The Matrix Reeve-Loaded II: A Comparative Analysis of Three European Folktales and Their Relationship to *The Mylner of Abyngton* and Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*

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Abstract: This article is intended to be read as the continuation of a previous paper: "The Matrix Reeve-Loaded I: Dismantling Biases and Evaluating Diagrams of Relationships between Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, *The Mylner of Abyngton*, and Other Cradle-Trick Stories" (2016). Part I aimed to show how a combination of entrenched biases in literary criticism had combined to exclude *The Mylner of Abyngton* from consideration as an analogue of *The Reeve's Tale*, but recent critical trends have challenged such biases and opened up new possibilities and perspectives. One such trend is to take a broader view of the relationships of texts to their sources and analogues: an intertextual approach. Accordingly, Part I critiqued four diagrammatic representations of the relationships between cradle-trick stories (ATU 1363) that essentially divide them into two separate strands: the "love plots" and the "miller plots." Such rigid representations cannot convey the intersectionality and intertextuality between narratives, including those on supposedly-separate strands. Instead, the relationships should be reconceptualised as an intertextual matrix. Thus, this follow-up paper takes a deep dive into this matrix, focusing on a trio of "miller-plot" European folktales (Breton, Danish, and Irish), similar to *The Mylner of Abyngton*, to elucidate, through comparative analysis, the relationships of the three folktales to each other, to *The Mylner*, to Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, and to other cradle-trick stories. The study identifies the distinguishing features of this subgenre of tales and highlights numerous connections between them and the more lauded narratives: the first study of these three folktales in English. The identified distinguishing features of this subgenre could help piece together what an older, similar version of the tale-type might have looked like and with which Chaucer might have been familiar as he was composing *The Reeve's Tale*. Moreover, the connections identified between the three folktales (plus *The Mylner*) and other sources and analogues, especially those on the

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supposedly-separate "love-plot" strand, indicate far deeper intersectionality and intertextuality than the diagrams represent. They are not poles apart. The suggestion is that such folktales may have cross-pollinated the established literary versions and therefore warrant greater consideration as mediating intertexts.

Keywords: Chaucer, *Reeve's Tale*, sources and analogues, *Mylner of Abyngton*, intertextuality

This article is intended to be read as a development of a previous paper: "The Matrix Reeve-Loaded I: Dismantling Biases and Evaluating Diagrams of Relationships between Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, *The Mylner of Abyngton*, and Other Cradle-Trick Stories" (2016). Part I argued that, as no single, definitive source of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* (in *The Canterbury Tales*) has been identified, scholars should analyse Chaucer's process of composition more holistically, by assessing a wider range of narratives. Moreover, these narratives should be conceived of as an intertextual matrix, which Chaucer plunged into and plundered eclectically as well as augmented with his own formidable creativity and originality.

This broader conception of an intertextual matrix jibes with both recent trends in literary criticism (Beidler *Sources* 24) and the established modus operandi of folkloric study (Heist 255). Part I of this paper noted the convergence of diverse, current critical approaches that interrogate, problematize, and destabilise entrenched literary prejudices, including the privileging of certain narratives because they are "literary" and the exclusion of others because they are "folk"/oral and/or the author remains anonymous. As Amodio observes, there has been a biased belief that the literate obliterates the folk/oral; however, folk orality did survive and interact fluidly with literate cultures, so it is important to recognise the "intertextual nature of composition" (14) as a "matrix" (15).

In the case of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, the study of its sources and analogues has been extensive but perhaps not yet exhaustive: these challenging new approaches can dismantle biases and yield fresh perspectives. Part I evaluated four diagrammatic representations of European "cradle-trick" stories (tale type ATU 1363, wherein male visitors stay the night in a family's house, and a baby's cradle is moved away from its mother's bed in the middle of the night, causing characters up in the night to become disoriented and get into the wrong beds with the wrong people).

The diagrams (Varnhagen 1885:266, Stehmann 1909:112, Raith 1936:129, and Hertog 1991:86) divide these stories (considered *The Reeve's Tale*'s closest sources and analogues) into two discretely-evolving strands: the "love plots" vs the "miller plots" (with *RvT* posited on the latter). Both plot types feature the cradle trick, but the "love plots" are characterised by burgeoning affection between the visitors and the host's daughter and/or wife, whereas that affection is generally lacking in

the "miller plots" (and the hosts in the "love-plot" tales are not millers).

In the diagrams, the "love plot" strand is headed by the French fabliau *De Gombert et les .ii. clers* (by Jean de Boves, 1190), later helping spawn Boccaccio's *Decameron* 9.6 (1349-52), two German analogues (including Rüdiger von Munre's *Irregang und Girregar*, c.1300), and the Flemish *Een bispel van .ij. clerken* (C14th, which is close in content to *Gombert*).

Conversely, at or near the fount of the "miller-plot" strand is another French fabliau *Le meunier et les .ii. clers* (early C13th),[1] which helped spawn both Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale* (1392-95, *Riverside* xxix) and *The Mylner of Abyngton* (anon., c.1532-34), with Stehmann speculating about the relationships between various extant and lost intertexts which may antedate and connect them.

Stehmann's "Motif IIa" is the focus of the current study because this sugbgenre has received scant critical attention. This motif is "the daughter's lover" (i.e. unlike in other analogues, the daughter already has a boyfriend). This subgenre comprises four extant texts: "E2" (*The Mylner of Abyngton*), "frz.7" (a Breton analogue), "Dan2" (a Danish analogue), and Raith later added an Irish analogue ("Patrick Mac Bride and his Son"). Stehmann posits these tales as having been preceded by a series of three, (lost) evolving French tales; it is important to recognise that these extant versions (which all postdate *RvT*) were probably preceded by tales (similar in content) that antedate Chaucer. Raith describes *The Mylner* as the "literary" version of this type, whereas the Breton, Danish, and Irish ones are more "folk-like developments" transcribed from oral tradition (132). Numerous scholars (Stehmann 107, Wright 105, Spurgeon Appendix A 8, Heist 252, Cooper 110, Hines 206, Grace 46, Gray 405) have observed that the distinctive elements that characterise *The Mylner* could be indicative of an older oral/folk story with which Chaucer may have been familiar in the process of composing the *Reeve's Tale* (and that may have interacted with, and cross-pollinated, the other literary versions schematised in the diagrams, on both strands).

As Part I explained, although there was a long critical bias for *Le meunier* as *The Reeve Tale*'s closest source, to the exclusion of the love-plot tales, recent scholars have challenged this by highlighting many similarities between *The Reeve's Tale* and *Gombert-bispel* (Beidler 1992) and *Decameron* 9.6 (Beidler 1994). Thus, Hertog's diagram is the best as it allows for such "blurred boundaries" (87) and "overlapping and crisscrossing" (86), showing the intersecting and interconnectedness of the tales, presenting the image as more of a "matrix" (58, 82). However, Hertog only mentioned *The Mylner* (i.e. not the three folktales), and set it at an even-more-distant remove than *The Reeve's Tale* from the love plots. This long-overlooked subgroup of tales only appears (if at all) in the diagrams at the furthest extremity of the "miller-plot" strand, out on a limb and very much marginalised, though still in the same orbit as the *Reeve's Tale*, and the folk versions have received even scanter critical attention than *The Mylner*, perhaps because all were originally related and

recorded in languages other than English.[2]

Accordingly, the method of the current study is to undertake a comparative analysis of the Breton, Danish, and Irish analogues, mainly in relation to each other and their "literary" companion piece (*The Mylner*), Chaucer's further-removed ne plus ultra of tale-type ATU 1363 (*The Reeve's Tale*), and some of the other "cradle-trick" stories represented in the diagrams, including on the supposedly-separate, polar-opposite strand of "love plots."

The aims are to identify the distinctive features of this subgenre of tales that could hint at the content of an older folktale version that Chaucer might have known (among others) when he was composing *The Reeve's Tale* and to show how much crossover and cross-pollination exists and thus try to make the matrix image more convincing. It is necessary to transcend the diagrams' brutal bifurcation into rigid, limiting lineality and instead recognise liminality, intersectionality, and intertextuality in the form of a matrix. As such, this paper contends that this distinct subgenre of tales (*The Mylner* and its European folktale kin) warrants reconceptualization and recognition as being of greater importance as mediating intertexts in the matrix of tales. It is believed that this study is the first critical treatment of these folktales in English.

Until now, *The Mylner of Abyngton* has largely been treated dismissively (as just a rip-off *Reeve's Tale*), if at all. However, as explained in Part I, scholars are now challenging the various, combined biases that have long excluded *The Mylner* (and the folktales) from critical consideration. As stated above, *The Mylner* contains diverse elements that differ qualitatively from the *Reeve's Tale* and are rather of a piece with the European "folk" versions represented on the diagrams of Stehmann and Raith (i.e. Stehmann's "MOTIV II^{a}": "the lover of the daughter" 112). As Cooper confirms, the *Mylner* "plot diverges sufficiently [from Chaucer's] to indicate its author also knew some version resembling analogues now known in Breton or Danish, in which the clerks seal the sack so that the miller has to beat it to get the flour out and the daughter is provided with a lover of her own" (426).

The Breton folktale is posited as the oldest of the three on Stehmann and Raith's diagrams. Stehmann suggests that *The Mylner* and this Breton story are derived from a lost, common-ancestor tale. It was translated into French and entitled *Le clerc et son frère laboureur* ("The clerk and his brother ploughman"—similar to Chaucer's Parson and Plowman?). As in *The Mylner* (but unlike the other 'literary' analogues), the two young protagonists are actual brothers, and their mother is a widow. The text can be accessed in print and online (see Luzel). This book is dated 1890, but, as indicated above, the actual date of these folktales (or earlier versions) could conceivably be centuries earlier.

As in *The Reeve's Tale* and *The Mylner*, the Breton miller's reputation for thieving precedes him, so the men take identical precautions to prevent his prolific pilferage: one watches the wheat

grinding from above the hopper, and one from below. Of course, it is also possible that these folktale versions of the tale could have been influenced by the literary versions, including Chaucer's (i.e. the interaction between folktale and literary versions could have been in either direction or even both directions). Skeat cites this scene as evidence that *The Mylner* was "plainly copied" from *The Reeve's Tale* (V.122. This scene does not feature in *Le meunier* or any other analogue). However, whereas miller Symkyn displays supreme confidence in his ability to cheat the clerks in *RvT* (I.4046-4056), the Breton miller voices doubts he can do it, so has to be spurred on by his decidedly-dastardly daughter (who peremptorily instructs him to "Shut up"!).

She is game for any of the dirty work done by other characters in other analogues. She is the one who then releases the young men's horses, sending them scurrying away in pursuit, thus making it a cinch to pinch their flour, as happens in *RvT* (when Symkyn releases Bayard, with his wife complicit by obscuring his guilt, just as the *meunier*'s wife helps bamboozle the clerks so her husband can steal their wheat and horse). The mylner instructs his son to steal the clerks' horse, but, even when they realise they have to go and seek their absent steads, both *The Mylner* and Breton young men are still loath to abandon their wheat to the miller. They thus take the precaution of sealing their flour in a sack before they leave; however, when they do depart, the undeterred millers hang up the sealed sacks, then beat them, causing a bounty of flour to escape through minute holes in the sack fabric and fall onto a white sheet placed below, with the seal remaining intact. This is the ingenious idea of the mylner (who enlists the help of his daughter to bring the sheet, then carry away the pillage of the spillage and make a cake of it), but, in the Breton folktale, it is another of the daughter's devious wheezes: she is the one calling the shots. This feature differs greatly from the "extreme naïveté of the girl" in *Le meunier* (Brown 227). She uses the stolen flour to make crêpes (a Breton speciality).

From outside, the Breton brethren hear the old bag being pounded and wrongly "believe that the miller is beating his wife." Interestingly, this folktale specifies she is not the miller's first wife: his "first wife" was the one who bore him the devious daughter. This plot variation perhaps enhances the tale's plausibility by helping explain the big age gap between the nubile daughter and the child in the cradle (and maybe intimating that the new wife could be younger and more attractive). The wide age gap between Symkyn's daughter Malyne (20) and her baby brother (6 months) in *RvT* has been queried (e.g. Wetherbee 61 and Machan 128, who conjecture that the baby may really be Malyne's).

It is also striking that the Breton folktale refers to the daughter as "the heiress" (probably ironically?), especially recalling Symkyn's aristocratic/dynastic aspirations for Malyne's marriage: because Malyne is the granddaughter and "heir" (I.3978) of the town parson, they have plans "to bistowe hire hye/ Into som worthy blood of auncetrye" [I.3981-82], only for Symkyn to be left aghast that clerk Aleyn came "to disparage/ My doghter, that is come of such lynage" [I.4271-72]).[3]

As in *RvT* (but not the *Mylner* or *Le meunier*), the Breton boys come back to the mill and bemoan getting soaked while out horse hunting. While the "nasty" (Beidler 1992:287) meunier is not pleased to see the clerks back (A140), Symkyn and the mylner are more amenable to letting them stay the night, perhaps because the clerks agree to pay handsomely. The Breton miller, meanwhile, seems an altogether more gracious host in exclaiming "Perfect!" at the suggestion and not demanding any payment for their lodging or crêpe supper. In this respect, perhaps he is closer to the more genial and "attractive" (Beidler 1994:243) host of *Decameron* 9.6 and the "solicitous" (Beidler 1992:287) hosts of *Gom-bis*, i.e. those in the "love-plot" line of tales. Thus, some crossover of elements can be discerned between the two supposedly separate strands of the "love-plot" and "miller-plot" stories.

After eating, everyone goes to bed. Whereas all *RvT* characters sleep in the same narrow room, and the meunier locks his "beautiful and agreeable" (B147) daughter up in a trunk every night (B149, A163, "lest she be too agreeable," A164), *The Mylner* and Breton daughters have their own, separate rooms. These sleeping arrangements enable the daughters to have assignations with their lovers (as noted above, the existence of these boyfriends is the defining motif of *The Mylner* and the folktales, identified as "Motif II[a]", a twist on the miller-plot tale type, in Stehmann's diagram 112).

A possible difference, though, could be that Jankyn, the mylner's daughter's beau (and the tale's only named character), seems to have the mylner's approval for these trysts. He calls Jankyn "his man" (195) and knows that he will come after he finishes work. The name "Jankyn" ("little John" or "son of John") was often given to the stock characters of lusty lads or clerics—or chaps who were both—so he could be a figure of fun and/or an object of derision.[4]

This paternal awareness and approval are less clear in the Breton folktale: the miller seems ignorant of any amoureux. It is only after he is safely asleep that his cunning daughter starts preparing the batter for *crêpes à deux*. The Breton cleric shows cunning in pretending to be asleep with some fake snoring (cf. the real snoring of Symkyn and his wife in *RvT*, the *meunier* B177, and Gobert and his wife in *bis*, 62-63). Observing the girl's sneaky preparations and intuiting what was occurring, the cleric decides to approach in the dark, pretending to be her "usual visitor." *The Mylner* clerk, having overheard the mylner's report of Jankyn's expected arrival, does likewise (an apparent difference, though, is that the *Mylner* clerk seems more genuinely attracted: "I think so on the damosell" 222).

Sure enough, the daughters duly (mis)take them for their customary cavaliers and welcome them into bed, although, *en route*, *The Mylner* clerk bangs his shin (maybe poetic justice for his unwanted earlier 'footsy'?), causing the girl to chide him for his faux pas in not knowing the way "[s]o oft as you come (hyther)" (244, causing the clerk to laugh as he recognised what a well-trodden and well-prodded furrow he was ploughing). He benefits from being 'Johnny-on-the-spot.' As the Wife of Bath confirms of her own "Janekyn" (III.383), "Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt" (III.389).

After she had 'done Jankers' (or so she thought), *The Mylner* daughter proceeds to tell the clerk about the thieving she had helped her father perpetrate earlier. Surprisingly, the clerk speaks to congratulate her: "That was well done, my derling deere" (287). This brief speech could be a plot flaw in *The Mylner* because of the risk of his voice making her realise he was not Jankyn. This likely danger of voice recognition is referred to in *De generibus ebriosorum et ebrietate vitanda* ("On Drunks and Avoiding Drunkenness," a C16th Latin analogue, on the "love-plot" side in the diagrams and reprinted in Benson and Andersson 194-197). The drunken wife is diverted into the student's bed by the cradle trick, and then asks her partner (her supposed husband) "'why are you so merry tonight?' But he answered nothing lest he be betrayed by the evidence of his voice and began anew several times."[5]

The Breton clerk is similarly circumspect in keeping his silence when the daughter talks to him, post-coitally, although there is less time for chitchat because, unlike in *The Mylner* (where the real Jankyn never actually appears), the Breton beau then arrives on the scene. The daughter assumes that this new arrival is one of the young men staying the night in the other room, come to try it on, and so she quickly devises another of her characteristically-cunning plans to send him packing. In a disgusting twist, sans warning « *Garde à l'eau*! », she peremptorily flings the contents of her almost-full chamber pot flush into his face![6] Earlier, presumably, the daughter had been using the pot as a stopgap measure, *pis-aller*; however, when her honey arrived, he had been expecting to receive crêpes not craps. This was not at all the kind of exchange of bodily fluids that he was eagerly anticipating; it really was *tant pis*. Like third-wheel Absolon in *The Miller's Tale*, he feels humiliated and irate to have received the bum's rush and scurries away to wash himself (because, as a curious and humorous line explains, the "odour of a Christian's urine tends to be more acrid"!).

Attention then turns to the Breton clerk's brother, who enacts the cradle trick to lure the miller's wife to his bed (as in *Myl*, the baby-in-cradle is only introduced at this precise point where it is required). Strangely, the timing of his cradle moving is the same as in *RvT*. The characters move the cradle from beside the miller and his wife's bed to beside their own bed *before* anyone gets up in the night to use the toilet (maybe they did not have any more chamber pots?). The logic of this timing in *RvT* has been queried (e.g. Stehmann 107, Raith 134, Craik 41, Hertog 80): how could clerk John have known the wife would get up before her husband during the night, if either even rose at all? Fortunately for John, he got lucky, as did the Breton ploughman, because it was indeed the millers' wives who got up first and were thus misled by the cradle's new position into climbing into bed with the clerks.

Meanwhile, *The Mylner* brother seems to execute the cradle trick with superior logic, moving it immediately *after* the wife goes out to relieve herself (she actually does so twice during the night—

the clerk entraps her the second time). Both the wives' acts of urination and subsequent copulation in *The Mylner* and the Breton folktale are described in politer, more euphemistic ways than in *RvT* (although the lyrics of the chanson leave little doubt that it is a Breton lay).

The young men who had been with the daughters then come back to find their comrades but, also deceived by the moved cradle, end up inadvertently climbing into bed with the miller. Thinking he is their confrère, they tell him about their escapades with the daughters, thus enraging him. Even so, once again, the clerks' descriptions of those escapades in *The Mylner* and the Breton folktale are more restrained and respectful compared to the crude phraseology of *meun* and *RvT*.

In addition, these versions detail the material rewards that the young men are set to acquire from the daughters (who continued to think them their usual beaux, not just hobos), besides carnal gratification. Not only does the mylner's daughter give him the cake made of the filched flour (354) and the rustled horse (284) but also 30 shillings (353, to buy her a dress). Similarly, the Breton daughter gives the clerk those extra crêpes, plus a clean shirt of fine cloth (so he has literally had the shirt off the boyfriend's back). They go from destitution to restitution (and then some) in short order.

A climactic physical altercation ensues in almost all of these analogues. Because of the nature of his hard, manual labour, the millers would probably be favourites in these fights. Patterson points to the "physical strength of millers and their reputation for violence" (256/257), like Chaucer's wrestling millers Robyn and Symkyn in *The Canterbury Tales*. However, in *Le meunier*, "incredibly, the deacon wins with ease (A. 287-91)," Brown 227), and then they retrieve their wheat and mare and make their getaway. In *RvT*, Symkyn and Aleyn seem evenly matched (as are the *Een bispel* combatants), but the "milner was the more keene/ And gate the clarke downe" (391-392, just as Gombert initially had the upper hand until the second clerk joined the affray, 158-161, 173). In the miller plots, though, the second clerk does not join in; instead, in *RvT* and *Myl*, the decisive intervention comes from the millers' own wives, who end the fights by accidentally thwacking their husbands down with a stick (thinking they are hitting a clerk). The *RvT* clerks tarry to give Symkyn a gratuitous beating, then retrieve the cake baked of their flour (Malyne had told Aleyn where to find it during their loving *aube* parody, I.4234-38), and the *Le meunier* clerks also team up to dish out an extra beating to the meunier before they leave. Although the mylner escapes such a gratuitous beating as the brother-clerks immediately flee back to their poor mother with their horse, cake, and 30 shillings, he is doomed never to recover: "he ended his life full wretchedly/In paine, care, and misery" (485/486, similar to how the *Een bispel* husband "remained behind in great distress" 221).

In contrast, the Breton folktale features no final fisticuffs. Instead, as things get heated when the clerk tells the miller about having spent the night with his daughter, their raised voices awaken the wife, who tells them to pipe down (thinking it is the brothers squabbling). When the miller looks

across and sees her in bed with the ploughman, he is furious to realise that his wife has cuckolded him. This development is quite novel; in almost all analogues, the wife escapes discovery. Benson and Andersson claim that, "'Le Meunier' is the only version in which the host learns that not only his daughter but also his wife has been seduced" (85), but the Breton folktale should be added.

The miller does not then have much chance to assault the Breton brothers because they flee, buck naked (it says they were clutching some clothes in their arms, but it is unclear if they got away with the fine shirt in the end, and the conclusion never mentions their widowed mother again, or their horses). Instead, the Breton miller turns his fury on his wife and daughter by beating them. Later, though, he is forced to protect his good reputation by buying the brothers' silence, about their cuckolding of him, with a bottle of wine.

Thus, the Breton folktale features several notable variations from *The Mylner* and *RvT*. *The Mylner* daughter seems more malign than Malyne (whose only 'crime' was to help her father steal the flour, 4246, which she presumably did under duress), but the Breton daughter appears to be the most cunning and conniving of all, especially in how she orchestrates the original theft of the flour and then disgorges her full-to-the-brim chamber pot over an unwanted nocturnal gentleman caller (so she thinks). Another twist is that she is the miller's daughter by his first wife.

The wives in *Myl* and the Breton folktale are faceless and nondescript, essentially mere plot functionaries, compared to both the conniving wives in *meun* and *RvT* (who help their husbands execute the thefts) and the beautiful (and often intelligent) wives in the love-plot versions. The *RvT* and *Myl* wives unwittingly hit their husbands with a stick, and this action pre-emptively prevents their husbands from discovering where they have spent the night.

Conversely, the Breton miller does discover his wife's infidelity, and then administers a fearsome beating to her and his daughter. In almost all versions, the young men escape with not only their stolen wheat (in the form of cakes in *RvT* and *Myl*, the original bag in *meun*, and all the crêpes the Bretons ate), but with something extra, too (30 shillings in *Myl*, the fine shirt [possibly] and bottle of wine in the Breton folktale, and the gratuitous beating of Symkyn in *RvT*, plus the knowledge that they may well have dashed his dreams of a lofty marriage for his daughter).

The question of whether Malyne was "seduced" (e.g. Craik 41, Brown 233, Cooper 117, Beidler 1994:243) or "raped" (Barnett 145, Weisl 120, Cannon 84) has been contested in recent years. For over 600 years, the scene was apparently unequivocally interpreted as a seduction—another example of how ingrained a biased reading can become. Burbridge (1971:34) seems to have been the first critic to identify it as "rape," and that view has been in the ascendancy, even to the point of becoming the new orthodoxy. The lack of prior consent is disturbing, as Aleyn swoops so suddenly on the sleeping Malyne (I.4193-97), "thries" (4265) through the night. In the morning, though, in

the mock *aube*, they exchange tender words, indicating all is well. However, critical readers dismiss Malyne's words as simply Chaucer's ventriloquized voicing of the "classic male rape fantasy" (Breuer 4): "of feminine struggle metamorphosing into feminine pleasure" (Allman and Hanks 44/45). Thus, claims Barnett, readers must "construct the narrative that Chaucer has neglected" (154). Weisl concurs: "We are forced to read between the lines to see what is really done to these two women" (120). Breuer adds that "this is way bigger than Chaucer" (10). Rose thus places Chaucer in the "western antifeminist tradition" and objects to the "displacement of rape by white men" (25): "Reading rape as not-rape" (33). She points to this "bestial double rape of mother and daughter" (34) and explains the "complexity of reading against the grain of the narrative's interpretational clues" (53n.7). Thus, she stresses the necessity to "voice the silent female voice in the text and subvert literary misogyny" (52).

In the case of the *Myl* and Breton daughters, it is definitely rape. By introducing the additional character of the boyfriend, and his expected visit, these tales set up another use of the bed-trick (in addition to the later one played on the wives, as a result of the cradle trick). In each case, the women are deceived into believing they are sleeping with their regular partners. Just like clerks Aleyn and John in *RvT*, the *Myl* and Breton clerks et al. strike in silence and darkness (whereas the first clerk generally has to verbally woo the daughter to gain her consent in *Le Meunier* and the love-plot versions). As Barnett bemoans of *RvT*, though it could equally apply to the *Myl* and Breton versions, there is "no pre-copulatory behaviour, no textual evidence of [...] receptivity to the sexual advances" (153). Impersonating someone's lover through a "bed-trick" is rape (Cannon 71; Desens 17).[7]

Similarly, post-facto consent/content does not "undo" the original rape (Cannon 74) although such scenes are a feature of the tale type. Malyne murmurs warm, wistful words to Aleyn in the *RvT aube*. Similarly, the *Myl* describes the daughter's "sory songe" (458) as she "wished for the clarke" (459) and "his mery play" (461), hoping he would come back (463), even after she had discovered his true identity. This is like Boccaccio's *Decameron* 9.6, which concludes by describing how fondly the wife remembered Adriano's embraces, and the *Irregang* wife even acts on those feelings by wilfully continuing to cuckold her husband. Even during/after the initial act, it is a feature of the tale type that the wife seems happily surprised by the unwonted virility of her old husband: e.g. the *Een bis* wife exclaims that "your prick is greatly improved" (148), and *RvT* states that, "So myrie a fit ne hadde she nat ful yore" (I.4230). However, as with the *aube*, various scholars doubt the veracity of such comments (e.g. Barnett 149, Rose 40, Allman and Hanks 57, Weisl 120) as they may again just be a hijacking of female subjectivity through the ventriloquized voicing of the male rape fantasy. Such dubious "humour" does not appear in the *Myl* and Breton versions.

Reflecting on the narratives from these women's viewpoints makes the tales altogether less

amusing. The misogynistic claim that the women may 'deserve' these fates because of their earlier complicity in the flour theft does not hold water. Although *The Riverside Chaucer* states, "Symkyn so obviously deserves his punishment, and the two women so clearly enjoy the clerks' means of revenge that we cannot condemn Aleyn and John for what they do" (8), this retribution is so disproportionate to the original 'crime.' Besides, the revenge motive behind the young men's actions seems barely there compared to its prominence in *RvT*; rather, they are attracted to the daughters (especially in *Myl*).

However, the daughters' dislike of the young men is made clear through the rejection of the man's 'footsy' (*Myl* 183) and the throwing of the chamber pot (Breton) and renders the subsequent rapes all the more repugnant (as do the daughters' kindness and devotion to their true beaux [the crêpes and fine shirt etc.], which evoke the warm feelings that flower between the daughters and their lovers in the "love-plot" analogues, especially *Gom, Decam* 9.6 and *Irregang*). The Breton miller's savage beating of his wife and daughter at the end is also highly disturbing, both in itself and in its unfairness: neither woman was consciously or consensually unfaithful. This beating seems to have been prefigured by his earlier thwacking of the flour sack, the sounds of which the brothers had mistaken for him beating his wife, indicating that they had recognised his abhorrent propensity for domestic violence. The Breton miller thus seems akin to Symkyn (I.3958-61) in the jealous ferocity of his attempts to control his wife and daughter's sexuality.

Turning next to the Danish folktale, "Mølleturen," printed in Stehmann (108-110) and posited diagrammatically (112) as being at least partly derivative of both some tale similar to the Breton one, plus (more tentatively) *The Mylner* (Stehmann's Danish source has a date of 1888, 108n.1). In the Danish version, though, the clerks are not specified as brothers and are not sent to the mill by their widowed mother. Instead, maybe more like in *RvT* (with the college manciple dispatching the clerks), a Zealand priest sends two clerks (priests-in-training) to the mill (four miles away) with a huge corn consignment, a veritable cornucopia of four tons, on a wagon.

In this version, the miller's reputation for thievery is not mentioned, but he soon dupes them (unassisted by any other family member, unlike the *meun, RvT, Myl,* and Breton versions). He is the sole locus of evil and villain of the piece. He immediately invites the frozen clerks in for coffee[8], and they gladly accept, negligently leaving the wagon unattended. The miller seizes the opportunity to steal the corn by releasing the horses. As in *RvT* and Breton versions, the horses hightail it away, whereas in *meun* and *Myl* they are cached on the property; however, like *meun*, but unlike the other three versions (i.e. *RvT*, *Myl*, and Breton), the corn is never milled. This means that there are no scenes of the clerks scrutinising the milling machinery, or of the miller thwacking any sealed bag of flour. When the clerks return, they see their wagon empty, and the miller brazenly lies by telling them

that the thief has already left: explicitly blaming a fictitious third party as the thief seems a novel detail that further shows how nefarious this particular miller is.

Another novel detail is that the clerks then decide to buy a ton of corn from the miller for 17 *rigsdalers* as they are afraid to go home empty-handed. The fact they have such ready cash on them makes them like the *RvT* clerks, with "silver, redy to spende" (I.4135): they seem to have pots of money, whereas the *meun* and *Myl* clerks do not have a (chamber) pot to micturate in. The *meun* clerks were oppressed by hunger (A27) and even considered begging (A14), while the *Myl* clerks have to borrow a horse and go to the mill when their mother says she can no longer feed them (31). Similarly, the *bis* clerks "had lost all their money" (11) and so asked Gobert to lodge them "for pity's sake" (15).

At the Danish dinner that evening, a tailor named Schneider is present (several of the characters are named). He is the daughter's lover (cf. Jankyn in *Myl* and the Breton *Natursektmeister*), and his presence at the table indicates he has the miller's approval. One of the clerks notices the intimacy between Schneider and the daughter and hides near them to eavesdrop on their sweet nothings; he hears the daughter inviting Schneider to her room later that night.

Later, everyone goes to bed, with the miller putting the clerks in his usual bed (he and his wife usually sleep in separate beds, but they seem to bunk down together this time). The clerk who had overheard Schneider's scheme then gets up and knocks on the daughter's door (as in the *Myl* and Breton versions, she has her own room: a small storeroom). Mistaking him for Schneider, she welcomes him (no sexual activity is explicitly described, but probably it can be inferred?).

Soon after, the *bona fide* Schneider arrives and knocks on the door. Whereas the Breton daughter immediately assumed the knocker was the clerk and reached for the chamber pot, the Danish daughter seems slower on the uptake. Thus, the clerk takes the initiative (as well as the aforementioned risk of speaking) by suggesting the visitor is probably the clerk who was listening to them talk over supper. Then, again similar to Nicholas's assault on Absolon in *The Miller's Tale*, the clerk goes to the window and punches Schneider (it is rough justice, but maybe better than the chamber pot?). He beats a hasty retreat; he is not a particularly brave little tailor.

The clerk also tries to induce a confession from the daughter by claiming her father's treatment of the clerks was dishonourable. Although his wisdom in speaking may be questionable, it is worth noting that this clerk seems a little bit more perspicacious and proactive than his Breton and *Mylner* counterparts. Although they also display some cleverness (the Breton clerk in circumspectly keeping silent, and the *Myl* clerk in staying in character [i.e. Jankyn] the next morning by saying, "I must to a faire gone" [335] as Jankyn had to do), they do not deploy the same level of strategy to find out about the daughter's planned tryst with her lover, or to induce a confession about the corn theft

(they are revealed more through pure luck), or to ward off her real lover when he comes. The Danish daughter duly confesses that her father has indeed stolen corn many times, just as he had done that day (although the *Myl* daughter blurts out a boastful confession, the cleverer Breton girl never does).

The clerk displays his keen intellect in their next exchange, too, by taking his impersonation of tailor Schneider even further for his own enrichment. When she asks why her "little Hans" is so quiet and depressed, he replies that he has made clothes for four (a recurring number in this version) clients but has not yet been paid, leaving him a cash-flow problem. He claims to need 50 *rigsdalers*, so she gives it to him (this seems analogous to the 30 shillings the *Myl* daughter gave the clerk, but he never solicited that money; she just gave it to him to buy a dress for her).

Meanwhile, the second clerk gets up to look for his friend (as in the Breton tale, but unlike *meun, RvT* and *Myl,* the first young man does not tell his comrade where he is going in the night), and this noise gets the miller up to investigate. Finding nothing amiss, he comes back and climbs into his normal bed (recently vacated by the second clerk) out of force of habit. This scene of having two characters up wandering at the same time of night is similar to *Decam* 9:6, in which Adriano innocently moves the cradle out of his way when he gets up to pee, thus inadvertently causing the wife (who was also up investigating a noise) to come to his bed. Thus, this could represent another crossover in detail between stories on separate strands of the diagrams. However, the Danish folktale features no baby or cradle trick and thus no congress of the second clerk with the miller's wife (as also noted by Stehmann 108 and Raith 131). She just stays alone in her bed all night.

Soon after, the first clerk returns to his original bed, where the miller now is. This is another odd commonality between the Danish folktale and some of the "love-plot" tales on the opposite strand in the diagrams: in this case, *Gombert* (and *bis*). These are the only tales in which it is the host (not his wife) who gets up in the middle of the night and then, in the darkness, mistakenly climbs into the bed recently vacated by the second clerk (Raith notes this and calls it a "congruency, which cannot be by accident" 129). Rychner rues it "une petite erreur" (108) that it is Gombert who gets up in the night, not the wife, as in other versions. When Gombert goes out for a "[s]tark naked" midnight "piss" (83), the clerk with eyes for his sleeping wife moves the cradle to beside his own bed. Gombert returns, gets his bearings by groping for the cradle in the dark, then settles into the wrong bed (assuming his wife has also got up to "piss and do her business," 107), leaving the clerk free to jump into Gombert's vacated bed with his wife (in *Gom*, the clerk prudently waits for Gombert to come back, get diverted by the cradle into the different bed, and fall asleep before he enters the wife's bed; however, in *bis*, the clerk already gets in and starts humping the wife *before* her husband has even finished his "piss" 111).

However, the key plot twist of the cradle trick is that it should be operant *twice*: first diverting

the baby's mother (or maybe father) into a different bed as intended, but then also diverting the returning first clerk into the bed sans cradle beside it (which he assumes must be his original bed, only to find the husband lying there). Strangely, in *Gom* and *bis* the returning first clerk is not redirected away by seeing the cradle (it is not even mentioned at this point), so he gets into the bed with the cradle beside it (where Gombert is lying). Accordingly, Hertog labels this scene a "mess" (79).

A similar "mess" unfolds in the Danish folktale (although there is no cradle). The second clerk and the miller are moving around in the darkness at the same time, before the miller (mistakenly) alights at his usual bed out of force of habit (i.e. the bed he was supposed to be letting the clerks sleep in). Returning from the daughter's room, the first clerk then also gets into that bed (sparking the confrontation scene), but where did the second clerk go? He appears to be up and about for too long, rather confused and in limbo, a bit like a spare thingy at a wedding (because no scene of him being in the wife's bed is described). As noted above, the staging of the cradle trick also appears questionable in the Breton and *RvT* versions, whereas it appears to be best executed in *meun* and *Myl*.

A further curious correlation between *Gombert* and this Danish folktale is when Gombert and the Danish miller are joined in bed by the first clerk returning (from the daughter's bed). The clerk is getting back into his original bed (despite the cradle now set beside it in *Gom*), so he assumes his bedfellow will be his chum, the second clerk. Accordingly, in excited anticipation of the exchange of banter, he unceremoniously elbows his bedfellow awake. These are the only two versions when the elbow is specified as being used to awaken the host (no elbow is used in *bis*, either).

A similar parallel, again between tales supposedly on opposite lines on the diagrams of "love-plot" and "miller-plot" type tales, is that the young men of both *Irregang* (574) and the Breton folktale awaken the hosts by shaking them. After the shaking, the *Irregang* man then "poked him in the ribs" (575), which is a technique also utilised in *Gom-bis* (prior to the elbow in *Gom*). In *RvT*, Aleyn also uses violence by grabbing Symkyn "by the nekke" (I.4261).

As for the first Danish clerk, he tells his bedfellow (the miller) what he has found out that night about the theft of their corn (from the daughter, although, unlike almost all of the other analogues, he reports no sexual shenanigans, so this is a 'clean' version of the tale). The miller still springs up angrily, wanting to punch the clerk, but (as in *meun*, but unlike *Myl*) the clerk is surprisingly stronger than the miller and sends him sprawling on top of his wife. The wife wakes up and grabs a stick and uses it to hit the ruffian who fell on her (i.e. her husband. Cf. the similar scene in *RvT* and *Myl*). Unlike the *meun* and *RvT* clerks, who linger to beat the miller gratuitously, the Danish clerk graciously decides that the miller has had enough punishment and leaves it at that (the second clerk joins him soon after, so he never participates in the fisticuffs—the same as in *Myl*).

However, the Danish miller still has something to say: he threatens to file charges against the

clerks because of their temerity in accusing him of theft. The daughter is summoned as a witness, but her honest testimony forces the miller to admit the theft and let the men go. He also has to buy their silence: 68 *rigsdalers* (the value of the corn he stole). This scene of buying the young men's silence is similar to the Breton folktale (in which the miller gives them a bottle of wine), but the price is steeper here. Indeed, the Danish clerks have made a tidy profit because they also inveigled 50 *rigsdalers* out of the daughter. The clerks returned joyously to their cloister (although, strangely, as in the Breton version, there is no more mention of their horses).

The distinctive features of this Danish folktale, then, seem to be that: the clerks are not brothers; the miller conducts the theft single-handedly (pilfering their wagonload of wheat without milling it, so no beating of any sealed sack is necessary); the first clerk displays superior initiative, strategy, and cunning to his analogue counterparts in finding out about the daughter's assignation, beating up her beau when he arrives, and then eliciting not only a confession from her about her father's thieving but also a tidy sum of cash; no cradle trick occurs, so the second clerk never beds the wife (it is not even clear that the first clerk bedded the daughter); the wife accidentally hits her husband with a stick in the fight scene (an incident only also found in *RvT* and *Myl*); and, the miller threatens legal proceedings but then has to admit his own guilt and buy off the clerks. The fact that the host (not the wife) gets up and is then elbowed awake by the clerk may suggest some kinship of this folktale with *Gom* (Raith 129, Stehmann 111), and the detail of having two characters simultaneously walking around in the dark is particular to only this Danish version and *Decameron* 9.6, which, like *Gom*, is posited on the distant, antithetical "love-plot" strand in the diagrams.

The final folktale is the Irish one adduced by Raith, collected from an oral source in Irish (Gaelic) and translated into English by J. H. Lloyd in a volume dated 1899. The title is "Parrach Mha'l Bhrighde's a mhac" ("Patrick Mac Bride and his son"). At first glance, this tale seems to have little in common with *RvT* and the other analogues in that it lacks some key defining elements: the cradle trick (ATU 1363) and the miller plot (no miller appears). However, broader similarities exist, and Raith argues that certain features make this folktale of particular interest in considering the matrix of tales.

Instead of being brothers (as in *Myl* and Breton versions), a different family dynamic between the protagonists is shown: father and son. The father is somewhat-stereotypically named "Pat." They are farmers who have two cows stolen. Raith emphasises the fact they are farmers because he is adamant that, originally, in the miller-plot tales, the protagonists robbed by the miller were farmers (131). He contends that the cradle-trick/love-plot stories originally featured clerks, so when the thieving-miller and cradle-trick narratives came to be conflated, clerks displaced farmers. He describes this displacement as an intriguing cultural-historical change. It shows in microcosm the

intermingling and cross-pollination that can take place between narratives. The Breton version even combines both patterns: one brother is a cleric, and the other is a "laboureur" (ploughman/farmer).

In similarly rustic vein, there are hints in some "love-plot" analogues that the character who puts the visitors up for the night was also a farmer. Gombert is introduced as a "peasant" ("un vilain" 5), and he provides his guests with simple country fare, "as usual on a farm" (33). Similarly, the Mac Brides' adversary is another country fellow. He is not described as a farmer, but neither is he described as having any other job, and the remote location of his house, and his aptitude in rustling and butchering cattle, may suggest he was a fellow farmer (albeit a felonious farmer, as Raith suggests 131). Moreover, Grace supplies detail on "Irish Analogues to the Reeve's Tale" (including "Patrick Mac Bride and his son") and states that, "The most obvious difference [from *RvT*] is that of the villain in Irish tradition being a Farmer rather than a Miller" (45).[9]

The Mac Brides' cows are stolen from their farm, so they spend all day out looking for them without success (the bovine replaces both the equine and the wheat in this version), and then have to be lodged at another house for the night. They are given supper, including a "sufficiency of meat" (the provenance of which will soon become apparent). After eating, the son goes outside and overhears the daughter secretly arranging for her beau to visit her room later that night (as in the Breton tale, but unlike the Danish and *Myl*, her dad seems not to know too much about her lover?).

Pat and his son are given a bed to share in the same room as the daughters' parents, with the daughter in a separate room (as in *Myl*, Breton and Danish versions). She sleeps in the kitchen. Knowing she is expecting her beau, Pat's son steals over to the kitchen and hijacks the tryst; he is in like Flynn with the sweet Colleen (although no intimacy is explicitly described, as in the Danish folktale, perhaps it can be inferred?).

Without needing any of the Danish clerk's finesse to wheedle a confession of the theft out of the daughter, the Irish girl just blurts out the story of how it was her father and brother who rustled the cattle of the men staying with them (having the brother involved in the theft recalls *Myl*, in which the brother stole the students' horse). Unlike the Breton tale, the daughter was not involved in the theft but seems happy to discuss it: how one cow had been killed and (partly) eaten that night, while the other one is outside in the wood. Now, Pat's son has serious beef with his host.

Meanwhile, the old woman gets up in the night (this is the only tale that describes the wife as being "old," possibly with unattractive connotations, especially compared to the "beautiful" wives of the love-plot tales. Symkyn's wife is also described unattractively). In the dark, she proves unable to navigate her way back to the bed she shares with her husband, but finds a bed with only one person in it and deduces that it must be her bed; however, unbeknownst to her, she gets into bed with Pat (whose son is still away with the daughter). This is how the need for any cradle trick is obviated: the logic of

the headcount in beds is applied instead by characters to decide which bed to enter (also, it may be odd for an "old woman" to have a cradle when her son and daughter seem quite grown up).

Then, Pat's son returns and applies the same logic: he seeks the bed with only one person in it. He does so and, assuming his bedfellow to be his father (when, in fact, it is the "old man of the house"), the son relates how he has discovered who stole their cows as he "was with the daughter of the house all night," thus incensing the girl's father. A donnybrook ensues, but ends in a 'no decision.'

The old woman awakes and chides the two men for fighting, thinking it is the two guests (a common misunderstanding in the analogues). As in the Breton tale, the husband breaks from the fight when he realises his wife is over in the other bed with another man. They quarrel, but the husband need not worry unduly because dozy old Pat has been asleep the whole time (as in the Danish tale, the wife remains unmolested. The senex is sans sex here; he stood pat). Pat's son tells him to get up then informs him what their host has done with their cows. Pat vows to have the host and his son arrested. As in the Danish tale, legal action is threatened (though this time by the guests not the host), and this prospect alarms the thief, prompting him to reimburse their losses. They receive their cow back from the wood, plus the value of the butchered bovine, and go home.

To recapitulate the main features of this Irish tale, the most striking point is that the protagonists are farmers, and father and son. Their cows (not horses) are stolen; no mill or milling is involved. The son finds out about the theft from the daughter (she mistakes him for her beau). As in the Danish tale, there is no baby or cradle trick and no congress with the wife (and maybe not with the daughter, either?). The beef-thief starts fighting the son, but their altercation is aborted, and the protagonists receive their due compensation. The tale ends with a line characteristic of folktales: "That is my story, and may there be a straw in your mouth, and a long yellow buttercake in mine."

Thus, these three folktales seem to join *The Mylner* in forming a distinct subset of narratives among the "miller-plot" strand of tales. As Stehmann identified (112), the motif is that the daughter already has a beau and arranges an assignation with him, only for the young man robbed by her father to hijack the tryst by going to her room first and impersonating her beau. This additional bed-trick constitutes a rape because the daughter sleeps with him under false pretences, believing him to be her usual swain.

This is a troubling variation. The daughters in all other analogues in the matrix do not (apparently) already have other lovers and thus give their consent to the young men who come to their beds, especially in the 'love-plot' versions. The 'miller-plot' versions are more problematic. In *meun*, the clerk dupes the daughter in the trunk into consenting by giving her a supposedly-magic golden ring that will restore a woman's virginity "no matter [...] how often she has whored about" (A217-218—a kind of a "morning-after-ring" Hertog 79). In *RvT*, Malyne gives no clear consent, so this

scene can definitely be read as rape, and it is unequivocally rape in the versions in which the daughter already has a lover but is then fooled by the clerk's impersonation of that lover through the bed-trick.

Thus, other than in this subgenre of tales, in no other source or analogue of *The Reeve's Tale* is the conjoining of the first clerk and the daughter a rape. If Chaucer did intend that scene of Aleyn and Malyne to be recognised as rape, could it be possible that he took the germ of that new idea from another story that he knew that was similar to those comprising this subgenre? Or was it Chaucer's original idea?

In these versions in the subgenre, the real beau sometimes seems to have the father's approval (*Myl*, Danish) but sometimes apparently not (Breton, Irish). As Stehmann stated, this is the subgenre's defining feature: the daughter already has an inamorato, and they have an assignation planned for that night (sometimes lover-boy never comes [*Myl*, Irish] but sometimes he does, with comedic consequences [Breton, Danish]). These assignations are made easier by the fact that the daughters of these four versions in the subgroup each have their own room.

In addition, there are some other distinct features of this subgenre that may be helpful in trying to piece together what a possible older version of the story (with which Chaucer might have been familiar) might have looked like. The two visitors are usually blood relations (brothers in *Myl* and Breton, and father and son in Irish, but apparently not related in the Danish).

Cooper identified the incident of the clerks' sealing their sacks to prevent the miller stealing their flour when they went out (and then the miller thwacking the sacks to get the flour without breaking the seal) as being characteristic of these "analogues now known in Breton or Danish" (426); however, in addition to *Myl*, this scene plays out only in the Breton version (so not in Danish; at least, not in this version: "Mølleturen"). Even so, this sack-thwacking scene remains a distinctive detail, different from the *Reeve's Tale*, which similarly conveys the clerks' wariness about the miller's reputation for thieving.

There are varying levels of the daughters' complicity in their fathers' thefts (the Breton daughter taking the cake, followed by the *Myl* daughter: the two versions that feature the beating of the sealed sack to extract flour. The Breton daughter devised that plan). Similarly, varying degrees of cleverness and craftiness are displayed by the visitors who sleep with the daughters (the Danish clerk proves especially cunning to deal with a miller who is especially malevolent).

The cradle trick is executed by the second young man in *Myl* and the Breton tale (albeit with the same slightly-strange timing as in *RvT* in the latter) to lure the wife into his bed, but there is no cradle trick in the Danish or Irish tales, and neither do those two tales feature any congress with the wife (it is also not specified that any carnality occurred between the first clerk and the daughter in those two tales). Indeed, any carnality is described in much more restrained and vague terms in all

four versions (especially the Danish and Irish ones), so this seems to be another unifying feature that distinguishes them from *RvT* and *meun* (and *Gom-bis*).

These tales almost all feature a physical altercation at the end, usually between the thief and his daughter's violator. The *Myl* and Danish versions are like *RvT* in that this fight is ended by the wife's inadvertent flooring of her husband with a stick. The Breton version differs in that the host hits not the young man but his wife and daughter (this is apparently the only version, besides *meun*, in which the host realises that his wife has cuckolded him).

These four tales in the subgenre conclude with the protagonists receiving recompense for their stolen goods. Whereas in the Irish analogue the visitors are satisfied just to get their stolen stuff back (i.e. their livestock or equivalent value) and thus break even and call it quits, the *Myl,* Breton, and Danish protagonists profit beyond that. Besides the crêpes they ate made of their stolen flour, the Breton brothers also receive a fine shirt (though it is unclear if they were finally able to take it with them as they had to flee, naked, so suddenly) and a bottle of wine later (plus their carnal pleasures). Meanwhile, the Danish clerks turned a tidy profit, thanks to the miller having to pay them 68 *rigsdalers* (the value of the corn he stole) and the daughter giving him 50 *rigsdalers* when she believed him to be her beau, Schneider. Similarly, in addition to retrieving the cake made of their stolen flour, the *Myl* clerk received 30 shillings from the daughter when she believed him to be her beau, Jankyn.

This notion of getting extra recompense might have appealed to Chaucer in composing *The Reeve's Tale* because the Reeve vows to use the tale to "quite" (I.3916) the pilgrim Miller through the humiliation of miller Symkyn (who is so easily identifiable as the pilgrim Miller's doppelgänger). Thus, the clerks' revenge on Symkyn and his family seems excessively vindictive: in addition to retrieving their stolen horse and the cake of their stolen flour, they destroy the lofty marriage aspirations he has for his daughter and tarry to beat him up for longer than was necessary.

The above points are intended as a summary of some of the distinct features of this subgenre of four analogues (*Myl*, Breton, Danish, and Irish) to *The Reeve's Tale*, both to help piece together what an older version of this tale type might look like and to reflect on how they might relate to *The Reeve's Tale*. Admittedly, it is likely that some of the other details in these tales in the subgenre come from *RvT* (especially the scenes of the clerks scrutinising the milling process from above and below, in *Myl* and Breton, and the wife hitting the miller with a stick in *Myl* and Danish); however, could Chaucer have also known an older version of a tale of this subgenre (probably an oral folktale)?

In his study of "Irish Analogues to the Reeve's Tale" (including "Parrach Mha'l Bhrighde's a mhac"), Grace concludes that they "include many Medieval motifs and ideas which are also present in The *Reeve's Tale*. This evidence taken in conjunction with the occurrence of 4 versions in Irish oral

tradition which are closely analogous to the *Reeve's Tale* but definitely are not derived from it, suggest that it is indeed possible for Chaucer to have heard the tale, then found in English folk tradition, and to have then used it as the basis of the *Reeve's Tale*" (46). "The basis" might be overstating the case, but perhaps such tales were indeed in circulation in Chaucer's time, and he could have been aware of them as he was in the process of composing *The Canterbury Tales*. Thus, contends Hines, "it is probable that the *Mery Jest* [=*Myl*] gives us a delayed glimpse of what a Middle English source for Chaucer's Reeve's Tale may have looked like" (206). Hines also even suggests that, "It is conceivable that Chaucer changed the name [Abington] from his source to the similar Trumpington" (206), near which Symkyn's mill is located, and Skeat claimed that, because Abington is seven miles from Cambridge, "In a way, it suits better; Trumpington is too near Cambridge for the clerks to have been benighted there" (III.397.2).

Even if Hines and Grace go too far in stating the importance/influence of such a putative old folktale of this subgenre, the possibility of the existence of such a version (or versions) seems undeniable. If Chaucer did know such a version, it would not detract at all from the appreciation of his originality in crafting his tales from the more established sources and analogues and from the creative workings of his own imagination. Instead, such versions would only add depth and complexity to the intertextual matrix that inspired Chaucer's novel, transformational composition.

The three folktales are geographically remote from each other (Breton, Danish, and Irish, plus the English *Mylner*), with variation in content, too, indicating that they might well have evolved in these different ways (and places) from underlying, antecedent folktales. Similarly, the more recognised "literary" ATU 1363 tales are geographically spaced out across Europe, so what are the influences and connections between them? This study has exhumed and examined these long-lost continental narratives as intertexts to try to provide some clues.

Through comparative analysis, this study has identified various curious correlations in detail between the three folktales (plus *The Mylner*) and the more renowned ATU 1363 tales, including those "love-plot" analogues that the diagrams posit as polar opposites. However, these intertextual intersections indicate that the tales are not necessarily poles apart at all, or that 'never the twain shall meet.' Rather, such details and motifs from older folktale versions of this subgenre of tales (i.e. Stehmann's "MOTIV II[a]") might have connected and cross-pollinated the literary versions as crucial conduits and mediating intertexts. This is why it may be better to reconceptualise and reconsider the relationships between tales more broadly, as an intertextual matrix: The Matrix Reeve-Loaded.

Notes

[1] As noted in Part I, there are two extant versions of *Le meunier et les .ii. clers*, A and B, neither of which can

be *RvT*'s exclusive source.

[2] Apparently, only the Irish analogue ("Patrick Mac Bride and his Son") has an English translation in print (see Lloyd). The Breton-language analogue was translated into French (see Luzel), and the Danish one ("Mølleturen") was translated into German (see Stehmann 108-110). Thus, I am indebted to the excellent foreign-exchange students at the University of Fukui for translating those Breton-French and Danish-German ones into English (the latter was translated by Jasmin Simoner, and the former by man-of-Nantes Mathieu Martin).

[3] All quotations from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*. All quotations from *The Mylner of Abyngton* are from the text printed in Raith (147-160). The quotations/references from *Le meunier et les .ii. clers, Een bispel van .ij. clerken,* and *Decameron* 9.6 are from Correale and Hamel (eds.), and quotations/references from *Gombert et les .ii. clers* and the other analogues mentioned are from Benson and Andersson (eds.).

[4] Darjes and Rendall refer to the "Jankyns of popular tradition" (426), such as the 15th-century poem (anon.) "Jolly Jankyn," in which the titillated titular playboy cleric impregnates a girl named Alison (shades of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*?), after wooing her by playing 'footsy' (as the *Myl*, *Le meunier* B, and *Irregang* clerks all also try to do). *The Riverside Chaucer* confirms that "Jankin" was a "derisive name for a priest" (1319). Another example is the 15th-century Chaucerian apocrypha (dated c. 1425, Darjes and Rendall 416), the Prologue of *The Tale of Beryn* (anon., which appears with genuine Chaucerian works in both the Northumberland MS 455, dated 1450-75, and Urry's 1721 *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*). In it, the pilgrims are imagined arriving in Canterbury, where the Pardoner wants to tap tapster Kit, especially after she tells him she sleeps with her kit off, lying by "myselff al nyght al naked" (line 28. All quotations from the Prologue are from Bowers [ed.], 60-79) since her lover, "Jenkyn Harpour" (30), died. Wise to him, Kit arranges a nocturnal honey-trap assignation with him while her real lover is in bed with her, leading to the Pardoner's humiliation as, in the battle of paramour vs. pardoner, he gets hit with his own staff (525-27) and has to sleep in the litter of a ferocious Welsh dog (633, 646). Darjes and Rendall note that this "bears some resemblance to the struggle [...] in the conclusion of the *Reeve Tale*" (430); it is also like Stehmann's "MOTIV IIa" subgenre of tales because the midnight approach of a presumed love rival is also violently/scatologically repulsed in some versions (including this Breton one). Kit had earlier called the Pardoner "Jenken" (62, 342) while buttering him up, and noting what playboys some clerics are, rather earmarking him as a somewhat-stereotypical stooge.

[5] A similar scene unfolds in the next Breton chanson in Luzel's collection, "Le meunier et sa servant." The plot is similar to Enguerrand d'Oisy's 13th–century *Roman du Meunier d'Arleux* as a horny miller (Robert) wants to bed his pretty young maidservant (Margot, and will pay for it), but she tells his wife, and they plan to play the bed-trick on him by putting the wife in bed instead. The wife worries he "will recognise my voice," but Margot assures her she will not have to breathe a word as he will be gabbing away ecstatically the whole time. That is exactly what occurs: he keeps banging on about how much joy Margot's beauty brings him (as his *fille de joie*), and how he would like to bury his wife tomorrow, only for the wife to reveal her true identity and considerably dampen his ardour.

[6] With his urolagnia fetish, renowned sexologist Havelock Ellis might have enjoyed this golden-brown shower

(376; it might have floated his boat), but water-sports are by no means everyone's cup of tea. The daughter's actions in being a 'pan tipper' emulate those of Xanthippe, who notoriously emptied a chamber pot over her husband Socrates ("How Xantippa cast pisse upon his heed", as the Wife of Bath describes it, III.279).

[7] Desens notes that some critics have seen the bed-trick as a "plot convention that violates psychological realism" (12) because surely, in reality, the victim would realise that this was not their regular partner: the body shape, the smell, the grunts/moans/moves etc.? Some willing suspension of disbelief seems required that the victim could really not be too cocksure. As Hazlitt put it: "we must not enter too nicely into the question of female discernment, where the two scholars are accepted in lieu of Jenkyn and the miller" (464). However, Desens is also adamant that people should no longer laugh it off like that and instead recognise "rape as lying at the heart of the bed-trick" (142).

[8] Coffee drinking was not widespread in medieval Europe, so this detail is a giveaway to this folktale's later provenance although it could also be a detail interpolated later to replace another beverage in an older version of the story (e.g. "Boiled milk" in *Gom* 32 or "porridge" in *bis* 31). As the online *Brittanica* confirms, "Coffee was introduced into one European country after another throughout the 16th and 17th centuries" (https://www.britannica.com/topic/coffee, retrieved 24/09/2022). Likewise, the specified currency, the *rigsdaler*, sometimes anglicised to the rix-dollar, a small silver coin, also dates from a similar period. As de Laine states, the "Daler or 'rigsdaler' is a Danish coin that was minted between 1537 and 1875, when kroner and øre replaced the old coinage." These details represent glaring anachronisms if this Danish folktale purports to be medieval, but, as stated above, it could have been preceded by an earlier folktale with similar content.

[9] Grace suggests a historical reason why Irish analogues tend to feature farmers rather than millers: "after the Famine, and particularly during the last quarter of the 19th Century, the local mills started to succumb to the decline in tillage farming and the competition from cheaper American flour" (45). Although this reasoning may represent as glaring an anachronism as the coffee and *rigsdaler* details in the Danish version, Grace suggests that, "The adaptability of the story, it could be argued, shows how it is possible for it to have been known in the Medieval period" (45).

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