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Medieval Performative Recreations of Chivalric Past. The Archaeology of Modern Historical Reenactment

Średniowieczne Performatywne Rekonstrukcje Rycerskiej Przeszłości. Archeologia współczesnego odtwórstwa historycznego

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to investigate the phenomenon of recreating the glorious past of chivalry in the High and Late Middle Ages in reference to scholarly reflexion concerning the modern historical reenactment. The author discusses a series of accounts testifying to the commonness of the performances during which the chivalric past was recreated. The most informative of these stories and examples relate to the institution of Round Tables – the tournaments which directly appealed to the Arthurian past of chivalry, as the adventures of the King Arthur's knights were perceived among knighthood and aristocracy.

In the discussion of these interesting accounts, a series of topics common to both the medieval recreations of the past and modern historical reenactments is considered. These include the significance of material objects used to come into contact with past (such as gear and attire), the markers used to invoke heroic identities of figures from the past, as well as the role of experiences (characteristic of combative sports) involved in the recreations and reenactments of the past. The role of the latter in acquiring the sense of connection with the past is discussed in reference to the notions of 'commitment' and 'flow' coined by the researchers from the field of the anthropology of sport.

As it appears, the social practices concerning recreating the past could be perceived by medieval men as very serious pursuits, communicating important ideological meanings and arising certain obligations. The comparison between medieval and modern practices of the kind in question reveals both close similarities and significant differences between both phenomena. Ultimately, these differences point to the aspects of medieval perceptions of the past, as both closer, more perceptible and compelling, even though one may call it an imaginary one.

Key words: historical reenactment, medieval tournaments, Round Tables, reception of Arthurian tradition, medieval performances, anthropology of sport – concepts of flow and commitment, medieval conceptions of the past

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest bliższe spojrzenie na zjawisko odtwarzania chwalebnej przeszłości rycerstwa w okresie pełnego i późniejszego średniowiecza w odniesieniu do refleksji badaczy nad współczesnym ruchem odtwórstwa historycznego. Autor dyskutuje serię przekazów świadczących o powszechności działań performatywnych, w trakcie których odtwarzano rycerską przeszłość. Najbardziej obfite w informacje spośród tych opowieści i przykładów są te, które odnoszą się do instytucji Okrągłych Stołów – turniejów, które bezpośrednio odwoływały się do arturiańskiej przeszłości rycerstwa, jak postrzegano przygody rycerzy króla Artura wśród rycerstwa i arystokracji.

W trakcie dyskusji tych interesujących przekazów, autor porusza szereg problemów wspólnych dla średniowiecznego odtwarzania przeszłości i współczesnego odtwórstwa historycznego. Należą do nich: doniosłość przedmiotów materialnych używanych, by wejść w kontakt z przeszłością (takich, jak uzbrojenie i odzież), wyznaczniki identyfikacji używane, by przywołać bohaterskie tożsamości, jak również rolę doświadczeń związanych z odtwarzaniem przeszłości (charakterystycznych dla sportów walki) w uzyskiwaniu poczucia połączenia z przeszłością. Rola ta dyskutowana jest w odniesieniu do pojęć „commitment" (zaangażowania) i „flow" ukutych przez badaczy zajmujących się sferą antropologii sportu.

Jak się okazuje, społeczne praktyki z zakresu odtwarzania przeszłości mogły być postrzegane przez ludzi średniowiecza jako bardzo poważne przedsięwzięcia, wyrażające ważne treści ideowe i rodzące konkretne zobowiązania. Porównanie średniowiecznych i współczesnych praktyk tego rodzaju ujawnia zarówno bliskie podobieństwa, jak i istotne różnice pomiędzy oboma zjawiskami. W ostatecznym rozrachunku, odrębności te odnoszą się do aspektów postrzegania przeszłości w średniowieczu jako bliższej, bardziej namacalnej i istotnej, nawet jeśli przeszłość ta mogłaby zostać określona jako wyobrażona.

Słowa kluczowe: odtwórstwo historyczne, turnieje w średniowieczu, Okrągłe Stoły, recepcja tradycji arturiańskich, działania performatywne w średniowieczu, antropologia sportu – pojęcia *flow* i *commitment* (zaangażowania), średniowieczne koncepcje przeszłości

It is widely recognized that medieval men revered the past which could be evoked, used or recreated in countless number of different ways[1]. However, one of these means seems to be surprisingly close to the undertakings of modern practitioners of public history who indulge in the activities aimed at reviving the history: the reenactors. Both them and medieval practitioners of Arthurian tournaments employed performative methods of representing the past, which in the case of the former is considered an object of affection[2]. Thus, as I would like to argue, the nature of the closeness of the medieval and modern phenomena is definitely worth of closer inquiry. Equally interesting questions can be posed while evaluating the medieval ways of performative recreating the past in the context of research on the contemporary reenactment movement. What are the elements of *longue durée* of these means of reviving the past? Why was performing of things past undeniably appealing to medieval mind?

To address these questions, the paper will examine a considerably rich body of accounts concerning events during which the Arthurian traditions were evoked. These are the materials referred to broadly by scholars sketching the (pre-) history of contemporary reenactments[3]. However, it is important to accentuate that the sphere of reenactment in medieval era was not confined only to the world of the knightly and burgher's tournaments. Interesting examples of performative references to the past may be also found in the accounts of *entremets* and *tableaux vivants*, spectacles of particular kind, organized during feasts or ceremonial entries of the members of ruling strata.

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[1] See for example: B. Guenée, *L'enquête historique ordonnée par Édouard Ier, roi d'Angleterre, en 1291*, "Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres" 1975, 119, 4, pp. 572–584; J. Dunbabin, *Discovering a Past for the French Aristocracy*, in: *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino, London–Rio Grande 1992, pp. 1–14; E. Mason, *Legends of the Beauchamps' Ancestors: the Use of Baronial Propaganda in Medieval England*, "Journal of Medieval History" 1984, 10, pp. 25–40; J. Banaszkiewicz, *Gall Anonim – tradycja historyczna Piastów jako wykład o początkach rodu-dynastii i Polski, w planie podobnych realizacji dziejopisarskich XII stulecia*, in: *Przeszłość w kulturze średniowiecznej Polski*, vol. 1, eds. J. Banaszkiewicz, A. Dąbrówka, P. Węcowski, Warszawa 2018, pp. 241–267; idem, *Mistrz Wincenty i naśladowcy – wizje najstarszych dziejów Polski XIII–XV wieku*, in: *Przeszłość*, vol. 1, pp. 269–306; Z. Dalewski, *Przeszłość zrytualizowana: tradycja królewskich koronacji*, in: *Przeszłość w kulturze średniowiecznej Polski*, vol. 2, ed. H. Manikowska, Warszawa 2018, pp. 29–58.

[2] V. Agnew, *History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present*, "Rethinking History" 2007, 11, 3, pp. 299–312.

[3] M. Bogacki, *Minione i współczesne odtwarzanie militarnej przeszłości człowieka*, "Z otchłani wieków. Czasopismo popularnonaukowe Stowarzyszenia Naukowego Archeologów Polskich" 2008, 63, 1–4, pp. 11–12.

Nonetheless, one can observe that it is in the descriptions of the tournaments evoking the adventures of Arthurian and other heroes' of famous historicoliterary cycles (concerning the past glories) that some core features characteristic of participation in modern historical reenactments may be recognised. It can be however asked if it would be appropriate to treat the accounts concerning these kinds of events as materials for the 'archaeology' of the aforesaid modern movement? The fundamental question may be raised: are the reenactments of Arthurian adventures the attempts to revive the world of history or rather embody literary fiction? Regardless of the answer, this is a rather anachronistic question which imposes modern cultural categories on the past era's worldview, and the problem of the medieval attitudes towards Arthurian tradition is nevertheless a challenging and ambiguous issue itself.

Even though the issue is certainly too complex to discuss it in detail in the present article, it is necessary to emphasize some essential aspects of the stance towards the stories of Arthur and his knights. One could obviously correctly point out that the world of French Arthurian romances and great epic cycles of 12th and 13th century is a place where knightly adventures led into the realm of fantasy. Taking into the account the question of genre and its specificity, it should be observed that a fairly objective indicator of the attitudes borne by the medieval readers towards the text are manuscript practices, that is to say the ordination or annotation of the material which frequently features in the serious Latin works. It is significant that in the English milieu more or less of a clear line may be drawn between chronicles and works of romance in regard of these practices[4]. Even more significant is the question of the development of peculiar characteristics of the tales of Round Table within the romance genre. It is well recognized that it was the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes which marked the departure of romance (as a genre) from the founding of the authority of the text in the use and invoking of superior, antecedent (especially Latin) text or in the reference to the (remembered) past in the classic works of the kind to the literary prowess of the author in the case of new romances[5]. The literary work's value became thus dependent upon its purely literary merits.

However, starkly different image of Arthur and his knights emerges from the works of medieval English historiography. As a famous

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[4]   J. Marvin, *Anglo-Norman Narrative as History or Fable: Judging by Appearances*, "The Medieval Chronicle", vol. 3, "Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, Doorn/Utrecht 12–17 July 2002 (2004)", esp. p. 117.

[5]   G.M. *Spiegel, Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, Berkely–London 1993, pp. 62–64.

ruler whose deeds, accomplishments and customs were frequently seen as a benchmark for English kings, Arthur is an illustrious character inhabiting the sphere of glorious past of the kingdom. This is the image coined by Geoffrey of Monmouth which – notwithstanding the critique of his work by some contemporary medieval authors – has become well recognized as it was disseminated in many historical works, notably in the highly popular *Brut* accounts of national history. The specificity of the character of English Arthurian tradition is a consequence of the fact that it is rooted in the historical materials of chronicle format, not in the works of romance genre. It was pointed out that the Anglo-Norman works of this kind were read across the Channel as there are continental French copies of them preserved[6].

As a matter of fact, this kind of attitude towards Arthurian matter may be also traced in the works of French authors. A persuasive example is the popular concept of Nine Worthies, coined by Jacques de Longuyon in the poem *Les Voeux du Paon* (1312). It presents celebrities of the history of knighthood, among them King Arthur, as one of three Christian Worthies[7]. Therefore, it would be inherently wrong to generalize over the nature of the enacted in the Arthurian tournaments taking into the account only the sole label 'Arthurian'.

However, even in the case of the sphere of continental Arthurian literature, some important points should be considered. Stories of the knights of Round Table in the form of romance which we would name fictional or fantastical could still be regarded by medieval readers as true: albeit in the moral sense, as it could disclose certain important principles or ideals of chivalry[8]. This kind of ideological meanings were by no means considered ornamental or ancillary. The fact that the deeper, moral senses of the narrative were indeed perceived vitally important is attested by the common writing practices of the authors of historical works, who habitually

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[6] See for example: J. Rajsic, *The Brut: Legendary British History*, in: *Medieval Historical Writing. Britain and Ireland, 500–1500*, eds. J. Jahner, E. Steiner, E.M. Tyler, Cambridge 2019, pp. 67–83, esp. 70; W.R.J. Barron, F. Le Saux, L. Johnson, *Dynastic Chronicles*, in: *The Arthur of the English. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron, Cardiff 2001, pp. 11–46. An interesting example of this kind of Arthur's image is featured in Pierre de Langtoft's chronicle, see: *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft in French Verse from the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I*, vol. 1, ed. T. Wright, London 1866, pp. 147–225.

[7] R.L. Wyss, *Die neun Helden*, "Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgesichte" 1957, 17, pp. 73–106; M. Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven–London 2005, pp. 121–124; R. Barber, *Edward III's Arthurian Enthusiasms Revisited: Perceforest in the Context of Philippa of Hainault and the Round Table Feast of 1344*, "Arthurian Literature" 2013, 30, p. 59.

[8] S. Fleischman, *On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages*, "History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History" 1983, 22, p. 282.

made use of various rhetorical practices to express certain ideas, attitudes and meanings[9]. Perhaps the significance of these moral truths and ideological meanings as the signs of veracity of the narrative was indeed more important for medieval authors and readers than we could expect, especially if the modern attitudes to the literature would be taken as the basis of our considerations. Putting aside this complex problem, we should bear in mind that the realm of continental Arthurian romances was perceived by its medieval audiences as something much more significant and meaningful than pure fantasy in the modern understanding of this term.

This opinion may be actually confirmed with various examples of cultural phenomena. But it is by no means a coincidence that a number of the aforesaid examples: institutions[10], customs and actions[11] may be considered the forms of active responding to the Arthurian past and Arthurian tales with the intent to imitate its certain aspects. This is the case of special kind of tournament which grew remarkably popular during the 13th century[12]: the Round Table or *tabula/mensa rotunda*. The scholars agree that the name of these events clearly reveals the source of inspiration behind them[13]. It should be noted that the tournaments are featured significantly in the Arthurian literature from its very beginnings: in Geoffrey's of Monmouth *Historia Regum Britanniae* (written around 1136) a tournament at Arthur's court takes place after the king's conquest of Gaul[14]. Indeed, John V. Fleming drove attention to the fact that the institution of Round Table tournament as a formal chivalric meeting is described in 'later [medieval] romances'[15].

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[9]   See: R. Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages. Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality*, Cambridge–Sydney 1991.

[10]   See: W.M. Ormrod, *The Foundation and Early Development of the Order of the Garter in England, 1348–1399*, "Frühmittelalterliche Studien" 2017, 50, 1, pp. 364–365.

[11]   See below.

[12]   C. Daniel, *Tournois et tables rondes d'Édouard Ier à Édouard III. Du jeu militaire à l'Ordre de Chevalerie*, in: *Armes et jeux militaires dans l'imaginaire. XIIe–XVe siècles*, ed. C. Gîrbea, Paris 2016, p. 271.

[13]   D. Crouch, *Tournament*, London–New York 2005, p. 117.

[14]   Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. M.D. Reeve, transl. N. Wright, Woodbridge 2007, pp. 213–215, bk. 9, vv. 392–403; J.R.V. Barker, *The Tournament in England 1100–1400*, Woodbridge 1986, p. 85; S. Bradford, *Chretien de Troyes and Arthurian Romance in the Development of the Tournament*, University of Tennessee: Knoxville College Scholars Program. Senior Thesis Projects, 1993–2002, pp. [8–9], https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_interstp2/3 [access: 1.02.2024].

[15]   J.V. Fleming, *The Round Table in Literature and Legend*, in: *King Arthur's Round Table. An Archeological Investigation*, eds. M. Biddle et al., Woodbridge 2013, pp. 11–12.

The first explicit reference to the organizing of Round Table tournament comes from the chronicle of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines who wrote about this kind of event taking place in Hesdin (Flanders) in 1235. However, many scholars suppose that the Round Table tournaments were older than that date. In any case, it is particularly telling that the very first mention of this kind of event testifies to its popularity in the continent. The relatively copious information circulating in narrative and documentary sources from about the middle of the 13th century confirm that the Round Tables were frequently organized not only in England and France but also in Germany and Spain in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the case of the realm of Valois kings, these tournaments were willingly organized not only by aristocracy but also by town patriciates of leading centres of the northern part of the country[16].

Although Round Tables did not necessarily involve performing the roles of Arthurian heroes, they nevertheless differed considerably from ordinary tournaments in a way which is undeniably significant. In contrast to the old way of tourneying, this new kind of hastiludes included competition rather in the form of jousting *a plaisance* with the arms 'of peace', between the knights gathered within the enclosed area of the 'Table' and those from outside, who would choose their opponent. But what should be especially emphasized is that Round Tables were by definition essentially social events, with the banquets, dancing, singing and various types of interactions characteristic of courtly culture going on. The role of women (by no means only passive observers of the skirmishes) was particularly important for the course of the event[17].

This kind of picture may be found in the *Sone de Nansay*, a late 13th century *roman d'aventures* which depicts the participation of the main hero in four Round Tables. The first of these events is advertised to Sone's

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[16] R.S. Loomis, *Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations of Arthurian Romance*, in: *Medieval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter*, vol. 1, ed. W. Koehler, Cambridge 1939, pp. 79–86; idem, *Arthurian Influence on Sport and Spectacle*, in: *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages. A Collaborative History*; idem, Oxford 1959, pp. 553–557; D. Crouch, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–120, 128–130; P. Paszkiewicz, *Społeczna i kulturowa geneza Dworu Artusa*, "Porta Aurea. Rocznik Zakładu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego" 1992, 1, esp. pp. 20–21.

[17] Although for the exact type of the knightly competitions which took place on Round Table tournaments see: D. Crouch, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–120. The author notices *commençailles* and *grand charge* mentioned in one of the descriptions of Round Tables in *Sone de Nansay* (see below). The engagement of two groups of knights in the style of tournaments of the 12th century features also in the imaginative story of Edward I's Round Table written by Lodewijk van Velthem, *Voortzetting van den Spiegel Historiael*, ed. and transl. D. Johnson, G. Claassens, in: *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor: the House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344*, eds. J. Munby, R. Barber, R. Brown, Woodbridge 2007, pp. 248–253.

as the feast with which comes great honour and which would be attended by great aristocracy[18]. Significantly, the evaluation of the performance during jousting is carefully conducted by the peers watching the tilts from the seats constructed for the occasion. The winning and losing has its clear consequence within the group as the defeated and their ladies are obliged to leave their seats what angers many of the *puchielles*[19]. The damsels envy Sone's victories because the main prize in the contest is the coronation of the winner's lady and all but enthroning her on the decorated chair situated in the most honourable place of the tourney's area – the 'high tent' in the centre of the field where the tournament takes place. She would be seated there in the company of her friend and the *roi de la table*. As the logic of the *roman d'aventures* requires, this is what happens to Sone and his lady. She is much honoured in the noble company sitting down behind the many tables set up. The joys of the banquet ensue: eating and singing. Next day, the banquet continues to the noon. The maidens and their friends carol holding their hands and finally engage in conversations about 'love, chivalry and all the other courtesies'[20].

Thus, the chivalric festival, which (via its fixed and widely recognized name) constituted a clear appeal to the Arthurian tradition, was a carefully arranged gathering of nobles who cultivated sophisticated forms of courtly values and manners. This is by no means a mere coincidence. According to Chrétien de Troyes' *Érec et Énide* there was no less than five hundred high born damsels of royal blood, noble and wise, staying in the Arthur's household[21]. A particularly interesting example of perceiving Arthurian realm as the centre of *le monde courtois* comes from Sarrasin's poem *Le roman de Hem*, an account depicting the tournament which took place in Hem (Hauts-de-France). In the scene of conversation of the two knights who decide to organise the event, the allegorical lady Courtesy arrives and joins the discussion. It is her who advises that the festival should be presided over by the Queen Guinevere (whose role is performed by the sister of Aubert de Longueval, one of the two organisers of the tournament). She also clarifies the scenarios of performative pieces which should take place between the jousts. They feature the Knight of the Lion and his seven captives, and a maiden with a dwarf who insults

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[18] *Sone von Nausay*, ed. M. Goldshmit, Tübingen 1899, p. 31, vv. 1167–1174.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 44, vv. 1683–1690, pp. 46–47, vv. 1786–1796.

[20] *Ibidem*, pp. 35–36, vv. 1339–1358, p. 47, 1807–1812, pp. 48–54, vv. 1831–2066.

[21] *Érec et Énide*, in: Chrétien de Troyes, *Oeuvres completes*, eds. D. Poiron et al., Paris 1994, p. 4, vv. 50–52; M. Meyer, *The Arthur-Figure*, in: *Handbook of Arthurian Romance. King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, eds. L. Tether et al., Berlin–Boston 2017, p. 85.

her. As writes Sarrasin, lady Courtesy's guidance is both accepted with gratitude and considered much needed[22].

It is well acknowledged that the Arthurian verse romances were especially rich in courtly aesthetic manifestations[23]. But it is the mechanism which caused the emergence of this phenomenon which is of special significance for us. As argues Robert Rouse, in the case of the relationship between the Arthurian literature and the noble society of its readers a dual influence may be discerned. Writers followed mores and courtly behaviours of their desired audiences and thus produced texts that are considered by the scholars to reflect the aspirational modes of life of the aristocracy and knighthood at the same time. But the important point is that the behaviours recorded by the authors could well be characteristic of the most sophisticated centres of courtly culture, as testifies the example of influential Chrétien de Troyes, a member of the retinue of the countess Marie de Champagne, daughter of Aliénor d'Aquitaine[24]. Depicted in this way, Arthur's court and its festivities were by all means a model worthy of emulation for the members of noble society. Therefore, the courtly ceremonies and behaviours conducted and displayed under the label of 'Round Table' should be perceived as performed with some kind of reference to Arthurian ones in mind.

Thus, it is by no means striking that a festive character of the Round Table described in the discussed fragment of *Sone de Nansay* is highly emphasized. This aspect of the meeting is highlighted at the very beginning of the description of the event: the reader learns that the feast will be *esbaudie* (entertained, delighted)[25]. The feeling pertains also to the pleasures

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[22] Sarrasin, *Le roman du Hem*, ed. M. Jeay, part 1, in: eadem. *Les Héritiers du tournoi de Noauz. Les tournois des dames, Hem, Chauvency*, Paris 2023, pp. 237–246, vv. 274–454. Sarrasin interestingly combines fanciful scenes with relations of performances and jousts which he witnessed himself, see: N.F. Regalado, *Performing romance: Arthurian interludes in Sarrasin's Le roman du Hem (1278)*, in: *Performing Medieval Narrative*, eds. E. Birge Vitz, N.F. Regalado, M. Lawrence, Cambridge 2005, pp. 103–119; eadem, *A Contract for an Early Festival Book: Sarrasin's Le Roman du Hem (1278)*, in: *Performance and Ritual in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. L. Postlewate, Amsterdam–New York 2007, pp. 249–267; G. Toniutti, *Imiter le roman – fictionnaliser l'Histoire: le Roman du Hem entre roman et relation de tournoi*, "Tirant" 2019, 22, pp. 73–88; C. Ferlampin-Acher, *À la mode de Bretagne: la culture arthurienne dans le Roman du Hem de Sarrasin (1278) et le Roman de Guillaume d'Orange*, in: eadem, *Arthur après Arthur: la matière arthurienne tardive en dehors du roman arthurien, de l'intertextualité au phénomène de mode*, Rennes 2017, pp. 517–537.

[23] P. Moran, *Text-Types and Formal Features*, in: *Handbook*, p. 61.

[24] R. Rouse, *Historical Context: The Middle Ages and the Code of Chivalry*, in: *Handbook*, pp. 16–18.

[25] *Sone von Nausay*, p. 31, v. 1166; see: D. Crouch, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

enjoyed by those who do not participate in jousting, as indicated by the passus from *La forme quon tenoit des tournoys et assemblees au temps du roy Uterpendragon et du roy Artus*. The fragment defines the purposes of organizing the tournament also as '*dames plaisir et esbatement*'[26]. Beyond any doubt, the aforementioned joys of feasting contribute significantly to these feelings. The Round Tables actually conform to the visions of meetings in Arthur's court as regards the pleasures of the table: the miniatures depicting the Round Table portray it as a board set for a banquet[27]. But especially important is that the medieval authors interested in chivalry were aware that banqueting was an essential feature of Round Tables. This is the case of the author of *Le livre des faits de Jean le Meingre dit Boucicaut*, who in the description of the famous tournament at St. Inglevert near Calais emphasized that the hero of his story (one of the three organisers and chief jousters of the event) prepared supplies in such a great abundance, and made plentiful and generous provisions of very good wines (and of everything that was needed by the participants of the event) that these victals were 'as copious as for holding Round Table, available in an instant in the course of the event'[28].

The general coherence between the discussed type of tournament and the idea of King Arthur's own Round Table meetings may be thus relatively easily noticed. But the scholars emphasize as well that certain ceremonial acts performed during these tournaments along with sometimes chosen modes of participation in the chivalric games were 'imitations' or 'repetitions' of the actions described in Arthurian romances. This is the case of the custom of knights being led by their ladies to the jousting field as well as fighting incognito or under someone else's arms. The former practice is well-known from the descriptions of sophisticated tournaments of 14th century in which dames could hold participant's steed's bridles or even kept the tourneyers themselves on silver or golden chains during ceremonial processions to the tournament field. In this case the influence of the fashionable *Roman de Perceforest* (composed ca 1340

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[26] E. Sandoz, *Tourneys in Arthurian Tradition*, "Speculum" 1944, 19, 4, p. 396.

[27] See for example: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms Français 343, *Lancelot-Graal*, fol. 3, Ms Français 112 (3), *La Queste del Saint-Graal, La Mort le roi Artu*, fol. 3v, Ms Français 113, *Lancelot du Lac*, fol. 100, Ms Français 111, *Le Livre de messire Lancelot du Lac, la Quête du Saint Graal, la Mort d'Arthus*, fol. 236.

[28] *Livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut, mareschal de France et gouverneur de Jennes*, ed. D. Lalande, Paris–Genève 1985, p. 69, I, 17, vv. 114–121, *...et tres honorablement messier Bouciquaut* [...] *fist faire provisions de tres bons vins et de tous vivres largement et a plain, et de tout quanque il couvient, si plantureusement comme pour tenir table reonde a tous venans tout le dit temps durant...*; R.S. Loomis, *Chivalric*, p. 87.

for the count of Hainault) was pointed out as the source[29]. But as a matter of fact, the similar custom features in the story of Sone of Nansay's first Round Table which was discussed above. The hero's entourage, moving to the castle where the lodgings during the tournament were located, and afterwards to the tournament field, is preceded by two beautiful and gracious maidens[30].

It is difficult to be conclusive concerning the question if the role of ladies in this kind of processions is the direct imitation of the custom known from the Arthurian literature or if the literature reflects the social mores. In fact, a premise that this second way should be considered very much possible too may be pointed out. In the knightly image of Geoffrey Luttrell in Luttrell Psalter it is the women next of kin who pass the mounted knight the most important pieces of his gear (great helmet, lance and shield which should also be considered signs of identity to the chivalric warrior)[31]. Thus, the connection of women with the sphere of a knight's preparation to engagement in a fight could not be restricted solely to the phenomenon of tournament but broader and more far-reaching.

As for the second abovementioned motif, fighting incognito or using other knight's coat of arms is a custom frequently featuring in the Arthurian literature. It is a significant and recurring theme of Chrétien's de Troyes romances and its Middle English reiterations, as well as *Le Roman de Tristan en prose* and even non-Arthurian Middle English romances *Ipomadon* and *Partonopeus de Blois* (which are translations of French works of the 12th century). Following this custom was considered a behavior fit for competing at the Round Table tournaments, as testifies *Sone of Nansay*. Interestingly, it was eagerly pursued by king Edward III Plantagenet who partook in tournaments both incognito and under his own men's coats of arms. But perhaps the most appealing is the story of the way that the English ruler participated in the combat with the French during the encounter at the gate in the failed assault on Calais led by Geoffroi de Charny. It is described in a very detailed way by Jean Froissart in his *Chroniques*. Edward III fought incognito as an ordinary knight in the victorious battle. Especially telling is that once the dust settled, the King organised the banquet (to which the vanquished were of course invited) during which he disclosed his identity: by awarding the prize for the bravest to the knight in the encounter to the French *gent d'armes*, who

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[29] J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 109; C. Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

[30] *Sone von Nausay*, p. 33, vv. 1253–1255, p. 35, vv. 1319–1320.

[31] See: C. Gravett, *English Medieval Knight 1300–1400*, illust. G. Turner, Oxford 2002, p. 21; see*: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/LuttrellPsalterFol202v-GeoffLutrellMounted.jpg>, [access: 1.11.2023].

had fought with the King fiercely[32]. It is also during the feast which is set up after the tilting that Sone of Nansay reveals his identity during the first Round Table tournament he attends. Until that time, he uses plain, white shield[33].

As a matter of fact, by disclosing their names both the Plantagenet king and Sone of Nansay acted just as many other chivalric romance heroes. Susan Crane emphasized that the act of finally revealing true identity is an ever-present point of the stories and accounts describing fighting incognito which actually concerns the issues of self-presentation and public recognition. The temporary concealment of is a doubtlessly beneficial act in terms of advantages of judgment of one's deeds, which in this case becomes devoid of regard for reputation, lineage or even previous failures[34]. But it also allows certain dramatization of the process of acquiring renown based on knightly accomplishments as the one unveiling his identity presents himself to the group in the aura of his all achievements perceived and evaluated all at once. The acts which closely imitate those performed by the famous heroes of literature thus serve to fulfil a socially important function: to enhance the knightly renown (and therefore social standing) in the group for which military feats had significant value as the basis for evaluation of individual's worth[35].

Do the discussed examples indicate the importance of the relationship between the (imagined) history of knighthood (evoked in the name of Round Tables or in the custom of fighting incognito) and the cultivation of chivalric culture (along with pursuing the socially relevant knightly ideals) by the way of carrying out performative acts? To this interpretation testify the accounts of well-known but anyway profoundly interesting initiative of Edward III launched during Round Table[36] held at Windsor in 1344. As declare Adam Murimuth (*Continuatio Chronicarum*) and the author of *Continuation of Nicholas Trivet*, after four days of jousting, the English king made a public, solemn oath to '*ad certum tempus [...] mensam rotundam inciperet, eodem modo et statu quo eam Arthurus [...]*'. That his

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[32]   S. Crane, *Knights in Disguise: Identity and Incognito in Fourteenth-Century Chivalry*, in: *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, eds. F.R.P. Akehurst, S. Cain Van D'Elden, Minneapolis–London 2014, pp. 66–70; M. Pastoureau, *Figures et couleurs. Études sur la symbolique et la sensibilité médiévales*, Paris 1986, p. 17; J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 86; C. Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

[33]   *Sone von Nausay*, p. 36, vv. 1380–1382, p. 54, vv. 2065–2094.

[34]   S. Crane, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 67, 70. For the example of Lancelot's disguise in *Mort Artu* see: M. Biddle, *The Making of the Round Table*, in: M. Biddle et al., *King Arthur's Round Table. An archeological investigation*, Woodbridge 2000, p. 354.

[35]   M. Keen, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–15, 224–225.

[36]   The event is referred to in this way in *The Anonimalle Chronicle*, ed. V.H. Galbraith, Manchester 1927, p. 18; R. Barber, *Edward III's*, p. 73.

intention of reviving of the illustrious centre of chivalric pursuits was indeed intended as an attempt to reconstrue the past institution is confirmed by the introduction to the ruler's vow. It details interesting information and one of them concerns the 'manner and condition' of the Arthurian institution which was about to begin anew: it was meant to number exactly 300 knights. According to Edward III's wish, the whole day was devoted to the ceremony of oath taking and the sumptuous banquet which was to follow after. Swearing to restore the Round Table, the king wore the crown, royal mantle and held the scepter in his hand. It is important that the act was conducted in this very serious and solemn manner. To say more, the oath was in fact taken with the hand on the Bible[37]. This attests to the significance of the matter in the eyes of the English ruler who apparently considered the reconstruction of the Round Table as an act worth of all the possible dignity.

It should also be strongly emphasized that the forceful declaration of Edward III's will was not a private, but a public act, and the one which was not affirmed by the chivalric community passively. To the contrary, the earls, barons and renowned knights gathered in Windsor made an oath as well, declaring that they will 'observe, sustain and promote' the Round Table in all their possessions (*'Ad quod quidem observandum, sustinendum, promovendum in omnibus suis appendiciis'*)[38]. Thus, the action aimed at reviving the Round Table was carried out within the community of nobles who obviously enjoyed participation in knightly tournaments. The members of this group implicitly declared that they knew the principles of the Round Table (which they obliged themselves to observe and promote) and it would be rather to assume that maintaining this institution (to which these nobles obligated themselves) would not be much against their will. After all, the author of *St Omer Chronicle* perceived the Edward III's act as the revival not only of Round Table, but also of '*aventures de chevalerie*'[39]. Thus, this historian invoked an important category of knightly culture, frequently described by the medieval authors interested in chivalric matters as a means of acquiring renown and prestige[40].

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[37] Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio Chronicarum*, in: *Edward III's Round*, p. 185.

[38] *Continuation of Nicholas Trivet from BL MS Cotton Otho C II f.99*, in: *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor: the House of the Round Table and the Windsor Festival of 1344*, eds. J. Munby, R. Barber, R. Brown, Woodbridge 2007, pp. 184–187.

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 187.

[40] See: *"Adventure"*, in: J.B. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage François*, vol. 1, Niort [1875], pp. 135–136; E. Köhler, *L'aventure chevalersque. Idéal et réalité dans le roman courtois. Études sur la forme des plus anciens poèmes d'Arthur et du Graal*, transl. E. Kaufholz, introd. J. Le Goff, Paris 1974, pp. 77–102, esp. 81–82. The concept is crucial for understanding chivalric culture but is frequently considered too narrow by

Acquiring this kind of benefits thanks to the participation in Edward III's knightly institution is indeed emphasized by Jean le Bel[41].

Considering the nature of medieval performative methods of representing the past, it cannot be overlooked that the events at Windsor included various accoutrements of courtly pageantry, such as the ceremonial procession of all the participants of the event to the place where oaths were made. The marshal and steward of England preceded this march with staffs of their offices, music of trumpets and drums was played and the participants wore sumptuous, especially rich clothes. It is thus no wonder that Adam Murimuth called the event a 'spectacle'[42]. But let us stress that all those attending the tourney took part in it, actively affirming the king's project of reviving the past glory of knighthood both verbally and non-verbally.

The events of the tournament at Windsor disclose the willingness to cultivate and practice the knightly virtues by the means of recreating an exemplary and fashionable model of chivalric community from the past – the famous Round Table. This attitude may be without exaggeration described as broadly appealing. Its earliest instance may be traced as far as Ulrich von Liechtenstein's fellowship of Round Table, described by the famous knight in his collection of imaginary autobiographical poetry, *Frauendienst* (ca. 1255). However, Arthurian societies who organized tournaments and promoted cultivating military (especially knightly) martial skills and virtues are well known from the history of large medieval towns in Low Countries, France and Germany as well as from hanseatic centres outside German lands. Frequently these patrician associations possessed their own seats, which in the two lastly mentioned regions were called Artushofen[43].

Nevertheless, in the case of Edward III's project we can observe a clear attitude towards the reconstruction of the Round Table as an institution which was supposed to exist permanently. Its location was Windsor Castle: the place with strong Arthurian connotations in the traditions of the 13th and 14th century, believed by Jean le Bel and Jean Froissart (the

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the scholars from the field of literary studies, as the characteristic feature of *roman Courtois*. See for example: S. Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, Princeton 1994, pp. 165–203, esp. pp. 165–169. But already relatively long ago Erich Köhler cited an especially illustrative passage from Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* which straightforwardly describes the sense of *adventure* as 'por esprover [...] proesce et [...] hardement'.

[41] *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, eds. J. Viard, E. Déprez, vol. 1–2, Paris 1904–1905, vol. 2, p. 26; R.H. Cline, *The Influence of Romances on Tournaments of the Middle Ages*, "Speculum" 1945, 20, 2, p. 207.

[42] Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio Chronicarum*, in: *Edward III's Round*, p. 185.

[43] J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

historians of Low-Countries origin) to be actual location of Arthur's *Table Rounde*[44]. It needs to be noted that the seat of the established knightly society was not only deliberately chosen with clear reference to the (imagined) past. There were also plans to develop it for the purposes of the chivalric community. According to Thomas Walsingham King Edward gathered skilled workers and *coepit aedificare domum, que 'Rotunda Tabula' vocaretur*[45]. Although the building has never been finished, the considerable work was conducted which is reflected both in records in Pipe Rolls and in archeological findings[46]. What brought a considerable interest of some of the scholars was the dimensions of the Windsor edifice which closely corresponded to these of the *Franc Palais*: the seat of the knights in the aforementioned romance *Perceforest*. The same correlation between Edward III's project and the aforesaid romance was observed in the case of exact number of 300 knights who were supposed to gather behind the Plantagenet Round Table and the large table in the imaginary *Franc Palais*. However, according to the recent voices in the discussion, it is not exactly certain if the literary work directly influenced the founder of the Round Table house or if the author of the story adopted the dimension of the actual construction[47].

In any case, it is evident that Edward III's idea of reviving the Round Table was supposed to blossom in a carefully planned material environment which evoked the chivalric past. Some scholars have indeed made an educated guess that this setting may have included some kind of replica of the famous *table rounde* itself. One reason for this reflection is that the accounts covering the expenses made for the construction of the new building at Windsor Castle include the payment for 52 oaks[48]. Regardless, the main argument in the discussion is based on the well-known fact that

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[44] *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, vol. 2, p. 26; *Oeuvres de Froissart publiées avec les variantes des divers manuscrits*, vol. 4, ed. J.M.B.C. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles 1868, pp. 203–204; C. Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 286; R.H. Cline, *op. cit.*, p. 207; R. Barber, *The Round Table Feast of 1344*, in: *Edward III's Round*, p. 188.

[45] *Thomae Walsingham, quondam monachi S. Albani, Historia Anglicana*, vol. 1, ed. H.T. Riley, London 1863, p. 263; H. Cline, *op. cit.*

[46] See: J. Munby, *The Round Table Building. The Windsor Building Accounts*, in: *Edward III's Round*, pp. 44–52; T. Tatton-Brown, *The Building Stone Used for the Round Table Building*, in: *Edward III's Round*, pp. 53–59; R. Brown, *The Archeology of the Upper Ward Quadrangle and the Evidence for the Round Table Building*, in: *Edward III's Round*, pp. 60–65; J. Munby, *Reconstructing the Round Table. Windsor and beyond*, in: *Edward III's Round*, pp. 119–134.

[47] R. Barber, *Edward III's*, pp. 71–74. Richard Barber holds the opinion that the building of Edward III was the model for description in *Perceforest*; According to J.R.V. Barker it was the opposite, see: eadem, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–94.

[48] *Ibidem*, p. 93.

an actual medieval imitation of Round Table has been preserved to our days. This is the famous Winchester Table hanging on the wall of Winchester Castle's Great Hall. Its precise date of origin is uncertain as there are significant discrepancies in dating based on radiocarbon analysis and the examination of rings of trees used to make the table. Although the aforesaid evaluations point out to broad period of ca 1250–1330, it is most likely that the table was made during the reign of famous 'Arthurian enthusiast' Edward I, as after the fire of 1302 the Winchester Castle was only sporadically used as a royal residence and King Henry III didn't display much favour to the traditions of Table Round neither. The occasion which was most frequently indicated as possibly connected to the procuring the famous artifact is the tournament in Winchester in 1290. Organized as a feast celebrating the king's children successful betrothals, it is only described in documentary sources which nonetheless don't testify to the Arthurian undertones of the occasion[49].

Still, the contexts and purposes of creating the Winchester Table should not be considered restricted to the realm of antiquarianism. It is well recognized, both in the spheres of scholarly considerations as well as in the common knowledge, that a table is by no means an ordinary piece of furniture as it is widely used as a focal point in various social gatherings, including the religious rituals[50]. Considering the matter of significance of Winchester Table it should be pointed out that tables were indeed the central spots of chivalric assemblages, as well indicates the example of the tradition of *Ehretischen* (the Tables of Honour) organised by the Teutonic Order[51]. But the aforesaid observation remains valid also in the case of the knightly festivals which evoked the famous past. To this testifies the interesting depiction of imaginary Round Table tournament (*tavel ründer*) in Heinrich von Neustadt's *Apollonius von Tyrland* (ca 1300). Despite that the story is based on classic work, its heroes engage in the fashionable chivalric meeting. Describing it, the author draws attention to the material 'round table' (*scheiblotter tisch*; *er was aller sinewell*), which stood in the area where the event took place. It was five ells broad, covered with scarlet cloth and set with glass tableware and other utensils[52]. The passage from

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[49] M. Biddle, *op. cit.*, pp. 337–338, 347–377.

[50] See for example: J. Banaszkiewicz, *Trzy razy uczta*, in: *Społeczeństwo Polski średniowiecznej*, vol. 5, ed. S.K. Kuczyński, Warszawa 1992, pp. 95–108, esp. pp. 98–108.

[51] See: M. Keen, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–174.

[52] Heinrichs von Neustadt, *Apollonius von Tyrland nach der Gothaer Handschrift, Gottes Zukunft und Visio Philiberti nach der Heidelberger Handschrift*, ed. S. Singer, Berlin 1906, p. 298, vv. 18727–18733; J. Bumke, *Courtly Culture. Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, transl. T. Dunlap, Berkeley–Oxford 1991, p. 263.

the *Apollonius von Tyrland* discloses that the object utilized in the course of social event which deliberately evokes the past could serve not as mere decoration but rather as an artifact which was in a certain sense operated during the Round Table tournament, evoking the customs and practices of the chivalry of the heroic age to emulate them.

We can thus observe the deliberate usage of a socially significant material object, which clearly referred to the core element of the past that was evoked in the sole idea of chivalric gathering itself. The similar purpose of Winchester Table was assumed by the scholars[53]. It should be therefore noted that the supposed use of the famous board would have had followed the recognized pattern. This observation may be adequately supported with the interesting albeit short account concerning another Round Table tournament. It was organized by Geoffrey Mortimer, son of Roger Mortimer, earl of March, the paramour of Queen Isabela with whom he held the power in England during the minority of Edward III. The event took place in Wigmore in 1328, two years before Roger Mortimer's death[54]. It was Juliet R. V. Barker who emphasized an interesting but undated royal account concerning the transportation of the castle made of canvas from Wigmore to Woodstock. 'Most likely' it refers to the tournament scenery which was carried from one Round Table festival to another[55].

That this kind of complex, high-volume scenography could be actually used to enact the famous events from the past is confirmed by the famous historical *entrement* which was performed at the feast ordained by Charles V for emperor Charles IV and his son Wenceslas in Paris in 1378. The scope of objects utilised on that occasion is truly remarkable. A beautifully painted ship with mast, sail and other sailing apparatus was used. It carried armed men representing the most notable heroes of the First Crusade. To say more, at the bottom of the vessel there were hidden men who in some way carried it moving swiftly in a way similar to a movement of a ship sailing on the sea. A resemblance of the town of Jerusalem was prepared. It featured a likeness of the Temple and a high tower next to it, which reached to the beams of the vault of the hall where the feast took

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[53] M. Biddle, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

[54] *The Brut or The Chronicles of England*, part 1, ed. F.W.D. Brie, London 1906, p. 262; J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Richard Barber attributes the organisation of the tournament to Roger Mortimer. However, the text of the *Brut*, albeit somehow unclear, states that it was Geoffrey who 'held the round table', see: R. Barber, *Edward III's*, p. 63. W.M. Ormrod dates the tournament to 1329, see: idem, *Edward III*, New Haven–London 2011, p. 99. See also I. Mortimer, *The Greatest Traitor*, New York 2006, pp. 196–218. Roger Mortimer was executed in 1330 on accusation of assumption of royal power (among other crimes).

[55] J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90.

place. Below that tall edifice a kind of crenelated wall with towers was located. On the aforesaid highest tower, a Saracen in the 'very appropriate' apparel characteristic for his people announced his faith in Arabic and according to the Saracen habit, emphasized the author of the account. Furthermore, the armament used by the Saracens defending the wall was also described as being *à leur maniere*[56]. It is therefore interesting to notice that in the case of *entrement* at the Paris feast not only the grandiose of the scenography was highlighted but also the realistic character of used artifacts and behaviours. This undeniable interest in verisimilitude resembles the attitude present in the modern historical reenactment.

The costumes and special pieces of armour was an important sub-category of the objects utilised to revive the past during chivalric festivals in medieval era especially because they served to announce the assumed identity. This is the case of the harness and tunic of Swan Knight made for Edward III for Christmas festivities in 1348. The apparel included shield with appropriate motto which clearly identified its bearer[57]. But perhaps a better-known instance of using this kind of garments comes from the literary description of Ulrich von Liechtenstein's adventures which he himself gave in his *Frauendienst*. Ulrich assumed King Arthur's identity and so he wore apparel which apparently clearly identified him as the famous figure during the journey to seek jousting adversaries[58].

The identifying oneself with a famous hero was easily and efficiently accomplished by the use of heraldic devices, abundantly represented on pieces of knightly gear which protected the participant of the tournament. These powerful symbols of identity could be eagerly used to evoke the glory of the kin by assuming of the role of heroic ancestors as did Richard Beauchamp during the jousts at Guines organized by himself in 1414[59]. Much more often the imaginary heraldry of the heroes of the glorious past of the chivalry was used. This kind of armorial emblems, especially the signs attributed to Arthurian knights were precisely determined in the learned treatises and indeed widely recognized, to the point of adopting the coats of arms of companions of Round Table by individuals or families in the 14th and 15th centuries. As pointed out Michel Pastoureau who conducted extensive research in this field, no less than 150–200 heraldic devices of the companions of Round Table

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[56]   *Les Grandes Chroniques de France. Chronique des règnes de Jean II et de Charles V*, vol. 2, 1364–1380, ed. R. Delachenal, Paris 1916, pp. 240–242.

[57]   A.R. Wagner, *The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight*, "Archaeologia" 1959, 97, p. 137.

[58]   J. Bumke, *op. cit.*, pp. 263, 318.

[59]   *The Beauchamp Pageant*, ed. A. Sinclair, Donington 2003, pp. 103–113; J.R.V. Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 87–88.

were established[60]. These could be not only studied and assimilated but also creatively recast, as did Jean Froissart in his Arthurian romance *Meliador*[61]. But the phenomenon was by no means restricted to the sphere of the companions of the Round Table. The coats of arms of Alexander the Macedon's knights were also widely recognized. During the tournament at Valenciennes in 1334, they were actually used to identify the participants as the members of ancient chivalry[62].

Another example indicating the wide dissemination of the use of heraldry in the performative acts embodying the past comes from Jean Froissart's description of the festive entry of Isabel of Bavaria to Paris in 1389. As part of celebration, numerous scaffolds were erected on the route taken by the queen and on the one of them '*estoit ordonné le Pas-Salhadin*', which means that the story from the short historical poem (late 13th century) about Richard the Lionheart was enacted. When Isabela approached the scene, the performance began, King Richard and his companions assaulted King Saladin and his Saracens and an intense battle commenced which was eagerly observed. It cannot be considered insignificant that in the first sentences of the description of these events, Froissart emphasized that all the lords who took part in Pas-Salhadin displayed the heraldic signs of the King Richard's companions which were used by the latter in the former epoque (of the adventure)[63]. Thus, the worlds of (historic) heraldry and reenacting deeds of chivalry of yore seem to be inseparable.

But the undeniable willingness to use the heraldic signs of the famous heroes is easily observed too. It is interestingly uncovered in the manual of conducting tournaments in Arthurian fashion from the 15th century: *La forme quon tenoit des tournoys et assemblees au temps du roy uterpendragon et du roy artus*. Its ending part is a lengthy enumeration of knights of Round Table together with their coats of arms, included

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[60] See: M. Pastoureau, *Traité d'Héraldique*, Paris 1979, pp. 258–261, esp. p. 261; idem, *Figures*, pp. 23–33; idem, *Les armoiries de Perceval*, in: *Marqueurs d'identité dans la littérature médiévale. Actes du colloque tenu à Poitiers les 17 et 18 novembre 2011*, eds. C. Girbea, L. Hablot, R. Radulescu, Turnhout 2014, pp. 25–35.

[61] F. Bouchet, *Rhétorique de l'héraldique dans le roman arthurien tardif. Le Meliador de Froissait et le Livre du Cuer d'Amours espris de René d'Anjou*, "Romania" 1998, 116, 461–462, pp. 239–249, 255, esp. p. 249.

[62] C.-F. Menestrier, *De la Chevalerie ancienne et modern*, Paris 1683, pp. 241–242; M. Cruse, *Costuming the Past: Heraldry in Illustrations of the "Roman d'Alexandre" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264)*, "Gesta" 2006, 45, 1, p. 52.

[63] *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. 14, ed. J.M.B.C Kervyn de Lettenhove, Bruxelles 1872, p. 9; R.S. Loomis, *Richard Coeur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, "Publications of Modern Language Association" 1915, 30, 3, pp. 523–528.

for those 'who want to pursuit the fashion that they conducted tournaments...'[64]. Thus, a certain but implicitly relatively common enthusiasm for assuming the roles of famous heroes by temporarily adopting their coats of arms may be discerned.

But what exactly did it mean to present oneself in the Arthur's or Lancelot's coat of arms and crest at the tournament? As a matter of fact, this question becomes all the more interesting if we don't simply impose our conceptions concerning theatrality on the medieval performative representations of the past[65]. Rather than considering the use of imaginary heraldry in terms of stage props use, it seems more advisable to take a short glimpse at the significance of heraldic symbols for the members of the knightly circles as this can allow to understand the ideas and perceptions behind the assumption of the arms of figures like Lancelot or Gawain.

In his seminal monography of chivalric culture, Maurice Keen emphasized that coats of arms 'could come to record [...] not merely the identity of an individual and his descent in blood, but a whole associated history of ancestral chivalrous achievement'. The emblem eagerly displayed in martial environment was infused with the sense of honour and pride in lineage and knightly achievement. One had to be careful not to disgrace it, as Diego de Valera warned[66].

This view is also voiced in the *Insignia seu clenodia Regis et Regni Poloniae* (first version was written about 1466–1480). The author(-s?), considered to be Jan Długosz (at least in significant part), describes the work's subject as the origins of the Polish noble houses and memory of its successive members, as well as these kin's privileges, arms and insignia in a single breath[67]. The special significance of heraldic symbols is interestingly emphasized in the context of acquiring of coats of arms in another work of Jan Długosz, *Annales seu Cronicae Regni Poloniae*. Describing the acquisition of Polish arms by the Lithuanian nobles, Długosz stressed that the former were able to rejoice the possession of heraldic signs just as the nobles of the Kingdom of Poland did[68]. Thus, the knightly families' emblems may be seen as evoking both a sense of prestige and

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[64] *La forme quon tenoit des tournoys et assembles au temps du roy uterpendragon et du roy artus*, in: E. Sandoz, *Tourneys in Arthurian Tradition*, "Speculum" 1944, 19, 4, p. 402.

[65] See for example: M. Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance du chevalier médiéval. Aspects ludiques de la fonction guerrière dans la littérature du Moyen Age flamboyant*, Leiden–Copenhagen 1988, p. 93.

[66] M. Keen, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.

[67] *Klejnoty Długoszowe*, ed. M. Friedberg, "Rocznik Polskiego Towarzystwa Heraldycznego" 1930, 10, p. 52.

[68] *Joannis Dlugossi Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, ed. C. Baczkowski et al., lib. 11, 1413–1430, Varsaviae 2000, p. 19.

acknowledgement of one's honour as well as kin's reputation. The importance of that last asset is clearly acknowledged by the genre of heraldic legend which frequently highlights the role of chivalric achievement in acquiring the arms.

Relating these remarks to the situation of adopting the emblem of the famous hero at the tournament, one more important factor must be recognised. In contrast to the theatrical spectacle, the members of the knightly society who evoked the glories of the past habitually engaged in highly competitive sport activity, that is jousting. As it was mentioned above, among many facets of this activity the more mild and safer to the participants seem to have been preferred at the Round Table tournaments. It should be considered significant that Matthew Paris in his more detailed description of this kind of chivalric gathering in Walden Abbey in 1252 (which is the earliest longer account concerning this kind of event) emphasizes the difference between *torneamentum* and *mensa rotunda* (the former should be probably understood as *melée*). He also writes that participants used lances with special points (commonly called *vomerulus*, and in French *soket*, writes the historian), which made the jousts all the more safe. However, failing to use this kind of a lance point on one occasion at Walden Round Table led to the fatal injury which captured the chronicler's attention[69].

Still, the jousting performed in the tournaments evoking the chivalry's past could be fittingly characterized as an extreme sport using modern terminology. Very illustrative descriptions of tilting completed at this kind of occasion come from the abovementioned Sarrasin's poem *Le roman de Hem*. The relation discloses certain fierceness of the contests. The desired target of lance strike is 'throat or nose, no lower'. Knights' hauberks get soaked with blood in these friendly jousts. But the greatest danger comes with a risk of direct collision of horseback riders. It is all the more likely to happen because the mounts are directed to gallop as near the opponent as possible to allow a better strike. The collision happens to Key (the important character in the performative parts of the tournament) and his horse is fatally wounded due to that. The danger is clearly recognised by the ladies watching the jousts from the platform above the tilting ground who sometimes pray for the jousting knights so that they will stay alive[70].

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[69] *Matthaei Parisiensis monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, vol. 5, ed. H. Richards Luard, London 1880, pp. 318–319; R. Barber, J. Barber, *Tournaments. Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages*, New York 1989, p. 160; J. Bumke, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

[70] Sarrasin, *Le roman du Hem*, part 1, p. 346, vv. 2282–2285 (aiming of lance), part 2, p. 413, v. 3477–3479 (hauberks soaked with blood), part 1, pp. 331–332, vv. 2019–2029,

It is worth to note that in the sphere of performative representations of the past in chivalric circles the interest in this kind of combat sports is not restricted to tournaments alone. In the aforementioned Froissart's relation of entry of Isabel of Bavaria to Paris a great battle is enacted 'for entertainment/amusement' (*Et là y eut par esbatement grant bataille*)[71]. It is the climactic moment of the historical spectacle. The same phrase features in *Grandes Chroniques de France*, in the abovementioned description of the banquet of Charles V. As the author emphasizes, the men who enacted the assault on Jerusalem, climbing the ladders and being thrown down, put on good entertainment/amusement (*esbatement*)[72].

 Engaging in this kind of activities is recognized by the scholars working in the field of the sociology of sport as providing the emotional and psychological sensations which are not provided by everyday life[73]. A significant part of these feelings is perhaps derived from the sense of 'commitment', neatly analyzed by Jeffrey Kidder in the case of parkour, as the key concept in that discipline indeed. It simply means 'to decide on a maneuver and follow through without bailing in the middle of the actions'. But this kind of action is conducted with the awareness of a certain degree of serious risk and with the management of fear[74].

The similar features of jousting were described by King Duarte of Portugal in his *Livro do Cavalgar* (*Book of Horsemanship*, 1437–1440). The learned ruler emphasized that one cannot be a good jouster if he is unable to take some risk. Moreover, Duarte depicted in considerable detail various fails and missteps caused by the lack of confidence in a tilt. The combatant should keep his body facing the opponent and turn his head towards him as much as possible with his eyes open while launching a strike, at the same time anticipating a powerful blow which he will receive himself. The learned king openly discusses the instinct to evade the encounter and avoid danger or fail resulting from the weakness of the flesh, for example, closing the eyes just before the violent clash with the opponent[75]. Thus, falling short of becoming fully committed in the tilting prevented one from becoming a respected jouster.

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p. 345, vv. 2260–2268 (collisions of jousters), part 1, pp. 313–314, vv. 1696–1699, part 2, p. 377, vv. 2830–2835 (ladies praying for saving jousters' lives).

[71]   *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. 14.

[72]   *Les Grandes*, p. 242.

[73]   M. Atkinson, *Sport and Risk Culture*, in: *The Suffering Body in Sport: Shifting Thresholds of Pain, Risk and Injury*, ed. K. Young, Bingley 2018, p. 14.

[74]   J. Kiddler, *Risk in Lifestyle Sports: The Case of Parkour*, in: *The Suffering*, p. 45.

[75]   *The Book of Horsemanship by Duarte I of Portugal*, transl. J.L. Forgeng, Woodbridge 2016, pp. 79–80, 108–109, 119–121; R. Barber, J. Barber, *op. cit.*, pp. 197–202.

The exceptionally interesting text of Duarte discloses one more striking parallel to modern reflections concerning the sport experiences which are significant for the understanding of tournaments invoking the glories of chivalric past. The king stresses the importance of 'fluidity' (*soltura*) in horsemanship and jousting. As explained by Jeffrey L. Forgeng, the translator of *Livro do Cavalgar*, this concept includes certain spontaneity and bodily relaxation in exercise which results in performing it in flowing, fluid fashion[76]. This kind of special way of behaving in sports experienced as a 'unified flowing from one moment to the next', in control of actions, but without a need of conscious intervention, was described by cultural anthropologists as 'flow'. The concept comprises experiencing particular mental state of blurring distinctions between self and environment, past, present and future[77]. This type of sensation is well recognized in the sports demanding high level of commitment like rock climbing. It is described as including the feelings of being 'hyper-focused', losing the fear and awareness of self-consciousness as well as involving state of mind akin to ecstatic[78]. As such, it is eagerly sought for, sometimes to the point of engaging in the riskiest ways of climbing to induce it.

It is thus important to notice that the assuming of heraldic signs of the heroes of old took place in the particular circumstances of combative rivalry which could induce stirring and extraordinary experiences. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that it is during the practices of the akin kind – evoking the glimpse of the experience of battle – that modern reenactors encounter the sensations described as 'magic moment', 'period rush' or 'time warp'. These were described as 'reported flashes of almost revelatory temporal connection'[79]. But in the case of the participants of Round Table tournaments this kind of experiences and emotions could be experienced in a high-risk risk combative activity which undeniably induced strong emotional responses itself. Thus, it can be assumed that the feelings of understanding and connecting with the past could be perceived

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[76] *The Book of Horsemanship*, pp. 98–101.

[77] M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Flowing: A General Model of Intrinsically Rewarding Experiences*, "Journal of Humanistic Psychology" 1975, 15, 3, pp. 41–63; V. Turner, *Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: an Essay in Comparative Symbology*, "Rice University Studies" 1974, 60, 3, pp. 87–88.

[78] See for example: H. Findlay, *Tap the Flow State to Climb Your Best. Sounds Absurd? Believe It*, "Climbing" 15th February 2022, https://www.climbing.com/skills/climbing-flow-state/ [access: 1.01.2024]; S. Chattopadhyay, *Flow and Notes on Climbing*, "Boulderbox", 27th March 2020, https://www.boulderbox.in/blog/flow-and-notes-on-climbing [access: 1.01.2024].

[79] M. Daugbjerg, *Battle*, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies. Key Terms in the Field*, eds. V. Agnew, J. Lamb, J. Tomann, Abingdon–New York 2020, pp. 27–28.

as deeper and more profound than these experienced by modern reen-
actors who do not engage in such activities. But more important for our
discussion is that the aforesaid adventurous sphere allowed to literally
try to match the knightly reputation and skill of the Arthurian heroes
who very willingly engaged in tournaments themselves.

Discussing the aforesaid kind of experiences of modern reenactors,
Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska affirms the role of authenticity in experi-
encing the past which may trigger the aforesaid sensations. It is important
to emphasize though that the concept include both object authenticity
(in the expected sense of used 'kit') and the existential authenticity which
is subjective and 'born in performance'[80]. If we juxtapose these observa-
tions concerning the modern reenactment with the so far discussed view
of the medieval performative endeavours to revive the past, both the
strong similarities and differences may be noticed. Apparently, the elites
of high and late Middle Ages understood the past in a different way than
contemporary people, which exemplifies itself in a common perception
of the institutions and material culture from the earlier eras as identical
with their own[81]. In the case of medieval performers of the chivalric past,
the nature of experiences from the sphere of the object authority which
they encountered should be considered as significantly different from the
ones accessible to the modern reenactors.

One may deduce that because of the aforesaid perceived identicalness
of the past and present environments of social life in the medieval era, the
experience of the yesterday glories was easier and more natural to attain
solely because of the perceived sameness of bygone and contemporary
kinesthetic experiences (related to the perception that the same material
objects, as military gear, remained the same in time)[82]. The same may
be said about the unity of (chivalric) culture and social institutions[83].
Still, the use of the artifacts representing the well-known objects from

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[80]   K. Baraniecka-Olszewska, *In-between reality and fiction. Participation in historical reen-
actments*, in: *Archaeological Open-Air Museums. Reconstruction and Re-Enactment – Reality or
Fiction?*, ed. J. Gancarski, Krosno 2022, pp. 380–382; comp. K. Johnson, *Performing Pasts for
Present Purposes: Reenactment as Embodied, Performative History*, in: *History, Memory, Perfor-
mance*, eds. D. Dean, Y. Meerzon, K. Prince, New York 2015, p. 44.

[81]   This phenomenon is interpreted by M. Cruse, *op. cit.*, p. 51, as the expression of chi-
valric ideology.

[82]   K. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–38, 45–48; K. Baraniecka-Olszewska, *Reko-rekonesans: prak-
tyka autentyczności. Antropologiczne stadium odtwórstwa historycznego drugiej wojny światowej
w Polsce*, Kęty 2018, pp. 108–115, 142, 214; eadem, *In-between*, p. 381.

[83]   M. Cruse, *op. cit.*, pp. 52, 54. Comp. K. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 47, on the role of 'demon-
stration of customs and behaviours through bodies' in reenactment and K. Baraniecka-
-Olszewska, *Rola ciała w transmisji wiedzy o przeszłości. Źródła pozadyskursywne w badaniach*

the history of knighthood indicates that this form of connecting with the past was important for the participants of the events during which performative embodying of the chivalric traditions took place. These objects included the blazonry which served as the means by the use of which both object and existential authority were experienced in the situations where commitment and flow were commonly experienced and which triggered extraordinary sensations because of that.

It is therefore all the more appropriate to consider the discussed medieval performative appeals to the past in the framework of reenactment rather than pure theatrical performances. Regarding this one should address the problem of the phraseology used for describing the Arthurian tournament in the imaginative story of King Edward I's Round Table from Lodewijk van Velthem's Middle Dutch *Continuation of Spiegel Historial (this part of the work was written in 1315–1316)*. The term used by Dutch author to name the event is *spel* ('play', *spel die tavelronde*, *spel van Artur den conic*). It is significant though that the term is also specifically applied to the combative part of the event[84]. The same French term *jeu* features in *Roman de Hem* to name one of the jousts at the tournament presided over by Queen Guinevere[85]. The 'play' should not be thus understood as evoking performance on the stage but in the sense of 'practising, performing, doing (some action) [...]' or 'performing or practising in the way of sport...'[86].

This way of understanding of Arthurian tournaments becomes apparent if we acknowledge that in the case of *Roman de Hem* even though only few persons act as the characters of the stories of Round Table and the rest of the jousters tilt under their own names, all of them consider themselves to be knights of Queen Guinevere. This becomes apparent in the performative scene of the entry of a damsel who was led on a horse without a saddle by her knight-lover while being beaten and insulted by a wicked dwarf. The reason for that maltreatment was that during the discussion with her lover she stated that the knights of Guinevere are the finest in the world. As a consequence of this performance, a knight

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antropologicznych nad rekonstrukcją historyczną, "Etnografia Polska" 2018, 62, 1–2, pp. 224–227, on the reviving and bringing back behaviours in performances.

[84] Lodewijk van Velthem, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–247, vv. 1143–1144, pp. 252–253, vv. 1259–1265.

[85] Sarrasin, *Le roman du Hem*, part 1, p. 341, vv. 2196–2197. Compare the name of French fencing treatise *Le Jeu de la Hache*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms Français 1996 (ca 1460–1485).

[86] *The Oxford English Dictionary. Being a Corrected Re-Issue with an Introduction, Supplement, and Bibliography of a New English Dictionary*, vol. 7, ed. J.A.H. Murray et al., Oxford 1978, p. 975, I.9.

immediately presents himself to the Queen and jousts the man who treated the damsel with disdain, without neither holding back nor a word of challenge. But the most interesting for us is that both the opponents are identified by their own names (the knight who defends the girl by his arms too) and come from just to the north-west of Le Hem and north of Arras respectively[87]. It was thus not necessarily required to assume the identity of one of the Arthurian personages or use his heraldic sign to perceive oneself as belonging to this (reenacted) circle of the companions of the Round Table.

But how exactly medieval authors perceived and described participation in the performative events that allowed to acquire such experiences? In the description of the very earliest known Arthurian tournament (organized by John of Ibelin in Cyprus, in 1223) from Philippe de Novare's *Mémoires* the term *contrefaire* ('imitate') is used. As the Italian author wrote, *Mout i ot douné et despendu, et bouhordé, et contrefait les aventures de Bretaigne et de la Table ronde, et moult manieres de jeus* ('A lot was allocated and assigned, and buhurt, and the imitation of adventures of Bretaigne and of the Round Table, and many ways of plays')[88]. Thus, the aforesaid adventures were not acted out but repeated or mirrored in the tournament environment as one of the abovementioned chivalric 'plays'.

The very same term *cŏuntrefĕten* features in the Middle English description of the abovementioned Wigmore tournament of 1328 from *Brut* chronicle. As the author explains, Geoffrey Mortimer held the Round Table for all men willing to take part in it and *countrefetede þe maner & doyng of King Arthureȝ table*. Thus, according to most common sense of the term given by the University of Michigan Middle English Dictionary (sense 1a), Mortimer 'followed the example of (a person), imitated, emulated; behaved like (sth.)'[89] 'the practices and doings of King Arthur's table'[90]. Therefore, not only particular actions or adventures might have been the object of performance on the tournaments evoking the past of chivalry. The much wider sphere of customs, social behaviours and pursuits

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[87]   Sarrasin, *Le roman du Hem*, part 2, pp. 387–394, v. 3018–3165; Sarrasin, *The Romance of Le Hem*, in: *The Tournaments at Le Hem and Chauvency*, transl. N. Bryant, Woodbridge 2020, fn. 146, 147.

[88]   Philippe de Novare, *Mémoires, 1218–1243*, ed. C. Kohler, Paris 1913. Comp. R.S. Loomis, *Chivalric*, pp. 79–80.

[89]   „Countrefeten" in: *Middle English Dictionary*, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED10003/track?counter=1&search_id=70050496 [access: 1.02.2024].

See also "manēr(e", in: *Middle English Dictionary*, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED26736 [access: 1.02.2024].

[90]   *The Brut*, p. 262.

may also have been recreated. Adding to that, it is relevant to highlight an interesting feature of the act of 'imitating' disclosed by the author of the account. He chastises Mortimer severely on the account of holding the Round Table, pointing out his pride and vileness. But the historian also emphasizes that the aristocrat failed in his intent to imitate King Arthur because the latter was the worthiest and most renown lord of all the world. To advance the explanation further, the author rehearses the military achievements of the famous ruler[91]. Thus, the act of imitating is a serious undertaking, both in the terms of being means to communicate ideas, enhance prestige, but also of fulfilling certain ethical and even political standards.

This aspect of tournaments evoking the glory of knighthood is clearly visible in the aforementioned imaginative story of Round Table tournament from Lodewijk van Velthem's *Continuation*. Here the chief participants, that is, the chosen knights, take part in the tournament under the names of the most famous companions of the Round Table and are recognised as such in the course of the event. The gathering is by no means solely celebratory in its character: a clear impression of seriousness of challenge and commitment is highlighted. The elected knights are ordered by the King to take the oath that they will observe the Arthur's *sede* ('way, custom, practice', lat. *consuetudo*)[92] during the tournament. But what these Edward's lords didn't know was that their king ordered the men from all the cities to 'hinder or hurt them'. Van Velthem interestingly points out the consequences of failing to match the high standards of king Arthur's chivalry against these formidable opponents. If Edward's knights of the Round Table would fail in that regard, they would be 'with great shame utterly condemned by their companions'. One should note that what ensues, is not a jousting tournament but *melée*, an engagement in the manner of early tournaments, during which Edward's companions of Round Table fight as a collective, standing for each other, ready to avenge misfortunes that may befell their comrades[93].

The frequently discussed features of Lodewijk van Velthem's story concern three performative scenes, orchestrated by the English king himself. Their plot and purpose are however unknown to the knights imitating Arthur's men. In consequence, the lords are persuaded to help Edward in his campaigns against Wales, Ireland and in the internal affairs (they

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[91]   *Ibidem*.

[92]   "Sede", in: *Historische woordenboeken Nederlands en Fries*, https://gtb.ivdnt.org/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=MNW&id=50831&lemma=sede&domein=0&conc=true [access: 1.02.2024].

[93]   Lodewijk van Velthem, *op. cit.*, pp. 246–251, vv. 1139–1226.

take an oath to do so), without realising the hidden intent of the ruler, as explains the author of the narrative[94]. It is thus important to notice that in the opinion of the Flemish historian the outcomes of the participation in Arthurian tournament transcend the sphere of the performance and the chivalric festival itself.

A similar feature of the tournaments evoking the past of chivalry may be seen in the case of very particular accounts concerning the afore-said matter: *The Jousting Letters of EUL MS 183* from Edinburgh University Library, called also *Edinburgh Jousting Letters*. These are copies made between 1390 to 1410 of five letters from the reign of Edward III, probably from about the middle of 14th century. These messages were written probably within the English court, presumably in Queen Philippa's circles. The identification of the authors and recipients is in most cases unclear because they assume the personae who evoke the interest in exoticism, Trojan ancestry (traditions linking the aristocratic houses of Plantagenets and Counts of Hainault to Aeneas), chansons de gestes of Charlemagne cycle but also, significantly in the case of squires whose jousts were arranged in the letters, the knights of the Round Table[95]. What is important though is that the letters express the feminine voices concerning the organisation of tilting in this historical-mythical garb. They also clearly testify to the extent of the identification with the figures from the imagined past and far-away lands which far exceeds the sphere of the performances at chivalric festivals[96].

But especially illustrative example of the significance of the role performed during Round Table tournament comes from Lodewijk van Velthem's story. It concerns King Edward himself. In one of the performative pieces, the challenge of the King of Ireland is presented to 'Lancelot'. After that the Plantagenet ruler who behaved during the feast as Arthur was obliged to declare to support his man. The author of the narrative puts expressive words in Edward's mouth: he announces that he will ride through every land on behalf of his knights, just as Arthur did for the Knights of the Round Table[97]. Thus, a '*play*' of King Arthur is depicted as a serious one. The person from the past who is embodied in the performance serves as the model for subsequent actions outside the festival. Of course, as was mentioned above, Dutch author's story is an imaginative vision of Arthurian tournament which probably didn't

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[94] *Ibidem*, pp. 252–269, vv. 1286–1636.
[95] P.E. Bennett, S. Carpenter, L. Gardiner, *Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III: the Jousting Letters of EUL MS 183*, "Medium Ævum" 2018, 87, 2, pp. 304–342.
[96] Comp. C. Daniel, *op. cit.*, p. 282.
[97] Lodewijk van Velthem, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–261, vv. 1423–1435.

take place. But the attitude expressed by the Flemish historian receives a strong corroboration in the interesting information from Jean le Bel's *Chronique*. Describing the return of Edward III to England from the campaign in Scotland in 1333, the historian emphasized that the ruler 'often held great fests, tournaments, jousts and gatherings of dames and because of that he acquired so great dignity among everyone that all were saying that he was the second King Arthur'[98].

As it may be therefore seen, the idea that one could actually be considered to be very much alike the famous person from the past in the wide social circle outreaches far the realm of performance on chivalric festivals. But what is also significant about the example from Le Bel's chronicle is that it is the sphere of engagement in the organisation of tournaments and chivalric festivals which made the people (presumably from upper social strata) perceive Edward III as the second Arthur. Excellence in maintaining this chivalric and courtly gatherings makes the king identical to the well-recognized exemplary ruler. It may be thus seen that the spheres of the glorious past and remarkable present mingle together in medieval social perceptions.

This kind of an attitude towards the past is well known to be the feature of historical literature in traditional societies. William T. H. Jackson emphasised the importance of this phenomenon in the discussion concerning the Greek epic. Within this genre 'the sense of repetition is strong, a sense of cycles of heroes, different but representing the same heroic qualities'[99]. The same may be said about medieval epic literature. In *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin* written by Cuvelier (1380–1385) an advice (by *princesse de Gales*) for those, who want to acquire the name of 'good and valiant' may be found: they should act in battle as did Roland and few other named heroes of chansons de gestes and the cycle of Knights of Round Table[100]. The phenomenon of modelling oneself on these paragons of chivalry was neatly described by Mark Cruse as 'chivalric *imitatio*', 'an imperative frequently voiced in chivalric literature and treatises [...]

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[98]   Jean le Bel, *Chronique*, vol. 1, p. 118: 'roy Edowart [...] et souvent tint grandes festes, tournoys, joustes et assemblées de dames, par quoy il acquist si grande grace envers tous que chascun disoit que c'estoit le second roy Artus.' Comp. *ibidem*, p. 4: 'certaine chose est que l'opinion des Anglès est communement telle, et l'a on souvent veu avenir en Angleterre puis le roy Artus, que entre deux vaillans roys d'Angleterre a tousjours eu ung mains souffisant de sens et de proesse.'

[99]   W.T.H. Jackson, *The Hero and the King. An Epic Theme*, New York 1982, p. 119.

[100]   *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin par Cuvelier*, vol. 1, ed. E. Charriére, Paris 1859, pp. 376–377, vv. 10707–10719; J.J. Duggan, *Social Functions of Medieval Epic in the Romance Literatures*, "Oral Tradition" 1986, 1, p. 747.

to remember and model oneself after, the deeds of exemplary knights'[101]. Indeed, the idea that the glory of knighthood may be transferred from one era to another was voiced as early as Chretien de Troyes' *Cligés* (ca 1176–1177)[102]. Thus, medieval ways of performative evoking the past should be understood in the context of the phenomenon of perceiving the historical time in terms of repeating cycles, which the ubiquitous (in learned circles) concept of *translatio* (*imperii*, *studii*, *chevalerie*) exemplifies.

Could one therefore use the term 'reenactment' for the medieval socio-cultural phenomena of tournaments evoking the glorious past of chivalry? Were the experiences of its participants, scope and ideas behind the Arthurian tournaments fundamentally different from these characteristic of modern reenactment?

This question is by no means an easy one to answer and the conclusion is far from being unambiguous. Certainly, there are types of modern reenactment events which include some risk and commitment as for example these organised by International Medieval Combat Federation, which are all about fullcontact sport fighting using medieval type of gear. It is obvious that people attending this kind of festivals do this out of their own passion for this kind of leisure, not sparing themselves of relatively significant expenses to pursue it. Thus, they behave in some way similar to the tournament enthusiasts of the Middle Ages. The practice of the reenactors of our own era was probably best understood in terms of creating the 'figure', that is acquiring certain skills and learning behaviours from the past, which are frequently connected with the use of material artifacts or body itself. But assuming this 'figure' during the reenactment event involves also transferring certain values, ethos and esthetics from the bygone to the contemporary but without importing the identity of the particular person or tuning into his/her mental states. The experiences and feelings which reenactor encounters are perceived as his own albeit concerning the realm of (reenacted) past[103]. It is thus a kind of behaviour comparable to knights of Queen Guinevere at La Hem tournament who joust under their own heraldic signs, obviously celebrating the glory of Arthurian heroes. But even the modern practitioners of historical reenactment sometimes go as far as to identify themselves with the aforesaid 'figure' in their everyday life, although this is an attitude which is subject to criticism of their colleagues[104].

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[101] M. Cruse, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

[102] D. Kelly, *Alexander's Clergie*, in: *The Medieval French Alexander*, eds. D. Maddox, S. Sturm-Maddox, New York 2002, p. 39.

[103] K. Baraniecka-Olszewska, *Reko-rekonesans*, pp. 211–216.

[104] *Ibidem*, pp. 210–211.

Consciously or not, the idea of *imitatio* seems to be sometimes followed in the contemporary world and without doubt retained some of its attractiveness. But it is essential to highlight the important differences in its perceptions in medieval and modern mind as testify the medieval performative forms of reviving the past. They offered significantly more intense experiences as the widely perceived closeness to the bygone allowed to evoke and affirm it eminently intensively via the material, social and cultural means of the present milieu. Thus, one may talk about modern reenactment but in the case of medieval phenomenon more appropriate term would be recreation. Still, having acknowledged these significant differences, one is left with the impression of dealing with the same phenomenon of performative affection towards the past.

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