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EMOTIONS IN MEDIEVAL
ARTHURIAN LITERATURE
BODY, MIND, VOICE

Edited by
Frank Brandsma, Carolyne Larrington and
Corinne Saunders

D. S. BREWER

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*Translating Emotion: Vocalisation and Embodiment
in Yvain and Ívens saga**

SIF RIKHARDSDOTTIR

In Chrétien's *Yvain*, Laudine, the mourning widow, cries out, faints, claws at herself and tears out her hair at the death of her husband, Esclados the Red.¹ In *Laxdæla saga*, one of the Icelandic sagas, on the other hand, the heroine, Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir, smiles as one of her husband's killers uses her shawl to wipe the blood off the weapon that killed her husband. We in fact see no evidence of grief on her part until twelve years later, when she goads her sons to avenge the killing of their father by taunting them with their father's bloody clothes. There is not a single exclamation of grief: no tears, no fainting, nor any other visible signs of sorrow.² In *Brennu-Njáls saga*, one of the better-known sagas, another heroine, Hallgerðr Höskuldsdóttir, similarly laughs at the news of her husband's slaying before sending the perpetrator to her father, where he will be killed himself.³ How does one reconcile such different demonstrations of emotional behaviour when comparing one cultural realm to the other – or are these two scenes as different as one might believe?

Some might argue here that I am comparing apples and oranges by juxtaposing scenes from a French romance with examples from the Icelandic sagas. Yet it is precisely in the comparison between the two that the cultural premise of emotional representation can be most fruitfully explored. If the saga examples represent a particular (cultural or literary) mode of feminine bereavement behaviour, how would the distinctly different performance of the French heroine be transmitted

* The initial research for this chapter was completed while the author was a Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and was funded by a research project grant from the Icelandic Research Fund.

¹ *Le Chevalier au Lion ou Le Roman d'Yvain*, ed. D. F. Hult (Paris, 1994), ll. 1150–61. Quotations from the French text will be cited with the relevant line numbers following the quotation in the text.

² *Laxdæla saga*, ed. E. Ó. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 5 (Reykjavík, 1934), p. 168 and pp. 179–81.

³ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. E. Ó. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík, 1954), pp. 50–51.

and received?⁴ While the saga material by no means comprises the only literature read or enjoyed by Icelandic medieval audiences, the examples cited are nevertheless representative of the type of literary material that was being written and copied alongside the translated romance material and later indigenous romances.

The topic of this chapter is the translatability of literary representation of emotion across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The central premise is that of the stability of emotional representation and categorisation across cultures. If emotions are to a great extent culturally defined, and therefore unstable and shifting, how does one translate emotional behaviour for an audience that conceives those emotions (or the literary representation of a particular emotion) differently? Furthermore, if emotional representation is dependent on linguistic structures, how does the translator convey the emotive undercurrents of his material within the new signifying system? This chapter considers Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and its Norse translation, *Ívens saga*, and the complexities of translingual and transcultural emotion and emotion research.

The Cultural Contingency of Emotion

Yvain was most likely translated around the mid-thirteenth century in Norway as part of a large importation of French materials at the court of King Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263).⁵ We do not know precisely what sort of literary materials the original audience might have been familiar with, although these most likely consisted of religious texts, sagas of kings, heroic legends and even possibly some Icelandic saga material. The Norse translation has, however, only been preserved in Iceland, where it was copied well into the nineteenth century. The three extant primary manuscripts stem from the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶ One can assume, based on the close connections between the two countries and evidence of familiarity with the material early on in Iceland, that the story

⁴ It should be noted here that the two examples cited at the beginning of the chapter do not represent the entire spectrum of female mourning in the sagas, which ranges from the aloof reaction of Hallgerðr Höskuldsdóttir, to crying, and finally to whetting (urging family members to vengeance) in the manner of Guðrún Ósvífsdóttir. Yet they are representative in the sense that their reactions highlight a comportment that was presumably recognised by its audience as particularly meaningful within the matrix of the saga material.

⁵ For a general discussion of the transmission of French material into Norse see S. Rikhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge, 2012), and *Rittersagas: Übersetzung, Überlieferung, Transmission*, ed. J. Glauser and S. Kramarz-Bein (Tübingen, 2014), as well as C. Larrington, 'The Translated *Lais*', and other essays in *The Arthur of the North: The Arthurian Legend in the Norse and Rus' Realms*, ed. M. Kalinke (Cardiff, 2011).

⁶ For information on the manuscripts see *Ívens saga*, ed. F. W. Blaisdell, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ Series B, vol. 18 (Copenhagen, 1979), pp. xi–clv.

passed to Iceland relatively shortly after being translated in Norway. Furthermore, both translated and native romances co-existed alongside saga material (frequently in the same manuscript collections) and presumably shared reading communities. Amendments to the emotional representation in the translation process can therefore provide significant insight into how cultural and linguistic communities embody emotions, about the available emotive vocabulary and about the influence of literary conventions in emotional demonstration.

While it should be noted that medieval Icelandic writers were probably more familiar with and more immersed in continental tradition than has previously been assumed – as both Torfi Tulinius and Margaret Clunies Ross have pointed out – the Norse translation of *Yvain* nevertheless forms part of the earliest known French material translated into Norse.⁷ Moreover, just as cultures are not monolithic stable entities but multi-faceted, complex and evolving, so are literary traditions. While Icelandic literary production formed part of a larger pan-European tradition, it nevertheless had its own unique characteristics, neither stable nor uniform, but distinct nevertheless. These characteristics would, like any cultural artefact, be influenced and shaped by multiple factors, ranging from language to gender relations. Any literature produced would thus contain elements that reflected its authorial background, although this does not mean that they might not transcend these originating boundaries. Any new input, whether through translation or exposure to other linguistic or literary traditions, would thus complement the existing material, thereby reshaping and reconstructing the tradition. The new object – that is, the translated text – would by the same token reveal the impressions of being moulded by existing linguistic and literary structures and conventions.

The thirteenth-century Norse translator and later Icelandic redactors of Chrétien's *Yvain* therefore had to convey their material in a manner that would have been comprehensible to their Nordic audiences; audiences whose emotional perceptions and habits – and more importantly, conventions of literary representation of emotional behaviour – might have differed substantially from those of Chrétien's original twelfth-century aristocratic audience. Yet there is no evidence of a brazen Nordic version of Laudine, laughing in the face of her husband's killer in the manner of the saga heroines. The Norse text is in fact quite similar to the French one. There are, nevertheless, certain distinct modifications in the way in which the translator conveys the emotive content of his original that reveal the process of adaptation to different conventions. There is a

⁷ T. Tulinius, 'The Self as Other: Iceland and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages', *Gripla* 20 (2009), 199–215, and M. Clunies Ross, 'Medieval Iceland and the European Middle Ages', in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerard Wolfgang Weber*, ed. M. Dallapiazza, O. Hansen, P. M. Sørensen and Y. S. Bonnetain (Trieste, 2000), pp. 111–20.

general and overall reduction in emotional vocabulary in the Norse translation when compared with the French text.⁸ By 'emotional vocabulary' I mean words that indicate emotional content, such as 'anger' or 'angry', 'joy' or 'joyous'. The definition of such vocabulary is, however, likely to be a matter of contention.⁹ How does one define emotion words, and where does one draw the boundaries? This may again be a question of cultural prerogative. The choices here do not necessarily reflect a firm conclusion as to what should in fact be considered emotional vocabulary. A consensus is needed on how broadly one can extend the concept, but for the sake of the argument here, the definition will be non-discriminatory and refer generally to words that indicate a presumed feeling.¹⁰

In the Norse text there is a reduction both in the quantity of emotion words used and the variety of such words. The French text ascribes emotion frequently (when compared with the Norse text) and assigns an array of both positive and negative emotions to its characters. These range from pleasure, delight, joy, happiness and love, to fear, distress, shame, hate, sorrow, grief, anguish, anger and so forth.¹¹ A short example from the initial scene should suffice to reveal the extent of the author's (or scribes') attribution of emotion to his characters. The queen has retold Calogrenant's story to the king, who has promptly decided that his court

⁸ For an analysis of the emotive vocabulary of Old Norse see C. Larrington, 'Learning to Feel in the Old Norse Camelot?' *Scandinavian Studies*, special issue on 'Arthur of the North: Histories, Emotions, and Imaginations', ed. B. Bandlien, S. G. Eriksen and S. Rikhardsdottir, 87.1 (2015), 74–94.

⁹ Within the 'natural school', emotions have been quantified as a limited number of basic emotions that have a biochemical and neurological origin, generally defined as happiness, anger, sadness, surprise, fear and disgust (see, for instance, P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, 'Constants across Cultures in the Face and Emotion', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17.2 (1971), 124–9). The list is extended in P. Ekman, 'All Emotions Are Basic', in *The Nature of Emotion: Fundamental Questions*, ed. P. Ekman and R. J. Davidson (Oxford, 1994), pp. 15–19, and 'Basic Emotions', in *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*, ed. T. Dalgleish and M. Power (Chichester, 1999), pp. 45–60. While the categories of basic emotions are useful in terms of defining generalised cross-cultural behaviour traits, the limited range excludes the complex landscape of emotional behaviour, particularly as it is expressed in literature.

¹⁰ Barbara Rosenwein's approach of examining emotion words used by medieval scholars as means of accessing the vocabulary of emotion that was available to medieval writers is duly noted ('Emotion Words', in *Le sujet des émotions au Moyen Âge*, ed. D. Boquet and P. Nagy (Paris, 2009), pp. 93–106). While this approach would provide a more concrete notion of words with a definite emotive association for medieval scholars, it is unlikely that such a list could encompass the entirety of words that might have had an emotional attachment or generated feelings (nor does Rosenwein suggest it would). In the absence of such a pre-established list of emotion words, I have therefore opted for a non-discriminatory approach despite the inherent risk of superimposing modern assumptions onto these terms.

¹¹ Some of the frequently cited emotion words appearing in the French text are: 'amours' (love), 'angoisse' (anguish), 'dolour' (suffering, pain), 'joie' (joy), 'ire' (anger), 'anui' (distress, sadness, sorrow), 'paour' (fear), 'duel' (affliction, sorrow), 'mescheoir' (to fall into depression, sorrow), 'rage' (madness, furor, pain), 'melancolie' (melancholy, sadness), 'esbahir' (feel bewildered), 'mautellent' (resentment, angry), 'aimer' (to love), 'a bele chiere' (cheerful, with a radiant face), 'lié' (joyeous), 'esjoier' (to be joyeous), 'tenir chiers' (cherish, hold dearly). Cf. also Anatole Fuksas's chapter in this book.

will proceed to the fountain to observe the marvels and to do battle with the knight:

De che que li rois devisa,
 Toute la cours miex l'em prisa,
 Car mout y voloient aler
 Li baron et li bacheler.
 Mais qui qu'en soit liés et joians,
 Mesire Yvains en fu dolans,
 Qu'il en quidoit aler tous seus,
 S'en fu dolans et angousseus
 Du roi qui aler y devoit. (ll. 671–9)¹²

(And everything the king had decided
 Delighted the entire court,
 For every knight and every
 Squire was desperate to go.
 But in spite of their joy and their pleasure
 My lord Yvain was miserable,
 For he'd meant to go alone,
 And so he was sad and upset
 At the king for planning his visit.)¹³

The emotion words here ascribe emotion states or feelings to both the courtiers, who are 'liés et joians' (joyous and happy), and to Yvain, who is, on the contrary, 'angousseus' (upset) and 's'en fu dolans' (felt sad).¹⁴ The contrast between Yvain's state of mind and that of the court foregrounds the emotional incentive that underlies Yvain's decision to depart ahead of the king. Emotional states are made explicit through emotive words, rather than being inferred from characters' actions, underscoring their function as interpretative signals within the narrative fabric.

The Norse translation reveals less of the emotional life of the characters, and the range of the emotions expressed is more limited. Happiness and love are the predominant positive markers, and fear, anger and

¹² For information on the manuscripts used, see Hult's edition.

¹³ Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion*, trans. B. Raffel (New Haven, 1987), ll. 673–81. Further quotations will be cited with line numbers following the quotation in the text.

¹⁴ The difficulty in conveying medieval emotion to the modern reader becomes apparent in the English translation of the Old French verse. The translator must convey an approximate equivalence for the perceived emotion being described in the original and decide whether or not to indicate emotion where one is either hinted at or nascent in the original. The first two lines in the French example, for instance, would translate roughly as the court much appreciating (or esteeming) that which the king had decided or declared. Raffel has chosen 'delighted' to convey this, which has a stronger emotive impression than 'esteem', which conveys a sense of ethical judgement of the act. Then again, the act of appreciating a gesture by the king may well have contained feelings of delight, which would then be aptly conveyed in the translation. The necessity of making such translational choices (apparent in Raffel's excellent translation) foregrounds the instability of emotional content and its expression through language.

sorrow the main negative ones.¹⁵ The passage quoted above is shortened, and its emotive content is eliminated in the Norse translation. The narration moves directly on from the king's decision to take his court to the fountain to Yvain's departure without any comment on the court's reactions or on Yvain's feelings about the king's decision:

ok er kongr heyrðí þetta. þa sor hann ath Jnnan halfsmanadar skyldí hann heimann fara med allrí sinní hírd ok koma ath keldunní hitt seinazsta ath Jons messu. ok nu hugsadí Ivent sítt mal ok ef hann færi med kongi þa mundí Kæi spotta hans mal sem fyr ok eigi væri vist ath honum mundí þessa einvigís audít verda ok hugsadí ath hann skyldí einn samann brott fara.¹⁶

(When the king heard this, then he swore that within a half month he would leave home with all his court and come to the spring at the latest at the eve of St. John. Now Iven thought about his cause and that if he went with the king, then Kæi would mock his cause as before, and it would not be certain that this duel would be granted to him, and thought that he should go away alone.)¹⁷

The emotive words and reactions of both the court and Yvain have been eliminated in the translation (or subsequent scribal copying), yet the underlying emotional reality is nevertheless present in the scene. Yvain's concern with Kay's mockery comprises an emotive valuation. His decision to depart is thus (as before) based on a judgement that has, as its basis of reference, an emotional motivation. The underlying emotional motivation might involve desire for honour, fear of mockery and possible anger at previous derision and displeasure with the current state of affairs. Rather than being expressed, however, these emotions have to be inferred from the text. There is therefore a distinct curtailing of emotive representation.

Many of the Norse translations of French material reveal similar signs of cultural adaptation in the behaviour of the characters.¹⁸ Furthermore, such emotive behaviour is generally attributed to physiological causes:

¹⁵ The corresponding Norse words would be 'gleði' (glaðazst, glöddumst, fagnaður), 'ást' (elskaði), 'hræðsla' (ógn, hræðsla, óttadiz), 'reiði' (reiðr), 'hryggleiði' (harmr, harmfullr, hugarangr, sorg). As with the French version, the English words used to convey the meaning of the original are given with the qualification that they do not capture the entirety or the multiplicity of the meanings of the original words in their textual context. They nevertheless provide the closest equivalence and the common usage of those words.

¹⁶ *Ívens saga*, pp. 23–4. The quotation is taken from MS A, but the other versions agree generally in the textual representation of this passage. Further quotations from *Ívens saga* will be cited by page numbers in the text.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161. Foster's translation, which follows the Norse text in the edition, is used throughout. I have eliminated variant readings of the passage in the cited quotation for ease of reading. Further English translations of the Norse text will be based on Foster's translation and will be cited by page numbers following quotations.

¹⁸ See S. Rikhardsdottir, 'Bound by Culture: A Comparative Study of the Old French and Old Norse Versions of *La Chanson de Roland*', *Mediaevalia* 26.2 (2005), 243–65, and *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, particularly pp. 66–70.

that is, internal and involuntary impulses, as opposed to external and symbolic representation. This shift in the representational function of emotive behaviour calls attention to a presumed cultural preference for emotional suppression or concealment (as opposed to demonstration). At the same time it acknowledges the existence of such emotions and the self-command needed to 'overcome' them. This model of emotions is based on the medieval medical understanding of the body as 'affective' and Hippocrates' theory of the humours.¹⁹ Emotions are thus perceived to arise within the body, at times resulting in somatic reactions beyond the character's control. As Barbara Rosenwein has noted, this model has been surprisingly enduring, surviving well into the twentieth century and beyond.²⁰

The Emotive Interior and Public Masking

This apparent tendency to reduce emotional exuberance in the Norse translations evokes questions of literary precedence and cultural conventions and shifts the focus back to the saga examples. Saga literature is, of course, notorious for its lack of emotional display. The same can be said to apply to many medieval Icelandic genres, such as *konungasögur* (sagas of kings) and *fornaldarsögur* (legendary sagas). This does not imply that the sagas are devoid of feelings – quite the opposite, in fact, as they often describe dramatic events and the efforts of characters to come to terms with those events. Rather, internal emotions are frequently translated into actions, exhibited through involuntary physical reactions (reddening, swelling or sweating) or conveyed through verbal retorts that are intended to hide the emotional turmoil that evoked them. While somatic description is fairly rare in the sagas, it is nevertheless used efficiently to convey underlying emotions that the character is unable to contain or suppress.

William Ian Miller notes that emotions in the sagas must be inferred.²¹ Furthermore he considers dialogue and action to be the most frequent indicators of the emotive life of saga characters.²² While I agree with Miller's

¹⁹ For a discussion of the 'affective' body in medieval literature see, for instance, C. Saunders, 'The Affective Body: Love, Virtue and Vision in English Medieval Literature', in *The Body and the Arts*, ed. C. J. Saunders, U. Maude and J. Macnaughton (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 87–102.

²⁰ Rosenwein terms this perception of emotions the 'hydraulic model' and points out that it is in fact a direct inheritance of the medieval notions of the humours. She furthermore states that it was not until the 1960s, with developments in cognitive sciences, that it was replaced (at least within scientific circles) by a conception of emotions as 'part of a process of perception and appraisal, not forces striving for release'. See 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002), 821–45, at pp. 834 and 837.

²¹ W. I. Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), p. 111.

²² W. I. Miller, 'Emotions and the Sagas', in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. G. Pálsson (Enfield Lock, 1992), pp. 89–109, at p. 107.

observation that dialogue is a rich source for accessing the emotional life of saga characters, there is a difference in the manner in which dialogue is used to convey emotions in the French versus the Norse texts. Dialogue is, in fact, frequently used to *obscure* internal emotive life in the sagas, rather than *expressing* it as in the French romance. While the emphasis is thus on vocalisation of emotion in *Yvain*, verbal utterance is by contrast used to mask emotion in the saga examples.

The example cited at the outset of this chapter of Hallgerðr's reaction to the news of her husband's killing reveals an exchange that is designed to suppress or conceal internal emotions. Glúmr, Hallgerðr's husband, is killed after a quarrel with Hallgerðr's servant, Þjóstólfr. Þjóstólfr has made a snide remark regarding Glúmr's lack of skills and strength to do anything other than 'bröлта á maga Hallgerði' ('bounc[e] around on Hallgerd's belly').²³ Glúmr retaliates in anger, resulting in Þjóstólfr sinking his axe into Glúmr's shoulder. After Glúmr's death, Þjóstólfr removes a golden bracelet from Glúmr's body, covers it with rocks and returns to Hallgerðr:

Hallgerðr var úti ok sá, at blóðug var øxin. Hann kastaði til hennar gullhringinum. Hon mælti: 'Hvat segir þú tíðenda? eða hví er øx þín blóðug?' Hann svaraði: 'Eigi veit ek, hversu þér mun þykkja: ek segi þér víg Glúms.' 'Þú munt því valda,' segir hon. 'Svá er,' segir hann. Hon hló at ok mælti: 'Eigi ert þú engi í leiknum.'²⁴

(Hallgerd was outside and saw that his axe was bloody. He threw the gold bracelet to her.

She spoke: 'What news do you bring? Why is your axe bloody?'

He answered, 'I don't know how you'll take this, but I must tell you of the slaying of Glum.'

'You must have done it', she said.

'That's true', he said.

She laughed and said, 'You didn't sit this game out.'²⁵

The passage is devoid of emotive words and is deceptively laconic and matter-of-fact. Any emotions on behalf of the participants must be inferred through contextualisation and interpretation of their acts and the implications of their words. Hallgerðr's decision to send Þjóstólfr to her uncle Hrótr signals an underlying emotion that is hidden beneath the seemingly dispassionate discourse. Hrótr's immediate reaction of slaying Glúmr's killer reveals that he has read her action accordingly and that, even if it is not made explicit, the emotive framework for her behaviour (the desire for revenge) is legible to the saga's audience.

Hallgerðr's perplexing laughter thus becomes a pregnant symbol of an emotional interior and its public masking. The disparity between emotional

²³ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 49, and *Njal's saga*, trans. R. Cook (London, 1997), p. 32.

²⁴ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 50.

²⁵ *Njal's saga*, trans. R. Cook, p. 32.

representation in the saga context and in romance is thus located in the *function* of emotional representation. Whereas the object of the emotive discourse in the French text is to express presumed internal emotions, the retorts in saga literature seem conversely to have been intended to conceal those emotions. Once the intent is to deflect emotional communication, the discourse can no longer be considered emotive – although it can, of course, be emotional and may very well have been understood as such by its medieval audience.

This method of emotional suppression, or concealment, can be said to apply equally to the example cited at the outset of Guðrún's reaction to her husband's killing. In *Laxdæla saga*, Guðrún's husband, Bolli Þorleiksson, is killed outside their house in a retaliatory attack. After the attack, one of the killers, Helgi Harðbeinsson, walks toward Guðrún and wipes the blood of the spear with which he has just run Bolli through on the end of her shawl: 'Guðrún leit til hans ok brosti við' (Guðrun looked at him and smiled).²⁶ Rather than expressing a feeling of joy or friendliness – the cognitive function of a smile in human communication – the heroine's smile masks the presumed emotion beneath. In fact, Helgi's reaction to his companion's criticism of his cruelty reveals that he has read her smile accurately: 'Helgi bað hann eigi þat harma, – "því at ek hygg þat," segir hann, "at undir þessu blæjuhorni búi minn höfuðsbani."' (Helgi told him to spare his sympathy, 'as something tells me that my own death lies under the end of that shawl').²⁷

Miller notes that smiles in the saga realm are 'markers more often of hostility than of amiability', which suggests that literary representation of emotional signs may indeed be governed by generic conventions as well as being culturally determined.²⁸ These generic codes would thus alert the audience to the value system and emotional framework of the text in question. The use of the smile here may indeed be a literary device intended to forewarn the reader of the impending doom of the recipient, a narrative device intended to build up anticipation.²⁹ The smile may also be seen as emblematic of the suppression of emotion, a means of

²⁶ *Laxdæla saga*, ed. E. Ó. Sveinsson, p. 168, and *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*, trans. K. Kunz, in *The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection* (New York, 2001), pp. 270–421, at p. 381. The English translation has been adjusted slightly to better reflect the emotional undercurrent.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Miller, *Humiliation*, p. 96.

²⁹ Miller discusses both Hallgerðr's and Guðrún's responses to their husbands' slayings in 'Emotions and the Sagas', pp. 91–2, and later in his book *Humiliation*: see particularly pp. 94–7. For a discussion of smiles or laughter generally in the sagas see also L. S. Ai, 'The Mirthless Content of Skarphedinn's Grin', *Medium Ævum* 65.1 (1996), 101–8, and J. Le Goff, 'Laughter in *Brennu-Njáls saga*', in *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*, ed. G. Pálsson (Enfield Lock, 1992), pp. 161–5. For information on the use of smiles as signals for dramatic irony see, for instance, P. Ménard, *Le rire et la sourire dans le roman courtois en France au moyen âge (1150–1250)* (Geneva, 1969), and J. A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, 2002).

preparing for the whetting or the vengeance to come. Yet it also conveys the complex orchestra of emotions that are present, all of which are, however, hidden beneath the smile. With the smile the emotive subject has displaced the emotion of sorrow currently experienced into a future in which the sorrow will generate a successful *hvöt* (goading). The expression thus acts as a victorious declaration of exercised control, successful transference and certainty of the recipient's doom.

Kathryn Starkey comments on the function of smiles in the German epic *Das Nibelungenlied*. She argues that the smile serves as a 'political and performative gesture' within the epic, thereby clearly defying the presumption that it is a spontaneous somatic or affective response.³⁰ At the outset of the epic, while the Burgundians prepare to woo Brunhild with a show of strength, Gunther's men grumble about the removal of their weapons and declare that they would kill the queen if they had their swords and armour. Brunhild, who overhears their words, smiles at Hagen and Gunther before offering to return the Burgundians their previously confiscated weapons:

Wol hort diu kuniginne, waz der degen sprach
mit smielendem munde si uber ahsel sach:
'nu er dunche sich so biderbe, so tragt in ir gewant,
und ir vil scharpfen waffen gebt den recken an die hant'³¹

(Noble Brunhild had no trouble hearing their words.
Smiling over her shoulder, she spoke to her men: 'Return their
armor, let these men, who think themselves such warriors,
have their shields, and also give them back their good sharp
swords.')

The smile is, as Starkey notes, apparently out of context, as Gunther's men have just intimated that if they had their weapons they would kill her. Starkey considers the smile to serve here as 'assessment of the power dynamics and an assertion of her superiority over her guests', revealing the appropriation of a somatic signal of friendliness to convey an undertone of menace.³³ This conscious manipulation of the smile within the narrative framework of the epic is similar to the way in which the smile is used in the saga, hinting at some tantalising implications of the generic functions of somatic indicators. The smile and laughter of the saga heroines discussed above can therefore be considered as fairly powerful evidence of the manipulation of physiological indicators of internal feel-

³⁰ K. Starkey, 'Performative Emotion and the Politics of Gender in the *Nibelungenlied*', in *Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*, ed. S. S. Poor and J. K. Schulman (New York, 2007), pp. 253–71, at p. 255.

³¹ *Das Nibelungenlied: Nach der Handschrift C der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe*, ed. and trans. U. Schulze (Düsseldorf, 2005), p. 150 (v. 457).

³² *Das Nibelungenlied: Song of the Nibelungs*, trans. B. Raffel (New Haven, 2006), p. 63 (v. 447).

³³ 'Performative Emotion', p. 255.

ings, possibly to conceal an emotion, or perhaps as a disquieting signal of impending doom for the recipients of those smiles.

Emotive Vocalisation and Embodiment

In the scene of Laudine's mourning in Chrétien's *Yvain*, the reader witnesses Laudine's reaction to the loss of her husband, Esclados the Red, who has been killed by Yvain. The focal point remains with Yvain and the reader therefore visualises her through his eyes:

... da duel faire estoit si fole
 C'a poi que'ele ne s'ochioit.
 A la feÿe s'escrivoit
 Si haut qu'ele ne pooit plus,
 Si recheoit pasmee jus.
 Et quant ele estoit relevee,
 Aussi comme femme desvee
 S'i commenchoit a deschirer,
 Et ses chaveus a detirer.
 Ses chaveus tire et ront ses dras,
 Et se repasme a chascun pas,
 Ne riens ne le puet conforter. (ll. 1150–61)

(Her grief was so intense
 She seemed ready to take her own life.
 And then she cried out so loudly
 That she seemed to have exhausted herself
 And dropped to the ground, unconscious.
 And when they lifted her up
 She began to tear at her clothes
 Like a woman gone mad, and she pulled
 At her hair, and ripped it out,
 And she tore at her dress, and at every
 Step fell in a faint,
 And nothing could relieve her pain.)

What stands out from this passage is the dual representation of Laudine's sorrow through voice and body. She vocalises her grief by crying out repeatedly and later by lamenting her husband's death. The presumed internal sorrow is embodied by quite literally displaying it on the body, through the torn hair, scratched face and rent clothes, all standard representations of female grieving in the romance tradition. While the text refers to her 'duel' (grief), a presumably internal condition, this interiority is nevertheless only made available through external exhibitors: that is, through vocalisation and embodiment.

The reference here to the exhibited embodiment of her grief does not denote somatic response in the proper sense. Such somatic responses would include swelling or reddening and even possibly fainting, related

to physiological processes, such as fluctuations in blood pressure (which would have been construed as humoral instability). What I intend here is to identify a *demonstrated* grief, one that is deliberately performed on the body. Such a representational enactment of emotion differs fundamentally from automatic or involuntary emotional responses that result in (or are the result of) neurological reactions that are evidenced on the body as somatic reflexes. Moreover, the mourning is a public scene that takes place amidst her people in a communal burial procession. Even later, as she remains behind 'qui souvent se prent par la gole,/ et tort ses poins, et bat ses paumes' (ll. 1416–17) ('clutching at her throat, wringing/ her hands, beating her palms') (ll. 1412–13), she still occupies her public role as the mourning widow and, in fact, continues to be observed in this role by Yvain, who is watching her through the window. Given the intimate connection between social performance and social identity, Laudine can be perceived as performing her prescribed role, which confirms and asserts her feudal status and identity. Susan Crane in fact notes that 'public appearance and behavior are thought not to falsify personal identity but, on the contrary, to establish and maintain it', calling attention to the function of public performance of medieval elites as a means of confirming and sustaining a personal identity.³⁴

It is not until she has retired to her rooms and is alone that we see a different Laudine altogether. Lunete, her maid, has scolded her for her excessive grief and suggested a better lord can be found, at which Laudine dismisses her in anger; but once in private she sets to calmly evaluate her options:

Et le dame se rapensa
 Qu'ele avoit mout grant tort eü;
 Mout vausist bien avoir seü
 Comment ele porroit prouver
 C'on porroit chevalier trouver
 Melleur c'ongques ne fu ses sire,
 Mout volentiers li orroit dire. (ll. 1654–60)

(And when the lady reflected
 She knew she'd been very wrong;
 And all her desire was to know
 How the girl could have proven
 That a better knight could be found
 Than her lord had ever been.
 And she wished she could hear her explain.)³⁵

³⁴ S. Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, 2002), p. 4.

³⁵ I have made minor amendments to the first line of Raffel's translation better to capture the pensive nature of the sentence in French.

There is a discernible shift in emotional register that occurs as we move from her public role, as the grieving widow, to the private sphere, where we witness the apparently dispassionate deliberation of her current state and the means of remedying her situation. The move from the exuberant display of emotions to internal reflection, quite dramatically different from the apparent state of mental disarray that came before it, indicates that the crying and tearing of her clothes may simply reflect a socially prescribed behaviour pattern for a grieving widow, rather than a deeply felt sorrow.

Female lamentation is commonly indicated (or represented) by dishevelled hair, torn clothes and wailing.³⁶ The existence of a prescribed behaviour pattern certainly does not negate the possibility of authentic feelings behind those actions. One can only assume that such socially coded behaviour patterns in many ways exist as an outlet for existent emotions, as a socially appropriate and approved means of expressing them. Then again, such coded performances might also be devoid of emotions; they may be initiated without underlying emotion in order to fulfil a political or social function. Emotive performances may indeed incite certain emotions through the coded verbal or physical act; in effect, the prescribed act may unleash the emotion itself. Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf observe that in ritualised performances of mourning the act of weeping is not necessarily brought on by the sentiments, but that 'wailing at the prescribed moment and in the prescribed manner creates within the wailer the proper sentiment'.³⁷ The prescribed pattern of emotive behaviour calls attention to the artificiality of the literary scene, as opposed to the authenticity of the emotive experience. This artificiality need not diminish the emotive value of the scene, but it does foreground the function of its components as literary signifiers.

The fact that Laudine's sorrow is externalised and embodied intimates a ritualised aspect. Jutta Eming observes that 'ritualized expres-

³⁶ See, for instance, A. E. Bailey, 'Lamentation Motifs in Medieval Hagiography', *Gender & History* 25.3 (2013), 529–44. The existence of communal patterns of public behaviour for bereavement has been demonstrated in various ethnographic studies, see, for instance, G. Urban, 'Ritual Wailing in Amerindian Brazil', *American Anthropologist* 90.2 (1988), 385–400, and B. Grima, *The Performance of Emotion among Paxtun Women* (Austin, TX, 1992).

³⁷ P. Metcalf and R. Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 26. Metcalf's and Huntington's statement refers specifically to Andamanese culture. Yet the socialising function of mourning rites is nevertheless more widely applicable, since most societies have certain conventions or standards of acceptable grieving behaviour. Bade Ajumon's discussion of professional mourners and dirge performances similarly reveals 'a Western cultural bias [that] regards lamentation for the dead as representing an outburst of emotions caused by feeling of sorrow for the departed fellow'. See B. Ajumon, 'Lament for the Dead as a Universal Folk Tradition', *Fabula* 22.3/4 (1981), 272–80, at p. 275. For information on the lament tradition in medieval literature, see J. Tolmie and M. J. Toswell, *Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature* (Turnhout, 2010), and V. B. Richmond, *Laments for the Dead in Medieval Narrative* (Pittsburgh, 1966).

sion communicates and authenticates emotions through an ostentatious styling of the body, through facial expression, gesture, movement, voice and speech'.³⁸ These expressions are therefore based on aesthetics rather than on presumed interiority. Laudine's calm reflections once in private suggest that the external display of emotion need not necessarily reflect an internal state. This disjunction between external and internal would explain the rapid move from apparent despair to stoic internal reflection, to a projected future state of contentment (if she were to find a better knight to replace the one who recently passed away). It is also quite possible that public grieving was considered to be cathartic by its audience. The performative mourning might thus have been perceived as an outlet for Laudine's emotions. Once the emotions had been exhibited, further grieving might have been judged inappropriate and might have been suppressed in favour of a calm exterior. Lunete's criticism of Laudine's excessive grieving lends some credibility to the idea of a preconceived period of mourning:

'Pour Dieu, car vous en chastiés?
Si laissiés seviax non pour honte:
A si haute femme ne monte
Que duel si longuement maintiengne'. (ll. 1668–71)

('By God! Get control of yourself,
Stop it, if only for shame.
No highborn lady ought
To keep up her mourning so long.')

It should nevertheless be kept in mind that Lunete's words are intended to facilitate the reconciliation of her lady with her husband's killer. It is therefore vital to reconfigure her emotional state from sorrow to concern for her status as the latter is more likely to result in a successful wooing. If one assumes the original audience would have been aware of (or even expected) such a disjunction between internal state and external presentation, then Laudine's acceptance of the killer of her husband as her new lord – often illogical to modern readers conditioned by romanticised ideas of love – makes perfect sense within the narrative framework of the story.

³⁸ J. Eming, 'On Stage: Ritualized Emotions and Theatricality in Isolde's Trial', *Modern Language Notes* 124 (2009), 555–71, at p. 556. While her argument relates to Middle High German courtly literature, more particularly to Gottfried von Straßburg's story of Tristan and Isolde, the reference to ritualised or conventionalised expressions of emotion 'like crying, audible mourning, tearing out of hair, and beating one's breast' (p. 562) could just as well apply to the romance of Yvain. In fact, given that French courtly romance (including Chrétien's material) was translated relatively promptly into German it is not unlikely that such ritualised (and possibly generic) sequences of emotional behaviour may have been transmitted along with the material to its new audience and established new conventions for the literary depiction of emotion.

Lunete's behaviour becomes more logical in this context too. Her apparent nonchalance with respect to the death of her lord appears in stark contrast to the other townspeople, who are described as enraged, storming, screaming and ranting as a result of their anguish (ll. 1109–10, 1189–95). Her own words provide some insight into the apparent breach between internal emotion and external behaviour as she tells Yvain:

... je n'os chi plus arrester.
 Je porroie tant demourer,
 Espoir, gu'ele me meskerroit
 Pour che qu'ele ne me verroit
 Avec les autres en la presse. (ll. 1337–41)

(... 'I dare not stay here longer,
 If I stay on here with you
 Perhaps they'll begin to suspect me,
 Not seeing me there with the others,
 Milling in that crowd down there.')

One would assume that upon joining the crowd she would display the same symptoms of grief as the others, suggesting that they too may be performing a ritualised public enactment of grief. This would further explain how Chrétien can state, perhaps with some irony, when Yvain marries Laudine and becomes lord, that:

Et li morz est tost obliés:
 Cil qui l'ocist est maries
 En sa fame, et esamble gisent.
 Et les genz aiment plus et present
 Le vif c'onque le mort ne firent. (ll. 2167–71)

(... and the dead man forgotten
 And the man who killed him married
 To his wife, and sharing her bed,
 And his people are happier with their living
 Lord than they were with the dead one.) (ll. 2165–9)

Fredric Cheyette and Howell Chickering point out that within twelfth-century aristocratic society love signified not only personal feelings (or devotion), but also political loyalty: the fidelity between a lord and his (or her) follower.³⁹ The emotions displayed by Laudine and her people can be understood in relation to this convention as a sign of feudal tribute rather than a demonstration of personal (or internal) sorrow. While the sorrow may be perceived as authentic, it would nevertheless be intended and understood as an act of homage, a socially prescribed gesture of feudal fidelity. Such an interpretation of the scene would explain the rapid

³⁹ F. L. Cheyette and H. Chickering, 'Love, Anger, and Peace: Social Practice and Poetic Play in the Ending of *Yvain*', *Speculum* 80.1 (2005), 75–117.

recuperation of both Laudine and her people once a new lordship has been established and new feudal allegiance guaranteed. The fact that the grief exhibited is born out of fidelity or loyalty to a lord does not negate the existence of personal feelings or, for that matter, the argument that such publicly professed fidelity may in effect engender emotions. In fact, Laudine's anger seems more severe and harder to quell at Yvain's later breach of his promise to return than previously at the loss of Esclados the Red. This is so because Yvain has in fact failed to fulfil his duty to love, as an act of homage, and to honour her (to keep his word). These are acts born not (or not solely) out of emotion, but out of social obligation.

According to Cheyette and Chickering, 'offense to fidelity was also an offense to love':

In its routine use in political contexts, 'love' signified political and personal loyalty, a layer of meaning that the troubadours continually drew upon when they used 'love' in an erotic sense. In their poetry, and here in *Yvain*, one meaning did not cancel out the other, a medieval balancing act that a modern reader must constantly remember.⁴⁰

Yvain has transgressed social codes that form the foundation of aristocratic society. Laudine's anger, Yvain's subsequent madness and the eventual reconciliation are political situations encoded through emotional signifiers that were comprehensible and meaningful to their twelfth-century aristocratic audience. In fact, the emotional displays of shame and guilt are critical for the successful re-integration of Yvain into the social fabric. Yvain's madness, a symptom of the shame and guilt felt at his breaching of the social code and the implicit social ostracism, is necessary to rehabilitate him. Richard A. Dienstbier points out that emotions play a fundamental role in the socialising process of moral behaviour.⁴¹ The emotional experience of fear, shame and guilt underlies the process of moral decision-making and hence the successful integration of an individual into society. Yvain's subsequent adventures thus bespeak his internalisation of the proper moral behavioural codes.

If the scene of Laudine's mourning does not reveal an internal emotion, but rather (or also) a politicised social action, how would one translate it for a reading community that has different social or political structures?⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴¹ R. A. Dienstbier, 'The Role of Emotion in Moral Socialization', in *Emotions, Cognition, and Behavior*, ed. C. E. Izard, J. Kagan and R. B. Zajonc (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 494–514.

⁴² As we do not have access to the Norse translation of *Yvain* in its thirteenth-century form, one must deduce from existing later Icelandic copies the sort of changes that the text might have undergone. The slight variations between the three primary manuscripts indicate that the later versions are likely to have been modified to some extent from the original translation, mostly through abridgement. The texts as we have them today therefore reveal more about their Icelandic reading communities, particularly in terms of audience predilection and perception of the texts, than about thirteenth-century Norwegian audiences. Yet the texts contain varying layers of cultural influence of the original translative effort and possible adjustments by later scribes.

If one assumes, as suggested above, a feudal act of homage as the underlying motivation behind the emotional display in the French original, the translator would have had to reconstruct not only a recognisable literary demonstration of an emotion, but moreover a *politicised* emotion. In the Norse text Laudine's mourning is related as follows: 'hun syrgdi ok æpti sinn harm stundum fell hun j ouít' (pp. 35–6) ('she mourned and cried out her sorrow. At times she fell in a faint') (p. 168).⁴³ The text contains the essential semantic elements of the episode as described in the French text (mourning, crying and fainting). Yet the passage has been both subdued and shortened. The elaborate depiction of the sorrow, the multiple swoons and the inconsolable grief, has been reduced to two sentences stating the bare facts: namely, that she mourned and cried and sometimes fainted. More significantly, however, the entire elaborate demonstration of the grief – that is the tearing of her hair and the clawing at her face and her clothes – is entirely missing.⁴⁴ The ritualised depiction of the mourning widow – the embodied gestures of the presumed internal grief – has been eliminated. If one hypothesises, as suggested above, that the scene presents a socially prescribed performance in a political role, assumed here by Laudine and understood as such by its French audience, this elaborate embodiment of the grief becomes redundant once the political context no longer applies.

Conclusion

Medieval Icelandic authors and audiences seem to have preferred to deduce the internal emotional life of their fictive characters through acts (but not through gestures), through somatic indicators (but not through bodily behaviour) and through verbalisation (but not through verbal expression). What is noticeable in the comparison of the Norse translation of *Yvain* and the two examples from the sagas is the absence of either vocalisation or embodiment from both saga passages. What we have instead is what I would term 'transference'. The somatic marker of happiness – i.e., a smile or laughter – is used either to hide actual emotions or to contain those emotions. In the French text, there is no need to hide or contain the sorrow as it is a necessary part of the process of re-establishing social balance. As Carol Clover points out, the lament in Old Norse literature is intimately linked to the concept of 'hvöt' (whetting) as 'whetting and

⁴³ The quotation is drawn from MS B as MS A has a lacuna here. MS C differs from B here. In MS C the entire episode of the procession is missing and Íven only sees her later as she is sitting down, presumably after the funeral.

⁴⁴ While it is of course quite possible that this reflects later amendments by Icelandic scribes, the passage nevertheless reveals the adaptation to a reading community whose habits of mourning may have differed from the original context of Chrétien's text and whose literary tradition of emotional representation did indeed differ.

lamenting are equivalent and interchangeable elements' that the audience would have appreciated and understood.⁴⁵ This intimate link between lamenting a loss and the incitement for revenge again shifts the representational function of emotive behaviour. In the previously cited example of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir, the presumed grief is veiled by her smile, only to be unleashed twelve years later in the goading of her sons to revenge – an act that will ensure that the memory of the dead will be properly honoured. The delay of twelve years intimates that this is not a spontaneous outburst of grief, but a social gesture of remembrance and respect.

In the case of the translated romances, there is of course no need for whetting as the social conditions depicted are radically different. Once the correlation between the literary topos of whetting and lamenting is broken, the signifying potential of emotive behaviour is inevitably shifted. There is no need for the Norse Laudine's grief to be contained or transferred as there is no familial obligation which could correspond with the saga convention of blood-revenge. The disassociation of the social obligations of the blood-feud society from the lament leaves the Norse audience to interpret the emotion itself, detached from both the feudal concern in the French text and the whetting obligations of the saga material. Whereas the lament is directly associated with feudal honour in the French original, here it is extricated from any such political subtext. What remains is an emphasis on the emotion itself, the presumed sorrow. The passage therefore depicts an effort to adjust an emotive behaviour to new cultural conventions of emotional representation.

The examples listed at the outset of this chapter reveal that emotional representation is not only culturally contingent and socially determined, but moreover reflects generic dispositions that one must assume audiences would have recognised and to which they would have responded. Admittedly generic distinctions are to some extent modern categorisations and serve a modern desire for demarcations of the medieval past. Fixed modern notions may contain and stabilise the shifting concept of the Middle Ages, rather than illuminate medieval perceptions of literary traditions. Nevertheless, such differences suggest that audiences are likely to have been able to decode the varying representations of emotion accurately and to situate them within a political, cultural and, significantly, generic context, thereby providing those codes with signifying potential. Since love signalled political as well as personal loyalty, the feudal subtext of political manoeuvres, negotiations and resolutions is intricately interwoven with Chrétien's apparent narrative concern with love. In the Norse text this subtext – while not eradicated – is redirected towards notions of honour. The concept of honour is here again intimately interlinked with

⁴⁵ C. Clover, 'Hildigunnur's Lament', in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. S. M. Anderson and K. Swenson (New York, 2002), pp. 15–54, at p. 23.

the social circumstances of medieval Iceland and reflects a personal and family-oriented responsibility, rather than a feudal or class-based concern.

The emotive potency of expression and gestures lies ultimately in the linguistic and literary conventions for embodying emotion, and the audience's engagement with this emotive content. The demonstrative public mourning of Laudine, representative of the feudal context of political allegiance and social obligations, conveys a social meaning as well as an emotive one. Similarly the substitution of a somatic marker of happiness, such as a smile, for an expression of sorrow in the sagas may well have signalled to its audience underlying conflicting emotions. These may have been perceived as a prelude to vengeance, an evocative gesture within the blood-feud society depicted in the sagas. The Norse translation of the grieving widow from the French text has, however, been divested of these feudal implications. Yet it has maintained the romance's generic conventions for representing emotional behaviour. The subtle tempering of Laudine's grief in the Norse translation internalises the grief and depoliticises it. Rather than serving as a social gesture, her behaviour signals instead a perceived emotive interiority. The expression of that presumed interiority alerts the audience that they are no longer in the world of feuds, where such interiority must be masked and projected into action, but in the world of romance, where emotionality in fact propels the action.