# The Culture of Food and Feasting in High Medieval England

## c. 1066-1330

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# The Culture of Food and Feasting in High Medieval England c.1066-1330

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# The Culture of Food and Feasting in High Medieval England (Project Abstract)

The feast in medieval England brings into focus complex issues regarding ceremony and ritual, noble status and family lineage, community, and political authority. The feast was a stage where the lord demonstrated control over nature and its resources through the provision of food. This allowed for management of the household, the construction of informal relationships, and the publicization of formal ones. The feast also reflected the lord's person with its displays of largesse, Christian piety, and good manners. It was usually a public affair, at which the lord's socio-political effectiveness and personal identity could shine for a large and diverse audience. The feast was a powerful symbol of good lordship, and it has been studied extensively by historians. Existent scholarship favours the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and covers its tangible aspects such as types of food, how it was acquired, how it was cooked, who served it, and how meals were conducted, in addition to expenditure, seating arrangement, cooking methods, nutrition, and material culture. Some of the social and cultural issues expressed by the feast (e.g. largesse and hospitality) have been studied but mostly from an ecclesiastical perspective. My thesis will take a step back from the individual parts in order to examine the cultural and symbolic significance of the feast as a whole. Our knowledge of the feast is less informed by its literary culture, so my study focuses on the feast's representation in chronicles, hagiographies, and vernacular romance. These types of narrative are all literary to a degree (even historical chronicles) and writers were free to represent the feast in its idealised form. Economic and logistical concerns are subverted in favour of the feast's greater symbolic significance. When we examine the feast's narrative representation, we can trace an increasingly settled and domestic culture of lordship that emerged in High Medieval England. This was a period of profound change in England and throughout Western Europe. Food production increased across Western Europe in this period of increased farming and commerce. And the growth of bureaucratic structures combined with manner of lordship in England based on hierarchical landholding required lords who managed the land and its resources, kept a household, and participated in hierarchical and reciprocal relationships with one another, and with the king. The feast demonstrated the practical and managerial exercise of lordship in the territorial and household settings. It also reflected modes of spiritual refinement and courtliness in the aftermath of the Peace Movement and Gregorian reform, which inspired clerical beliefs that lords should manage their violent impulses and conduct themselves as model Christians. Economic and social changes impacted the nature and perception of lordship, so they also influenced societal perceptions of what the feast was meant to accomplish and represent. The nature of these changes can be read in the feast's narrative representation, and we can understand better how the banqueting society of the Late Medieval England arose from the warrior culture of the Anglo-Saxon mead hall.

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# Introduction: The History of Food and Feasting in Medieval England

The feast in medieval England brings into focus complex issues regarding ceremony and ritual, noble status and family lineage, community, and political authority. The feast was a stage where the lord performed certain necessary functions – to provide food, maintain the household, construct informal relationships, and publicise formal ones (made so by the ceremony of homage). It also demonstrated the lord's person with its displays of Christian piety and good manners. It was generally a public affair, at which the lord's socio-political functions and personal qualities could shine for a large and diverse audience. This was a culture that demanded continuity between the public and private persona, so the feast was a powerful symbol of both as it demonstrated the lord's public effectiveness as well as his or her personal identity. In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, an illuminated psalter was commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (d. 1345), knight and lord of Irnham manor in Lincolnshire. The psalter's illuminations depict food production on the lord's estates as well as its provision in the household, of which successive stages from field to table are shown. Workers plough the fields and gather the harvest, and a kitchen scene shows its preparation in the household. A feast (fig. 1) shows food on the table, which is prepared and served by members of the household. The lord also dines and entertains guests. These guests – Dominican friars associated with voluntary poverty – suggest a level of pious *caritas* attached to the feeding of these men while the feast seems to mimic a Last Supper illustration (fig. 2). The feast assumes religious overtones, and it appears as a symbol of pious devotion. Aside from the miniature of Sir Geoffrey armed and mounted (fol. 202v.), lordship is represented in the household through visual representations of the lord's provision of food. The psalter provided this seigneurial family with a visual reminder of the values which defined English lordship by the fourteenth century. While early medieval lordship was characterised by its military ambitions and the warlike tendencies of Anglo-Saxon and early Norman elites, the aristocracy had shed much of this image by c. 1300. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries mark a period of transition for aristocratic society, during which its domestic culture gradually superseded its warrior-based culture. Study of the medieval feast has revealed a growing domestic culture with attitudes and values emphasising the non-martial side of aristocratic affairs. When we turn our attention to food and the culture of the seigneurial household and the great hall, the manner of this transition becomes apparent.

The lord's feast reflected and embodied a less militaristic, more settled, and domestic image of the lord that had emerged in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. The chronological parameters of 1066-1330 are designed to trace attitudes and values that emerged and/or developed between the Norman Conquest and the composition of the *Auchinleck* manuscript, which contains the Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* discussed in chapters three and four. I will additionally trace the increasingly domestic culture of lordship in Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet England over the long twelfth century until the decades that preceded the Black Death. This was a period of great economic and social change in England. Diets improved for all levels of society as the result of better weather in

**Fig. 1 – The Luttrell Psalter (c. 1325-40) – “Luttrell Family Feast”**

**Fig. 2 – The Luttrell Psalter (c. 1325-40) – “The Last Supper”**

Northern Europe, which created longer growing seasons. Rising levels of cultivation, technological innovations, growing markets and growing commerce allowed food to be produced, traded, bought, and sold on a considerably larger scale than in the earlier period. This substantial increase in agricultural production combined with a structure of lordship based on hierarchical landholding inspired fundamental changes in the attitudes and expectations of lords. Early lordship had been defined by its instability and perceived opposition to clerical values, and a more settled and domestic image began to emerge in the twelfth century. The feast gained significance as it reflected modes of courtliness and refinement in the aftermath of the Peace Movement and Gregorian reform, which inspired beliefs that lords should restrain their militaristic impulses and behave courteously. These factors distinguish the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as worthy of attention because changes certainly influenced societal perceptions of what the feast was meant to accomplish and represent. It requires further investigation to understand better how the culture of lordship developed from the Anglo-Saxon mead hall into an aristocracy built on stately banquets in the late medieval period.

The topics of food and feast have been studied widely by scholars of medieval history. Antiquaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have studied recipe books, texts dealing with domestic manners, courtesy books, and other household materials. T.F. Tout's work in the early twentieth century with royal household documents has provided insight into the culinary practices of the English royal household as far back as Edward I's reign. Social and economic historians working in the decades after World War II have explored food in relation to medieval living standards as well as its role in the material conditions of daily life.[1] William Edward Mead's *The English Medieval Feast* is an especially informative piece. It deals with a variety of topics related to the feast, such as the types of food they ate, how it was acquired, preparation methods, and how food was presented and arrayed on the lord's table. He also discusses types of entertainment, and the way feasts were meant to have been conducted. The book focuses on royal feasts and their messages of social dominance and political authority, expressed through table displays called subtleties (also *sotelty* or *soteltie*), and public declarations of oaths and vows. Mead has described the great feast as incomparably the greatest attraction of medieval life, and the banquets given to mark special occasions were a welcome relief from the monotony of the daily routine.[2] Mead's cited examples are almost exclusively from the Late Middle Ages and the early Tudor period because a larger number of documents and prescriptive materials exist from the fourteenth century forward. Accounts of large feasts have been mostly taken from chronicles, which are compared to documents and prescriptive texts. However, some of the chronicle episodes had been written centuries after the events they describe, which calls their value

[1] C.M. Woolgar, "Food and the Middle Ages", *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010), 2; For study of Edward I's household, see: T.F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England: The Wardrobe, the Chamber and the Small Seals Vol. 2*, Publications/University of Manchester: 34 (Manchester, 1920), pp. 27-30, 49-51.

[2] The types of occasions for which a great feast was inevitable was a coronation, a great victory, the arrival of an ambassador, the enthronization of an archbishop, a birthday, and Church festivals (such as Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun); see: William Edward Mead, *The English Medieval Feast* (London, 1967), p. 19.

into question because the attitudes expressed may not be wholly medieval. Mead has claimed that the use of bright colours, decorated food, and elaborate table and hall ornamentation indicate childish impulses among the aristocracy, who he accuses of acting enthusiastically without weighing the consequences.[3] Mead's focus on the largest banquets reflects Victorian fascination with the colourful side of medieval life while the theory of childlike fascination with lavish displays seems too simplistic. Cultural historians have offered more convincing explanations. Timothy Reuter and David Crouch explain how feasts were designed to indicate social distinction, and Lars Kjaer and Björn Weiler have discussed the political effectiveness of culinary display.[4] Mead probably writes for diverse (and non-academic) audiences, but the information on the feast's practical aspects have been corroborated in subsequent scholarship. So, Mead has provided a base for more scholarly works.

Our knowledge of medieval food has been expanded by subsequent historians, who cite a wider range of documents, prescriptive texts, and archaeological evidence. Stephen Pollington and Kathryn Hume have covered Anglo-Saxon food by exploring practices, and its depiction in poetry and literature.[5] Allen J. Frantzen has explored Anglo-Saxon society in terms of food-based networks in his material culture study. Individual settlements formed small networks of supply and distribution with the lord's hall at the centre. Food moved along these networks from field to table and outward in the form of feasts and gifts, whereby food also connected aristocratic society with the countryside.[6] Christopher Dyer has explored food on a macro-economic level in terms of production, expenditure, and lord/tenant relationships across most of the Middle Ages (c. 850-1520). Dyer has also shown how food networks grew and changed over time alongside fluctuating levels of production, consumption, and expenditure.[7] This work by archaeologists and economic historians has shown how food production was medieval society's priority, and increasingly complex networks of supply, distribution, and exchange provided an economic and social structure throughout the period. C.M. Woolgar is among the most noteworthy historians of medieval food, and his work has focused on the

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

[4] Timothy Reuter, "Nobles and Others: The Social and Cultural Expression of Power Relations in the Middle Ages" in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 85-98; David Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain, 1000-1300* (London, 1992); Lars Kjaer, "Food, Drink and Ritualized Communication in the Household of Eleanor de Montfort, February to August 1265", *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011), 75-89; "Matthew Paris and the Royal Christmas: Ritualized Communication in Text and Practice" in *Thirteenth-Century England XIV: Proceedings of the Aberystwyth and Lampeter Conference, 2011*, ed. J. Burton, P. Schofield and B. Weiler (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 141-54; Björn Weiler, "Symbolism and Politics in the Reign of Henry III" in *Thirteenth-Century England IX: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 2001*, ed. Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell, and Robin Frame (Woodbridge, 2003) pp. 15-41.

[5] Stephen Pollington, *The Mead Hall: The Feasting Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England* (Norfolk, 2003); "The Mead Hall Community", *Journal of Medieval History* 37:1 (2011), 19-33; Kathryn Hume, "The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry", *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), 63-74.

[6] Allen J. Frantzen, *Food, Eating and Identity in Early Medieval England*, Anglo-Saxon Studies: 22 (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 37, 79.

[7] Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520*, New Economic History of Britain (New Haven, 2002).

consumption patterns of the aristocracy. In addition to his work with archaeological evidence,[8] Woolgar's interpretation of household expense accounts has taught us about the practical organisation and distribution of food in the great households of late medieval England. Eating occupied up to one third of the day in the aristocratic household, and to receive, prepare, and deliver sufficient quantities was a major exercise in logistics. It also required skilled and sensitive personnel, who had to answer a range of demands relating to social status, religious observance, philosophy, and personal taste. The acquisition of food by the household along with its preparation and service in the hall was deeply imbedded in the aristocratic daily routine. It also must have comprised much of the lord's financial expenditure throughout the medieval period.[9] Woolgar has explored how foods such as bread, meat, fish, dairy, and other items were acquired and paid for by members of the lord's household in addition to how the lord's table was arranged, and how (and by whom) the food was prepared and served.

Woolgar has addressed food practices for the microcosm of the great household. He has shown how food was the largest item on the aristocratic budget, and much of the household routine was occupied with its acquisition, preparation, and service. He has explored a wide range of lay and clerical households, and Johanna Maria Van Winter has explored similar themes for the household of Floris V, count of Holland (r. 1256-96).[10] Other economic historians have produced complementary studies for ecclesiastical households. Barbara Harvey has covered food provision for the great Church household of Westminster, and Philip Slavin has provided a case study for the monastic household (Norwich Cathedral Priory).[11] We see how feasts were meticulously planned events that required a substantial investment in terms of time, man-power, and financial investment. While the economic and logistical side of food and feast has been studied thoroughly for lay and ecclesiastical households across the Middle Ages, literature shows the feast as a cultural investment as well. The ability to produce and provide food had significance beyond sustenance and economic success in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the growth of production, and the Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet manner of lordship based on management of land contributed to its growing domestic culture.

Several historians' work with household ordinances and domestic documents has expanded our knowledge of the practical organisation of royal and seigneurial households. S.D. Church has used the twelfth-century *Constitutio Domus Regis* to explore offices in the Anglo-Norman royal household, as well as their responsibilities and payments in food. David Crouch has explored the development of

[8] *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C.M. Woolgar, Dale Serjeantson and Tony Waldron, Medieval History and Archaeology (Oxford, 2009).
[9] C.M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp. 111, 135-37; *The Culture of Food in England, 1200-1500* (New Haven and London, 2016), pp. 4, 28.
[10] Johanna Maria van Winter, "Dining in the time of Floris V, count of Holland (1256-1296)" in Johanna Maria van Winter, *Spices and Comfits: Collected Papers on Medieval Food* (Totnes, 2007), pp. 91-102.
[11] Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c. 1200-1520*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge, 1993); Woolgar, *The Great Household*; Barbara Harvey, *Standards of Living in England, 1100-1500: The Monastic Experience*, Ford Lectures (Oxford, 1993); Philip Slavin, *Bread and Ale for the Brethren: Provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260-1536*, Studies in Regional and Local History: 11 (Hatfield, 2012).

household offices, and how the royal household provided a model for imitation by lesser aristocrats.[12] Carpenter has explored the daily routine of Henry III's household in the thirteenth century, and M.W Labarge has produced a similar study for the thirteenth-century baronial household. Woolgar has covered several households of varying status from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as he has taught us more about domestic offices and their responsibilities.[13] These historians have covered the practical affairs of the great household, and others have explored its increasingly significant role in political affairs. S.D. Church has argued that the royal household and the affairs of the royal court became inextricably connected in the early twelfth century. And J.O. Prestwich has argued that the royal household became a centre for government by the thirteenth century.[14] David Carpenter has shown how Henry III preferred the domestic setting of Westminster over the Tower for conducting official business.[15] These scholars have focused on lay households. Philippa Hoskin has studied episcopal households, and she compares them to their lay counterparts. Some differences existed but like lay establishments, they also functioned as an administrative centre and symbol of the bishops' status.[16] These historians have covered the growth of household structures, and its role in administration and politics in this period. The lord's household became the preferred centre for business in addition to a status symbol. Aristocratic culture grew domestic in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and this transition can be traced in literature. Narrative texts show the feast as a symbol of domestic cohesion, and the household is celebrated for its social and political importance.

Other medievalists have engaged with the social, political, and religious issues that were expressed with the lord's provision of food. Some have addressed the topic of hierarchy. Allen J. Grieco explains how medieval scholars imagined food in terms of a hierarchy, which was meant to explain why certain types were reserved for the aristocracy besides their cost. Martha Rampton has described the feast as a blueprint for social hierarchy, at which guests were seated and served according to their rank. This allowed the feast to serve as a visual reminder of relative status, and the hierarchical relationships that existed among the participants.[17] Other scholars have covered hospitality, which was meant to reinforce hierarchy while fostering hierarchical and reciprocal relationships. Alban Gautier's study of Anglo-Saxon hospitality distinguishes between feasting

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[12] Richard Fitz Nigel, *Dialogus de Scaccario: The Dialogue of the Exchequer*, ed. Emilie Amt, *Constitutio Domus Regis: Disposition of the King's Household*, ed. S. D. Church, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2007); Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy*.

[13] Woolgar, *The Great Household*; David Carpenter, "The Household Rolls of Henry III of England (1216-72)", *Historical Research* 80:207 (2007), 22-46; M.W. Labarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1965).

[14] *Constitutio Domus Regis*, ed. Church, p. xlix; J.O. Prestwich, "The Place of the Royal Household in History", *Medieval History* 1:2 (1991), 40-43.

[15] David Carpenter, "King Henry III and the Tower of London", *London Journal: A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present* 19:2 (1994), 99-101.

[16] Phillipa Hoskin, "Continuing Service: The Episcopal Households of Thirteenth-Century Durham" in *The Foundations of Medieval English Ecclesiastical History: Studies Presented to David Smith*, ed. Phillipa M. Hoskin, Lawrence Brooke, Christopher Nugent and R.B. Dobson, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion: 27 (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 137-38.

[17] Allen J. Grieco, "Body and Soul" in *A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age,* ed. Massimo Montanari, The Cultural Histories Series: 2 (London, 2012), pp. 148-49; Martha Rampton, "The Significance of the Banquet Scene in the Bayeux Tapestry", *Medievalia et Humanistica* 21 (1994), 37-40.

(voluntary provision of food) and guesting (legally obligated hospitality) as he traces hospitality practices and attitudes between the eighth and eleventh centuries.[18] Julie Kerr has covered the nature of monastic hospitality alongside several publications on lay hospitality for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the latter, she explores its purposes in terms of creating friendships, protecting reputations as well as its formulaic representation in literature, and the opposition between literature and practice.[19] Kerr prioritises the moral and spiritual side of hospitality, and Lars Kjaer has explored its political side. His case studies of hospitality practices by Henry III and Eleanor de Montfort have shown how the feast was used to forge alliances amidst political struggles.[20] We see how the feast's hierarchical nature reminded each of his or her relative status, and displays of hospitality were meant to construct and affirm these relationships. These relationships were unequal, but all who participated were expected to benefit. The feast affirmed informal relationships, and it publicised those formalised by acts of homage. Historians have prioritised documentary evidence, and it seems less explored how literature tends to idealise hierarchical yet mutually beneficial relationships at a time when kings looked to centralise their own authority at the expense of baronial and aristocratic interests. Aristocratic culture became more domestic than previously and thus, writers of literature engaged with tensions in society by using the feast in their written reflections on the nature of relationships.

Other medievalists have approached food and feast from a theological (religious) perspective. Aisling Byrne has explored Church attitudes towards food, and how these beliefs inspired feast descriptions in Arthurian literature. Conflicting beliefs have been addressed, whereby the medieval clergy was inspired by biblical examples such as the Last Supper (fig. 3), the Cana Wedding feast (fig. 4), and the heavenly banquet (discussed in chapter three). Many saw the feast as an image of order and perfection in Christian society. On the other hand, the feast also presented an opportunity for sin and the loss of self-control, and clerics sometimes associated the feast with gluttony. Byrne has attempted to resolve the contradiction, and concludes that morality and immorality were assessed by the degree to which impulses were indulged rather than the impulses themselves, whereby the feast could occur, but excesses had to be avoided.[21] Bridget Ann Henisch and C.M. Woolgar have presented extensive studies on the portrayal of food in the bible alongside notions of gluttony. They have also covered monastic food practices, the value of asceticism, aristocratic abstinence, and the yearly liturgical cycle of feasting and fasting.[22] Others have covered almsgiving, which was

[18] Alban Gautier, "Hospitality in Pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England", *Early Medieval Europe* 17:1 (2009), 23-44.
[19] Julie Kerr, "Monastic Hospitality: The Benedictines in England, c. 1070-1245" in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2000*, ed. J. Gillingham, Anglo-Norman Studies: 23 (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 97-114; "Food, Drink and Lodging: Hospitality in Twelfth-Century England", *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History* 18 (2006), 72-92; "The Open Door: Hospitality and Honour in Twelfth/Early Thirteenth-Century England", *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 87:287 (2002), 322-335; "Welcome the Coming and Speed the Parting Guest: Hospitality in Twelfth-Century England", *Journal of Medieval History* 33 (2007), 130-46.
[20] Kjaer, "Matthew Paris and the Royal Christmas"; "Food, Drink and Ritualized Communication".
[21] Aisling Byrne, "Arthur's Refusal to Eat: Ritual and Control in the Romance Feast", *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011), 62-74.
[22] Bridget Ann Henisch, *Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society* (London, 1976); Woolgar, *The Culture of Food*.

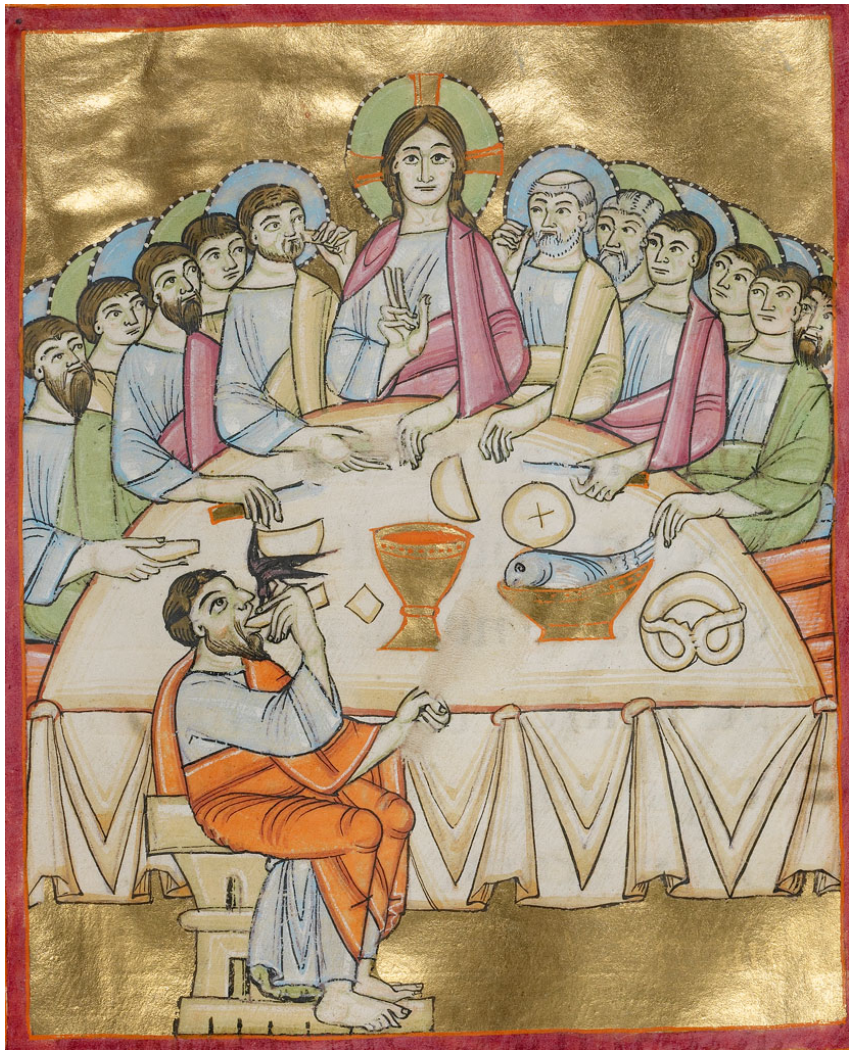

**Fig. 3 – The Last Supper (c. 1030-40)**

**Fig. 4 – The Cana Wedding (13th Century)**

considered by the Church to be the most pious manner of food provision. Hilda Johnstone, Sally Dixon-Smith, and David Carpenter have explored the famous almsgiving practices of Henry III, which are depicted in chronicles and corroborated by household documents. Miri Rubin's study of medieval Cambridge has covered almsgiving practices in relation to economic and social changes, and theological debates that took place throughout the period.[23] Historians have shown how the feast was influenced by Christian values. And while the practices of fasting, asceticism, and almsgiving have been covered, it seems less explored how these clerical beliefs were expressed in literary culture. Members of the clergy sought independence from secular authorities after the Gregorian reform and disputes over investiture. The clergy also looked to influence the lay aristocracy following the Peace Movement and amidst the Crusades. Lay and ecclesiastical lords came under fierce pressure to show their piety, and to conduct themselves in strict accordance to ecclesiastical doctrine. Gluttony was perceived throughout aristocratic society, so images of the gluttonous (and impulsive) lord, the heavenly banquet, and the liturgical cycle of feasts and fasts became potent literary motifs that writers used to express and describe their notions of good Christian lordship. Their literature shows how the post-Gregorian Church did not reject the feast, but sought to integrate it into clerical discourse with themes of balance and moderation through culinary self-discipline paired with outward liberality.

Social historians have explored the importance of table manners and feast etiquette. William Mead has argued that that despite popular images of the feast as a stage for conspicuous consumption, it was certainly not an occasion for vulgar feeding, and manners were highly important. Julie Kerr describes the importance of one's public reputation in aristocratic society, whereby the feast was a platform for diners to exercise control over their physical gestures, which demonstrated courtliness and worthiness, and presented the right image in public.[24] C.S. Jaeger has shown how the importance of manners can be linked to growing Church influence on lay society after the tenth-century Peace Movement. He argues for a process of civilizing that took place from the late eleventh century. The ideals of courtliness emerged as the Church sought to redirect lay aristocratic violence by promoting models of elegant and refined conduct.[25] David Crouch and Nicholas Orme describe the twelfth century as a new era of manners and courtly etiquette, and Cynthia Hahn and Mark Haggar have emphasised the social importance of table manners in a society where outward conduct was viewed as a reflection of one's inner identity.[26] And Björn Weiler and Lars Kjaer have also addressed how feasts

[23] Hilda Johnstone, "Poor Relief in the Royal Households of Thirteenth-Century England", *Speculum* 4:2 (1929), 149-67; Sally Dixon-Smith, "The Image and Reality of Almsgiving in the Great Halls of Henry III", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 152 (1999), 79-96; Carpenter, "The Household Rolls"; Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought 4:4 (Cambridge, 1987).
[24] Kerr, "Food, Drink and Lodgings", 84-85; Mead, *The English Medieval Feast*, p. 156.
[25] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210*, The Middle Ages (Philadelphia, 1985); "Courtliness and Social Change" in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 287-309.
[26] David Crouch, *The English Aristocracy, 1072-1272: A Social Transformation* (Cornwall, 2011), pp. 193-207; Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London, 1984); Cynthia Hahn, "Proper Behaviour for Knights and Kings: The Hagiography of Matthew Paris, Monk of St. Albans", *Haskins Society Journal:*

were politically advantageous because good conduct set an example for others, and allowed for good relationships while failure inhibited these relationships, and might have led to disputes and violence. Thereby, the lord's table manners also reflected the well-being of the realm by symbolising the correct exercise of his or her responsibilities.[27] These social and political historians have covered the growing importance of aristocratic conduct in this period, whereby the lord's manners became an especially potent indicator of the lord's public effectiveness in addition to his or her inner identity.

Medievalists have explored how manners came to outweigh birth, wealth, and martial prowess in twelfth- and thirteenth-century assessments of good lordship. But little attention has been given to how the feast was meant to teach this conduct to others. It was standard practice that aristocratic boys were raised in seigneurial households, and they served at table. Some historians have mentioned the practice in passing. Stephen Pollington has described how Anglo-Saxon *þegns* were a class of minor nobles that arose from household service. Robert Bartlett has explained how the twelfth- and thirteenth-century households were channels of social mobility where aristocratic boys served their superiors.[28] Literary critics have also studied educational motifs for Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal*, in which a boy of aristocratic birth remains ignorant of courtly life and receives education via the great household. Sarah Gordon has explored food motifs in Chrétien's final romance, which echo character development in terms of the protagonist's socio-economic status and psychological development.[29] Although Nicholas Orme and C.M. Woolgar have mentioned the practice of youths serving the lord at table,[30] the feast's role in aristocratic education seems unexplored. Clerical interest in courtly manners alongside growing aristocratic self-awareness of its own conduct during this period resulted in a renewed interest in this manner of aristocratic education. Many clerical writers debated whether lordship could be taught via the feast, and vernacular romances such as Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* and the anonymous Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* represented complex and highly nuanced views regarding the feast's role in educating aristocratic youths in relation to the society for which education was meant to prepare them. Thus, the growing emphasis on the lord's manners alongside renewed interest in the teaching of non-martial conduct additionally contributed to a growing cultural importance of the lord's feast in symbolising the increasingly settled and domestic culture of lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England.

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*Studies in Medieval History* 2 (1990), 237-48; Mark Hagger, "Lordship and Lunching: Interpretations of Eating and Food in the Anglo-Norman World, 1050-1200" in *The English and their Legacy, 900-1200: Essays in Honour of Ann Williams*, ed. David Roffe (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 229-44.

[27] Björn Weiler, "William of Malmesbury on Kingship", *History: Journal of the Historical Association* 90:927 (2005), 3-22; Kjaer, "Food, Drink and Ritualized Communion".

[28] Stephen Pollington, *The Mead Hall*, p. 196; Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225*, The New Oxford History of England: 2 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 130-33.

[29] Sarah Gordon, "Consumption and the Construction of Identity in Medieval European Arthurian Romance" in *Arthurian Literature XXIV: The European Dimensions of Arthurian Literature*, ed. Bart Besamusca and Frank Brandsma (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 79-81.

[30] Nicholas Orme, "The Education of the Courtier" in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne (London, 1983), p. 82; Woolgar, *The Great Household*, pp. 101-02.

Scholarship has shown how food and feast served many purposes across the Middle Ages. Society as a whole depended on food production, and this required time, labour, and financial investment by the lords who controlled the estates and oversaw the means of production. Lords feasted to engage in reciprocal relationships, and to affirm the hierarchical structure of aristocratic society with displays of hospitality and largesse. At the same time, society was shaped heavily by ecclesiastical doctrine, which promoted culinary abstinence, linked certain consumption practices with sinful gluttony, and linked others with expressions of piety and personal conduct.[31] Existing scholarship has allowed us to understand the medieval food economy, and the material basis of production, provision, and consumption in high-status communities (both clerical and lay). While food and feast have been studied widely by medievalists, there is still considerable room for expansion, particularly how the feast embodied and symbolised the values of good lordship in the Middle Ages. Scholarship prioritises practice, and it tends to favour the tangible aspects such as types of food, where it came from, how it was cooked, who served it, and how meals were conducted. Household expenditure, seating arrangements, cooking methods, nutrition, and the material culture of food and non-food items (e.g. table cloths, seats, and cups) have also been covered. Historians have studied the feast's parts, but they give less attention to the symbolic and cultural significance of the feast as a whole. It has been acknowledged by C.M. Woolgar that the values which guided feasts are less developed.[32] Scholarship also favours the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries because more documents and prescriptive materials explicitly related to the feast exist. Food culture has received some attention, but mostly from an ecclesiastical perspective. The feast's symbolic significance remains under-studied, especially for the sparsely documented twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

My thesis will take a step back from the feast's individual parts to examine the cultural and symbolic significance of the whole. This seems underdeveloped because our knowledge is less informed by its literary culture, particularly for the High Middle Ages when many forms of literature flourished in England beginning with the twelfth-century renaissance. Historians of the late medieval period prioritise documents and prescriptive texts, and examples from literature are usually cited to support documentary evidence. The following chapters will explore the feast's representation in chronicles, hagiographies, and vernacular romance. These narratives were written in part for didactic purposes – to instruct audiences with positive and negative examples. Cited chronicles include French vernacular histories such as Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (c. 1136-37) and Wace's *Roman de Brut* (c. 1155), and Latin chronicles such as the twelfth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Orderic Vitalis, William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1125), the *Gesta Stephani* (c. 1148-54), and Matthew Paris's thirteenth-century *Chronica Majora*. Latin chronicles (aside from the *Gesta*

[31] Woolgar, *The Culture of Food*, pp. 233-34.
[32] Woolgar, "Food and the Middle Ages", 8.

*Stephani*[33]) were written by monks, and lay clerks composed in French for lay aristocratic audiences. Wace's *Roman de Brut* – written for Eleanor of Aquitaine – includes the first appearance of Arthur's Round Table, which appears as the prominent location for feasts in subsequent Arthurian texts (e.g. Chrétien de Troyes and Laȝamon's *Brut*). Although William of Malmesbury was a monk writing in Latin, he dedicated the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* to Empress Matilda, David of Scotland, and Robert of Gloucester. William wrote the events of the past to inspire the lords of his day. The *Gesta Regum* provided audiences with examples of how the duties and obligations of lordship should were fulfilled and pitfalls avoided.[34] Malmesbury, Gaimar, Wace, and Laȝamon prioritised examples of lay aristocrats, and Orderic Vitalis and Matthew Paris depicted high-status laity and clergy. While some attempted to describe real events, and their texts are considered trustworthy accounts of history (William of Malmesbury and Matthew Paris), chronicles (especially Wace and Laȝamon) are literary to a degree, and they were written with certain attitudes and values in mind. Accounts of the past and representations of contemporary events are informed by attitudes and values held at the time they were written. Thus, literary feasts reflect the increasingly domestic values of lordship in this period.

Works of hagiography also contain accounts of the lord's feast, but these were written from an ecclesiastical perspective. Hagiographies were written in Latin, and those such as Eadmer's *Life of Anselm* (c. 1124), Walter Daniel's late twelfth-century *Life of Aelred of Reivaulx*, and Adam of Eynsham's *Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln* (c. 1212) depict the most exemplary of ecclesiastical lords. Anselm was an abbot who became archbishop of Canterbury, Hugh was a Carthusian monk who became the bishop of Lincoln, and Aelred was a Cistercian monk who became the abbot of his monastery of Rievaulx. All three were considered worthy of sainthood and praise by their contemporaries. Eadmer and Walter Daniel showed their subjects in the best possible light to defend them from critics who had doubted their sanctity.[35] While these stories of saintly figures contain exaggeration and idealisation, descriptions of the most pious of feasting habits provided examples for admiration by twelfth-and thirteenth-century audiences. Additionally, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* or *Golden Legend* (c. 1260) was equivalent to a best-seller in the second half of the thirteenth century. It contains a collection of saints' legends, which were meant to be read aloud on the feast days of each saint as they recurred throughout the calendar year. Jacobus retold many old stories of early Christian saints, but contemporary figures such as Thomas Becket (d. 1170), St. Dominic (d. 1221), and St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) are also included. Jacobus' *Golden Legend* reflects what

[33] It has been concluded concluded that the author could not have been a monk because his familiarity with the kingdom is too vast for someone confined to the cloister, see the introduction by R.H.C. Davis in *Gesta Stephani*, ed. K.R. Potter, First Edition Reprinted with new Introduction and Notes by R.H.C. Davis, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1976), pp. xxvi-xxvii.
[34] Björn Weiler, "William of Malmesbury, King Henry I and the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*" in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXXI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 2008*, ed. C.P. Lewis, Anglo-Norman Studies: 31 (Woodbridge, 2009), p. 172.
[35] For Eadmer, see: Michael Staunton, "Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi*: A Reinterpretation", *Journal of Medieval History* 23:1 (1997), 2; For Walter Daniel, see: Katherine Christensen, "Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*: The Heroism of Intelligence and the Miracle of Love" in *The Middle Ages in Text and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources*, ed. Jason Glenn (Toronto, 2011), p. 219.

medieval people knew about the saints, but it had been updated according to the messages of the thirteenth-century Church. The text represents thirteenth-century ecclesiastical attitudes as Jacobus was also well-experienced in the Church's affairs as prior, Dominican preacher, and archbishop of Genoa.[36] Jacobus had experience with the aristocratic feast, and although his Dominican status would suggest a purist attitude, some of the stories seem to accept certain concessions for laity and clergy in terms of acceptable feasting. The *Golden Legend* was enormously popular in the thirteenth century, and it provided audiences with regular readings of idealised piety. Jacobus' stories would have made a considerable impact on aristocratic audiences when read aloud on a feast day as the stories were intended to showcase clerical values while the feast was in action. Hagiographies idealise the feast in line with the Church's notion of lordship, which gained importance in the post-Gregorian period.

Romances were also read aloud at the aristocratic feast. While chronicles and hagiographies were composed by monks and lay clerks,[37] courtly romance exploded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were written mostly in the vernacular (French and Middle English) by secular clerks. Many of these clerks composed for specific lay patrons, and their stories were disseminated for a lay aristocracy that was increasingly interested in fanciful tales of brave knights and exemplary chivalry. The romances of Chrétien de Troyes (composed in the late twelfth century) were among the most popular and influential. Although Chrétien wrote for the courts of Champagne and Flanders, he used English characters (Arthur and his knights) and English locations. M. Blaess argues that Chrétien was connected with the court of Henry II (r. 1154-89). This was due to Henry's alliance with the princes of Champagne and Flanders against Philip Augustus of France (r. 1180-1223), to whom they also owed fealty for various lands, and who sought to increase his own authority and influence on the Continent. Chrétien's use of specific place-names suggests that he knew parts of England well, and he might have travelled there on behalf of his patrons.[38] Additionally, the "matter of Britain" – the Celtic and Breton stories of Arthur – became well-known and widely popular outside the British Isles. Many Bretons migrated to the region known as Amorica (or Brittany) in the midst of the Saxon invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries. Their descendants in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (called *conteurs*) told stories of Arthur, whereby they spread the "matter of Britain" throughout the French speaking world that included Flanders and Champagne. Chrétien de Troyes may have learned of Arthur via oral

[36] *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, trans. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger (Salem, 1991), p. viii; Phyllis B. Roberts, "A View of Medieval Sanctity: St. Thomas of Canterbury in the *Legenda Aurea*", *Medieval Sermon Studies* 46 (2002), 60-61; Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, "Chastity Models in the *Legenda Aurea* and in the *Sermones de Sanctis* of Jacobus de Voragine", *Medieval Sermon Studies* 52 (2008), 19-20.

[37] Sometimes the two were mixed. For example, Adam of Eynsham was a monk but he became chaplain of Hugh's episcopal household. Also, Jacobus de Voragine was a Dominican turned archbishop (after initially rejecting the office), see: *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis: The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln Vol. 1*, ed. Decima L. Douie and David H. Farmer, 2 Vols. Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1985), pp. viii-ix; *The Golden Legend*, trans. Ryan and H. Ripperger, p. v.

[38] M. Blaess, "The Public and Private Faces of King Arthur's Court in the Works of Chrétien de Troyes" in *Chrétien de Troyes and the Troubadours: Essays in Memory of the Late Leslie Topsfield*, ed. P.S. Noble and L. Paterson (Cambridge, 1984), p. 238; Bridgette Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail: A Social Reading of Chrétien de Troyes "Conte du Graal"* (Stanford, 1996), p. 6.

transmission and/or the texts written by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace.[39] Members of the European aristocracy also inter-married and formed international alliances, whereby the literary cultures of England and the Continent also crossed borders. Aristocrats in England spoke French (although in the Anglo-Norman dialect as opposed to Continental Occitan), and many were born and/or educated on the Continent. Audiences in England loved Continental French literature (especially romance), and Chrétien's texts were widely popular and influential in England and elsewhere. They inspired multiple adaptations (some in England) as kings, princes, and knights throughout Europe sought to embody the chivalry depicted in the romances. Chrétien was certainly familiar with the experience of lordship, and his romances reflect the attitudes and values of English lords as well as those shared by the supra-national aristocracy of Western Christendom. While Chrétien emphasised the importance of prowess and battlefield etiquette, he also used images of the lord's feast to showcase the growing non-martial (and domestic) culture of lordship and knighthood.

Amidst the plethora of vernacular romances from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Chrétien's *Yvain* (or *Le Chevalier Au Lion*), *Lancelot* (or *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*), and *Perceval* (or *Le Conte du Graal*), as well as the anonymous Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* use the feast to best represent the increasingly domestic culture of lordship. Feasts occur in *Amis and Amiloun*. Critical debate has focused on the brotherhood between the two knights, and it receives less attention how feast episodes engage with contemporary debate on charitable provision, and how the feast educates the knights and inspires their sworn brotherhood. While multiple versions of the story exist in several languages, the Middle English text (from c. 1330) reflects and engages most clearly with the increasingly domestic culture of lordship and knighthood in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chrétien's *Yvain* deals with notions of lordship in terms of property rights [*tenir terre*].[40] Lordship is connected with the possession of an estate, whereby food and the manner of its provision indicates the hero's aristocratic identity. Chrétien composed *Lancelot* and *Perceval* at roughly the same time as *Yvain*. But these were composed for specific patrons – Marie of Champagne (d. 1198), and Philip d'Alsace, count of Flanders (d. 1191) respectively. Marie was the daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine (step-daughter to King Henry II), which suggests a direct connection between Chrétien's world and the Angevin court. Chrétien likely became established in Marie's personal circle by *Lancelot*'s composition, from which the romances show knowledge of aristocratic attitudes and culture.[41] These two romances engage with issues of household management, feasting and fasting cycles, and notions of the *miles Christi*. The importance of fasting in relation to penance, and notions of Christian knighthood (and lordship) are also expressed more directly in *Perceval* via the Grail and the Hermit episode. Chrétien's *Perceval* and *Amis and Amiloun* also represent the feast's significant role in

[39] R.S. Loomis, *The Grail, from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (New York, 1963), pp. 13-14; Roberta L. Kreuger, "Chrétien de Troyes and the Invention of Arthurian Courtly Fiction" in *Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Blackwell, 2009), p. 162.
[40] Donald Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: Once and Future Fictions* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 55.
[41] Kreuger, "Chrétien de Troyes", p. 161; Blaess. "The Public and Private Faces", p. 241.

educating young aristocratic boys, whereby each writer used feast imagery to assess and critique the process of education as well as the society for which household education was meant to prepare young boys. Although Chrétien claimed that his texts were inspired by unspecified sources, romances are imagined stories, and both writers were free to imagine the lord's feast in terms of the secular and religious values that shaped the increasingly domestic culture of lordship in the High Middle Ages.

Narrative literature reveals the attitudes and values of different clerical writers that wrote for diverse audiences. The term "clerical" refers to those who were educated in monastic institutions, cathedral schools, or universities, and they were considered members of the clergy. While some were monks that wrote from the cloister, others resided in and wrote from lay aristocratic courts. Some monastic writers wrote for the benefit of lay aristocrats, and those who wrote for monastic audiences were also deeply concerned with aristocratic society, and its increasingly domestic culture. Texts express different outlooks and sets of values, and the monastic writer might be expected to have a narrower and more purist worldview than a clerk engaged with lay society. However, writers of divers narrative genres were all deeply interested with the issue of lordship, and their texts provide us with a more complete picture of the feast's significance than documents and prescriptive texts. Narrative writers had the freedom to subvert practical concerns, and to present the feast how they wanted it to appear in order to convey certain messages. The texts are imperfect – each represents the view of a single writer, sometimes a cloister monk who was taught stringent piety, and whose primary objective was to promote the interests of the monastery. Literature also tends to romanticise events and shows ideal conditions that did not always exist. Feasts occur frequently in narrative texts, and whether it's a chronicle of the past, account of the present, or imagined story in romance, writers intervened in aristocratic culture through their texts, in which they promoted views and attitudes that oftentimes agreed but sometimes debated and opposed one another. In this way, limitations can become advantages when different representations and attitudes are combined to create a complete picture of what the feast was meant to symbolise and represent. Those who wrote narratives were free to show the feast in its idealised form, in which practical and economic concerns are subverted in favour of its symbolic messages. The feast's cultural significance shines through more clearly in narrative than other literary genres. So, when we focus on its narrative representation, we can gain additional insight into the different forces acting on lordship during this period of profound change in England and Western Europe. And whether it was a grand banquet or small meal, writers were aware of the feast's significance, as well as its importance to the domestic culture of lordship. In the following chapters, our knowledge of food and the lord's feast will become informed better by its literary representation.

# Chapter 1: Feasting and the Politics of Good Lordship

Lordship at its most basic level in twelfth- and thirteenth- century England can be described as the politics of food. The Norman victors after the Conquest of 1066 imposed a structure of lordship into England that was organised around the management of land. The Norman kings granted parcels of land to their Norman followers, which forged a new social hierarchy of those who held of the Crown and smaller landholders below them. The high importance that Anglo-Norman lords placed on hereditary succession, and the practice of providing for a single heir (rather than division among many) kept estates largely intact, and allowed even the lowest tenants to become effective owners of their own estates regardless of the size.[42] The Church also owned substantial amounts of land, and high-ranking members such as bishops, abbots, and lesser clergy controlled vast estates, and wielded degrees of authority over them. Thus, the basic idea of lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England (lay and ecclesiastical) was specifically associated with the holding of land in some way.

While the possession of land conferred the authority of lordship, the degree of its prestige was based on the land's productivity. Fertile land produced grain and other crops, and meadows provided pasture for animals that were used for meat and other products (e.g. eggs, milk and cheese). Coastlines, rivers, and ponds offered fish, and forests provided wild animals. While specific foodstuffs and levels of production varied, lords needed to mobilise their dependents in order to achieve maximum productivity, whereby lordship and food production became inextricably connected. The lord's estates were food-producing enterprises that centred around a multitude of daily tasks associated with production, management, and distribution of food resources. Surveys from the *Black Book of Peterborough* (c. 1125-28) show the large-scale production and movement of food that occurred. 40 villeins in Kettering ploughed 4 acres for the lord's benefit each year. On occasion, they also provided ploughs "for the lord's work". Additional renders to the lord included 50 hens and 640 eggs. In Thorpe Achurch, 12 villains paid 200 loaves of bread, 22 skepfuls of oats, 64 hens, and 160 eggs, in addition to plough-work for the lord.[43] Dependent tenants aided in food production on the lord's demesne, worked part of their own holdings for the lord's benefit, and provided the lord with additional renderings or food-rents. We see how a substantial proportion of the population was involved in the process. They depended on the estate for sustenance and livelihood while the lord needed their labour to feed himself and profit from surpluses. As the leasing of demesnes was replaced gradually with direct management from the late twelfth century, treatises such as Walter of Henley's *Le Dite de Hosebondrie* (c. 1280s) were disseminated, which advised lords on the philosophy and the practice of estates management. Prescriptive texts specifically taught methods of food production, such as calculation of resources and yields. The close attention that Anglo-Norman lords placed on resource management allowed them to become the most agriculturally minded

[42] Dyer, *Making a Living*, p. 87.
[43] *English Historical Documents Vol. 2, 1042-1189*, ed. Douglas and Greenway (London, 1981), pp. 829-30.

aristocracy in Western Europe.[44] Food production formed the base on which society operated, and it provided the basic economic and social structure. According to C.M. Woolgar, up to ninety percent of the population was employed in this way (at some level) by the thirteenth century.[45] All lords needed to manage their demesnes, oversee tenanted land, and collect food-rents. Thus, food production and food management were central to notions of good lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England.

The system faced difficulties in the late twelfth century, and these worsened in the thirteenth for several reasons. The aristocracy relied on their estates for their economic livelihood, so all who held land were also subject to the same fluctuating economic forces. Trends in grain prices for 1180-1300 reveal a prolonged inflation, which only exacerbated existing political unrest among members of the aristocracy. Increases in the price of food and growing fiscal demands widened the gap between aristocratic income and expenditure in an age of growing affluence. Lords responded to these challenges by recovering more leased land and adding to their demesnes, which offered larger surpluses to sell.[46] But Dyer has argued that late twelfth-century magnates were less able to exercise authority over the subtenants on their land. The tenants' increasingly independent attitudes gradually eroded the magnates' authority, and the tenants came to exercise greater control over the food they produced. The royal court also subjected the magnates to financial demands from above, which forced them to borrow money based on predictions of future productivity. It required lords to add to their demesnes to sustain their households and gain sufficient wealth to answer increasingly lofty expectations to consume and spend. Many mismanaged their affairs and fell into debt.[47] Smaller landowners like knights and gentry held more land collectively than the magnates. But they were particularly vulnerable because they held smaller estates individually, which intensified the effects of inflation, poor harvests, and political upheaval. They held a high proportion of demesne land, the majority of which was needed to feed the household rather than earn profit. They aspired to be aristocrats and came under pressure to consume at an elevated level, which increased the likelihood of debt. An agreement in 1219 between Stephen de Fretwell and the abbot of Eynsham arranged for the surrender of Stephen's land to cover his debts. This was humiliating for a once-proud lord to become dependent on the abbot's charity. In this way, Dyer has argued that the thirteenth century marks the failure of lordship in England.[48] The system of estates management may have been less consistent in sustaining lords at this time. However, Stephen was probably an extreme case. Although lords could not always manage their lands in full, most were able to adjust to various changes. The ideals of

[44] Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 123, 128.
[45] Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 93.
[46] The efforts of royal government to meet rising costs included taxing the property of their subjects, which provoked resistance. See: C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, Second Edition (London and New York, 1989), pp. 129-30.
[47] Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 107-09, 119-20; "The Ineffectiveness of Lordship in England, 1200-1400" in *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages: An Exploration of Historical Themes*, ed. Dyer, Coss and Wickham, Past and Present Supplements: New Series 2 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 75-76.
[48] Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 148-49; "The Ineffectiveness of Lordship", p. 70.

landholding remained powerful, and the preservation of estates and authority over them was the strongest motivating force behind the attitudes and actions of lords.[49] In light of the aristocracy's obsession with land, hereditary tenure, and challenges to the land-based system, narrative writers showed good lords managing their estates by producing food while bad lords were shown neglecting their estates and allowing them to become waste. Literature reflects how estates management, food production, and the ability to feast distinguished lords from what was considered barbaric and inferior. Although writers expressed nuanced (and partisan) views, the common desire for well-managed estates producing food became potent images for the rising domestic culture of lordship.

## Estates Management: Resource Management, Cultivation, and Notions of Civilisation

Lands taken into aristocratic possession are described in terms of culinary abundances in narrative literature. In Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Haveloc is told how his aristocratic family had settled in England because "there was no lack of fish to eat" [*peison eümes a manger*]. The description of "good fish" [*bon peison*] includes "turbot, salmon, grampus, whale, porpoise, and mackerel" [*turbuz, salmuns e mulüels / graspeis, porpeis et makerels*]. The land also has "bread also in abundance", and "plenty of it" [*a grant plenté e a fusion / eümes pain*] (ll. 444-48).[50] The land had offered the family abundant resources that were available for management. The text looks beyond their basic survival. The possession of land and management of abundant food resources defines Haveloc's lineage and provides a base for the aristocratic identity. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, Gaul is admired by its lord as "most valuable" [*mult vaillant*] because the land is "very fertile and abundant" [*bien guaainable, e plenteïve*] (ll. 5918-20). There are "plenty of fish and plenty of game" [*grant plenté i ad de peissun / E grant plenté de veneisun*] (ll. 59223-24).[51] Fertile land would produce grain, which combined with rivers and forests would allow society to operate through landholding lords, productive estates, and a well-fed populace. These texts represent the need for estates management by describing lands that are naturally rich in food that become the lord's estates. Thus, writers believed that good lords were those who managed natural abundances of food to their potential while those unfit for the role did not do so.

Management of naturally fertile land became the essential criterion for good lordship in the twelfth century, which Anglo-Norman writers used to promote their brand over whomever they considered inferior. In the *Gesta Stephani*, Wales is "abounding" [*uberrima*] in "deer and fish" [*ceruorum et piscium*] as well as "milk and herds" [*lactis et armentorum*]. But the native lords are "animalistic" [*bestialium*] (I. 8) despite the land's potential.[52] It seems implied that native Welsh lords

[49] Marjorie Chibnall, "Feudalism and Lordship" in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. Harper-Bill and Van Houts (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 44-46; David Carpenter, "The Second Century of English Feudalism", *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 168 (2000), 62-63.
[50] *Estoire des Engleis: History of the English, Geffrei Gaimar*, ed. Ian Short (Oxford, 2009), p. 26.
[51] *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. Judith Weiss, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, Revised Edition (Exeter, 2002), pp. 148-50.
[52] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, p. 14.

do not manage their estates, nor do they produce food from them. Scotland is also abundant [*copiosa*] with productive forests [*siluarum fertilum*] and "milk and herds" [*lactis et armentorum*]. However, the inhabitants are "barbarous and filthy" [*barbaros et impuros*], and they suffer from "severe hunger" [*aspera fame*] (I. 26).[53] This writer describes abundant lands that are not managed, and the populace is not well-fed as the result. Gerald of Wales (d. 1223) depicts Wales and Ireland lacking productivity in a comparable way. Ireland's lands are fertile [*terra est et fecunda*] with "abundant corn fields" [*frugibus arva… abundant*] (I. 5).[54] The lords are "richly endowed with natural resources" [*ad plenum naturæ dotibus excolantur*]. But their mental capacity [*mentium cultus*] makes them "wild" [*barbaros*] and "uncultivated" [*incultos*] because they are "a nation that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life" [*gens a primo pastoralis vitse vivendi modo non recedens*] (III. 10).[55] Gerald writes of Wales: "this land sufficiently abounds with grain" [*Est igitur hæc terra satis abundans grano*], and it is "abundant with pastures, woods, wild animals, and herds of cattle" [*pascuis et silvis, feris et armentis terra fœcunda*]. "Freshwater fish are plentiful" [*fluvialibus quoque piscibus abunda*], including "salmon" [*salmonibus*] and "trout" [*trutis*] (I. 2).[56] But "the men however, do not soften" [*homines vero mansuescere nesciunt*] (I.8).[57] Gerald describes lords who do not manage land, nor do they produce food despite the abundances. And blame is placed on the lords' actions rather than naturally occurring deficiencies. Native lords are shown in narrative texts as wild and violent rather than concerned with management of the estates. Thus, the absence of land exploitation represented an inferior brand of lordship, and those who resisted Norman rule were described by narrative writers as barbarous and backwards because their lands were abundant, but their potential remained unfulfilled.

Literature represents Anglo-Norman lords who successfully manage fertile lands and produce food from their natural abundances. In the *Gesta Stephani*, the Normans subdue Wales. They "made the land so productive" [*adeoque terram fertilem*], and "abundant in all kinds of resources" [*omnibusque copiis affluentem*] that "you would have reckoned it in no wise inferior to the most fertile part of Britain" [*ut fecundissimæ Brittanniæ nequaquam inferiorem æestimares*] (I. 8).[58] Estates management is represented in connection with a superior manner of lordship. Native lords do not produce food from fertile lands. This contrasts the productivity and abundance achieved under Norman lordship, whereby Wales' level of productivity matches England. In a comparable manner, Wace's *Roman de Brut* imagines the establishment of new lordships in alongside the production of food from uncultivated land. Ireland had been "wild" [*salvage*] (l. 3315) with no structures, "nor any

[53] *Ibid*, p. 54.
[54] *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera Volume 5: Topographia Hibernica, et Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. J. S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner, 8 Vols. Rolls Series: 21 (Cambridge, 1867) p. 26.
[55] *Ibid*, pp. 150-51.
[56] *Itinerarium Cambriæ, seu laboriosæ Balduini Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi per Walliam legationis accurata descriptio auctore S. Giraldo Cambrense. Cum annotationibus D. Poweli*, ed. Sir R. C. Hoare (London, 1804), p. 19.
[57] *Descriptio Cambriæ* in *Pontici Virunnii viri doctissimi Britannicæ historiæ libri sex, magna et fide et diligentia conscripti: ad Britannici codicis fidem correcti, & ab infinitis mendis liberati: quibus præfixus est catalogus regum Britanniæ: per Dauidem Pouelum*, ed. S. Theolog (London, 1585), p. 256.
[58] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, p. 14.

cultivated land" [*ne nule altre guaainerie*] (l. 3317). So, the new lord "cultivated that land" [*e les terres unt guaainees*] (l. 3322). Lordship over Scotland is also imagined when its first ruler is given deserted land [*desertee*] (l. 7942) "to cultivate" [*a guaainer*] (l. 7969).[59] What had been wild becomes cultivated as Wace imagines lordship in the Anglo-Norman style of well-managed estates. Lords gain possession of abandoned estates that had not been managed. The lord ensures the production of food from abundances, so its potential is fulfilled. This reflects estates management and thus, good lordship in a twelfth-century context. The Norman elites saw England on the frontier between civility and barbarism [*in termino civilitatis*]. They viewed the native English and their neighbours (Wales, Scotland, Ireland) as barbarous, backwards, and needing improvement.[60] Estates management was linked to notions of civilised lordship in this period. This needed to be imposed to improve those whom the Normans considered inferior. So, food production was a distinguishing feature that Norman writers used to promote their own lords and validate Norman presence in England and elsewhere.

The best types of lords for these writers were those who held land, managed resources effectively, and oversaw the production of food, more specifically from grain agriculture. Cultivation and agricultural production was recognised as the most efficient and therefore, the most civilised manner of estates management. Wace's *Roman de Brut* imagines the foundation of Britain in connection with the cultivation of its land. A dichotomy appears between venison and agriculture in the context of establishing good lordship in the newly discovered kingdom. The Trojan founders first discover an island where venison [*veneison*] (l. 632) is abundant. However, the island that becomes Britain is specifically chosen by its would-be lord because the "ground is good for cultivation" [*bone est la terre a cultivar*] (l. 684).[61] Both lands are presented with natural abundances of food, but arable land (for grain agriculture) is clearly shown as preferable. Venison is not discredited entirely: "the abundance [of venison] lasted them a long time afterwards" [*Lunc tens aprés a grant fuisun / Lur en dura la veneison*] (ll. 631-32). But abundant venison is not considered enough on its own, so the island is considered unfit for lordship because cultivation of its land cannot occur: "the land was deserted with no one to cultivate it" [*Tut unt trové le païs guast / Ke n'i aveit kil gaainnast*] (l. 623-24). Wace describes the island of Britain as "fit to live on" [*une ille bone e abitable*] (l. 683) due to its potential for cultivation and therefore, the best manner of estates management. When they arrive on the island, "[they] ploughed lands… sowed corn and reaped it" [*terres arerent / Blez semerent, blez guaainerent*] (ll. 1172-74).[62] While Wace considered venison useful and it was certainly regarded highly by his audiences (many of whom likely consumed venison from time to time), it seems to contrast grain agriculture in the context of the narrative. And this represents how venison was often viewed with less favourable attitudes by some narrative writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

[59] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, pp. 84, 200.
[60] John Gillingham, "Civilizing the English: The English Histories of William of Malmesbury and David Hume", *Historical Research* 74:183 (2001), 26-27, 42.
[61] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, pp. 16-18.
[62] *Ibid*, pp. 18, 30.

Venison presented some clerics (such as Wace) with a dilemma because of its association with the aristocratic practice of hunting. Venison on the one hand indicated social distinction and high privilege in Anglo-Norman society, and lords paid close attention to their methods for controlling this highly-prized resource. They enforced a strict new forest law, which limited hunting and venison consumption to the king and chosen lords. Harsh penalties were also imposed on any found guilty of transgressions in the forest. Gaimar describes a time before the Conquest when England's forests had been "teeming with stags, roebucks, wild boar, hares, foxes, and all manner of wild creatures in such abundance throughout the countryside" [*cerfs, chevriz, daims et porcs salvages / levres, gupilz et salvagines / ad tel plenté par ces guastines*] (ll. 6238-40). However, the Norman lords make no exception in their efforts "to police the royal forests" [*pur les forestz le rei guarder*] (ll. 6234-45).[63] Gaimar writes how Anglo-Norman lords asserted their dominance in twelfth-century England by strictly regulating the types of food that reflected aristocratic privilege as well as their practices (hunting). The Norman lords had imposed these restrictions fully by c. 1100 as private hunting reserves were converted into demesne forest for the king and his favourite aristocrats. This was a critical difference from the nature of Anglo-Saxon lordship, so designation of private forests became a valuable tool for separating and distinguishing Norman lords from the lower tiers of English society.[64]

Some writers represented how control over hunting and access to venison was intended to enforce the landholding hierarchy, and to amplify aristocratic authority. The *Gesta Stephani* provides a negative example, whereby its author attributed the instability of Stephen's reign to the king's inability to control the resources of the forest. Under Henry I, "wild animals" [*ferœ*] had been "most scrupulously preserved in the whole kingdom" [*quœ in tota prius regione reseruabantur*] as though "enclosed with hunting nets" [*tanquam in indagine reclusœ*]. After Henry's death, hunt-animals are "molested in every corner" [*nunc quaquauersum turbari*]. Animals that "formerly overflowed the land in numerous herds" [*quœ antea copioso grege uniuersam terram affluenter*] have been "exterminated", [*adnullata*] and the "great abundance" [*indicibilis copia*] has been "diminished" [*extenuari*] (I. 1).[65] Lordship unravels in the text when prestigious foods are taken unlawfully. The hierarchical aristocracy is unsettled because venison and hunting rights do not reflect social distinction. In this way, the text shows how restrictions on hunting and venison consumption were distinctively Anglo-Norman methods of resource management, with which lords distinguished themselves above their subordinates, and expressed authority by controlling food resources. Henry I was shown as a good lord because he controlled the resources of the forest, but Stephen did not. This symbolised a greater failure to manage the estates, and it became a political failure as the writer ascribed it to the onset of war. Thus, writers associated violence with failures in estates management.

[63] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, pp. 336-38.
[64] Judith Green, "Kingship, Lordship and Community in Eleventh-Century England" in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXXI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2008*, ed. Lewis, Anglo-Norman Studies: 31 (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 11-12.
[65] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, pp. 2-4.

Other writers (like Wace) seemed more critical of this aspect of Anglo-Norman lordship. William of Malmesbury writes an account of William Rufus' death, in which he describes the New Forest as a region reduced to "woodland glades and lairs for the wild beasts" [*in saltus et lustra ferarum redegerat*]. This refers to the Norman practice of constructing private forests, with which they self-consciously created environments to help distinguish themselves as privileged members in Anglo-Norman society. William claims this was done "with villages abandoned" [*desertis uillas*] as his account reflects how Norman dominance of prestigious foodstuffs was sometimes detrimental for those who cultivated the fields. The text describes how villages were abandoned, and peasants were driven from their fields, so lords could create forests for themselves. Two manuscripts include the description of an "unnatural spectacle" [*infando spectaculo*] where "red deer and roebucks and suchlike animals" [*ibi cerui et capreoli et ceterae illud genus bestiae*] are "not even available to men at large for their benefit" [*nec illae quidem mortalium usibus communiter espositae*] (III. 275. 1-2).[66] Other extant manuscripts omit the critical language, but William of Malmesbury seemed critical of the way that Anglo-Norman lords asserted their brand of dominance. The growing judicial machinery used to punish those who transgressed in the forest also aroused popular resentment from the peasantry, who viewed the forest law with contempt. According to N.J. Sykes, native English peasants disapproved because they viewed animals as nobody's property (until caught) before the Conquest. Therefore, the act of hunting became particularly divisive in twelfth-century England, and many continued to oppose any restrictions on wild resources.[67] Clerics held different and conflicting views on the subject. Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) placed hunting among his seven mechanical arts, and described venison as the most noble of foods. But Orderic Vitalis criticised those who hunted too much, which he considered excessive.[68] Some believed that lords who hunted might have neglected their duty to cultivate. The hunt did not threaten the food supply, but excess showed a disregard for wider sustainability in favour of personal pleasures as estates were not managed to their potential.

Venison was also associated with the uncultivated forest and the behaviour it was thought to produce. Forests in Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet England did not refer to any wooded area. It designated a specific environment (often man-made) which fell under the jurisdiction of the forest law. The forests were wild as cultivation did not occur. The French vernacular *gaste* and *gastine* translate to "empty" and "uncultivated", or that which opposes the agricultural enterprise. Writers depicted the forest environment [*la terre gaste*] as isolated, distant, and marginal. Whether it was used as a hunting ground for lords, a refuge for eremites, or a gathering area for peasants, all who went to the forest were thought to behave more like animals than humans, having fled the civilised world of

[66] Others simply describe how Rufus enjoyed the hunt, *William of Malmesbury Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, 2 Vols. Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1998), p. 504.
[67] N.J. Sykes, "The Impact of the Normans on Hunting Practices in England" in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. C.M. Woolgar, Dale Serjeantson and Tony Waldron, Medieval History and Archaeology (Oxford, 2009), pp. 162-74.
[68] Bruno Andreolli, "Food Representations" in *A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age*, ed. Massimo Montanari, The Cultural Histories Series: 2 (London, 2012), pp. 156-57; Marjorie Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1984), p. 15.

agricultural production. The forest symbolised an oppositional space between nature and culture, and what was wild and what was cultivated. It was considered a frontier – created by lords, but inhabited by those on the fringes of society.[69] Writers expressed critical attitudes towards venison in relation to the forest setting, the animalistic behaviour needed to acquire it, and popular resentment for an instrument of Norman oppression. Those who wrote in the wake of William Rufus' unfortunate death (1100) seemed ready and willing to recognise a darker side of the aristocracy's affinity for venison. The forest for some writers was where lordship became unstuck because it encouraged them to behave in an uncivilised manner. So, venison may have symbolised the bestial and violent tendencies that remained beneath the surface of civility in lordly culture. Matilda Bruckner has suggested a distinction between necessary and excessive violence, whereby hunting required violence, but at least its goals were tied to food production (albeit for aristocrats).[70] Perhaps it was slightly preferable to other violence, and some attempted to reconcile between the aristocracy's love for the hunt and the behaviour it was thought to inspire. Narrative writers expressed different views as contradictory messages coexisted in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Venison designated social status and distinction, but preference for agriculture indicates a higher and divinely sanctioned type of lordship.

Writers viewed land cultivation and grain agriculture as the indicative of the best type of lordship during this period. Orderic Vitalis attributes the historical foundation of Normandy to when "husbandmen ploughed fields" [*laborantibus colonis*]. Neustria becomes Normandy, and it bore to God an "abundant harvest" [*multiplicem fructum*] of "men dwelling in holiness" [*hominum in sanctitate permanentium Deo obtulit*] (III. 4).[71] Orderic uses the language of agriculture to describe the historical progression of Normandy as he writes it surpassing its neighbouring regions by adopting a better and more civilised manner of lordship. Gerald of Wales writes how the phrase *agricolis labor actus in orbem* (or farmers toil in the world) does not apply in his native Wales because the soil is rarely ploughed: "they ate more flesh and less bread" [*carne plenius, pane parcius vesci*] (I. 8).[72] This implies emphasis on hunting to the detriment of agricultural production. Writers recognised how agriculture required communal discipline and an attentive lord to oversee. Grain sustained society, which further contrasted the hunt and its products because most were reserved for the lord. Agriculture demonstrated a more complete control over natural abundances than hunting because it reflected concern for society's well-being rather than purely the lord's food and martial prowess (demonstrated in the hunt). The aristocratic diet varied, but everyone at every level of hierarchy used

[69] Jacques Le Goff, "The Wilderness in the Medieval West" in Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London, 1988), pp. 52-54, 58; R. Howard Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table: The Historical Significance of Myths of Dearth and Plenty in Old French Romance", *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 11:2 (1980), 256.
[70] Matilda T. Bruckner, "Of Swords and Ploughshares: Dislocations and Transformations in Chrétien's Grail Story" in *Knight and Samurai: Actions and Images of Elite Warriors in Europe and East Asia*, ed. Rosemarie Deist, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik: 707 (Göppingen, 2003), p. 45.
[71] *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis Vol. 2*, ed. M. Chibnall, 6 Vols. Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969-80), p. 4.
[72] *Pontici Virunnii viri doctissimi Britannicæ historiæ libri sex*, ed. S. Theolog, p. 255.

bread and ale, and the well-being and prosperity of society depended on agriculture. Writers promoted this as the ideal base on which lordship was to be built. Orderic's language likely symbolises the influence of churchmen on secular lords and the foundation of monastic houses, but his text uses the language of land cultivation to describe the method of civilizing. The men sustained by the abundant harvest are also part of said harvest, whereby agricultural imagery evokes a greater image of social and political order in association with Christian lords and pious monks. This does not occur in Gerald's account, and native lords are defined clearly as uncivilised. Thus, writers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries viewed agriculture as the best and the most ideal manner of estates management.

Land cultivation reflected order and harmony in medieval society. Therefore, agriculture carried additional significance for the Church. Pope Honorius III (r. 1216-27) declared that agriculture, civilisation, and Christianity went hand-in-hand around 1220.[73] In Eadmer's *Vita Anselmi*, Anselm's vision of heaven includes "serfs of the king" [*regis ancillæ*] who are pictured "reaping corn". [*segetes metere*] while members of the household [*familiam*] are sent "to gather the crops" [*ad colligendas messes*] (I. 2).[74] The text presents the Church's notion of divine lordship in familiar terms. God (like an Anglo-Norman lord) is a landholder who oversees the cultivation of land to produce bread, whereby grain agriculture reflects the twelfth-century Church's idea of heavenly lordship. The reading for the Epiphany in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* includes how Christ "fed five-thousand men with five loaves" [*quinque milla hominum de quinque panibus satiavit*], reminding audiences of the importance of bread in relation to the "multiplication of bread in the wilderness" [*multiplicationem panum in deserto*] (XIV).[75] Perhaps it was God's heavenly cultivation (described by Eadmer) that clerics understood to have allowed Christ to provide such a miraculous abundance of bread. Both texts represent the spiritual value that clerics attached to agriculture in this period. This image of cultivated fields and therefore, the ability to produce and provide bread was synonymous with the best manner of lordship – practiced by God in heaven and sanctioned by Christ on Earth.

This spiritual value which clerics attached to agriculture was also inspired by their notions of *Opus Dei* or "work of God", which originated in the cloister. The *Rule of St. Benedict* prescribes work "in the field" [*in agro*] as part of the *opere Dei* (VII. 62).[76] The *Rule* describes how brethren should be engaged with gathering the harvest [*ad fruges recolligendas per se occupentur*] because "when they live by the labour of their hands… then they are really monks [*quia tunc vere monachi sunt si labore manuum suarum vivunt*] (XVIII. 7-8).[77] Work in the fields became ritualised by the Benedictines, but the elaboration of liturgical duties led to its virtual elimination by the twelfth century. Peter the

[73] Cited in: Hagger, "Lordship and Lunching", p. 236.
[74] *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. R.W. Southern, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1962), pp. 4-5.
[75] *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda Aurea, vulgo historia lombardica dicta / ad optimorum librorum fidem*, ed. Th. Graesse (Dresden and Leipzig, 1846), p. 88.
[76] *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English with Notes*, ed. Timothy Fry, Imogen Baker, Timothy Horner, Augusta Rabbe, and Mark Sheridan (Collegeville, 1981), p. 200.
[77] *Ibid*, pp. 248-50.

Venerable (d. 1156) believed that the monks' delicate hands and social background (as many came from aristocratic families) left them unprepared to handle the rigours of agricultural labour.[78] The practice was revived by the Cistercians who sought to live strictly by Benedict's *Rule*. The founders believed that a monastic community should participate in manual labour, so field-work was restored to its place in the cloister. Entire communities worked in the fields, and Cistercian writers stressed the value of work as an ascetical exercise in addition to a means of providing food. Caesarius of Heisterbach (d. 1240) wrote a miracle story, in which the Blessed Mary, St. Anne, and St. Mary Magdalen visit the monks of Clairvaux while they toil at the harvest. The Cistercians organised the *Opus Dei* more clearly by hiring lay brethren. The *Opus Dei* was divided into prayer and manual labour, so the part-time work force of cloister monks was inadequate for the provision of food. Cistercian monasteries began to employ lay brothers for field work, which left the monks free to focus on worship. Thereby, monks remained dedicated to the *Rule* without involvement in the worldly business of estates management.[79] Clerical attitudes that connected cultivation with spiritual purity and heavenly lordship inspired beliefs that lords needed to take direct responsibility for overseeing the cultivation of their estates. Thus, agricultural output reflected the quality of lordship as much as martial activity and leadership in battle. Material resources were believed to have been created by God, and bestowed on earth for human use. Therefore, lordship in heaven needed to be mirrored on Earth, and the effective management of estates required only the best manner of lordship. The connection made by clerics between cultivation and lordship clearly associated the highest manner of lordship with agricultural production. The ability to cultivate and therefore, to produce bread indicated the lord's control over the most basic of food. Texts show how writers of twelfth- and thirteenth-century narrative literature viewed the best lords as those who managed resources and produced food.

## The Difficulties of Lordship: Ambition, Conflict, and Devastation

Narrative literature reflects popular anxiety that lords did not always manage their estates, nor did they ensure the safe production of food. Lords had personal ambitions, which clerics believed was the cause of predatory behaviour towards the land and its food. Orderic Vitalis writes of Wazzo of Poissy, who "took away the produce of the peasants" [*prædam hospitum cepit*]. And his land becomes "uninhabited" [*solitarius*] (V. 19. 466) as a result.[80] The lord's ambition is implied, which leads to theft and thus, the failure of cultivation, and loss of the estate. It symbolises the destruction of lordship, which could not exist without the estate. William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* includes an account of William Rufus's reign. The royal *curiales* "devoured the substance of the peasants" [*rusticorum substantias depascebantur*] by "withdrawing food from the mouths of the poor" [*a buccis*

[78] Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, p. 115.
[79] *Ibid*, pp. 177-81.
[80] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 3*, ed. Chibnall, p. 204.

*miserorum cibos abstrahentes*] (IV. 314. 4).[81] Courtiers plunder and steal food from those who cultivate while the king allows and likely benefits from predatory behaviour. Lords do not protect their food, nor do they ensure its safe production because of a desire for gain. Ambition causes predatory behaviour which causes devastation as a result. The texts reflect anxiety about the realities of lordship in this period when the plundering of estates, and predatory behaviour by lords and their men was familiar. This behaviour was resented by churchmen, whose lands were targeted. Clerics felt that lords were vulnerable to worldly temptations, including an uncontrolled desire for wealth. Writers picked up on anxieties about the proliferation of undeserving lords alongside a perceived rise in violence. They recognised how easily lords were corrupted into preying on the estates they were meant to protect. Too many lands were plundered as ambitions came at the expense of estates management. So, writers paid attention to those who preyed on estates rather than protecting the food.

Narrative literature shows major concern with the issue of armed conflict. Ambition brought lords into direct conflict with other lords in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England and Normandy, which produced greater devastation of estates, and more specifically the food production infrastructure. Orderic Vitalis writes of the militant lordship of Hugh the Great (d. 965). In order to "sack the whole province" [*totamque regionem istam deuestate*], Hugh devastates "ovens and mills" [*furnos et molendinos*], and "drove away flocks and herds" [*greges pecorum et armentorum abductie*]. Ambitions causes armed conflict, which Orderic describes as contrary to expectations because "the peasants thought themselves safe under Hugh's protection" [*tutela Hugonis tuti esse putabant*] (IV. 10. 96-97).[82] The lord engages in militarism rather than protecting the means of food production (including the labour force). Lands are devastated, so food production cannot occur. Estates would disintegrate without the means to produce and thus, lordship would cease to exist. The Old Testament book of *Isaiah* connects the destruction of Israel with desolate lands and fields laid waste. The wasteland in twelfth-century literature most often means land that is deliberately destroyed or laid waste.[83] Narrative writers likely knew the Old Testament parables, and many saw lands plundered and devastated in their own day. So, peaceful land management provided them with a nice opposition to the violence which devastated fields and produced the desolate and uncultivated wasteland. Therefore, the uncultivated wasteland was the expected result of militant lordship, and it destroys the very idea of lordship itself (productive estates). Biblical tradition and clerical disdain for violence may have inspired Orderic's efforts to denounce the years of rebellion and border warfare in and around Normandy.[84] Orderic provided examples of how warfare produced devastation in the past, and it

[81] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 558.
[82] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 3*, ed. Chibnall, p. 314.
[83] *Isaiah* cited in Bruckner, "Of Swords and Ploughshares", pp. 32-33, for wasteland, see: Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table", 257.
[84] Marjorie Chibnall, "Orderic Vitalis on Castles" in Marjorie Chibnall, *Piety, Power and History in Medieval England and Normandy*, Collected Studies Series: CS683 (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 46-52.

should be avoided in the present. In this way, good lordship was reflected by copious estates and a well-fed populace while violence exacerbated the devastation of lands and increased the wasteland.

Anglo-Norman writers presented more nuanced attitudes when it came to the devastation caused by their lords, to whom they were loyal. Contemporaries were aware that William the Conqueror employed these tactics effectively before and after the Conquest. His biographer, William of Poitiers (d. 1090) writes how the Normans "devastate" [*uastare*] the "vines, fields and domains" [*uineas, agros, uillas*] of their enemies (I. 38).[85] The opposition cannot cultivate, lordship is destroyed, the Normans take control of the estates, and they assert their own lordship. William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* describes the harrying of the north when large-scale devastation allowed the Normans to crush the last remnants of Anglo-Saxon resistance to the Conquest. In the text, King William subjects the citizens of York to "a long famine" [*civibus longa*]. He orders that "towns and fields" [*uicos et agros*] are to be "devastated" [*corrupti*], and "fruit and grain ruined" [*fructus et fruges labefactari*]. So, a "province once fertile" [*prouintiae quondam fertilis*] becomes "entirely uncultivated" [*omnifariam inculta*] (III. 249. 2-3).[86] William of Malmesbury describes Norman lordship imposed with the devastation of land, which destroys the means for food production. His account seems neutral. He does not seem to condemn the devastation, despite clerical disdain for this method of aristocratic warfare. William may have been pressured to sympathise with the Norman regime, which likely influenced his description of violence by Norman lords. William also believed that Anglo-French society was superior to what existed before. He favoured a strong Anglo-Norman monarch who was superior to any challenging force, and maintained order at all costs.[87] In this way, William of Malmesbury may have believed that the Conqueror's method of devastation was necessary in order to quell the northern resistance, and impose a superior form of lordship over any who resisted, although he does acknowledge in detail its devastating effects on the once plentiful region.

Orderic Vitalis' account is even more complex and nuanced. The language is far from neutral, and Orderic describes a particularly shameful and heinous act. William has "succumbed to vice" [*uitio succubuit*] and he has "made no effort to restrain his fury" [*dum iram suam regere contempsit*] (IV. 195). William's actions are clearly inspired by sinful temptation, which affects negatively the king's judgment. At William's command, "crops and herds" [*segetibus et pecoribus*] and "chattels of every kind of food" [*uases omni genere alimentorum*] are destroyed, "so all the food for the entire northern region was devastated" [*et sic omnem alimoniam per totam regionem Transhumbranam pariter deuastari*]. This account seems consistent with others in some ways. But Orderic Vitalis condemns the devastation outright despite his general praise for the Conqueror: "but for this act that condemned

[85] *The Gesta Gvillelmi of William of Poitiers*, ed. R.H.C Davies and Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1998), p. 60.
[86] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, pp. 462-64.
[87] Gillingham, "French Culture", pp. 733-34; J.G. Haahr, "The Concept of Kingship in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* and *Historia Novella*", *Mediaeval Studies* 38 (1976), 370-71.

the righteous and the wicked alike to die by slow starvation, I cannot praise him" [*sed in hoc quod una iustum et impium tabidæ famis lancea æque transfixit laudare non audio*] (IV. 196).[88] Orderic also forgives William by imagining his deathbed speech. True regret is expressed as William supposedly admits, "In mad fury, I descended on the English of the north like a raging lion" [*Vnde immoderato furore in boreales Anglos ut uesanus leo properaui*], and "homes and crops" [*domos eorum segetesque et*] have been "burnt" [*incendi*], and "and full herds of cattle and sheep were slaughtered [*et copiosos armentorum pecudumque greges passim mactari*]" (VII. 243).[89] In this way, Orderic Vitalis may have his cake and eat it too. Orderic condemns the method of devastation like many clerics of his day, through which innocent people suffer. But the deathbed speech allows Orderic to present the Conqueror favourably because he supposedly repents and seeks God's forgiveness. William's violence results from temporary vice rather than deep-seeded immorality. Thus, Orderic believed in a pattern of divine redemption for penitent lords. He was sympathetic to the Normans, and clerics tended to forgive those who were generous with monastic land grants and foundations. Some writers employed "us vs. them" textual strategies, with which devastation was shown as necessary or forgivable. It was accommodated into a larger framework by these Norman writers when used to subjugate others and promote their lords, whereby redemption was possible.

Writers also addressed the issue of devastation with regards to armed conflict that persisted in their own day. England descended into civil war after Henry I's death, which was known as the Anarchy. What followed was characterised by contemporaries as a series of sieges that resulted in widespread devastation. In William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella*, King Stephen attacks Dunster [*Dunestore*], leaving "nothing at all" [*nichil omnino*] that would have "served his enemies for food" [*quod posset inimicis suis esui*] (II. 32).[90] The conflict seemed to drag without an end in sight, and the *Gesta Stephani* describes advice that given to Stephen. He is advised to "set fire to the crops and every other means of supporting human life" [*segetes et quæcumque alia erant humanæ vitae sustentamenta incendio dare*]. Salisbury becomes a "cruel and brutal site" [*crudelius erat et inhumanis spectaculum*] as they "fired the crops" [*segetes flammiuomas*], and "brought to nothing everything edible" [*escarum reppererant consumere et ad nihilum redigere*]. The author also promotes Stephen's worthiness. Although he acknowledges that it is "evil" [*malum*] to "take away the sustenance of human life" [*malum vero esse optulerat humanæ vitæ subsidia auferre*], it would be "far worse for the kingdom to be constantly disturbed by the enemy's raiding and impoverishment by daily pillage" [*multo tamen deterius hostium incursione regnum assidue turbari et cotidiana depopulatione imminui*] (II. 114).[91] The belief was that Stephen's short-term devastation was justifiable to avoid greater devastation, and the text attributes the devastation and famine to the

[88] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, pp. 231-32.
[89] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 4*, ed. Chibnall, p. 94.
[90] *William of Malmesbury Historia Novella: The Contemporary History*, ed. Edmund King, trans. K.R Potter, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1998), p. 64.
[91] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, pp. 218-20.

perpetual fighting rather than Stephen's unworthiness.[92] The writer believed that devastation was necessary to re-establish conditions for estates management and land cultivation. Warfare caused enormous devastation for a society based on land management. It also required drastic actions by the (perceived) rightful lord. The writer favoured King Stephen, and he did not condemn the strategy when used for these purposes. But he and others rarely failed to acknowledge the real consequences.

Writers gave attention to the devastating effects of warfare on the food supply despite their occasional justification. And they paid close attention to those who suffered the most. In the *Gesta Stephani*, "terrible famine prevailed all over England" [*fames namque in omni Anglia dirissime inualuerat*] because "fields whitening with a magnificent harvest" [*agros cultissima segete albescentes*] had "cultivators taken by the agency of the devastating famine" [*sed eorum cultores, pestifera fame intercurrente, de medio sublatos*]. Devastation and famine are attributed to the perpetual state of warfare rather than naturally occurring shortages. Resources are abundant, but cultivation and estates management cannot occur because those who cultivate have been killed. The survivors feast on the "forbidden and unaccustomed flesh of dogs or horses" [*vetitis et insuetis canum uel equorum carnibus*] while others "fed unsatisfied on raw and filthy herbs or roots" [*illi herbarum vel radicum crudam ingluuiem*] (II. 78).[93] Civilised systems of cultivation are destroyed, and people resort to uncivilised and animalistic behaviour to feed themselves. The details of famine and suffering are not spared despite the author's loyalty to Stephen. He was clearly horrified by the suffering of the common people, and even when devastation is exercised in the king's interest, its effects are represented with real emotion.[94] Devastation created suffering even when employed on behalf of a good lord, and writers sympathised with the victims. They picked up on and represented anxieties that prolonged conflict decimated the lord's ability to cultivate, and it only created more suffering. Thus, this anonymous writer did not shy away from the real effects of warfare on the realm's food supply.

Other writers reminded their audiences directly that armed conflict came with great risks to the food, and this needed to be considered in cases when warfare was unavoidable. William of Malmesbury writes that famine "often lays low what seems impregnable" [*quae etiam tuta expugnare solet*] (IV. 362. 1).[95] William references the impregnable nature of castles, and implies that some lords might have been preoccupied with strong defences. He reminded them how focus on the martial aspects of lordship came at the expense of the food, which left the estates impoverished and their dependents starving. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, the Trojans come under siege and acknowledge starvation as the highest threat. Their defences are "closely guarded" [*bien gardees*] (l. 344) and capable of withstanding the attack. However, the danger of starvation remains: "hunger would make

[92] Graeme J. White, "The Myth of the Anarchy" in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1999*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, Anglo-Norman Studies: 22 (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 326.
[93] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, pp. 152-54.
[94] *Ibid*, pp. xxx-xxxi.
[95] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 634.

them surrender; against that, they had no defence" [*Par la faim le estrova rendre / De cel ne se püent defender*] (ll. 355-56).[96] Wace expresses directly how military strength on its own cannot protect against starvation. Later, the Britons come under siege by Caesar. The Britons are "experienced warriors, bold, strong and tough" [*Vassal erent Bretun pruvé / Hardi e fort e aduré*] (ll. 4655-56). However, the conflict endangers the production of food, which negates their superior prowess: "they were not afraid of weapons, attacks, or any stratagem" [*Ne criement arme ne assalt / Ne nul engine*] (ll. 4673-74). Fear of starvation takes clear precedence and Wace provides a direct warning: "you will never see a fortress, however strong and difficult to capture, which is not forced to surrender once there is a shortage of food – no one else need attack it" [*Ja ne verrez tel fortelesce / Tant i ait gent de grant prüesce / Kit ant seit fort e grefs a prendre / Que famine ne face rendre / Des que faute vient vitaille / N'i estuet altre kis assaille*] (ll. 4877-82).[97] Warfare is unavoidable, the Britons are superior in prowess, and their castles are well-defended. But lords needed to recognise that martial superiority meant nothing if cultivation did not occur, and the production of food was not guaranteed. Conflict could have been resolved if food production was upheld, whereby superior defences and prowess could take over. Wace wrote in the 1150s when the Anarchy was still fresh in the minds of clerics and lay aristocrats. Both looked to Eleanor's husband (Henry II) to end the violence and restore good lordship. Wace reminded of the dangers posed by militarism, and he promoted estates management as the priority. Lords needed to protect the estates, and this was considered equally important to prowess.

Jacobus de Voragine's thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* imagines Jerusalem under siege in the story of St. James the Less. A "great famine" [*tanta fames*] occurs as expected, and Jacobus writes how "parents snatched food not only from the hands, but from the mouths of their children, and children from their parents" [*quod parentes filiis et filii parentibus, viriu uxoribus viris et uxores cibos non tantum et minibus*]. A lady [*matrona*] also kills [*jugulavit*] her new-born son, has him cooked [*coxit*], and eats half of the body [*dimidium comedens partem*]. She offers part of the child's flesh to some robbers who smell the odour of meat and demand some: "behold, for I have saved for you the better part" [*ecce, vobis partem optimam reservavi*]. And her desperate state is enhanced even further when the woman attempts to justify her actions: "it is my son" [*meus, filius hic*] and therefore, "the sin is mine… I will eat without fear because I, who bore him, has eaten first" [*meum est peccatum, securi edite, quia prior ego comedi, quem genui*] (LXVII).[98] This extreme and barbaric behaviour horrifies the plunderers, who run away in fear. Warfare in this thirteenth-century text again leads to the devastation of estates, and the destruction of the realm's food supply. The effects are given in gory detail by Jacobus. Sin is acknowledged; however, the lady believes her actions to be justified because of the conditions caused by the devastation. While Jacobus would not have permitted filicide in practice (even in extreme famine), he felt free to describe extreme behaviour in order to depict the

[96] *Roman de Brut,* ed. Weiss, p. 10.
[97] *Ibid*. p. 118.
[98] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, pp. 301-02.

horrific effects of devastation on the lord's dependents. He imagined how even thieves might be frightened by their desperate actions. The text clearly contains high levels of exaggeration, but it employs sensationalist imagery alongside religious discourse to represent clerical anxieties about the real threat of warfare and devastation that persisted throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Jacobus' story from the second half of the thirteenth century shows how anxiety about the threat of armed conflict, the destruction of the food supply, and the appearance of uncultivated wasteland did not subside after 1154. Henry II's sons rebelled in the 1170s, and thirteenth-century revolts against John and Henry III alongside the persistent struggles against the Welsh, Scots, and French demonstrate to us how the dangers of armed conflict remained well into the thirteenth century and beyond. Giuliano Pinto has argued that the development of commerce allowed speculators to influence the effects of famine by provoking price increases in challenging times. The effects of famine did not decrease in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but they were often crueller because they affected larger amounts of people.[99] While the threats of devastation and famine were not unique to this period (nor was clerical distaste for warfare), the frequency of its description in narrative literature suggests that its effects may have been exacerbated by a societal structure organised by hierarchical lordships, whose subsistence and economic success was based on dependent tenants and labourers (at multiple levels). Armed conflict and the consequent devastation may have exacted a heavier toll in this period, so writers often described in detail the devastation of food in both the past and the present. Writers sympathised with the innocent victims who suffered the most from wars they had nothing to do with. And narrative literature shows them resorting to less civilised actions, even cannibalism. These extreme examples represent how lords were expected to act as holders of land and managers of the estates. And thus, the safe production of food was recognised as the highest priority.

## The Politics of Food Provision and the Identity of Lordship

Literary imaginings of the lord's feast reveal beliefs that the ability to provide food indicated good lordship in this period because it symbolised estates management and control over natural resources. Chrétien de Troyes' late twelfth-century romance of *Yvain* presents a motif of food provision alongside the changing nature of the hero's identity as knight and lord. The series of events begins when Yvain feasts with Laudine after he defeats her husband (Escalados) in single combat. The feast consists of "roast capon" [*capon en rost*] (l. 1048) and "a pot of fine wine" [*vin qui fu de boine crape*] (l. 1050). "She invited him to come and eat" [*si li a a mengier offert*] (l. 1052).[100] Yvain takes possession of the estate, which includes a magic fountain. Any knight who pours water over a nearby stone unleashes a devastating storm. When Yvain kills Escalados, the household is frantic to replace

[99] Giuliano Pinto, "Food Security" in *A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age*, ed. Massimo Montanari, The Cultural Histories Series: 2 (London, 2012), pp. 62-66.
[100] *Le Chevalier Au Lion; ou, Le roman d'Yvain: édition critique d'après le manuscrit B.N. fr.1433*, ed. David F. Hult, Lettres Gothiques 4539 Livre de Poche 19 (Paris, 1994), p. 114.

him because of the domain's susceptibility to devastation. A new lord is needed to prevent the estate from becoming an uncultivated wasteland because adventuring knights like Yvain could unleash the storm with no concern for the consequences. The land's susceptibility to devastation by the actions of knights in pursuit of adventure calls attention to the vain pursuit of self-fulfilment by knights and lords in twelfth-century England and France, which did create devastation on a large scale. The lord of the fountain in the romance is responsible for protecting the cosmic order as well as the social order, demonstrating the medieval desire for a symbiotic relationship between the social and heavenly orders.[101] Medieval notions of temporal and heavenly order required lords to protect the land and its food from the devastation brought about by other lords and knights. In the text, Yvain kills Escalados, whereby he acts violently and creates disorder. He has to become lord to protect the estates from greater devastation. A feast is given. Although details of preparation and service are omitted, the description of roast meat and wine implies it is aristocratic. This feast requires prosperous estates and management of food resources. It seems to affirm Yvain as lord by demonstrating that the estates are well-managed, and they produce food, with which Chrétien begins to construct an identity of lordship.

Yvain's lordly identity is short-lived. He and Gauvain remain at tournament too long, which breaks Yvain's promise to return to Laudine after one year. She leaves Yvain, so he abandons the estate, becomes insane, and enters the forest. There, he operates on animalistic instinct rather than lordly restraint. He hunts animals in the forest [*les bestes par le bois aguete*], and he consumes their meat entirely uncooked [*si menjue / La venoison trestoute crue*] (ll. 2824-26). Land management is abandoned in favour of primitive hunting. Chrétien describes this diet without bread or wine as "like a wild man deprived of reason" [*Comme hom forsenés et sauvage*] (l. 2828).[102] The diet of raw meat also contrasts roasted capon from the feast with Laudine. Yvain's period of estrangement is a destabilizing point in the narrative, with which Chrétien constructs an opposition between the interests of love and the interests of chivalry. Yvain's pursuit of chivalric glory comes at the expense of marriage and love. He is also denounced before the Arthurian court, whereby his social status and chivalric identity are also destroyed. Yvain abandons the society of lordship, which was defined by ploughed fields in this period. He gives up agriculture and replaces cooked foods with raw meat. Yvain ceases to be a knight of Arthur's court and becomes a hunter-predator in line with the wild man topos, straddling the line between nature and civilised society.[103] The feast of raw meat was considered inhuman in this period, and the forest setting recalls the discussion of the uncivilised and

[101] Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, pp. 57-59; Rasmus T. Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles in *Yvain*" in *Monsters, Marvels and Miracles: Imaginary Journeys and Landscapes in the Middle Ages*, ed. Leif Søndergaard and Rasmus T. Hansen (Odense, 2005), pp. 126-27.
[102] *Le Chevalier Au Lion*, ed. Hult, p. 224.
[103] Michael Ovens, "Violence and Transgression in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain, le Chevalier Au Lion*", *Parergon: Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 32:1 (2015), 54-55; James R. Simpson, "Lion-heart of Darkness? The Black Book of the Courtier in *Le Chevalier Au Lion*", *Nottingham French Studies* 46:3 (2007), 56-57; Jacques Le Goff, "Lévi Strauss in Broceliande: A Brief Analysis of a Courtly Romance" in Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London, 1988), pp. 109-14.

bestial behaviour associated with hunting in medieval thought. Emphasis on meat rather than cultivation also recalls the conduct of barbaric lords in need of civilizing in Norman literature. Yvain dines alone on unprepared food instead of cultivating fields and feasting communally. Raw meat contrasts roasted capon, and there is no bread, or anything associated with the aristocratic feast. It is understood that Yvain no longer holds land, nor does he provide food, so his identity as a lord is lost.

Yvain begins to recover when he encounters a hermit who is "clearing land" [*essartoit*] (l. 2831) to increase cultivation. It suggests a level of civilised living that sets the stage for Yvain's rediscovery of the civilised world. He leaves the forest, and the hermit gives him "bread and pure water" [*pain et de s'eve nete*] (l. 2838). The hermit cultivates and prepares enough bread to distribute surpluses, which contrasts raw meat and the uncultivated forest. The hermit provides poor-quality bread: "I do not think [Yvain] had ever tasted such coarseness or hardness", which refers to "the flour from which the bread was made" [*ne quit quë onques de si fort / ne de si dur eüst gousté: / le sestier dont tu fais li pains*] (ll. 2844-47). The bread is made from "barley mixed with straw" [*D'orgë iert pertris avec paille*] (l. 2849).[104] Yvain also receives *porrete*, which has been interpreted as vegetable soup.[105] The hermit's rudimentary agriculture (in addition to its ascetical elements) represents the primitive level of civilised society. Low-quality bread also symbolises the intermediate status between civilisation and barbarism.[106] The hermit's food is an act of charity based on good sense and Yvain's psychological (and physical) need for sustenance. The gesture develops a relationship based on food, whereby the hermit's provision of bread provides a base for social relationships to develop.[107] Yvain begins to reconstruct his identity because the hermit represents entry-level civilisation. Yvain no longer dines on raw meat, nor does he behave like an animal in the wild forest. He experiences the lower tiers of civilised society, which sets the stage for an expansion of food-based relationships.

Yvain also begins to provide food for others. He hunts and acquires the raw materials for the hermit to convert into prepared dishes: "the good man took and skinned the animals and cooked part of the venison" [*li boins hom s'entremetoit / De l'escorchier et si metoit / Assés de la venison cuire*] (ll. 2872-75). Yvain is also provided with "bread and water" [*li pains et l'iaue*] (l. 2876), and "venison without salt and without pepper" [*venison sans sel et sans poivre*] (l. 2880).[108] It has been noted by critics that Chrétien does not indicate whether the hermit partakes of this new culinary element (cooked meat). It seems unlikely because eremites were not expected to eat meat in practice. However, the hermit's kindness stimulates reciprocity in Yvain, even at his less than human level. The result is a renewed system of exchanges between nature (Yvain) and culture (the hermit). The encounter also allows Yvain to wander between the two as he provides materials from nature for the

[104] *Le Chevalier Au Lion*, ed. Hult, p. 226.
[105] Peter Haidu, "The Hermit's Pottage: Deconstruction and History in *Yvain*", *Romanic Review: A Journal Devoted to the Study of Romance Literature* 74:1 (1983), 3.
[106] Le Goff, "Lévi Strauss in Broceliande", p. 114.
[107] *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.
[108] *Le Chevalier Au Lion*, ed. Hult, p. 228.

hermit to prepare and distribute back to him. This exchange operates at the threshold between bestial foraging and a primitive bartering system. Cooked food becomes the new threshold of civilised culture as Yvain receives cooked meat (which he had eaten raw).[109] According to Le Goff, a culinary triangle is formed with cooked meat acting as the mediator between the highest levels of nature and the lowest limits of civilised society.[110] Critical debate has focused on themes of commerce and market exchanges, but the episode shows Yvain's re-entry into the civilised culture of lordship. He feasts on poor fare (low quality bread), and he progresses to cooked meat. However, spices, wine, and table manners remain absent. He also begins to provide food, yet he remains dependent. He provides raw materials, whereby he does not oversee cultivation, production, or the preparation of food, nor does he feast communally. He is given prepared dishes, which reminds audiences that he has not regained authority over an estate. This places him at the level of a tenant farmer, who works the lord's estates and provides the lord with materials for preparation and redistribution. However, the lion helps Yvain to recover his identity as a lord by allowing him to oversee food preparation and its provision.

Yvain's encounter with the lion officially re-establishes his lordly identity. It allows him to reassert control over the land and its resources by providing food in the manner of a lord. Yvain and the lion establish a relationship of culinary exchange somewhat like that with the hermit. The lion detects wild animals, and "hunger and its nature prompted it to pursue its pray and hunt for food" [*si le semonst fains et nature / D'aler em proie et de cachier / Pour sa vitaille pourcachier*]. For the lion, "this was what nature wanted it to do" [*Che veut Nature qu'i le faiche*] (ll. 3420-24).[111] Therefore, the lion also represents the upper limits of nature – the position held previously by Yvain, and what requires civilising. Yvain assumes the role of the hermit as he prepares and carves away "as much meat from the deer as he wanted to eat" [*du chevroil escorcheroit / Tant comme il en vaurroit mengier*] (ll. 3456-57). He starts a fire, "puts the meat on a spit" [*met en .i. broche*], and "roasts it" [*en rost*] until it is "cooked thoroughly" [*molt tost*] (ll. 3663-64). The lion remains with Yvain and "when his master had consumed his fill of fat steak, the lion ate the rest of the venison" [*Tant qu'il ot pris tant du lardé / Et tant mengié qu'il n'en pot plus / Du chevroil trestout le surplus / Menga li leons juq'ad os*] (ll. 3472-77).[112] Some critics have interpreted the lion as a heraldic emblem and an indicator of knightly valour while others have argued for an incarnation of the anger that characterised Yvain before his encounter with the hermit. According to Helen Laurie, the lion embodies the close link between courtly and chivalric elements by presenting ecclesiastical notions of repentance and forgiveness on a secular level through the rehabilitation of a knight who wrongs his lady.[113] Julian

[109] Haidu, "The Hermit's Pottage", 5-6; Eugene Vance, *Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages*, Regents Studies in Medieval Culture (Nebraska, 1986), p. 142.
[110] Le Goff, "Lévi Strauss in Broceliande", pp. 114-15.
[111] *Le Chevalier Au Lion*, ed. Hult, p. 262.
[112] *Ibid*, p. 264.
[113] Vance, *Mervellous Signals*, p. 137; Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles", p. 137; Helen C.R. Laurie, "Beasts and Saints: A Key to the Lion in Chrétien's *Yvain*", *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society: Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne* 39 (1987), 137.

Harris also prioritises its ecclesiastical significance. He interprets the lion as a symbol of Christ, whereby it directly indicates redemption in spiritual terms. This reflects a traditionally medieval view of lions as Christ symbols, and as representatives of the entire Christian community.[114] Thus, Yvain's lion has been interpreted by critics as a symbol of recovery, potentially with Christ-like overtones.

Yvain also reassumes the identity of a lord through the establishment of a food-based relationship with the lion. Yvain and the lion enter a relationship of culinary exchange like the hermit, but with Yvain in the dominant role. Yvain manages nature's resources and provides prepared food for others rather than providing only the raw materials. The hermit performs low-level cultivation and small-time commerce while Yvain's identity as the provider of food is acquired by overseeing the hunt and preparing the venison. The lion assumes the role of dogs and falcons (owned by lords in practice) by hunting on Yvain's behalf, and providing raw materials. The narrative shows venison in a positive light as it emphasises social distinction. Yvain roasts the meat and provides the lion with prepared food, somewhat like the hermit had done for him, but in a way which reflects high status. The hermit does not eat the venison he prepares, but Yvain does, and he provides for the lion when he finishes. Yvain tames his animalistic instincts (symbolised by the lion),[115] which is doubled by the distribution of prepared food to another. He feasts with the lion rather than by himself, so he achieves an identity of lordship on a higher level than the hermit. The absence of bread, knives, tablecloths, salt, and wine is also noted [*Que il n'i ot ne pain ne sel / Ne nape, ne coutel, në el*] (ll. 3467-68), but it is Yvain that complains of this.[116] This indicates the restoration of an aristocratic identity. Several critics have debated Yvain's identity and whether it changes. C.R.B. Combellack and Zara P. Zaddy have argued that Yvain's identity does not change, and he remains a chivalric knight throughout the narrative.[117] Ovens and Hansen interpret the romance as a story of sin and rehabilitation as Yvain transgresses by killing Escalados, and by remaining at tournament to the detriment of his wife and estate. Trials and personal growth allow Yvain to the amend transgressions, and to undergo a spiritual transformation in a way that reflects a man's journey towards God based on the Gospels and the life of Christ. Rasmus T. Hansen connects the Yvain romance to the twelfth-century ideal of Christian knighthood that sought to move away from the anti-social aggressiveness of earlier warrior elites.[118]

Whether or not Yvain's adventures are guided by spiritual transgressions and the need for redemption, the hero's identity as knight and lord does seem to change. And these changes are conveyed through his manner of feasting and food provision. Yvain appears as a lord when he feasts

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[114] Harris cited in: C.R.B. Combellack, "Yvain's Guilt", *Studies in Philology* 68:1 (1971), 18; See also: Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles", p. 137; Associations between lions and Christ also appear in the bible and medieval bestiaries, see: Laurie, "Beasts and Saints", 304.
[115] Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles", p. 136.
[116] *Le Chevalier Au Lion*, ed. Hult, p. 264; also see: Le Goff, "Lévi Strauss in Broceliande", pp. 108, 122-24.
[117] Combellack, "Yvain's Guilt", 12, 16-25; Zara P. Zaddy, "The Question of Yvain's Redemption" in *Chrétien Studies: Problems of Form and Meaning in Erec, Yvain, Cligès, and the Charrete* (Glasgow, 1973), pp. 72-83, 85.
[118] Ovens, "Violence and Transgression", 59-63, 74; Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles, pp. 113-17.

with Laudine, which indicates management of the estate. Yvain's aristocratic identity is lost when he dines alone on raw meat acquired through violent behaviour. A food-based exchange with the hermit begins the restoration of the aristocratic identity, and the lion completes the recovery by allowing Yvain to convert raw materials into prepared dishes. Therefore, he behaves as a lord by controlling natural resources, and overseeing the production and preparation of food rather than acquiring raw materials for another to prepare. Yvain distributes prepared food to establish loyalty in the manner of the lord/dependent relationship, and control over resources and the taming of bestial instincts are symbolised by the production, preparation, and provision of food. The eleventh-century *treuga*/*treva Dei* (Truce of God) and *pax Dei* (Peace of God) movements motivated attempts by the twelfth-century Church to limit and redirect aristocratic violence by pushing Christian-inspired codes of conduct on lay aristocrats.[119] This included images of lordship that were less militant and more domestic in nature. Knights also became aristocratic in Chrétien's day, and many became landholding lords. Knights were also expected to manage estates, and to oversee the production and distribution of food. Chrétien constructs Yvain's identity as knight and lord around food provision. The romance reflects the desirable form of lordship, defined by resource management alongside prowess in battle. Thus, food, the feast, and the aristocratic identity appear inextricably connected in narrative literature.

The feast symbolised the lord's role as the owner of land, the protector of its resources, the overseer of production (raw materials), and the provider of (prepared) food. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature shows how the ability to provide food and feast communally was what it meant to act as a civilised lord. While French adventure-based romances like those by Chrétien de Troyes focus on the experience of single errant knights, the Anglo-Norman *Roman de Brut* constructs the identity of lordship on a wider and more national scale. The Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet kings owned all the estates, and sought to exercise lordship over an enormous realm that eventually included Normandy, Aquitaine, and Anjou, in addition to England. Clerics assigned kings such as Henry II with special responsibilities to manage wider resources by producing and providing food on a larger scale than earls, dukes, lesser lords, knights, and clerics. The royal feast was by far the most potent and conspicuous display of kingship, and Wace imagines the foundation and subsequent rise of English kingship in association with increasingly detailed feasts. Brutus and the Trojans "made a feast" [*firent feste*] (l. 1077) upon founding Britain, and the feast is attacked by giants: "they ran up upon the Trojans, killing many in a brief time with stones, clubs, and stakes" [*As Troïens corurent sure / Mult en ocistrent en poi d'ure / Od pierres, od tinels, od pels*] (ll. 1089-91). This description contrasts how the Trojans "danced and played games for joy" [*caroles faiseient e gues / Pur la joie*] (ll. 1079-80).[120] This pictures civility and peace associated with the provision of food. But the need for prowess is recognised immediately, with which the lord-giant is defeated, and the feast is

[119] Discussed in relation to *Yvain* in: Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles", p. 142.
[120] *Roman de Brut,* ed. Weiss, pp. 28-30.

protected. Giants are primitive figures in medieval literature. They precede humans and the Great Flood in the bible, so they were thought to have been tainted with primal sin.[121] The giants also draw comparison with the bull-herd in *Yvain*. The bull-herd is an authentic "wild-man" and "anti-knight". However, he is also a lord because he displays mastery over domesticated animals. The bull-herd is primitive, yet he remains closer to lords than other barbaric figures (including the mad Yvain). Wace's giants are also wild because they lack the power of cultivation.[122] The giants' land is rich in resources and good for cultivation like the barbaric lords in other texts, yet its potential is unfulfilled. The giants do not cultivate the land, so they represent the fringes of society, and need to be tamed by a superior lord. Despite this, they have their own lord (Gogmagog), whose name references the two nations (Gog and Magog) that oppose the kingdom of God in *Revelations*. Therefore, Brutus' victory allows the foundation of Britain to symbolise New Troy, Canaan, and Paradise.[123] Wace pits the civilised feast against the uncivilised (and less than human) other, whereby he promotes his brand of lordship based on resource management and food production. While food constructs an individual aristocratic identity for Yvain, Brutus's feast provides the base on which a collective and national identity of lordship is built. The episode appears as a symbolic coronation feast that allows Britain's mythical founder to demonstrate control over the provision of food from natural abundances on a scale that matches and complements martial success. Wace's text is certainly not pacifistic, but battlefield prowess on its own is not enough, and martial success needs to accompany an equally lavish demonstration that realm's estates are well-looked after, and its resources are well-managed. Thus, food production, provision, and the aristocratic identity also go hand-in-hand in Wace's text.

Wace directly imagines the coronation feast once lordship over England has been established. Success in battle is matched by equally detailed feasting, through which stronger kingship is demonstrated by greater levels of food provision. Uther's coronation feast is described with detail. It follows success on the battlefield where Uther emerges "with a great company and great army" [*Od grant maisniee et od grant force*] (l. 8544). The feast is "properly celebrated" [*Bien fu la feste celebree*] as the king sits "to eat" [*mangier*] at the "head of the hall" [*al chief de las sale*] (ll. 8565-68).[124] Arthur's coronation feast depicts a similar image: "when the king was seated on the dais, in the manner of the land" [*Quant li reis fu al deis assis / A la custume del païs*] (ll. 10459-60).[125] This reflects a willingness to adhere to custom and tradition, which further cements a collective identity of lordship via the feast. The literary description reflects contemporary practice. The king's raised position indicated his superior authority, and defined him as the chief provider of food for the entire realm. This carried special significance at a coronation feast, which distinguished the king above other lords. By undergoing coronation, the king was given the obligations to preserve peace, prevent

[121] Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages*, Medieval Cultures: 17 (London, 1999), pp. 5-6, 17.
[122] Le Goff, "Lévi Strauss in Broceliande", pp. 120-21; Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 34.
[123] Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 33-35.
[124] *Roman de Brut,* ed. Weiss, pp. 214-16.
[125] *Ibid*, p. 262.

looting, and maintain justice, for which biblical figures provided models and predecessors.[126] The coronation feast was as a public demonstration of this, and the elevated position distinguished the king as the provider of food on a level that invited comparison with the most admired exemplars. In the text, Uther's coronation feast is described with greater detail than Brutus's, and the scale matches the rise of Britain's collective national identity. Prowess is clearly not enough on its own, and the royal feast needs to occur to define the king as the chief provider of food for the entire kingdom.

Arthur is the greatest king in Wace's narrative. His coronation feast occurs after the conquest of Gaul to "display his wealth and spread his fame" [*Pur ses richeises demustrer / E pur faire de sei parler*] (ll. 10199-200).[127] Its purpose is clearly to display superior kingship by providing food to those he had previously conquered in battle, whereby it demonstrates and symbolises control over the entirety of the land and management of its resources. Wace's descriptive language is by far the most detailed in the text. He writes how Arthur has multitudes of finely dressed servants, who provide food for the king and his chosen guests. They "brought food from the kitchen and moved about frequently, carrying bowls and dishes" [*Cil serveient de la cuisine / Suvent aloent e espés / Escueles portant e més*] (ll. 10468-70). Meanwhile, drink is served by those who "brought wine in cups, bowls of fine gold and goblets" [*Od cupes e od nés d'or fin / E od hanaps portoent vin*] (ll. 10475-76). "Many splendid dishes could be seen, expensive and beautiful, lavish helpings of food and drinks of all kinds" [*Ki mult ert chiere e mult ert bele / E de mangiers riche servise / E de beivres de mainte guise*] (ll. 10488-90).[128] Wace's detailed language highlights the service of food and drink on a massive scale. It clearly implies that raw materials are converted into finished dishes in enormous quantities, and these are served on Arthur's behalf in cups and plates made from costly materials that would have inspired awe among the highest of aristocratic audiences. Arthur's success on the battlefield is matched by an equally extravagant feast. The coronation feast displays royal control over the land and all of its resources on an appropriate scale. The feast seems mythical, whereby it invites a comparison between Arthur's extraordinary kingship and the exemplary kings of the bible (e.g. David and Solomon) and history (e.g. Caesar and Charlemagne). In this way, the mythical rise of kingship in Britain alongside its collective national identity of lordship accompanies the growth of territorial estates, greater levels of resource management, and equally elaborate displays of food provision.

The feast was central to the increasingly domestic culture of twelfth- and thirteenth-century lordship. Narrative literature has shown how post-Conquest lordship was defined by landholding, and the management of material resources from the great estates. Writers believed that good lords were those who demonstrated control over nature, and this was shown by the management of natural resources, by systems of agricultural production, and by the conversion of raw materials into prepared

[126] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 125-26.
[127] *Roman de Brut,* ed. Weiss, p. 256.
[128] *Ibid*, pp. 262-64.

food for distribution to others. Armed conflict occurred frequently in Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet England, which caused devastation of food infrastructure, and turned ploughed fields into uncultivated wasteland. Food shortages were also provoked by natural phenomena, such as disease (in crops and animals), harsh weather, and poor harvests. So, devastation, starvation and wasteland remained a threat even without armed conflict. The recklessness of lords and persistent conflicts between them often exacerbated existing challenges because the medieval world was unpredictable enough without deliberate acts of devastation. This was particularly true in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when society relied heavily on large-scale land cultivation for both sustenance and economic stability, whereby shortages and poor production were felt more intensely by more people than in the earlier period. Literature reveals how wealth and prowess on their own were not considered enough to convey an image of good lordship, and lords were expected to act as peacekeepers, and to care for the well-being of the realm as a whole. The feast embodied the culture of lordship by displaying the lord's authority not by prowess only, but through management of the estates and control over the food. Good lordship was reflected in copious estates and a well-fed society, and the lord's priority was to ensure food for the dependent populace. Thus, estates management resulted in the ability to provide food, which reveals a settled and domestic culture of lordship in High Medieval England.

# Chapter 2: Giving Food to Others – Household Management, Reciprocal Relationships, and Aristocratic Largesse

The provision of food allowed lords to build and maintain social and political relationships. While this was certainly not unique to the period, relationship-building was particularly crucial in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century England because lordship depended on hierarchical networks of lords and dependents, many of whom were landlords themselves. As lordship and the land tenures that went with it took shape after the Conquest, the framework was established by exchanges of territory for loyalty and service. All lords (regardless of rank) who managed lands granted to them by the king were expected to cooperate with one another, share counsel, exchange services, and aid in the administration of a growing supra-national aristocracy. In this way, the framework of hierarchical and reciprocal exchanges increasingly shaped the provision of food during this period as reciprocal relationships were established by mutually beneficial exchanges of food and service. These were meant to ensure a well-governed and well-fed realm, and we have already discussed how failed relationships between powerful lords caused armed conflict and turned ploughed fields into wasteland. The feast was not the only means with which lords entered reciprocal relationships. But it was certainly the most conspicuous, and it helped to generate and sustain informal relationships in addition to publicising formal relationships of homage. The effectiveness with which food was believed to create and sustain social and political bonds attracted attention from writers of the period. Monastic chroniclers witnessed the occasional feast, and others (e.g. Matthew Paris and Chrétien de Troyes) were well familiar with day-to-day life at court. Any of these writers probably witnessed lordship at table at some point, and their texts name the individuals that were expected to attend the feast. While accounts differ in their specifics, these usually include members of the household in addition to visiting lords and clerics while the feast symbolises relationships between the participants.

This chapter focuses on those who received (and served) the lord's food, and were expected to reciprocate in some way. Narrative representation shows the types of relationships that feasts were expected to construct across various levels of the aristocratic hierarchy. The household retinue was closest to the lord, and we already know how the need for administrative efficiency brought the household to the forefront of social and political affairs in England. We also know that the domestic setting of the household became the preferred centre for the lord's official business, and it was organised in part around reception of the lord's food. Members of the household received food in exchange for their service, and many had the privilege of feasting in the lord's hall. The household also provided food on the lord's behalf. The growth of household offices, and especially those connected with the feast also coincided with the growing importance of the household to the exercise of lordship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ceremonial associated with domestic service also grew in scale, and the successful feast (and the successful lord) required closer management of a

larger group of domestics than was necessary in the earlier period. Food formalised the relationship between lords and their household servants, so the feast became a particularly potent symbol of household cohesion. Thus, many writers of narrative wrote about its importance in their literature.

Those who received food from members of the household included other members of the landholding aristocracy. Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet kings granted parcels of land to lay lords, who granted smaller parcels to subtenants below them. This created a hierarchy of landholding lords, who were expected to remain loyal to one another and subordinate to the king, yet they held varying amounts of land, so some were quite powerful in their own right. Church institutions also held land that was managed by ecclesiastical lords. Bishops controlled land attached to the diocese, some of which was managed by subordinate archdeacons and deacons. Monasteries received grants from aristocratic patrons, which were managed by the abbot. While the Church had its own hierarchy (subordinate to the pope), high-ranking clergy intermingled in lay affairs, particularly after the period of Gregorian reform. Ceremonial acts of fealty allowed lay lords to engage in hierarchical relationships that were unequal, but intended to benefit all. The nature of these varied, but loyalty and services in exchange for land and rewards were common themes. Reciprocal exchange provided the framework for aristocratic relationships (lay and ecclesiastical), so the feast became an effective and conspicuous way of expressing them publicly. Aristocratic networks became larger and more complex in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they came to include high-ranking clergy in addition to laity who held property rights and authority over land grants. At the top of England's hierarchy, the king was expected to govern with the advice (counsel) and consent of the tenants-in-chief, who were also expected to counsel one another in service to the king. Tensions and frequent clashes between the king and the aristocracy occupied much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, resulting in *Magna Carta* and several revolts. Amidst the clashes, narrative writers showed the feast creating social and political bonds, and they frequently represented relationship-building between members of the aristocracy. Giving food to other lords was expected to construct highly personal relationships, and while these were unequal, all were expected to benefit from their participation. The feast itself also symbolised the lord's largesse, and writers also wrote about its importance in this period. Literature shows how largesse assumed a greater role in lay aristocratic affairs by acting as social and political currency due to the expectation that lords should network. Narrative representation reflects the effectiveness of food in displays of largesse as well as its potential for abuse. Thus, narrative literature reveals further the growing domestic culture of lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England.

## The Domestic Sphere: The Feast and Household Management

Twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature shows lords providing food in order to maintain and care for members of the household retinue. In Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Haveloc (called Cunan) serves in the royal household performing "menial work in the sculleries" [*estait quistrun*] (l. 104). The

king provides food in exchange for service. Haveloc receives "loaves" [*gastels*] and "slices of the finest bread" [*quarters de simenels*] in addition to "roast meats and chickens" [*hastes e gelines*] (ll. 129-31). Reception of the lord's food identifies Haveloc as his household official and immediate dependent. Haveloc then acquires his own dependents, for whom he provides "simnel cake, meat, and loaves" [*de simenels, de canestels / e de hastes e de gastels*] (ll. 137-38).[129] Food provides the glue that maintains the household at various levels. The king feeds household servants, and Haveloc can feed menials below him with the king's food, which establishes a hierarchical domestic structure around food provision. Haveloc acquires land tenure, and is reinstated to his rightful place as king. This has been described by Freeman as a victory for legality and morality because he is entitled by lineage.[130] Haveloc's destiny is foreshadowed when he recognises the effectiveness of food, with which he rises above menials and assumes leadership responsibilities in the household. The well-managed household is defined by those who receive food, whereby the monarch sets the pattern to be replicated by the lower tiers of lordship. In the *Gesta Regum*, King Æthelstan provides food on a large scale for a large household. It "overflowed with the rich living that benefitted a king" [*Feruet et exundat regali regia luxu*]. A "busy tumult" [*ingens tumultu*] is described in the hall [*aula*], where "lackeys run to and fro" [*discurrunt pueri*] and "servants hurry to their task" [*celerant iniuncta ministri*]. Reception of food binds the household to their lord: "food fills their stomachs" [*delitiis ventres cumulantur*] (II. 133. 5).[131] Narrative texts account for what the well-managed household should look like. They imagine a busy place where servants representing the lord conduct business on his behalf. Servants receive food from the lord, which defines a formal relationship. This manner of household management is depicted positively, and it is also consistent with practice in this period.

Lords of households provided food in exchange for service in practice. In Anglo-Saxon England, the lord's immediate dependents were called *hlafætan*, or "bread-eaters". They bound themselves to the lord, whereby the "bread-eaters" became dependent on the "bread-keeper" [*hlaford*] for sustenance. The feast solidified the position of the *hlaford* as provider of food to a hungry and grateful domestic workforce.[132] Basic exchanges of food for household service were conducted on a larger scale after the Conquest. It became official written policy in the royal household by the second quarter of the twelfth century. The *Constitutio Domus Regis* (c. 1136) describes wages and allowances for members of the Anglo-Norman royal household. Its contents are based on Henry I's reforms of 1108. A multitude of domestic leaders and menials are named in the document, most of whom receive bread and wine, or "customary food" [*consuetudinarium cibum*] for their services. Many are also permitted to dine in the household, meaning they feasted regularly with the king.[133] Food bound

[129] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 8.
[130] Paul Dalton, "Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, Peacemaking and the Twelfth-Century Revival of the English Nation", *Studies in Philology* 104:4 (2007), 433.
[131] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 212.
[132] Pollington, *The Mead Hall*, pp. 182-87.
[133] *Constitutio Domus Regis*, ed. Amt and Church, pp. 196-214.

servants to their lord, which formed the basis of the formal relationship. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century lords needed to manage larger and more diverse groups of domestics than Anglo-Saxon lords. Servants were required to represent the lord and act on his or her behalf, so the lord could govern and conduct administration. Thus, the exercise of lordship required a cohesive and well-organised group of domestic servants in this period of growing bureaucracy and growing royal and baronial courts.

Members of the household also provided food to others on behalf of the lord. And narrative representation of the feast reflects the growing sophistication and specialisation of these domestic offices. In the twelfth century, Gaimar writes of a feast given by William Rufus in the newly-built Westminster Hall. It includes three hundred ushers [*treis cent ussers*] (l. 5982). The ushers protect the exclusivity of the feast, and escort "those bringing different courses of both food and drink from the kitchens and offices" [*cil ki aportouent les més / de la quisine e des mesters / e li bevres e li mangers*] (ll. 5992-94).[134] Gaimar gives special attention to members of the household who serve the feast. He praises the ushers who guarantee the safe provision of food by an ungiven number of untitled servants. The lord's administrative demands increased over time and a wider range of titled offices appeared in the thirteenth century. Matthew Paris writes of a feast given by Henry III in 1235, at which the cupbearer [*cuppae*], butler, [*pincernæ*] household marshal [*marescaliæ in domo regis*], almoner [*elemosinariæ*], chancellor [*cancellarius*], chamberlain [*camerarius*], marshal [*marescallus*], and constable [*constabularius*] participate in service.[135] Such offices existed in the twelfth-century, but it is noteworthy that Gaimar describes an amorphous group of untitled officials, and he likely exaggerates the number of ushers. Matthew Paris shows a well-defined and organised group of titled servants, reflecting how the household became more specialised. This is also reflected in Edward I's household ordinance of 1279. It shows how ushers and sub-ushers of the hall, pantlers, butlers, cooks of the king's kitchen, cooks of the household kitchen, porter, and salser were kept on regular wages. They were paid in cash rather than food, although most were likely expected to dine there.[136] Cash payments reflect changing economic structures in addition to the increased wealth, strength, and stability of the royal *domus*. The thirteenth-century household seems better defined and more specialised than the one described in the *Constitutio*. Literature and documents support the notion of an increasingly sophisticated group of domestics (leaders and menials) associated with food service.

The royal household provided a model for lesser aristocratic establishments. Although these households were smaller by comparison and had fewer dependents, they aspired to copy the royal example, and service was just as sophisticated. The *Rules* of Bishop Robert Grosseteste written for the countess of Lincoln (c. 1260) describe how domestics should have served in the hall. Grooms were to be present while the baker and butler served bread, wine, and ale. The marshal was to oversee the

[134] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 324.
[135] *Matthaei Parisiensis Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora Vol. 3*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, 7 Vols. Rolls Series: 57 (London, 1876), p. 338.
[136] *English Historical Documents Vol 3: 1189-1327*, ed. Harry Rothwell (London, 1975), pp. 581-86.

feast, and ensure that the household conducted itself respectably.[137] Grosseteste's' *Rules* were written for a smaller household, but a range of titled offices were involved with the feast. Twelfth-century household departments tended to blend together with servants expected to be proficient in more than one. [138] Specific departmental headings and specialised titles developed in the thirteenth century, which reflects the increased specialisation of each department. Households also began to employ professional administrators in the thirteenth century rather than simply those who were close to the lord.[139] Literary accounts alongside documentary evidence shows how the household grew and evolved into a sophisticated, well-organised, and highly specialised group of domestics in this period, all of whom also played a central and active role in administration and government. While literature sometimes romanticised reality, writers gave attention to household management and its increasingly vital role in the social and political affairs of lordship. The feast appears in narrative as a potent symbol of the household cohesion, which reflects lord's ability to conduct affairs. Thus, the feast became a symbol of household management, which further distinguished good from bad lordship.

Order within the lord's household is celebrated for its social and political importance in narrative texts, in which the exercise of lordship is dependent on the well-managed household. Wace's *Roman de Brut* represents this alongside the English version of Arthur as a strong and effective lord. As previously discussed, Kei and Bedoer (the seneschal and cup-bearer respectively) provide food on Arthur's behalf at the coronation feast. It may also be assumed that they receive food for their services. Shortly thereafter, Arthur calls on them to battle a giant. Arthur identifies them by title (*senescals*, *buteilliers*), and he also describes their importance: "he wished to talk to no one else" [*N'en volt parler a nul altre hume*] (ll. 11321-23).[140] Those who lead the service of food and collectively represent royal authority in the household also do so in battle. The giant also feasts, but Wace paints a very different picture. The giant feasts alone, "sitting by the fire, roasting pork" [*al feu se seeit / Char de porc al feu rostisseit*] (ll. 11481-82). The giant is described with the language of uncivilised filth: "his beard and whiskers were filthy with the meat cooked on charcoal" [*La barbe aveit e les gernuns / Suilliez de char quite es charbuns*] (ll. 11485-86).[141] This opposes the extravagant service at Arthur's feast as well as its communal nature. According to Cohen, disgusting foodstuffs represent isolation from the civilised world. In light of the "wild vs. cultivated" debate from chapter one, this giant also finds its place on the fringes of society. He is man-like and not entirely animal. But he remains wild and undomesticated because civilised beings were expected to control their appetites. According to Carol Weinberg, these traditional attributes of disorder and

[137] *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, ed. Dorothea Orchinsky (Oxford, 1971), pp. 403-05.
[138] *Constitutio Domus Regis*, ed. Amt and Church, p. li.
[139] Carpenter, "The Second Century", 56.
[140] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, p. 284.
[141] *Ibid*, p. 288.

gluttony are symbols of monstrous anti-Christian behaviour.[142] Although the giant's food is cooked, he feasts alone in an uncivilised manner, un-phased by the lack of bread, wine, and table manners (which bothers Yvain). It can be said that the giant's environment resembles the wasteland because cultivation remains absent. By contrast, Arthur symbolises the twelfth-century view of civilised lordship. The coronation feast serves as evidence of land cultivation, and raw materials are clearly changed into prepared dishes for distribution to others. In other words, Arthur has tamed nature by controlling the land and its resources. And while the Trinitarian image of Arthur and two companions who fight against an anti-Christian monster seems significant, Arthur and those who serve his food also appear to symbolise the collective structure of the strong and cohesive seigneurial household.

This image of Arthur's household draws a comparison with a traditional opposition between great hall culture and the outside world in pre-Conquest literature. The hall in Anglo-Saxon poetry symbolises order and security from the unpredictable outside world. Kathryn Hume has described the dwelling of the literary antagonist is an "anti-hall" because the villain threatens the order and civility represented by hall culture.[143] Wace seems use a similar motif. However, it is represented in a way that reflects the growing complexity of domestic structures, and the importance of the household to the exercise of lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. Arthur's household is strong and effective in the narrative – domestic leaders with prestigious titles and countless menials beneath them serve prepared dishes in costly tableware, whereby they exercise effective authority on the king's behalf. The giant's dwelling is an "anti-hall", but it also appears as a type of "anti-household", in which no well-clad menials, prestigious domestic leaders, or any retinues are present, nor is food and drink served in fine dishes or cups of gold. The giant cooks his own food and feasts alone, so he clearly does not manage a household whatsoever. Arthur's victory connects good lordship with household management, which separates civilised Arthurian society from the outside world of violence and wasteland. Thus, Wace's narrative shows how good lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England was viewed as inextricably linked with domestic matters of household management.

Chrétien de Troyes' romances reflect the perceived dangers posed by poorly-run households a few decades after Wace. Chrétien acknowledged its importance, but he seemed particularly concerned with its vulnerability to internal conflict and the intrusion of external chaos. Wace shows Arthur as an exemplary monarch. But he appears weak in Chrétien's romances, and critics have read him as such. Arthur becomes *rex inutilis*, and his hall is not the embodiment of a civilised community. A progressive decline in Arthur's domestic authority has been traced through the royal feast in Chrétien's romances. While the feast in *Erec et Enide* includes at least five hundred knights, the royal feast in *Yvain* concludes with the king retiring early, which causes grief in the household. Arthur

[142] Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 38; Carole Weinberg, "The Giant of Mont Saint Michel: An Arthurian Villain", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 84:3 (2002), 14.
[143] Kathryn Hume, "The Concept of the Hall in Old English Poetry", *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), 66-68.

appears idle in *Lancelot* and *Perceval*; whereby successive descriptions of household disturbances show a gradual decline of Arthur's capacity to govern both household and kingdom.[144] Arthur is a strong king whose household seeks out and defeats external threats in Wace's text. But Chrétien's Arthur allows external threats to interrupt and threaten the tranquil atmosphere of the household. Maddox and Peters attempt to explain Arthur's weak character in light of theological concerns, and the conflicting interests of kings and knights in this period.[145] External challenges expose Arthur's weakness, and feeble responses to threats exacerbate the disintegration of household cohesion. And Chrétien's feast connects Arthur's weakness with poor household management in his final romances.

In Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal*, Perceval encounters the royal court at a routine feast. Arthur and his household knights are seated at the table [*li rois et li chevalier / Estoient assis al mengier*] (ll. 901-02), and "all the knights were laughing and joking with each other [*tuit li chevalier mengoient / Et li .i. as autres parloient*] (ll. 909-10). The feast is presumably served by other members of the household who are also fed by the king. However, the king "at the head of the table" [*Au chief d'une table*] (l. 908),[146] does not participate in the feast while the knights feast like nothing is wrong. But Arthur's non-participation indicates that something is wrong, and a disconnect appears between the household retinue and its lord. We are told how the Red Knight had entered the hall unchallenged and spilled wine over the queen. As a result, "the queen withdrew, aflame with sorrow, rage, distress, and shame" [*Que la roïne en est entree / De grant dol et d'ire enflammee*] (ll. 963-64).[147] Wine indicated status and lordship in this period. According to Lisi Oliver, spilling wine functions as a metaphorical spilling of Arthur's sovereignty. This combined with theft of Arthur's cup has been interpreted as an attack on courtly and civilised society, and on the idea of lordship.[148] Other literary critics have also recognised how Arthur does not receive support or solace from the household, which reflects a dismal community that does not even impress the ignorant Perceval. Arthur behaves like a debilitated monarch with servants who appear indifferent to threats to their lord. Arthur's passivity and his inability to respond to threats suggest a lack of interest in his principal functions as lord and king.[149]

Household management was among the most important of the lord's functions in this period. And the Red Knight's attack transforms the feast into a scene of domestic disorder in the text. External chaos interrupts the feast, and the king's poor response provokes internal degradation of the household structure. The queen leaves, Arthur does not feast, and the knights engage in raucous

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[144] Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, pp. 12-13, 130; *Yvain*, trans. Cline, pp. 1-2; E. Peters, *The Shadow King: Rex Inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751-1327* (New Haven and London, 1970), p. 170: Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, pp. 44-45.
[145] For more on these young knights (*juvenes*), see: Robert W. Hanning, "Inescapable History: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Arthurian Romance of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries" in *Romance and History: Imagining Time from the Medieval to the Early Modern Period*, ed. John Whitman, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature: 92 (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 55-73.
[146] *Le Roman de Perceval ou, Le Conte du Graal: édition critique d'après tous les manuscrits*, ed. Keith Busby (Tübingen, 1993), pp. 37-38.
[147] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[148] Lisi Oliver, "Spilled Wine and Lost Sovereignty in Chrétien's *Perceval*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 97:1 (1996), 92-94.
[149] Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, 84-89; Peters, *The Shadow King*, p. 179.

conduct. In practice, loud noise and rowdy behaviour was frowned upon in aristocratic households. The poor conduct of the literary retinue indicates that the lord cannot manage his dependents, and this reflects the lord's greater inability to conduct affairs and exercise authority through their collective actions. Royal weakness exacerbates the problem even more, resulting in internal degradation and an apparent failure of lord/servant relationships. Arthur does not reassert domestic authority and re-establish ordered feasting as separate from the outside world. He cannot address an external threat, nor can he protect the household from the consequences of his inaction. Thus, the romance reflects the internal disorder that was expected to befall ineffectual lords who failed to manage their households.

Arthur also allows external chaos to disrupt the feast in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. It produces internal conflict, and literally causes the household to disintegrate. Arthur and his household knights are feasting in the hall as the narrative unfolds. They are also served by household servants, "and Kay, who'd overseen the feast was eating with those who had served" [*et Kex qui ot servi as tables / manjoit avoec les conestables*] (ll. 41-42). Food is provided by unnamed menials, who are supervised by the seneschal (Kay), all of whom are likely fed by Arthur in exchange for their services. This suggests a level of domestic order at first. But everything changes when Meleagant enters the hall (also unchallenged) and claims to hold captives that include dependents "from [Arthur's] land and from his household" [*de ta terre et de ta meison*] (l. 52). This provokes another feeble response from Arthur, and "many in the palace heard this and all the court was in turmoil" [*ce oïrent el palés maint / s'an fu la corz tote estormie*] (ll. 80-81).[150] The feast also becomes a state of domestic disorder in this text, but the episode differs slightly from *Perceval*. The structure of the household is threatened directly as members of the domestic retinue have been captured. To make matters worse, the seneschal has threatened to leave Arthur's service, and the queen is captured. In practice, the queen was among the most obvious and distinguished members of the household, and the loss of the seneschal was detrimental, without whom the lord could not manage the remaining household retinue.

Giorgio Agamben has explored the "useless king" (or *rex inutilis*) motif in medieval literature. Kings become separated from their powers and are reduced to impotence. In other words, the king reigns, but he does not govern.[151] The growth of administrative and bureaucratic structures in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries required the use of judges and administrators, many of whom served in the lord's household. Clerics viewed lordship (especially kingship) as an office linked to good governance in a more practical sense than the purely biblical language used to describe early medieval kingship. Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) attributed *rex inutilis* with a neglect for governance, and Alain of Lille (d. 1202) cited the Old Testament example of David neglecting his palace to warn

[150] *Chrétien de Troyes: Lancelot or The Knight of the Cart (Le Chevalier de la Charrete*), ed. William W. Kibler, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 1: A (London, 1984), pp. 4-6.
[151] Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, 2011), pp. 68-69.

lords who might have neglected their practical and administrative obligations.[152] Ineffectual rulers in twelfth-century literature might symbolise those lords who had claimed authority and majesty, but failed in their administrative responsibilities, which increasingly required direct management of the household in both domestic and public affairs. Household management had become a matter of good government by the late twelfth century, so Chrétien de Troyes clearly acknowledged the household's importance to aristocratic affairs, and he was not complacent about what was required to sustain it.

Agamben's discussion of the useless king prioritises the physically wounded Fisher King in *Perceval*, but Arthur also seems to fit the category in Chrétien de Troyes' final two romances. E. Peters has pointed out how the characters of Arthur and the Fisher King become progressively similar to one another in the thirteenth-century *Grail* narratives.[153] The manner of Arthur's useless nature is represented through poor household management in Chrétien's *Lancelot* and *Perceval*. Arthur is clearly recognised as king – he provides food and keeps household officials. He does appear to reign. However, external chaos penetrates the domestic feast, and Arthur fails to respond with any manner of authority. Chrétien's Arthur (unlike the strong Arthur in Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth) does not actively govern members of his household, nor does he exercise authority through their collective actions by responding adequately to threats. And threats cause domestic relationships to fall apart even more as a result. In *Le Conte du Graal*, a disconnect exists between lord and household once Arthur fails to respond to the Red Knight. Domestics laugh and joke instead of conducting affairs on the lord's behalf. In *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, royal passivity in the face of Meleagant causes internal disorder, and the literal breakdown of the household structure. Chrétien shows weak and ineffective lordship through poor household management, whereby literature reflects the necessity of the strong and cohesive household to the exercise of lordship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

## The Lord's Counsel – Hierarchy, Network Relations, *Primus inter Pares*, and Largesse

Literature also addresses relationships and tensions within society's lay and ecclesiastical elite. Lords feasting with other lords was meant to construct social and political relationships at various levels of the social hierarchy. Feasts built relationships between the king and principal lords, emphasised hierarchical distinctions among the different tiers within a lord's affinity, and demonstrated relationships of dependence between lords and their tenants and household knights. Writers favoured strong hierarchical relationships with the king at the top. Orderic Vitalis writes of a feast held by King William Rufus around 1080. It includes an archbishop [*archiepiscopum*], "all the bishops, abbots, counts" [*omnes episcopos et abbates comitesque*], and "other leading men of Normandy" [*aliis proceribus Normanniæ*] (V. 5. 316).[154] A large crowd of society's most elite members attends the feast. It is given to construct and maintain social and political relationships with

[152] For context and cited examples, see: Peters, *The Shadow King*, pp. 19, 88-89, 93.
[153] *Ibid*, p. 194.
[154] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 3*, ed. Chibnall, p. 24.

the king. Further down the hierarchy, Orderic Vitalis also writes of a feast given by Roger of Bellême, one of King William I's tenants-in-chief. Many assemble at the invitation of the "generous earl" [*dapsili comite*]. Named guests include the bishops of Le Mans, Lisieux, and Séez, alongside the abbot of St. Pierre-sur-Dive, the abbess of Almenéches, and three additional (presumably lay) lords. A smaller crowd is described when compared to the royal feast. Archbishops are not included, nor counts or barons. Bishops, abbots, and unnamed lords are present, and each is identified by his title. These guests are also chosen for a reason. The feast is given to honour a grant [*concessionem*], to which they are witnesses (V. 16. 430).[155] A feast publicises the relationship, whereby Orderic shows how the feast was intended to foster relationships between the tenants-in-chief, lesser lords, and clergy. Matthew Paris writes of a "magnificent feast" [*fastigiose convivantes*] in 1244, given by Earl Richard for Henry III: "Nearly all nobility of the kingdom was invited" [*invitatis omnibus fere regni nobilibus*], and Matthew names the countess of Provence and her daughter as guests of distinction because the daughter had recently married. Matthew writes that "the king used all his endeavours to appear amiable and gracious" [*rex cum summo conamine totum se exhibuit serenum et jocundum*] in return for the earl's hospitality.[156] Matthew shows a tenant providing for his superior. A multitude of lords are present alongside a newly married baronial couple. And relations and mutual support occur.

In this way, literature shows lords feasting with other lords across various levels of the social and political hierarchy. In the texts, kings feast with lay aristocrats and clerics, who also feast with one another and those below them. At the same time, lesser lords seem expected (and they were sometimes obligated) to entertain their superiors. Guests also appear in household documents from this period. Lars Kjaer's case-study has shown how Eleanor de Montfort frequently entertained aristocratic supporters during her husband Simon de Montfort's rebellion in the 1260s. The best quality foodstuffs such as venison, pike, capons, and fine wines were saved for these occasions. Eleanor's table became a meeting place for lords, at which shared feasts were meant to strengthen solidarity.[157] The feast was the stage for lords to share counsel, administrative assistance, and support in battle. It was intended to foster relationships at all levels of the landholding aristocracy. Thus, narrative texts reflect how the hierarchy of landholding accompanied expectations that those who held estates of the king were expected construct and maintain highly personal (and unequal) relationships.

Wace's *Roman de Brut* gives close attention to the hierarchical and unequal nature of the feast. Uther's coronation feast includes "dukes, counts, citizens" [*Ducs e cuntes et citaains*] (l. 8555), and "the rest of his barons" [*Et trestut sun altre barnage*] (l. 8557). While the king feasts on the dais, "the barons sat around him, each according to the importance of his fief" [*Li baruns s'assistrent entur*

[155] *Ibid*, p. 158.
[156] *Matthaei Parisiensis Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora Vol. 4*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, 7 Vols. Rolls Series: 57 (London, 1877), p. 283.
[157] Kjaer, "Food, Drink and Ritualized Communion", 79-80.

*/ Chescuns en l'ordre s s'enur*] (ll. 8569-70).[158] A larger crowd is imagined for Arthur's coronation feast. Arthur summons the barons, and an enormous crowd of titled guests are named, including four British kings, thirteen British counts, five foreign kings, eight French counts, and three archbishops, in addition to bishops, abbots, and unspecified lay lords. While the king feasts on the dais, "the barons sat around, each in order of his importance" [*Assis sunt li barun entur / Chescuns en l'ordre de s'enur*] (ll. 10461-62).[159] Wace imagines the types of guests expected to attend the most lavish of royal feasts, including every king, lay lord, and high-ranking cleric. Many had surrendered to Arthur in battle, so their inferior position in the hall serves as a strong indication of relative status. While its scale is romanticised, the basic arrangement of participants was familiar to audiences. Bishop Grosseteste prescribed a u-shaped arrangement with freemen and guests seated at tables adjacent to the lord's high table. Meanwhile the lord was expected to remain in the middle of the high table: "that your presence as lord… is manifest to all".[160] In practice, distinguished guests feasted at the high table with the lord while domestic retinues and less distinguished persons dined at lower tables. This practical table arrangement allowed hierarchy to become part of the display, whereby the feast provided an easy reminder of relative status. In the text, Uther and Arthur feast on a dais surrounded by titled guests. Their reception of food and position in the hall reflects their place in the *cursus honorum*. Although these kings and lords represent different realms, they are subject to Uther and Arthur because they were defeated in battle and thus, they dine below the dais. Despite the unequal nature, literary feasts also reveal an attitude that hierarchical relationships should benefit all involved.

Narrative literature shows how feasts were meant to construct reciprocal relationships, and mutual benefit was expected for lord-host and noble guest(s). In Gaimar's *Estoire*, King Edgar feasts at Gloucester with the Welsh kings, the nobles from Wessex, and the thanes of Cornwall. Gaimar also gives the reason for their attendance at the king's feast: "it was their duty to do so" [*Pur ço le firent k'il ert lur dreit*] because each of them holds large estates [*chescons de lui grant fieu teneit*] (ll. 3877-78), which makes them "extremely powerful" [*grant richeise*] (l. 3880).[161] The king provides a feast, which asserts his position at the top of the social and political hierarchy. Despite the vast estates held by the guest-lords and their high degrees of local authority, their inferior status compared to the king is evident by their obligation to attend the royal feast and receive the king's food. It seems understood that guest-lords dine below the royal dais, whereby their place in the social hierarchy and *cursus honorum* is reinforced visually in the royal hall. The feast publicises a formal relationship of homage, and guests acknowledge the superiority of royal lordship and their relative status. They are also described as powerful in their own right (because of vast landholdings), and these unequal relationships appear to enhance (rather than diminish) their statuses as the realm's leading nobles. In

[158] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, pp. 214-16.
[159] *Ibid*, pp. 256-64.
[160] *Walter of Henley*, ed. Orchinsky, p. 403.
[161] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 212.

this way, all who attend the feast seem to benefit from participation, which allows the feast to symbolise further their unequal, yet mutually beneficial relationships in terms of the *cursus honorum*.

Matthew Paris' account of Henry III's wedding feast in 1236 also describes "such a host of nobles" [*tanta nobilium multitudo utriusque*] and "such numbers of religious men" [*tanta religiosorum numerositas*] in attendance. However, the actual food service at this feast is conducted by the kingdom's leading aristocrats. The earl of Pembroke has "arranged the banquet and the guests at table" [*et in mensa regale convivium cum convivis disponente*], the earl of Leicester supplies basins for washing [*in pelvibus aquam ministrante*], and Earl Warrenne acts as royal cupbearer [*cuppæ regalis*]. Master Michael Belet serves as butler [*pincernæ*], and the earl of Hereford performs the duties of the household marshal [*marescalciæ*]. Lastly, William Beauchamp acts as almoner [*elemosinariæ*], and the forest justiciar has "arranged the dishes on the table" [*fercula in mensa disponente*]. Everybody is seated and "each knew his own place" [*quilibet eorum suum ibi locum sortitur*].[162] Matthew shows the king providing a feast for lesser lords. Leading aristocrats attend the feast and receive the king's food, which displays the hierarchy as each knows his place in the *cursus honorum*. Matthew also places titled guests in direct service to the king, which was customary in thirteenth-century practice, and occurred in other ceremonial acts (e.g. dressing the king for coronation). In the text, the guests arrange the feast and perform table service, whereby they exercise authority on the king's behalf in a direct and literal way. According to Kjaer, Matthew's description of enthusiastic service represents the religious and lay aristocracy seeming to unite in ordered community. It opposes Henry's alleged affection towards foreigners at the expense of native barons as this literary feast represents an ideal that was rarely achieved in Henry's reign.[163] In contrast to the real situation, Matthew shows order in aristocratic society, in which the king and the barons foster relationships in a hierarchical yet mutually beneficial way. The aristocracy represents royal prestige directly by serving food on his behalf, and by assuming the roles of prestigious household members. Order in the household symbolises order throughout the whole realm as king and nobility seem united in their cause. Servile behaviour enhances rather than diminishes the participants' status. And while royal supremacy and relative status is displayed, all who attend and serve also benefit from their participation. It affirms their position as the kingdom's leading nobles, who appear beneath the king in terms of status; but they have crucial roles in the affairs of the kingdom. Thus, the literary feast allows for the construction of hierarchical yet mutually beneficial relationships among the landholding lords.

Other texts focus more directly on notions of reciprocal exchange, and how the feast was expected to befit the interests of host and guest(s). Hengist, a leading Saxon noble (loyal to King Vortigern) invites the king to enjoy himself "eating and drinking" [*beivre e mangier*] (l. 6936) in Wace's *Roman de Brut*. The feast's purpose is to impress the king, foster relationships, and

[162] *Chronica Majora Vol. 3*, ed. Luard, pp. 336-39.
[163] Kjaer, "Matthew Paris and the Royal Christmas", pp. 142-43.

acknowledge relative status. Ronwen (Hengist's daughter) emerges during the feast and greets the king according to the Saxon custom: "Lord King, Wassail" [*Laverd King, Wesseil*] (l. 6953).[164] The custom is explained, and the king responds by adopting it. The feast displays the intended hierarchy. It is given by a lesser lord for the king, whereby it demonstrates recognition of, and deference to royal authority. At the same time, the king's adoption of the Saxon custom reflects a willingness to reciprocate by serving the interests of loyal nobles, and both parties benefit from the feast. In Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora*, Henry III's Christmas feast of 1237 includes "archbishops, bishops, installed priors, earls, and barons" [*archiepiscopis, episcopis, abbatibus, et prioribus installatis, comitibus et baronibus*]. The feast is clearly given by the king to build reciprocal relationships. A man called William de Kaele [*Willelmus de Ræle*] acts as mediator, and he declares that the king would henceforth rule by the counsel [*consiliis*] of his "faithful and natural subjects" [*fidelium et naturalium hominum*], which refers to the multitude of guests who are present at the royal feast.[165] Thus, representations of the feast in narrative reveals a widely held attitude that the king was superior in status, and should reign supreme while simultaneously serving the interests of the lesser aristocracy.

The introduction of the Round Table in twelfth-and early thirteenth-century literature reflects an English view of kingship favouring the consent and counsel of the tenants-in-chief. In practice, the expectation was a strong governing partnership at the top of the socio-political hierarchy. Arthur is clearly expected to cooperate with the knights in Chrétien de Troyes' romances. Although the Arthurian household seems especially prone to external threats and internal degradation, Arthur's great hall is a focal point from which knights set off for adventures and return to tell their tales. They are called knights in Chrétien's romances, because individual errant knights are the dominant figures in adventure-based romances from the Continent. Those who serve the king are called barons in Anglo-Norman texts such as Wace's and Laȝamon's *Bruts*, and the narratives describe a hierarchy of thanes, earls, knights, and other lords. These titles reflect an English preoccupation with hierarchical landholding, whereby all who held of the king were viewed as particularly important in the affairs of government. In reality, clashes between kings and tenants-in-chief (or barons) occurred frequently in Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet England, which resulted in violent struggles, several revolts, and complex divisions because some remained loyal to the king while other lords acted in opposition.

Wace's literary Round Table is produced in response to disputes among Arthur's barons, "each of whom felt he was superior, each considered himself the best" [*Pur les nobles baruns qu'il out / Dunt chescuns mieldre estre quidout / Chescuns se teneit al meillur*] (ll. 9747-49).[166] The episode is expanded in Laȝamon's English *Brut* (c. 1185-1220), in which Arthur invites all who hold land of him to a Christmas feast. Like Wace's text, each "had proud feelings in his heart and thought

[164] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, pp. 174-76.
[165] *Chronica Majora Vol. 3*, ed. Luard, p. 380.
[166] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, p. 244.

that he was better than his fellows" [*Ælc hafede an heorte leches heȝe* / *and lette þat he weore betere þan his iuer*] (ll. 11353-54). A "fierce rivalry" [*muchel onde*] results because one believes himself great while the other considers himself greater [*muche herre*] (ll. 11355-56). Laȝamon depicts tensions among a large group of lords, and he emphasises their individual rank and personal pride. They are shown as lords over Arthur's land, but they are beneath him in rank. To make matters worse, guests are served out of order at the feast. Knights are served before the earls, which greatly upsets them. As a result, "blows were frequent" [*duntes þer weoren riue*] (l. 11367). Guest-lords throw bread [*laues*], bowls filled with wine [*bollen seoluerne mid wine*], and fists [*uustes*] (ll. 11368-70) at one another. The feast turns violent: "there was much bloodshed, there was chaos in the court" [*þer wes muchel blod-gute, balu wes an hirede*] (l. 11386).[167] Laȝamon places greater emphasis on the issues of hierarchy. While Wace describes petty squabbling among a group of competitive warriors of equal rank to one another, Laȝamon embellishes. He presents a scene of disorder where disputes over precedence in food service result in physical violence. He includes earls and knights, who are not equal to one another, but they are subservient to the king. The Round Table is introduced in response to these tensions, and in light of real tensions that existed between kings and their barons in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England.

Wace's *Roman de Brut* provides the first appearance of the Round Table in Arthurian literature. Wace describes how Arthur's barons feast together as equals to one another: "none of them could boast he sat higher than his peer, each was seated between two others, none at the end of the table" [*Nul d'els ne se poeit vanter / Qu'il seïst plus halt de sun per / Tuit esteient assis meain / Ne n'I aveit nul de forain*] (ll. 9757-60). The notion of equality is expressed further through the act of feasting: "there sat the vassals, all equal, all leaders, they were placed equally around the table and equally served" [*Illuec seeient li vassal / Tuit chevalment e tuit egal / A la table egalment seeient / E egalment servi esteient*] (ll. 9753-56).[168] Arthur's attempt to quell disputes in the household seems to foreshadow domestic treachery as the root cause of national disaster, whereby Wace imagines domestic disorder as a greater threat to lordship than any external foe.[169] But Wace's Arthur (unlike Chrétien's *rex inutilis*) uses the feast to re-establish domestic order, and to improve relationships with powerful aristocrats. Wace imagines a static group of barons dining together regularly as equals to one another. They interact directly with one another and with the king, which symbolises a strong and united governing body. John V. Fleming has interpreted the Round Table as a literal table that is round in shape, and used to prevent clashes over food service. Makiko Komiya has disputed this notion, claiming that Wace's ambiguous language does not prove that the table itself is round. The phrase "Round Table" might describe the organisation of knights (equal in service to Arthur),

[167] *Layamon's Arthur: The Arthurian Section of Layamon's Brut (lines 9229-14297)*, ed. W.R.J. Barron and S.C. Weinberg, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, Revised Edition (Exeter, 2001), p. 108.
[168] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, p. 244.
[169] *Layamon's Arthur*, ed. Barron and Weinberg, p. xxxiv.

whereby it symbolises the world under Arthurian rule.[170] Komiya and others have argued that the Round Table becomes circular in Robert de Boron's texts, the Vulgate, and the post-Vulgate cycles from the thirteenth century in connection with the Last Supper and post-Chrétien Grail adventures.[171]

Wace's description of equal seating and equality of service seems to indicate that he is imagining a real table that is likely round in shape. This seems evident from the equal placement of the barons (each between one another) with none at the end of the table. This does not reflect practice, and Wace moulds the traditional arrangement of hierarchy into a fanciful image of noble solidarity in deference to royal lordship. Feasts show the king as a literal first among equals [*primas inter pares*]. Ducal power in Normandy originated from this idea, and the duke was defined as someone available first and foremost to the realm's leading men.[172] By Wace's day, aristocratic networks had expanded out of the warband structure, and formed hierarchical networks of landholding lords engaged in unequal relationships of mutual benefit. But twelfth-century kings looked to centralise royal authority, and this came at the expense of baronial interests. The barons were powerful because they controlled estates in England and Normandy, and the two sides needed to be reconciled. Henry I's coronation charter of 1100 first attempted to associate kingship with baronial consent, which in this case was fabricated because most barons were not present when the king declared their consent. In reality, the barons were rebellious, and the king seemed invulnerable only after c. 1125. King Stephen did not see the need to converse with the barons, nor did he serve their interests. So, the dialogue between the parties had collapsed by the 1140s.[173] Attitudes that favoured conciliar kingship and *primus inter pares* strengthened among the clerics and lay aristocrats of England. In 1141, the bishops met and determined that the king needed baronial support, counsel, and consensus by the aristocracy. Henry II's accession of 1154 was settled on terms acceptable to the community, and Ralph de Diceto (d. 1202) regarded the peaceful transition as remarkable.[174] Thus, Henry II's reign began amidst cautious optimism as Henry sought to project himself as *primus inter pares* – ready to rule with the consent of the aristocracy. Thus, Wace portrayed the feast as a powerful symbol of this for the Angevin court.

Laȝamon's *Brut* describes the Round Table with more detail than Wace, and the English text places greater emphasis on the subversion of hierarchy in favour of equal service. Laȝamon's Arthur employs a Cornish carpenter to construct for him a "fine table round" [*bord swiðe hende*] (l. 11433).

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[170] John V. Fleming, "The Round Table in Literature and Legend" in Martin Biddle with Sally Badham, et al, *King Arthur's Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 12; Makiko Komiya, "The Transition of the Round Table: Shape and Significance", *Studies in Medieval Language and Literature: The Japan Society for Medieval English Studies* 22 (2007), 14.

[171] Komiya, "The Transition of the Round Table", 15-17; Fleming, "The Round Table", p. 21; Gina L. Greco, "From the Last Supper to the Arthurian Feast: *Translatio* and the Round Table", *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 96:1 (1998), 43-45.

[172] Björn Weiler, "Crown-Giving and King-Making in the West c. 1000-1250", *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 41:1 (2010), 59, 68.

[173] Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 67-72.

[174] Edmund King, "The Accession of Henry II" in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 24-25.

This shows the king's willingness to work with others. The Round Table is produced, at which men face one another so "none shall be excluded" [*nan ne beon wiðouten*] (l. 11435). The carpenter assures Arthur that no longer will "any proud knight shall ever stir up strife at your table" [*þat æuere ænie modi cniht at þine borde makie fiht*] (l. 11440). The Round Table is presented specifically for the purpose of addressing disputes among aristocratic supporters, whereby mistakes in hierarchical precedence had turned violent. At future feasts, "the great shall be on equal footing with the humble" [*þe hehȝe beon æfne þan loȝe*] (l. 11441). Laȝamon also shows the Round Table in action: "no one there could boast of having refreshments different from that of his companions who were at the table" [*Ne mihten þer nan ȝelpen, for oðere kunnes scenchen / oðere his iueren, þe at þan beorde weoren*] (ll. 11452-53). As a result, "each spoke with the other, as if they were brothers" [*þa spæc ælc wið oðer, alse hit weore his broðer*] (l. 11448).[175] Bloch references the riot to argue that the Round Table is an adequate response to the violence that would cause devastation if left unchecked. The Round Table is a food-producing vehicle of plenty (in contrast to *la terre gaste*) where men feast together as part of an innate fellowship. They feast as equals, and notions of community oppose the demographic dispersion and social isolation that characterise the wasteland.[176] While Komiya and E. Bryan also dispute its round shape,[177] Laȝamon seems to show a table where powerful aristocrats feast as equals beneath the king despite their unequal status to one another. Laȝamon shows a diverse group of aristocratic followers, ranging in status from humble knights to great earls. Their inclusion at the table also allows the feast to display Arthur as *primas inter pares*, and equal food service produces good reciprocal relationships between the king and the supporting aristocracy. Notions of hierarchy (which produced violence) are subverted, and the feast symbolises aristocratic equality in deference to royal authority, as well as the king's capacity to serve the interests of great and humble alike. Laȝamon's *Brut* also represents the feast as an image of idealised unity in service to, and in support of the king.

The Round Table engages with tensions within England's elite in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While critics have focused on its religious significance – its connection with the Last Supper and the Holy Grail in thirteenth-century texts – the Round Table in Wace and Laȝamon appears wholly secular. Critics have described the majesty of kingship alongside internecine strife as prominent themes in Arthurian romance, and the Round Table symbolises both aristocratic fellowship and a tragically flawed order. Simon Jarvis discusses contradictions that were inherent to a rigidly hierarchical system as well as the problem of formal hierarchies within the household. Maddox has described how Arthur is bound by two contradictory ideas of order. On the one hand, he is bound by the restraints of the hereditary monarchy, as kings had to protect royal supremacy and maintain its judicial practices. On the other hand, kings were compelled to seek baronial advice and consent,

[175] *Layamon's Arthur*, ed. Barron and Weinberg, p. 112.
[176] Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table", 264-65.
[177] Komiya, "The Transition of the Round Table", 15; Elizabeth Bryan, "Truth and the Round Table in Lawman's *Brut*", *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* 2 (1992), 27.

which restrained their power. Writers dealt with the issue of how the feudal monarchy should effectively enforce its hereditary mandates while accommodating the oppositional mandates of its most powerful subjects.[178] The Round Table appears as the tool with which writers addressed the oppositional interests of king and aristocracy, and attempted to resolve them in a fanciful way. Circular tables did not exist in practice before literature captured the imagination of thirteenth-century lords, and inspired the construction of real round tables (like the Winchester table of Edward I). The literary Round Table engages with tensions on a symbolic level by consolidating inter-vassalic interests, and departing from the hierarchical chain of command, allowing Arthur's hall to represent an ongoing social network, unlike the contractual bonds of feudal dependence.[179] Wace introduced his Round Table in light of Henry II's kingship after a civil war. And Laȝamon's text (in which a feast leads to violence) reflects how despite Henry II's optimism, tensions remained after 1155. Nicholas Vincent notes how magnates from Normandy, Anjou, and Aquitaine were absent from Henry's entourage, and other barons were infrequent or unwelcome guests.[180] Henry looked to re-establish royal authority against an empowered barony, and Laȝamon's expansion of the episode reflects how tensions within the ruling elite persisted and even worsened in the decades leading to *Magna Carta*.

Thus, the Round Table reflects the continued opposition between kings and barons in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann has interpreted Wace's Round Table as an instrument of propaganda to promote royal supremacy because equality of service supposedly strengthens royal power to the detriment of baronial status.[181] There seems no doubt that the Round Table indicates a desire for royal supremacy in both texts as Arthur continues to dine on the dais. However, the communal feast may indicate a more benevolent and reciprocal image. The barons are served as equals beneath the king, yet they are named as lords in their own right. Wace names powerful barons, and Laȝamon names renowned knights and powerful earls. Arthur and the aristocracy share food in the hall, which provides them with regular opportunities share counsel, demonstrate their consent, and acknowledge relative status. In return, the idea of roundness (whether or not the table was actually round) may symbolise unity among the aristocracy as their seats grant them equal yet essential roles in the governing partnership. In light of the aristocracy's dependence on hierarchical networks, and amidst continued clashes in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, narrative writers used the feast to engage with political tensions, and to idealise the desired relationships between the king and all who held land of him. Wace and Laȝamon represent the king as superior, but equality of feasting (without favouritism or disputes over precedence) also represents the

[178] Fleming, "The Round Table", p. 6; Simon Jarvis, "The Round Table as Furniture" in Martin Biddle, with Sally Badham, et al *King Arthur's Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 31; Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, p. 32.
[179] Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table", 266-67.
[180] Nicholas Vincent, "The Court of Henry II" in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 287.
[181] Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, "The Round Table: Ideal, Fiction, and Reality", *Arthurian Literature* 2 (1982), 63-68.

king's willingness to serve equally the interests of the aristocracy. Aristocratic status seems enhanced (not diminished) by their participation because the feast shows them acting as a governing body. They engage in hierarchical yet mutually beneficial relationships in a highly-romanticised way, whereby narratives represent interests genuinely shared by those who make up the core of the governing class. While other texts (monastic chronicles) prioritise the presence of clerics, the Round Table addresses the issue of *primus inter pares* for the lay aristocracy. Thus, works of narrative literature reflect the desired (but rarely realised) relationships between the king and the lay aristocracy during this period.

Lords needed to entice other lords with feasts and gifts in order to construct reciprocal relationships, and this symbolised the lord's largesse. All lords were expected to show largesse, and lavish generosity reflected the lord's pious nature by showing a level of contempt for material wealth. David Crouch has explained how largesse also became associated with worldly virtue in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which is evident in the *Life of William Marshall* (c. 1226). Its author describes largesse as the parent of nobility and the result of a good heart.[182] Members of the post-Gregorian clergy viewed acts of generosity as indicative of the lord's morality and secular virtue in addition to the pious rejection of temporal wealth. Aristocratic largesse also took on greater cultural significance by assuming a larger role in the affairs of lay lordship. It was distinguished from its spiritualised counterpart (*caritas*) because it was shown only to those who could provide something in return. It was shown most conspicuously at the lord's feast because it was intended to benefit those with the privilege of attending. Generous provision of food acquired loyalty and support. And whether it was counsel, military service, or other contractual obligations, those who feasted with the lord were expected to reciprocate in some way. This manner of secularised largesse assumed a more prominent role in the affairs of lay lordship, so feasts in narrative literature are shown as social and political currency, through which literary lords establish and define their mutually beneficial relationships.

Twelfth- and thirteenth-century narrative represents how acts of largesse provided the means for lords to engage in strong governing partnerships. In Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, William Rufus's feast of 1099 is described as "one worthy of true nobility" [*La feste tint com[e] baron*] (l. 6078). "Great gifts" are "personally distributed" [*le grant dons k'il [i] donast*] (l. 6081) by Rufus at the feast, whereby largesse appears as food provision and gift-giving. This combination represents the physical and material care provided by the lord for his network of supporters. One of them, Earl Hugh (Norman tenant-in-chief) initially resists acting as a royal servant. But he eventually reciprocates by declaring loyalty, and by acknowledging superior royal lordship: "in recognition of the honour you have done me, I place myself in your fealty and will for evermore be your faithful vassal" [*e pur l'onur ke fet m'avez / me met en vostre fëeltez / tuzjurs serrai vostre fëeil*] (ll. 6027-29).[183] An act of ceremonial homage completes the exchange and formalises the relationship. This is made public by

[182] Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 201-02.
[183] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, pp. 326-28.

the feast, whereby Gaimar shows largesse defining the network. The king appears at the top while support from lesser lords is acquired with the act of food provision. Rufus acts as a good lord/king by giving food (and gifts) to powerful lords in order to provide physical and material care, thereby engaging with the tenants-in chief in a hierarchical and mutually beneficial governing partnership. This symbolises secularised largesse, which acts as social and political currency in narrative texts.

Writers also used the feast to address the potential for unworthy lords to manipulate largesse for dubious purposes. In William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum*, Ralph of Gael (earl of Norfolk and Suffolk) feigns largesse to usurp the throne. A feast [*conuiuium*] is held of "the most lavish scale" [*magnis apparatibus*], and the guests become intoxicated [*ebriis*]. Ralph "laid his plans before them" [*ambitu propositum suum*], which are received by the drunken guests "with prolonged applause" [*ingenti plausu*] (III. 255. 1-2).[184] Ralph provides a feast to manipulate his supporters towards discussions of treachery rather than giving in accordance with the genuine desire to foster mutually beneficial relationships. Their drunken state leaves them susceptible to manipulation, and the majority repent their actions when they sober up. While the feast generates political support, it is done with treacherous intentions, and largesse becomes sinful prodigality. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, Vortigern is described as "full of deceit" [*fu de grant feintise*] (l. 6579). He summons the Picts, for whom he provides "food, drink and a merry life" [*Bien les pout, bien les abevra / a grant joie les fais vivre*] (ll. 6604-05). And "he made them well and truly drunk" [*E tuz les out bien enivrez*] (l. 6618). Vortigern is viewed by the Pict lords as more generous than the king, and Vortigern manipulates them further by blaming the king falsely for his lack of greater generosity. He claims, "I hold little property in this land" [*Poi ai rentes en ceste terre*] (l. 6627). [185] Many turn against the king because of this, and they favour Vortigern because he seems more generous. But this lord also displays false largesse to acquire support for selfish purposes. He establishes a loyal support network; however, he manipulates them towards treacherous actions. Wace also emphasises how their drunken state leaves them susceptible to manipulation, which suggests that excessive drink was the most recognisable manner of false largesse. The feast becomes a tool for manipulation rather than a way of fostering genuine support, and engaging in strong governing partnerships. These texts serve as warnings of how avaricious lords might feign generosity to manipulate others for self-serving and sometimes treacherous purposes. In practice, economic vigilance and moderation were advocated among lords in this period, and a fine line between liberality and prodigality was widely acknowledged.[186] While many focused on the idea that lords might have squandered their resources, Wace and William of Malmesbury were concerned with bad lords using the feast to manipulate others towards actions they would not otherwise perform. Literary representation shows the fine line between largesse and prodigality, and the lord's intentions

[184] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 472.
[185] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, pp. 166-68.
[186] Llinos Beverly Smith, "On the Hospitality of the Welsh: A Comparative View" in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies*, ed. Huw Pryce and R.R. Watts (Oxford, 2007), pp. 185-87, 191.

seem to determine which is which. Good lords give feasts and provide gifts for genuine loyalty while prodigal lords provide lavish feasts to manipulate others. Writers clearly recognised a disingenuous form of largesse that existed in this period. While the line between them was often ambiguous and subjective, mutual benefit, cooperation, and joint governance resulted from genuine acts of largesse.

Literature shows feasts alongside genuine acts of largesse. In practice, this allowed lords to foster reciprocal relationships with a wide body of aristocrats. The provision of food combined with distribution of land was viewed as the highest and most idealised form of largesse, shown at the royal level. Thereby, the king provided for a larger network, which included clerics and lay barons, all of whom made up the governing partnership. In Gaimar, King Edgar holds a feast and is said to have "distributed generous presents" [*e grant dons donat*], which include "two bishoprics, three abbeys and several religious houses" [*Dous evesquiez, treis abeïes / religions*] (ll. 3922-24).[187] These gifts allow the feast to act as currency, with which the support of leading clerics is acquired via the construction of reciprocal relationships. In practice, bishoprics came with landholdings attached to the diocese, and abbeys and houses required the appointment of abbots to manage the lands granted to them. It seems understood in the text that each recipient would gain tenure over estates, allowing them to enter the upper ranks of the clergy, and to become lords in their own right. In return, new bishops and abbots would be expected to give support and counsel to the king, which allows the literary feast to symbolise the desired partnership between lay and ecclesiastical authorities. King Aurelius's feast in Wace's *Roman de Brut* includes the distribution of bishoprics [*croces*] to Dubric of Caerleon [*Dubriz de Karlion*] and Sanson of York [*a saint d'Everwic a saint Sanson*] (ll. 8168-70). The appearance of lay investiture seems odd considering Wace's clerical status, and how twelfth-century kings frequently clashed with churchmen over the power to appoint bishops. However, the bishoprics in Wace's text are awarded following "great deliberation" [*grant esguart*] (l. 8168),[188] which allows it to seem ambiguous who approves the decision or carries out the investiture. Wace represents the act as praiseworthy, likely for literary effect rather than a genuine approval of practice. While the feast provides physical care, ecclesiastical titles ensure material care. Largesse defines leading clergymen as members of a supportive aristocracy, presented after the investiture dispute when tensions persisted between lay and ecclesiastical authorities throughout Europe. Thus, narrative texts show the feast as the stage, at which lords demonstrate largesse to construct these mutually beneficial relationships.

Communal feasts combined with land-gifts also provided the means with which lords were expected to foster reciprocal relationships with the lay aristocracy. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, Arthur holds an Easter feast following the conquest of Gaul. There, the king demonstrates his exceptional largesse. Kei, Arthur's seneschal is given lordship over "all Anjou and Angers" [*Duna tut Angou e Angiers*] (l. 10155), and Bedoer (cupbearer) receives "all Normandy in fief" [*Duna tut en feu*

[187] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 214.
[188] *Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, p. 206.

*Normandie*] (l. 10159). Lordships over Flanders, Le Mans, Bologne, and Puntif are given to others who support Arthur in battle. Kei is described as "a brave and loyal knight" [*Un chevalier pruz e leal*] (l. 10154), and Bedoer is named among Arthur's privy counsellors [*Un sun demaine cunseillier*] (l. 10158): "these two were his most faithful subjects and knew all his deliberations" [*Cil dui erent mult si feeil / E saveient tut sun cunseil*] (ll. 10161-62).[189] It seems understood that recipients hold land directly of the king, whereby they acquire the status of tenant-in-chief. The language presents the recipients as loyal and worthy, and land-gifts officialise their mutually beneficial relationships. While the feast provides physical care and establishes royal supremacy, the lands are given *en feu*, allowing the recipients to become lords with official titles and important roles in administration and government. These individuals and the bishops appear at the coronation feast, at which they display loyalty and support the king as a united body of landowning lords (lay and ecclesiastical). Texts show how secularised largesse allowed the king to engage in reciprocal relationships across the nobility, which made up the cohesive hierarchical network, and the strong governing body of laity and clergy.

In Anglo-Saxon England, the gift-stool [*giefstol*] was a free-standing chair in the hall. It was a recruiting device that allowed lords to continuously renew the warband.[190] Attitudes about good lordship looked beyond the warband structure in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they favoured estates management, administration, and joint governance. Wace and other texts show the feast as the setting for aristocratic largesse in the tradition of the *giefstol*. But rather than simply rewarding fellow warriors with material gifts, each recipient of land would be expected to cultivate and produce food, manage a household of their own, and participate in the realm's administration as the king's tenants-in-chief. Literary largesse is shown with food provision (physical care) alongside the distribution of titles and administrative positions, whereby the king engages in a governing partnership with the realm's leading aristocrats. The largesse symbolised by the feast establishes royal supremacy, provides for a hierarchical support network of landholding lords, and constructs mutually beneficial relationships on a wider scale than the warband society of Anglo-Saxon England. Literature shows how secularised largesse gained prominence in this period, and it became defined more clearly as socio-political currency. Displays of largesse reflected good governance when it was used for these legitimate purposes, which allowed praiseworthy lords to engage in mutually beneficial relationships.

Thus, the lord's feast played an increasingly significant role in the management of relationships between lords and others in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. Lords provided food for members of the household, who additionally served food to others on the lord's behalf. While chronicles show this in line with practice, literature by Wace and Chrétien de Troyes reflects the social and political importance of the household. Literature shows the lord's feast as a potent symbol of domestic stability that demonstrates the managerial exercise of lordship in the domestic setting.

[189] *Ibid*, pp. 254-56.
[190] Pollington, *The Mead Hall*, pp. 81-84.

The well-managed household symbolised the well-managed kingdom for narrative writers, who composed at a time when the exercise of lordship required direct management of a strong and cohesive household that was able to exercise authority on the lord's behalf. Those who received the lord's food (sometimes at the high table) made up a hierarchical network of landholding lords and clerics, who were expected to counsel and support one another in deference to superior royal lordship. The king, barons, lesser lords, and high-ranking clerics made up the strong governing partnership. And while this appears in literature, it was rarely achieved in practice. Writers used feast imagery to engage with social and political tensions, even to the point of promoting one section of the nobility (king and the barons) over others (like the Round Table example). While aristocratic relationships were rarely simple, and they were not always successful or mutually beneficial, literary emphasis on the exchange of food and gifts also reflects how aristocratic largesse acquired new secular dimensions during this period alongside its spiritual significance in terms of Christian liberality. The literary feast is often accompanied by genuine largesse while prodigal lords are shown feigning generosity to advance their own interests to the detriment of others. Literature shows how High Medieval largesse differed from Anglo-Saxon gift-culture as it was used to achieve collective administration, and it was given to define and maintain a strong governing partnership. The feast did foster relationships in pre-Conquest England, but twelfth- and thirteenth-century emphasis on the nature of these relationships reveals even further how the culture of High Medieval lordship grew more settled and domestic.

# Chapter 3: The Art of Balance – The Feast and Christian Lordship

The lord's feast was an expression of his or her personal character in addition to a display of public effectiveness. The Church looked to contain secular lordship within a framework of Christian piety in the period that followed the Gregorian reform (c. 1050-80). There emerged a growing expectation that the feast should display the lord's Christian self. We saw in chapter one how lay lords and their men plundered Church properties. Kings and princes also exploited episcopal vacancies and demanded control over appointments (investiture). The clergy resented lay intrusion on the Church's authority and in response, clerics argued that conspicuous Christian conduct was the hallmark of good and legitimate lordship. Piety became a matter of aristocratic legitimacy during this period, and those who did not abide by the Church's standard could not legitimise their status, which was believed to be ordained. Many clerics questioned the morality of secular court service, so court clerics were increasingly expected to appear in aristocratic circles to instruct lords in Christian conduct.[191] The eleventh-century *treuga*/*treva Dei* (Truce of God) and *pax Dei* (Peace of God) followed by the Crusade movement from 1095 also inspired a clear framework of piety for those who wielded military power. Clerics preached Christian ethic to knights and lords in the early twelfth century, and the clergy recognised that those who fought could and should be models of religious virtue rather than its opposition. The Church recognised that lay lords needed to represent their interests, from which the "knight of Christ" [*miles Christi*] became the ideal for lords and their knights to aspire.[192] Thus, attitudes about lordship were particularly influenced by modes of piety in the post-Gregorian twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The clergy attempted to guide lay aristocrats in favour of the monastic ideal because laity and clergy shared similar backgrounds, and they were viewed as collectively occupying the top of a divinely ordered hierarchy, in line with the heavenly hierarchy with Christ at the head.[193]

The Church's desire to transform the feast into an ideal canvas for Christian lordship was particularly challenging because attributes of the feast table were inescapably secular. It was a demonstration of temporal wealth, and clerics were encouraged to view such worldly pleasures with scorn. However, the feast was necessary to the exercise and display of lordship in this period of estates management, and the consequent growth of the lord's domestic responsibilities. High-ranking clerics such as bishops and abbots needed to walk an especially fine line. They wielded spiritual authority, and they were expected to conduct themselves as model Christians. Bishops, abbots, and lay clergy (e.g. deacons and archdeacons) also managed estates, wielded degrees of secular authority, and intermingled in lay aristocratic circles. They were treated as lords and expected to display themselves as such. All who held land (laity and clergy) needed to provide food, maintain their households, foster relationships, give and receive hospitality, and show largesse while simultaneously

[191] For further discussion on the idea of the "courtier-bishop", see: Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*.
[192] David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900-1300* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 75-77; *The Image of the Aristocracy*, pp. 132-33, also see: Hansen, "Monsters and Miracles", p. 142.
[193] From 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, see: Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility*, p. 224.

living a pious life, the highest forms of which were threatened by costly dishes, tableware, and other temporal displays. While some held purist attitudes and equated the feast with gluttony (because for them, the monastic life was the only acceptable choice), others saw the feast as an opportunity to articulate their notions of Christian lordship. Nuances were acknowledged, and conflicting messages coexisted. Thus, writers used the feast as the medium on which they portrayed and represented issues of aristocratic piety with vivid detail. Texts show how the post-Gregorian Church attempted to accommodate the morally perilous but necessary feast within their framework of Christian lordship.

## Purist Positions: Gluttony, Sin, and Pious Self-Denial

Twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature shows how members of the Church promoted culinary discipline among the lay aristocracy. Monks and secular clerks had always been expected to regulate their consumption, but the clergy began to apply monastic discipline to lay aristocrats after the Gregorian reform to enforce their notion that all privileged members of society owed their status to God. Orderic Vitalis writes critically of Hugh of Avranches, the earl of Chester. The earl is "slave to his gluttony" [*Ventris ingluuiei nimis seruiebat*] and "staggered under a mountain of fat" [*unde nimiæ crassi pondere prægrauatus*]. He is "scarcely able to walk" [*uix ire poterat*] (IV. 219).[194] Orderic pictures the gluttonous lord who literally cannot move, much less function effectively. He feasts to excess and cannot fulfil his duties and obligations. William of Malmesbury writes of a French king with "many a glutton's hiccup" [*singultiens ingluuie*]. He "unbuckled his belt" [*infractus cingulum*] and "returned to the feast" [*et conuiuium repetiit*] after failed peace negotiations, and this causes civil war [*bello intestino*] (IV. 307. 1-2).[195] In William's text, gluttony causes aristocratic relationships to disintegrate, and armed conflict results. Narrative literature shows lay lords who cannot control their appetites. Self-indulgence combines with prodigality and pride to reflect excessive carnality. Clerics in this period ascribed gluttony to the inability to control one's impulses, which was also linked to other forms of impulsive conduct. Writers provided examples of gluttonous lay lords to promote self-discipline and piety among themselves and among lay aristocrats, who during this period were expected to regulate their appetites and control their impulses to be considered good Christian lords.

Writers expressed their beliefs that gluttony indicated a greater inability to control one's impulses, and texts usually combine gluttony with other carnal sins. The Church believed that outward behaviours reflected the inner spiritual condition, and sins were not isolated from one another. Gluttony was thought to result from a lack of impulse control, so it was associated most directly with lust. Alain of Lille (d. 1202) described gluttony as the preamble to lust, and the antecedent to the consequent venery.[196] The clergy associated pleasures of the flesh, so lust was recognised as the partner of gluttony. In Jacobus' story of Saint Andrew, the devil feasts at an

[194] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, p. 262.
[195] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 548.
[196] *The Plaint of Nature: Alan of Lille*, trans. James J. Sheridan, Mediaeval Sources in Translation: 26 (Toronto, 1980), p. 169.

episcopal table disguised as a woman. The bishop and the woman sit opposite one another [*episcopus et illa ex opposito consederunt*], and the bishop is tempted by her beauty. His eyes are fixated [*dum oculus figitur*], and his "heart filled with desire" [*animus sauciatur*]. And thus, "the evil one drove his arrow deep into them" [*antiquus hostis cor ejus gravi jaculo vulneravit*] (II. 9).[197] In Jacobus' story of Saint Anastasia, a prefect [*praefectus*] lusts over "three beautiful maids" [*tres ancillas pulcherrimas*]. He imprisons them in the room where cooking utensils are kept [*in cubiculum eas reclusit ubi coquinae utensilia servabantur*]. He goes to "satisfy his lust" [*suam libidinem exerceret*], but "he goes insane" [*Qui in amentiam*], and "embraces and kisses pots, pans, cauldrons, and similar things" [*cacabos, patellas, caldaria et similia amplectens osculabatur*] (VII).[198] Men of status are tempted by lust in this text, which is connected with the feast. A bishop falls for the devil's trickery when the feast provokes his carnal desires, and another lord is deceived into a humorous sexual encounter with feast items. Gluttony and lust combine to deprive men of their judgment. This connection originated with the Fall of Man when the forbidden fruit resulted in the recognition of sexuality.[199] Jacobus' text provided warnings of this, as negative consequences provided examples of what lords were expected to avoid. The belief was that outward behaviour reflected the inner condition. One sin was thought to inspire others, creating a complete image of spiritual degradation. And even clergymen were at risk.

Narrative examples of gluttonous lay lords also show the feast in connection with armed violence. In Gaimar, Osberht (king of Northumbria) dines at a household [*a la meison a cel baron*] (l. 2609), whose lord is away on business. The feast is given by the lord's wife, who partakes. When Osberht has "eaten his fill" [*Quant out mange tant cum li plout*] (l. 2619), he grabs the lady "against her will" [*Quant il la prist estre son gré / de lui ad feit sa volunté*], and "proceeded to have his way with her" [*puis s'en turnat*] (ll. 2629-31).[200] This act of treachery and felony occurs in the hall where feasting leads to lawlessness, the defeat of the nation, and the destruction of the monarchy itself.[201] The visiting lord does not control his impulses. The meal exacerbates lustful desires for another lord's wife, which is also an act of disloyalty and betrayal. This combines with gluttony to show extremely impulsive conduct. In the *Gesta Stephani*, Robert of Bampton is pictured "devouring wine" [*uorax uini*]. He is a glutton [*escarum consumptor*] – devoted "only to gluttony and drunkenness" [*gulæ tantum et ebrietatis*]. After Henry I's death, Robert "changed his love of drunkenness for a spirit of rebellion" [*ebrietatis stadium in discordiæ commutans discidium*]. Robert and disloyal knights feast lavishly at a splendid banquet [*splendidoque epularum…abunde conuiuatis*] where they consume an "abundance of wine" [*uino etiam largissimo*] (I. 14).[202] Robert joins the king's enemies and wages war. Gluttony provokes more impulsive conduct by this lord, which also leads to disloyalty and

[197] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 20.
[198] *Ibid*, p. 48.
[199] Grieco, "Body and Soul", pp. 143-46.
[200] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, pp. 142-44.
[201] Dalton, "Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*"", 437.
[202] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. Potter, p. 28.

betrayal in this case. Violence results from lords behaving impulsively, which also reveals a lack of piety. One sin combines with others in order to reveal and emphasise failures of impulse control and therefore, a complete opposition to ecclesiastical virtue. In this way, clerics seemed to attribute violence to the abasement of lay aristocratic piety. Notions of gluttony could not stand on their own, and overindulgence was connected to greater spiritual deficiencies. Writers showed lords succumbing to their carnality to explain greater impulsive acts such as treachery and rebellion. Thus, writers represented gluttony in connection with impious lordship while piety was represented by self-denial.

The solution to the question of gluttony was strict asceticism for most clerics. Writers who were also churchmen promoted meagre feasting within their own ranks. This was a cornerstone of the monastic ideal prescribed by St. Benedict. His *Rule* dictates for monks: "two cooked dishes" [*duo pulmentaria cocta*] per day in addition to "one pound of bread" [*Panis libra una*] (XXXIX. 3-4), and "a measure of wine" [*heminam vini*] (XL. 3).[203] Monastic practice was strict, but the monastic ideal was stricter. Orderic Vitalis writes of St. Guthlac, who enters a monastery. He consumes "barley bread and dirty water" [*ordeiceo pane ac lutulenta aqua*], and "turned away from feasting and fleshly lusts" [*ab ebrietate omnique lasciuia toto nisu declinauit*] (IV. 269-70). Two demons appear and try to tempt him with "excessive feasting" [*ut nimium ieiunando*], but he defies them by "partaking of his morsel of barley bread" [*illorum ordeicei panis particula uesci cepit*] (IV. 271).[204] Carnality (in the form of demons) is literally defeated with the ideal manner of monastic culinary discipline. The reading for Christmas [*nativitate domini nostri Jesu Christi*] in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* describes an encounter with the devil in the monastic setting. It is explained how the refectory is open to the devil's influence [*refectorium introibo*], but the door is blocked by "moderation in eating and drinking" [*sobrietate cibi et potus*] (VI).[205] Jacobus shows how the feast was sometimes viewed as sinful, but the ascetic diet was its barrier. In other words, food was not necessarily sinful on its own, but the absence of self-discipline would allow sin to fester. Monastic asceticism was not unique to this period, but meals in the cloister did not adhere to the letter of Benedict's *Rule* in the twelfth century. Monks remained subject to strict regulations, but extra dishes (pittances) had accumulated, which caused complaints. Gerald of Wales protested the sixteen or more costly dishes served to the monks of Canterbury, which he describes as "contrary to all order" [*per ordinem…praeter ordinem*].[206] This was a problem. If monks did not at regulate their consumption, the Church would have been ineffective in promoting these ideals in lay society. Orderic was a Benedictine monk, and Jacobus was a Dominican friar turned bishop. They knew that the *Rule* was relatively tame, and there were higher degrees of asceticism to be achieved. And its highest ideals were used to impress and inspire lay lords. Jacobus' story in particular provided a powerful reminder for monastic and lay audiences when it was

[203] *The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. Fry, et all, p. 238.
[204] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, pp. 324-26.
[205] Story is attributed to Peter the Venerable (d. 1156) by Jacobus; *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 46.
[206] *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, ed. H.E. Butler (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 70-71.

read aloud at the Christmas feast when degrees of luxury were expected. The conduct of monks was meant to set an example, and justify the substantial endowments that monasteries received from their lay patrons. The highest degrees of monastic asceticism became a potent tool with which the Church promoted piety among themselves, and especially the lay aristocracy in the post-Gregorian period.

The abbot's feasting habits were of particular interest to writers from the post-Gregorian period. The abbot was a lord in many ways – he managed the monasterial estates, and controlled the provision of food. The abbot was expected to set an example for the monks by embodying the monastic ideal alongside good lordship in a temporal and spiritual sense. Eadmer praises Anselm's self-discipline as a leader of monks: "neither hunger nor pleasure in eating were induced by any amount of abstinence" [*sed nec famem sive delectationem comedendi pro quavis abstinentia*]. He feasts "sparingly" [*parce*] (I. 8). Any who are "eating hastily" [*expectatione celerius comedentem*] would be reproved and "urged to look after themselves" [*operam darent, affectuose admonebat*] (II. 11).[207] Anselm's ascetic diet sets an example that he enforces on the monks. Walter Daniel praises his Cistercian brethren because they reject "carnality" [*carnalitati*] and "vainglory in food and drink" [*uane glorie in cibo in potu*] (V). To avoid gluttony and other sins of the flesh, their diet is uniformly meagre. This example is set by Abbot Aelred. Walter writes that Aelred feasts "so sparingly" [*ita parce*] that he cannot believe that he is a man and not a spirit [*non eum hominem set spiritum pocius esse*] (XXVII).[208] Aelred resembles the type of abbot exemplified by Benedict's *Rule*. He sets a good example for the monks by acting as their teacher and model of monastic observance. Walter's text was written in part to defend Aelred from criticism for the fact that he had worked towards his own election as abbot. This reflected a degree of ambition that opposed the Cistercian ideal for some members of the community.[209] Walter cites Aelred's diet to showcase his master's spiritual purity and refute the criticism. He shows Aelred as a model of monastic discipline that sets a good example for generations of Reivaulx abbots and monks. Monastic feasts in practice sometimes resembled the lay aristocracy more closely than Benedict's *Rule*, so monastic writers depicted their abbots as models of monastic discipline in order to promote Christian lordship within their own ranks. Good monastic lordship alongside the enforcement of dietary restrictions was also a matter of relaxing those restrictions for those who were ill as well as older and younger monks. It became a matter of monastic principle that good abbots regulated consumption, but they also needed to recognise when quantities of food were necessary for the community's weakest members. Narrative writers urged abbots to monitor closely the provision of food in the cloister, and the consumption habits of healthy monks in order to guide them towards the monastic ideal. And this was also meant to justify the lavish endowments from lay patrons. Exemplary abbots addressed internal debate over dietary regulation, and they also provided aristocratic audiences with models of Christian lordship. In this way, saintly

[207] *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. Southern, p. 14, 78.
[208] *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*, ed. F.M. Powicke, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1978), pp. 11, 34.
[209] Christensen, "Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred of Reivaulx*", pp. 219-21; *The Life of Ailred*, trans. Powicke, p. xxx.

figures represent the conspicuously Christian values that the post-Gregorian Church sought to impose on themselves, and especially among the lay aristocracy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Bishops also wielded spiritual and temporal authority. The ecclesiastical hierarchy as well as the secular duties of bishops meant that they also needed to walk a fine line between the monastic ideal and keeping a good table for patrons, dependents, and the poor. The clergy seemed to allow for certain concessions in the episcopal diet. In the twelfth-century *Vita Anselmi*, Anselm (as archbishop) is urged to feast to remedy an illness. Anselm agrees by saying, "perhaps, I might eat some partridge if I had some" [*Forte…de perdice comederem si haberem*]. A partridge is found by what seems like divine providence, and "our invalid took some nourishment from it, and at once he began to recover" [*ex qua eger noster refectus, statim meliorari ab egritudine coepit*] (II. 57).[210] Partridge was certainly not part of the monastic diet. But the text suggests that it was sometimes acceptable for an archbishop if it allowed him to recover his health and continue to conduct affairs. In the thirteenth century, Adam of Eynsham writes that St. Hugh's diet changes when he becomes a bishop. He practices strict asceticism as a Carthusian monk: "water with dry bread [*aque cum arido pane*] (I. 12).[211] However, he is somewhat less abstemious in the matter of food" [*in uictus parsimonia… solito minorem visus districtionem*] as bishop. He still abstains from meat [*a carnis…abstinens*], but he eats fish [*piscibus crebro uescebatur*] and drinks wine [*vini*], but "using it in moderation" [*set eo moderate utens*]. Adam describes Hugh as "lively at table" [*in mensa hylaris et iocundus*], but he also feasts with "dignity and moderation" [*grauitate et modestia*] (III. 13).[212] Bishops were expected to regulate their consumption like any member of the clergy, but narrative representation shows that some luxury was acceptable for them. Anselm is allowed to eat partridge, and Hugh consumes fish and wine when he becomes a bishop. Hugh continues to practice personal discipline by abstaining from meat, but he moderates his own diet, and he gives feasts, presumably to provide for the household, show largesse, and display levels of wealth appropriate for a man of rank. Clerics seemed to acknowledge that those wielding temporal authority would practice lesser degrees of asceticism while remaining true to clerical values.

Clerics also went as far as identifying cases of asceticism that they believed was excessive. In the *Vita Anselmi*, one of Anselm's men suggests that Anselm might recover more quickly from his illness "with food and drink" [*cibo et potu*]. But Anselm remains ascetic, so he deserves "no sympathy" [*nullus compati*] (II. 58).[213] Eadmer praises Anselm's devout self-discipline, but the text also recognises some who do not agree. Others believe that Anselm should feast in order to maintain health and function effectively as an archbishop. The thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* criticises St. John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople. John has "never invited anyone to dine with him" [*quia*

[210] *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. Southern, p. 136.
[211] *The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln Vol. 1*, ed. Douie and Farmer, p. 37.
[212] *Ibid*, p. 125.
[213] This man is identified as Ralph, abbot of Seéz and bishop of Rochester (r. 1108-14) who would then become archbishop of Canterbury (r. 1114-22); see: *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. Southern, p. 136.

*nunquam aliquem ad prandium invitabat*], nor does he "accept invitations from others" [*nec ab aliquo invitari volebat*]. His eating habits [*manducaret*] are "disgraceful" [*turpiter*], and the only motive is his own "abstinence" [*abstinentiam*] (CXXXVIII).[214] These examples show how self-denial did not always reflect piety, but rather the opposite – if it came at the expense of practical obligations. Writers believed that moderating one's diet should not supersede one's health, nor the obligation to give and receive hospitality. The ideal was personal self-discipline alongside outward liberality, and asceticism was excessive if it prevented lords from behaving generosity towards others. Strict diets were prescribed for the cloister, but moderate feasts were appropriate and necessary for bishops and archbishops. They intermingled in lay affairs at the highest levels as they entertained kings and princes, so they exercised considerable influence in lay society. They also wielded temporal authority, managed vast estates, and were meant to provide justice in the ecclesiastical courts. The central issue of the investiture dispute was whether churchmen owed their positions to lay authorities. The clerical assertion was that laity should not control Church appointments. Therefore, bishops and abbots needed to act as secular lords to a degree, which also challenged the monastic ideal. All men of status were expected to feast in order to conduct affairs, display wealth, and justify their positions at the top of the divinely ordained hierarchy. Some attempted to reconcile by approving feasts for those with the means. Thus, provision for others alongside the avoidance of personal excess allowed lords to act as such while remaining pious and true to the ecclesiastical values of impulse control and self-discipline.

Narrative writers transposed the monastic virtue of self-discipline onto the context of secular lordship. Their texts show examples of praiseworthy lay lords who effectively balance the need for self-discipline with the necessary feast. Orderic Vitalis defines Ansold by his "temperance" [*frugalitate*]. He feasts, but only on dishes "brought to his table at regular hours" [*solummodo ad mensam quæ apponebantur sumebat horis*]. He otherwise practices "fasting and bodily abstinence" [*ieiunia et continentiam*], but only "as far as a layman can" [*pro modulo laici retinebat*] (V. 19. 447).[215] This lord practices self-discipline because he regulates his own diet. Moderate feasts occur, but only at predetermined times each day. In William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, Edward the Confessor provides a feast, but while others are "eating greedily" [*acriter comederent*], the king has "turned away from earthly things" [*a terrenis auocato*] (II. 225. 1).[216] Orderic was a cloister monk, so we would expect him to hold narrow and purist views on food and feast. But he seemed to recognise that lay aristocrats would practice lesser degrees of asceticism while remaining pious; evident in the phrase, "only as far as a layman can". And William of Malmesbury shows a Christian king who rejects temporal pleasures while exercising lordship and maintaining relationships. In this way, monastic writers depicted lay lords as embodiments of the clerical ideal to bind the religious house with their patron and his lordship. They showcased their lay patrons in a way that

[214] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 612.
[215] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 3*, ed. Chibnall, pp. 180-82.
[216] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 410.

reinforced and legitimised the foundation. Orderic and William of Malmesbury did so by showing their lords at table, successfully balancing self-discipline with the necessities of secular lordship.

The clergy looked to accommodate (rather than simply reject) the feast within the framework of Christian lordship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. An illustration of the Four Cardinal Virtues from c. 1295 (fig. 5) shows a feast beneath the word for temperance (*attemperance*), This means moderation of impulses which appears alongside the virtues of prudence, courage, and justice. Impulse control is promoted through an image of the feast table. Only fish and bread are present. It seems to depict personal restraint, showing how the feast gained clerical approval as a display of piety rather than indulgence. Clerics justified the feast by promoting moderation and balance between gluttony and total self-denial in order to promote the virtue of temperance. In Jacobus' story of Saint Dominic, monks inquire how the devil tempts men to sin. The devil repeats the phrase, "more and less" [*plus et minus*]. It is explained how some are tempted "to eat more" [*ut plus comedant*], and "so they sin from too much food" [*et sic ex nimia cibi sumtione delinquant*]. Others are tempted "to take less" [*ut minus sumant*], and "they become weak in service to God and in observance of the *Rule* [*in Dei servitio et sui ordinis observatione debiliores fiant*] (CXIII).[217] This notion of balance is echoed in the *Ancrene Wisse*, which warns how the devil tempts anchoresses to fast too much and thus, holiness would become sinful if excess occurred in either direction.[218] In practice, strict asceticism was incompatible with lordship while lavish feasts were gluttonous and indicated spiritual degradation and sin. Neither extreme was considered praiseworthy. Lords were monastic patrons, and they were expected to be wealthy. But lords needed to live piously to legitimise the foundations. The Church needed to establish balance, whereby lords could feast to maintain the household, build relationships, and exhibit largesse while avoiding gluttony, and adhering to clerical values. The clergy also promoted *miles Christi* among lay aristocrats to redirect their militaristic impulses in favour of Church interests instead of looking to subvert entirely their martial abilities, whereby a similar balance was struck between unrestrained aggression and pacificity. Clerics promoted moderation and balance, which narrative writers used to accommodate the feast within the framework of Christian lordship.

## The Art of Balance: The Lord's Supper and the Liturgical Cycle of Feasting and Fasting

Narrative texts show how the lord's feast assumed a new spiritual dimension during this period as it was integrated into ecclesiastical discourse. The Church wanted to influence lay piety in a way that made considerable impact, so clerics imagined heaven as a sumptuous banquet where Christ and the saints feast in God's great hall. As we saw in the *Vita Anselmi* (in chapter one), Eadmer describes a vision by Anselm, in which he witnesses the heavenly household. God appears in the hall with his

[217] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, pp. 477-78.
[218] Cited in Henrietta Leyser, "Two Concepts of Temptation" in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford, 2001), p. 326.

**Fig. 5 – Four Cardinal Virtues (c. 1295)**

steward [*dapiferum*], who feeds Anselm with "the whitest bread" [*panis nitidissimus*] (I. 2).[219] Heaven is portrayed as a feast with recognizable features. God manages the estates, oversees agriculture, and keeps a household. Anselm is fed with the highest quality bread, which shows the provision of food in the hall. God is imagined as a landholding lord; whose feasts provide pious souls with the culinary bounties of heaven. In Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, St. John the Evangelist is visited by Christ and his disciples who say to him, "the time has come when thou shall sit at table with me and thy brethren" [*quia tempus est, ut in mensa mea cum tuis fratribus epuleris*] (IX. 11).[220] Canonisation of Anselm and John is foreshadowed by these visions, which shows their inclusion at the heavenly feast with God, Christ, and the saints. Narrative writers used this image of heaven as a sumptuous banquet to reconcile with the necessity of aristocratic feasting by imagining how self-discipline and rejection of transitory worldly pleasures in this life would have led to an extravagant feast in the next. Thus, the aristocratic feast reflected Christian lordship by drawing association with this image alongside other biblical exemplars (like the Last Supper), whereby the lord's feast found its place within ecclesiastical discourse rather than defining a split between the values of the laity and clergy.

The Church gave its sanction to feasts in the liturgical year that were given to honour religious occasions. William of Malmesbury praises the "costly and splendid" [*sumptuosa et magnifica*] feasts [*conuiuia*] given by William I on the major church festivals of Christmas [*Natale Domini*], Easter [*Pascha*], and Pentecost/Whitsun [*Pentecosten*]. All who attend are said to admire the "large and brilliant company" [*multitudinis*] and the "splendid luxury of the feast" [*apparatumque delitiarum*] (III. 279. 2).[221] While the crown-wearing ceremonies display secular lordship, the practice had been discontinued by the text's composition. The language also offers the Church's approval because piety was the most important feature of kings for William of Malmesbury. He believed that kings should be armed in faith before military equipment.[222] William's text justified feasts that did often occur to observe religious occasions at prescribed points in the year, whereby each feast promoted rather than detracted from an image of Christian lordship. Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* describes the "Day of the Ascension" [*diei ascensionis*], on which "the fast is not to be observed" [*jejunium non observaretur*] (XXXI).[223] Feasting was not considered appropriate for some occasions, even for a Dominican friar. Jacobus also writes that the "Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord" [*festum transfigurationis domini*] calls for the consumption of "new wine" [*novo vino*]. This feast represents the "glorious renewal" [*gloriosam innovationem*] that "Christ underwent after resurrection" [*quam Christus post resurrectionem habuit*] so "new wine is required" [*vinum novum requiritur*] (CXIV. 2).[224] Jacobus's text also justified the feast as well as degrees of luxury that were

[219] *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. Southern, p. 5.
[220] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 61.
[221] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 508.
[222] Haahr, "The Concept of Kingship", 358.
[223] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 146.
[224] *Ibid*, pp. 483-84.

expected for the observance of religious occasions. At the same time, feasts allowed lords to fulfil their necessary functions, such as displaying status, and providing for others through hospitality and largesse with the Church's approval. Thus, clergymen who sought to influence lay piety depicted the lord's feast as indicative of good Christian lordship by defining better the yearly liturgical cycle – periods of church-sanctioned feasting balanced by periods of pious restraint and self-denial (fasting).

The Church imposed a well-defined regimen of culinary discipline in order to promote piety alongside the feast, thus allowing lords to display levels of wealth appropriate to their status. Feasts gained clerical approval when they were balanced by fasting or abstinence. These words were used somewhat interchangeably, and could mean different things. It sometimes meant abstaining from meat and substituting fish if one could afford it. Clergy and observant laypersons might have abstained from all food except bread and ale. In Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, King Eorcenberht of Kent becomes the "first person to fast for Lent" [*Celui juna primes Quaresme*] as "no English king before him had observed it for this length of time" [*nul rei engleis nel tint ensemble*] (ll. 1277-78).[225] Gaimar provides historical context for the Lenten fast, which was among the most important on the liturgical calendar. It also gained attention after the Gregorian reform. Orderic Vitalis describes the Council of Rouen in 1087 where it is decreed that: "none shall dine in Lent before the ninth hour has past" [*nullus in Quadragesima prandeat antequam nona hora peracta*] (IV. 242).[226] William of Malmesbury describes the Papal Council of 1095, at which it is reinforced that no layman (from Ash Wednesday) and no cleric (from Quinquasgesima) may eat meat until Easter [*in Pascha carnes comedat*] (IV. 345. 2).[227] Written accounts of the Church councils define Lent; whereby culinary discipline was defined more clearly as feasts balanced by fasts. It also became customary by c. 1200 for lords to abstain on certain days of the week and the vigils of feast days.[228] All-in-all, feasts and fasts were balanced evenly on the liturgical calendar. Alongside the penitential aspects of fasts, feasts were justified because the fasts provided balance. The issue of culinary balance developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as clerical values were imposed on lay society. Thus, narrative writers attempted to explain how spiritual dangers could be reconciled with the feast's necessity to lordship.

The Church organised its messages on culinary discipline more clearly in this period, so literature represents the balanced liturgical cycle of ritualised feasting and fasting. Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Conte du Graal* represents culinary discipline in the form of a balanced liturgical cycle. Its highest ideals might be symbolised by the Grail and the lord it sustains. We are told by Perceval's hermit-uncle that the Grail King does not receive "lamprey nor salmon" [*Luis ne lamproie ne salmon*] from the Grail. Instead, he receives "a single Host" [*D'une sole oiste*] (ll. 6421-22). The Host "comforts and sustains his life" [*Sa vie sostient et conforte*] (l. 6424) because "he is so spiritual" [*Et li*

[225] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 70.
[226] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, pp. 290.
[227] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 596.
[228] Woolgar, *The Great Household*, pp. 90-91; also see: *The Culture of Food*, pp. 5-8.

*est si esperitax*] (l. 6426).[229] The Hermit's description is ripe with Eucharistic imagery. This lord is sustained not by costly fish, but by the Eucharist. And twelfth-century audiences would have seen him as nourished directly by Christ. Chrétien's Grail is different from its subsequent thirteenth-century depictions. In Helinand de Froidmont's *Chronicle* (c. 1204), the Grail serves tasty meats in lavish sauces. The Grail also provides food and drink in abundant quantities in Robert de Boron's texts. Even one of the Chrétien's continuators cannot name a food that the Grail does not contain.[230] We are however told that Chrétien's Grail does not provide any exquisite foodstuffs, but it carries a single Eucharistic wafer instead. This king rejects all forms of worldly nourishment in favour of divine sustenance. According to Diverres, the fact that the Grail King feasts on the sacramental wafer shows that he is not of this world. Perceval and the Fisher King operate in the temporal world. However, the Grail King operates from the next world and thus, he receives only spiritual nourishment.[231] The Grail King certainly seems otherworldly as he appears to transcend all types of temporal feasting. Thus, Chrétien's Grail and its lord seem to represent an extreme and idealised type of aristocratic piety.

But Chrétien's description of the Grail and the lord it sustains are not consistent with the sacrament of Mass in late twelfth-century Church doctrine. The Eucharist had been defined as heavenly bread and thus, it was the highest form of spiritual nourishment. But unlike the description of the Grail procession, its daily reception was never practiced. This confirms for Diverres that the Grail King is not of this world, and he is in heaven partaking of the heavenly banquet.[232] The Hermit also connects the Grail with the heavenly banquet, but his account of the Grail procession shows other practical inconsistencies. Perceval sees the Grail carried by a woman, which is a clear and obvious violation of sacramental doctrine. The Host is also carried through the hall several times without a priest to hear confession, which is sacrilegious for this period.[233] D.D. Roy Owen theorises that Grail was written as a profane (non-religious) object, and the entire Hermit episode had been interpolated by another author after Chrétien's death.[234] Most literary critics do agree on a single author, but Chrétien's description does not match practice in some pretty significant ways. According to Bridgette Cazelles, the hermit (also Perceval's relative) lies about the Grail in order to persuade Perceval to serve his interests and that of the Grail King (also Perceval's own lineage).[235] Whether or not Chrétien intended the Hermit's description to be truthful, connections with the Mass and the heavenly banquet allow Chrétien's Grail to at least appear to symbolise the highest and most idealised degree of culinary discipline, as well as the most divinely inspired manner of good Christian lordship.

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[229] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 271-72.
[230] Cited in: Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table", p. 263.
[231] Armel Hugh Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade: Thoughts on *Le Conte del Graal* by Chrétien de Troyes" in *Arthurian Literature X*, ed. Richard Barber (Cambridge, 1990), p. 57.
[232] At most the Host was received by the faithful three times per year (Christmas, Easters, Pentecost), or once per week for those in religious Orders, see: *Ibid*, p. 58.
[233] Loomis, *The Grail*, pp. 46-47; Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 166.
[234] D.D. Roy Owen, "From Grail to Holy Grail", *Romania: Revue trimestrielle consacrée à l'étude des langues et des littératures romanes* 89 (1968), 34-37, 52.
[235] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 174.

Chrétien's use of Eucharistic imagery reflects how the sacrament of Communion gained importance in the post-Gregorian period despite its practical inconsistencies. The laity were usually spectators rather than participants in the sacrament of Mass, although most were expected to take Communion at least once per year at Easter. This period also saw intense debate surrounding the miracle of transubstantiation, and clerics promoted the idea that the Eucharist became the true flesh of Christ. Therefore, Christ's body was literally consumed.[236] The early Church had emphasised spiritual consumption to alleviate anxieties about cannibalism.[237] However, the twelfth-century Church preached literal transformation, and some of the laity remained hesitant. In response, priests were urged to instruct the laity that the Eucharist was no doubt the body of Christ.[238] Lateran IV (in 1215) defined Christ's presence in the Eucharist with scholastic terminology in light of the heresies that denied the doctrine of transubstantiation. The council gave the idea canonical approval, and offered official condemnations for those who had denied its validity like Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202) and Amaury de Bène (d. 1207). It also became official policy that all Christians should receive the Host once per year at Easter.[239] Late twelfth-century Christendom was also obsessed with relics relating to the Passion. Alongside debate and problems about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic bread, audiences may have believed any image that affirmed the doctrine.[240] Despite its inconsistencies with Church practices in a period of intense debate and fears of heresy, the Grail and its king might reflect an ideal to be admired instead of a practical application of the sacrament. Eucharistic imagery provided a tool, with which writers promoted Church values by accommodating the issue of food within their religious discourse. While Perceval is not meant to adopt this diet, he is likely expected to understand the Grail, and acknowledge the more spiritual type of nourishment. Thus, the romance hero must understand impulse control and self-discipline, whereby feasting is balanced by fasting.

Perceval experiences the feast in the first half of the romance. The motif reaches its pinnacle when Perceval dines with the Fisher King as the Grail procession occurs. While Perceval is no stranger to the feast at this point, the Fisher King's is the most luxurious in the narrative by far. In fact, this feast is described with more detail than any other feast in Chrétien's romances. They dine on a "ivory table" [*table lee d'yvoire*] (l. 3261) covered by a cloth: "no legate, cardinal or pope ever dined at one so white" [*Liegaus ne cardonax ne pape / Ne menga onques sor si blanche*] (ll. 3278-79). The "first dish" [*Li premiers mes*] is "haunch of venison" [*d'une hanche / De cerf*] which is prepared "with hot pepper and cooked in fat" [*de craisse au poivre chaut*] alongside "clear and delicious wine"

[236] Edward Donald Kennedy, "The Grail and French Arthurian Tradition" in *Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Blackwell, 2009), p. 209; Bartlett. *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 449-50.
[237] Frantzen, *Food, Eating, and Identity*, p. 41.
[238] Bartlett. *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 478-79
[239] Anne J. Duggan, "Conciliar Law: 1123-1215: The Legislation of the Four Lateran Councils" in *The History of Medieval Canon Law in the Classical Period, 1140-1234: From Gratian to the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX*, ed. Wilifried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington, History of Medieval Canon Law (Washington, 2008), pp. 345-48.
[240] Loomis, *The Grail*, pp. 274-75.

[*Vins clers et aspre ne lor faut*] (ll. 3280-82). Other luxuries are described as they are provided with "all the dishes befitting king, count, and emperor" [*De toz les mes que rois ne quens / ne empereres doive avoir*] (ll. 3316-17).[241] Items such as venison, pepper, and fat (for cooking) were enjoyed only by the wealthiest aristocrats, and Chrétien says so explicitly. Several critics have commented on the feast's meaning. For Cazelles, the Fisher King is a member of a faction, and his feast is a tool to redirect Perceval against Arthur.[242] Diverres notes several features linking the feast with the heavenly Jerusalem, most notably the square-shaped hall, and food consistent with a Mediterranean banquet. The episode might have been inspired by Count Philip's expedition to Jerusalem (c. 1177-78). He fought on behalf of Baldwin IV, whose leprosy might have inspired the maimed Fisher King.[243] The degree of wealth and luxury was uncommon outside churches, monasteries, and seigneurial households, whereby the Fisher King is established as lord in both spiritual and temporal terms. Therefore, Chrétien's language coincides with that of the Church and the secular hierarchy.[244] Critics outside Cazelles interpret the feast in terms of temporal lordship as well as religious values and biblical imagery. In this way, the lavish feast provided for Perceval by the Fisher King seems to represent the most lavish feast that still might receive ecclesiastical sanction if balance is achieved.

Chrétien presents a contrast between the lavish feast and the concurrent Grail procession. Venison is served in a *talloir*, indicating a dish for carving meat and fish, which Chrétien deliberately contrasts with *graal*. In other words, the carving dish carries the lavish banquet while the Grail carries only the Eucharist. Chrétien shows a clear opposition between corporeal and spiritual nourishment, consistent with the dual tables described by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153).[245] It appears that Perceval is given a choice between physical and spiritual nourishment. The episode occurs before the Hermit's explanation, and Perceval does not question the procession nor the strange vessel while the courses are served. His attention remains on the food and drink before him. Worldly values seem to oppose spiritual values, of which the ongoing procession provides a silent reminder before each lavish course. The constant juxtaposition seems to suggest one is the antithesis of the other, whereby the Grail symbolises something greater than food. While Chrétien does not dismiss the feast, Perceval's failure is that he does not ask about the other kind of food.[246] The lengthy description of the most lavish and luxurious foods allows his audiences to view the feast through the eyes of someone too focused on worldly luxuries rather than the religious dimensions of knighthood, which may also

[241] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 139-41.
[242] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 53.
[243] Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade", pp. 38-39, 49, 62.
[244] A.D. Crow, "Some Observations on the Style of the Grail Castle Episode in Chrétien's *Perceval*" in *History and Structure of French: Essays in Honour of Professor T.W.B. Reid*, ed. F.J. Barnett, A.D. Crow, W. Rothwell and S. Ullmann (Oxford, 1972), pp. 76-78.
[245] One table where guests indulged in worldly delights while the other provided spiritual nourishment, see: Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade", pp. 54-57.
[246] Crow, "Some Observations", pp. 80-81; Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade", pp.33-34, 49-50.

reflect the dichotomy between carnality and spirituality.[247] It additionally seems to suggest imbalance in Perceval's character because the hero attends multiple feasts, but he also lacks any understanding of culinary self-discipline. Thus, the romance hero's experience of the liturgical cycle is incomplete.

An episode of fasting allows Perceval to understand the religious side of twelfth-century knighthood. Perceval has been performing feats of arms for five years, described as *felenesses*, which suggests less than pious conduct.[248] This also suggests imbalance as worldly success occurs, but he still does not understand Christian knighthood. When Perceval encounters the Hermit, he is required to fast on "chervil, lettuce, and cress" [*Cerfueil, laitues et cresson*] alongside "bread made of barley and oats" [*pain i ot d'orge et d'avaine*], and "water from a clear spring" [*iaue de clere fontaine*] (ll. 6502-04).[249] The penitential nature of this meagre diet is given directly. The nature of the episode is consistent with twelfth-century practice because its placement on Good Friday represents a specific liturgical season when fasting and penance were expected.[250] In practice, parish priests and bishops (not necessarily hermits) were expected to hear confession around Easter. Fasts were prescribed for those who wished to do penance, and abstinence from enjoyable food was thought to cleans sin. Cazelles claims that Perceval's only "sin" is that he has allied himself with Arthur, which causes him to neglect his own lineage (which is the Grail faction). She argues that Perceval's conduct is consistent with Christian knighthood, whereby the Hermit's view of sin seems rather archaic – based on actions and consequences rather than motivations. Only the Hermit believes Perceval to be neglectful in service to God.[251] But if we are to believe the Hermit's claim that Perceval sins by neglecting his mother, remaining silent about the Grail, or by any other of his actions, the reason given is that Perceval focuses on worldly feasts. He does not seem to understand the values of moderation and self-discipline, for which the fast provides balance and balances the liturgical cycle.

Perceval's need for penance coincides with the need to balance the feast. Therefore, episodes of feasting followed by fasting seems to depict the balanced liturgical cycle on a macro level. Perceval must experience feast and fast to understand the clerical values associated with lordship and knighthood. Perceval receives Communion, which completes the liturgical cycle, and Perceval seems ready to exhibit impulse control and culinary self-discipline. In this way, Sarah Gordon describes a journey of spiritual discovery as Perceval constructs his identity as an increasingly spiritual figure – less concerned with bodily appetites.[252] Clergymen preached Christian ethic as a means for controlling and simultaneously exalting the knightly class in this period, so the Grail can be read as

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[247] Sara Sturm-Maddox, "Food for Heroes: The Intertextual Legacy of the *Conte Del Graal*" in *Text and Intertext in Medieval Arthurian Literature*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities: 1997 (New York, 1996), pp. 118-19.
[248] Interpreted as such in Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade", pp. 41-42.
[249] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, p. 275.
[250] Bonnie Buettner, "The Good Friday Scene in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*", *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion* 36 (1980), 416-18.
[251] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, pp. 8, 146-51.
[252] Gordon, "Consumption and the Construction of Identity", pp. 82-83.

the ultimate symbol of religiously inspired knighthood. And Perceval's quest becomes his admittance to a higher order of knighthood based on service to God.[253] According to Penny Simons, the fast episode reflects how the object of Perceval's quest shifts from the worldly sphere towards something more akin to the divine.[254] Perceval must experience the balanced liturgical cycle of feasting and fasting in order to reach the highest and most divinely ordained level of knighthood and lordship – based on religious values rather than worldly gain on its own. The feast was allowed for Chrétien de Troyes, but periodic fasts were considered essential. No one could have been expected to adopt the Grail King's diet in practice, but Perceval identifies more closely with the Grail King by fasting and receiving the same sacramental bread. Thus, he reaches beyond the experience of worldly knights by understanding the spiritualised feast represented by the Eucharistic wafer, the Lord's Supper, and the heavenly banquet.

A similar motif appears in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, albeit it is given much less explicitly than in *Le Conte du Graal*. This romance has no mystical figure that embodies a culinary ideal like the Grail King. Lancelot feasts, but the descriptions themselves seem rather lacking in detail. At the first household where Lancelot feasts, "the food was splendidly arrayed" [*li mangiers fu bien atornez*] (l. 451). No other details are given. Despite the vagueness of the description, "nothing would have made them wish to change their lodging to seek better" [*por neant volsissent changier / lor ostel por querre meillor*] (ll. 454-55). The Immodest Maiden also provides a feast for Lancelot. They dine upon a long and white cloth: "upon it the meal was set out" [*et sus estoient aporté*] (l. 986). More detail is given in this episode. The feast includes "two pots, one filled with red wine and the other with a heady white wine" [*dui pot, l'uns plains de moré / et li autres de fort vin blanc*] (ll. 990-91). At the Vavassor's household, Chrétien deliberately withholds specifics of the feast provided: "I do not intend to give you any details about the fine dinner he was served" [*s'il fu bien serviz au soper / de ce ne quier je ja parler*] (ll. 2071-72).[255] The romance exercises moderation in language to promote moderate feasts, which contrasts the detailed language used to describe the Fisher King's feast. Perceval appears too focused on the worldly feast, but Lancelot seems focused on his quest to rescue the queen, so descriptions are short and vague while the types of food and household service are omitted with the slight exception of the Immodest Maiden's feast. The feast is given with the condition that Lancelot sleeps with her, so greater attention to detail may enhance the carnality of her intentions. The fact that Lancelot rejects her surmises his extraordinary character and mission. In other words, Lancelot successfully defends her honour without yielding to her seductive charms. The

[253] Lisa Lampert-Weissig, "Why is this Knight Different from All Other Knights: Jews, Anti-Semitism, and the Old French Grail Narratives", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106:2 (2007), 227; Roel M.T. Zemel, "The New and the Old Perceval: Guillaume's *Fergus* and Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*", *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society: Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne* 46 (1994), 324-25.
[254] Penny Simons, "Pattern and Process of Education in *Le Conte du Graal*", *Nottingham French Studies* 32:2 (1993), 7-8.
[255] *Lancelot,* ed. Kibler, pp. 20, 42-44, 88.

episode becomes a qualifying test of prowess, service to feminine honour, and fidelity.[256] The feast tests prowess and loyalty, whereby Chrétien justifies the feast by associating it with service to others.

Chrétien seems to justify each feast in *Lancelot* by connecting it with the performance of the *miles Christi*, an idea that was preached widely in the late twelfth century. Despite the morally questionable object of his quest, Lancelot defends an innocent damsel, and conversations during the Vavassor's feast connect the rescue of the queen with the restoration of society's well-being. The motif culminates with a symbolic knighting feast, which is interrupted by a call to arms. The language defines Lancelot as a knight: "when he was riding off fully armed, mounted on his horse, and holding his shield by its arm straps, he could only be counted among the fair and good" [*si com il s'an aloit le pas / armez de trestotes ses armes / et tint l'escu par le enarmes / e fu sor son cheval Montez / qu'il deüst estre mescontez / n'antre les biax n'antre les buens*] (ll. 2660-65).[257] Lancelot appears as an exemplary knight with shield and horse as he defeats his foe so the can feast continue. Bruckner describes a religious echo with Christological overtones that furnishes an aura around Lancelot. He appears as a suffering martyr (of love) and a redeemer of captives like Christ's harrowing of Hell. Yet, he remains a knight-lover and not a figure of Christ, whereby religious dimensions enhance the extraordinary quality of secular heroism.[258] Chrétien does not discredit feasting by knights, but he justifies it by focusing the attention not on food, but on its connection with the Church's ideal of knighthood. Clerics such as Bishop Stephen de Fougères (d. 1178) promoted *miles Christi* (previously for monks) among knights, who were charged with the duties of protecting the weak, fighting for a worthy cause, and they were expected to partake in sanctifying rituals.[259] The Church sought to redirect the knights' aggression to benefit their interests in the post-Gregorian age. So, Chrétien represents the feast as a sanctifying ritual for Christian knighthood. While Chrétien does not explicitly connect the feast with piety, he justifies it by associating the feast with performances of *miles Christi*.

Lancelot (like Perceval) must also fast in order to experience the balanced liturgical cycle. He immediately fasts when the queen rejects him. A lady says to him, "you neither eat nor drink" [*ne bevez ne ne mangiez*] (l. 5442). He lodges outside town when he arrives at a tournament: "never had such a gentleman chosen such poor lowly lodgings" [*einz si prodom n'ot mes itel / car molt estoit petiz et bas*] (ll. 5508-09).[260] It directly contrasts the prior episodes of hospitality, and Lancelot neither feasts nor takes lodgings appropriate to his status. Chrétien tells us directly that this household is below Lancelot's station. Lancelot is imprisoned after his adulterous liason, "and he was given to eat

[256] Matilda T. Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*: That Obscure Object of Desire, Lancelot" in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, Arthurian Studies: 63 (Cambridge, 2005), p. 144; Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, pp. 41-42.
[257] *Lancelot*, ed. Kibler, p. 112.
[258] Bruckner, "*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*", pp. 146-47.
[259] Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 198-99; *The Image of the Aristocracy*, pp. 132-33; Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change", pp. 292-93.
[260] *Lancelot*, ed. Kibler, pp. 226-28.

only niggardly portions of poor fare" [*si li donoit l'an a mangier / molt povremant a dongier*] (ll. 6141-42). This is described as barley bread [*pain d'orge*] and stagnant water [*eve troble*] (l. 6617).[261] The episode appears as a symbolic penance for adultery, riding in the cart, and initially arousing the queen's disdain. This diet would seem shockingly meagre for a knight of aristocratic status. In practice, it was associated with the cloister and a purist form of culinary discipline. It shows a degree of liturgical fasting not normally practiced by lay aristocrats. Kings, princes, and knights would have expected fish and other (non-meat) dishes on days of abstinence. Lancelot is forced to contend with the food of cloister monks. The episode is not given directly as an episode of penance, but it seems implied, and it may have been understood as such. It may symbolise the ideal liturgical fast, which balances feasts and thus, balances the liturgical cycle. Lancelot is established as *miles Christi* because he learns impulse control and self-discipline in addition to knightly service and use of prowess, although much of it is forced. Thus, Chrétien justifies the feast by allowing his protagonists to experience feast and fast. The feast also represents Christian knighthood by finding its place in a balanced cyclical motif. Thus, the literary experiences of Chrétien's heroes reach beyond that of earthly knights and provide models and templates for Christian lordship in the post-Gregorian period. Feasting was clearly acceptable for clerics in this period. However, it required balance in preparation for the sacramental rituals of knighthood, and the cycle of feasting, fasting, and penance that was preached in the twelfth century. The romances show how Christian lordship was to be achieved in preparation for a feast that was akin to the divine – the Lord's Supper and the heavenly banquet.

Lancelot does not receive Communion (like Perceval does), but other texts directly represent its key place in the liturgical cycle. It symbolised Christ's nourishment in this period, which was thought to allow pious lords to attend the heavenly banquet. The Eucharist was of particular importance at the time of one's death for this reason. In Gaimar, William Rufus "demands the Lord's body" [*le corpus domini ad demandez*] (l. 6336) before his death in the New Forest. There are no churches, so a huntsman feeds him "grass, flowers, and all" [*des herbes od tut la flur*] (l. 6340), "intending in this way to give him Communion" [*issi quidat l'acomenger*] (l. 6342).[262] For Gaimar, intent was more important than substance, and substitutes for the Host were acceptable in some cases. The reception of the Eucharist symbolises the completion of the liturgical cycle, which combined with a preceding fast is shown as preparation for the heavenly banquet. Adam of Eynsham writes how Bishop Hugh fasts in his final days. However, he receives the Eucharist [*eukaristie*], with which he is given "the food of eternal life" [*refectus uite eterne*] (V. 16).[263] A vision is also described on the night of Hugh's death, in which he is seen "hastening" [*properare*] to the "banquet of the king of kings" [*ad regale conuiuium*] having received a "well-deserved summons to the heavenly feast" [*celestis*

[261] *Ibid*, pp. 254, 275.
[262] *Estoire des Engleis*, ed. Short, p. 342.
[263] *The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln Vol. 2*, ed. Douie and Farmer, p. 211-12.

*conuiuium meruit accersiri*] (V. 18).[264] Anselm also prepares to die in the *Vita Anselmi*, and Eadmer includes the quote, "ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" [*ut edatis et bibatis super mensam meam in regno meo*]. Anselm also dies directly before the "the Lord's Supper" [*Cœnam Domini*] (II. 65).[265] Regardless of its historical accuracy, Eadmer draws a connection between the Lord's Supper and Anselm's invitation to the heavenly feast, which is assured by the Eucharist. Anselm and Hugh discipline themselves in their lives, and they receive the Host before death, which allows them to attend the Lord's Supper in God's heavenly household. Thus, literature shows how observance of the liturgical cycle and the Eucharist was thought to prepare for the heavenly banquet.

Narrative literature shows how the post Gregorian Church found ways to reconcile their stringent values of self-discipline with the necessity of food and feast in the culture of Christian lordship. Lords needed to feast, but it came alongside the dangers of gluttony and excessive carnality, which opposed the values of Church and cloister. All lords (whether lay or ecclesiastical) were expected to avoid gluttony and other carnal sins by practicing moderation and balance through degrees of self-denial and periodic fasts, which demonstrated impulse control and thus, a willingness to live in accordance with clerical (and monastic) values. Regular bouts of feasts and fasts formed a balanced liturgical cycle, and moderate feasts were sometimes justified in this way. The Eucharist completed the cycle, at which point, pious individuals expected to attend the heavenly banquet. In this way, the feast further embodied and reflected issues of the lord's piety, and members of the clergy accommodated the feast within the Church's emerging framework of good Christian lordship. Thus, they recognised ways that the lord's feast and expressions of pious living could occur simultaneously.

## The Art of Balance: Charity and Almsgiving

The feast also found pious balance through the provision of alms. *Caritas* was a major part of monastic piety, and it was also imposed more clearly on lay society in the post-Gregorian twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Everyone in this period knew that their society was inherently unequal, and it was too easy to become impoverished for many. The basic idea throughout the Middle Ages was that those who had wealth (by divine providence) had a special responsibility to provide for the poor.[266] Monastic institutions needed to be charitable in order to balance their lavish endowments while aristocratic benefactors and lay clergy viewed their monastic foundations and contributions as forms of charity. The Church pressured lay lords to be charitable in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and *caritas* was recognised as a separate type of largesse from that which was shown to other aristocrats. Mutual and reciprocal obligations could not apply because the poor could not reciprocate in a material way. But charitable lords expected to benefit from divine favour, and the poor reciprocated with their prayers for the souls of those who had provided for them. In this way, alms reflected the quality of the

[264] *Ibid*, p. 186.
[265] *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. Southern, p. 142-43.
[266] Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 59.

lord's person rather than the effective exercise of the office. In practice, the twelfth-century royal household kept a "bearer of the alms-bowl" [*portator scutelle elemosine*] on permanent staff.[267] He dined in the household, and alms likely came from the hall. The thirteenth-century *Rules* of Bishop Grosseteste included detailed instructions for alms. Food was to be served generously to increase alms, and leftovers were to be freely, wisely, and moderately distributed among the poor, sick, and beggars.[268] And provision for the poor indicates Christian lordship directly in narrative literature.

*Caritas* provides balance for sin in some texts. Orderic Vitalis praises the charity of Queen Matilda in contrast to her husband William the Conqueror's militarism. Matilda exhibits "strong faith and fervent love for Christ" [*firma fides et studiosus amor Christi*] by the "alms which she distributed daily" [*Elemosina cui cotidie*]. This brings more "succour" [*succurrebat*] than can be expressed to William who is "struggling on the field of battle" [*agonizanti in procinctu bellico*] (IV. 189).[269] Orderic Vitalis portrays the couple in a way that one extreme balances the other. Matilda feeds the poor regularly, which expresses her piety directly. In this way, she moderates and balances William's less pious actions in battle, and the aristocratic couple receives Orderic's praise. It was believed during this period that almsgiving helped to wipe away sins and to acquire God's forgiveness. The mixture of violence and religious fervour in the eleventh century inspired frantic almsgiving by lay lords. The post-Gregorian clergy preached that the mighty ruled in this world but the humble were raised in the next.[270] However, charity afforded military leaders like William with an opportunity to balance sinful conduct, and to increase their chances of divine salvation. Almsgiving was seen as a major part of the clerical pattern of redemption for militant lords, and clerics believed that even violent lords could redeem themselves and serve as models of piety. While monastic foundations were ideal, almsgiving was thought to balance sin, and piety was expressed even further by the lord's feast.

Jacobus de Voragine's thirteenth-century story of St. John the Almoner describes the balancing effect of *caritas* in a direct and literal way. Beggars elicit alms from a tax-collector who is "without pity for the poor" [*sed nimis pauperibus immisericors*]. The collector maliciously throws a loaf of "rye bread" [*panes siliginis*], which is caught by the beggars and received as alms [*eleemosinam accepit*]. The collector becomes ill and appears "before the judgment stand" [*ante judicium stare*]. A scale weighs his sins against "the single loaf of rye bread that he gave to Christ two days ago" [*unum panem siliginis, quem ante duos dies Christo dedit*]. The loaf balances the scale, and angels urge him to further his gain by adding to it. The collector is inspired to give when he awakes because "a single loaf" [*una siligo*] has been "so profitable [*ita profuit*] (XXVII. 1).[271] The charitable provision of bread (even by accident) was thought to balance sin, and Jacobus describes this literally.

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[267] *Constitutio Domus Regis*, ed. Amt and Church (Oxford, 2007), p. 200.
[268] *Walter of Henley*, ed. Orchinsky, pp. 400, 404.
[269] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, p. 224.
[270] Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy*, pp 313-14; *The English Aristocracy*, p. 222; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 55.
[271] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 127.

The story shows how *caritas* was believed to earn divine reward through association of the poor with Christ, whereby provision for the poor was thought to create a bridge to Paradise. According to Rubin the "arithmetic of the soul" was developed by the Church during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whereby almsgiving was promoted as a wise investment that would yield fruit.[272] Almsgiving became the main program of spiritual redemption, which was believed to provide literal balance for sinful conduct. Thus, writers promoted the clerical belief that *caritas* had a cleansing effect on the soul.

The Church additionally looked to develop its messages at a time when demand for charity increased due to economic and social changes. Urbanisation and growing markets prompted large-scale migrations to urban centres. Migration exceeded employment in many towns, which mixed with declining wages and rising prices forced many into dependence on charity.[273] Lester Little has explored how the Church responded to these societal changes by shifting the traditional scheme of cardinal vices. While pride received attention in the earlier period, avarice emerged from relative obscurity. Avarice was placed with gluttony among the pleasures of the flesh. It found its place in society alongside commercialism and increased use of money as the means for exchange as concerns about feudal warfare were gradually replaced by fears of involuntary poverty.[274] In light of these economic, social, and theological developments, it seems especially noteworthy that Orderic Vitalis' twelfth-century text depicts battlefield violence, and Jacobus' thirteenth-century text shows an avaricious tax collector whose concern is money. While almsgiving was not unique to this period, the nature and context of its practices developed and changed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was definitively connected to the lord's feast as feasting without almsgiving was gluttony and avarice while alms reflected the moderation of excess and the remission of sin. Thereby, balance was established, and the feast was accommodated further into the clerical framework of Christian lordship.

*Caritas* balances the luxuries of the table in literature. Lords were expected to moderate their own consumption to avoid the appearance of gluttony. However, lords (lay and ecclesiastical) were expected to keep a good table for others to avoid the perception of avarice. Churchmen taught that self-denial was to be practiced personally and not forced on others, whereby the feast was justified if excesses were moderated via the provision of alms. William of Malmesbury writes of King Oswald, who had become a saint. When "food was served to guests" [*appositis obsoniis cum conuiuae*] the king "restrained his appetite" [*ipse uoluptatem frenarit*] and thus, he "purchased the happiness of the poor" [*pauperum mercatus gaudia*]. And this is the echoed with the quote, "he has given to the poor" [*dispersit dedit pauperibus*], so "his righteousness endures" [*iustitia eius manet*] (I. 49. 4).[275] Oswald balances lavish feasts by moderating his own diet and providing the excesses as alms, thus exhibiting

[272] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 458; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 58, 86, 90
[273] Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 20-21, 49-50
[274] For the full discussion, see: Lester C. Little, "Pride Goes Before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom", *The American Historical Review* 76:1 (February 1971), 16-49.
[275] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 72.

a manner of lordship worthy of canonisation. Orderic Vitalis writes Peter of Maule as a bad example. He "loved giving alms" [*elemosinas amabat*] and "he frequently did" [*et frequenter faciebat*]. However, he is "afraid of fasting" [*sed ieiunia metuebat*]. Thereby, he seems generous and greedy at the same time [*cupidus simul erat ac prodigus*] (V. 19. 445).[276] Peter gives alms, but he also feasts to excess, so it seems unclear how the alms are acquired. Clerics believed that wealth acquired by dubious means (e.g. theft or plunder) was not be virtuous. Alms had to come from personal moderation, of which Archbishop Stephen Langton (d. 1228) writes: "fasting without alms is of no value, and fasting with almsgiving is of double goodness".[277] Inner restraint and outward *caritas* were both considered necessary to post-Gregorian notions of Christian lordship. The withholding of alms indicated gluttony and avarice while alms without personal moderation implied morally questionable and avaricious behaviour to acquire wealth. Lords were expected to avoid excess by exhibiting self-discipline and *caritas*, whereby balance was achieved, and the feast embodied Christian lordship.

The nature of almsgiving also developed as the demand for charity increased and its provision became more institutionalised. Monastic almonries were the oldest, which provided regular clientele with food and clothing. Hospitals and alms-houses were established in large numbers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by monasteries, bishops, and lay aristocrats (who included them as part of collegiate churches).[278] Charitable foundations provided a dignified way to manage poverty for a local and deserving population. Foundations grew in number, whereby general distributions of alms from the castle or monastery gate were reduced to token levels by the thirteenth century.[279] Institutional foundations provided lords with an alternative method for *caritas*, but the notion of open-handed giving from the table remained the ideal for many. Richard of Devizes offers praise for those "whose bread was ready for the poor" [*quorum panis presto fuit pauperi*].[280] William of Malmesbury describes Queen Margaret as famous for her almsgiving [*elemosinis*]. She feeds twenty-four poor persons [*pauperes*] regularly. She also feeds a growing number of poor [*pascebat*] during Lent that culminates with three-hundred on a single occasion (IV. 311. 3).[281] Margaret increases alms given from the feast instead of restricting personalised charity, which was considered especially pious. Personalised charity continued to be practiced, but some writers lamented a perceived decline in the traditional manner of almsgiving. Orderic Vitalis describes Abbot Osbern as "very fond of the poor" [*pauperes... ualde amabat*]. He provides "the bread and drink of seven monks" [*panis et potus vii monachorum cotidie*] for "seven lepers" [*vii leprosi*] daily. However, Orderic bewails how his successors reduce the number to three [*ternarius*] (III. 101).[282] Richard of Devizes additionally

[276] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 3*, M. Chibnall, p. 178.
[277] Quoted in Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 64.
[278] Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 240-43.
[279] Woolgar, *The Culture of Food*, pp. 230-31.
[280] *The Chronicle of Richard Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, ed. John T. Appleby, Medieval Texts (London, 1963), p. 71.
[281] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 554.
[282] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 2*, ed. Chibnall, p. 116.

criticises the bishop of Chester. If the pauper "who lived at the gates" [*foribus habitat*] seeks alms, the bishop refuses and replies: "go away and beg for food somewhere else" [*transite et alibi alimoniam querite*].[283] It is not mentioned in the text if the bishop maintains any charitable institutions. But Richard criticises his lack of personalised *caritas*, and excess and avarice are implied. Writers promoted open-handedness and non-discrimination in charity. They believed that any who sought alms were deserving in the eyes of God. Economic and social changes also made open-handed charity difficult and inconvenient, resulting in a frequent need to recognise those who were most deserving.

Some clerics took more nuanced approaches to the issue of charity, and attempted to distinguish some as particularly worthy of alms. Pope Gregory the Great (r. 590-604) had first distinguished between public beggars and modest paupers, whereby he anticipated later debates over the deserving and undeserving poor. The twelfth-century *Glossa Ordinaria* presents a scale of merit for charity based on the recipients' virtue and their closeness to the giver. The contemporary *Summa Decretorum* prescribes concentric circles of the recipients' proximity to the giver. In cases of equal proximity, the recipient's virtue should be tested. One's ability to work entered the discussion in the thirteenth century, and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) writes that alms should only be given to those with no other source of livelihood.[284] Examples also appear in narrative texts, in which the provision of alms seems less open-handed than other narrative examples. In Adam of Eynsham's *Life of St. Hugh*, the bishop's almoner is "exceedingly conscientious in his treatment of the needy" [*In quo satis indigentium se ostendit*]. He "considered carefully who should receive alms and how much each ought to receive" [*prudenter quibus et quantum erogandum esset perpendens*] (V. 18).[285] In this way, Adam describes careful organs of the bishop's alms rather than purely indiscriminate giving. And he suggests that some were considered to be more deserving than others. Household documents also indicate that vague and general orders to feed unspecified numbers of poor were no longer the norm by the thirteenth century. It had become customary at this time for the lord's almoner to record specific information regarding the date, the number of paupers fed, the costs, and details about the food provided. The provision of alms was henceforth instilled with discipline, restraint, and business-like methods.[286] Alongside the rise of food prices, the growing numbers of poor, and larger numbers of charitable institutions, suspicion of those who begged for food also increased in this period. Alms-houses and other institutions were less personal than the direct provision of alms, and the image of the "fraudulent pauper" emerged. They supposedly demanded food and induced others to sin, so they were considered undeserving. Attention was also given to the person of the poor beggar by the thirteenth century for these reasons. The clergy denounced false beggars and differentiated between

[283] *The Chronicle of Richard Devizes*, ed. Appleby, p. 70.
[284] Examples taken from Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 237; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 68-71.
[285] *The Life of St. Hugh of Lincoln Vol. 2*, ed. Douie and Farmer, pp. 212-13.
[286] Johnstone, "Poor Relief in the Royal Households", 161-62.

voluntary and involuntary poverty.[287] Inflation also impacted the nature of charity. Wealthy lords were expected to give, but not to the point of impoverishment. Thus, literature shows cases when alms are restricted or withheld, and some texts discuss ways to distinguish those particularly worthy of alms.

Impoverished lords were considered among the most deserving of charity. In the Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*, Amiloun gains a wife and an estate, whereby he achieves lordship like Yvain at the beginning of *Le Chevalier Au Lion*. But Amiloun contracts leprosy and as a result, he is excluded from his hall and exiled from the estate. He cries out, "*A god help! / Whilom y was a man of miȝt [to dele mete & cloþ] / Ous bihoueþ to bid our brede*" (ll. 1681-91).[288] Amiloun's identity as lord – as the provider of food (and alms) – has been lost. Exclusion from the hall means he no longer controls the food, nor does he manage the estate. He seeks charity instead of abandoning civilisation like Yvain, and the decline from lordship to poverty is given with the realisation that he must receive the type of charity (*mete & cloþ*) that he had provided. In Jacobus' *Golden Legend*, the bishop of Nola has "fallen to earth half dead of hunger and cold" [*fame et gelu afflictus solo corruisset*]. Thereby, St. Felix is "bidden by an angel" [*ab angelo ad eum mittitur*] to feed and assist the impoverished bishop (XIX).[289] The bishop's literal fall to earth might symbolise a sudden decline from wealth to poverty, and the bishop is considered worthy of alms received by divine providence. Economic and social change caused lords to experience economic hardships. It is possible that some lords did become impoverished and dependent on charity (like Stephen de Fretwell). The term "shame-faced poor" [*pauperes verecundi*] also came back into fashion in the thirteenth century, which specifically described those who had fallen from comfort to poverty. They were thought to suffer from shame and dislocation as well as physical need. Theologians were especially concerned with the idea of social disruption, so *pauperes verecundi* were considered especially worthy of charity from the lord's table.[290] Thus, the idea of impoverished lords seemed to concern Jacobus and the anonymous Middle English author. Men of rank in both narratives become dependent on charity and thus, they are presented as deserving of alms, allowing for an image of pious lordship for any who opted to provide.

In *Amis and Amiloun*, alms from the feast table are initially provided by a market-town: "*Gret plente was in þat lond / boþe of mete & drink*" (ll. 1706-07). Amiloun and Amourant "*sore wepeand fro dore to dore / & bad here mete for godes loue*" (ll. 1702-03).[291] The inhabitants respond in exemplary fashion by providing food as alms, which earns them divine favour in return. Their alms provide balance for feasting by moderating its assumed excesses. The romance shows wealthy townsfolk as sources for alms at a time when towns grew and increasingly took the lead in the

[287] Woolgar, *The Culture of Food*, p. 218; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 92.
[288] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 70.
[289] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 102.
[290] Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 72-73.
[291] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 71.

establishment and maintenance of charitable institutions.[292] Although alms seem open-handed and indiscriminate, the recipients have been identified as *pauperes verecundi* and therefore, we know they are worthy of alms. They are sustained by alms for some time: "*& as þat folk of þat cuntray* / *com to chepeing eueri day* / *Þai gat hem liues fode*" (ll. 1722-25).[293] However, charity is withheld due to famine: "*Corn bigan to wex dere* / *Þat hunger bigan to go*" (ll. 1736-37). Therefore, "*þer was noiþer eld no ȝing* / *Þat wald ȝif hem mete no drink*" (ll. 1738-39).[294] Famines (like those that occurred in the early fourteenth century) would have justified the restriction of charity. The text also suggests a favourable attitude held towards strict organisation of alms to recognise when limits were reached.

Amiloun and Amourant arrive at Amis' hall where a feast is held. The feast is a lavish one: "*When þai were semly set on row* / *Serued þai were opon a þrowe* / *As a prince serued he wes* / *wiþ riche coupes of gold*" (ll. 1900-05). The author pictures a luxurious feast, at which excesses require balance. Numberless beggars seek alms: "*stode bischet wiþ-outen þe gate* / *wel sore of hungred & cold* (ll. 1907-08)."[295] There is much to give and many for whom to provide, so a distinction is made according to virtue. A knight offers to take Amourant into the duke's service, but Amourant refuses to abandon his lord. This is reported to Amis, who identifies them as deserving: "*for þat he is so trewe & kende* / *Y schal quit him his mede*" (ll. 2003-04). Alms are given from leftover wine: "*Take, he seyd, mi coupe of gold* / *as ful of wine astow miȝt hold*" (ll. 2008-09), and "*He and his page drink þis win*" (l. 2015).[296] Charity is provided according to virtue as Amis distinguishes the deserving poor. But Amiloun is thought a thief for possessing the cup. *Caritas* is replaced by violence, but Amiloun becomes deserving when he is recognised as *pauperes verecundi*, and the virtue of his sacrifice becomes known. They enter the hall, and "*what so euer he asked niȝt or day* / *It nas neuer bihinde* / *Of euerich mete & eueri drink*" (ll. 2189-91).[297] Alms provide balance on multiple levels. Excesses are given for the deserving poor, which balances the feast. A greater act of *caritas* also balances the sacrifice previously made for Amis. The author recognises necessary limits for alms while assessment of the recipients' virtue distinguishes those who are deserving. The text also shows that care must be taken when assessing merits as mistakes can be made. Thus, moderate feasting, a balanced liturgical cycle, and frequent displays of *caritas* allowed lords to showcase their Christian selves, which accommodated the necessary feast into the post-Gregorian Church's model of Christian lordship.

[292] Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 242-43, for more on the rise of urban institutions of charity, see: Sethina Watson, "City as Charter: Charity and Lordship of English Towns, 1170-1250" in *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400-1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space*, ed. Caroline Goodson, Anne E. Lester, and Carol Symes (Surrey, 2010), pp. 235-62.
[293] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 71.
[294] *Ibid*, p. 72.
[295] *Ibid*, pp. 77-78.
[296] *Ibid*, pp. 81-82.
[297] *Ibid*, p. 88.

# Chapter 4: Aristocratic Manners and Educating the Next Generation

The feast reflected the lord's personal quality with its displays of aristocratic manners. The growing influence of the Church on aristocratic culture in the post-Gregorian twelfth and thirteenth centuries provided the context, in which literature echoed a new era of manners and growing attention to the lord's personal conduct. While an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon or Norman lord might have been distinguished by lineage and material wealth alone, a new behavioural language developed by c. 1300. Greater value was placed on the conduct of lords in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which came to outweigh birth and material wealth in judging the quality of lordship by the fourteenth century.[298] Alongside the growth of the lord's domestic responsibilities, which included household management, network relationships, and effective administration (in part through hospitality and largesse), clerics also looked to redirect the violent nature of competitive warriors throughout Western Christendom. Aristocratic blood-feuds and private warfare had provoked clerical opposition by the twelfth century, and the clergy responded with attempts to guide warrior society towards a more refined and courtly image. C. Stephen Jaeger has explored how court clerics inspired a so-called "civilizing process" (a term coined by Norbert Elias) in the twelfth century.[299] As the Church looked to defend orthodoxy and protect Christendom from external threats and internal heresy, clerics promoted measured conduct among themselves and among lay aristocrats, which they believed was essential if lords were to fulfil their role of ensuring the safety and prosperity of Christian society. The lord's feast became the dominant platform for performances of conduct, whereby ease of manners while at table was a conspicuous public demonstration of the lord's refinement in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. And this was equal if not superior to birth, wealth, and prowess because it was believed that outward behaviours revealed the inner condition. Manners became vital for demonstrating the lord's personal quality and thus, his or her ability to conduct affairs, and to fulfil clerical expectations in this period.

Aristocratic society also recognised the need for instruction in the types of conduct promoted by the Church. While scholars of the period were at odds over whether lordship could be taught to those of non-aristocratic birth, the aristocratic household functioned as a type of boarding school for children of high-status families. The household provided a setting, in which children witnessed and were meant to acquire the forms of conduct expected of them in adulthood. The Church provided a model. Diocesan schools developed around the episcopal household, in which young clerics were prepared to assume positions in the dependent parishes and churches. The papal *curia* attracted youths from across Europe, who served in the households of the pope, cardinals, and others. The renowned chronicler Henry of Huntingdon (d. 1160) was raised in the household of the bishop of Lincoln

[298] Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 134-35; Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 193-94.
[299] Discussed in: Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change", pp. 303-04; see also: *The Origins of Courtliness*, p. 235.

alongside knights and other youths.[300] Outside the Church, the royal household has been described by Robert Bartlett as the greatest channel of social mobility in the medieval world. And Nicholas Orme has described the English royal household as the chief academy for the English nobility. It provided schooling in good manners for royal children, orphans in royal wardship, and others of varying backgrounds.[301] The basic practice was not unique for this period. Alfred the Great (r. 871-99) spent a quarter of his income raising high- and low-born children in his household where they were trained in good manners.[302] The practice exploded after c. 1100 when the Normans introduced the wardship system into England, which resulted in the movement of thousands of children to external households.[303] Didactic "courtesy" literature provided written instruction in good manners, and these texts were widely disseminated in aristocratic circles to aid the process of education. In the twelfth century, Bishop Stephen de Fougères instructed each order of society in appropriate conduct, and Arnaut-Guilhem de Marsan (c. 1170) presented an insider's view of manners because his text was written by a lay aristocrat for his peers.[304] Daniel of Beccles' early thirteenth-century *Urbanus Magnus* was the first courtesy text written in England. These texts reveal how lords were expected to behave in daily life. The popularity of this literary genre reflects changes in the nature and context of aristocratic education during this period to accommodate expectations that lords should be well-mannered. Alongside pressure from churchmen, lords themselves also recognised the need for instruction in modes of conduct, and especially the need to educate the next generation. Notions of good conduct developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and clerical influence and growing aristocratic self-awareness led to renewed interests in matters of courtly education, particularly the process of raising youths in the great household where they often learned by serving the lord at table.

The lord's feast displayed good conduct most conspicuously, so youths commonly performed table service. Twelfth-century prescriptive texts (intended for youths) include instructions for serving the lord at table. Young boys were expected to carve meat, serve drinks, hold lights, and carry water. The *Vitae* of Bishop Wernher of Merseburg (c. 1150) depicts a young steward of the royal table – impeccable in conduct and courtly in manners. The *Summa ad Iniungendam* (c. 1200) addresses those who have not been fed at the table of a *paterfamilias*, nor drunk the wine of his household.[305] It was expected during this period that youths learned to exhibit manners by participating in feasts and serving the lord at table. The *Summa* was clearly intended to teach those who were not afforded the experience. *Urbanus Magnus* devotes one tenth of its attention to table manners. Themes include

[300] Joseph Goering, "The Internal Forum and the Literature of Penance and Confession" in *The History of Medieval Canon Law in the Classical Period, 1140-1234*, ed. Wilifried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington, History of Medieval Canon Law (Washington, 2008), pp. 407-09; Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 130-31.
[301] Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 133 Orme, "The Education of the Courtier", p. 63.
[302] Cited in: Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 50.
[303] *Ibid*, p. 46.
[304] Cited in: Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 195-96.
[305] Orme, "The Education of the Courtier", p. 82; Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, p. 216; Goering, "The Internal Forum", p. 407.

bodily restraint and self-control while at table, and Daniel urges his readers against taking large bites, talking with one's mouth full, and overloading the spoon.[306] Youths performed table service in order to learn impulse control and bodily discipline. They also engaged with and participated in courtly ritual, and witnessed the lord's conduct in its ideal setting. Table service also provided opportunities for the practical application of learned conduct, all of which would have prepared them to act as lords in the future. And those who impressed their superiors improved their future prospects. The growing popularity of courtesy literature influenced narrative depictions of the feast in relation to educating youths, reflecting the connection made between feasting, non-martial conduct, and educating the young. Writers debated whether lordship could be taught at all, and others presented complex and nuanced positions on the nature and effectiveness of raising young aristocrats via the great household.

## The Feast and the Aristocratic Education

Narrative writers used the feast to address whether they believed lordship could be taught, and who did or did not have the capacity to learn aristocratic conduct. Some were optimistic towards the idea, and literature represents the lord's hall as the ideal setting for doing so. In the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury writes of a shepherd's daughter [*opilionis filia*] supposedly known from popular songs. She enters the royal household, where she becomes acquainted with "refined diet" [*cibis delicatioribus*], and the "behaviour of polite society" [*gestibus facetioribus uirgunculam informans*] (II. 139. 1-2).[307] The low-born child's conduct (fostered in the household) outweighs her non-aristocratic birth. The feast allows this woman to learn aristocratic conduct in spite of the fact that she is the daughter of a humble shepherd. William of Malmesbury writes how David I of Scotland (r. 1124-53) abandons the "barbarian gaucherie of Scottish manners" [*rubiginem Scotticae barbariei*] by adopting "civility in diet" [*pasci accuratius*] (V. 400. 2).[308] Orderic Vitalis also writes how David "sought the court of Henry I" [*expetiit curiam Henrici regis Anglorum*], and "grew up with the boys of the household" [*et inter domesticos educatus pueros creuit*]. He is knighted by Henry, and he "sat among the greatest magnates" [*inter precipuos optimates penes illum consedit*]. (VIII. 401-02).[309] Table service can be implied by the civilizing of his diet, whereby the household allows a barbaric lord to learn manners successfully, and to achieve near-equal status to the Anglo-Norman lords. We saw how Anglo-Norman chroniclers used food to promote their notions of civilised lordship over the barbaric other. Some also believed that outsiders could enter civilised society by learning manners via the household and hall. Whether it is a low-born shepherd's daughter or high-born (but outsider) lord, those who had not exhibited manners enter the household and participate in feasts. And conduct is

[306] For discussions of these texts, see: Mark Gardiner, "Buttery and Pantry and their Antecedents: Idea and Architecture in the English Medieval House" in *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England* ed. Maryanne Kowaleski and P.J.P. Goldberg (Cambridge, 2008), p. 61; Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 582-88.
[307] *Gesta Regum Anglorum Vol. 1*, ed. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, p. 224.
[308] *Ibid*, p. 726.
[309] *The Ecclesiastical History Vol. 4*, ed. Chibnall, p. 274.

taught as a result. The idea of learning was central to William of Malmesbury's view of history. He and his audiences had clear ideas of good conduct, and a preferred method by which it was taught and learned.[310] In the thirteenth century, Raimon Vidal de Besalù (d. 1252) believed that anyone could become aristocratic because true nobility resulted from the heart and intelligence and not family.[311] Conduct increasingly outweighed lineage in the assessment of good lordship in this period, and writers seemed favourable to the idea that manners/lordship could be taught, even outside the aristocracy. Literature shows that a process of education was required, and the feast was the stage.

Walter Map (d. 1210) did not agree, and he believed lordship was unattainable for those born outside the aristocracy. He writes of Godwine – the son of a cowherd who serves King Æthelred lavishly during a royal visit. A feast is provided, comprised of "goose" [*anserem*] alongside "one piece of salt pork and vegetables" [*unam salsi porci frustum oleribus*]. Entertaining the king in practice was feasible only for high-ranking aristocrats. However, in this case the king strays from his retinue, and stumbles across Godwine's family by accident. Godwine's conduct and hall service impress the king: "he fed the fire, lighted candles, and amused the king [*ignem nutrit, candelas accendit… regi mimus est*]. "He did not lie, or sit or lean on elbows" [*non iacet, non sedit, non accubitat*], and "he did not serve for greed" [*non auare serui*]. But Godwine serves with an "open heart" [*aperto corde*] (V. 3).[312] He displays an illusion of conduct that likely matches the examples given in books of courtesy. His conduct displays impulse control and liberality to others, which Walter notes as unusual considering the boy's lineage: "who would suppose a rustic could be pure of rusticity and distinguished by such sweet perfume of virtues" [*quis enim rusticum rusticitatis expertem crederet, et tanto uirtutum odore preculem*].[313] It seems ironic that a boy of humble birth could behave as an aristocrat without any formal training. Godwine supplements the feast with three additional pieces of pork and a sow pig [*adolescentem et uirginem suem*], provided "apart from his mother and father" [*et preter matris et patris*]. Godwine takes the lead in providing food, giving orders rather than receiving them [*matri adulator, patri hortator*] (V. 3).[314] Map represents good conduct in connection with the boy's natural instincts, separate from the parents, which expresses how Godwine has not received training. Thus, the king invites Godwine to serve his household in preparation for lordship because of his performance at the feast and his lack of formalised education.

Walter Map writes that Godwine becomes an earl (high-ranking lord). The king "elevated him over all the of the princes in the realm" [*sublimauit super omnes principes regni*], and gives him "the belt of knighthood" [*cingulo milicie*]. However, the need for largesse causes him to become covetous and exhibit avaricious conduct. Godwine needs wealth by any means necessary to appear generous,

[310] Gillingham, "Civilizing the English", 20-21, 40.
[311] Cited in: Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, pp. 200-01.
[312] *Walter Map De Nugis Curialium "Courtiers' Trifles"*, ed. M.R. James, revised by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1983), pp. 412-14.
[313] *Ibid*, p. 416.
[314] *Ibid*, p. 414.

and Walter warns against allowing one's liberality to exceed one's resources [*non debeat largitas facultatis excedere modum*]. The appearance of generosity [*largitatis*] becomes greed [*auiditas*] like the prodigal lords from chapter two. Godwine fails to conduct himself as a lord, which is attributed by Map to inherent moral flaws. All that seems "good and courteous in appearance" [*bonus et comis in apparencia*] in fact, "masked the blemishes…owed to his birth" [*que fide natiuitatis habebat probra tegebat*]. Noble "goodness" is then defined as the "daughter of nobility" [*generositatis est filia bonitas*], and "wisdom denies the highest degree of it to the ignoble" [*habere summam degeneres denegat sapiencia*] (V. 3).[315] In other words, Map clearly believed that true aristocratic conduct was inherent to those of high birth, and denied (by God) to the low-born. The feast provides the stage, at which conduct indicates a potential for lordship to be learned. A low-born but instinctively well-mannered child is invited to serve in the royal household. While this type of education reflects an ideal for twelfth- and thirteenth-century audiences, the demands of lordship are too much for Godwine, and his outward behaviours are not consistent with his true moral condition. This disparity becomes apparent when he tries to exercise lordship in his own right, and he fails to exhibit largesse in the acceptable manner. Thus, Walter Map clearly believed that those born outside the aristocracy could not learn to conduct themselves as lords regardless of efforts to raise and educate them as such.

Outside the debates over birth and lineage, writers represented the process of aristocratic education via the household and the feast. Writers of hagiography expressed mixed views of the feast's ability to foster good manners. And they sometimes depicted the failure of domestic education to teach conduct, even to those of aristocratic birth. In the thirteenth century, Adam of Eynsham writes of Pons, who serves in the episcopal household. Because he acquires "great riches in his household" [*ad maximas excreuit diuitias in domo eius*], this "exceptionally well-behaved boy became an arrogant young man" [*puero seruientissimo iuuenis euasit superbissimus*] (V. 17).[316] Although episcopal service implies some level of aristocratic birth, domestic service allows him to gain higher degrees of wealth. But rather than fostering good conduct, the opposite seems to occur. The acquisition of material wealth corrupts this formerly well-mannered individual, and domestic service exacerbates his moral degradation. Once the youth gets a taste of wealth, he greedily desires more and therefore, develops poor conduct. Jacobus de Voragine's story of St. Benedict describes a young monk who serves the abbot at supper [*coenaret*]. This young man holds the light [*lucernam tenens*], and thinks to himself in a display of sinful pride, "who is this man that I should serve at his table and hold the light for him?" [*quis est hic, lucernam teneo, servitium impendo*] (XLIX. 7).[317] The monk is relieved of his domestic office because conduct is not learned, and the process fails to work. This servant is proud of his high birth, and it comes into conflict with the humbling and civilising effect of serving the abbot at table. Clerics believed that moral and spiritual dangers were not

[315] *Ibid*, pp. 414-16.
[316] *The Life of St. Hugh Vol. 2*, ed. Douie and Farmer, p. 204.
[317] *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Graesse, p. 209.

necessarily inherent to hall service, and neither text seems to dismiss its beneficial aspects. Sin was believed to exist within the individual, and these existing moral flaws could be provoked by wealth and conspicuous consumption. Writers urged lords (and abbots) to pay attention to table service as a method for disciplining youths to combat the avaricious and prideful behaviour that existed in some. Lineage and wealth were challenges to the process of disciplining, especially in the cloister where humility was a cornerstone virtue. Writers expressed deep concerns that table service was imperfect in teaching aristocratic conduct, and they often identified those for which education was likely to fail.

Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred* provides an example of how dangers and temptations could be conquered, and it shows how household service could achieve a desirable result. Aelred is a boy of status, and he serves in the household of David I of Scotland: "made great in his house and glorious in his palace" [*eum faceret magnum in domo sua et in palacio gloriosum*]. More specifically, Aelred becomes steward of the household [*echonomus domus regalis*], and "chief steward of the royal table" [*mense regalis dapifer summus*]. He assumes the responsible for serving the king at table: "he stood in the presence of the king at dinner, serving dishes and dividing food in turn" [*staret coram rege ad prandium fercula distribuens et particiones diuidens ciborum uiritim unicuique conuescencium*] (II).[318] Ideally, this would allow Aelred to witness and learn conduct, and to apply it in practice. Walter writes that had Aelred not entered the cloister, his domestic service would have earned him the "first bishopric in the land" [*episcopatu primario terre sue*] (II).[319] In practice, this would have been an ideal result, but Aelred and his biographer saw hall service as spiritually perilous like many of their contemporaries. Walter describes how Aelred rejects all temptations posed by the lord's feast. While serving the king, "he would forget the affairs of the belly" [*uentrium negotia obliuisceretur*] according to the apostolic words: "meats for the belly, and belly for the meats: but God shall destroy both it and them" [*esca uentri et uenter escis: Deus hunc et has destruet*]. Thus, "in the hall of kings, he was looked upon rather as a monk" [*in regali triclino positus ut magis monachus putaretur*] (II).[320] Aelred differs from the examples given by Adam and Jacobus. Aelred shows humility in service alongside total control over bodily impulses. Because of its spiritual dangers, hall service successfully humbles the inherently pious Aelred, and guides him towards the monastic life to escape the dangers.

Aelred's table service seems to reflect how the St. Benedict's *Rule* advises the good cellarer. Aelred develops the virtues of charity, intelligence, and peace-making by patiently enduring insults from some household knights. Aelred's service as the royal dispenser prepares him to act as God's dispenser for monks, and Walter used this argument to defend his master from disputes over whether he actually did conduct himself humbly in the royal hall.[321] Walter Daniel shows hall service allowing Aelred to develop his inherent sanctity by overcoming moral and spiritual dangers, and by embracing

[318] *The Life of Ailred*, ed. F.M. Powicke, pp. 3-4.
[319] *Ibid*, p. 3.
[320] These "apostolic words" [*apostolicum*] are supposedly taken from I Corinthians 5:13, see: *Ibid*, p. 4.
[321] Christensen, "Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*", p. 222; *The Life of Ailred*, ed. Powicke, pp. xli, lxxxii-lxxxiii.

life in the cloister. Therefore, the process of education can be considered successful in preparing Aelred for the office of abbot. The feast appears as a type of aversion therapy for young would-be clerics in narrative texts, where they face moral and spiritual dangers on a daily basis. The belief was that worldly corruptions associated with the feast made it an essential site for testing one's piety, and for disciplining those of high birth by presenting them with almost constant temptation. Clerics promoted courteous manners, but many aspects of courtly etiquette still seemed contrary to the expectations of clerical-monastic service. While some placed sin within the individual rather than inherent to worldly affairs, others attacked service in the household as immoral because the cloister was the only acceptable choice for them. It was of the utmost importance that would-be ecclesiastical lords overcome and reject any and all temptations, thus transforming the lord's table from a location of sin into an opportunity for the display of pious restraint and personal moderation. Walter expressed a view that despite (or possibly because of) its moral dangers, the lord's feast offered a valuable and indispensable opportunity for the highest forms of self-discipline in relation to aristocratic conduct.

## Feasting and Education in Vernacular Romance: *Le Conte du Graal*

Writers of twelfth- and thirteenth-century romance presented nuanced views regarding the feast's role in teaching conduct, addressing the process itself as well as the society for which it was meant to prepare young aristocrats. The late twelfth-century *Le Conte du Graal*, represents a process of education for young Perceval by establishing his need for instruction followed by training in domestic etiquette. It becomes clear in the narrative that Perceval has been isolated from aristocratic society. He lives in the forest although some cultivation occurs. The mother has "harrowers" [*herceors*] who "sow oats" [*ses avaines li herçoient*] (ll. 82-83).[322] Despite cultivation and the appearance of estates management, the act of sowing oats (or barley) is mentioned three times (ll. 83, 306, 310). Oat and barley produced bread that was associated with poverty in this period. Perceval hunts for food, which combined with poor-quality bread represents the lower tiers of society like Yvain when he encounters the hermit (as the hermit also provides bread made from barley and oats). Some knights also note Perceval's lack of etiquette. One says to the other, "he doesn't quite know his manners" [*Il ne set pas totes les lois*] (l. 236).[323] Perceval is described as *niche*, from the word *nescius*, meaning "one who does not know".[324] Some literary critics have associated Perceval's childhood home with *les Illes de Mer*. – the western isles of Scotland – which were plagued by internecine warfare and frequent violence in the twelfth century. It was seen as the fringes of civilisation by French-speaking society. This was a place recognised in its opposition to notions of aristocratic conduct, whereby the romance also shows a location beyond the pale of Arthur's kingdom

[322] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 5-6.
[323] *Ibid*, p. 11.
[324] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail* pp. 27-28.

(the symbol of Christendom) and thus, outside civilised society.[325] It shows how Perceval has been raised in a non-aristocratic environment, and had not received the education expected of aristocratic youths.

The youth's need for education manifests in the Tent Maiden episode, in which Perceval fails to conduct himself in a feast setting. He enters the maiden's pavilion by force where he finds "a cask of wine" [*.I. bouchel…plain de vin*] (l. 738), and "three good venison pies" [*.III. bons pastez de chievrol fres*] (l. 743). He begins to feast, devours one of the meat pies [*.I. dez pastez devant lui froisse / Et mengüe par grant talent*], and fills a silver cup with wine, which he drinks with great gulps [*Et verse en la colpe d'argent / Del vin qui n'estoit mie lais / S'en boit sovent et a grans trais*] (ll. 746-50). Perceval also offers to share with his frightened host: "I can't eat all these pies myself, come and eat, they are very good, each may have one and there will be one left" [*cist paste / Ne seront hui par moi gasté / Venez mangier, qu'il sont molt buen / Assez avra chascuns del suen / S'en i remandra .i. entiers*] (ll. 751-55). Meanwhile, "she wrung her hands, and sobbed, and wept" [*ains pleure fort / Molt durement ses poins detort*] (ll. 759-60).[326] Perceval serves himself before others unlike Walter Map's Godwine. He shows a lack of training by exhibiting selfish impulses. There is a clear disparity between the character and the knowledge of his audiences, most of whom would view this as comically ignorant.[327] Ignorance is shown with poor conduct in a household environment as the youth fails to abide by the conventions of hospitality and feasting etiquette. He enters the domestic enclave without invitation, steals food, and attempts to offer it back as if it were his own. Impulse control and bodily discipline are non-existent, and audiences may appreciate the silliness of an uneducated child who turns manners completely on their head. However, outward behaviours do not reflect Perceval's inner condition. Whereas Godwine's outward courtesy masks moral shortcomings, Chrétien's language makes clear that this youth holds no ill-will nor inherent moral deficiencies. He simply does not understand manners. Chrétien used the feast to establish his hero's need for household education.

Perceval also fails to act appropriately at the Arthurian feast. The youth enters the hall on horseback while the feast is in progress (he does not dismount). He approaches the table, "not knowing who to greet" [*N'il ne set le quel il salut*] (l. 913). In another display of comedic ignorance, Perceval's horse sends the king's hat "flying from head to table" [*Li abati desor la table / Del chief .i. chapel de bonet*] (ll. 936-37).[328] Perceval displays improper conduct before a larger aristocratic audience. While the previous episode involves a noble lady of lesser rank, Perceval has now conducted himself poorly before the royal court. He enters the royal hall without invitation, fails to dismount, and does not exhibit courteous behaviour before the king. He has clearly never attended an

[325] Diverres, "The Grail and the Third Crusade", pp. 19-20; Urban T. Holmes, "The Castle and the Grail Procession" in Urban T. Holmes and M. Amelia Klenke, *Chrétien, Troyes, and the Grail* (Chapel Hill, 1959), p. 72.
[326] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 31-32.
[327] Helen Cooper, "Good Advice on Leaving Home in the Romances" in *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (Rochester, 2004), pp. 105-06.
[328] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 38-39.

aristocratic feast. Although Perceval is of noble stock and manages to acquire arms when he defeats the Red Knight, these items are stolen rather than earned. Bruckner argues that the battle is un-chivalric because Perceval cannot recognise that his violent response is disproportionate to the Red Knight's provocation. Maddox justifies Perceval because he defends Arthur's right to *tenir terre* despite his ignorance of chivalry.[329] Cazelles also notes the youth's unquestionable martial talent, and she claims that killing the Red Knight is just use of violence because it eradicates a threat to the social order. That Perceval is not invited to join the feast shows that the Arthurian court is in decline, and Arthur is not concerned with adding the best knights to his entourage.[330] Perceval's prowess defeats Arthur's enemy, but he still exhibits poor conduct in the hall. Perceval does not seem ready to join the aristocratic court because of his non-martial conduct. Despite his natural abilities in battle, he still behaves like an environment-deprived klutz, whereby he fails to display impulse control and other refined manners. This also explains why he remains excluded from the feast. Childish, uncivilised, and non-aristocratic conduct reveals that Perceval has not been raised in an aristocratic household, nor has he served a lord at table. The feast further establishes the need for education, whereby high birth and natural prowess are not enough for Perceval to become a knight. The acquisition of conduct was equally important to high birth and prowess in this period, for which domestic education was required.

Perceval is of high birth – his father and brothers had been knights. Yet he remains excluded from the feast because formal education must occur in order to acclimate the youth with the etiquette of lordship. The text differs from Yvain as Perceval engages with the feast directly, through which he witnesses and learns to practice good manners. Perceval meets Gornemant, who invites the youth into his household. The household is "rich and spacious with good servants" [*Riches maisons beles et grans / et bons sergans*] (ll. 1557-58). The language seems to make clear that Gornemant is a good mentor for youths. Perceval learns conduct by attending a feast. In the hall, "the meal was already set out, good, appealing and well-prepared" [*li mengiers fu atornez / Bons et biax et bien conraez*] (ll. 1559-60). They feast, and Gornemant has Perceval "eat with him from the same platter" [*Le vallet, et mengier le fist / Avec lui a une escüele*] (ll. 1564-65).[331] Sharing food from the same plate seems to have provoked mixed reactions in the twelfth century. John of Salisbury (d. 1180) supposedly felt embarrassed when Pope Adrian IV (r. 1154-59) forced him to eat from his plate during a visit to the papal palace.[332] Chrétien's text presents a more favourable attitude. Sharing food defines Perceval's mentor in the household, whereby the feast teaches aristocratic conduct. Gornemant represents the true gentleman [*preudom*], a word that appears over thirty times in the episode.[333] According to Penny

[329] Bruckner, "Of Swords and Ploughshares", p. 35; Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, p. 91.
[330] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, pp. 119, 128; Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, p. 92.
[331] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 64-65.
[332] Cited in: Kerr, "Food, Drink and Lodging", p. 83.
[333] Rupert T. Pickens, "Courtesy and Vassalage in Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte del Graal*" in *Echoes of the Epic: Studies in Honour of Gerald J. Brault*, ed. David P. Schenck and Mary J. Schenk, with a Preface by William Calin (Birmingham, 1998), pp. 196-99.

Simons, Gornemant represents the collaboration between nature and nurture, whereby he helps the youth to develop his natural abilities.[334] While Cazelles prioritises Gornemant's refinement of Perceval's prowess,[335] Gornemant also provides education in non-martial conduct via the feast. The feast pairs his inherent prowess alongside domestic manners and feasting etiquette. While Yvain and the hermit reflect the lowest level of civilisation, Perceval's engagement with its upper level allows good manners and non-martial conduct to be taught and learned quickly and effectively. Perceval feasts with a willing host instead of serving the lord at table, which combined with adherence to the code of hospitality contrasts his prior exclusion. At the same time, the single dish may symbolise the teaching of conduct, and the transfer of aristocratic attributes from elder lord to youth. Despite the false equality shown between the two, the shared feast highlights a shared experience in manners as Gornemant teaches and Perceval learns. As previously discussed, prowess on its own fuelled rivalry and conflict while courtly conduct was meant to construct positive relationships. While Perceval's prowess remains unquestionable and inherent, a process of education is clearly necessary for the teaching of conduct, and for his acceptance into aristocratic society. Thus, Chrétien recognised the significant role of the feast in teaching good manners to aristocratic youths in preparation for lordship.

Perceval learns aristocratic conduct by attending the feast, which symbolises the process of education that many during this period believed to be necessary. Perceval does exhibit manners at first because he relies solely on motherly advice. Gornemant advises Perceval to stop citing his mother in favour of his mentor.[336] The romance addresses the inadequacies of maternal advice without formal education. Chrétien certainly did not consider maternal advice entirely useless, and Cazelles also notes the value in the mother's advice. The mother's notion of chivalry represents an agency for individual and social betterment in terms of the body politic and organised religion.[337] Children learned from their parents in practice until they reached the appropriate age for household service. Perceval also cites his mother in relation to approaching Gornemant and seeking his advice, whereby maternal advice allows him to progress to formalised education. However, preoccupation with the mother also influences Perceval's decision to reject Gornemant's request that he remain in his household for long-term education.[338] Chrétien believed that maternal advice only went so far, although he considered it useful in some ways. In the text, it provides Perceval with a basic foundation of good conduct, and it urges him to seek better advice and life experiences. But his mother also seems to inhibit the educational process, and maternal advice reaches its limit in terms of practical application, evident in the Tent Maiden encounter and the Arthurian feast. According to Helen Cooper, problems arise because Perceval does not understand how to apply his mother's advice

[334] Simons, "Pattern and Process", p. 10.
[335] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 147.
[336] Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, p. 92.
[337] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 204.
[338] Preoccupation with his mother also causes Perceval to reject Blancheflor's offer for a potential marriage, see: Crow, "Some Observations", p. 62.

in the correct way.[339] The mother is correct on paper. However, isolation from aristocratic society means that Perceval lacks the experiences to use it. The romance reveals a belief that maternal advice could provide a foundation, on which education could build. Gornemant's feast allows Perceval to refine maternal advice, and to learn conduct not covered such as feast etiquette and table manners, which teaches impulse control, and personal discipline. Gornement's household provides training in manners in addition to opportunities for its practical application. The romance reveals a belief that lordship and knighthood required the best conduct – acquired with training via the great household.

Perceval conducts himself better when feasting with Blancheflor as the hero's progress is acknowledged. She recognises Perceval as a man of status when she admits that her food and lodgings are unfit for a *preudome* (l. 1837), the same word used to describe Gornemant. She says to him, "Your words are fine indeed; you've spoken most courteously" [*Molt est vostre parole bele / Et molt avez dit que cortois*] (ll. 1894-95).[340] Perceval also uses his refined prowess to defeat Clamadeus' army, which was besieging Biaurepaire. He defends the lady, the land, and its retainers, whereby he acts as the upholder of liberty and the defender of contested property. Perceval behaves altruistically, so he ascends to the status of *miles* by fulfilling its expectations like Lancelot (see chapter three).[341] While the battle provides Perceval with the opportunity to use his inherent prowess in a more chivalric manner than the Red Knight episode, he has also received formal training in manners via the household. And thus, he is perceived differently by others of status. He is offered hospitality and included at feasts, which contrasts prior episodes, and provides more opportunities for the practical application of learned conduct. It can be argued that Perceval's rejection of Blancheflor shows impulse control and inner restraint in favour of his true quest (like Lancelot and the Immodest Maiden). His victory against Clamadeus also shows selflessness and liberality (in contrast to the Tent Maiden). He meets Gauvain, who also recognises learned courtesy. He says, "there was nothing base about that thought, it was most courteous and refined" [*Cist pensers n'estoit pas vilains / Ainz estoit molt cortois et dols*] (ll. 4458-59). They attend Arthur's court together, where they "celebrated all night long and all the next day" [*E tote nuit grant joie font / Et l'endemain autel refirent*] (ll. 4608-09).[342] St. Augustine believed that children should develop out of their inherent ignorance by passing through successive stages of development and maturation.[343] Perceval appears in the preliminary stages of childlike ignorance, and remains excluded from the aristocratic feast until a formal education allows him to progress into the next stage. The feast fuels Perceval's development and progression from ignorant youth to knight of the Arthurian court. While aristocratic youths typically learned conduct by entering a single household and performing long-term table service in practice, Perceval's

[339] Cooper, "Good Advice on Leaving Home", p. 105.
[340] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 77, 80.
[341] Maddox, *The Arthurian Romances*, p. 93; also see: Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 218.
[342] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, pp. 189-90, 195-96.
[343] Leah Tether, "Perceval's Puerile Perceptions: The First Scene of the *Conte du Graal* as an Index of Medieval Concepts of Human Development Theory", *Neophilologus* 94:2 (2010), 232-33.

education occurs episodically through successive encounters with several aristocratic establishments. He learns conduct by participating in Gornemant's feast, and other feasts provide opportunities for the practical application of learned conduct. This motif culminates with Perceval's invitation to attend Arthur's feast, from which he had been excluded previously. Thus, Chrétien seemed to recognise the important and necessary role of the feast in raising youths and teaching them manners and conduct.

Chrétien de Troyes believed that education was necessary, but his text also shows how the process did not always lead to positive outcomes because it was sometimes incompatible with the realities of lordship. We are told how Perceval's brothers were educated in the traditional method: "the elder went to the king of Escavalon" [*Au roi d'Eschavalon ala / Li aisnez, et tant servi*] (ll. 463-64), and "the other, born after him, served King Ban of Gomorret" [*Et li autres, qui puis fu nez / Fu au roi Ban de Gomorret*] (ll. 466-67).[344] It is not stated what service they performed, but they both became knights. However, they were immediately killed in battle. Critics read the family history as an indictment against chivalric society. Luttrell and Kleimen argue that Perceval's family symbolises the inherent violence and destruction that lay beneath the splendour of knighthood. The language of the family, chivalry, and violence are one and the same, leading to violence and death.[345] According to Cazelles, the lords whom the brothers served are Arthur's rivals, whereby the father's quest for revenge left his sons vulnerable.[346] The romance represents the violent nature of lordship alongside the futility of household education, which leaves youths vulnerable because they serve lords that are entrenched in conflict. Chrétien recognised that violence was inherent to lordship in this period. Perceval's brothers were raised in expected manner, but they died when they followed their lords into battle. Although its goal was achieved (which shows education working), manners did not mean much for those who wound up dead. In reality, young knights were instruments of lordly aggression and violent deaths, whether by accident (hunting/tournament) or in battle were common.[347] Manners were intended to mitigate conflict and redirect violence, but it was not always successful and household education failed to protect many from catastrophe. Thus, Chrétien suggested flaws in education, but particularly within aristocratic society, in which violence rendered the teaching of manners useless.

Perceval's education is certainly different and romanticised. It occurs in multiple episodes in multiple households rather than long-term service in single household. Perceval's domestic training does not necessarily appear more beneficial than the manner in which his brothers were raised (which is closer to practice). Perceval certainly learns to exhibit levels of courtesy, which earns him an invitation to Arthur's hall. However, it also appears that Perceval misapplies learned conduct when he fails to question the Grail: "the wise lord's warning he observed… I have heard warnings people give,

[344] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, p. 19.
[345] Claude Luttrell, "The Upbringing of Perceval Heroes" in *Arthurian Literature* 16, (1998), p. 168; I.R. Kleiman, "X Marks the Spot: The Place of the Father in Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal*", *Modern Language Review* 103:4 (2008), 973-74.
[346] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, pp. 191-92.
[347] Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London, 1977), pp. 115-16.

that one can be too talkative" [*La parole au preudome sage / com trop parler a la foie[e]*] (ll. 3247, 3251).[348] The advice seems good, but Perceval does not seem to use it properly. Helen Cooper and Penny Simons argue that the text warns audiences against education at face-value, and Perceval represents the process of education failing to work.[349] The feast seems to cause misunderstandings because his silence is also attributed specifically to food: "and so he put it off to a later time and concentrated on eating and drinking" [*Einsi la chose a respitie / S'enten[t] a boire et a mengier*] (ll. 3310-11).[350] Culinary tunnel-vision combines innate appetites with the misapplication of good manners. Perceval may not learn to manage his base impulses as he seems to remain focused on worldly pleasures. Thus, he does not seem to behave in accordance with ecclesiastical expectations.

Criticism from ecclesiastical writers of the period suggests that knights might have been perceived as ill-mannered by members of the post-Gregorian Church. Stephen de Fougères (d. 1178) lamented how knights supposedly took from the poor and feasted on the profit. The courtier Peter of Blois (d. 1203) also complained that knights supposedly went to battle as if to banquet – laden with cheese, sausage, and roasting forks instead of weapons. These criticisms clearly contain exaggeration, but twelfth-century knights were increasingly viewed as heedless playboys rather than the purely the bloodthirsty brutes of earlier times.[351] Whether knights were seen as glory-hungry bullies, or vain and greedy playboys, many clerics clearly viewed them as prone to impulsive behaviour because their participation in feasts left them ill-prepared to handle the duties of knighthood promoted by the clergy in the post-Gregorian age. Writers used these exaggerated critiques to promote good manners and the image of *miles Christi* in lay aristocratic circles. Chrétien might have attempted to show the vulnerability of youths to these desires, whereby Perceval progresses in terms of lay expectations, but hits a ceiling when it comes to spiritual refinement. If the goal of education is the synthesis of secular knighthood with religious ideals, Perceval must fail because he fixates on one.[352] Chrétien might have depicted weakness in the process of household education, whereby the feast teaches good secular conduct, but this remains in opposition to good conduct in a clerical-monastic sense. The benefits are acknowledged in the text, but the feast might also distract from the spiritual side of twelfth-century lordship as Perceval seems to fall short in achieving the Church's ideal of *miles Christi*. Therefore, success would depend on the application of conduct according to lay and ecclesiastical expectations.

Alternative readings of the text suggest that although Chrétien recognised that the feast was imperfect in teaching spiritualised conduct, much of the blame for failures in education was with society rather than inherent to the process. Literary critics such as Bridgette Cazelles, Rupert T. Pickens, and D.D. Roy Owen argue that the advice given to Perceval by his mother, Gornemant, and

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[348] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, p. 138.
[349] Cooper, "Good Advice on Leaving Home", pp. 108, 119; Simons, "Pattern and Process of Education", 4-5.
[350] [350] *Le Roman de Perceval*, ed. Busby, p. 141.
[351] Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, p. 198; *The Image of the Aristocracy*, p. 139 Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change", pp. 291-92.
[352] Simons, "Pattern and Process of Education", 7-9.

the hermit seems mostly the same in terms of its basic ideas of protecting ladies, seeking good company, and attending Church. The hermit's advice largely mimics Gornemant's, but it is ordered differently in that it prioritises religious conduct over secular manners.[353] However, the problem remains that Perceval supposedly fails to conduct himself in the Fisher King's hall. But according to Cazelles, neither the hermit nor the Hideous Damsel should be trusted, both of whom want to draw Perceval away from Arthur in favour the Grail faction.[354] The ignorant nature of Perceval's character allows more experienced characters to only seem like omniscient messengers and purveyors of absolute truth regarding good conduct. So, silence is not necessarily a misapplication of learned conduct, but a natural tendency to follow instructions. Perceval's education actually places him between rival factions at war with one another (Arthur and the Grail faction) rather than preparing him for lordship. Perceval is the real victim because his ignorance and eagerness to learn renders him unaware that he is manipulated. The text shows the divisive nature of lordship, and the inadequacy of manners in a world governed by factional rivalries.[355] Like the story of his brothers, Chrétien also used Perceval's experience with the feast to represent how education in manners did not prepare youths for the realities of lordship. But aristocratic society was mostly at fault rather than the process.

While the Chrétien seemed to acknowledge problems with the feast in terms of educating youths, he placed much of the blame on the violent and factional nature of aristocratic society in the late twelfth century. Chrétien recognised the benefits and its potential for success in some ways. Perceval learns the basics of conduct from his mother, and Gornemant's feast provides formal education by adding domestic manners and table etiquette while providing an opportunity for its practical application. Feasts at Biaurepaire and the Grail Castle (with the Fisher King) provide more opportunities for the application of manners, whereby he succeeds in attending Arthur's feast as an apparent equal to Gauvain. He cites Gornemant's advice to focus on the feast and not question the Grail, which might suggest preoccupation with worldly gain rather than the ideals of Christian knighthood. However, if we cannot trust the hermit's word, the feast teaches conduct successfully, and Perceval becomes a victim to the "alternative facts" of partisan members of rival factions. Inconsistencies between the Grail and sacramental doctrine may have alerted audiences (who were expected to understand liturgical practices) that the hermit is not truthful. Perceval's silence might also suggest that he learns conduct because the avoidance of excessive talking is good advice, and it was likely taught in practice. His choice to focus on food may not indicate impulsive conduct, but close attention to table manners and humble etiquette in the presence of his superiors. In this sense, the process of education succeeds in that it teaches and reiterates the ideals of good conduct while providing opportunities for its application in practice. However, this ultimately seems futile as it

[353] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 149; Rupert T. Pickens, "Le Conte du Graal: *Chrétien's Unfinished Last Romance*", in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert, Arthurian Studies: 63 (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 186-87; D.D. Roy Owen, "From Grail to Holy Grail", 33-36.
[354] Cazelles, *The Unholy Grail*, p. 4, 142-44.
[355] *Ibid*, pp. 37, 155-56, 177-80.

throws Perceval into a society of factional conflicts where he gets used and manipulated by rival clans at war with one another. While the poor conduct of knights who supposedly chose material pleasures over spiritual refinement was written about in the twelfth century, the aristocracy was also embedded in factional rivalries. Chrétien wrote for the Flemish court, so he himself was placed in a network of factions (including the Angevin regime) who opposed Philip Augustus. Their relationships were constantly in flux, which reflects an unstable and hopelessly divided feudal world.[356] Thus, Chrétien's representation of aristocratic education in his final romance suggests that despite its imperfections and the potential for advice to be misapplied, the feast was necessary and beneficial in teaching aristocratic conduct while the nature of aristocratic society itself was flawed and largely at fault.

## Feasting and Education in Vernacular Romance: *Amis and Amiloun*

The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun* offered another complex view of the feast's role in educating youths vs. the society for which it was meant to prepare them. Literary scholarship has focused on the relationship between the knights and the author's ambiguous portrayal of morality and justice.[357] Feasts occur frequently in the text. Dale Kramer claims the feast has no special significance,[358] but this fails to account for its role in the education of the titular characters. *Amis and Amiloun* differs from *Le Conte du Graal* in that it accurately represents the singular household as a long-term training ground for aristocratic youths. And somewhat like Chrétien's final romance, the feast sets up the process by establishing a potential for lordship and the need for education. Amis and Amiloun attend a feast which is given by a duke: "*After erles, barouns, fre and bond* / *And ladies bryȝt in boure* / *A rych fest he wolde make* / *[al for Ihesu Christes sake]*" (ll. 65-68). It is given "*with myrth [and] grete honoure*" (l. 72).[359] The duke is clearly a distinguished lord. Food production and control over resources is asserted and household management is assumed. Guests define his support network while an identification with Christ projects piety. The mood of happiness and honour evokes conduct, all of which present the duke as an ideal mentor. Guests at the feast admire the boys: "*Mony men gan hem byholde* / *Of lordynges þat þere were* / *Of body, how wel þey were pyȝt* / *And how feire þey were of syȝt*" (ll. 77-80).[360] While the feast establishes the duke as a good lord and potential mentor, two aristocratic boys simultaneously display their attributes. They had been conceived and born on the same day, and look identical aside from their clothing. Their appearance reflects shared attributes that are equally inherent to the boys, and are equally attractive to the duke. While the feast exposes

[356] *Ibid*, pp. 4-6.
[357] Susan Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition: The Story of *Amis and Amiloun*", *Neophilologus* 67 (1983), 611-22; Ken Eckert, "*Amis and Amiloun*: A Spiritual Journey: A Spiritual Journey and the Failure of *Treuþe*", *Literature and Theology* 27:3 (2013), 285-96; Kathryn Hume, "*Amis and Amiloun* and the Aesthetics of Middle English Romance", *Studies in Philology* 70:1 (1973), 19-41; Jill Mann, "Messianic Chivalry in *Amis and Amiloun*", *New Medieval Literatures* 10 (2008), 137-59; Edward E. Foster, "Simplicity, Complexity and Morality in Four Medieval Romances", *The Chaucer Review* 31:4 (1997), 401-19; Ju Ok Yoon, "Leprosy, Miracles and Morality in *Amis and Amiloun*", *Medieval and Early Modern English Studies (Korea)* 18:1 (2010), 29-56.
[358] Dale Kramer, "Structural Artistry in *Amis and Amiloun*", *Annuale Mediaevale* 9 (1968), 112.
[359] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, pp. 3-4.
[360] *Ibid*, p. 4.

Perceval's behavioural shortcomings alongside natural prowess, the feast in *Amis and Amiloun* displays only positive attributes, and these may be attributed to their birth. It also seems understood that lineage and appearances are not enough for them to become lords. Conduct must be learned, whereby inherent qualities demand that they enter a household to refine and develop natural abilities.

Expectations are met when the duke adopts the two boys to serve in his household: "*In court þai shuld abide* / *& lete her tvay sones fre* / *In his seruise wiþ him to be*" (ll. 114-16). The author also makes it clear that the duke intends to prepare them for knighthood and lordship: "*& he wald dubbe hem kniȝts to* / *& susten hem for euer mo* / *As lordinges proud in pride*" (ll. 118-20).[361] The author tells us directly that this manner of education is intended to prepare them for lordship. And this was how aristocratic boys were expected to be raised in practice. Aristocratic parents would have ideally sent their children to the household of a greater magnate, which provided them with expert and impartial supervision and wider opportunities for patronage.[362] There, children would have accessed the highest quality training and the regular opportunities to impress men of rank by applying learned conduct in practice. The romance seems consistent with practice. The parents are barons, but the duke is superior in rank. His household would provide them with the best opportunity for training. This represents an ideal practice that was achieved by many parents in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Amis and Amiloun serve in the duke's household and receive training in manners: "*In court frely to fede* / *to ride an hunting vnder riis*" (ll. 135-36).[363] They feast in the household and practice hunting, whereby they become acquainted with aristocratic activities. They are given household offices as they engage more directly with the feast by performing table service: "*Sir Amis, as ȝe here* / *He made his chef botelere* / *[For he was hend and fre]* /*& sir Amiloun of hem alle* / *He made chef steward in halle* / *To diȝt al his meine*" (ll. 187-92).[364] Amis becomes the butler and Amis becomes the hall steward. These titles differ from the Anglo-Norman version, in which the Amiloun character (called Amilun) becomes the military chief. Their offices help to distinguish identical characters by making a clear distinction between their military and domestic abilities.[365] John C. Ford has ascribed the same titles to the Middle English romance,[366] but there is little evidence to suggest that either Middle English character assumes a military office. Their only martial activity is participation in tournaments, which is mentioned once. Amis is the butler and Amiloun is steward *in halle*. These are recognizable offices associated with table service, and they appear similar to those who serve Arthur in the *Roman de Brut*. We also discussed how young Aelred becomes steward of the royal hall. In practice, these were prestigious members of the household, who commanded menials and led the

[361] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[362] Orme, "The Education of the Courtier", pp. 72-73.
[363] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 6.
[364] *Ibid*, p. 9.
[365] Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition", 613.
[366] John C. Ford, "Contrasting the Identical: Differentiation of the "Indistinguishable" Characters of Amis and Amiloun", *Neophilologus* 86 (2002), 312.

service of food. The author likely selected these titles to distinguish Amis and Amiloun above others in the duke's household. It seems noteworthy that their offices are entirely domestic in the Middle English romance, whereby education is represented entirely in the household setting through serving the lord at table. This would allow manners and good non-martial conduct to be taught and learned.

The feast in *Amis and Amiloun* seems to (at first) represent the strengths of educating aristocratic youths with table service as it allows the boys to further themselves, and to achieve early success. Amis gains renown by serving the duke as his butler: "*To serue þo hende in [hale]* / *Þan was þe Boteler, sir Amis* / *Ouer al yholden flour & priis*" (ll. 438-40).[367] Amis is honoured at one of the feasts at which he serves, and the text identifies him by his household title. His positive reception implies the successful acquisition and application of manners. Amiloun marries, inherits land, and becomes a lord. Both seem ready for lordship upon their departure – Amis by his dress, appearance, and conduct while Amiloun executes his aristocratic duty in terms of marriage and rulership over the family estate.[368] One reaches the goal of household education (lordship) while the other remains in the household, serves his lord with honour, and impresses his superiors. Amiloun also has identical cups made for them before they part ways. Jill Mann interprets the cups as a metonymic representation of the identical knights.[369] It also allows their educational experience to manifest itself through identical items associated with the feast table. Drinking cups are associated with the feast and in this case, the shared experience of hall service. They are provided by Amiloun, so his gift is a reminder of Amis' office of butler, whose responsibility is drink service. The twin cups appear as physical products of household education, which seems successful at this point in the story. In this way, the author placed the benefits of service and its potential for success on display as Amis and Amiloun enter a household and perform service at table. And this seems to prepare them to behave as lords in their own right.

Amis' experience in table service takes a negative turn after Amiloun's departure. They swear an oath of brotherhood, and critical debate has focused on the morally questionable acts that occur to preserve their sworn allegiance (judicial duel and child sacrifice). Sheila Delaney points out parallels between the literary sworn brotherhood and the problematic bond between King Edward III and Piers Gaveston in the first half of the fourteenth century, both of which arose from household education.[370] While Delaney cites this connection to prioritise anxiety about sworn brotherhoods and household-bred relationships, loyalty between sworn brothers can also be assessed as a product of household education. The judicial dual is required because of a love affair that begins at a feast. Amis is honoured, and the duke's daughter (Belisaunt) deliberately seeks out the worthiest participant: "*Þat miri maide gan aske anon* / *Of her maidens euerichon* / *& seyd, So god ȝou spede* / *Who was hold þe*

[367] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 19.
[368] Ford, "Contrasting the Identical", 314-45.
[369] Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 150.
[370] Sheila Delany, "A, A, and B: Coding Same Sex Union in *Amis and Amiloun*" in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Neil McDonald (Manchester, 2004), pp. 63-81, also: Alan Bray. *The Friend* (Chicago and London, 2003), pp. 27, 114-15.

*douȝtiest kniȝt* / *& semlyest in ich a siȝt* / *& worþiest in wede*" (ll. 448-53). One of the maidens replies, "*It is Sir Amis, þe kinges boteler*" (l. 463).[371] The maiden identifies Amiloun to Belisaunt in the same way that he is honoured – by his household title. Belisaunt had not met Amis, but she becomes love-sick after she witnesses him perform his office. She tricks Amis into an affair, which Amis admits is inappropriate for someone of his rank, plus he betrays his lord. William Calin and Jill Mann are sympathetic to the couple because they represent the fantasy of young knights to gain a high-status wife, and become lord of her father's domain.[372] Jean E. Jost vindicates Amis because he is blackmailed while Dean R. Baldwin and John C. Ford blame Amis because seductive behaviour was expected of high-status women in this period. Amis also acquiesces, failing to trust his rightness.[373] The feast provokes poor conduct, whereby service does not produce its desired result.

It was discussed in chapter three how clergymen viewed the feast as dangerous to one's soul, and connections were drawn between food and carnality. Youths were impressionable, so those serving in households were seen as particularly vulnerable to the feast's moral dangers. Aelred of Reivaulx reflected on his household service in the *Mirror of Charity*. Service at table guided him towards the cloister for what he believed was a safer moral environment. The Dominican John Bromyard (d. 1352) believed that educating youths at court was of little benefit to their souls, during which they learned follies and bad manners.[374] Clerics certainly viewed the feast as imperfect in fostering good conduct. The hall was where all members of the household (male and female) gathered on a regular basis so temptations might have been seen as inevitable. Despite its early successes, table service also makes Amis vulnerable to another's carnal desires. The fact that Amis requires blackmail to participate might show that he is not the one whose desires are out of control. The feast exacerbates Belisaunt's carnality as she puts Amis in a no-win situation, whereby the romance author also recognised that the feast was ripe with moral dangers. However, part of the educational process was learning to overcome them with the application of learned conduct. Table manners were intended for youths to defeat their brutish instincts, which was meant to set an example for servile subjects. Amis sets a bad example because he allows himself to be manipulated into poor conduct. While Belisaunt is not blameless, it seems likely that male clergymen expected aristocratic women to behave this way. Thus, the responsibility lies with Amis to apply learned conduct by employing impulse control and bodily discipline to overcome her (perceived) natural inclination. Perhaps he is meant to trust in God to mete out justice against her false accusations. So, those worthy of true nobility would overcome challenges with the best manner of conduct for the process of education to be considered successful.

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[371] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, p. 20.
[372] William Calin, "Women and their Sexuality in *Ami and Amile*: An Occasion to Deconstruct", *Oliphant* 16 (1991), 79-81; Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 155.
[373] Jean E. Jost, "Hearing the Female Voice: Transgression in *Amis and Amiloun*", *Medieval Perspectives* 10 (1995), 116-32; Ford, "Contrasting the Identical", 316; Dean R. Baldwin, "*Amis and Amiloun*: The Testing of Treuþe", *Papers on Language and Literature* 16 (1980), 359.
[374] Cited in: Christensen, "Walter Daniel's *Life of Aelred of Rievaulx*", p. 222; Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 53-54.

Things unravel quickly as the result of Amis' domestic transgression, and subsequent challenges are also overcome by questionable conduct. The first of these questionable acts occurs when Amiloun impersonates Amis in judicial combat. This dishonest act seems to border on treachery because it requires an oath that is technically false. The steward is truthful in his accusations while the protagonists' loyalty requires manipulation and deceit. Critical debate has addressed the judicial oath and its consequences (Amiloun's leprosy). Those critical of the knights' absolute loyalty include Edward E. Foster, Kathryn Hume, and Dale Kramer. They believe that Amiloun sins by foreswearing, and leprosy serves as divine punishment and penance.[375] Most critics recognise the deception, but Kramer argues along with Dean R. Baldwin that audiences should sympathise with the knights because they are motivated by true loyalty while their situation is brought about by the selfishness and malice of others (the steward). Eckert and Yoon emphasise the malicious self-serving, and legalistic qualities of the steward's motivations.[376] Jill Mann and Ojars Kratins justify the oath by making a distinction between higher and lower justice, whereby genuine loyalty is meant to outweigh factual accuracy.[377] The text seems to create a morally ambiguous situation where what is legally correct is not moral, and what is moral is not legally correct. The duke's household produces and tests conflicting oaths in a way that morality becomes separated from legality. While judicial combat was non-existent by the thirteenth century, its inclusion in the text may represent an ongoing conflict between clerical notions of virtue and changing power structures in this period. English knights became involved with legal procedures beginning with Henry II's Grand Assize of 1177.[378] The clergy may have felt that the legalistic side of knighthood was incompatible with the ethical code of traditional chivalry, in which loyalty was an essential virtue. The loyalty between Amis and Amiloun is produced in domestic service, whereby criticism shifts from education onto society. Education teaches absolute loyalty. However, it does not prepare for the legal complexities of lordship. The author expressed an attitude that conduct produced in table service was not compatible with reality.

While the text reflects critically on teaching of manners via the household by acknowledging its potential to foster sinful behaviour, the author seems to advocate for the traditional method of education. Amiloun's leprosy is the most significant test of the loyalty oath. Some critics read leprosy as divine punishment (see above). Dehl acknowledges that sin occurs, but he argues that leprosy presents another challenge for the knights to overcome.[379] Other critics do not believe that the judicial oath is sinful. They argue that leprosy is not divine punishment, but a choice between self-sacrifice for

[375] Foster, "Simplicity, Complexity and Morality", 415; Hume, "*Amis and Amiloun* and the Aesthetics", 27; Kramer, "Structural Artistry", 111-14.
[376] Eckert, "Amis and Amiloun: A Spiritual Journey", 287-89; Yoon, "Leprosy, Miracles and Morality", 39; Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 154.
[377] Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 154; Ojars Kratins, "The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography", *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 81 (1966), 351.
[378] Discussed in: Peter Coss, *The Knight in Medieval England, 1000-1400* (Stroud, 1993), pp. 31-32.
[379] Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1968), pp. 108-09.

the sworn brotherhood and Amiloun's own health.[380] In this way, the romance seems ambiguous with evidence to support both arguments that leprosy is the consequence for sinful conduct while providing another challenge to be overcome with exemplary loyalty. Leprosy was sometimes recognised as punishment in the Middle Ages. But it was also seen as a divine blessing in the lives of saintly figures, who were meant to suffer in this world. And these attitudes coexisted. Amiloun might have sinned; however, he accepts his affliction as a blessing. He abandons worldly possessions, and continuously thanks God, which attests to his saintly nature.[381] When we consider the sacrifices that are made to preserve their sworn bond, the loyalty of these two knights (which is produced in household service) may represent a higher and more virtuous form of loyalty – one that is meant to transcend its legal (and temporal) restraints, and represent a more spiritual notion of virtue and virtuous conduct.

The second act that receives attention from literary critics – the sacrifice of Amis's children – allows the product of education to assume religious overtones, and to reach beyond its earthly limits in addition to its definition in feudal law. The act of child sacrifice cures Amiloun's leprosy, and it reciprocates the prior sacrifice made for Amis. The twin cups re-emerge when Amiloun seeks assistance. They are introduced at their departure, but they disappear throughout their separation. Amiloun's cup provokes a physical attack followed by intense remorse as Amis recognises Amiloun and acknowledges his mistake. Jill Mann acknowledges that the pairing of pain (Amiloun's suffering) with joy (their reunion) serves as a strong Christian motif.[382] Amis's initial failure to recognise the leper also indicates that the omniscience of their brotherhood temporarily fails. The physical tokens of table service go missing, which combined with their opposing fortunes reflects the temporary absence of the loyalty it produced. Despite how two men who once looked identical reach a point where one cannot recognise the other, a cup that matches his own initiates the process by which Amis identifies his friend. Feast-related items remind Amis of the unreciprocated sacrifice to preserve their loyalty. It requires payback of equal (and biblical) magnitude, whereby a seemingly heinous act appears to receive divine sanction because it mimics the sacrifices of Christ and the saints. It allows the product of table service to reach beyond earthly law, and represent virtues that appear more akin to the divine.

Critics debate child sacrifice, and many seem to explain the act in both practical and religious terms. Although MacEdward Leach acknowledges the omnipresence of religion in all aspects of medieval life, he does not believe *Amis and Amiloun* to be a religious text, and the children's miraculous restoration occurs only so innocents do not suffer.[383] However, critics such as Mann and Kratins recognise the powerful religious overtones of the Middle English version in particular. Susan Dannenbaum associates the sacrifice of Amis' children for Amiloun with Christ's sacrifice, and Ken

[380] Eckert, "*Amis and Amiloun*: A Spiritual Journey", 290; Kratins, "The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*", 349-51; Yoon, "Leprosy, Miracles and Morality", 36-37; Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition", 620; Baldwin, "*Amis and Amiloun*", 360.
[381] Kratins, "The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*", 352-53; Yoon, "Leprosy, Miracles and Morality", 44.
[382] Susan Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition", 616-19; Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 157-58.
[383] *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Leach, pp. xxv-xxvi

Eckert argues that Amis and Amiloun learn that the narrow legalistic *treuþe* will ultimately fail while a theological *treuþe* will sustain their lives. Therefore, the author seemed to promote ideal conduct, not by blind adherence to earthly matters, but by transcending its limitations towards something more spiritual.[384] The author was likely a cleric and like Jacobus' story of St. James the Less, he would not have condoned infanticide in practice in any case. However, religious imagery, the miraculous resurrection of the children, and the healing of Amiloun combine to offer divine approval in the text, which represents a higher and more spiritual loyalty. While the text is not hagiographical, child sacrifice allows domestic education to transcend its earthly experience, and to produce the highest and most divinely inspired conduct. The overarching theme is friendship, so the feast teaches conduct successfully because it produces loyalty that can overcome any challenge, and cannot be broken.

Therefore, the education of Amis and Amiloun cannot simply represent the failure of educating youths in the great household. Amis and Amiloun are raised in the standardised manner of serving a noteworthy lord at table. While the anonymous writer acknowledged the necessity of table service as well as the potential benefits in terms of worldly success, the feast also presents challenges in the text. Amis and Amiloun must conduct themselves with unquestioning and unwavering loyalty in order to overcome them. Thereby, seemingly greater acts of questionable conduct can be justified in the context of the narrative because Amis and Amiloun represent true and genuine loyalty. In this way, the traditional virtues of knighthood come into conflict with the legalistic side of twelfth- and thirteenth-century feudal obligations, and virtuous conduct in any circumstance seems to outweigh cold narrow legalism. The sacrifices made for one another draw association with those made by Christ and the saints, which allows the product of domestic table service to transcend and reach beyond the earthly realm of legality towards a literary ideal that is divinely sanctioned, and reflects the ecclesiastical models of holiness and sanctity. Overall, the feast does appear successful in teaching aristocratic conduct; however, it seems recognised that virtuous conduct sometimes carries a heavy price. This romance was written after the period when knights became lords, gained estates, and were expected to participate in legal procedures. So, this author wrote critically about the feast's role in preparing youths for the realities of aristocratic society. He clearly recognised the feast as imperfect and ripe with dangers, but those could be overcome. Thus, the author advocated for the traditional manner of educating aristocratic youths. Perhaps it was aristocratic society that needed to change.

[384] Mann, "Messianic Chivalry", 149; Kratins, "The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*", 354; Hume, "*Amis and Amiloun* and the Aesthetics", 29-30; Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition", 620-21; Eckert, "Amis and Amiloun: A Spiritual Journey", 291-94.

## Concluding Remarks

Literary representation of the lord's feast has allowed us to understand better how it symbolised and projected the social and cultural identity of High Medieval lordship. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers and scholars intervened in the culture of lordship with their texts, in which they focused on the feast's greater significance beyond economic and logistical concerns. Narrative texts offered positive and negative examples for their audiences, and these have provided us with additional insight into the attitudes and values of lordship in a period of growing domestication. Writers presented complex and nuanced views that complemented and sometimes debated with one another while their accounts often coincided with practice but sometimes opposed it. We see how writers used the feast to represent the practical necessities of lordship. Texts show how the feast displayed the lord's ability to provide food, which underlined and reinforced the importance of estates management, and the symbolic significance of controlling natural resources. The feast was meant to construct relationships in practice, and literary feasts reflect the hierarchy of lordship, and the social and political norms surrounding the maintenance of aristocratic support networks. The literary feast also reflects the lord's personal qualities, which include degrees of pious observance and formalised etiquette while the hall is depicted as the setting where youths learn the values of lordship. Exploration of the feast's literary representation reveals a growing domestic culture of lordship during a period of momentous change in England and throughout Western Europe. Economic expansion, changes in political structures and governing philosophy, religious reform, and novel approaches to the issues of authority and rank provoked a renewed importance for the feast alongside changing attitudes towards the idea of lordship. While feasting was certainly a prominent activity in Anglo-Saxon England, its social and cultural significance grew as developing bureaucratic structures, a growing national identity, and increasing clerical distaste for violence generated attitudes that saw lords not only as leaders in battle, but as the governors of a stable and prosperous realm. Interpretation of the feast in this context reveals how referring to the High Medieval aristocracy as those who fought is especially misleading for this period. Rather, narrative writers highlighted and emphasised the non-martial values of a settled and domestic manner of lordship as the English aristocracy grew out of the mead-hall society of the Anglo-Saxon warband towards the nationally minded court-based nobility of the Late Middle Ages.

Narrative representations of the lord's feast show the practical exercise of lordship in a territorial setting. It became expected in High Medieval England that the lord's top priority was to project authority over territorial holdings of land and thus, patrimonial right over an estate was the dominant theme in the literature they enjoyed. The importance of the feast in literature reflects the new emphasis that society placed on the issue of estates management while the idea of lordship became liked to the idea of controlling nature and its resources. In this period of intense agricultural expansion, English society relied heavily on the management of estates by lords and their tenants for sustenance and economic prosperity. The lord's daily routine also revolved around ensuring the safe

production of food and managing its provision in the household. These non-martial obligations required communal discipline and effective oversight and as a result, the lord's primary focus shifted towards domestic affairs. Popular attitudes changed accordingly, whereby material wealth and leadership in battle were no longer enough to covey good lordship on their own. Militarism and preoccupation with prowess was seen as the cause of aristocratic violence, which produced devastation of estates, and turned ploughed fields into uncultivated wasteland. Narrative literature shows a shift in clerical focus from purely battlefield success to the image of productive estates and a well-fed populace to define more clearly what good lordship should look like. This image also reflects notions of civility, with which writers distinguished a more civilised and altruistic manner of lordship over warrior culture. Those who prioritised their own ambitions were depicted in literature as violent, barbaric, and therefore, inferior to those who prioritised the well-being of society as a whole. Writers also expressed their notions of the civilised identity through the lord's ability to convert natural resources into cooked dishes for provision to others. This is what it meant to control nature. And Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and Wace's *Roman de Brut* have shown how control over nature's resources indicated the lord's control over the brutish and animalistic impulses that were believed to cause the militarism associated with early medieval lordship. Narrative writers promoted a more settled and refined manner of lordship to help the Church in their efforts to tame aristocratic violence. In reality, estates were often plundered by lords while kings and princes exploited church vacancies, causing controversy, and invoking clerical disdain. Thus, the world portrayed in literature sometimes shows us a desired state of affairs instead of reality, and some writers (Wace and Orderic Vitalis) might have attempted to establish historical context for their preferred way of life. Alongside violence and plunder, severe weather also caused poor harvests and shortages sometimes occurred naturally. These posed regular challenges without deliberately inflicted violence. The situation worsened in the early fourteenth century due to natural disasters including the great famine of 1315-22.[385] Despite frequent challenges, land management and control over resources came to define notions of good lordship, whereby productive output was viewed with equal importance to martial success. While prowess was not dismissed, writers depicted lords, first and foremost as holders of land and managers of food, whereby the feast embodied further a growing domestic culture of High Medieval lordship.

Literary imaginings of the lord's feast reflect issues of domestic stability as it also came to symbolise the managerial exercise of lordship in the household setting. Food defines the relationship between lords and the household retinue in literature, and this also occurred in practice. Members of the household were fed by the lord in exchange for service. They were expected to dine together with the lord, which publicised their formal bond on a daily basis. While pre-Conquest lords kept a household, its size and complexity grew in this period as it became a centre of government in addition to an institution for sustaining the lord. The household became essential to the exercise of lordship

[385] Discussed in: Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 228-29.

because estates management called for oversight of tenanted and demesne land while the household itself required careful administration and close attention to domestic affairs and external demands. Lay lords and bishops held estates across vast territories, so they could not oversee the production and management of food in separate locations at the same time. They required a network of domestics who conducted affairs on the lord's behalf. Some travelled with the itinerant lord while others remained in various locations and conducted affairs in the lord's absence. The growth of bureaucracy also required the household to participate in national government from the late twelfth century. Domestics engaged with judicial procedures by serving in royal and baronial courts. The affairs of English government were conducted through the collective actions of the royal household by the thirteenth century. The household became essential for any lord in this period, both as a practical necessity and as a social statement that indicated status and authority. As the lord's domestic obligations increased alongside the need for bureaucratic efficiency, narrative writers depicted the quality of lordship according to household strength and cohesion. The texts show the feast as a potent symbol of household order, in which the provision of food defines the lord/servant relationship while the successful feast requires a cohesive body of domestics acting on the lord's behalf and exercising collective authority. As we saw in Wace and Chrétien, imaginings of domestic order (and disorder) reinforced the notion that lords were expected to govern the household and ensure its cohesiveness. Texts show how the household further distinguished civilised lords from the violent world outside the household and hall. Writers used feast imagery to construct an opposition between civilised and uncivilised lordship, for which Wace's Mont St. Michel battle appears as an iconic moment of civilised lordship conquering the uncivilised and inferior brand. Household order symbolised the lord's ability to conduct affairs outside the field of battle, which required an increasingly large body of domestic officials and other household menials in practice. Thus, the well-managed household came to symbolise the well-governed kingdom for writers of narrative literature, and written attention to the importance of household management further reveals a growing domestic culture of lordship.

The feast was also considered the ideal location for the management of relationships with those outside the household. Itinerant lords and knights travelled the realm and required the care of other lords, bishops, and monastic leaders. Hospitality was provided and sometimes obligated. Literature shows lords feasting with other lords at all levels of the socio-political hierarchy. In practice, the feast offered practical opportunities for the extraction of oaths, the publication of formal relationships of homage, displays of loyalty, the forging of alliances, and the sharing of advice or counsel. Narrative texts show how feasts were intended to produce reciprocal relationships across diverse levels of the aristocratic hierarchy, emphasising the benefit that was expected to accrue for all parties. Despite the unequal nature of a hierarchical society, participation in the feast (even when mandatory) was perceived to enhance the status of all. The need for bureaucratic efficiency and administration at the top of England's hierarchy called for a network of tenants-in-chief in support of

the king, who was meant to govern as *primus inter pares*. While the idea of kingship with the consent of supporting aristocrats was known and promoted in Anglo-Saxon and early Norman culture, the ideology strengthened in High Medieval England amidst the centralisation of royal authority, and the increasingly independent interests of powerful landowning barons. Writers of narrative texts mediated on the potential for conflict, and their literature tends to idealise relationships between sections of the nobility that did not often exist in practice. Kings and their barons clashed frequently, resulting in rebellions, *Magna Carta*, and the formation of Parliament. The Round Table in Wace and Laȝamon offers a particularly idealised imagining of the supreme monarch surrounded by a strong body of supporting lords, whereby participation in the feast symbolises the desired partnership in governing a prosperous, stable, and peaceful realm. Thus, literary depiction did not often seem to reflect reality.

The generous provision of food was meant to solidify relationships, and oftentimes it did as the notion of largesse took on a new secular dimension in this period. In addition to its religious significance, largesse was recognised as social and political currency that provided an effective means for lords to produce relationships of mutual benefit. Generous lords ideally gained aristocratic allies and loyal dependents. Food and feast were tangible forms of largesse that demonstrated physical and material care and cemented formal and informal relationships across the aristocratic hierarchy. Texts have shown genuine largesse alongside cases where largesse is manipulated and given for selfish purposes. This disingenuous manner was thought to indicate pride and prodigality, and clerics usually drew the line according to the giver's intentions. Largesse assumed greater significance in the culture of lordship as aristocratic support networks expanded beyond the warband and included powerful landlords and high-ranking clerics. These networks differed from warrior culture because collective administration and cooperative governance of a peaceful and prosperous realm were the intentions. Whether the lord provided feasts (hospitality), gave food-gifts or other material wealth (such as land), writers promoted openhanded largesse in the sense that economic and legal aspects should be occluded and genuine relationships were built that benefit the economic, social, and political interests of all involved. Thus, writers engaged with tensions in society by imagining good lords (of all rank) who cooperate, counsel, and support one another with feasts and largesse, reflecting a state of affairs that was widely desired but not always achieved. The ideal goal was to promote cooperation and joint governance across the aristocracy, which further reveals an increasingly domestic culture of lordship.

Writers also represented the feast to address the lord's personal qualities, which included degrees of pious living. In light of the Peace Movement, the Gregorian reform, and the investiture disputes, the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Church imposed new models of piety on the culture of lordship as lay lords were expected to adhere to the values of Church and cloister more closely than in the earlier period. While gluttony was perceived in lay society, and food and feast were sometimes viewed in direct opposition to religious values, many writers depicted themes of moderation and balance in order to accommodate the necessary feast within newly developing models of good

Christian lordship. They referenced biblical and religious examples, such as Christ's Last Supper as well as the heavenly banquet to show how the feast could and should display the lord's Christian self rather than defining a split between the values of laity and clergy. Narrative texts support the notion that that the feast was not always considered sinful by definition, but failure to moderate one's appetite indicated the absence of self-control and other moral transgressions. Writers showed gluttony in connection with other sins of the flesh, whereby overindulgence in food reflected the lord's greater inability to exhibit impulse control and self-discipline in accordance with ecclesiastical demands. Literary examples were meant to impose and reinforce clerical notions of culinary discipline as lay lords were expected to control their appetites in a comparable manner to monks and secular clergy. Narrative texts reflect the growing importance of a clearly defined liturgical cycle of ritualised feasting and fasting while personal moderation was also expected to accompany generosity to others, the highest form of which was alms. Texts show how the provision of alms reflected the lord's inner spiritual quality because it was thought to earn divine favour instead of material reward. Literature also reveals a belief that alms had to result from personal moderation, for which they were intended to balance the excesses of the feast. While monastic austerity was the ideal, and the Eucharistic feast symbolised Christ and the heavenly banquet most explicitly, degrees of feasting received clerical sanction if excess was avoided with personal moderation, frequent fasts, and regular alms, which painted a larger picture of impulse control, personal discipline, and spiritualised liberality. Some thirteenth-century writers also addressed ongoing debate over the deserving nature of charitable recipients. Impoverished lords and virtuous individuals were viewed as worthy of alms, but writers also promoted the idea that lords should be attentive when assessing their merits as mistakes can be made – like when Amis gives charity to Amourant, but mistakes the deserving Amiloun for a thief. Thus, the feast was not viewed as immoral by definition, but it required impulse control, self-discipline, moderation, and balance, which adhered to the monastic virtues of temperance, restraint, and humility along with the ever-important *caritas*. Literature became the tool with which post-Gregorian writers intervened in lordly culture and promoted new modes of aristocratic piety. Literature reinforces the belief that lords were expected to behave according to Church doctrine because they owed their status to God. Early lordship was perceived in its opposition to clerical values, so the High Medieval Church recognised that lords should serve their interests. The feast was brought into ecclesiastical discourse, and it came to reflect (rather than detract from) piety. Thus, the feast further embodied the domestic culture of lordship in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England.

The lord's feast set the stage for the development of aristocratic manners in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While early medieval lordship was generally not known for the value attached to its manners, the post-Gregorian Church placed new emphasis on aristocratic conduct both on and off the battlefield in their efforts to tame what they perceived was unrestrained violence by warrior lords. Although battlefield ethics were a prime focus in the ideas that produced chivalry in the thirteenth

century, clerics also focused on non-martial conduct. Outward behaviours were believed to reflect one's inner moral identity, so the lord's conduct at table was viewed as a highly conspicuous display of good secular lordship in addition to concern for one's soul. In this way, the lord's feast provided a context for the new value of aristocratic manners to be articulated in both practice and narrative representation. As feasting practices were adapted to fit the models promoted in books of courtesy, narrative representation supports the notion that Church influence alongside growing aristocratic self-awareness led to a renewed interest in courtly manners. Writers debated who was able to acquire aristocratic courtesy and how. Some believed that outsiders could learn to exhibit good manners by engaging with and serving aristocratic establishments while others (e.g. Walter Map) believed that true lordship and its conduct were inherent to high birth, despite any outward appearance of aristocratic attributes. The aristocracy expanded during this period as men of relatively humble birth were "raised from the dust" via the growing royal and baronial courts.[386] Knights were also recognised as aristocratic from the late twelfth century while the growth of towns and markets allowed large numbers of urban merchants to gain wealth and status. Simply, there were more types of lords feasting by c. 1330 than had the means to do so in 1066. While this challenged the traditional hierarchy, clerics and lay aristocrats responded in part by defining better its non-martial qualifications. In this way, narrative writers clearly recognised the feast as a potent symbol of refined aristocratic conduct, the image of which was used to promote outward behaviour the main qualifier for lordship.

Regardless of the intended career path, it was regular practice that aristocratic youths were raised in external households, where they performed service at table. They ideally witnessed and acquired good conduct while applying it in practice on a regular basis in order to impress their superiors and earn patronage. Hagiographers wrote stories of its successes and its failures according to one's ability to overcome inherent moral dangers, which seems to show a split between manners in a secular sense and the stringent discipline of Church and cloister. We have also seen how writers of romance assessed the methods of aristocratic education as well as the society for which it was meant to prepare youths. Chrétien's *Perceval* and the anonymous *Amis and Amiloun* address the need for formal education, and they show the potential benefits of the household in fostering good conduct. However, the feast table may have presented a distraction in some cases, whereby the case of Perceval shows how preoccupation with its luxury may have detracted from greater spiritual obligations. At the same time, education in manners may have also rendered youths vulnerable to manipulation by rival factions, and the violence that remained inherent to aristocratic society in the High Middle Ages. Romances also show the feast presenting challenges that produce devastating consequences in terms of household stability and domestic cohesion, like the case of Amis and Belissaunt against the envious steward. However, the example of Aelred in King David's hall shows how these challenges could be

[386] "Raised from the dust" was a common (and sometimes pejorative) phrase to describe these men (many of whom studied at growing universities), who rose through the ranks of the twelfth-century royal court (mostly under Henry I and Henry II) to positions of prominence in the king's government.

overcome with further displays of good conduct in a spiritualised sense. Chrétien seemed to believe that the feast taught good conduct, but these values were negated by a world of factional rivalries and violence. And the author of *Amis and Amiloun* seemed to believe in cases where good conduct in a moral (and spiritual) sense was incompatible with the growing legal and administrative complexities of aristocratic culture in this period. Society itself is largely to blame in both romances. Despite its flaws and moral challenges, narrative writers seemed to advocate for teaching conduct in the domestic setting, whereby they depicted service at the lord's table as a test of one's true potential. Narrative representation suggests that the process of education was viewed as necessary and had the potential to succeed. But it was also thought of as imperfect, and outcomes were not always positive. In the end, success or failure came from within the individual, and it depended on their ability to overcome challenges perceived as inherent to the household and society. Literary emphasis on how aristocratic youths should be raised in the household reveals further how the culture of lordship shifted away from the warrior aristocracy of 1066 towards a more refined and domestic image by the fourteenth century.

All-in-all, the literary feast has shown us what good lordship should have looked like in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. It required management of resources and household while provision for others fostered reciprocal relationships. The feast displayed piety and manners, all of which reflected impulse control, bodily discipline, and liberality. These were prominent medieval values, and their absence was believed to cause violence and devastation. In this way, the ability to feast distinguished civilised society from the uncivilised other. It distinguished aristocrats from the lower classes. It distinguished good lordship from those who waged war. And it was the image used by the Church to promote piety and courtliness, and to tame and redirect militaristic impulses. The literary feast reveals how a strong domestic culture grew from warrior society. The lord's domestic side grew after c. 1330, for which the lavish banquets of state are explored in existing scholarship. Scenes of domestic life in a secular context feature prominently in illustration from the fourteenth century. In addition to the Luttrell Psalter, the Smithfield Decretals (c. 1300-40) depicts bread baking (fig. 6), the Queen Mary Psalter (c. 1310-20) shows a royal feast (fig. 7), and books of hours (fig. 8) show the lord at table. The lord's feast continued to attract attention in the fourteenth century even though harvest failures, inflation, and livestock epidemics forced lords to move away from management of demesne land.[387] While aspects of warrior culture remained, and warfare remained a concern, the feast reflected an image of domestic lordship that could stand on its own, symbolising the non-martial values associated with land management, bureaucratic efficiency, and good government.

Each theme I've discussed warrants additional study with a wider selection of literary genres and documentary evidence. In particular, scientific, and medical texts seem under-utilised, which can shed light on properties that were associated with various foods in relation to hierarchical theories as

[387] Discussed in: Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 233-41, 262-63.

Fig. 6 – Smithfield Decretals (c. 1300-40) “Baking Bread”

Fig. 7 – Queen Mary Psalter (c. 1300-10) “Royal Feast”

Fig. 8 – Book of Hours (c. 1318-25) “January Feasting”

well as the belief that consumption allowed the eater to gain said properties.[388] What properties were thought to be consumed with dishes reserved for the aristocracy, such as venison, partridge, peacock, and swan? How about other meats, such as pork, beef, chicken, and lamb? How about fish in relation to its religious significance as well as the ongoing debate among scholars over whether fish was a penitential food or simply an acceptable luxury for those who could afford it.[389] Or how about the properties associated with lowlier items, such as grains, oats, and vegetables? What do these properties have to say about the attitudes and values of those who were meant to consume them? Additionally, the role of the household and hall in educating youths and teaching them non-martial conduct seems under-studied. Some have explored medieval theories of child development and childhood itself. But little exists on the role of the feast in aristocratic education outside the Woolgar and Orme, who focus on the later period, and only mention the feast in passing. It would be interesting to compare *Le Conte du Graal* and *Amis and Amiloun* to other narratives, prescriptive texts, and documents to understand the practices and perceptions of domestic education, and why the feast was chosen to teach the values of lordship. The practice and culture of feasting by urban merchants and guilds in relation to the growing urban identity (separate from that of the landholding aristocracy) also seems underdeveloped. There is still much to be done in terms of food culture across the Middle Ages. But I hope my exploration of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century feast has expanded our knowledge of the attitudes and values that shaped aristocratic culture in High Medieval England.

[388] Discussed in: Woolgar, "Food and the Middle Ages", 8.

[389] D. Serjeantson and C.M. Woolgar attribute fish consumption with increasing Church emphasis on fasting in the High Middle Ages while Allen J. Frantzen (writing about the Anglo-Saxon period) claims fish was never a penitential food but only an acceptable luxury and the increased consumption in the eleventh century occurred because fish were more plentiful in growing markets and the wealthy could afford it, see: C.M. Woolgar and D. Serjeantson, "Fish Consumption in Medieval England" in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutricion*, ed. C.M. Woolgar, Dale Serjeantson and Tony Waldron, Medieval History and Archaeology (Oxford, 2009), pp. 129-30; Frantzen, *Food, Eating and Identity*, pp. 244-45.

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