encyclopedic thought, and these works

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10 Kalinke notes the likelihood of Hákon’s involvement, accepting the later manuscript evidence as reflecting an earlier manuscript acknowledgement of Hákon’s involvement. She also notes that the evidence is only explicit for Hákon’s involvement in the translation of Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar, Ívens saga, Möttels saga and Strengleikar. There is no such explicit reference to Hákon’s involvement for Erex saga and Parcevals saga (Kalinke, 2011, 11).

11 Theoretical approaches to medieval translation as transformation include Copeland (1991), Campbell and Mills (2012) and Eriksen (2013).
therefore represent some form of continuity rather than generic separation from continental learning.\textsuperscript{12}

**Social Context**

The political and social contexts of the material being considered here are not easily understood as a linear process. The Welsh material is the product of widely varied cultural contexts which can in part be attributed to the comparatively wide time frame in which the Welsh texts are understood to have arisen. The earliest Welsh texts considered here are *Pa gu* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The former appears in a manuscript dated to approximately 1200, while the latter is only extant in thirteenth and fourteenth-century manuscripts,\textsuperscript{13} but both are considered to date from an earlier period, possibly around 1100.\textsuperscript{14} In these texts Cai and Bedwyr are heroes living with Arthur “outside the network of lords and paternal kindred which formed the basis of medieval Welsh society” (Padel, 2013, 18). Linda Gowans (1988, 24) considers this early Cai to derive from the oral culture of pre-Saxon and pre-Anglo Norman Wales, as “a hero from an earlier world, who is already feeling rather awkward and a little out of place at Arthur’s court on the threshold of the Age of Chivalry.” This ‘medieval Welsh society’ is the Angevin administration of powerful Norman and Breton aristocrats installed across much of England and Wales following the Norman Conquest and continuing into the fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{12} Though Barnes concentrated on the indigenous *riddarasögur*, given that the development of French courtly literature was influenced by scholastic learning through eleventh and twelfth centuries – see Jaeger (1994, 292–324), Kay (2001, 3–25). The case can be made that the translated material is also a descendent of this learned milieu.

\textsuperscript{13} *Pa gu* exists only in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, dated to around 1250, whereas *Culhwch ac Oluen* exists in both the *Red Book of Hergest* and the *White Book of Rhydderch*, both of which are mid-fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{14} Padel (2013, 11). Sims-Williams (2008, 39) notes the similarities of narrative content in *Culhwch ac Oluen* and *Pa gu* with the Latin *Vita Sancti Cadogi* which is believed to have been composed around 1100. Though in Latin, the Arthurian context of *Vita Sancti Cadogi* is also discussed in this thesis.
That the Welsh manuscript evidence preserves this material is itself a matter of note, for *Culhwch ac Olwen* reflects an earlier heroic sense of social values, and yet it appears in the same manuscript compilations as the other Mabinogion narratives that exhibit influence from continental chivalric romance. For example, the three ‘romances’ *Peredur*, *Gereint* and *Owain* appear alongside *Culhwch ac Olwen* in both *The White Book of Rhydderch* and *The Red Book of Hergest*. These three correspond, respectively, with Chrétien’s *Perceval*, *Erec et Enide* and *Yvain*. Davies (2007, xi) notes that these three ‘romances’ indeed exhibit broad characteristics of chivalric order, and “may very well be loose retellings of Chrétien’s poems”. Moreover, Roger Middleton\(^{15}\) notes the presence of French loanwords in *Gereint*, and states that “the society depicted owes much to twelfth-century developments in European culture, and this too is treated as normal for the time, not some exotic intrusion.”

These ‘later’ texts, with an interest in, and influence from, the chivalric mode of narrative storytelling, reflect a social interest in the behaviours and virtues of the knightly class: concerns that are far more embedded in the later medieval Welsh society under Angevin influence. In comparison, the ‘earlier’ texts are considered to derive from a ‘heroic’ mode of storytelling, with concerns more akin to the pre-chivalric society. The fact that the heroic and chivalric material survive alongside each other may indicate a literary culture interested in a variety of modes of narrative, and perhaps an interest in encyclopedic compilations of the sort similar to the Norse *Hauksbók*. It is noteworthy that the manuscripts containing the Mabinogion texts also contain a range of historical, geographic, medical and wisdom texts, alongside romances.

In comparison, the context within which the Icelandic material came into existence is considerably different. The Arthurian narratives being considered in this

\(^{15}\) Middleton (2008, 149).
thesis were sponsored (and therefore motivated) translations derived from Chrétien’s works. This happened within a social and political setting wherein the dominant aristocratic institutions in Norway were consolidating an ideal already being enjoyed by continental aristocracy: the establishment of a hierarchy of warrior aristocracies through whom a ruling elite was able to develop an administrative structure which served to the ruler’s military, fiscal and territorial strength. The social and political situations in Norway were appreciably different from the continent, and as a consequence the French systems of governance did not equate directly with the needs of the Norwegian ruler and aristocracy. The French had a developed system of administration based around a castle-building hierarchy of landed cavalry/warrior aristocrats drawing resources from the obligations of tenants and lesser landowners as revenue that ultimately benefitted the royal house and its political and military interests. In comparison, the Norwegian political system developed later than the French and had no such extensive dispersed landowning aristocracy. In addition, the revenue source for the crown in Norway was largely drawn from the coastal and tributary lands in the west, with the naval levy or leiðang being the most militarily important arrangement in place. The professional armed forces for the crown of Norway were primarily on foot and in the fleet. This thesis will demonstrate how these social and political circumstances influenced the characters and social structures represented in the different narrative traditions.

Methodology

While translations, analogues and parallels have been identified and widely discussed in relation to many vernacular literatures, a detailed comparative analysis

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16 For a thorough overview see, for example, Thomas Lindkvist (2003).
17 See, for example Power (2003) in respect of Angevin Normandy, and Everard (2000) for the situation in Brittany under Henry II.
18 See, for example, Helle (2003, 349).
of Old Norse material with the Middle Welsh has not hitherto been undertaken. Reasons for this may include the simple fact that finding a possible genetic relationship between the Welsh material and the later Icelandic material is fraught, as there are many possible avenues for transmission, and little evidence for any significant political or mercantile contact between Wales and Scandinavia. Any attempt to seek possible lines of transmission would be at best perilous, due to the need to take account of the range of possible intermediate connections.

Complications in this process include the challenge of disentangling the array of possible interactions and directions of influence between Breton, French, Welsh, Middle English and Middle High German with the Norse. In addition, it is clear that the Old Norse/Icelandic material stands at a significant distance from the Welsh material given the comparatively late manuscript testament of much of the Scandinavian material. Given this, and the likelihood that any transmission or influence will be so attenuated due to the effects of time and different intervening cultural and political practices and values, a quest for transmission is fraught.

On the other hand, a comparison of Old Norse and Welsh texts is far from limited to mapping out possible genetic relationships between different material. Each narrative is the product of a given set of social and political circumstances, and the nature of the narrative, and variations between narratives and characters therein can be viewed in the light of the array of contextual political, administrative and social

19 Examples exist of descriptive comparisons, such as can be found in the introduction to R. L. Thompson’s 1968 edition of Owein or Chwedyl iarles Hfynnaun, in which he compares (xxix - lvi) the broad parallel and variant contents of the Middle English, Norse, Swedish and French versions with the Welsh Owein.

20 Kalinke (2012, 174) notes that the manuscripts for Ívens saga and Erex saga, respectively, date from the fifteenth century and about 1650, and therefore need to be problematised in terms of assumptions about being adequate reflections of thirteenth century Norwegian translations. Kjaer (1992, 131) argues that the surviving manuscripts for both Erex saga and Ívens saga “contain recastings made in Iceland at a later date, and closer to the Reformation, than Tristrams saga ... [and] that there no longer exist Norwegian version of these texts.”
arrangements within which the manuscripts and their narratives came into existence. Restricting the analysis of comparability to identifiable connections between manuscript evidence overlooks the relevance of other fields of study concerned with interactions across medieval Europe, and which may be able to shed light on the circumstances of manuscript production, and the social anxieties that may be reflected in these narratives. A range of different approaches is possible for a comparative method that considers the translation and transformation of medieval narrative across linguistic and geographic boundaries. These include an analysis of the social and political implications of translations in the context of royal and imperial authority, a consideration of the implications for behavioural values systems of the transformation of the modes of a narrative from heroic to romance, the implications of social circumstances for understanding narratological changes in the transformation of texts and the complexities of narrative transformation and the variability of medieval textuality in multiple translated testaments that relate ostensibly to the same narrative.\footnote{Sif Rikhardsdottir (2012) discusses these in respect of a variety of Old Norse translations.} Other relevant contexts that can be brought to bear on the transformation of texts across language boundaries include the comparative influences of philosophical teachings and scholasticism\footnote{As Barnes (2014) has done for indigenous riddarsögur. No such analysis of translated riddarasögur has been undertaken to date.} and comparative approaches to the status of vernacular languages against foreign or classical languages.\footnote{Eriksen (2014) discusses these contexts of textual transmission/translation.}

This thesis will focus on comparing the social and political circumstances within which the these narratives were produced. The various textual treatments of the characters being analysed can be interpreted as reflecting social structures,
issues, anxieties and tensions present in the context of the narrative composition and manuscript production.
Chapter 2 The Welsh Sources

Introduction

Cai and Bedwyr are found in a range of literary and historiographic Welsh texts, although while the two categories may be useful, the dividing line is not necessarily perfect: the historiographic material being considered in this thesis (both the Middle Welsh Brut y Brenhinoedd and the Old Norse Breta sögur) may also be viewed as literary. On the other hand, the Welsh texts being discussed in this chapter, that are nominally classified as ‘literary’ themselves diverge both in form and content, and I differentiate here into two groups: the ‘heroic’ and the ‘chivalric’.

I place Pagur and Culhwch ac Olwen in the heroic category, for in these two texts both subject matter and form differ markedly from the chivalric texts. They both call up grand mythic deeds of ancient heroes and they show an implied shared cultural memory on the part of the audience, in which there often appear oblique references to other narratives involving the named characters, for which audience foreknowledge can be assumed, so that entirety of the narrative is not necessarily within the text we have. Also, these texts tend not to conform readily to modern expectations of character development, narrative structure and resolution. Both Pagur and Culhwch ac Olwen share signs of having origins in an oral culture. In the ‘chivalric’ category I discuss the three Welsh ‘romances’ Owain, Gereint and Peredur, each of which is recognised as having been composed under the influence of French chivalric romance, whether or not there is a direct association with the respective parallel known French romances by Chrétien de Troyes, Yvain, Erec and

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24 I have adopted these abbreviated forms. The tales are known variously as Owain or Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnaun (Owein, or The Tale of the Lord of the Fountain) which is also known as The Lady of the Fountain, Ystorya Gereint Uab Erbin (The Story of Gereint son of Erbin), and Historia Peredur uab Efrauc (The Story of Peredur son of Efroig).
These tend to conform more closely to a modern narrative structure that favours a focus on a primary character who reveals some degree of internal psychology, and who may be subject to human weaknesses and failings, that must be overcome to achieve narrative closure, often through linear or sequential plot progress. The chivalric material is also clearly set within a discourse of courtly values and behaviours, although as Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan argues, in the Welsh redactions the presence and nature of the chivalric mode is modulated into a native Welsh form. The form of narrative progress and closure, and the more psychologically complete protagonist or descriptions of chivalric offices and values in the Arthurian court are generally not found in the heroic material.

I place *Brut y Brenhinoedd*, the Welsh version of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in the category of ‘Historiography.’ It is neither heroic in form nor in content, nor does it take the form of a chivalric romance, although it does provide an attenuated version of the chivalric courtly ideal, expressed in terms of chivalric administrative ideology. *Brut* engages in the discourse of ‘real-world’ politics of identifiable locations in past and contemporary Europe, and it appears to create an imagined historical verisimilitude in favour of the political interests of its production through asserting as historical certain events and rulers. Consistent with the Latin source material, *Brut* has the Arthurian court in a historiographic frame.

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25 Fulton (2014, 166) notes the close affinities of the French and Welsh tales, but that few scholars would argue for direct influence from Chrétien’s work.
26 Cited in Fulton (2014, 166, n. 14), original unable to be sourced.
27 I do not consider the *Vita Sancti Cadogi* in this thesis, as it is not in Welsh. However, it does offer a useful point of comparison for it is also historiographic, incorporating mythic Arthurian action within the ambit of the asserted real-world actions of a Saint. It also crosses other generic categories, combining historiography with more heroic (rather than chivalric) material.
The Heroic Tradition

The section describes the appearance and characteristics of Cai and Bedwyr as they are presented in two heroic texts, namely *Pa gur* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*. I also include in this section a brief mention of other heroic texts which are not being examined closely in this thesis. Both Cai and Bedwyr are prominent in the Welsh Arthurian tradition, although Cai has generally held the more prominent role of the two, and in the early Welsh tradition, they were both closely connected with each other, and enjoyed a status close to that of Arthur. It is understood that their status reflected characteristics associated with their heroic roles in earlier oral culture. Rachel Bromwich noted that “the bards whose work falls within the period before 1200 prove by their allusions that they were familiar with ... the Arthurian story” and that in their work at this early stage “Cai appears together with Bedwyr ... as Arthur’s companions in the earliest Welsh sources.” A. O. H. Jarman suggested that the Arthur of this ‘earlier’ material “is not the figure we are familiar with in early annals and medieval chronicles, or in the romances. He is rather a hero of folklore, the leader of a band of strange and wonderful characters from ancient Welsh and Celtic tradition.” Cai and Bedwyr are high among the prominent heroes in this mythic band, and it is evident that they both have the skills or attributes of a mythical hero.

Heroic material often incorporates extensive lists referencing noteworthy heroic figures, their attributes, the nature of their fame and the manner of their deaths. There is such a list in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and the ostensible *raison d’être* at the opening of *Pa gur* is to provide Arthur the opportunity to list his heroes.

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28 Sims-Williams (2008) discusses the difficulty with the pre-1150 dating as the earliest possible for manuscript evidence, and yet there is much contextual and intertextual evidence to support earlier dates for some of the heroic material as pre 1100.
Further, Jarman argues that in *Pa gur* “we have the earliest known assembling of Arthur’s ‘knights’ ... [in which] ... (t)heir milieu and associations and the atmosphere they bring with them are those of the earliest extant Arthurian tale, Culhwch and Olwen[sic], and most of the names in the poem occur in the tale.”31 Patrick Sims-Williams considers *Pa gur* as “the most substantial Arthurian poem” in the earliest extant volume containing Welsh Arthurian poems, and identifies the content it shares with *Culhwch ac Olwen*, for in that tale there are elements in common with *Pa gur*, and in both works Cai and Bedwyr play a noteworthy role in which their characterisations are mutually consistent.32 However, their respective manuscript testaments are in some ways curiously at odds, for while the sole testament to *Pa gur* appears in the manuscript *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (The Black Book of Carmarthen, see next section) containing other works in the heroic mode, such as *Englynion y Beddau*33 (‘Stanzas of the Graves’) there are two manuscript versions of *Culhwch ac Olwen* and both of these exist within encyclopedic compilations dating from the late fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries, which include a range of other types of material, such as the chivalric Mabinogion narratives.34

A further important source for Welsh material dealing with Cai and Bedwyr is *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*.35 I do not include consideration of this material in this thesis, as it is largely supportive of and consistent with the heroic material I do discuss. Some comment and details of the Welsh heroic material not incorporated in the body of the thesis is included at Appendix 1.

31 A. O. H. Jarman (107-8).
33 There are two heroic poems of relevance to this thesis not included in this discussion. *Englynion y Beddau* ‘Stanzas of the Grave’ (Jones, 1967) contains a single reference to Bedwyr, and *Ymddiddan Melwas a Gwenhwyfar* involves Cai but not Bedwyr. See Appendix 1.
34 Complete Mabinogion compilations occur in the two manuscripts known as *The Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford Jesus College 111) and *The White Book of Rhydderch Part 2* (NLW MS. Peniarth 4).
35 (Bromwich 1961)
Pa gur

*Pa Gur* only exists in one manuscript: NLW Peniarth 1 ff. 47v - 48v, (the Black Book of Carmarthen or *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*), generally accepted as dating from around 1200. Rachel Bromwich noted that the “the early Arthurian poem *Pa gur yw y porthaur* ['What man is the gatekeeper’] is concerned mainly with Cei’s exploits and appears to give him chief precedence among Arthur’s warriors.” The poem opens in the form of a gatekeeper’s challenge, in which Arthur, seeking entry, is challenged by the gatekeeper Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr (‘Mighty Grasp’). Arthur is called upon to declare who the members of his company are before he will be allowed admittance, but as the declaration of the names of his band proceeds the poem evolves into a panegyric to the heroic might of Cai, and the honour of Bedwyr:

Pa gur yw y porthaur. Gleuliud gauaeluaur.
Pa gur ae gouin. Arthur. a chei guin.
Pa imda genhid. Guir gorev im bid.

NLW MS Peniarth 1, 47v, 1-4 (my transcription)

[What man is the gate-keeper? *Glewlyd Mighty-Grasp*

*What man asks it?* Arthur and fair Cai.

*What (company) goes with you?* The best men in the world.]

Bromwich (1983, 45)

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36 Jarman (1983, 99). Bromwich (1983, 45) notes that the poem itself may be dated to before 1100, in relation to which dating the *Vita Sancti Cadogi* may offer some degree of corroboration, a point also made by Sims-Williams (2008, 39). Roberts (2008, 83) dates *Vita Sancti Cadogi* to c. 1090.

37 Bromwich (1961, 304).

38 The role of Glewlywd is problematic, for while he is here named as the *porthaur* (gatekeeper) in which role he challenges Arthur, he also refers to the *ty* (house, broadly) as his own. He appears as Arthur’s gatekeeper in *Calwech ac Oluen* (Davies, 2007, 182) and in two of the three later ‘romances’: in *Owein* (Davies, 2007, 117) and in *Geraint* (Davies, 2007, 139).
However, Cai’s heroic nature may include a darker side. The poem takes on an elegiac tone of lament for lost times of greatness and the loss of Arthur’s heroes, and Sims-Williams suggests that there may be something of the hand of Cai in this loss; a possible underlying complexity to Cai’s reputation, that he may have (in a previous narrative time), turned against his own side:

Kei ae heiriolei. trae lla thei pop tri.
Pan colled kelli. caffad cuelli.
aseiro lei. Kei hid trae kymynhei.

NLW MS Peniarth 1, 48r, 1-3 (my transcription)

[Cai entreated them as he hewed them down by threes.
When Celli was lost men endured savagery.
Cai mocked them as he cut them down]

Bromwich (1983, 45)

Sims-Williams interprets this as a possible references to Cai turning against his own, and notes a possible parallel with the “dark hint in Culhwch that Cai did indeed turn against Arthur in his hour of need, when his men were being slain,” referring to the passage in Culhwch ac Olwen in which Cai is offended by what appears to be a spiteful englyn from Arthur, which causes him to sulk. As a consequence, in Culhwch ac Olwen “the warriors of this island could hardly make peace between Cai and Arthur,” and Cai thereafter takes no further part in the events in the tale.

40 Sims-Williams cites lines 981–984 of Culhwch ac Olwen.
41 See Davies (2007, 207). The Middle Welsh term sorres (CO, 35) Davies translates as ‘sulks.’ However, the word might also carry a sense of Cai being offended, shamed, and angered. If the sense is therefore extended to the other possible meanings, it may be an indication that there is a more complex subtext to Cai’s actions.
Bedwyr appears in *Pa gur* in the next passage, in which he appears in a heroic light, with deeds to match:

Id cvitin. pop cant. Rac baduir bedrydant.
Ar traethev trywruid. In amvin a garv luid.
Oet guychir y annuyd. O dety w ac yscuid.

NLW MS Peniarth 1, 48r, 8-12 (my transcription)

[They fell by the hundred, by the hundred they fell before Bedwyr, Perfect of Sinew; on the banks of Tryfrwyd fighting with ‘Rough Grey’, furious was his nature, with shield and sword.]

Bromwich (1983, 45)

It is certainly Bedwyr *bedrydant* (perfect) in this instance who enjoys the warrior hero status, moreover enjoying an epitaph denoting some form of perfection.

The remaining lines of the poem continue with a sustained focus on the deeds of Cai.

Oet guaget bragad Vrth. kei ig kad.
Oet cletyw ighad ...
Nau cant guarandau.
chuechant y eirthau. A talei y ortinav...
Oet gur hir in ewnis.
Oet trum y dial. Oet tost y cynial.
Pan yuei o wual Y uie urth peduar.
Yg kad pandelhei. Vrth cant idlathei.
Ny bei duv ae digonhei. Oet diheit aghev kei.

NLW MS Peniarth 1, 48r, 12 - 48v, 9 (my transcription)

[A host was futile compared with Cai in battle; he was a sword in battle ... Nine hundred to listen, six hundred to scatter, his onslaught would be worth ... the ‘long man’ was hostile;]
heavy was his vengeance, fierce was his anger.
When he drank from a buffalo horn he drank for four,
when he came into a battle he slew for a hundred.
Unless it was God who caused it, Cai’s death was impossible.]

Bromwich (1983, 45-6)

Cai is the primary interest of this poem and warrior-hero par excellence.
Bedwyr, referred to only twice, is of secondary interest, and yet he is nevertheless embedded within the same heroic warrior ethic that suffuses this tradition, and his description as ‘perfect of sinew’ sets him as a high status warriors, where it would seem only the best are likely to remain unscarred. In the course of Pa gur the warrior ethic appears highly developed, through oblique references to past deeds and important other figures, both adversaries and allies. This is in fact the nature of the heroic mode, from which the characterisation is as much implied and contextual, drawing on shared knowledge, as much as it draws on explicit narrative contained within the actual text. Therefore, the qualities of Cai and Bedwyr, as far as they are referenced in Pa gur, are at the same time derived from other related texts, and the fact that their qualities are broadly in accord with characterisations in the other heroic texts, such as are described in Culhuch ac Olwen (discussed below) speaks to the systemic nature of the heroic tradition.

**Culhuch ac Olwen**

*Culhuch ac Olwen* appears in two manuscripts, both of which are encyclopedic in nature incorporating a variety of material. These are *NLW MS. Peniarth 4 (The White Book of Rhydderch Part 2)*, dating from approximately 1400, and *Oxford Jesus College MS. 111 (The Red Book of Hergest)* of a similar age, dating from

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after 1382.\textsuperscript{43} Brynley F. Roberts describes this tale as “the longest and the earliest of the surviving native prose tales given written form in medieval Welsh ... generally assumed to derive from traditional oral narrative recited by professional story-tellers to audiences in courts, both lay and ecclesiastic, and aristocratic houses.”\textsuperscript{44} Despite the comparative lateness of both these manuscripts, Roberts argues the final written version of the tale belongs to around 1100, based on linguistic and syntactic comparisons with other early Welsh poetic forms.

Cai plays a major role in \textit{Culhwch ac Olwen}, and once again Bedwyr plays a secondary role. Cai is first introduced in a passage that resonates with \textit{Pa gur}, in which the young Culhwch arrives at the gate of Arthur’s court, and is challenged by Arthur’s gatekeeper, sharing the same name as the gatekeeper in \textit{Pa gur}, Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr. The gatekeeper seeks Arthur’s advice as to whether he should be admitted, and while Arthur wants to allow admission, considering it shameful to not make him welcome, it is Cai who takes the contrary view, pointing out that to do so would break the laws of the court.\textsuperscript{45} While Roberts\textsuperscript{46} describes Cai as “sullen” for advising against the admission of Culhwch, Cai’s own words may suggest otherwise. Cai declares his position with an oath ‘on the hand of his friend’ thus seeming to invoke a some kind of traditional heroic warrior code that would seem to be embodied in the laws\textsuperscript{47} of the court. Similarly, Bromwich considers this behaviour as

\textsuperscript{43} Transcription at \url{http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/en/ms-home.php?ms=Jesus111}, images at \url{http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=jesus&manuscript=ms111}.
\textsuperscript{44} Roberts (2008, 73).
\textsuperscript{45} In a comparable episode in the Latin \textit{Vita Sancti Cadogi}, from around 1100, an episode occurs in which Cai plays a responsible law-governed role as a brake on Arthur’s own selfish desires that would have been dishonourable had he proceeded.
\textsuperscript{46} Roberts (2008, 74).
\textsuperscript{47} The Middle Welsh \textit{kyfreithu} (ModW \textit{cyfreithio}) perhaps may also be understood as the sense of rule and practice rather than simply abstracted law.
“less heroic” and “churlish.” At his next appearance Cai he is described in terms of his array of ‘magical’ properties:

...oer uyth uyd y galon, ac ny byd gwres yn y dwylaw ... pan dycco beich, na mawr na bychan uo, ny welit uyth na rac vyneb na thra’e geuyn ... ny feit neb dwuyr a than yn gystal ac ef ... ny byd gwasanaythur na swydvyr mal ef.

CO , ll. 266-273, 10

[... his heart will always be cold, and there will be no warmth in his hands ... when he carries a load, be it large or small, it will never be visible, neither in front of him nor behind him ... no-one will withstand water or fire as well as he ... there will be no servant or officer like him.]

Davies (2007, 186)

Cai’s pre-eminence is also evident when Culhwch invokes his name first in an extensive list of heroes, as highly symbolic declaration that places him in the highest position of honour. When next we meet Cai he is chiding Culhwch for insulting Arthur, and yet Cai takes personal responsibility for Culhwch’s quest, binding himself to Culhwch to never part until the lady (the object of his quest) is proven either not to exist, or until they find her. Cai is here described in terms of his extraordinary powers, which then become thereby embedded in the narrative, for these powers are called into play in the progress of achieving Culhwch’s quest for Olwen. The progress of the narrative showcases Cai’s authority, powers and magical abilities and his final appearance in Culhwch ac Olwen is at his apparent falling out with Arthur.

Bedwyr’s role and characterisation in Culhwch ac Olwen is clearly secondary to Cai, but he only comes a close second in formal terms. He is first mentioned at the

49 Culhwch ac Olwen citations in Middle Welsh are taken from Bromwich and Evans (2012), abbreviated throughout as CO, and I use both line and page numbers.
50 These powers are described in Middle Welsh as budugawl (ModW buddigiol) with possible meanings associated with ‘powerful’, ‘clever’, ‘skilled’, so personal attributes rather than externally derived powers.
commencement of Culhwch’s invocation of the names of Arthur’s warriors: where Cai is invoked first of the many, Bedwyr appears second in the list of heroes.\textsuperscript{51} His prominence is confirmed when Cai declares his support for Culhwch in his quest. Arthur calls on his warriors to support Cai and the first he calls upon is Bedwyr. At this point, following the description of Cai’s powers, Bedwyr, while second in order of being called, is described as the third most handsome man in Britain, yet the fastest to draw blood at battle, and possessing a particular skill with his spear, all of which is described under the caveat that he was \textit{unllofyawc} [one-handed].\textsuperscript{52} In heroic-symbolic terms this one-handedness is important for Cai, for twice he makes an oath on the hand of his friend, an oath that Davies notes is restricted to Cai, due to the closeness of the two.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, when called upon by Arthur to support Cai, the narrator states that Bedwyr “never feared the quest upon which Cai went.”\textsuperscript{54} Bedwyr next appears performing a feat with a spear, as foreshadowed by the former mention of his skills, and following that (in a gate-keeper challenge at the fort of Wrnach Gawr, parallel to the opening scene), Cai gains entry for his sword furbishing skills, while Bedwyr is next to be admitted, once more ostensibly on the basis of his spear skills, although in this instance he never uses this skill, and is only accompanying Cai in his killing of the giant Wrnach Gawr. Following this Bedwyr also accompanies Cai in finding the imprisoned Mabon son of Modron, and he accompanies him again but plays no material part in Cai’s vanquishing of Dyllus Farfog, and the plucking of that giant’s beard. This is Cai’s last feat, for following this event he falls out with Arthur, but Bedwyr continues in Arthur’s retinue for two

\textsuperscript{51} Davies (2007, 184), \textit{CO} l. 175, 7.

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{CO} l. 396, p. 14. Bedwyr’s one-handedness is curious, given he is described ‘perfect of sinew’ in \textit{Pagur}, perhaps an oblique reference to another narrative concerning Bedwyr’s loss of a hand.

\textsuperscript{53} Davies (2007, 182, 206, and endnote on 261); \textit{CO} l. 134, p. 7 ‘\textit{Myn llaw vyng kyueillt...}’ and l. 396, p. 14 ‘\textit{Myn llaw vyng kyueillt...}’

\textsuperscript{54} Davies (2007, 189).
further appearances, although neither involves his spear skills. The first is his taking hold of the disputed cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel while the last reference is to Bedwyr holding Arthur’s dog Cafall.

**Other Heroic Material**

Four other texts will be noted briefly here, two heroic poems, one later literary narrative and the Welsh Triads, although none of these is examined closely. They all provide support for the case being made that both Cai and Bedwyr enjoy high levels of honour in heroic Welsh poetry. The two poems are *Englynion y Beddau* ‘Stanzas of the Grave’ and *Ymddiddan Melwas a Gwenhwyfar* ‘The Conversation of Melwas and Gwenhwyfar.’ The first is a metrical listing of the graves, deeds and manners of death of British heroes, in which Bedwyr appears, but not Cai. The second is two fragments of a poem which appears to deal with Cai defending Gwenhwyfar’s honour, and possibly rescuing her from abduction. This is considered an earlier version of the abduction tale found in Lancelot/charette, a version in which Cai is the hero. Space precludes a close consideration of these poems here, and as they provide similar characterisations of Cai and Bedwyr found in the other texts being discussed, neither is critical for this analysis.

*Trioedd Ynys Prydain* (‘Triads of the Island of Britain’) are a catalogue of characters and events available for the oral Welsh bardic story-telling tradition. Rachel Bromwich is of the view that the “original nucleus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* ... consisted in an index of ... orally-produced narrative, formed for the benefit of those whose professional duty it was to preserve and hand on the stories which embodied the oldest traditions of the Britons about themselves.”

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56 Davies (2007, 210).
58 Bromwich (1969, lxv).
are strong indications of the importance of both Cai and Bedwyr in oral bardic narrative tradition.

One final piece of work needs to be noted here in passing, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (The Dream of Ronabwy), which is an uneasy generic fit. Its form and content tend to be closer to traditional heroic narrative, but it is likely a text that had a literate genesis rather than oral.\(^59\) Nevertheless, it sustains the importance of Cai’s heroic role in respect of Arthur’s warrior court. Further details regarding these four texts can be found in Appendix 1.

**Chivalric Narratives**

In addition to *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, only three other tales within the *Mabinogion* include Cai and Bedwyr and Bedwyr is at best marginal in all three, only rating passing mention in *Gereint*.\(^60\) The three are, *Owain, Gereint* and *Peredur*, commonly referred to as the three Welsh ‘romances’ and recognised as derived from, or influenced in their development by, the French romances of Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain, Erec* and *Parceval*, respectively. All three appear in both versions of the *Mabinogion*, that is, in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century manuscripts *NLW MS. Peniarth 4 (The White Book of Rhydderch Part 2)* and *Oxford Jesus College MS. 111 (The Red Book of Hergest)*. Rather than being in the heroic mode of the material discussed above, these texts have more in common with the narrative form that found expression in the works of Chrétien,\(^61\) although the extent of this influence is not entirely clear, and it is widely accepted that while showing


\(^60\) *Mabinogion* texts that include Cai and/or Bedwyr are *Peredur, Owain, Gereint, Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*. Those that don’t are the first four branches (*Pwyll, Manawydan, Pryderi* and *Math*), *The Dream of Maxen Wledig* and *Lluydd ac Llefelys*.

\(^61\) As noted, for example, by Fulton (2014, 166).
French influence, the tales are still firmly embedded in native Welsh culture.\(^{62}\) Rachel Bromwich\(^{63}\) argues that the French romances, such as *Ywain, Erec* and *Perceval* known through the work of Chrétien, for example, had their antecedents in native Welsh tales, and that Anglo-Norman French influences emerge in the written form of the tales that subsequently survive in the *Mabinogion*. These three ‘romances’ paint a considerably different picture of Cai and Bedwyr when compared with the earlier heroic and mythical material. In this thesis I only consider in detail the appearance of Cai in *Owain* and *Peredur*. Both Cai and Bedwyr appear in *Gereint* but that appearance is only minimal, and will only be noted briefly below.

**Owain**

Cai plays a key role in the opening scene of *Owain*. The initial episode is framed in the courtly context with Arthur inviting story-telling, food and drink while he sleeps. Cai clearly has a hospitality role, as he is charged with getting the food and drink, which Davies footnotes as implying “that Cai holds the high-ranking officer of steward.”\(^{64}\) Unlike the character who has often been blamed for being sullen or contrary, all he expresses at the outset is his desire to hear the story he was promised rather than going to the kitchen and cellar, in itself a statement that is not particularly disruptive. Gwenhwyfar is absent from the opening conversation that leads to the telling of the tale by Cynon,\(^ {65}\) although she is present in the vicinity. While her presence is necessary for subsequent narrative development she is not part of the knights’ tale-telling domain at the outset. Also, at this point in the narrative there is nothing to characterise Cai as anything other than

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\(^{62}\) However that culture, and the production and reception of manuscript narratives is to be understood. See chapter four for further discussion on this matter.

\(^{63}\) Bromwich (1983, 42-44).

\(^{64}\) Davies (2007, 254) cites *The Law of Hywel Dda* (earliest manuscript being thirteenth century) for codifying the status of the head steward responsible for food and drink.

\(^{65}\) Cynon assumes the role of Calogrenant in the French version.
socially functional and constructive. Moreover, Cynon explicitly addresses his story to Cai. When he completes his tale and Owein declares a desire to visit the location of Cynon’s tale, Cai charges Owain with boasting and cowardice, that he was “saying with his tongue what he would not perform in deed.” Gwenhwyfar then intrudes, in defense of Owain, declaring is that Cai “should be hanged ... for speaking such insulting words.” Cai, in response, is not concerned with defending his own statement, but is directly aimed at the queen, pointing out that she had “given Owain no more praise” than he had himself, thus calling into question her motivation. Here Cai is asserting a view in support of appropriate behaviour at court, where he is critical of Owain’s boastfulness, which may be thus understood as an attempt to maintain a warrior code. His exchange with Gwynhwyfar can be read as a gendered engagement around the courtly ideal, with Cai attempting to withstand the challenge that the queen may represent. After this exchange, Cai reappears one more time in Owain, when he is overthrown by Owain, but it is noteworthy that of all Arthur’s knights, he was the first to be tested against Owain, and none of them could overcome him. Bedwyr doesn’t appear in Owain.

*Peredur*

Cai appears early in *Peredur* in a role that frames the development of Peredur as a knight, in a narrative that overall appears to be quite complex, with characters often acting out apparently conflicting motivations that are not necessarily clearly expressed. Cai here is certainly a reflex of the steward of the French chivalric model of court, and he also seems to retains vestiges of his earlier Welsh nature, although somewhat attenuated. When Peredur arrives uninvited at court he calls to Cai as

66 Davies (2007, 121).

67 This varies considerably from the French version, which in turn influenced the Norse version. The French version does not afford Kay a reply, instead providing both the queen and Ywain an opportunity to dismiss Kay for his shameful behaviour and demeanor.
‘that tall man over there’\(^6^8\) reminding the audience of the traditional epithet applied to Cai – *Cai hir* in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Pa gur* mentioned above. Cai’s role in this initial exchange appears primarily concerned with asserting a standard of behaviour, ruling on Peredur’s inadequate appearance, horse and equipment. However, the fact that Cai’s authority does not seem to extend to the honourable behaviour of avenging an insult to Gwenhwyfar that occurred in his presence shortly before the arrival of Peredur, this is open to being construed as ironic. But no-one else is so honourable either. Indeed, the narrator specifies that the court is glad to have Peredur in their presence “so that the other incident can be forgotten.”\(^6^9\) As in *Owain*, Cai also declares what he believes to be appropriate behaviour at court, censuring both the ‘dwarf’ and the ‘she-dwarf’ for not speaking to anyone until the arrival of Peredur. Peredur continues to call Cai ‘tall man’, and Cai sends him on his way to avenge the insult on the queen\(^7^0\). At his next appearance Cai is criticised by Owain for his behaviour towards Peredur, although again Cai’s behaviour can be construed as asserting a form of traditional authority for appropriate behaviour, and yet others such as Owain and Arthur, still criticise him. Peredur’s threat to avenge Cai’s insult to the dwarf and she-dwarf sees those he vanquished sent to Arthur’s court, to each repeat his threat for vengeance. Cai is reprimanded\(^7^1\) by Arthur for having driven Peredur away, but this may not be a fair charge. Certainly Cai sent him to avenge Gwenhwyfar, but Peredur did not return as he was bidden. When Arthur’s retinue comes to Peredur and Cai has his arm and collarbone broken,

\(^{68}\) *Dwy et heb y peredur, y gôr hir racco* (NLW MS. Peniarth 4, 31r, 122, 24-25), [Tell me, said Peredur, who is that tall man over there?], translation Davies (2007, 68).

\(^{69}\) Davies (2007, 68).

\(^{70}\) Which in itself, is surely a contradictory break in courtly protocols, for this cannot be a functional way for the court to deal with the insult. Peredur is not a member of the court, and thus cannot be expected to have such a role. Implications of this, however, are not the concern of this thesis, but it is possible there may be an underlying ‘outsider’ narrative at play in this episode.

\(^{71}\) Davies (2007, 74).
Arthur calls for physicians to care for him, expressing the high honour in which he is still held, for he “was sorry for the pain that Cai had received, for he loved him greatly.”

Cai’s response, however, is negative, he sulks and is angry: ac ýna ý sorres kei ac ý dýwaot geireu dic keinuigenos [And then Cai sulked, and spoke angry, jealous words].

We may also have here in Peredur another reflection of the once heroic Cai from Culhwch ac Olwen, who at his estrangement from Arthur is described in very similar terms: Ac am hynny y sorres Kei [And because of that Cai sulked].

Gwalchmai also criticised Cai for his behaviour, his speech and his anger and at Cai’s final appearance Peredur is once again challenged by Cai, with the encounter resulting in Cai’s shame once again. Certainly Cai’s role in Peredur differs considerably from the heroic Cai, despite a few remnants of his past returning.

Certainly there seem to be a number in this narrative that may be exploring chivalric behaviours, however, as noted earlier, there are many characters each with varied and at times conflicting motivations, and Cai plays a small but dynamic role in this. As with Owain, Bedwyr does not appear in Peredur.

**Welsh Historiography - Brut y Brenhinedd**

The only Welsh historiographic material which refers to Cai and Bedwyr, is Brut y Brenhinoedd, the Middle Welsh translation of the twelfth century Latin Historia Regum Britannie of the Anglo-Norman Geoffrey of Monmouth.

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72 Davies (2007, 80).
73 NLW MS. Peniarth 4, 36r, 142, 12-13, translation Davies (2007, 80).
75 Davies (2007, 80). Gwalchmai is the Welsh equivalent of Gauvain/Gawain, a member of Arthur’s retinue who did not exist in the heroic texts, but appears to have arrived as a chivalric warrior.
76 Davies (2007, 85).
77 The Vita Sancti Cadogi, ‘the Life of Saint Cadog’, is another historiographic incorporation of early Arthurian mythic material involving both Cai and Bedwyr into the life of that particular Saint. As it is in Latin it is not being considered in this thesis, although its incorporation of ‘heroic’ material into a historiographic narrative would undoubtedly be of interest to this topic.
78 The discussion on manuscript evidence for Brut is taken from Roberts (1971, ix-xxxix).
Historia (and Brut in turn) incorporates a historicisation of the Arthurian court within a partly mythic, partly historical chronology of events, battles and kings. It also clearly ties the Arthurian world to the politics of Anglo-Norman England, and such continental provinces as Anjou, Normandy, Poitou and Flanders. Brut survives in some sixty manuscripts many of which are later versions based on earlier manuscripts, and historically scholarship has attempted to group these by contents. The earliest manuscript dates from the thirteenth century. Roberts notes that the version in the fourteenth century Red Book of Hergest (Cambridge Jesus College MS. 111) is an amalgam of the two main versions (known as the Dingestow version and Llanstefan 1), but is neither the earliest or the best copy of the amalgam. I use the Red Book version in this thesis, chiefly for ease of accessibility, as there is a full diplomatic transcription available online.⁷⁹

Both Cai and Bedwyr appear in the Brut, Cai with the role of penn swyddwr ‘head officer’ (ModW pen swyddwr) in Arthur’s court, while Bedwyr is penn trulliad ‘head butler’ (ModW pen trulliad). Moreover, they both hold dual roles, for they are also assigned by Arthur to important aristocratic administrative roles, ruling on his behalf over territories in his empire: Bedwyr over Normandy and Flanders, Cai over Anjou and Poitou.

ac yna y rodes ef y vedwyr y bentrullyat normandi a fflandrys. ac y gei y benswy+dwr y rodes ef yr angwy a|phereita.


[And then he granted to Bedwyr his head butler Normandy and Flanders. and to Cai his head officer he granted Anjou and Poitou.]

(my translation)

The historicising nature of the text here becomes apparent when one notes that in the twelfth century when Geoffrey was producing his *Historia*, Normandy, Anjou and Poitou were indeed domains within the Angevin empire but Flanders was a Carolingian domain, and from the mid-twelfth century it became Frankish. However, in Geoffrey’s *Historia*, in a number of versions reviewed for the purposes of this thesis, Beduero was only granted Neustria (or Normandy), and Kaius was granted only Anjou. While it is beyond the capacity of this thesis to explore the variant readings more fully in both *Historia* and *Brut*, the variation in the territorial claims made against these characters indicates the importance of understanding political motivation underlying the re-framing of these narratives through translation and redaction. In comparison, the Old Norse version, discussed in the next chapter, only speaks of Neustria and Anjou. The political context of Anglo-Norman England and Wales is likely to be an important consideration in the construction of territorialities in the various Welsh version, for even though the Red Book version extends the lands associated with these two characters, the Llanstephan 1 manuscript only includes the same lands specified in Geoffrey’s *Historia*: Normandy and Anjou.

Cai and Bedwyr both are depicted in subsequent text as high status members with important responsibilities at Arthur’s court, and ultimately, in their respective deaths and burials, as ennobled Christian lords. The former can be seen in their hospitality services at court, when each in charge of a retinue of a thousand servants, they supply the food and drink to the lavish feast hosted by Arthur at the height of his power. On this occasion there is an explicit differentiation of Cai’s role from

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80 Various versions reviewed are Griscom (1929), Hammer (1951), Wright (1984) and Wright (1991). The version of *Brut* in Oxford Jesus College MS LXI which Griscom (1929) translates parallel to the Latin only references Normandy and Anjou in respect of Bedwyr and Kei, and attributes Poitou to a Prince Gwidart/Gwidrad.
Bedwyr’s with Cai responsible for the serving of food, while Bedwyr is responsible for serving the drink, and both are in charge of thousands of sons of noblemen dressed in ermine. At their respective mortal woundings, deaths and burials, Cai is killed before Bedwyr, although Bedwyr receives his wound on the same occasion, and in their burials their final honoured status is established, with both enjoying significant high status burials. Bedwyr’s is attended with great mourning and set within a churchyard.

[and then the body of Bedwyr was carried to his city in Normandy, with great mourning among the people of Normandy. And within the churchyard to the south/right of the city he was buried in honour, close to a small wall.]

Cai’s burial was also attended by great mourning:

[Cai, pierced, was carried in procession to the castle and they lamented him. It was not long thereafter that Cai was dead from that wound and to a nearby forest was thither taken within an anchorite monastery to be buried, as was due the honour by right for the earl of Anjou.]

The historiographic treatment of Cai and Bedwyr in Brut reinforces their characterisation as honourable and authoritative, and introduces a clear sense of
worthy Christian nobility. When compared with both the heroic and chivalric material, however, it is curious that the status of Bedwyr is promoted to be as prominent as Cai in the support of Arthur, in all ways: performance, courtly status and nobility of death.

**Chapter Summary**

The Welsh material from which the narrative characterisations of Cai and Bedwyr can be seen is wide-ranging, as is evident from the foregoing discussion. The following table displays the primary characteristics of Cai and Bedwyr, as they appear across the texts discussed in this chapter.

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<td></td>
<td>Bedwyr: heroic deeds, heroic epithet <em>‘perfect of sinew</em>’</td>
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<td><em>Culhwech ac Olwen</em></td>
<td>Cai: asserts authority/order, mythic characteristics, oblique references to other narratives, heroic skills, heroic deeds, oblique references, sulks, heroic epithet <em>hir</em> ‘tall’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedwyr: heroic skills, heroic epithet ‘one handed’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Owain</em></td>
<td>Cai: asserts authority/order, subject to criticism</td>
<td>Cai: asserts authority/order, subject to criticism</td>
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<td>Cai: asserts authority/order, subject to criticism,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brut</td>
<td>Cai: heroic epithet <em>hir</em> ‘tall’ - not in the Red Book version, appears in Oxf. J. C. MS LXI version (Griscom 1929, 483)</td>
<td>Both Cai and Bedwyr: lords ruling actual domains, high status courtly roles, noble deaths and burials.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Cai’s and Bedwyr’s characteristics, while comparatively stable within the heroic mode, show a number of important changes in the chivalric mode, especially as the more fanciful or mythic of their heroic attributes become more moderated to suit the less mythic chivalric discourse. A noteworthy exception is the epithet *hir* ‘tall’ which is applied to Cai across all of the literature. This epithet has been noted by Patrick Sims-Williams as consistent with the medieval Welsh place-name “*gwryt Kei* ‘Cai’s fathom’ (already attested c. 1200) ... [which ] would have been a pass across which the gigantic Cai could stretch his arms.”\(^8^1\) In this sense, perhaps there is a strong folk tale element to the character from which the literate narrative cannot easily extract itself.

The variations thus mapped in the table above reveal consistencies and variations, some of which may reflect conditions of each narrative’s production. The ‘heroic’ material reveals a clear valorisation of high status behaviours which appear to take the form of highly structured and symbolic positioning of warrior aristocratic ideals embodied by characters enacting socially codified responsibilities, as is seen in the formalised narrative role of the gate-keeper, for example. These characters are not troubled by the later chivalric order which appears to contain the seeds of tensions in respect of the place of women in the courtly narrative. Where, for

\(^8^1\) Sims-Williams (2008, 51).
example, in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the feminine is largely constrained to the part of Olwen as the simple object of Culhwch’s quest, in the ‘romances’ women have greater subjectivity, playing a clear role in narrative progress: in *Owain* the queen challenges Cai’s authority, Luned plays a key role in bringing together Owain and the countess and in *Peredur* when Peredur fails to heed the other knights it is because he is lost in a daydream about his lady. The heroic material appears to occupy a wider discourse of extra-textual heroic narrative, indicated through oblique references to other, barely specified events and circumstances, whereas the chivalric narratives are all each self-contained, with an intertextually that functions through cross-reference to the textuality of the other self-contained chivalric narratives.

The chivalric material certainly indicates a more complex narrated set of characters and motivations, from which we might infer personality conflicts expressing contradictory motivations and ideals, and whereas the heroic material is understood as emanating from an oral past, it is noteworthy that both the chivalric material and the historiography is more readily associated with Angevin England and the historical conditions in the Welsh Marches, and these show signs of content and concerns more embedded in that slightly later period. The historiographic material in particular reveals a narrative construction that is placing these characters in an idealised establishment mythology grounded in the real-world politics of the Anglo-Norman administration, as initially asserted through Geoffrey’s *Historia*.

Across all three modes Cai occupies a position of authority among Arthur’s warriors, whether that group is a heroic band or a chivalric court. This authority, and the variations in how his authority is constructed is an important aspect of subsequent narratives. Within the Welsh material, tracking Cai’s development and the various forms that he takes, along with the lesser but comparable forms of Bedwyr, provides a useful base for which later versions in other vernaculars can be
compared. The characters’ respective versions within different modes and genres reflect both the nature of the narrative mode being employed and the ways in which divergent character attributes, skills and behaviours are valued. The next chapter reviews in a like manner the development and variations of these two characters in the Norse literature.
Chapter 3  The Old Norse/Icelandic Sources

Introduction

There are fewer examples of the Norse equivalents of Cai and Bedwyr than there are in the Welsh material. This may be because the Welsh material comes out of a native oral tradition with heroic figures more likely to have an extensive narrated presence, and which the chivalric material has drawn extensively. Given that the source for the Norse narratives was French, and that the matiè re de Bretagne was transformed into the chivalric mode in France prior to the Arthurian narratives reaching Norway, then the absence of an equivalent heroic mode in the Norse is likely due simply to the lack of direct lines of transmission of the heroic material from Welsh through French.

Kæi appears in four of the Icelandic riddarasögur translated from French: Möttuls saga, Saga af Tristram og Ísodd, Ívens saga and Erex saga, the latter two being the Norse translations derived from Chrétien’s French romances Chrétien Yvain and Erec and equivalent to the Welsh narratives Owain and Gereint respectively. In comparison, a Norse version of Bedwyr occurs only in one of these translated riddarasögur, as Bedondr in Möttuls saga. In addition, the characters Kei and Beduerus both appear in the synoptic Icelandic redaction of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britannie, known as Breta sögur. Also, Kæi appears in the fourteenth/fifteenth century\textsuperscript{82} metrical version of Möttuls saga known as Skikkjurímur and in the early fourteenth century Old Swedish Hærra Ivan.

I restrict my detailed consideration of ON texts here to three riddarasögur Saga af Tristram og Ísodd, Möttuls saga, and Ívens saga along with the historiographic Breta sögur all of which provide good examples of the characters being discussed.

\textsuperscript{82} Kalinke (1999b, 269-270) states that the rímur are from the fourteenth century, but that the earliest manuscript is from the second half of the fifteenth century.
Kæi plays a non-influential part in *Erex saga* (see Appendix 2). In both *Möttuls saga* and *Ívens saga*, the representation of Kæi appears to be contingent on the nature of his representation in the French materials.

This chapter places Old Norse sources into two generic categories: those that are chivalric and those that are historiographic. As noted, there is no equivalent Old Norse ‘heroic’ narrative that incorporates the characters being discussed, as is found in Welsh. The Old Swedish *Härra Ivan*, and the Icelandic *Skikkjurimur* provide an indication of the reach of these narratives beyond the first translations, but they do not indicate significant developments in the characters of Kæi and Bedondr/Boðver, so they will not be closely examined in this thesis. A brief discussion of aspects of these two metrical narratives is to be found in Appendix 2. *Breta sögur* is the only text being considered in the historiography category in this chapter, being the Norse translation of Geoffrey’s *Historia*.

**Riddarasögur**

**Saga af Tristram og Ísodd**

The appearance of Kæi in the Icelandic Tristram tales presents a problematic case for *riddarasaga* scholarship, for this Kæi not only suggests a clear authorial role behind his appearance in this saga, but also points to possible manuscript sources that are no longer in existence. A character by the name of Kæi is confined to the later redaction *Saga af Tristram og Ísodd* but he does not appear in the original translation into Icelandic by Brother Robert of *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*. Marianne Kalinke considers the redaction as “presumably composed in the fourteenth century,” and notes that, although recognisable as a version of the earlier translation, it has been considered by scholars variously as boorish, clumsy, or a

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83 Marianne Kalinke (1999a, 243).
parody. She dates the earliest of five manuscripts, AM 489 4to, to the mid-fifteenth century, in a manuscript collation that also contains Ívens saga. Kæi enjoys some degree of positive recognition in the redacted Icelandic text, in which his courteous nature is made evident, and yet his status in the eyes of the king is clearly undermined by the views of “a lot of people”.

Sá maðr ... er Kæi hét, hinn kurteisi. Hann var kær kómgi, en þó lagði hann þar til optarr sin *rað,84 er flestum þötti verr, ok þó var hann helzti mikils ráðandi, því kóngr may hanns mikils, þótt því væri illa komit.

(Kalinke, 1999a, 264)

[There was a man ... who was called Kæi the Courteous. He was intimate with the king but more often than not he gave advice that a lot of people thought bad; yet he was very influential, for though it was unfortunate, the king esteemed him highly.]

(Kalinke, 1999a, 265)

This is not Kæi in Arthur’s court, but the court of King Engres in Ireland. In the equivalent episode in the translated source Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar, the character (also serving the king of Ireland) is not named but is characterised as an evil ræðismaðr (advisor):

Kóningrinn átti einn ræðismann. Sá var hinn mesti metnaðarmaðr, írskr at ætt, illgjarn ok, undirhyggjusamr, prettvíss ok lygimaðr ok falsari

Kalinke (1999a, 98)

[The king had a steward. He was an arrogant man, born in Ireland, who was wily, wicked and cunning, a deceiver and a liar]

(Kalinke, 1999a, 99)

In the later redaction, the fact that the name Kæi is used suggests an interesting moderation arising through the redaction. While certainly the ræðismaðr continued to be characterised as unpopular, he was nevertheless held in some esteem, as is seen below in his treatment by Tristram, where his lengthy courtly

84 Kalinke emends MS orð to read rað.
service stands him in good stead. The court itself seems to be some kind of inversion: Engres is described as víkingr which must be taken in the sense of ‘despot’ rather than the narrower meaning of ‘pirate.’³⁸⁵ Engres and his court are Tristram’s enemies, and even though Kæi the Courteous is responsible for subterfuge in taking credit for Tristram’s killing of the dragon, Tristram still treats him with honour for his long service to the king and the queen, for when the queen orders that Kæi be hanged, Tristram intervenes:

Tristram svarar: “Nei, frú,” sagði hann, “þáy hæfir ekki, þvíat hann hefir lengi þjónat yóð”

Kalinke (1999a, 272)

[Tristram answered. “No, my lady,” he said, “that is not fitting, because he has been your servant for a long time”]

Kalinke (1999a, 273)

When compared with the longer earlier version, which is believed to resemble the source material used for the redaction, the evil steward is not so honourably treated:

Síðan hæddi ok hataði hann hvër maðr, ok var hann þafnan síðan rekinn, hrjáðr ok sv’virðr...

Kalinke (1999a, 118)

After that every man scoffed and scorned the steward, and forever after he was shoved and harassed and shamed...

Kalinke (1999a, 119)

This question of honourable treatment is important for understanding the redemption of this ræðismaðr, for it reveals an understanding of the subtleties of

³⁸⁵ Salvesen (1968, 48) has identified the lexical expansion of víkingr in the context of her semantic study of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century Old Norse translation of Elucidarium.
honourable service to the king and queen written into the redaction. It shows an awareness of the nature of honour as it is expressed here in terms of chivalric hierarchical responsibilities over time, and the value of faithful service. Such a treatment of the steward in his transformation from the evil unnamed ræðismaðr to Kæi the Courteous also exemplifies the socially constructed importance of not being irredeemably shamed, for even though in the end he is sent away never to return to Ireland, he is spared the ignominy that the evil unnamed ræðismaðr experiences in the earlier translation, forever after being shamed. In courtly terms, being permanently shamed is the antithesis of desirable outcomes of socially constructive behaviours.

Such character development presents some interesting challenges for understanding the redactor’s role and the knowledge of possible variant readings and related narratives at the time the redaction was written. It is clear that the author of the redaction knew of a ræðismaðr by the name of Kæi either from another Arthurian narrative, or he was working from a pre-existing version of the Tristram narrative in which the character is thus named. If the latter is the case, then this would mean a variant version of the saga already in circulation at the time, from which a question of origins arises in relation to the character’s becoming thus named, given that the name does not appear in known earlier versions, either in French or Norse. The possibility of multiple versions of the Tristram story circulating in Iceland, some with a character called Kæi, combined with the fact that he is displaced into an Irish court, adds further uncertainty regarding the resources that were available from which the redactor could have worked.
Ívens saga

Ívens saga survives in a number of manuscripts, all of which derive ultimately from two fifteenth-century vellum versions: Holm 6 4to and AM 489 4to. At his first introduction in Ívens saga, Kæi is not a problematic character, and he is also not in the serving role in which he appears in both the Welsh and French versions. He is simply one of the kongs riddarar sitting before the king’s bedroom doors with the other knights, and even at the introduction of Kalebrant’s story with the Queen insisting on hearing the tale of disgrace rather than honour, there is no verbal intervention from Kæi, as there is in the other versions. Rather, there is a formal prologue delivered by Kalebrant. However, on the completion of the Kalebrant’s tale, Íven’s declares his desire to avenge Kalegrenant, and Kæi charges him with boastfulness and intoxication, that he has “fleirí ord enn fullr potr víns” (more words than a full pot of wine) to which the queen responds with a highly critical statement to Kæi:

er tunga þínn talar æ þat er ilt er ok kant eigi þat er gott er ok verdí þín tunga bolfuoth er hon kann aldri yfir sinní Ílzsku ath þeggía ok Jafnann spottar þu þer betri menn ok aller hata þik firir þína tungu þeir er medann heimren stendr. ok æ man þíns nafns getit ath illku eigi ordum vid hann.

Blaisdell (1979, 21-2)

[Your tongue is always speaking that which is evil, and knows not that which is good, and would that your tongue be cursed that it can never keep silent about its evil you always slander better men and everyone hates you for your tongue, for as long as the world stands. And always will your name have evil words associated with it.]

(my translation)

86 Blaisdell (1979, XI). Ívens saga quotations are taken from the diplomatic transcription of Holm 6 4to in Blaisdell (1979).
87 Blaisdell (1979, 21) my translation.
Next we find Íven joining in the public criticism of Kæi, saying that *hann spottar íafnan okunna menn enn hann hropar sína felaga ok eignar bræðr* (he mocks always unknown men and he slanders his fellows and his own brothers). Subsequently, Kæi is again critical of Íven for drunkenness and cowardice, to which Valven responds with advice that Kæi will suffer shame if he does not be silent.

The antagonism between Kæi and Íven comes to a climax when they meet at the fountain, with Íven arriving to defend the fountain. The king permits Kæi to fight Íven (who recognises Kæi but not vice versa). Íven wins, Kæi is shamed, and the narrator describes Kæi’s public shame:

*Nu ligr Kæí suivírdr ok helldr harms fullr neístr ok yfir kolínn ok makliga leiðinn. Þui ath *hann* hafði sagt ath herra Iv(ent) mundi eigi þora ath bida hans, enn aller fógnudu misfórum hans Þui ath hann attí önguan vín þ kongs hírd. kongrín sialfr giordi ser ath gaman.*

[Now lies Kæí disgraced and rather vexed, full of shame and overcome and properly dealt with. because he had said that Lord Íven would not dare to wait for him. So all rejoiced his misdeeds because he had no friends in the king’s court. The king himself made fun of him.]

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88 Blaisdell (1979, 22) my translation.
Curiously, even though the critical passages noted above are closely modelled on Chrétien’s version, in places they are slightly abbreviated, and the opening frame of Chrétien’s Ywain establishes Kay as a contrary kind of character, such characterisation is missing in the equivalent passage in Ívens saga. But a highly noteworthy variation can be found in the Norse. Kæi indeed occupies a key role across the range of these narratives, but in Ívens saga he does not have the explicit courtly role that he has in both the Welsh and French versions, and as he also does in many other texts. In Ívens saga he is nowhere referred to as ræðismaðr (advisor). The apparent extremity of his shame and disgrace, when considered in the context of this loss of courtly status, puts this version of Kæi at the nadir of his narratological fortunes.

Möttuls saga

Möttuls saga has been transmitted in numerous manuscripts and fragments ranging for early fourteenth up to the eighteenth century, and Kalinke and Bennett\(^89\) provide a description of these. Her edition uses Stockholm 6 / AM 598 Iα 4to (or its copy AM 179 fol) and the text quoted here is from that edition.

In Möttels saga, Kæi appears to enjoy a position that is not as negatively treated as in other translated riddarasögur. In fact, both Kæi and Valven maintain a comparatively high status throughout the tale, despite the narrative being figured around a kind of shaming game, and both are early to receive their shame. They are both ræðismenn, with Valven described as the chief of all ræðismenn. But from chapter 4 onwards\(^90\) Kæi is the only one thereafter described as ræðismaðr. This is as it appears in the French source, Lay du cort mantel, in which Gauvein is le

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\(^89\) Kalinke and Bennett (1987, LXXXV - CXLII).
\(^90\) Chapter number as marked in the manuscript AM 179 fol., a seventeenth century transcript of an earlier vellum manuscript used as a more reliable basis for Kalinke (1999b) edition and translation.
seneschal\textsuperscript{91}, and Keus is also seneschau\textsuperscript{92} while in the Norse translation, Valven is the one who is the forstiori ... allra [foremost of all] ræðismenn.\textsuperscript{93}

Even though both Valven and Kæi are among the early knights to be ridiculed in the narrative, they both adopt a comic mode to embrace the ironic shame, and in so doing they set a standard for behaviour in this narrative that shrugs off what would otherwise be embarrassment occasioned by the challenge to order arising out of the mantle test. Valven and Kæi are thus both the voice of the authority of the court through the test. They are both early recipients of dishonour through the agency of the mantle, and they both declare how the court should respond to the ostensibly shameful exposure of the women’s infidelities. In this way it can be seen that Kæi plays a primary structural role in both facilitating the fidelity testing of women of the court, and in containing the ‘disgrace’ in a socially constructive way, with humour. Kæi’s reputation for deriding others is made explicit in the words of Ideus:

\[\text{Þa mællete Jdeus vid Kæi ræðizmann. “Vel er nv” s(agdi) hann “ad *heim snvist spott og svivirding til sialfs þíns er þv spottar hvern mann.”} \]

Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 39)

[Then said Ideus to Kæi ræðizmann, “Well it is now,” said he, “that homewards is turned mockery and shame to yourself, since you mock everyone.”]

(my translation)

However, ultimately the dishonour of the court is dislocated into an object of humour and Valven becomes a vehicle for the expression of this humour: hann

\textsuperscript{91} Line 94: “Gauvein le seneschal” Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 16).
\textsuperscript{93} “... hera Valvenn er forstiori var allra ræðzmanna kóngs” Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 17). [Sir Valven, who was the chief of all the King’s stewards] (translation, p. 84).
giordi þar gamann ad og snere þa apttur hlægiandi [he made fun of it and turned back laughing]. In comparison, Kæi takes a position that supports Valven, and his utterance takes the form of gnomic wisdom:

þa sv(arar) Kæí rædís madr. huí mæler þu slikt fegín ok katr mæi sa vera er tapar otrurí vnnasto.

Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 63)

[then answers Kay, ræðis madr: “why do you speak in such a way? Happy and merry should be the one who loses an untrue lover”]

(my translation)

In Möttuls saga, then, it can be seen that Kæi enjoys a role remarkably different from Kæi as he appears in other chivalric narratives. This variant characterisation is considered more thoroughly in the next chapter. In addition, what appears to be the only reflex of Bedwyr in non-historiographic Norse texts is to be found in Möttuls saga. In this case his name is Bedondr hinn kuerteisi skutillsvein (the courteous cup-bearer), and he plays a part of only minor significance in the narrative. His presence resonates with the courtly milieu, for he has the responsibility of calling Arthur’s attention to the correct order of courtly status, although the order as described is an inversion of the male warrior aristocracy, where status is accorded to the most beautiful of ladies. If it is indeed the same character, then he has faded in significance somewhat.

**Historiography**

*Breta sögur*

*Breta sögur*, the Icelandic version of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britannie*, occur in two manuscript versions, the synoptic redaction of *Hauksbók*

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94 Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 49), my translation.

95 Kalinke’s translation as ‘the courteous page’ (1999. vol. 2, 21) in my view renders an unfortunate historicising error, as the role of ‘page’ may not be suitable in this context. ‘Cup-bearer’ seeming to be the remnant link with the Bedwyr/Boðver in other narratives.
(AM 544 4to), and a more extensive version in AM 573 4to. Stefanie Gropper (2011)\(^{96}\) notes that while the abbreviated *Hauksbók* version concentrates on historic information, the version in AM 573 4to focuses on the courtly material. Stefanie Gropper (2015) discusses a small number of AM 573 4to variants to AM 544 4to that were published by Jón Sigurðsson,\(^{97}\) but aside from these, as AM 573 4to has not been edited, this thesis is only able to consider the *Hauksbók* redaction, and such material as is dealt with by Gropper and Jón.

The characters Kei and Biaðvor/Boðver each appear twice in the synoptic redaction of *Breta sögur*. In this redaction the Cai/Kei character is transparently rendered as Kei, whereas Bedwyr/Beduerus has been transformed into a form more akin to Icelandic: Biaðvor (55r, 6), or Boðver (56r, 34). In keeping with the abbreviated form of these passages, they are both given just passing mentions at their key moments in the narrative: their granting of lands and their deaths.

\[
\text{hann gif} i \text{ biaðvösv dottur} \text{ finn e} \text{strvíam} \text{ íkenkiara} \text{ fínvm} \text{ en} \text{ adenagiam} \text{ gif} t
hann \text{ kíe} i \text{ raðímanne} \text{ fínvm} \text{ íkipti} \text{ hann} \text{ fí湮} \text{ olv frá} \text{klandi} \text{ med} \text{ fínvm} \text{ monnum}
\]

Black (2014, 78)

[He gave his daughter Beduerus to his cup bearer Estrusias,\(^{98}\) and he gave Anjou to his advisor Kei.\(^{99}\) Then he divided all of France among his men.]

Black (2014, 79)

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\(^{97}\) Jón Sigurðsson (1849).
\(^{98}\) Patzuk-Russell (2012, 163) translates this passage as “He gave to Beduerus his cup-bearer his daughter Estrusia, and Andegauensium he gave to Kay, his counselor. Then he divided France among all his men.” Black (2014, 79), suggests this part of the text is “clearly a misreading on the part of the saga writer. According to the HRB and VV, Arthur presents Estrusia, now called Normandy to his cup bearer Beduerus. HRB, IX.301.” The matter of Estrusia equating with Normandy is summarised by Keller (1974).

\(^{99}\) Black notes: “Given the misunderstanding of Estrusia, it is likewise unclear whether or not the saga writer is referring to the region in France or to an individual.”
Median King Boccus immediately rode against Beduerus and ran a spear through him, and then Sir Kei wished to avenge him, but he became mortally wounded. Hirelgas, Beduerus’s nephew, became very angry when he saw his defeat. He charged so mightily that he killed King Boccus.

In the first of these passages the role of cup-bearer (skenkjari) is attached to Estrusia, while Biaðvorv appears to be mistakenly characterised as Arthur’s daughter, while Kei is clearly identified as reðismaðr, or ‘advisor/counsellor’. In the second of these passages the role of Boðveri is not mentioned, and Kei is given the title of síra (‘Sir’). While this abbreviated narrative reports their being granted lands in France, and their deaths, there is no mention beyond that, whether to their status as chief stewards and servants of Arthur’s court, their lives beyond these two key events, or their high status burials. That there is such a revision of Bedivere\(^{100}\) indicates a likelihood that these characters in the Arthurian court were not well known, at least as far as the context of production of this manuscript is concerned.\(^{101}\)

The AM 573 4to version can be seen to contain more detailed descriptions which are closer to known Latin and Welsh versions, than the synoptic Hauksbók version, even considering the small amount of text edited and available. Jón Sigurðsson edited a number of passages from this manuscript, two of which mention

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\(^{100}\) Also possibly of Kei, as Patzuk-Russell (2012, 161, n. 395) suggests that the translator might also have interpreted Adenagiam as the name of another daughter of Arthur.

\(^{101}\) It thus appears unlikely that the translator had knowledge of the translated riddarasögur in which Kæi appears, although the fact that nowhere in that material is Kæi associated with Anjou doesn’t necessarily equate with the two narrative traditions being inconsistent.
Kaius and Beduerus. The first deals with the grand feast (also noted in \textit{Brut} above) in which Kaius is responsible for the \textit{krásir} (‘dainties’) and Beduerus is \textit{byrlari} (cup-bearer), while the second passage refers to Arthur accompanied by Kaius \textit{skutilsveinn oc beduerus byrli} (Kaius page/plate-bearer/cup-bearer and Beduerus cup-bearer).

**Chapter Summary**

The Norse sources for the narrative characterisations of Kæi and Boðver/Bedondr are less wide-ranging than are the Welsh sources, and there is no transmission through French into Norse of the heroic material, which means the Norse material is described only in one column, by its chivalric characteristics. The following table displays these characteristics.

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<td>redeemed for lengthy service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boðver/Bedondr: absent</td>
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<td>\textit{Ívens saga}</td>
<td>Kaius: lacks courtly status/role, asserts authority but challenged by others, authority thereby undermined, shamed, not redeemed</td>
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\textsuperscript{102} The first referenced here is Jón Sigurðsson (1849, 100, n. 11), the second is (1849, 108, n. 3).
The character Bedondr/Boðver has all but disappeared from the chivalric material, except in what appears to be the remnant form of the skutilsvéinn Bedondr in Möttuls saga, and he has survived in the historiographic material in Breta sögur enjoying a similar status as is held by Kæi in that synoptic text. Therefore, little can be made of this character in the Norse. On the other hand, in the chivalric material in particular, Kæi can be seen occupying important, and yet contradictory, narrative roles. The formal courtly role that he has inherited from the French literature, that which has become ræðismaðr in Norse, survives in Erex saga and Möttuls saga, and in Saga af Tristram og Ísodd the ræðismaðr role has had Kæi’s name attached to it. In Ívens saga this formal title has not survived the translation, though he is seneschal appears in Chrétien’s Ywain. Ívens saga is noteworthy because it is the narrative that is most damning of Kæi, sharing the disdain for the character that is so apparent in the French narratives. In comparison, the version of Kæi that appears in Möttuls saga presents an entirely different approach to characterisation, wherein Kæi and Valven both assert a degree of authority and responsibility. Curiously, the versions of both Kæi/Kaius and Boðver/Beduerus in the Hauksbók version of Breta sögur are somewhat reduced from the characters we see in both the AM 573 4to version which in turn differ again from the characters as they appear in the riddarasögur. While the more extended historiographic version accords these characters titles and important courtly roles, consistent with the Latin sources and the Welsh version discussed in chapter 2, the lack of such detail suggests a different discursive role or purpose for the Hauksbók versions.
Chapter 4  Synthesis

Introduction

In this chapter I seek to reach an understanding of the contexts and implications of the divergent treatment and variability of characters and roles through a comparison across generic boundaries and across modes in Welsh and Norse texts. The character Cai/Kæi has assumed clear authoritative roles in both heroic and chivalric narratives. In the heroic material he occupies a position of prominence in both deeds and reputation, and yet that authoritative character did not survive unchanged in the chivalric narratives. In chivalric literature, both Welsh and Norse, he is also clearly authoritative, yet he is widely associated being troublesome and disruptive behaviour. A challenge is to problematise the disgrace he appears to suffer in these later chivalric manuscripts. I make the case below that his administrative role is implicated in this decline in fortunes, with the social and political contexts in the administrative governance structures of medieval Wales and Scandinavia playing a part in the narrative tensions attached to the role and function of Cai/Kæi.\(^{103}\)

These characters appear across different modes and genres, and the summary tables in chapters 2 and 3 shows that they share a number of common characteristics across both mode and genre. These common characteristics lend themselves to a straightforward typology of social roles, based on how they are represented across these texts and the kind of narrative roles and story world responsibilities. I have selected for this analysis a typology of hero, administrator and prankster. In the Welsh material there are two roles apparent: the heroic warrior and the authoritative chivalric court administrator. In the Norse material while the heroic role does not occur, the courtly chivalric administrator persists, with some variation, and a new

\(^{103}\) Cai/Kæi in particular, as the Norse reflex of Bedwyr in this material is considerably diminished.
and peculiar role appears which is Kæi in the role I have called the prankster. These three categories are essentially pragmatic and descriptive in origin, and importantly they do not rely on generic, linguistic or other formal characteristics of the narrative. They instead identify character functions, both within the narrative and in terms of social context. The administrator role is the only category in both the Welsh and Norse material, and this role shows signs of significant influence from the pragmatics of social and political conditions attaching to the administrative structures associated with the narrative production.

**Heroes**

In the earlier Welsh heroic material, Cai is not a character who occupies a clearly defined or formal position in the Arthurian court, as compared with the later Welsh and other vernacular narrative traditions that show chivalric narrative influence, in which he is given some kind of formal title or role. This may be, in part, due to the fact that the pre-chivalric ‘court’ in early Welsh oral culture is not as explicitly defined or structured in narratives, as are the chivalric courts, and the fact that the historical circumstances under which those narratives of apparently oral origins were produced are much less well defined. In the heroic material we tend to find broad and less clearly determined attributes being described (such as ‘warrior’) and only a narrow range of what might be interpreted as ‘formal’ roles (such as ‘king’, ‘prince’, ‘gate-keeper’) that might give a sense of a structured court. It also needs to be recognised that such roles are less an indication of a formal set of social and administrative arrangements, but perhaps more a reflection of a narrative/fantastic world derived from older oral traditions, in which structures and roles play out without necessary recourse to a grounded historicized past. These kings, princes and gatekeepers occupy the same story world and the same set of story rules as the giants, witches and fantastic animals with which they contend.
Nevertheless, though ill-defined in formal social terms, both Cai and Bedwyr occupy notable high status positions in the company of Arthur. These roles may be related to these characters’ origins in early Celtic myth, and particularly for the former, there appear to be hints of an even deeper Welsh mythological tradition attached to the figure of Cai, in which he is the figure of a giant known for his heroic deeds. The epithet *hir* ‘tall’ that appears in *Pa gur* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*, as noted above, along with the later reference in *Peredur*, is considered by Patrick Sims-Williams as consistent with the medieval Welsh place-name “*gwryt Kei* ‘Cai’s fathom’ (already attested c. 1200) ... [which ] would have been a pass across which the gigantic Cai could stretch his arms.”

Also perhaps relevant for understanding this heroic background for Cai is the mythic context proposed by Linda Gowans in which she discusses possible parallels with the Irish hero Cu Chulainn, as I have noted in Chapter 2.

Importantly, the heroic Cai also takes on a role in asserting positive values of social order. While in *Pa gur* he is the grand hero accomplished in battle, one of *Guir gorev im bid* (the best men in the world), in *Culhwch ac Olwen* he provides a source of authoritative legal interpretation, in addition to his performing deeds of mythic heroism, and I argue that such a figure of authority is important for the future Cai. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* he has clear responsibility for asserting correct and regulated behaviour within Arthur’s court. At the appearance of Culhwch at the gates of Arthur’s court, Cai takes a principled stand against his entry into Arthur’s presence. He declares it contrary to the rules of the court (at least as far as they are asserted in *Culhwch ac Olwen*) which prohibit anyone being admitted after ‘knife had

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104 Sims-Williams (2008, 51).
106 NLW MS Peniarth 1, 47v, 4, my transcription, translation Sims-Williams (1991, 40).
gone into meat and drink into horn. Apart from the son of a lawful king of a
country or a craftsman who brings his craft, none will be allowed to enter." In this
case Cai’s authority can only be overturned by the King, and indeed it is. Such a
declaration of a standard of the court may be seen as a useful anticipation of future
versions of Cai, in which he takes an explicit role in the court, and thus this is a
useful starting point to consider the administrative role that I discuss next.

Administrators

Cai takes on a much more explicitly administrative role in the historiographic
and chivalric narratives, a status with possible roots in the earlier heroic Cai in his
authoritative role, as noted above. In the historiographic treatments of the Arthurian
court, as derived in both Welsh and Norse from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia
Regum Britanniae, it can be seen that the administrative nature of these characters
appears to have a base in the kind of political circumstances in which Geoffrey lived
and wrote—post-conquest Anglo-Norman Wales. Likewise, in the chivalric material
Cai’s role can be seen quite clearly influenced by similar contexts associated with
the social conditions of narrative production across various vernaculars. However, it
is noteworthy that, while in the chivalric material Bedwyr plays a considerably
diminished role, he is nevertheless an important member of Arthur’s imagined
historical past in the historiographic works, at a level equal to Cai.

In Brut y Brenhinoedd the dual roles of both Cai and Bedwyr are important for
understanding the contextual influences on the development of these characters: Cai
as penn swydw ‘head officer’ of the Arthurian court and lord of Anjou and Poitou,
Bedwyr’s as penn trollyad ‘head butler’ and lord over Normandy and Flanders. ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Anjou, Normandy and Poitou were Angevin territories in the period Geoffrey was writing, but
Flanders was not.
These narrated lordships are grounded in a historicised past of Angevin rule on the continent, and argue for an awareness on the part of both the author and the translator, of the underpinning model of governance that Geoffrey incorporates in his *Historia*: the extension of responsible and justified Angevin administration back through time. This embeds the characters and this narrative in an ideology of an idealised past. In this context Cai and Bedwyr are fundamentally working in support of dynastic authority in these domains of Arthur, aligned with the Angevin rule of England.

But in the Norse *Breta sögur* we find the roles of both Kæi and Boðver while abbreviated, resonant with the presumed Latin\(^\text{109}\) original. They both appear just twice in *Breta sögur*, at two key moments in the course of the narrative, the first when they are both granted their duchies\(^\text{110}\) for deeds performed in battle in support of Arthur, and the second when they receive their mortal wounds in battle. Moreover, in *Breta sögur* Kæi is explicitly *ræðismaðr*, or ‘advisor/counsellor’, presumably intended to be equivalent to the Latin *dapifer* ‘food bearer’, which is more closely rendered in the Welsh translation than in the Norse, and Boðver is *skenkjari*, or ‘cup-bearer’ and Bedwyr/Boðver in both the Welsh and Norse translations are close to the Latin *pincerna* ‘butler, one who mixes drinks’ used in Geoffrey. Beyond these two instances there is no further mention to the either their deeds or the fact that they both had high status deaths and burials, all of which appear to be important to the Welsh and Latin versions, in which they are clearly established as noble Christian chieftains, embedded in the religious discourse of thirteenth century righteous dynastic chivalry. This comparative deficit in *Breta*

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\(^{109}\) The source manuscript used for the *Hauksbók* redaction is not known, but is presumed to have been Latin.

\(^{110}\) In *Breta sögur* these are abbreviated, with Kæi only receiving just Anjou, while Boðver receives Estrusia/Normandy. No mention is made of Flanders or Poitou.
sögur may simply be a result of the synoptic approach of the translator, or they may reflect other underlying motivations in this redaction.

When we turn to the chivalric narratives, we find considerable variation in the treatment of these characters. In the Welsh material Cai’s authoritative role is clear, regardless of the narrative complications that arise due to conflicting and contradictory interests of other parties in the narrative. Such complications that have tended to give rise to negative critical assessments of his character\textsuperscript{111} and he is often in the position of being criticised or reprimanded by others, including the most significant of characters in the court: Gwynhwyfar, Arthur and Gwalchmei. But, while the ostensible reasons for such reprimands may seem straightforward, and are commonly declared explicitly at some point in the speech of the own who is criticizing, the underlying narrative tensions are not so straightforward, and this may give a clue to the complexities of Cai’s role. In Peredur, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the opening scene of the shameful slap delivered to the queen,\textsuperscript{112} he is nevertheless operating in a narrated realm in which he has some degree of control, as can be seen by his attempting to set a standard for appearance and equipment in the court, through denying acceptance of Peredur for being ill-equipped and ill-mannered. He is criticized at first by Owain for the possibility that he has

\textsuperscript{111} In criticism relating to the French versions, for example, assessments of Keu’s character are consistently damning: “outspoken, sometime spiteful” (Pratt 2006, 3); “propensity to discourteous slander” (Kelly 2006, 169); “consistently belligerent behaviour” (Cazelles 1996, 78); “combines anger and sarcasm” (Cazelles, 1996, 79); “exemplifies the opposite of the knightly ideal” (Howey 2000, 115). The Welsh criticism tends to be more moderated, such as Thomson (1991, 162), for example, expressing a reservation that the rebuke Cai receives in Owain is a development or not of the quarrel with Arthur in Culhwch ac Olwen. Norse literary criticism of this particular character is not as extensive as for French.

\textsuperscript{112} The scene involves an unknown knight entering the chamber uninvited, slapping the queen and departing without retribution. The responsibility of vengeance for the shame is never made clear. That the outside Peredur achieves it does not necessarily resolve the courtly failures, or clearly locate the shame totally on Cai’s head.
condemned the boy by sending him to seek revenge, and so could bring shame to
the court. Subsequently he receives a reprimand from the king because he sent that
boy away, even though we, as readers, know that the absence of Peredur from the
court is actually out of Cai’s hands. Peredur remains absent for his own personal
motivation, his desire to avenge Cai’s mistreatment of the dwarf and she-dwarf. In
this opening frame, nevertheless, Cai clearly had a gate-keeping authority, and it is
clear too, from the way he deals with the intruding boy, that he is endeavouring to
maintain a level of socially constructive behaviours at court. Moreover, in the end,
when Peredur seriously injures Cai, the importance of Cai’s role and status is
emphasised by Arthur’s expression of his sorrow “for the pain that Cai had received,
for he loved him greatly.”

In the Norse equivalent, *Parcevals saga*, the Arthurian framing episode of
Peredur arriving at court compares closely: Parceval embarks on the similar series of
quests given similar motivation by Kæi, and throughout the saga his role and
characterisation is generally consistent. However, there are subtle and important
differences. Chrétien introduced an element of personal psychology in Kay’s
behaviour towards Perceval, describing his response as ‘anger’, and explaining it as
due to the fact that he had been wounded. This explanation is not in the Welsh
version, and Cai sends Peredur on his way without him meeting Arthur. Chrétien
extended the court entry scene for Perceval, and enhanced the role of the king (and
as a consequence demoted Keu’s role to secondary and more troublesome). But the
Norse version does not include an explanation of Kæi’s motivation, but retained
both Parceval’s anonymity as well as his meeting with Arthur, both of which were
introduced in the French version. Moreover, the motivation for both Perceval and

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113 Davies (2007, 80).
114 “The seneschal, who had been wounded, was angered by what he had heard” (Kibler 2004, 393).
Parceval to seek vengeance is identified as not solely due to theft and insult but a claim of sovereignty on the part of the intruding Red Knight. This is not an issue in *Peredur*, which might suggest narrative tensions in the Welsh versions are more concerned with status than territoriality, while the anxieties thus expressed in the French and translated into the Norse take account of both territoriality and honour.

Cai/Kæi has a significant role in the three versions of the ‘knight with the lion’ narrative. In the Welsh version *Owain*, the initial episode is framed in a courtly context where Cai clearly has a hospitality role, responsible for providing the food and drink before the story can be told, and Sioned Davies takes the view “that Cai holds the high-ranking office of steward.” At the start of the Welsh narrative, Cai expresses a desire to hear the story he was promised rather than going to the kitchen and cellar first, seemingly his formal courtly responsibility, and in a curious detail in the opening frame he claims the story that Arthur called for as a story due to him. Cynon addresses his story directly to Cai.

The spiteful reputation that has accrued over time to Cai/Kæi is perhaps most marked in his interactions with the queen in the ‘knight with the lion’ narrative. In the Welsh story, when Cynon finishes his tale, Owain declares a desire to avenge Cynon’s shame, to which Cai responds by criticizing Owain for his pride, drunkenness and boasting. Gwenhwyfar then declares that Cai “should be hanged ... for speaking such insulting words.” But Cai does not defend his statement. Instead, he replies to the queen that she had “given Owain no more praise” than he had himself, implying that she has missed the point of his statement, and perhaps in a way she has, for as queen she may be considered as not a full participant in the

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115 Also titled in the translation by Sioned Davies (2007) as *The Lady of the Well*.
117 Davies (2007, 121). The charge is quite outrageous, in my view.
courtly or heroic honour code through which the knight are constructed. Rather, it may even be possible to construe the queen as an intrusive outsider to the knightly court ideals, and even perhaps an object of that order, as indeed the knights’ ladies can be viewed. In this frame, far from being inappropriate, the case might be made that Cai here is acting as a kind of arbiter of appropriate courtly behaviour, for the position he took is open to being interpreted as opposing Owain’s pride and boasting, which may be viewed as individualist and thus anti-social.

Kæi in Ívens saga, however, while ostensibly in similar narrative form, appears with some noteworthy differences from both the Welsh and French versions. In Ívens saga, Kæi is first introduced simply as one of the king’s knights, but neither in the Norse or the French has he retained a hospitality role that is found in the opening frame of the Welsh tale. In the Norse version he even lacks his explicit courtly role. We have seen that in Owain he has a butler role, serving food and drink, and in the French version he is explicitly the seneschal. But in this saga he has no formal status, unlike every other riddarasaga in which he appears, where he is consistently identified as ræðismaðr (‘advisor’). Therefore, it is important to consider this Kæi as a character who has lost status and what this loss may mean. In Íven’s saga we also have a case where Kæi is criticized for spiteful or shameful speech, and in all three versions he calls Ywain/Owain/Íven on his declaration of individualist intent, and in the three versions Owain/Ywain/Íven unhorses Cai/Kay/Kæi when they come to their final meeting. But the outcome of their final meeting varies considerably. Where in the Welsh version Cai receives no lasting dishonour for his defeat by Owain, and in the French version Kay is shamed, saddened and speechless, in the Norse version there is no such rehabilitation, and he remains

118 Kibler (2004, 324), terms perhaps reflecting the somewhat personalised psychology in the French versions.
the most unredeemed of the three, *suivírdr ok helldr harms fullr neístr ok yfir komínn ok makliga leikínn ... attí ónguan vin* [disgraced and rather vexed, full of shame and overcome and properly dealt with ... he had no friends].\(^{119}\)

So, on the one hand Kæi’s spitefulness is also authoritative, inasmuch as he declares a view critical of Íven’s boastfulness and drunkenness. But in the context of his formal or courtly status not being identified, a case can be made that such spite and anger can be viewed as perhaps akin with a troublesome protagonist in a more traditional *Íslendingasaga*. This negative characterisation of Kæi can also be found in the Old Swedish *Hærra Ivan*, in which a very similar dynamic of shame is played out, and Kæi is left as the an unredeemed object of laughter, a point which marks ultimate ebb in from courtly discourse.\(^{120}\) Kæi also appears in *Erex saga*, and as in both the Welsh and French versions he is here a simple non-influential character. However, the Norse narrative, in which he enjoys a formal courtly role, suggests an alternate positioning for Kæi when compared with the harsher treatment we see in Ívens saga.

When we turn to the Tristram narrative, in the later redaction *Saga af Tristram og Ísodd*, the Irish ‘Kæi the Courteous’ appears, a *ræðismaðr* held in high esteem by king Engres of Ireland, and a significant variation compared with the equivalent passage from *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (the assumed source of the redacted version).

In the earlier version the *ræðismaðr* is un-named, and explicitly described as *irskr at ætt, illgiarn ok, undirhyggjusamr, prétviiss ok lygimaðr ok falsari* [Irish born, ill-willed, deceitful, cunning, a deceiver and a liar].\(^{121}\) The episode concerning the Irish king and his court in the earlier version comprises an extensive plot around Tristram

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\(^{119}\) Blaisdell (1979, 74), my translation.

\(^{120}\) See Appendix 2 for an example of this text.

\(^{121}\) Kalinke (1999a, 98), my translation.
winning Ísönd for his king, framed by tribal hostilities from Irish demands for tribute. The redacted narrative is considerably reduced, and the hostilities are not clearly due to broader Irish fiscal and political demands but simply that the king himself is a víkingr.\(^\text{122}\) In both versions the ræðismaðr takes credit for Tristram’s slaying of the dragon, and while in Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar the ræðismaðr character is disposed of with much shame, in the redaction Kæi is treated honourably by Tristram, specifically for his long service. With the addition of a name and a moderation of his character there appears an intrusion of the positive aspects associated with Kæi from outside any other known translated Tristram. Certainly, the addition of Kæi’s name suggests that at some point in the development of this narrative there was knowledge of a character by that name who was a ræðismaðr and even though he was associated with questionable or dishonourable behaviour, he was still a character deserving of honour, clearly a status the earlier Tristram ræðismaðr did not enjoy. The fact that he was in part redeemed for his service indicates an understanding of the value and worth of courtly administrative service.

**The Prankster**

As I have noted in chapter 3, in Möittuls saga Kæi takes on a significantly different role to his other riddarasögur roles, a role fundamentally in humorous response to a challenge. In this saga he is certainly a high status member of the court and he does not suffer the sustained attack as he receives in Ívens saga. Indeed, the naming of Kæi as having a reputation for “spott og svivirding” [mockery and shame]\(^\text{123}\) in this saga comes from the intruding and disruptive outsider to the court

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\(^{122}\) Which, presumably, carries the wider semantics associated with ‘despotic ruler’ rather than the narrower (and earlier sense) of ‘pirate’, as Jørgensen translates it in Kalinke, (1999a, 265).

\(^{123}\) Kalinke (1999b, 39), my translation.
himself, Ideus. Kæi is still a redismaðr, initially one of many, and he maintains a comparatively prominent role throughout the narrative. Both Kæi and Valven are the first knights to be shamed through the chastity test, with the queen and her maiden only being tested before Kæi’s and Valven’s ladies. The order of the chastity test is explicitly discussed as a matter of courtly priority, a point to which the skutilsveinn Bedondr calls attention. Bedondr questions Kæi’s status compared with Valven, on the basis that Valven’s lady is more beautiful. Even though they are ridiculed, both Kæi and Valven take control and adopt a mode that asserts a kind of authority. They do this through humour as a means to embrace and contain their shame, and there thus arises an irony in their characterisations, where the shame is turned from being a genuine threat to social order, instead becoming, through humour, a paradoxical way of containing that same shame. They are shamed, and yet through that actual shaming they are able to deflect the shame.

It is an irony that the one character who charges Kæi with antisocial behaviour is the outsider Ideus who is the one who wilfully brings shame to Arthur’s court with the chastity test. In response, Kæi and Valven together set a standard that shrugs off what would otherwise be severe embarrassment to social order arising out of the chastity test. Their standard-setting is clearly expressed in Kæi’s gnomic statement, declaring that anyone who has an untrue love exposed ought to be fegin ok kattr [happy and merry], and Kæi enjoys a fundamentally functional (and yet counter-intuitively dual) role that both facilitates the fidelity test of women of the

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124 The presence of a character called Ideus in Trojumanna saga is a potentially interesting intertextuality that may repay further consideration, given the manuscript association of Trojumanna saga with Breita sögur.
125 Bedondr’s intervention actually specifies, and subverts, this order according to the beauty of the ladies, rather than the status of the knights.
126 This is itself a subversion of the courtly ideal, where precedence should be flowing from the relative honour of each knight, rather than the ladies.
127 Kalinke and Bennett (1987, 63), my translation.
court, and contains the courtly disgrace of the test in a socially constructive way. The fact that he does this with humour renders this role as in some ways comic, somewhat like a jester, fool or clown at the court of Arthur. The development of Kæi as a figure with a sharp yet humorous focus on didactic social commentary somewhat akin to the figure of a ‘clown’, ‘trickster’ or ‘prankster’\textsuperscript{128} presents a new style of characterisation, not least because such commentary needs to be explicitly embedded in social contexts in which it exists to produce meaning: the context of its production, and the context of its reception.

There may also be a slight sense that Ideus is a folkloric kind of trickster figure, in his bringing disruption to society\textsuperscript{129} order, however this would seem to perhaps place too much agency on that character and undermine the qualities of the responses that both Valven and Kæi have to the chastity test. In fact, Valven and Kæi both help facilitate the test, and in so doing take on aspects of that trickster role themselves, through actively taking on the disruptive role themselves. Importantly, the use of humour in resolving the tensions of the court almost totally populated by unfaithful ladies, is consistent with Salinas’s recognition that joking is a form of resistance, that “not only is humor [sic] a carnivalesque release valve, but also it can open a space for more meaningful transformation by disarming even the most serious situations.”\textsuperscript{130} Such transformative nature of Valven’s and Kæi’s involvement in this tale is important for its resolution.

\textsuperscript{128} This role resists easy definition, in part due to the figure of the trickster inhabiting much anthropological literature. Williams (2000, 1) defines trickster as one “whose deliberate aim is to achieve ... psychological victory using wit and deception,” whereas her prankster is a character “for whom performance and spectacle are the sole sources of pleasure.” Kæi certainly shows attributes of both types, but the prankster type is more suitable for this particular version of Kæi.

\textsuperscript{129} Salinas (2013, 143) for example, notes that the Jungian trickster’s “common role is to upset dominant orders.”

\textsuperscript{130} Salinas (2013, 154).
Perhaps the French original, *Le Lai du cort mantel*, achieves a force to its humour from the tensions associated with the ridiculing of seneschal, a very local role in Anjou and Normandy. It may be a big call to suggest that *Möttuls saga* requires some nuanced understanding on the part of the audience, but for the humour to be relevant for the successful reception of this Norse text, one may benefit from inferring a knowledgeable audience in Norway or Iceland with a shared understanding of the high courtly behavioural expectations that attach to the ideal knights and the ladies of Arthur’s court. If not, then the audience would not recognise the extremity of the failed chastity test of all but that one lady at court, nor the wise and ethical issues at stake in the containment of the threat.

**Social Conditions**

The French narratives clearly identify Kay as *seneschal*, and (presumably influenced by this) at various times the English translations of both the Welsh and Norse material have used that same term for the Welsh *swyddwr* and Norse *ræðismaðr*. However, to translate in such a way would appear to be a mistake, for the term has a specific relevance and provenance in Anglo-Norman France and England, and to apply it more widely is to level out the divergent ‘national’ circumstances and overlook the contextual semantics associated with the term. The nature of the historic seneschal in France is significantly different from anything found in Norway. The same may be said for in respect of Wales given that the expansion of Anglo-Norman political structures into England and Wales was effectively the transfer of powerful families following the Conquest of 1066 into large insular land-holdings, and as time passed, the harmony of such families to the close knit military élite of the Angevin crown dwindled.\(^{131}\) Administrative structures

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\(^{131}\) See for example Chibnell (2003, 129).
invariably respond to changing conditions, and the centralised administration of Angevin France which revolved around the authority of the seneschal was not repeated in the Welsh Marches. On the continent the seneschal was an Angevin creation under the rule of Henry the second, from the middle of the twelfth century. Seneschals were established in both Normandy and Anjou to centralise the extraction of revenue, to control the administration of law, much of which involved appeals over taxation by lesser nobility, and to maintain and represent the ducal and regal presence and financial interests across the territory.\(^{132}\) This kind of role underpins the tensions associated with a character such as the French Kay in his role of seneschal: an actual officer of the court who was close to the king, powerful, authoritative, and presumably disliked by many.

The Norwegian situation differed markedly. Where the French developed a castle-based administration of land-owning warrior aristocrats which drew fiscal resources from the obligations of tenants and lesser landowners as revenue, which were ultimately for the royal house and its political and military interests, the Norwegian system, arising somewhat later, had no such extensive dispersed landowning aristocracy. Instead, the revenue source for the crown in Norway was largely drawn from the coastal and tributary lands in the west, with the naval levy or \textit{leiðang} being the most militarily important arrangement in place. The professional armed forces for the crown of Norway were primarily on foot and in the fleet.\(^{133}\) The cavalry and the castle were quite foreign.

So perhaps the question must be asked as to why a continental cavalry-based discourse is relevant for an ideological model to be imported into the Norway? The

\(^{132}\) See, for example Power (2003, 68 ff.) in respect of Angevin Normandy, and Everard (2000, 76 ff.) for the situation in Brittany under Henry II.

\(^{133}\) Helle (2003, 349).
idea of consolidating an aristocracy in Norway around a somewhat alien continental model that was already being enjoyed by a powerful Christian aristocracy certainly may provide some indication of the intentions of those responsible for promulgating the translations in Norway. Even if (or perhaps especially if) the elements were not directly transferable, the model may have been particularly useful for encouraging behavioural or attitudinal changes due to actual obvious differences in social order therein described.

While it is apparent that the tensions around the reputation of the French seneschal may be behind Kay’s treatment in the material that is closely related to the French originals, Kæi’s shame and disgrace in the Norse versions, especially considering his role in Ivens saga, are not necessarily linked to his administrative role as ræðismaðr. His court title is not even mentioned in that text.\(^{134}\) This de-linking of the character\(^ {135}\) with the role is reinforced through the appearance of a Kæi ‘equivalent’ in Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd, where the admittedly troublesome but nevertheless honourable Kæi hinn kurteisi’s status (which thereby results in his being spared hanging) is explicitly attached to his status as a long term servant. These Norse texts are thus not operating within the concept of a troublesome functionary (the seneschal) in a mature (and imperial) administrative structure as was the case under Angevin rule in France, England and Wales. The notion of ræðismaðr is, as a consequence, perhaps less emotionally or politically charged as compared with seneschal. This can have at least two possible effects. Firstly, Ivens saga in particular presents Kæi’s issues as personal, and his personality as troublesome. Secondly, as

\(^{134}\) Kjær (1992, 130-131) argues that the extant manuscripts for Ivens saga reflect Icelandic sensibilities closer to the Reformation. If this is the case then this may be a further reason to explain the distance of Kæi in this narrative from the earlier French-influenced versions with clear ties to the courtly status.

\(^{135}\) Note the Norse historiographic version shows no obvious connection made between Kæi the troublesome ræðismaðr of the translated riddarasögur and Kæi the ræðismaðr of Breta sögur.
seen from *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd*, the negative associations of Kæi as *råðismaðr* are not due to him being the *råðismaðr*. In fact it is quite the opposite, as this status is the reason he is ultimately redeemed and honoured. However, the presence in *Tristram saga ok Ísöndar* of the un-named *råðismaðr* who was *illgjarn ok, undirhyggjusam* [wily and deceitful] would appear to challenge this view. This character may be explicable because this text may be closer to French than the redaction, and may retain tensions that are likely to have been in the French original.\textsuperscript{136}

If, in the Norwegian context, in which the translations took place, the specific court details as represented in the Anglo-Norman originals did not necessarily apply, then possible narrated gaps and variations to the structure and forms of life as represented may be important for understanding both the nature and intent of the translations, and their reception in their new contexts. If we accept the view that Kæi in all his troublesome glory, especially in the form in which he is divorced from his *råðismaðr* status, represents a de-escalation of a problematic *råðismaðr* role in favour of an anti-hero typology suited to an audience familiar with the more common (i.e. non-*riddarasögur*) Icelandic saga narratives, then the loss of his administrative role in the key text of *Ívens saga* has the effect of reinforcing the fact that such an administrative office was less an issue for the time of composition, whether that be Norway or later Iceland.

Moreover, such a Norse Kæi, if he is considered more in accord with the troublesome protagonist typology expected of the *Íslendingasögur*, might represent some kind of type for nativized chivalric narrative, developed in translation, and

\textsuperscript{136} Which Kalinke (1999a, 25) notes is likely to have been the French redaction (although not necessarily Beroul’s) of Thomas of Britain’s *version courtoise* from ca. 1150-1170, translated by Brother Robert in 1126.
displacing the continental/insular character types, in the French originals, except inasmuch as their structural characteristics might accord with relevant administrative structures. Certainly the role of the Welsh heroic Cai, Arthur’s chief supporter form a totally different story world, is no longer there, and the mythical epithet of Cai the tall has been lost. But such a character might just have suited the kind of fantastic material that is often found in the more fanciful of the Íslendingasögur and the fornaldarsögur, populated as they are by characters who cross into the fantastic and mystical, while all the while appearing to be ordinary farming Icelanders.
Appendix 1 — Other Welsh Material

This Appendix describes and provides examples of the Welsh material that has not been discussed in detail in the thesis. This material contains further evidence of both heroic and chivalric roles performed by Cai and Bedwyr.

_Trioedd Ynys Prydain_

While the manuscript evidence for the _Trioedd Ynys Prydain_ (Triads of the Island of Britain) is comparatively late, dating from between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries (the dating of the triads in Peniarth 16, which is the basis for Bromwich’s edition) the contents of the triads are considered widely to reveal a comparatively early native traditional oral mode. There are over 80 triads in total, spread across 9 different manuscripts,\(^{137}\) and they comprise a set of generally oblique references to key legendary persons and events in list form, providing glimpses of what are believed to be known narratives of the Welsh story-telling tradition, although a number of these expand slightly and provide a more explicit narrative, as will be seen below in relation to Triad 26W. The mode and contents of these is clearly heroic, using lists and oblique references to known events and characters.

The Triads take the form of a catalogue of characters and events available for the oral Welsh bardic story-telling tradition. Rachel Bromwich takes the position that the “original nucleus of _Trioedd Ynys Prydain_ ... consisted in an index of ... orally-produced narrative, formed for the benefit of those whose professional duty it was to preserve and hand on the stories which embodied the oldest traditions of the Britons about themselves.”\(^{138}\) Bromwich’s assessment is that the triads include references to stories that are at variance with those preserved and that “the oldest stratum in the triads refers to parallel oral versions of these tales which have not

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\(^{137}\) See Bromwich (1961, xiv-xvii) for a table indicating the distribution of triads among manuscripts.

\(^{138}\) Bromwich (1969, lxv).
survived” (1969, lxviii). She goes on to note that the triads provide “ample corroborative evidence” (p. lxix) for poems in the Black Book of Carmarthen (which includes Pa gur and Englynion y Beddau) showing the appearance of Arthur as a central character associated with both pre-Saxon and mythic heroes prior to possible appearance of external influence.

There are four triads that refer to Cai and two that refer to Bedwyr, with both of Bedwyr's appearances occurring alongside Cai. In one they are spoken of as in the company of Arthur.

Triad 21139

Tri Thaleithyavc cat Enys Pridei:
Drystan mab Tallwch,
a Hueil mab Caw,
a Chei mab Kenyr Keinuaruawc.
Ac un oed taleithyavc arnadunt wynteu ell tri:
Bedwyr mab Bedravc oed hvnnv.

[Three Battle-Diademed Men of the Island of Britain:
Drystan sone of Tallwch,
and Heuil son of Caw, and Cai son of Cenyr of the Fine Beard.
And one diademed above the three of them:
that was Bedwyr son of Bedrawc.]

Triad 26 W

Tri Gvrueichiat Enys Brydein:
...
A(‘r), Drystan ap Tallvch vrth voch March ap Meirchion,
tra aeth y meichat yn gennat ar Essyllt. Arthur, a March,
a Chei, a Betvyr a vuant ell petwar, ac ny chavsant kymint
ac un banv, nac o dreis, nac o dvyll, nac oledrat y ganthaw;

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139 All text and translations taken from Bromwich 1961, as follows: Triad 21 pp. 37-38, Triad 26 W pp. 46-8, triad 42 p. 105 and text and translation of App IV triad 4 pp. 250-52, and Bromwich (1956-57, 122) except the English translation of the Cai variant in this triad is by the author.
Three Powerful Swineherds of the Island of Britain:

... 
[And the second, Drystan son of Tallwch, tending the swine of March son of Meirchyaun, while the swineherd went with a message to Essyllt. Arthur and March and Cai and Bedwyr were (there) all four, but they did not succeed in getting so much as one pigling—neither by force, nor by deception, nor by stealth:]

Triad 42
Tri Gohoew Edystyr Enys Prydein
Lwyty, marth Alser marb Maelgwn,
a Gwineu Godwfhir, marth Kei,
a Chetin Carnavlaw, marth Iddon marb Enyr Gvent.

[Three Lively Steeds of the Island of Britain:
Grey, horse of Alser son of Maelgwn,
and Chestnut Long-Neck, horse of Cai,
and Roan Cloven-Hoof, horse of Iddon son of Ynyr Gwent.]

Manuscript variant Llanstephan 65
Tri Lledrithawc Varchoc oedd yn Llys Arthur: Menw ap Teirgwaedd, a Thrystan ap Tallwch, ac Cai hir ap kynyr varfoc; cans ymrithiaw a wneynt yn y rith y mynnyn pan vai galed arnunt, as am hynny ni allai ned eu gorvod.

[Three Enchanter Knights were in Arthur’s Court: Menw son of Teirgwaedd, and Trystan son of Tallwch, and Kai son of Kynyr the bearded; since they changed themselves into the form they wished when they were hard pressed, and therefore no-one could overcome them.]

Ymddiddan Melwas a Gwenhwyfar
The heroic poem, *Ymddiddan Melwas a Gwenhwyfar* (‘The Meeting of Melwas and Gwenhwyfar’), appears to present an early version of the abduction tale we

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known from later chivalric Arthurian narrative.\textsuperscript{141} It incorporates a Cai who is a high
social status figure, and according to a reconstructed narrative proposed by Peter
Korrel, Cai appears to have been the queen's champion, defending her and having a
role in her rescue.\textsuperscript{142}

The poem appears across two manuscripts, known as Llanstephan 122, 426
(from the sixteenth century) and Wynnstay, i, 91. Cai is mentioned in stanzas 3–7 of
the former and stanzas 3–5 of the latter.\textsuperscript{143}

\textit{Wynnstay, i, 91}

3. Aro ychydic snevin
ni wallaf vi vyngwin
ar wr ni ado ag ni safai mewn trin
ni ddaliai Gai yn i vin.

4. Ni arveisewn ryd
ag a vo gemyn a gwryd
a llfric drom drai
mi yw'r gwr a ddaliai Gai.

5. Taw was taw a'th salwet
onis well nath welet
ni ddalut Gai ar d'wythvet.

6. Gwenhwyvar olwg hyddgan
na'm dirmic cyd bwy bychan
mi ddaliwn Gai vyhvnan.

7. Tydi was ar ben maint
ai ben coch val ysgyvaint
anhebic i Gai wyt o vaint.

\textsuperscript{141} Such as found in Chrétien’s Lancelot romance \textit{The Knight of the Cart}.
\textsuperscript{142} Peter Korrel, \textit{An Arthurian Triangle: A Study of the Origin, Development and Characterization of
Arthur, Guinevere and Modred}, 86–89, Leiden: Brill, 1984 if possible!
\textsuperscript{143} All text and translations from Williams (1938, 39–41).
[3. Wait a little ? ?
I do not pour out my wine
For a man who cannot bide, cannot hold out in the fray.
He would not stand up to Cai in his wine.

4. I would wade a ford
Even if it were a fathom deep
With a coat of mail (on the shore) of the ebb tide
I am the man who would stand up to Cai.

5. Silence, lad, silence to thy idle talk
If thou (art) not better than thy appearance
Thou wouldst not stand up to Cai, if thou wert one of eight.

6. Gwenhwyvar of the deer's glance
Do not despise me although I am young
I would stand up to Cai alone.

7. Thou lad (?) above a number
With thy head red like lungs
Thou art unlike Cai in size.]

*Llanstephan 122, 426*

3. ...
... ymlaen y drin
nid deil gwr ond Cae Hir ap Sefin

4. Myfi a ferchyg ag a sai
ag a gerdda yn drwm gan lan trai
myfi yw'r gwr a ddalia Gai.

5. Dyd was, rhyfedd yw dy glowed
onid wyd amgen noth weled
ni ddalid Gái ar dy ganfed.

[3. ...
... in the forefront of the fray
No man holds out but Cai the Tall, son of Sevin.

4. It is I will ride and will stand
and walk heavily on the shore of the ebb
I am the man to stand up to Cai

5. Pshaw, lad, it is strange to hear thee!
If thou art not other than thy appearance
thou wouldst not hold out against Cai, one of a hundred]

**Englynion y Beddau**

Bedwyr is clearly associated with the important and final Arthurian battle at Camlan, in stanza 12\(^{144}\) of *Englynion y Beddau* (‘Stanzas of the Grave’), which lists the graves, deeds and manner of deaths of the heroes of ancient Britain. This clearly places him in high status position in the heroic context.

Stanza 12

Bet mab Ossvran yg Camlan
gvydi llauer kywlavan;
bet Bedwir in alld Tryvan.

Jones (1967, 120)

[The grave of Osfran’s son is at Camlan,
after many a slaughter;
the grave of Bedwyr is on Tryfan Hill.]

Jones (1967, 121)

**Gereint**

Cai only has two appearances in Gereint, once where he is included in a list of the sort found in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, but very much shorter, and then again in a scene where he challenges the incognito Gereint. In this latter, Cai is referred to as

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\(^{144}\) See Appendix 2 for the text.
‘steward.’\textsuperscript{145} In this statement however it is unclear what this status is, as the Middle Welsh term used is \textit{distein}\textsuperscript{146} (\textit{ModW} - \textit{distain}) – ‘principal court steward, captain of the guard’ and the extent to which this term may or may not equate with the French \textit{seneschal}, or the Middle Welsh \textit{penn swydlwr}. Bedwyr is also included in the list, but he is not mentioned any further in the tale. Middleton\textsuperscript{147} (2008) suggests that while a French source for \textit{Gereint} is likely, that source is not necessarily the poem by Chrétien.

\textbf{Breuddwyd Rhonabwy}

\textit{Breuddwyd Rhonabwy} does not conform strictly to either the heroic or the non-heroic chivalric categories, and it is thus an uneasy generic fit: it is not a chivalric romance, being the tale of a dream vision of the Rhonabwy, and it tends to have form and content that is closer to tradition heroic narrative. But, it appears to be a have had its genesis as a written text, so comparatively late and literate rather than oral. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan takes the view that it is not from the a native oral tradition but “a new departure”. Nevertheless the tale retains trappings from an earlier tradition but is also comfortably textured with post-romance trappings – aristocratic hierarchy... “Much of the subject matter of \textit{Breuddwyd Rhonabwy} is both traditional and native”, and “Arthur retains some of his trappings from earlier tradition.”\textsuperscript{148} There are also consistencies in content with \textit{Culhwch ac Olwen}, and both references to Cai have him in a position of honour and authority, thus suggesting a retention of the positive nature of Cai’s character and status independent of the French tradition, which saw a decline in his honour.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{145} Davies, (2008, 169).
\item \textsuperscript{146} Jesus College MS. 111, 198r, 800, ll. 23 / 25, and NLW MS. Peniarth 4, 75v, 436, ll. 29, 30 & 33\textit{distein} (\textit{ModW} - \textit{distain}) – ‘principal court steward, captain of the guard’ (from OE \textit{disctheng!}), likewise Whgite Book Pen. 4, 75v, 436, ll. 29, 30 & 33.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Middleton (2008, 149).
\item \textsuperscript{148} Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan (2008, 184).
\end{itemize}
Appendix 2 – Other Norse Material

Metrical Narratives

Skikkjurímur

Kæi’s appearance in Skikkjurímur, the slightly later metrical version of the chastity test, is far less nuanced than he is in Möttuls saga. He is characterized a number of times in negative terms, and he is seen to take humorous delight in the shame visited on a number of the ladies of court. Moreover, there is no occasion in the narrative for him to take a controlling role in containment of the shame, partly because the text appears to be principally humorous. There appears to be less interest in the narrative in maintaining the status of the court.

Kæi makes a number of appearances in Skikkjurímur, in ways consistent with his role and characterisation in the related Möttuls saga, however even though he initially appears in stanza 12 of the second ríma, as kátur og glaður [cheerful and happy]149, in stanza 13 of ríma 3 he is described as þegar að kalsi ber [quick with a bitter gibe]150. He then reappears at stanza 25 as ‘scathing Kay’151 and in stanza 31 his disgrace is complete:

Lýðurinn hlær en lægðist dramb;
þess lóngum býður af hendi kamp;
Kæi nam sækja hæðin heim;
hann var kenndur lítt af þeim.

[Kalinke (1999b, 302)]

[The people laugh, and the arrogance of him who was most often ready to taunt subsided; Kay was visited by his own mockery; he was greatly mocked by them.]

Kalinke (1999b, 303)

151 Kalinke (1999b, 301).
Hærra Ivan

Hærra Ivan exists in multiple manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century: Codex Holmiensis D4, Codex Holmiensis D 4a, Codex Holmiensis D 3, Codex Skokloster 156, Codex Holmiensis K4, and Codex Holmiensis K 47. The edition and translation prepared by Kalinke (1999c) is used below.

In Hærra Ivan, Kæye is established as a disruptive force from the outset, where he is described as hærra Kæye qvaðsprak þær æ taker illa a hvars manz bak [Sir Kæye the slanderer who always speaks ill behind every man’s back]. Then follows an extended passage of 73 lines in which Kæye is critical of Kalogrevanz, and is in turn criticized by the Queen.

Þit hiærtta monde nu sunder ga,
haft þu eigh þolikt spot nu gjört,
sum vi havum alle saman hört.
Þu haver alla mæþ spot untfangit,
þat haver þik opta gangit.

[Kalinke (1999c, 14)]

[Your heart would have burst
had you not been able to vent your rancor
as all of us now have heard.
You are always deriding everyone,
and things often go badly for you.]

Kalinke (1999c, 15)

Curiously, following this, the knights plead for him on the basis that he þo kan han sit spot eigh lata (cannot help his spite), and yet the Queen advises Kalogrevanz to hans þrugh aktin ræt ængte vætta (not mind his abuse at all) (line 146). When Kalogrevanz completes his tale, Kay is rather critical of Ivan’s boast to

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152 Kalinke (1999c, 12), translation Kalinke (1999c, 15).

153 Kalinke (1999c, 14), translation Kalinke (1999c, 15).
avenge Kalogrevanz’s disgrace, to which the queen is once again critical of his spite, using a ‘your heart would burst’ formula very similar to her earlier criticism:

Þit hiærta monde nu sunder ga,
haþe þu þolikt spot eigh giört,
sum vi havum nu alle hørt.
Mik þykker þik vara en galin fænda;
hvær man vilt þu mæþ orþum skænda.
Forbannæþ varþe þin fula tunga!

[Your heart would burst now
had you not vented your spleen
as we have now all heard here.
I think you are an angry devil;
you want to insult every man with words.
Cursed be your nasty tongue!]

Kæyæ’s characterisation continues to be negative, through to the point when he is unhorsed. When Ivan sets out secretly on his quest he envies and grudges both Kay and Gawain the fact that Arthur holds them in higher status and his motivation continues to be based on wanting to prove Kæyæ wrong – ‘þa ma mik ater hærra Kæyæ dara / ok drivæ mik til hova spot [Sir Kæyæ will once more mock me / and bring on the court’s derision’]. After Kay is unhorsed Kæyæ’s disgrace is complete, with his lack of redemption and him being an object of derision compounded in a final statement by the king himself:

konung Artus siælf at Kæye lo
mæþ alt hans folk ok mølþe svo:
“Kæyæ matte þa hælder hema bliva
þa han bæþ sik þæt ævintyr giva;
vi havum alle amaan hær set,


\(^{155}\) Kalinke (1999c, 38), translation Kalinke (1999c, 39).
han fik þæt nu han haver æptir let.”

[King Arthur himself laughed at Kay with all his people and spoke thus: Kay should sooner have stayed at home than asked to be granted the adventure; we have all seen here that he has gotten what he has asked for.”]

This clear dismissal of Kæi from courtly discourse marks the ultimate ebb to which his fortunes have come.

_Erex saga_

Kæi appears in _Erex saga_, and as in both the Welsh and French versions of this narrative he is here a non-influential character. He is, however, twice identified as Arthur’s steward or advisor – his _ræðismaðr._

Walven og Kæi ræ diz madur Artus kongz og margar riddarar voru þar fyrer og spyria tijdinda…

Blaisdell (1965, 18)

Walven and Kæi, King Arthur’s steward and many knights were there and asking tidings.

(my translation)

Kæi reappears\(^{156}\) when he challenges Erex, a scene in which Erex recognises Kæi but not vice versa, where Kæi is once again described as _ræðismaðr_, and he is unhorsed by Erex before he recognises his opponent. Such a motif of non-recognition and the unrecognised opponent winning is common in these chivalric narratives. In this saga Kæi is not characterised in particularly negative terms, there is no adverse motivation attributed to the challenge, and there is no narratorial

\(^{156}\) Blaisdell (1965, 58-59, translation 100).
commentary on his defeat or his character, as we find in both Ívens saga and Parcevals saga.
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Erex saga

Hærra Ivan
Ívens saga

Le Lai du cort mantel

Möttuls saga

Owein

Pa gur

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Secondary Literature


