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Edited by
Gerhard Jaritz, Kyra Lyublyanovics, Ágnes Drosztmér



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**“LAUGH, MY LOVE, LAUGH:”
MOTTOS, PROVERBS AND LOVE INSCRIPTIONS
ON LATE MEDIEVAL BONE SADDLES¹**

Virág Somogyvári

Introduction

Fifteenth-century bone saddles form a particularly unique and special object group in medieval Central European history. There are thirty-three bone saddles dispersed in museums of all over the world from Budapest to New York.² Most of the saddles were preserved in collections of aristocratic families before they were taken to their current homes, the museums.³ Despite their particularity and uniqueness, these bone saddles have a marginal position in scholarship.⁴ There are

¹ The article is based on Virág Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” MA thesis (Central European University, 2017). I would like to thank my supervisors, Alice M. Choyke and Béla Zsolt Szakács for their support for my research. I am particularly grateful to Gerhard Jaritz for his enormous help reviewing the inscriptions, transcriptions and translations of the saddles, and to András Vizkelety for his critical advice on the translations and the literary context. Finally, I thank Chloé Miller for her advice on the language of my paper.

² In 2006, Mária Verő assembled a comprehensive and critically reviewed list of twenty-eight saddles. Mária Verő, “Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit,” in *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 270–78. I built on this list with new pieces in my MA thesis, so my catalogue includes a total of thirty-three saddles. See Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 102–50. The online database of the Courtauld Institute of Art, the *Gothic Ivories Project* (hereinafter GIP) includes twenty-one saddles. Courtauld Institute of Art, *Gothic Ivories Project* [GIP], <http://www.gothicivories.courtauld.ac.uk/> (accessed October, 2017).

³ See Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 13–14.

⁴ One part of scholarship is confined to annotated lists of the saddles: Sir Guy Francis Laking, *A Record of European Armour and Arms through Seven Centuries*, pt. 3 (London: G. Bell and sons, 1920); István Genthon, “Monumenti artistici ungheresi all'estero,” *Acta Historiae Artium* 16 (1970): 5–36; Lionello Giorgio Boccia, *L'Armeria del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna* (Busto Arsizio: Bramante, 1991). The first dissertation that did not simply list but also interpreted the saddles was written by Julius von Schlosser: Julius von Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsattel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 15 (1894): 260–94; Julius von Schlosser, “Die Werkstatt der Embriachi in Venedig,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 20 (1899): 220–82. Apart from these, there are articles and catalogue entries of one or two saddles with different kinds of interpretations: Kovács Éva, “Disznyereg Sárkányrenddel! [Parade saddle with the emblem of Dragon Order], in *Művészet Zsigmond király korában 1387–1437*

several issues regarding their places and times of origin, their original purposes, and their use for which there are no convincing answers due to the lack of written sources.

In the twentieth century, a theory emerged that all of the saddles were made for Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund's Order of the Dragon.⁵ However, recently a new idea has arisen regarding the original purpose and function of the saddles. Benedetta Chiesi suggests that these saddles were used in tournaments and parades as well as in marriage ceremonies, more precisely during the procession of *domumductio*, in which the bride was led from the parental house to her new husband's house. This procession symbolized the change of the bride's status and it was also a chance to display the family's wealth by showing off the dowry.⁶ The main goal of my recent MA thesis was to examine this new marriage theory and find an answer to the question of whether the fifteenth-century bone saddles were made for wedding purposes.⁷

The complexity and interdisciplinary character of the bone saddles resides in the fact that they can be examined from different approaches: art history, literary history, material culture, military history and cultural history. In this present article, I am examining the subject from the literary history point of view, focusing on the inscriptions incised into the saddles. Therefore, I will make

[Art in the time of King Sigismund] [exhibition catalog], vol. 2, ed. László Beke et al. (Budapest: Budapesti Történeti Múzeum 1987), 83–85; János Eisler, "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums I," *Folia Archaeologica* 28 (1977): 189–210; and "Zu den Fragen der Beinsättel des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums II," *Folia Archaeologica* 30 (1979): 205–48; Verő, "Bemerkungen zu den Beinsätteln aus der Sigismundzeit," 270–8; Benedetta Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," in *Voyager au Moyen Age* [exhibition catalog], ed. Benedetta Chiesi et al. (Paris: Musée de Cluny – Réunion des musées nationaux, 2014), 101; Virág Somogyvári, "Zsigmond-kori csontnyergek a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban" [Fifteenth-century bone saddles in the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest], MA thesis (Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, 2016).

⁵ See Géza Nagy, "Hadtörténeti ereklyék a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeumban: Első közlemény," [Relics of military history in the Hungarian National Museum: First report], *Hadtörténeti Közlemények* 11 (1910): 232; Kornél Divald, *A Magyar iparművészet története* [History of Hungarian applied arts] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1929), 47–8; Stephen V. Grancsay, "A Medieval Sculptured Saddle," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 36 (1941): 76.

⁶ Benedetta Chiesi, "Le pouvoir s'exerce à cheval," 101.

⁷ Accordingly, my thesis is divided into four main chapters. In the first chapter, I give an overview of the most important issues about the object group. In the second chapter, I reveal the saddles' dominating iconography which is connected to love. The third chapter examines the inscriptions which usually have some love-related message, and the initials, which may refer to actual couples. Finally, I place these special objects in their probable cultural context: late medieval marriage rituals. See Somogyvári, "The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles."

a classification dividing three different types of inscriptions. Afterwards I will place some of these inscriptions in their possible literary context. This kind of examination of the saddles is particularly important since it has not been applied yet in scholarship. My examination covers only a handful of examples; therefore, at the end of the article, a table comprising the critically reviewed inscriptions of the saddles is attached. The following saddles, listed in the table, will be discussed: the Batthyány-Strattmann Saddle; the Western Bargello Saddle; the Saddle of Ercole d’Este; the Rhédey Saddle; the Tratzberg Saddle; the Saddle of the Tower of London; the Meyrick Saddle; and the Braunschweig Saddle.⁸

Inscriptions

The inscriptions adorning the saddles fall into two main categories: twelve saddles are decorated with Middle High German, while three saddles have Latin inscriptions. Their length and meaning differ. The shorter inscriptions include mottos and short phrases. The longer ones are love dialogues written in rhymes on banderoles held by male and female figures on the saddles.

Mottos

The following saddle inscriptions can be interpreted as mottos: the repeated “*gedenkech und halt*” (recall and wait) on the Batthyány-Strattmann Saddle; the inscription of the Western Bargello Saddle (“*aspetto tempo / amor / laus / deo*” – I wait time / love / praise to / God); and the inscriptions of the Saddle of Ercole d’Este (“*deus fortitudo mea / deus adiutor*” – God my strength / God my supporter).⁹ On the last of these, “*deus adiutor*” accompanies a scene of Saint George on the right cantle.¹⁰ The “*deus fortitudo mea*” appears in its full length on the back of the left cantle above a scene of Samson or Hercules fighting with a lion. Additionally, they appear in abbreviated forms (“*deus forti, deus fortitu*”) on each side of the

⁸ For entire descriptions of the saddles including their current locations and inventory numbers, see Table. For the explanation of the appellations, and the traditional classification of the saddles (Eastern and Western types), see Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 102–150.

⁹ The “*aspetto tempo*” occurs in Dante’s Canzone as well: “Aspetto tempo che più ragion prenda; / Purché la vita tanto si difenda.” (Canzone XIV). Dante Alighieri, *Opere poetiche di Dante Alighieri*, ed. Antonio Buttura (Oxford, 1823), 152. I am grateful to Patrik Pastrnak who drew my attention to this poem.

¹⁰ The cantle is the raised section at the back of the saddle. On the bone saddles these cantles are bifurcated so that one can distinguish the right and left cantles on each saddle.

saddle.¹¹ The “*deus fortitudo mea*” can also be read on the reverse of Ercole I d’Este’s *grossone*, running around the depiction of Saint George.¹² It is his personal motto and the coat of arms of the Este family on the front side which indicate that the saddle belonged to Duke Ercole I d’Este (1471–1505), the count of Ferrara. This is the only bone saddle regarding which we can deduce the original owner based on the motto and personal coat of arms.

Proverbs

Two proverbs are prominently featured as part of dialogues on the saddles. One of the proverbs is the “*lach li[e]b lach*” (laugh, [my] love, laugh) inscription that adorns the Rhédey and the Tratzberg Saddles (Figures 1–2).¹³ On the Rhédey Saddle, it is placed above the scene of Aristotle and Phyllis, heightening its



Fig. 1. Tratzberg Saddle (left side). New York, MET, inv. 04.3.249.
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art

¹¹ “Samson:” Courtauld Institute of Art, *Gothic Ivories Project* [GIP]; “Hercules:” Julius von Schlosser, “Elfenbeinsättel des ausgehenden Mittelalters,” 274.

¹² *Ibid.*, 273.

¹³ “*Lieb*” can also convey the imperative mood and therefore the inscription can be translated as a command of sorts: “laugh, love, laugh.”

mocking character.¹⁴ On the Tratzberg Saddle, the inscription does not connect to any particular scene; it is part of a dialogue between a man and woman, both depicted, and running through the whole surface of the saddle: “*wol mich wart / ich hof der liben somerzeit / lach lib lach*” (just wait for me / I am hoping for dear summertime / laugh, [my] love, laugh). The “*lach lieb lach*” expression exists in a contemporary literary source as well, the *Lobriser Handschrift*, which includes the work of Heinrich Münsinger: *Buch von den Falken, Habichten, Sperbern, Pferden und Hunden*.¹⁵ The book is the German translation and variation of Albert the Great’s zoological work: *De animalibus libri* (chapters 22 and 23).¹⁶ Münsinger’s translation in the *Lobriser Handschrift* can be dated to between 1420 and 1480.¹⁷ In one part of the book, which discusses hawks, the scribe concludes with the following line: “...und damit hat das drittail dißs buchs ain end. Got unß sin hayligen frid send. *Laus Deo! Lach. Lieb. Lach.*” (...and with this the third part of the book ends. God send his holy peace to us. Praise to God! Laugh, [my] love, laugh).¹⁸



Fig. 2. Tratzberg Saddle (left side, detail).
New York, MET, inv. 04.3.249.
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art

¹⁴ The saddle displays the moment when Alexander’s lover, Phyllis, rides on the philosopher’s back, proving that even the wisest person can become a fool of love. The scene of Aristotle and Phyllis was a popular motif in the Late Middle Ages, represented especially on secular objects. See Paula Mae Carns, “Compilatio in Ivory: The Composite Casket in the Metropolitan Museum,” *Gesta* 44, no. 2 (2005): 71.

¹⁵ Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Cam. 4^o52, fol. 1–116 (C). Heinrich Meisner, “Die Lobriser Handschrift von Heinrich Münsinger,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 11 (1880): 480–2; Kurt Lindner, ed., *Von Falken, Hunden und Pferden. Deutsche Albertus-Magnus-Übersetzungen aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Jagd 7–8. (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1962), 83.

¹⁶ Irvén M. Resnick, ed., *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 730.

¹⁷ Meisner, “Die Lobriser Handschrift von Heinrich Münsinger,” 481.

¹⁸ Lindner, *Von Falken, Hunden und Pferden. Deutsche Albertus-Magnus-Übersetzungen aus der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, 83.



Fig. 3. Tratzberg Saddle (right side). New York, MET, inv. 04.3.249.
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 4. Tratzberg Saddle (detail of the right cantle).
New York, MET, inv. 04.3.249.
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The other proverb in the Tratzberg Saddle's inscription is the "*in dem ars is vinsten*" (it is black/dark in the arse – Figures 3–4). The proverb also appears on the Saddle of the Tower of London as "*im ars is vinsten*" (Figure 5). On the Tratzberg Saddle, it is part of the already mentioned inscription; the man's response to the woman: "*wol mich nu wart / in dem ars is vinsten / frei dich mit gantzem willen*" (just wait for me / it is black/dark in the arse



Fig. 5. Bone saddle. London, Tower of London (Royal Armouries), inv. VI.95.
© Royal Armouries

/ rejoice, with your whole will). On the Saddle of the Tower of London, the inscription is presented in an isolated position and is divided between the back sides of the two cantles: “*im ars / is vinster.*” This expression can also be found in contemporary German literature, more specifically in a manuscript preserving the Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf located in Alba Iulia’s Biblioteca Batthyaniana.¹⁹ The original Latin dialogue, featuring the Old Testament king and a medieval peasant, was probably conceived around the eleventh century, and its Latin and German vernacular versions were widespread and extremely popular

¹⁹ Alba Iulia, Biblioteca Batthyaniana cod. I. 54. fol. 59 v–fol 60 r; 1469. Róbert Szentiványi, *Catalogus concinnus librorum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Batthyányanae: Albae in Transsilvania* (Szeged: Ablaka, 1947), 35–36; Sabine Griese, *Salomon und Markolf – Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation* (Berlin, Boston: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2013), 283.

in German lands from the fifteenth century onwards.²⁰ Accordingly, the extant manuscripts from that time were all copied in southern Germany and Austria.²¹ The work is composed of five verbal contests, each using different rhetorical forms: genealogies, proverbs, riddles, arguable propositions and arguments on both sides of an issue. As part of the proverb contest, Solomon quotes a moral statement from the Old Testament Wisdom Books to which Marcolf adapts Solomon's statement in vulgar language, mocking it. He degrades Solomon's wisdom by applying his words to the functions of the lower parts of the body.²² In this section of the manuscript Solomon says: "*Ain schöns weib ist ain zier jrm mann*" (A beautiful woman is an ornament for her husband). Marcolf's reply is: "*Auff dem Hals ist sy weis als ain tawben, jm ars vinster als ein scher*" (In the neck she is white as a dove, in the asshole²³ black as a mole).²⁴ The existence of the inscription in this contemporary German dialogue as a proverb suggests either that it could be the literary source of the inscription or – in the case of a less direct connection – that it was a popular idiomatic phrase at the time. Nevertheless, this vulgar proverb seems strange on the saddles when comparing it to the rest of their inscriptions and the illustrations. For example, on the Saddle of the Tower of London, the other parts of the inscription pray to God and Saint George for

²⁰ Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury, eds., introduction to *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf: A Dual-Language Edition from Latin and Middle English Printed Editions*, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2012), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/bradbury-solomon-and-marcolf-intro> (accessed May, 2017).

²¹ For the German versions of the dialogue, see Walter Benary ed., *Salomon et Marcolfus. Kritischer Text mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen, Übersicht über die Sprüche, Namen- und Wörterverzeichnis*, Sammlung mittellateinischer Texte 8 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1914); Michael Curschmann, "Marcolfus deutsch. Mit einem Faksimile des Prosa-Drucks von M. Ayer (1487)," *Kleinere Erzählformen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger, *Fortuna vitrea* 8 (Tübingen: De Gruyter, 1993), 151–255; Griese, *Salomon und Markolf – Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation*.

²² Bradbury and Bradbury, introduction to *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf: A Dual-Language Edition from Latin and Middle English Printed Editions*.

²³ Ziolkowski translates the "ars" as "asshole." Jan M. Ziolkowski, transl., *Solomon and Marcolf*, *Harvard Studies in Medieval Latin* 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Department of the Classics, Harvard University, 2008), 71.

²⁴ In other German versions of the dialogue, this line slightly differs, see the manuscript of the Staatsbibliothek of Munich (germ. 3973, middle of 15th century) fol. 211. v. and the first printed version: M. Ayer, 1482 (?) Nuremberg; Griese, *Salomon und Markolf – Ein literarischer Komplex im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu Überlieferung und Interpretation*, 289; Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, 71.

success. Also, on the Tratzberg Saddle, lovers wait for each other and for the summertime. Neither of these contexts are reasonable places to mention a vulgar proverb about the darkness within arses.

The appearance of the same phrases such as “*im ars is vinster*” and “*lach li[e] b lach*” in completely different genres suggests that they were frequently used proverbs at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The words “*lach lieb lach*” can be found in a book about animals (*Summa zoologica*), while “*jm ars vinster*” is part of a medieval dialogue between an Old Testament king and a peasant. These examples illustrate that the proverbs fit well in completely different contexts. This ambiguous character of these literary examples, as well as the inscriptions of the saddles, may seem peculiar to us, but their medieval audience was probably well-acquainted with them and their meaning.

Love inscriptions

Love inscriptions include short sentences as well as dialogues in rhymes between the men and women depicted on the saddles. Most of these dialogues show similarities to Middle High German lyric.

The dialogue between the man and woman is the longest on the Meyrick Saddle (Figure 6). There are two inscriptions on each side. The long inscription on a banderol starts on the cantle, runs along the borders of the saddle, rises up the volute, and finishes in the hand of the woman on the left side and the hand of the man on the right side. The shorter inscription runs around the field, under the cantles on each side, and is held by a man on the left side and by a woman on the right side. The long inscription held by the woman on the left side says: “*ich pin bie ich ways nit wie / ich var von dann ich ways nit wan / nu wol auf mit willen unvergessen*” (I am here, I don’t know how / I am leaving, I don’t know when / Now then, willingly unforgotten). The long inscription held by the man on the right side replies: “*ich var ich har ye lenger ich har me gresser nar / dein ewichleich in sand ierigen nam*” (I go, I wait, the longer I wait the more rescue/salvation I have / yours forever in the name of Saint George). The short inscription, held by a man on the left side says: “*ich frei mich all zeit dein*” (I always rejoice you), and the woman on the right side replies: “*we den ke[...] rat*” (?).²⁵ The inscriptions show similarities with two genres of Medieval German lyric. This kind of dialogue between a man and woman can be identified with the genre of *Wechsel* (exchange between man and woman). The *Wechsel* does not mean a direct conversation, but rather a series

²⁵ Due to the unresolved abbreviation after the k[...], the meaning of the sentence is not clear.



Fig. 6. Meyrick Saddle. London, Wallace Collection, inv. A 408.
© The Wallace Collection, London

of strophes which relate to one another.²⁶ Apart from this, the hesitant character of the inscription (“*ich var, ich bar...*”) suggests a moment of separation, and therefore can be linked to the tradition of the *Tagelied* (dawn song), which is a lyric type that describes the couple waking up together in the early morning when they are warned by a bird’s sing or a guard that it is time to separate.²⁷ These two poetic genres appear usually together in German lyric.²⁸

The short inscription of the Braunschweig Saddle speaks about fidelity: “*treu yst selt[en] in der wêld*” (fidelity is rare in the world). Faithfulness, a popular motif at that time, exists also on different media such as caskets, tapestries, sealstones, and manuscript illuminations.²⁹ Couples promising fidelity also appear on the different sides of a German casket, (*Minnekästchen*) where the man states, “*uf din tru bu ich al stund*” (on your faith I rely at every hour), to which the woman replies, “*din tru lob ich nu*” (to be faithful to you I vow now).³⁰ According to Jürgen Wurst, around this time fidelity became important in man-woman relationships, not only as a moral virtue, but also because it confirmed the marital alliance that provided the economic survival of the family.³¹ The reliefs of the *Minnekästchen* reflect this idea, representing contemporary relationship models.³² The inscription about fidelity on the Braunschweig Saddle can also be placed in that relationship context.³³ Furthermore, by the fourteenth and fifteenth century, German love

²⁶ The *Wechsel* was a popular genre in the poems used by Der von Kurenberg, Dietmar von Aist and Albrecht von Johansdorf. Marion-Johnson Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson, *Medieval German Literature: A Companion* (New York-London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 235.; Albrecht Classen, “Courtly Love Lyric,” in *A Companion to Middle High German Literature to the 14th Century*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill, 2002), 143; Hubert Heinen, “Thwarted Expectations: Medieval and Modern Views of Genre in Germany,” in *Medieval Lyric. Genres in Historical Context*, ed. William D. Paden Evanston, Illinois medieval studies 7 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 334.

²⁷ The *Tagelied* is the only type of love lyric which indicates the physical union of the lovers. Classen, “Courtly Love Lyric,” 136–7.

²⁸ The different types of Medieval German lyric usually overlap. Heinen, “Thwarted Expectations: Medieval and Modern Views of Genre in Germany,” 334.

²⁹ Jürgen Wurst, “Pictures and Poems of Courtly Love and Bourgeois Marriage: Some Notes on the So-called «Minnekästchen»,” *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Isabel Davis et al., Jones International Medieval Research 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 108.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 119–20.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The new importance of the family and fidelity in marriages is discussed in Chapter 2 of my MA thesis in connection with the changing symbol of the wild man, which also served as a form of expression of this transitional period. See Somogyvári, “The Art of Love in Late Medieval Bone Saddles,” 32–3; Jürgen Wurst, “Reliquiare der Liebe: Das Münchner Minnekästchen und andere

lyric went through significant changes. The earlier traditions which expressed the love between men and women – but exclusively outside of marriage – were transformed into marital love poems between spouses.³⁴ One of the pioneers of this new tendency was Oswald von Wolkenstein in whose work the vestiges of the motifs of the traditional love lyric can be recognized. An example is the *Tagelied* tradition in which the woman warns her lover about the presence of spies.³⁵ At the same time, von Wolkenstein's love poems were dedicated primarily to his wife.³⁶ As we can see from the previous examples, the transitional character of this period, reflected through the presence of the old traditions and new tendencies, is captured by the inscriptions on the saddles.

Conclusion

The inscriptions of the bone saddles presented above are only few examples, but they show well their characteristic diversity in type and meaning. The mottos probably served to make the saddles more personal to their original owner. The proverbs illustrate that vulgar texts well suited such saddles, and these texts also reflect the popular idioms of this period. The love inscriptions are particularly important since in most cases they correlate with the love iconography on the saddles, and the inscriptions also reflect the literary context of this transitional period and its new tendencies towards fidelity and marriage. Furthermore, this recognition also strengthens the idea that some of these objects could have been made for marriage purposes. With my work, I intended to highlight the importance of this special Central European group of objects by focusing on a new aspect of the saddles, such as their inscriptions and their literary context. However, there are many other aspects through which this complex and diverse subject can be examined. My contribution can be regarded as a first step toward further, more elaborated, analyses in the future.

mittelalterliche Minnekästchen aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum," PhD Dissertation (Munich, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 2005), 238–9; Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Cloisters, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 114.

³⁴ Classen, "Courtly Love Lyric, 118.

³⁵ "*herzlieb, nim war, das uns nicht vach der meider rick!*" Albrecht Classen, "Love and marriage in late medieval verse: Oswald von Wolkenstein, Thomas Hoccleve and Michel Beheim," *Studia Neophilologica* 62:2 (1990): 165; The English translation of this phrase is: "Heart-beloved, pay attention that we are not being caught by the traitors' ropes!" For the full translation, see Albrecht Classen, *The Poems of Oswald von Wolkenstein: An English Translation of the Complete Works (1376/77–1445)*, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 147.

³⁶ Classen, "Love and Marriage in Late Medieval Verse: Oswald von Wolkenstein, Thomas Hoccleve and Michel Beheim," 164–5.

TABLE: INSCRIPTIONS¹

German inscriptions				
Name of the saddle	Inscription		Translation	
	Left side	Right side	Left side	Right side
Saddle of King Albert Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Hofjagd und Rüstammer, inv. A 73	<i>wyl es got, yeh helf dir aus</i>	<i>no²</i>	if God is willing, I will help you out of	misery ³
Bone saddle Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale, inv. 402	<i>vol auf heute morgen</i>	<i>ich freue mich dein (?)⁴</i>	to this morning	I am looking forward ⁵
Batthyány-Strattman saddle Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 69.944	<i>gedenkech mid halt</i>	<i>gedenkech und halt</i>	recall and wait ⁶	recall and wait
Bone saddle Braunschweig, Kunstmuseum des Landes Niedersachsen, Herzog Anton- Ulrich Museum, inv. MA 111	<i>reden yst sel[en] in der meld⁷</i>	<i>und halt</i>	recall	and wait
Rhédey saddle Budapest, Hungarian National Museum, inv. 55.3118	<i>ich hof mit lieb</i>	<i>st b[...]⁸ lach lieb lach hof mit [...]</i>	I hope with love	(?) laugh [my] love laugh ⁹ hope with... [something]
Bone saddle Florence, Museo Nazionale, Bargello, inv. 2831 Av. 15	<i>ich han nicht lieberr¹⁰ nen dich bit end [...]¹²</i>	<i>allain mein ader las gar sein¹¹ rit[er] sa[up]d jörig¹³ dich lüt¹⁴ got</i>	I do not love anyone more than you (?)	only mine or just leave it [if not staying with me] just go) Knight Saint George God loves you
Bone saddle Florence, Museo Bardini, inv. 3152	<i>ander für</i>	<i>ich lüb all hie mid wais mit ni[er] [ü]nd mues w' [...] ich [...]¹⁵</i>	other for	I love all here and don't know how and I must ... [leave from here...]
Meyrick saddle London, Wallace Collection, inv. A 408	<i>ich pin hie ich wags mit nie¹⁶ ich nar non dann ich wags¹⁷ nit wan¹⁸</i>	<i>ich nur ich burye leger ich bar me grasser nar¹⁹</i>	I am here, I don't know how I am leaving, ²⁰ I don't know when	I go, I wait, the longer I wait the more rescue/salvation I have ²¹
	<i>nu vol auf mit willen unnergesen</i>	<i>dein enichelech in sand ierigen nam²²</i>	Now then, willingly unforgotten	yours forever in the name of Saint George ²⁴
	<i>ich frei mich all zeit dein</i>	<i>we den k[...]²⁵ rat²⁶</i>	I always rejoice you ²⁷	(?) ²⁸

German inscriptions				
Name of the saddle	Inscription		Translation	
	Left side	Right side	Left side	Right side
Bone saddle London, Tower of London (Royal Armouries), inv. VI.95	<i>hijf got wol auf sand jorgen nam</i>	<i>ich hofff des pesten dir galing</i>	with God's help well then, in the name of St George (God grant in the name of Saint George)	I hope for the best that you succeeded
	<i>i m a r s</i>	<i>is inister</i>	in the arse	it is black/dark
	<i>wol mich wart</i>	<i>wol mich nu wart</i>	just wait for me	just wait for me
Tratzberg saddle New York, MET, inv. 04.3.249	<i>ich hof der liben sommerzeit</i>	<i>in dem ars is winter</i>	I am hoping for dear summertime	it is black/dark in the arse
	<i>lach lib lach</i>	<i>frü dich mit ganzem willen</i>	laugh, [my] love, laugh ²⁹	rejoice, with your whole will
Thill saddle New York, MET, inv. 36.149.11	<i>bol auf sand [jo]rgen nam [h]ijf ritter sand jorg³⁰</i>	<i>hijf</i>	well then, in the name of Saint George, help knight Saint George	help
Bone saddle Stresa, Isola Bella, Museo Borromeo	<i>lib</i>		love	
Latin inscriptions				
Name of the saddle	Inscription		Translation	
	Left side	Right side	Left side	Right side
Jankovich saddle Budapest, Hungarian National Museum, inv. 55.3119	<i>da pacem domine</i>		give peace, lord	
	<i>amor</i>	<i>aspeto³¹ tempo</i>	love	I wait time
Western Bargello saddle Florence, Museo Nazionale, Bargello, inv. 2832 Av. 3	<i>deo</i>	<i>laus</i>	to God	praise
	<i>deus fortis[udo]</i>	<i>deus fortis[do]</i>	God my strength	God my supporter
Saddle of Ercole d'Este Modena, Galleria Estense, inv. 2461	<i>deus fortitudo mea</i>	<i>deus adiutor</i>		

Tables footnotes

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Gerhard Jaritz and András Vizkelety for their help with the inscriptions of the saddles.

² “*wyl es got ych helf dir au(s) not, ave...*” Verő, “4.72. Beinsattel (Sattel von König Albrecht),” *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 363.

³ The right order is probably: “*wyl es got ych helf dir aus not*” – “*If God is willing I will help you out of misery.*”

⁴ Or “*ich frewe mich dein*” – I rejoice you; “*ICH FREUUE MICH VOL AUF HEUTE MORGEN*” GIP.

⁵ The right order is probably “*Tch frewe mich denn (?) vol auf heute morgen*” – “I am looking forward to this morning.”

⁶ Literally, “think and stop” or, colloquially, “look before you leap” GIP.

⁷ “*trev yst selth in der weld*” GIP.

⁸ “*G lib (?)*” Verő, “4.68. Beinsattel (Rhédey–Sattel),” *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 360.

⁹ “*Lieb*” can also be in imperative mood, therefore the inscription can be translated as: “laugh, love, laugh.”

¹⁰ “*lieben*” GIP; “*liebere*” Verő, “4.70. Beinsattel,” *Sigismundus rex et imperator. Kunst und Kultur zur Zeit Sigismunds von Luxemburg, 1387–1437*, ed. Imre Takács (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2006), 362.

¹¹ “*ALLAIN MEIN ODER LOCGAR SEIN*” GIP.

¹² “*huerd*” or “*Sit erd (?)*” GIP.

¹³ “*Ritt sad iorig*” GIP.

¹⁴ “*hab*” GIP.

¹⁵ “*ICH LIB ALL HIR UND WAIS NIT WI[E] / [U]ND WUCS [?] VO HIN*” and “*ICH WAI [SS] NI*” Mario Scalini, “Sella da pompa,” in *Le Temps revient – Il tempo si rinnova. Feste e spettacoli nella Firenze di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, [exhibition catalogue] ed. Paola Ventrone (Milano: Silvana, 1992), 173.

¹⁶ “*ich pin bie / ich wans nit wie*” Sir James Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, vol. 1. Armour (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1962), 226–227; GIP.

¹⁷ “*wans*” William Maskell ed., *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), 175.

¹⁸ “*ich var von v... / ich wans nit wan*” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

¹⁹ “*Ich war, ich bar, ne lenger ich bar, Me gresser nar*” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; “*ich var ich bar / ye lenger ich bar / me greffen (gresser) nar*” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

²⁰ “I go hence, I know not where” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

²¹ “I go, I stop, the longer I stop, the madder I become” Ibid.

²² “*Dein ewigleich land ierigen varn*” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

²³ “Well a day! Willingly thou art never forgotten” Ibid.

²⁴ “Thine forever, The world o’er your betrothed” Ibid.

²⁵ “*Me den kerg: ent*” Maskell, *A Description Of The Ivories, Ancient And Medieval, in The South Kensington Museum*, 175; Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

²⁶ It can be also read as “*Nie den k[r...]*”

²⁷ “I rejoice to be ever thine” Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. European Arms and Armour*, 226–227; GIP.

²⁸ “But if the war should end?” Ibid.

²⁹ The order is probably the following: Right side: “*wol mich nu wart / in dem ars is vinster / frei dich mit gantzem willen*” Left side: “*wol mich wart / ich hof der liben somerzeit / lach lib lach*”

³⁰ “*HILF VOL AUF SAND [JO]RGEN NAM -ILF(?) RITTER SAND JORG*” GIP.

³¹ “*aspero*” GIP.

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