

Sir Galahad is introduced to King Arthur's knights, gathered at the Round Table. BnF MS fr. 343, 14th c. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

FOOD AND FEAST IN THE ARTHURIAN WORLD

4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ARTHURIAN SOCIETY, NORDIC
BRANCH, 4TH–6TH MAY 2022

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



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FOOD AND FEAST

Feasting is very much at the core of courtly ideals and courtly life and plays a crucial role in Arthurian and other courtly narratives. Splendid banquets with a cornucopia of luxury dishes are indispensable in this context, as is shiny tableware of glass and gold, proper attire, suitable entertainment, lots of servants and, most importantly, refined table manners. Together, they take the social event of a courtly meal to the highest possible level, turning it into a performative and interactive show of power, splendour and ethics of the elite.

The conference addresses the topic of *food and feast* with a set of perspectives:

1. A multi-disciplinary approach that invites contributions from various fields, such as literary studies, history, art history, archaeology, food history and so forth
2. A focus on the Nordic versions of Arthurian and other courtly romances and their Icelandic sequels within their European context, thus welcoming comparative contributions
3. A theoretical interest in the wider social and cultural frames of the phenomenon

The conference will be held in Bergen, at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and at the University of Bergen.

Contact the Organising Committee

If you have any questions or concerns during the conference or cannot find a venue, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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Getting Around

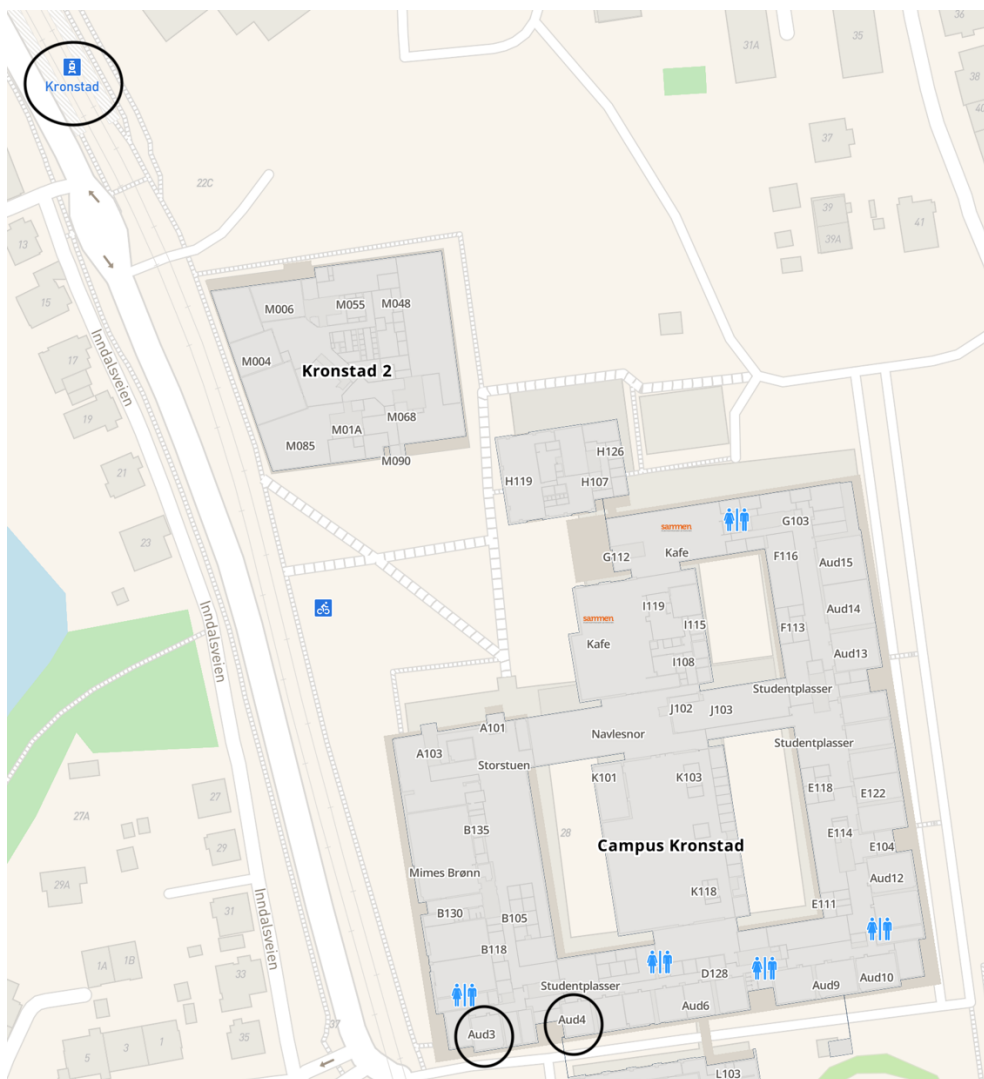
You will find it convenient to use the Bybane (Light Rail) to travel between the airport, your hotel and the conference sites, particularly on Wednesday and Friday. The website for the travel planner can be found here: <https://www.skyss.no/en/> Public transport information can also be found on Google Maps. Should you wish to take more than 5 single trips, it is cheaper to buy a weekly ticket.

The airport stop is called "Bergen lufthavn, Bergen". The innermost town centre stop is called "Byparken, Bergen". The stop closest to Høgskulen på Vestlandet (for Wednesday and Friday) is called "Kronstad, Bergen". The University of Bergen (for Thursday) is in walking distance from the town centre. Should you need to take bus to the university, the stop closest to the venue is called "Møhlenpris, Bergen".

LOCATION WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY (HVL)

On Wednesday and Friday we will be at Høgskulen på Vestlandet (HVL) (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences). Take the light rail to the stop called Kronstad (circled on the top left of the map).

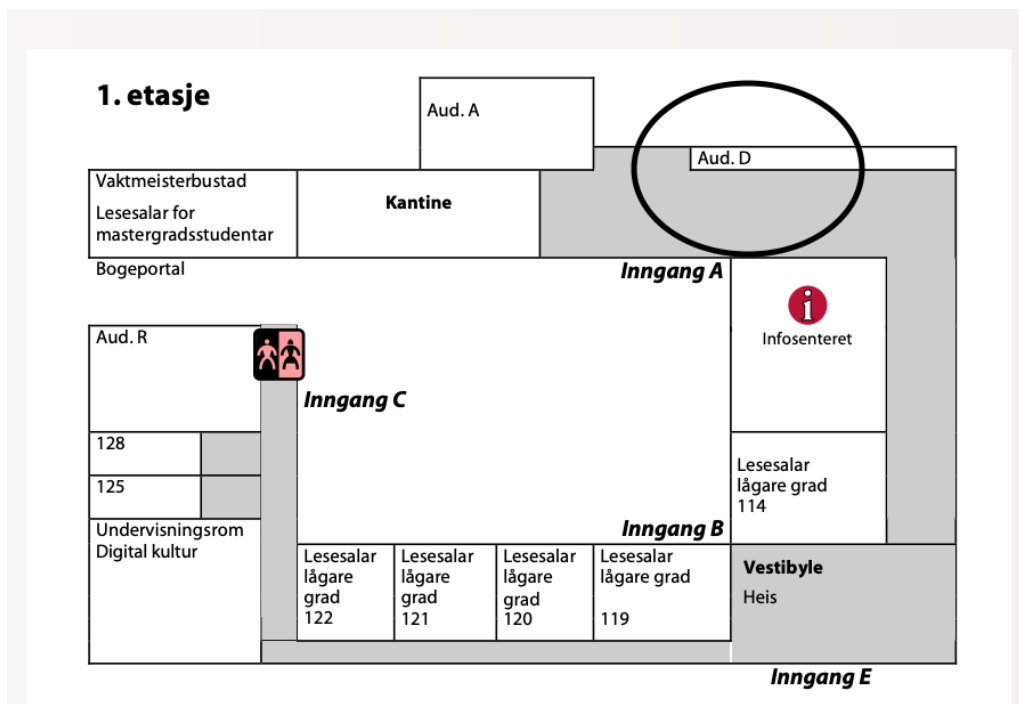
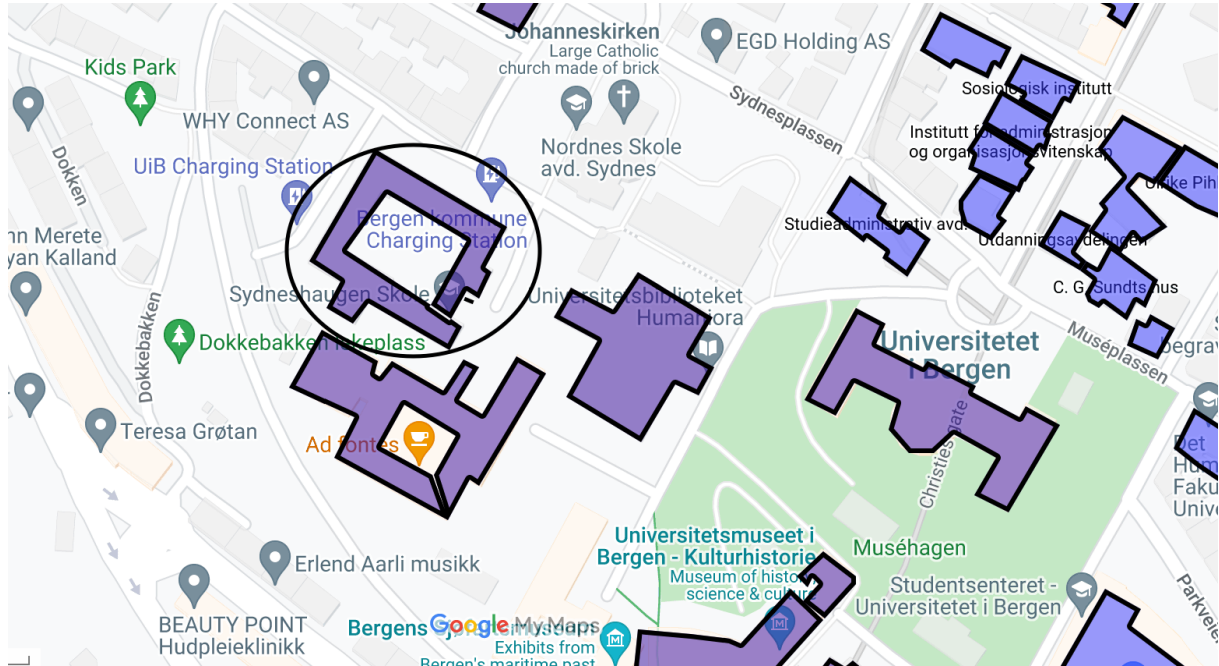
On Wednesday we will be in Room C115, circled on the map as "Aud4". On Thursday we will be in Room C121, circled on the map as "Aud3". Both rooms are on level 1 of the building.



LOCATION THURSDAY (UIB)

On Thursday, the conference will be held at the University of Bergen (UiB). The venue will be in a section of the university called “Sydneshaugen skole” (Sydnesplassen 9), circled on map one below.

The room on Thursday will be Auditorium D, circled on the second map below, on the first floor of the building.



PROGRAMME

Wednesday (4th May, HVL C115/Aud4)

12.00–14.00 Arrivals

14.00–14.15 Welcome

Keynote Chair: Heidi Støa (HVL)

14.15–15.00 H  l  ne T  trel (Universit   de Rouen): *The Instrumentarium in the Riddaras  gur: Remarks on a Literary Motive*

15.00–15.20 Coffee Break

Session A (A Test Case: *M  ttuls saga*) Chair: Jens Eike Schnall (UiB)

15.20–15.50 Carla Sch  ffler (University of Bergen): *The Depiction of Feasts and Food in M  ttuls saga and Erex saga in Comparison to their Old French Originals*

15.50–16.20   sd  s R. Magn  sd  ttir (H  sk  li   slands): *The Test of Fidelity – Or How to Spoil a Feast at Arthur’s Court*

16.20–16.40 Break

16.40–17.10 Ingvil Br  gger Budal (HVL): *Cloaks and Buttons: Feasts as Scenes for Female Frivolity*

17.10–17.40 Jonathan Y.H. Hui (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore): *Romancing the Giant’s Wedding-Feast: The Arthurianisation of the Prymr Myth in Samsons saga fagra*

Thursday (5th May, UiB Sydneshaugen skole Aud D)

Keynote Chair: Ingvil Brügger Budal (HVL)

10.15–11.00 Bjørn Bandlien (University of South-Eastern Norway): *Arthurian Materiality in Medieval Scandinavia*

11.00–11.15 Coffee Break

Session B (Frugality and Luxury) Chair: Ingvil Brügger Budal (HVL)

11.15–11.45 Margrete Figenschou Simonsen (University of Oslo): *Fish for the Cistercians – Fishing and Fish Farming at Hovedøya Monastery, Oslo*

11.45–12.15 Helmut W. Klug (University of Graz): *Show and Surprise Dishes in (German) Medieval Cuisine*

12.15–12.45 Victor Barabino (Université de Caen Normandie): *Influences from Arthurian Romances in the Food Symbolism of the Riddarasögur*

12.45–14.00 Lunch

Project Presentation Chair: Helen F. Leslie-Jacobsen (UiB)

14.00–14.45 Marianne Vedeler (University of Oslo): *The Impact of Food Culture in Medieval Towns (FOODIMPACT)* (<https://www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/foodimpact/>)

14.45–15.00 Break

Session C (Feasts and Violence) Chair: Helen F. Leslie-Jacobsen (UiB)

15.00–15.30 Alban Gautier (Université de Caen Normandie): *The Feast of the Long Knives From 'Nennius' Onwards*

15.30–16.00 Heidi Støa (HVL): *Feast, Battle, and Description in Middle English Arthurian Romance*

16.00–16.30 Michael Lawson (University of California, Berkeley): *Weaponizing the Feast: Ritualized Performance as a Social Metric in Clári saga*

19.00 Conference dinner (Bien Centro, Nordahl Bruns gate 9)

Friday (6th May, HVL C121/Aud3)

Session D (Manners and Emotions) Chair: David Brégaint (NTNU)

- 10.15–10.45 Sabine Walther (University of Bonn): *Feasts, Emotions and Love in Trójumanna saga and Breta sögur*
- 10.45–11.15 Jens Eike Schnall (University of Bergen): *Meals and Morals: Table Manners in the Arthurian World*
- 11.15–11.45 John W. Flattun (University of Bergen): *A Foxy Feast: Justice, Chivalry, and Good Manners in Reynard the Fox*
- 11.45–12.00 Break
- 12.00–12.30 Discussion, Future Plans and Closing Words
- 12.30– Lunch / Departure

ABSTRACTS

NOTES

Hélène Tétrel (Université de Rouen): *The Instrumentarium in the Riddarasögur: Remarks on a Literary Motive*

In the *riddarasögur*, feasts and celebrations at court are largely ritualized. Dates, places, speeches and type of festive activities seem to correspond to a codified description. One of the recurring elements of this ritual is the so-called *instrumentarium*, the list of musical instruments performed at court. This motive has been studied in French and Occitan literature by musicologist and linguist Pierre Bec. In the present study, I shall study the resurgence of this motive in three translated works: *Breta Sögur*, *Strengleikar* and *Karlamagnússaga*.

Carla Schäffler (University of Bergen): *The Depiction of Feasts and Food in Möttuls saga and Erex saga in Comparison to their Old French Originals*

During the thirteenth century, Norway was reigned by one of its most famous leaders, known by the name of King Hákon Hákonarson, who ruled over his kingdom from the years 1217 to 1263. His reign was characterized by his efforts to evolve the Norwegian people, especially his court, into a more cultured and chivalrous society, modelled after the French and English court. This agenda was to be achieved by the import and translation of foreign literature, such as Old French texts and poems, which partly acted as templates for the desired chivalrous behaviour of the Norwegian court. These translations of the texts are known as the Old Norse literary genre of the translated *riddarsögur*. Two popular sagas belonging to said genre are the *Möttuls saga* and *Erex saga*, which will form the Old Norse literary corpus of my paper. The former is a translation of the Old French text *Le lai du cort mantel*, which is also known as *Le Mantel mautaillié*, whereas the latter is stemming from Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide*. Both of these Old French texts form the other half of the used literary corpus.

However, when studied closely, the Old Norse translations, as well as the Old French originals offer very different approaches to the depiction of food and feasts. In the *Möttuls saga*, there is only one episode properly including a feast and the meals it offers. But even though this is only a single incident, its account on the festivities and food of the Christian holiday Pentecost, the table set up and King Arthur's reluctance to eat before hearing any news is one of the most thorough depictions in the translated *riddarsögur*. This description varies quite strongly with the correlating passage in *Le lai du cort mantel*. In the lai, the author is simply offering a few lines concerning the feast, thereby providing an only very general idea of it. These depictions however, are reversed in comparison to *Erex saga* and *Erec et Enide*. Where Chrétien goes into lavish detail when describing meals, their presentation and other festivities, the translator of *Erex saga* reverts to a mere laconic mentioning of a feast, not even giving any information of which food is offered. He only seems to give a detailed account on the number, name and rank of the attending nobility.

With this in mind, the aim of my paper is to conduct a thorough analysis of the depiction of feasts and food in the aforementioned texts and how these descriptions vary from each. The subsequent results will then be used to provide an explanation, as to why specifically the comparison between *Möttuls saga* and *Erex saga* render such different results.

Ásdís R. Magnúsdóttir (Háskóli Íslands): *The Test of Fidelity – Or How to Spoil a Feast at Arthur’s Court*

The assembly of knights at king Arthur’s court is often characterised by the arrival of an unknown guest, a request or a departure leading to an unexpected event. In two short Arthurian texts from the end of the 12th century, *Le Lai du cor* and *Le Manteau mal taillé*, this unexpected event takes place at the court. Through the use of an enchanted drinking-horn in *Le Lai du cor* and a magic mantle in *Le Manteau mal taillé*, the test of fidelity reveals the unfaithfulness of the women present at Arthur’s court on the occasion of a religious festival when the court gathers to celebrate and honour the king. These are the first known manifestations of the so-called test of fidelity in European literature.

Written in prose, the Old Norse *Möttuls saga* is a lyrical translation of the French *Le Manteau mal taillé*. The translation of *Möttuls saga* is usually related to the translation activity associated with king Hákon’s court and the king is mentioned in the last lines of the prologue where the translator states that Hákon asked him to provide some entertainment for the court. In Iceland the saga inspired *Skikkjurímur*, a fourteenth-century metrical version of *Möttuls saga* which although remaining close to the basic plot of *Möttuls saga* contains several additions and other significant changes. The mantle and its fabrication are also mentioned in the chivalric *Samsons saga fagra*. On the other hand, *Le Lai du cor* does not seem to have found its way to Scandinavia. However, enchanted drinking-horns and drinking contests can be found in Icelandic legendary sagas where they are not related to unfaithful wives or lovers but to strength, endurance and sovereignty.

Even if the public humiliation of those concerned – the men who spill the drink in *Le Lai du cor* and the women who try on the mantle in *Le Mantel mal taillé* – is narrated in a comic way, the test and its consequences challenge the order and the stability of the court. The king’s reputation is also concerned by the outcome of the test. This specific intrusion of *feerie* remains rare in the Arthurian romances and provides a particularly misogynic representation of Arthur’s court. In this paper the test of fidelity will be studied in regard to its origin and playful, yet serious role in these two French texts, as well as in the Old Norse *Möttuls saga* and the Icelandic *Skikkju rímur*.

Ingvil Brügger Budal (HVL): *Cloaks and Buttons: Feasts as Scenes for Female Frivolity*

A marvelous and magical cloak brought to king Arthur's court by a mysterious stranger, is a chastity test, revealing sexual preferences of the court ladies of in *Mottuls saga*. The chattering ladies of *Leikara líóð* declares that nothing would have been done, and no man would have been worth a button, "were it not for their desire for the cunt". This paper will investigate the narratives of courtly feasts of Pentecost and Saint Pantelion as scenes for exposure and female frivolity.

Jonathan Y.H. Hui (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore): *Romancing the Giant's Wedding-Feast: The Arthurianisation of the Þrymr Myth in Samsons saga fagra*

Samsons saga fagra ('The Saga of Samson the Fair'), a late fourteenth-century romance, is one of very few medieval Icelandic texts in which Old Norse myth openly meets Arthurian legend. Previous scholarship has identified the saga's clear borrowings from the French fabliau *Le mantel mautailié* ('The Ill-Fitting Mantle') via the fabliau's Norse translation, *Möttuls saga* ('The Saga of the Mantle'), primarily with regard to the chastity-testing mantle. What has escaped scholars' notice so far, however, is the fact that *Samsons saga* does not simply borrow the Arthurian chastity mantle with minor adaptation. In addition to repurposing the mantle for a non-Arthurian setting and retaining its chastity-testing function while turning it into the object of a retrieval quest, *Samsons saga* also notably embeds the motif within the narrative context of a prominent Norse myth, namely the wedding-feast of Þrymr, best known from the eddic poem *Þrymskviða* ('The Lay of Þrymr'), but also attested in the fifteenth-century set of *rímur* known as *Þrymlur*, whose composition was roughly contemporary with that of the saga. The proposed paper would examine the fusion of these two traditions – the giant's wedding-feast and the chastity-testing mantle – to explore how the thematic resonances and confluences between the mythological tale and the Arthurian motif allow for the combinative reappropriation of both within a romance context. In so doing, it would provide rare insight into the understudied question of the influence of Norse myth on later medieval Icelandic romance, and it would thereby provide further illumination – in hitherto unidentified ways – of the vast potential of the Icelandic genre of romance to serve as a melting pot of European narrative traditions.

Bjørn Bandlien (University of South-Eastern Norway): *Arthurian Materiality in Medieval Scandinavia*

Some of the key concepts of Arthurian literature seem to be more or less absent in medieval Scandinavia. This includes for instance the Round Table: Apparently, the tables of the Scandinavian élite remained firmly square. The shape of the material tables even at royal feasts has been interpreted by scholars as a sign that the ideas and ideals of the imported Arthurian literature did not make much impact on courtly identities. However, there is much more to an Arthurian feast than the table, for instance the cutlery, drinking horns and the clothing of the participants. Archaeological excavations have revealed many such objects in recent years. Moreover, testaments and inventories offer glimpses of a material culture that relates to the textual world of epic and romances. This lecture will discuss how such objects of feast and food animated courtly practice with allusions to the translated *riddarasögur*.

Margrete Figenschou Simonsen (University of Oslo): *Fish for the Cistercians – Fishing and Fish Farming at Hovedøya Monastery, Oslo*

The Cistercian Monastery at Hovedøya was founded in 1147 on an island in the inner Oslofjord just outside the nearby Medieval town. The Monastery survived for nearly four hundred years until it was set on fire and abandoned just before the Reformation. Fish was an important food resource for the Cistercian monks at Hovedøya, besides vegetarian food. The monastery owned, or had fishing rights to, over 40 different sites and fisheries in South East Norway, consisting of inland lakes, waterfalls and rivers and fishing grounds in the fjord. At first they fished for their own needs, before also selling fish commercially. In one year, the catch of the salmon fish (*Salmo salar*) alone measured several tons. These monks also practiced fish farming, of freshwater fish, locally. The Cistercians had two fishponds on the mainland, just outside the Medieval town, today only preserved in the name Munkedammen. Demand for fish was increasing after the second half of the twelfth century, as fish was becoming a part of the Cistercian daily food. As a general rule, it was also important for the fish to be as fresh as possible for eating. At Hovedøya, there is one fishpond which still exists today, a circular pond with a diameter of around 18 meters. Recent GPR surveys show traces of what may be one additional pond, hidden under thick layers of soil. A complex system of drainage ditches led from the Monastery down to and between the fishponds. The fish farmed were fresh water fish and most probably the crucian carp (*Carassius carassius*), but perhaps also other species such as pike (*Esox lucius*). White fish such as these were prized as food, with pike especially considered healthy and used as a cure for illness. Fish was also important for other people, who wanted to live according to the church rules. The religious elite outside the monasteries, as well as the nobility in Medieval society, were active in fish farming and also kept fish in ponds. Structures interpreted as fishponds in Norway have been identified at the King's castle in Bergenhus, the Archbishop's palace in Trondheim and his castle in Steinvikholmen, the Østraat manor and in the Dominican monastery of St Olav in Oslo, which includes a reconstructed fishpond. The fishponds served two different purposes, either producing and raising fish, referred to as a *vivarium*, or for storing fish for consumption nearby, referred to as a *servatorium* or *piscine*.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, a copper sink was preserved in the abbey's kitchen. Today, only a tube-like hole in the wall remains. In the fall of 2020, the project FOODIMPACT undertook an archaeological excavation at Hovedøya. On the outside of the kitchen, in an area where waste material was flushed out into a drainage ditch, two test pits were dug. The excavation has revealed some interesting organic material, including a great number of bones from different fish types as well as animal bones. The questions raised abound. What does the bone material outside the kitchen consists of? Are the bones from the locally farmed crucian carp or other types of fish, and how did this compare to the written sources? Do the different species relate to different periods of time? Does the kitchen waste represent only the order's members and lay brothers, or did other people eat at the abbey? We are now preparing the samples and awaiting for analysis to be complete to find out.

In this paper, I will focus on the Cistercians' relationship to fish, both as food and as an important economical resource. The aim is also to give a better insight into the diet at Hovedøya Abbey in the Medieval times, based on new archaeological finds.

Helmut W. Klug (University of Graz): *Show and Surprise Dishes in (German) Medieval Cuisine*

A contemporary feast without food is just as unimaginable, as a medieval feast that does not include one or more show or surprise dishes. The joy of food transformation, the play with colors and shapes, and the surprise effect of the unexpected can be imagined while reading the many surviving recipes of German medieval cuisine. An earthworm dish, a crowing roasted cock, a pig's head spewing flames, or the inevitable pastry with live birds spurs the guest's imagination: guests should be deceived, shocked, entertained. Just as music, theater, or fight scenes this was part of the entertainment of medieval banquets. A rich host and a crafted chef could bring forward a succession of courses and dishes that even found their way into annals to be handed down over the centuries. Also authors of literary texts take up this topic and similar exciting descriptions are incorporated in chivalric romances.

The fantasy of chefs throughout Europe ranged from fancy preparation methods (a fish prepared in three different ways) over luxurious ingredients (silver or gold plated dishes) to architecturally constructed dishes (a necklace, a tiled stove, a castle, an animal enclosure). The creativity in the conception as well as the artful processing of the ingredients provided surprise and amazement in equal measure. These illusions of the chefs have been handed down in various European recipes. They are found in German-language recipes, but also in Latin, English, and French, and even in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese traditions. A supraregional practice of imitating extraculinary concepts in the festive culture of medieval Europe can be witnessed. Thus it was also part of the feasts described in the courtly romances.

With this presentation I want to give a brief overview of the category 'surprise dish' in German medieval cuisine from a culinary historian's point of view. I will attempt a systematisation, and compare it to other European traditions, following the lines of argument provided by these research questions: What exactly is a 'surprise dish'? On the basis of a definition, can surprise dishes be categorized? How are surprise dishes handed down in other language traditions than German? What kind of surprise dishes are described in medieval literature (with a focus on the Arthurian World) and how do they relate to real world sources?

Victor Barabino (Université de Caen Normandie): *Influences from Arthurian Romances in the Food Symbolism of the Riddarasögur*

Stylistic and thematic influences between the *riddarasögur* and the romances that inspired them is a highly debated topic, but it has yet to be studied through the lens of food symbolism. In so-called “transcribed” *riddarasögur*, such as *Ívens saga*, *Parcevals saga* and *Erex saga*, food served at feasts or eaten in other circumstances is seldom described. There has been a hypothesis about *sagnamenn* lacking understanding of the original texts, as in the emblematic case of the holy Grail (Álfrún Gunnlaugsdóttir, 1985). In most cases, we can notice a reduction from the original Arthurian romances to a minimum of indications about food and drink, be it at the Round Table or in other instances of meals in the *riddarasögur*.

But in addition to these misunderstandings and lacks, the *riddarasögur* sometimes mention details about food that are not present in the original “*matière de Bretagne*”. This is particularly the case in original Icelandic *riddarasögur* which are not direct transcriptions of Arthurian romances, such as *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss ok Gestis*, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis* and *Mírmans saga*. From cabbage soup to trolls’ cuisine, these original *riddarasögur* create a food world of their own, whose symbolism, based on local Icelandic and Scandinavian cooking habits and myths, can be explored in comparison to that of Arthurian romances.

As a matter of fact, in all of these *riddarasögur* as in the original Arthurian romances, food bears symbolic meanings and signals the statuses of individuals (A. Guerreau-Jalabert, 1992). Food could reinforce relationships, particularly a form of “brotherhood”, between knights and confirm their status (A. Gautier, 2006). But a feast could also take place after a young knight had accomplished something admirable. Food is presented as what gives knights physical strength as well as moral courage to accomplish heroic deeds, but it can also serve as a reward for these feats after they are achieved. There is in particular a topos on women serving such rewards in food, sometimes as part of “nutritive couples” composed of a lord and his wife. Food thus becomes a resource for chivalric behaviour and recognition, a symbolic conception that we will trace back to the Arthurian heritage of the *riddarasögur*.

Alban Gautier (Université de Caen Normandie): The Feast of the Long Knives From ‘Nennius’ Onwards

Chapters 45 and 46 of pseudo-Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum* tell the highly colourful story of the ‘Feast of long knives’: in the middle of a festive meal which they shared with Vortigern and three hundred British nobles, Hengest and his Saxon warriors drew their knives and each of them killed the man who sat next to him. Maybe the most salient feature of this brutal story is the use of a vernacular Old English phrase – *Eu nimet saxas! Take your long knives!* – as a signal from Hengest to his men. The very word *saxas*, which denotes a specific kind of one edged blade (so-called ‘scramasax’), well-known through archaeological research, also evokes the actual name of the Saxons: *saxas* are quintessentially the Saxons’ weapons. Another important aspect is the moral and political opprobrium attached to the exercise of violence in the normally peaceful setting of the feast: Hengest’s treachery is reinforced by the fact that it takes place at the king’s table and during the king’s feast.

In this paper, I first propose to compare (shortly) this striking narrative, absent from Gildas’s and Bede’s accounts, to other, more or less contemporary, accounts of violence and use of concealed weapons during feasts, mostly drawn from early medieval Insular literature and legislation: though the feast is normally conceived as a space of peace, numerous violent events are recorded or prevented from happening. [I actually consider dropping this first part of my paper if the material for the second part proves to be abundant enough for a twenty-minutes presentation.]

In the second (longer) part of my paper, I propose to retrace and study the variations of this narrative in Arthurian and non-Arthurian literature from the eleventh to the thirteenth century – for example in works such as the Irish *Lebor Bretnach*, William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta regum Anglorum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Brittonum*, Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, Matthew Paris’s *Chronica maiora*, and the Icelandic *Breta sögur*; the story is also alluded to in the Welsh Triads. Through processes of translation, adaptation and amplification, the narrative went on growing, and though it kept its fundamental structure, it took on new details – names for previously anonymous participants, more precise locations (e.g. at Amesbury) and settings, new twists in the story that transformed the brutal and one-sided massacre into an epic fight. In particular, I wish to observe how the initially central detail of the ‘Saxon *saxas*’ was retained, transformed or taken away from the various accounts, as the story moved through different periods, genres and languages.

Heidi Støa (HVL): *Feast, Battle, and Description in Middle English Arthurian Romance*

In this paper, I focus on descriptions of feasts and battles in the Northern Middle English Arthurian corpus, in particular the romances *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* and *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Arthur*. I explore two interrelated issues: the connections between feast and battle in these Northern romances and the similarities in language used to narrate these events. Why do demonstrations of civility and hospitality—feasts—so often appear in the same language of spectacular materiality and opulence as violent battles? Obviously, feasts and battles both participate in the romances' construction (and occasional deconstruction) of chivalric codes and behaviors. They also contribute to the increasing use of spectacle and magnificence to build elite power in late medieval English society, a practice that is often seen to be subversively critiqued in late Middle English romance. Is the language used for these scenes then part of a larger political critique of elite excess, or are they rather part of an elite investment in that excess?

As part of this larger question, I discuss the kind of description afforded to these kinds of spectacular social events in these romances (and in other romances in the Northern Middle English Arthurian corpus). Scholars have often noted the extremely elaborate descriptive passages in the Northern Middle English romance corpus, tying the preference for such description to the alliterative meter these romances are written in. My paper takes up this scholarship but redirects these questions towards asking what effects the descriptions have on the reader, framed by recent discussions of vividness and charisma in art historical work.

Thus, my paper explores a common feature of medieval texts, *description*, as producer of textual charisma – work that focuses on, but extends beyond, the late Middle English corpus. Focusing on descriptions of feasts and battles that employ similar narrative strategies, I argue that such vivid description is related to (and sometimes synonymous with) *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*, highly persuasive rhetorical strategies that aim to make words 'come alive' for another person. As Ruth Webb notes, such vivid language "penetrate[s]" and even "shape[s]" the hearer's mind. Focusing on alliterative descriptions of spectacular feasts and battles, I develop a framework for thinking about the descriptive language used to narrate these events, the connections between them, and their persuasive effects on the reader, as well as whether that reader is meant to condone or critique these instances of material and social excess.

Michael Lawson (University of California, Berkeley): *Weaponizing the Feast: Ritualized Performance as a Social Metric in Clári saga*

Medieval tales of courtly romance often indulge in descriptions of extravagant banquets held in celebration among the royal courts of northern Europe. These marvelous repasts were a method of marking different points of the year, demonstrating the munificence and opulence of a sovereign's court, celebrating marital unions, and occasions to relax and distract oneself from the banalities of daily life. Though these gatherings were primarily held to convey merriment, they additionally served a distinct political function for their hosts. By carefully observing the behavior of their court, these celebrations provided a theater for those who held them to measure the refinement of their attendants. For discerning lords, the actions of the individuals who participated in the ritual of the feast represented a reflection of their own success as rulers, for a court is truly only as grand as its reputation. For most attendees, the pomp and gaiety of such occasions offered opportunities to perform their courtesy for an audience as well as to craft the noblest image of themselves possible. However, with this prospect came risk in equal measure. Inasmuch as it was used as a predictor of courtly etiquette, the feast could also be effectively weaponized by shrewd hosts, as the stringent codes of conduct prescribed within idealized courtly behavior could be used to distinguish those possessing the desired traits of courtesy from those who did not. Indeed, the individuals who frequented these events did so at the risk of their very reputation if they proved inadequate in their demonstration of refinement. One such example of how this metric could be used against an individual can be witnessed in the late medieval Icelandic romance *Clári saga*. In this tale, the eponymous protagonist is judged by his table manners during a feast held in his honor and is determined to be woefully lacking. While being handed a soft-boiled egg, Prince Clárus of Saxland is unable to hold onto it and inadvertently spills the yolk down his costly silken tunic, leaving an obvious and unsightly stain. This assumed breach in dining decorum prompts his host to call into question his breeding, his status as a gentleman, and, by insinuation, his sexual capabilities. This arguably harsh pronouncement is made even more baleful in the context of the prince's motivation for visiting the court of France, as his intention was to ask for the hand of this host, the Princess Séréna. The princess uses the inability of the young lord to perform satisfactorily in this highly structured act as an excuse to forcibly expel him from her tower, unwashed, unengaged, and ashamed. The spilled yolk can, therefore, be interpreted as more than just a tangible stain on his tunic but also as a metaphorical blemish on his reputation, equally symbolic with his emasculation at the hands of his host. By examining this scene in *Clári saga*, I argue that the literary representations of feasts can be viewed as barometers of the proper social ethics that medieval writers envisioned as being vital to the success of a royal court and that these values—whether real or imagined—allowed the ritual performance of the feast to serve as an expedient overture to dramatic narrative events.

Sabine Walther (University of Bonn): *Feasts, Emotions and Love in Trójumanna saga and Breta sögur*

Sagas of Antiquity stand in the tradition of the romans antiques that display knightly ideals. *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur*, being transmitted together and following each other chronologically, manifest the union between Antiquity and the Arthurian world forged in the Middle Ages. Seven love stories run through both sagas. In several cases, feasts are the occasion for first glances between future couples or the development of emotions. A number of these love stories are told with the help of Ovid's *Heroides*, letters of women to their absent lovers: Medea and Jason, Hercules and Deianira, Helen and Paris, Dido and Aeneas. Others are added independently of Ovid: Uther and Igerna as well as Modreið and Guenuere.

The paper will look at the narrative depiction of these feasting scenes in both sagas and interpret them looking at the Ovidian influence, *Roman de Troie* as well as Arthurian romances. The paper aims to describe the specificity of the narrative discourse on feasting and the development of emotions and love in *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur*. Generally spoken, food and feast play a lesser role in both sagas than in the foreign models. Sometimes feasts are omitted entirely; in other cases – apparently, when females and love play a role – they are retained. Insofar, it seems worthwhile analyzing these rare scenes to discover the transfer of new concepts from the European centers to Norway and Iceland as well as asking where this literature belongs within the Norwegian and Icelandic societies.

Jens Eike Schnall (University of Bergen): *Meals and Morals: Table Manners in the Arthurian World*

The main focus of my paper lies on scenes of food consumption in Arthurian and other courtly narratives from the medieval North. These scenes will be analysed and discussed in the light of (1) their European counterparts and (2) descriptive and normative texts on table manners. The backdrop of normative texts illustrates the ideals and expectations connected to the social setting of a cultivated meal — courtly table manners function as a lens: they allow, e.g., for the display of an individual's courtly bearing, they show how to relate to elements of courtly material culture such as specific dishes and tableware, and they include the aspects of socializing and communication within the elite. I will show how narrative texts can dynamize the potential, transform it into a play with signs, and thereby engage the audience.

John W. Flattun (University of Bergen): *A Foxy Feast: Justice, Chivalry, and Good Manners in Reynard the Fox*

At the feast of the Pentecost, one of the high feasts of the medieval Church, Lion the King had summoned his court for a feast, all beasts came, great and small, all except Reynard the Fox. In an age of chivalry and good manners, heroes formed the idealised crowd to be invited to the great feasts and roundtables. The Arthurian knights were a force for good and King Arthur the image of justice (Bedwell 2011), from Geoffroi de Charny's *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry* the opening creed tells the knight: "there can be no evil only good" (de Charny 2005, 47). During his coronation Arthur proclaims that he should "be a true king, to stand with true justice" (Malory 2008, 11). There is also the near evil and villainous 'other', the rebel and anti-hero and trickster, and in the fabled allegories we meet the infamous Reynard the Fox. The stories of Reynard were political and religious commentaries, from their first Dutch presentation in the 1100s, the part mock-heroic part deceitful trickster figure, familiar from the beast-epic from Aesop. Together with Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485) and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1476), *The Historie of Reynard the Fox* (1481) were among William Caxton's most famous printings.

The apparent need for a contemporary political and judicial commentary on the social politics of late medieval England might point to reasons for the book's publication amid a raging war between the two houses of Lancaster and York and suggest an emphasis on good council in a time of clerical and judicial corruption. As Caxton proclaims in his prologue, calling the stories of Reynard a history of «goode lernynge», adding: «this booke is maad for nede and prouffyte of alle god folke», not so that the stories should tempt the reader to use and follow them, but «kepe hym from the subtyl false shrewis that they be not deceuyd». The topics concerning food and greed are juxtaposed with corruption, violence, and bad advice, in a dark mirror of the Arthurian knights, Reynard and his fellow animals display the social interaction in a self-obsessed and lawless world. The allegories of law and politics across Malory, Chaucer, and *Reynard* where powerful commentaries on society in late medieval England, as medieval political allegories depend on an understanding of contemporary cultural memory to function as rhetoric, visual and or textual (Astell 2002, 23).

In this presentation I intend to look at the trickster figure in Caxton's editions of *Reynard* and *Morte Darthur* in the context of legal and political allegories and idea of chivalry and good manners. I will focus particularly on the characterisation of the legal court scenes and discuss the way justice and advice is given and are part of a cultural depiction.

NOTES

