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Flores og Blanseflor – Romance in East Scandinavia and the Introduction of Printed Book Culture in Denmark¹

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Abstract: The article addresses the question of what happened to the genre of romance when printing technology was taken into use in late 15th and early 16th century Denmark, at a time when hand-written manuscripts still were being produced. East Scandinavian romance had a history from the beginning of the 14th century in Sweden, when the three *Eufemiavisor* were created, and they continued to attract interest in late Middle Ages up to the beginning of the 16th century. They appear in Danish manuscripts in the last decades of the 15th century, but when the printing technology is introduced, they seem to play a less prominent role, as only one text, *Flores og Blanseflor*, survives in the first phase of printing. In the article, it is argued that the choice to print this particular text probably lies in its ability to respond to late medieval currents and the new urban literary market, but also that it perhaps should be understood within the context of a late medieval religious reading of romances.

Keywords: romance, late medieval romance, early prints, Scandinavian literary culture, Old Danish literary history, *Eufemiaviser*, *Flores og Blanseflor*

European romance is sometimes primarily associated with its high medieval origins, but it continued to attract interest for a long time, not the least during the late Middle Ages.² The genre was not stable or petrified; it evolved in different directions as time and contexts changed, and it was assigned new functions and meanings and found new audiences. One much discussed example of change within the romance genre is the abandonment of rhymed verse for prose, but the genre as a whole underwent changes that involved formal characteristics, thematic orientation, ideology, narrative structure, and expected audience.³

The late medieval period is also the period of the introduction of printing technology, which in time would change the whole textual landscape. Printing technology had the potential to make books available to new groups due to the much lower sale prices. One

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- 1 The present study is based on research conducted within the research programme “Modes of Modification. Variance and Change in Medieval Manuscript Culture”, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.
 - 2 An overview of the history of romance can be found in Saunders (2004).
 - 3 The discussion on the development of late medieval romance is vast and will not be summarised here. For the present analysis, Brown-Grant (2008) and Cooper (1997, 1999, 2004) are important sources for the French and English contexts, respectively.

estimation states that printing technology lowered the cost of production by up to 80 percent in comparison with a manually produced book (Ludwig 1964: 4). However, even if the change was to be profound, the current scholarly discussion on this period nevertheless stresses the long co-existence of and exchange between the manuscript culture and printing technology rather than speaks of a sharp break (Boffey 2014; Tether 2017:14–16). Romance also found its way into printed book culture, but not without some hesitation towards the genre among printers, and the relationship would remain complex.⁴ Here, we will approach this process in Scandinavia.

Romances appeared in today's Norway and Iceland in the thirteenth century, and in Sweden and Denmark, here collectively referred to as East Scandinavia, the genre was introduced in the fourteenth century and seems to have attracted interest during the fifteenth century.⁵ The printing technology was first introduced in Denmark and Sweden in the 1480s, and during the first decades it was mostly used for religious and educational texts.⁶ In Sweden, no secular narratives, like romances, were printed at all in this early phase, and this pattern would last. After the nobleman Gustav Vasa ascended to the Swedish throne in 1523, printing became monopolised under state control, thereby limiting the commercial exploitation of the printing technology.

In Denmark, a somewhat different path was taken, as secular texts in the Danish vernacular were printed in the very first decades of domestic printing (Undorf 2014: 16–18). Later in the sixteenth century, a large number of popular narratives were printed. These were a group of texts which sometimes are called 'chapbooks' or 'Volksbücher', or the more textually oriented concepts 'Historienbücher' or 'early modern narratives'.⁷ The shifting terminology of this group of texts mirrors the heterogeneity in terms of their content and textual characteristics. Although 'romance' is a rather wide and open genre concept, the early modern narrative is a probably even wider category.⁸

In this article, I address the process of change in the corpus of East Scandinavian secular narratives, of which the romances were part, upon the advent of the new printing technology in Scandinavia, and more specifically, in Denmark. For reasons which will be explained further below, special attention will be paid to the printing of the Danish *Flores og Blanseflor* of the *Floire et Blanchefleur* tradition. What happened to romance in East Scandinavia when printing technology began to be used at the same time as hand-written manuscripts were still being produced? How can we understand the choices that have left us the corpus of texts we have? Let us look at a broad picture of Scandinavian text history before going into the details of manuscripts and prints.

4 Sánchez-Martí (2019) shows the shifting attitudes towards romance among English printers, and Montorsi (2019) analyses how Arthurian material is edited in France and Europe.

5 A recent overview of Nordic romance texts with an emphasis on the West Nordic medieval texts can be found in Glauser (2020).

6 Undorf (2012: 62–64) summarises and compares printing in Denmark and Sweden.

7 The discussion on terminology is treated in Richter (2009: 7–11), in which previous research on this group of texts is also discussed (pp. 11–16).

8 The problem of genre is discussed in part 2 below.

1 Romance and secular narratives in late medieval Denmark and Sweden

Although the empirical focus of this study is on the Danish material, the topic requires a Scandinavian context since the textual cultures of each respective language area are connected in different ways. For the whole of the fifteenth century, Scandinavia was a political union; there were strong internal tensions, especially between Denmark and Sweden, but there was still a continuous interaction between its different parts. The languages were so close that translation of texts probably was not called for in many cases. An example of this inter-Scandinavian readership could be brought in from the early modern era, when Danish printed books seem to have been commonly read in Sweden (Richter 2009: 19–21). Still, ‘translations’ were carried out during the Middle Ages of texts from different parts of Scandinavia, even if the linguistic shifts between the source text and target text can be so small that it challenges the concept of translation.⁹

Denmark and Sweden share an important part of their history of romance literature through the three Swedish chivalric verse translations from the early fourteenth century, the *Eufemiavisor*. The *Eufemiavisor* were probably commissioned by the Norwegian Queen Eufemia (d. 1312) for her daughter Ingeborg and her future son-in-law, the Swedish Prince and Duke Erik Magnusson. Later, perhaps in the fifteenth century, they were translated into Danish.¹⁰

The *Eufemiavisor* consist of, first, *Herr Ivan* (‘Lord Ivan’), a verse translation of Chrétien’s de Troyes *Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion*, which also made use of the West Nordic translation *Ívens saga* as a source; second, *Hertig Fredrik av Normandie* (‘Duke Fredrik of Normandy’), which describes itself as a translation of a German translation of a French original, of which there are no traces; and finally, *Flores och Blanzeflor*, a translation that probably made use of a Norwegian translation of a *Floire et Blanchefleur* text.¹¹ According to the colophons, they were translated in 1303, 1308 and, most likely, 1311/1312, respectively (Degnbol 2014: 87). Unlike the West Nordic prose translations, the *Eufemiavisor* were written in knittel verse, an end-rhymed metre that was popular on the continent and remained dominant in Swedish secular narratives into the early modern era.

These three texts form the core of Swedish romance literature and influenced other works outside the romance genre, e.g. the Swedish royal chronicle *Erikskrönikan* (the ‘Eric Chronicle’) believed to be from the second quarter of the fourteenth century (Ferrari 2008: 55). There were no other romances translated in this early phase, but there are other works related to courtly culture that seem to stem from this period, such as the satire *Herr abboten* (‘The Lord Abbott’), the King’s mirror *Um styrilse konunga ok höfðinga* (‘On the Rule of

9 Linguistically speaking, it might be relevant to speak of intra-linguistic translation in Roman Jakobson’s terminology, but this is a discussion that will not be taken further here.

10 Queen Eufemia and her literary interests and activities are discussed in Würth (2000). It is unclear when they were translated from Swedish to Danish, but the manuscripts stem from the end of the fifteenth century. Kværndrup (2014: 295–297) suggests that the translations would have been carried out in the late fourteenth century when Queen Margareta I of Denmark became the regent of all Scandinavia, but even if it is quite possible, there is no clear evidence in favour of such an early dating.

11 For a thorough analysis of *Herr Ivan*, see Lodén (2012). The possible sources of *Hertig Fredrik* are recently discussed in Busby (2015) and the *Flores och Blanzeflor* in Bampi (2018/2019).

Kings and Chieftains'), and also the Old Swedish Pentateuch translation (known from the edition *Medeltidens bibelarbete 1*, 'Medieval Bible Works 1').¹² From the last part of the fourteenth century stems a verse translation of the Alexander matter in *Historia de Preliis*, called *Konung Alexander* ('King Alexander'), which was partly adapted to the format of courtly literature (Bampi 2015). Later in the fifteenth century, some new texts appear to which we shall return after examining the romance manuscripts.

The manuscript evidence of the Old Swedish *Eufemiavisor* romances is limited. From the fourteenth century, only a fragment of a manuscript containing *Flores och Blanzeflor* is preserved. In addition, an inventory from the royal castle of Bohus, in modern western Sweden, mentions one book with *Herr Ivan* and another with *Hertig Fredrik*; however, there are no other traces of these manuscripts.¹³

Manu- script	SDHKnr 5311 ^b	R III	D 4	D 4a	D3	AM 191	E 9013	K 45	D 2
Time of MS pro- duction ^a	b. 1346	c. 1350	1410– 1430	c. 1448	1488	1492	c. 1500	c. 1500	–1523 ^c

Table 1: Old Swedish medieval manuscripts containing the *Eufemiavisor* romances.¹⁴ a: The approximate dates are suggestions, while the exact years are dates from the respective manuscripts; b: SDHKnr 5311 is not a manuscript but a charter containing a list of books that were kept at the royal castle of Bohus in modern western Sweden, which mentioned two of the *Eufemiavisor* romances, see footnote 13; c: The first text in the manuscript was written in 1470–1480. The other parts are from the first decades of the sixteenth century, with one text dated to 1523.

As can be seen in Table 1, there is a growing number of preserved manuscripts containing romance texts in the final decades of the Middle Ages. Although such an increase in numbers cannot be taken as proof of a growing interest – the actual number of manuscripts is low and older manuscripts have probably been lost to a greater extent than later ones – the material does at least avoid giving the impression there was vanishing interest in this literary category at the end of the fifteenth century. There are also other indications of an interest in secular narratives at large during the century through the translation of

12 The datings of all these three works are debated, but they have been argued to stem from the first part of the fourteenth century. *Herr abboten* is a clerical satire related to the Latin *Golyas de quodam abbate*, and for an introduction and broad analysis of the texts and their relation to the courtly literature, see Ferm/Morris (1997). For a discussion on the dating of the *Konungastyrelsen* ('The Rule of Kings', *Um styrilse konunga ok höfðinga*), see Delsing (2000). The relation between the Pentateuch translation and the *Eufemiavisor* is discussed in Wollin (2015).

13 The inventory in the charter SDHKnr 5311 tells of a number of books and mentions "jtem vnum yuan. (...) jtem dedit dominus rex. dapifero ærlingo I. librum de hærtogh fræthrik." ('moreover one *Ivan* (...) moreover the lord King gave one book with *Hertig Fredrik* to the Justiciar Erling Vidkunsson').

14 An overview of the manuscripts containing at least one of the three *Eufemiavisor* romances can be found in Layher (2015), and the manuscripts are described in more detail in Backman (2017, Ch. 2). I have excluded here MS Stockholm Riksarkivet, E 8822, as it belonged to a Norwegian milieu, see Karl G. Johansson's contribution in this volume.

new texts into Swedish from both the continental and other Scandinavian languages. These fifteenth-century texts were, for instance, *Namnlös och Valentin* ('Nameless and Valentin' of the *Valentin et Orson* tradition), *Riddar Paris och jungfru Vienna* ('Knight Paris and Virgin Vienna' of the *Paris et Vienne* tradition) and *Sju vise mästarare* ('The seven sages' of the *Septem sapientes* tradition). All three are translations of German sources and examples of late medieval narratives that were widely popular in Europe.¹⁵ Also, the West Nordic *Karlamagnús saga* ('The Saga of Charlemagne') and *Piðreks saga af Bern* ('The Saga of Theoderic of Bern') were translated into Swedish, which add to the impression of an interest in narrative texts in the vernacular. There seems thus to be a firm interest in secular narratives in the vernacular in late medieval Sweden, and the *Eufemiavisor* romances from the beginning of the fourteenth century were part of that interest.

The social provenance of the manuscripts is uncertain in most cases, but in some cases there is information concerning owners and scribes. When it comes to ownership, the information we have points in the direction of the aristocracy (including the royal family).¹⁶ All three *Eufemiavisor* are assumed to have been prepared for Princess Ingeborg and Duke Erik (Degnbol 2014: 87–88), and the inventory in the charter from 1346 places manuscripts of two of the texts in the royal family, although one is noted to have been given to the Justiciar Erling Vidkunsson of Norway (see footnote 13). Of the fifteenth-century manuscripts, two, namely D 4a and D 3, were produced for and owned by a mother and her daughter in the high nobility within the landowning aristocracy (Backman 2017: 27–32). These examples clearly show that this kind of literature was part of an aristocratic reading culture. In two cases we know that the manuscripts were produced by scribes connected to different religious institutions, and it is possible that they could have been meant to be used within these institutions. This pertains to MS AM 191 fol., which was written and owned by the chaplain of Askaby Cistercian nunnery, and MS D 2, which was written by the scribe of a bishop in Linköping in central Sweden.¹⁷ In the case of AM 191, some redactional choices seem to have been motivated by considerations regarding a female audience, which could be explained with an intention to use the manuscript at the Cistercian convent where the chaplain was active (Bampi 2017). The connection to the nobility is, however, still relevant in this case, as the sisters were in all probability of aristocratic lineage. The remaining manuscripts – the fragment R III, and MSS D 4, E 9013 and K 45 – carry no clear or explicit information on ownership.

What we see in Sweden is thus a sudden outburst of romance and other texts connected to the courtly culture in the beginning of the fourteenth century. These were likely inspired partly by the Norwegian literary culture and partly by the continental, probably German, one. In the fifteenth century, the *Eufemiavisor* continued to attract interest, as we find them in manuscripts, and there was moreover a production of new texts. These new texts did

15 *Namnlös och Valentin* is introduced in Vilhelmsdotter (2010), *Riddar Paris och jungfru Vienna* in Lodén (2015a), and *Sju vise mästarare* in Bampi (2014).

16 For a more detailed discussion on the social context of the manuscripts of the Swedish *Eufemiavisor*, see Andersson (2014: 65–67), who stresses the connection to the aristocratic milieus and questions whether some of the manuscripts were used in monasteries.

17 For an updated discussion on D 2, see Lodén (2015a), and for a discussion on the context of AM 191 fol., see Bampi (2014).

not resemble the old *Eufemiavisor* as they were written in prose and also departed from the traditional romance material. The manuscripts show that the texts circulated among the aristocracy and that some of them were possibly read within religious institutions.

If we turn to Denmark, the history is even more difficult to grasp, as the preserved texts and manuscripts are late and even rarer than in Sweden. There are no known courtly literary texts in Old Danish from the fourteenth century, although we might assume the existence of ballads and other orally transmitted texts, perhaps already in the thirteenth century (Dahlerup 1998: 151–154). Only two manuscripts with romances are preserved from the fifteenth century, namely Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, K 4 from the latter half of the fifteenth century and Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, K 47 from around 1500.¹⁸ There might well have been a larger number of texts and manuscripts, also of greater age, that were lost in the 1728 Copenhagen fire, but it is also possible that a vernacular literary culture in Danish did not emerge before the fifteenth century.¹⁹

Old Danish chivalric texts	Pages in MS K 47	Old Swedish source texts
<i>Ivan løveridder</i>	222	<i>Herr Ivan</i>
<i>Hertug Frederik af Normandi</i>	83	<i>Hertig Fredrik av Normandie</i>
<i>Dværgekongen Laurin</i>	32	–
<i>Persenober og Konstantianobis</i>	54	–
<i>Den kyske dronning</i>	23	–
<i>Flores og Blanseflor</i>	74	<i>Flores och Blanzeflor</i>

Table 2: Romances in Danish medieval manuscripts in the order they appear in MS Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, K 47.

A complete library of all known Danish medieval chivalric texts can be found in MS K 47, and its contents are shown in Table 2. It includes translations of the three Old Swedish *Eufemiavisor* and the three chivalric tales only known in Danish: *Den kyske dronning* (‘The

18 The miscellany manuscript Linköpings stiftsbibliotek Saml. 1 a, dated to early sixteenth century (Backman 2017: 35), represents a special case that I leave aside here. It is written in a mixture of Danish and Swedish and contains different kinds of practical and religious texts together with the Danish printed book *Den tolamodige Griseldis historia* (see Table 3 below). Paulli (1920: 232) does not rule out that the *Griseldis* text was copied from the printed but lost edition of 1528, and it is thus not clear if it should be seen as part of the medieval manuscript culture in this overview or an example of a manual copy of a printed book. It has genealogical notes about people within the aristocracy from 1518, which places it in the aristocratic milieu.

19 In his very broad overview of emerging vernacular cultures, Pollock (2006) shows that it is quite typical for a culture with an administrative and documentary vernacular literacy to persist for a long time before a vernacular secular literary culture suddenly breaks out. The Swedish vernacular literature probably owes its origins to the dynastical marriage between the Swedish duke and Norwegian princess in the beginning of the fourteenth century and the mother Eufemia’s literary interests. Without such circumstances, the Swedish literary culture might have stayed silent for a much longer time, in a way similar to Denmark.

Chaste Queen'), *Dværgekongen Laurin* ('The Dwarf King Laurin', built upon sources about Didrik of Bern) and *Persenober og Konstantianobis* ('Persenober and Konstantianobis' of the *Partonopeus de Blois* tradition). *Den kyske dronning* has been suggested as a possible original work in Danish that relied on themes that were used in other texts.²⁰ K 47 is thought to stem from around 1500.²¹

Slightly older is the manuscript MS K 4, dated from around 1480, which contains *Ivan løveridder*, the Danish translation of *Herr Ivan*, together with other works of piety, among them a large number of legendary texts (Layer 2015: 278; Bullitta 2017: 5–8).

According to information in the texts themselves, *Den kyske dronning* was created in 1483 by an otherwise unknown Jep Jensen, and *Persenober og Konstantianobis* was written in 1484.²² The third of the Danish romances, *Dværgekongen Laurin*, carries no similar dating, and, as already mentioned, there is no information about the translation of the three *Eufemiavisor*.²³

The social provenance of the two manuscripts can only be hypothesised, but there are some interesting details that indicate female audiences in both cases. Bullitta (2017) has pointed out that the MS K 4 legendary material mainly consists of female saints, and in one occurrence the text addresses its audience as "sisters". In MS K 47, *Hertug Fredrik* and *Flores og Blanseflor* carry the interesting note in the colophon that they were penned by a female writer, and in the texts of both *Ivan løveridder* and *Hertug Fredrik* there are some deviations from other text witnesses, which seem to be motivated by an adaption to a female audience.²⁴ No changes with a similar intent have so far been suggested concerning *Flores og Blanseflor*. Nevertheless, adaptation to a female audience might possibly be the explanation for why one of the three sons of Blanseflor and Flores in the Swedish original was exchanged for a daughter in the Danish text, a rewriting that is described and discussed in Richter (2018/2019: 47–48). This exchange probably was meant to connect the story dynastically to the history of Charlemagne, as Charlemagne's mother Berthe is described as the daughter of the couple in the continental tradition of *Floire et Blanchefleur*. Still, to bring forth a historically important female heir, is a detail that could be seen in the light of the rewriting tendency in the other two *Eufemiavisor* in K 47, but the text needs further analysis before any conclusions might be drawn.²⁵ In summary, we find one manuscript connected to the religious sphere and one with no such obvious religious connections, but both of them were probably made for a female audience.

20 An overview of the Danish romances can be found in Dahlerup (1998: 247–274). For a recent discussion on *Persenober og Konstantianobis*, see Richter (2019, especially 332–334).

21 A description of both manuscripts is published online on the webpage "Håndskrifter/Tryk" at the website *Tekster fra Danmarks middelalder og renæssance 1100–1550 – på dansk og latin*. The URL address is given in the references (online sources) under the name of the webpage.

22 "Skønlitteratur" (*Tekster fra Danmarks middelalder*, see footnote 21) contains useful descriptions of each of the three works.

23 For a discussion of a possible time frame for the original translation, see Kværndrup (2014: 295–296) with comments in Bampi (2019: 217–218).

24 Some examples of changes in *Ivan løveridder* are given in Bampi (2019: 223–225), see also the contributions by Massimiliano Bampi and Louise Faymonville in this volume.

25 In a future article I will present an analysis of K 47 vis-à-vis the other manuscripts.

Compared to the literature of other European central cultures in the late Middle Ages, the Swedish and Danish romance literature is minute, but what matters here is the fact that there was a certain interest in this kind of literature as part of a more general interest in secular narratives in the latest phase of the medieval manuscript culture. Each manuscript was an expensive economic investment, and obviously there was enough interest to translate and create new texts as well.

The possible connection to religious contexts also deserves some further comments, as it is not self-evident why romances appear in otherwise religious manuscripts. Bampi (2019: 227–230) discusses two such Scandinavian cases, the already mentioned Danish MS K 4 and the Norwegian MS Stockholm, Riksarkivet, E 8822. These manuscripts have similar content structures, namely *Ivan løveridder/Herr Ivan* as a single romance text among other religious, edifying texts, and from that pattern and with support from previous research, Bampi argues that the romance could have been open to a religious reading and interpretation. A similar interaction between romance and works of piety has been reported in other parts of Europe, for instance, in English late medieval manuscripts.

The compatibility of romance with piety [...] is endorsed by the evidence of manuscripts and readership. The compilers of late medieval miscellanies, increasing numbers of them middle-class townsmen (such as the Leicester burgess Rate or the London mercer Johan Colyns) or gentry (such as the Yorkshire Robert Thorton), generously confirm the tendency in earlier collections [...] to mix romances with works of orthodox piety [...]. (Cooper 1999: 696–697)

Considering how deeply religious medieval society was, it is not surprising that works of piety are found together with ‘secular’ ones in lay manuscripts. However, it is perhaps a little more conspicuous when single ‘secular’ narratives are brought into manuscripts with mainly religious texts. In a discussion on the Middle English romance, Adams (1998: 291) argues that surrounding a romance with religious works even could be understood as a neutralisation of the morally problematic character of romance. The traditional genre had been criticised for its amoral themes, and probably as a response to that, Middle English romance tended to be influenced by the genre of Saints’ lives. In several ways there came to be a relationship between romance and the religious genres, and the two Scandinavian manuscripts seem to fit into that picture.

In one important aspect, the situation in Scandinavia differs from Cooper’s description of late medieval England in the quotation above. The reading culture among the lay, urban classes in England has no known counterpart in medieval Scandinavia, as no Scandinavian medieval manuscripts are clearly linked to burghers or townspeople (if we do not count the secular clergy). We must be careful about drawing conclusions *e silentio*, but as far as the material allows us any conclusions, the romances and secular narratives seem to have been a matter of concern for aristocratic readers, perhaps to some extent in religious settings.²⁶

26 In his analysis of early printed book culture in Denmark and Sweden up to the Reformation, Undorf describes what we know of private book-ownership, and when it comes to Denmark, most of the known book-owners were clerics (Undorf 2014: 235). In Sweden there are more examples of known book-ownership within the nobility and also among burghers (Undorf 2014: 251–253).

2 Changing texts, genres, and corpus

Before we move on with the analysis of the early printed book culture in Denmark, it is necessary to consider which texts should be included in the discussion and how the term ‘romance’ should be understood and used. It also requires a discussion on the concept of genre.²⁷

The *Eufemiavisor* text group took its departure from the emblematic romance of *Yvain*, but came to include perhaps less typical romance works of *Hertig Fredrik* and *Flores och Blanseflor*. They were, however, shaped in the same form of knittel verse regardless of the character of their original, and an intended convergence is also visible in the translation of *Flores och Blanseflor*, which is rewritten in a more courtly direction than the original (Bampi 2018/2019). Even if the three texts originally belonged to different traditions, they merge into a more closely connected group of texts as the *Eufemiavisor*.

The fifteenth century Danish knightly verse tales are obviously related to the *Eufemiavisor*, but they were held in a new, less courtly key, as the analysis of their vocabulary in Akhøj Nielsen (2017) has shown. There seems thus to have been a drift away from some of the typical features of the courtly language and content of the *Eufemiavisor*. In Sweden, we find no similar extension of the *Eufemiavisor* romance verse literature, but the literary corpus of secular narratives was expanded with prose works of other traditions, such as *Valentine et Orson* or the *Septem sapientes*.²⁸ The question is thus: are the new texts of the fifteenth century so different from the *Eufemiavisor* that it is no longer relevant to speak of the same kind of text? Is it a genre that changes or becomes more inclusive, or do the new texts form a new genre of their own?²⁹ Are even the *Eufemiavisor* to be regarded as *one* genre? These questions are complex and challenging, and the answers also depend on how we understand the concept of genre.

In a theoretical discussion on genre evolution and emergence, Miller (2016) points out that genre has traditionally been discussed either deductively from normative definitions, such as for instance the different kinds of speeches of Aristotle, or from an inductive analysis of traits in a given group of texts. Both these approaches aim at formulating the essence of a genre: what a genre actually *is* in terms of textual properties. In the case of romance, there are several such essentialistic definitions, such as the following example: “[a] fictional story in verse or prose that relates improbable adventures of idealized characters in some remote or enchanted setting” (Baldick 2008: 291). The consequence of such a definition is that some of the textual innovations we find in late medieval texts must be seen as an abandonment of the initial genre and the emergence of new genres, or the evolution of new sub-genres. However, such a rigid essentialism has been criticised for being anachronistic and not

27 A very useful discussion on the concept of genre with special attention to the West Nordic literature can be found in Bampi/Larrington/Rikhardsdóttir (2020). Its recent publication has prevented me from treating it thoroughly in this discussion, but I hope to return to it in a future publication.

28 The Swedish *Namnlös och Valentin* of the *Valentine et Orson* tradition is in its main part written in prose, but it also contains some elements of knittel verse (Vilhelmsdotter 2010).

29 A similar discussion with some different conclusions can be found in Adams (1998: 292–293).

taking the contemporary views among the audience of the Middle Ages into consideration.³⁰ Would the late medieval readers agree upon the same definitions that we apply?

Miller has shown a way from such essentialism in her seminal article “Genre as social action” (1984), further developed in the discussion in Miller (2016), in which genre is treated as a social category. Genre is then not defined by specific traits in a group of texts but is instead based on habits and opinions among speakers, writers and readers. This leads to an interest in, for instance, how genres are named by their users (2016: 13). In the Scandinavian medieval context, where there is a shortage, or even an absence, of any meta-discussion about and literary terminology for vernacular texts, one might instead trace ideas about genres with respect to how texts were arranged in multi-text manuscripts.³¹

This social approach makes the concept of genre a dependent variable rather than an independent one, thus not postulating the existence of a genre but rather exploring genre as a possible, socially construed way of communication among the users and producers of text within a textual culture. This also means that it is necessary to be open to changing textual properties within the same genre in a growing corpus of texts.³² As long as texts are treated as a certain genre by their users, this is enough reason to speak of it as such, even if originally typical genre traits are replaced by innovations. However, if texts start to be read and used and categorised in new ways, one would have reasons to argue that a genre change is occurring. The religious reading of classical romance texts, which we touched upon in the last part, would then represent a possible genre change even if the texts themselves did not change at all.

Thus, genre development can be discussed from either a textual or a social viewpoint, and from positions between these two typical approaches. Whetter (2008) takes the essentialistic genre definitions as realities for the medieval audience, arguing that, for example, genre parodies would be impossible without the audience having a clear idea of the typical characteristics of the genre in question. From another perspective, Brown-Grant (2008: 7) argues that the general use of prose in the fifteenth century levelled out some generic distinctions, and with less distinct textual characteristics, like prose instead of a certain metre, genre categories became open for debate. It is clear that a thorough understanding of a genre and its evolution requires attention to the complex interplay between the textual properties and ideas underlying social categorisation in a continual negotiation of categories in a textual culture.

30 See, for instance, Cooper (1997: 142). The essentialistic genre concept has often been burdened by evaluative statements about literary quality in relation to the ideal, and changes within the genre has previously been described as a decline and degeneration, as discussed in Brown-Grant (2008). Similar pejorative sentiments can be found addressing the Old Swedish chronicles of the fifteenth century, when they depart from the courtly character of the fourteenth-century chronicle *Erikskrönikan*, which is discussed in Ferrari (2015).

31 A recent discussion on manuscripts as witnesses of genre conceptions can be found in Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir (2020).

32 Miller (2016) also involves cognitive and psychological arguments, but here the alternative is described as social for the sake of simplicity and in line with how the approach to genre within New Rhetorical studies in the 1980s and onwards often is described. Miller/Devitt/Gallagher (2018) provide a useful overview of different theoretical positions in relation to the concept of genre.

In the following discussion, I am less concerned with the textual properties of specific works than with the corpus as a whole. I will, as indicated above, speak about the *Eufemiavisor* as a group of texts that, despite their internal differences, formed an identifiable group and potential category of texts for the medieval readers. I believe we cannot expect that the readers in medieval Sweden had a thorough knowledge of the relation each of these works had to the different international traditions of narratives to which they belonged. Most of them probably perceived them as one kind of text, be it a genre or some other text category. For the sake of simplicity, I speak of them as examples of East Scandinavian romance. When new narrative works of fictional character show up in the fifteenth century, it is reasonable to believe that people saw the differences between them and the *Eufemiavisor* – or the similarities, as in the case of the Danish knightly verse-tales. The difference could be on the formal level, like prose in contrast to knittel verse, but one would also need to consider content, values, motives etc. It is, however, not clear if they saw these new texts as a different category or as variants of the same basic kind of text. This is a field that needs further exploration and a more in-depth theoretical discussion.

Essentialistic definitions, like the one cited above, can be used as a methodological starting point, but one also must consider the historical circumstances and manuscript contexts. Most importantly, it is necessary to treat such definitions as prototype categories, that is a category with a core and with blurred boundaries.³³ Some texts undoubtedly belong to the core while others linger on the fringes or appear to be on the outside.

One type of text that has been excluded from the present investigation is historical verse-chronicles. Even though they were influenced by the *Eufemiavisor* in terms of literary form and style, they represent another epistemological discourse that connects to the readers' political and geographical real-world horizon of experiences, in contrast to the more or less far-away settings of romance adventures. An adjacent group of texts are the texts about Alexander the Great, Theoderic or Charlemagne, the 'heroic epics', which carry a greater weight of historical substance than, for instance, the Arthurian stories, but which still take place far away and long ago and are not rarely spiced with supernatural elements.³⁴ These texts are kept in the investigation, even if they to some extent belong to historiography. The new prose narratives that appear in late Middle Ages are, however, kept in the investigation regardless of how closely or distantly related they might be to prototypical romance definitions.

To summarise, when I ask the question of what happens to romance in East Scandinavia, I am not primarily interested in discussing the change in the properties of certain texts and how they relate to any definition of a genre. Rather, I wish to follow the fate of a historically defined group of texts, the *Eufemiavisor*, and the kind of text they represent within a broader group of related secular narratives by investigating continuity, variation and change in the corpus.

33 Glauser (2020) also stresses the hybridity of the romance text group, usually described as a genre, and treats it as prototype category.

34 A recent investigation of the Charlemagne tradition from a Nordic perspective can be found in Brandenburg (2019). Different aspects of the West Nordic *Piðreks saga* and its translation are addressed in Johansson/Flaten (2012).

3 The Danish corpus of secular narratives between the Middle Ages and the early modern era

We will now take a closer look at the changing corpus from the moment printing was introduced and further on into the sixteenth century. As already mentioned in the beginning, the history of printing in Denmark and Sweden began at the same time, in the 1480s, and in some respects printing in both parts of the Nordic union resemble each other.³⁵ Nevertheless, the Danish printed book culture developed in directions that had no counterpart in Sweden until much later, namely it had a much larger and differentiated production of secular texts. In Sweden, Latin schoolbooks and a political propaganda text (in German) are the only representatives of this category (Undorf 2014: 51, 57). In Denmark, it was not only secular works that were printed, but works in the vernacular, such as Latin schoolbooks, law books, chronicles, romance literature, contemporary historical and political works, scientific literature and classical Latin drama (Undorf 2014: 16–18).

The fate of Danish romance literature in the transition between the Middle Ages and the early modern era has been described differently. Some stress a continuity, while others see some kind of break, and the conclusion seems partly to depend on the chronological scope chosen. With a broad historical perspective, continuity seems to be the case, as can be exemplified by this description from a literary history of Danish literature:

Ridderromanerne bevarede deres popularitet gennem de følgende århundreder, idet de såkaldte ‘folkebøger’ fra 1500-, 1600- og 1700-tallet netop hentede en del af deres stof fra de middelalderlige forbilleder. (Pedersen/Mortensen/Schack 2007: 132)³⁶

Glauser (1984) prefers to speak of continuity in a discussion regarding how some literary themes became interesting in the late fifteenth century and later in the early modern era. Richter (2018: 44) takes a similar stance when describing the printing of *Flores og Blanseflor* as the beginning of a long series of printed narrative literature in Denmark.

However, with a narrower time perspective, including only the first phase of the printed book culture in Denmark up until 1523, Dahlerup (2010) points to a notable lack of interest in romance during that period.

Den høviske kultur er påfaldende sparsomt repræsenteret i bogtrykkerkunstens første 40 år i Danmark. Ridderromaner, folkeviser og høviske omgangsformer har levet deres liv i mundtlig og i håndskriftlig form. *Flores og Blanseflor* er eneste verdslige kærlighedshistorie, der kom med i første omgang. Det kan undre, fordi tiden ikke var smålig og ikke fremviste polemik mod den høviske

35 The history of printing in and for Denmark and Sweden up to the Reformation is thoroughly described and analysed in Undorf (2014), especially Chapter 1, with a summarised comparison on pp. 62–64.

36 ‘The chivalric tales continued to be popular during the following centuries, as the so-called chapbooks from sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took some of their matter from medieval models.’

kultur. Det er svært at pege på overbevisende årsager til dette tomrum i den samlede genreprofil. (Dahlerup 2010: 536)³⁷

We could then say that Danish romance survived in the long run from the Middle Ages and into the early modern era, but there is a kind of gap in the overlapping period, i.e. from the 1480s to the beginning of 1520s, when manuscripts with romances were still being produced even though printing had been introduced.

If we look at the corpus of narratives as a whole, how can the protracted transition between the medieval and the early modern literary be described as a process of change? Table 3 presents an overview of major East Scandinavian secular narrative works in the vernacular except for historical chronicles, with information about whether a certain text appeared in medieval manuscripts or not and if and when they were printed.

	Medieval manu- script	Danish editions 1480s–1530	Danish editions 1530–1600	Danish editions 1600– c. 1800
<i>Texts translated from Swedish into Danish</i>				
Ivan løveridder	Sw: 3 Da: 2			
Hertug Frederik af Nor- mandi	Sw: 6 Da: 1			
Flores og Blanseflor	Sw: 5 Da: 1	2 (1505–10, 1509)	2 (1542, 1591)	4
<i>Texts in Danish (not known in Swedish)</i>				
Den kyske dronning	1			
Persenober og Konstan- tianobis ^a	1		2 (†1560, 1572)	1
Dværgekongen Laurin	1		2 (1588, 1589)	12
Den tolamodiga Griseldis historia/Griseldis	1 ^b	1 (†1528)	3 (1550s, 1592, 1597)	9
Sigismunda		1 (†1528)	1 (1591)	1
Marcolfus			4 († c. 1540, 1554, 1591, 1599)	9
Uglspil			1 (†–1571)	8
Euriolus og Lucretia			2 (†–1571, 1594)	1

37 'The courtly culture is remarkably sparsely represented in the first 40 years of book-printing in Denmark. Romances, folk songs and courtly forms of social intercourse continued in oral and handwritten form. *Flores og Blanseflor* is the only secular love story that made the transition initially. This is surprising as the era was not small-minded and did not show polemical action against the courtly culture. It is difficult to point out convincing reasons for this void in the overall genre profile.' (My translation, JP.)

	Medieval manu- script	Danish editions 1480s–1530	Danish editions 1530–1600	Danish editions 1600– c. 1800
Fortunatus			1 (1575)	11
Den skønne Magelona			1 (†1583)	14
Faust			1 (1588)	11
Kong Apollonius			1 (1590s?)	18
Keyser Octaviano			1 (†1597)	15
Tvende Købmænd			1 (1599)	9
<i>Texts in Swedish and Danish, not translated from one another</i>				
Sju vise mästare (Sw)	3			
De syv vise Mestre (Da)			2 (1571–1575, 1591)	11
Karl Magnus (Sw)	4			
Karl Magnus' Krønike (Da)	1	2 (1501?, 1509)	2 (1534, 1572)	4
<i>Texts in Swedish (not known in Danish)</i>				
Riddar Paris och jungfru Vienna ^c	1			
Amicus och Amelius	2			
Namnlös och Valentin	3			
Konung Alexander	1			
Didrikskrönikan	2			
Trojasagan	1			

Table 3: An overview of vernacular secular narratives (not including historical chronicles) in medieval manuscripts in Sweden and Denmark and in Danish prints that first appeared in the sixteenth century.³⁸

a: A fragment of the text is also preserved in the AM 151a 8vo manuscript from c. 1600; b: The text is only preserved in an early sixteenth century manuscript which might have been copied from the lost 1528 edition, see footnote 18; c: Only a part of the text exists in Swedish translation, see Lodén (2015a).

38 Information about editions is here mainly derived from Paulli (1915–1925, 1918–1936). Chapbooks with secular narratives that are not included here because the first preserved prints are from seventeenth century and later include *Theagenes and Chariclia* (3 editions up to c. 1800), *Vigoleis* (10 editions up to c. 1800), *Kong Edvard af England* (17 editions up to c. 1800), *Melusina* (15 editions up to c. 1800), *Helena* (21 editions up to c. 1800). Some of them might have been printed already in the sixteenth century.

Table 3 confirms the picture given in the previous quotations that there was some kind of continuity from the Middle Ages into the early modern era, although there was a rather narrow bridge between them in the first phase of the printing era. The following works represent the continuity from the Middle Ages: *Flores og Blanseflor*, *Persenober og Konstantianobis*, *Dværgekongen Laurin* and *Karl Magnus' Krønike*; the last one being an abbreviated translation of the West Nordic *Karlamagnús saga*. The *Sju vise mästare* existed in Swedish manuscripts in the fifteenth century, and it was later printed in Danish, but the Danish texts were not translations of the Swedish ones. On the whole, Table 3 illustrates the fact that the influence of Sweden on the Danish literary corpus was restricted to the translation of the *Eufemiavisor*; none of the other Swedish secular narratives seem to have found their way to Danish scriptoria or printing workshops.

The first era of printing in the 1480s–1520s coincides with the last era of hand-written manuscripts. The two Danish manuscripts with chivalric texts, K 4 and K 47, were dated to ca 1480 and ca 1500, and a majority of the Swedish manuscripts that contain chivalric texts belong to the same era (see Table 1). Among prints of secular narratives from this period we find the two editions of *Flores og Blanseflor*, which are later to be followed by several other editions, two editions of *Karl Magnus*, and, at the end of this period, the two prose narratives *Griseldis* and *Sigismunda*. The first of these, *Griseldis*, also appears in a Swedish/Danish multi-text manuscript (Linköping, Stiftsbiblioteket, Saml. 1a). The oldest part of the manuscript has been dated to the late fifteenth century or ca. 1500, but *Griseldis* appears late in the manuscript in a section of mostly religious texts, and it has been suggested that the text might be a hand-written copy of a printed version (see footnote 18). Both *Griseldis* and *Sigismunda* were reprinted several times, and they were typical representatives of chapbook texts. What connects the romance literature of medieval manuscript culture with the literature of the printed book culture in this phase is thus restricted to *Flores og Blanseflor*; it is the link in the chain that never breaks. Later in the sixteenth century we find an interest in some of the medieval texts, and they continued to be printed for a long period of time, but with a different degree of success, as can be seen in Table 4.

	1500–1524	1525–1549	1550–1574	1575–1599	1600–c. 1800	Total
<i>Karl Magnus</i>	1	1	1		4	7
<i>Flores og Blanseflor</i>	2	1		1	4	8
<i>Persenober og Konstantianobis</i>			2		1	3
<i>Dværgekongen Laurin</i>				2	12	14
<i>De syv vise mestre</i> ^a			1	1	11	13
Total	3	2	4	4	32	45

Table 4: Number of editions of secular narratives printed in the sixteenth century that also occur in Scandinavian medieval manuscripts: a: *Sju vise mästare*/*De syv vise mestre* is included here although the Danish text was not translated from the Old Swedish text.

Of the texts from medieval manuscript culture that continued to be printed in the later period of 1600–1800, *Dværgekongen Laurin* and *De syv vise mestre* were the most frequently printed works, while *Karl Magnus*, *Flores og Blanseflor*, and *Persenober og Konstantianobis* attracted somewhat less interest. The numbers of editions of these texts can be compared with the works that appear in print in the sixteenth century for the first time (Table 5).

	1500–1524	1525–1549	1550–1574	1575–1599	1600–c. 1800	Total
<i>Griseldis</i>	1		1	2	9	13
<i>Sigismunda</i>	1			1	1	3
<i>Marcolfus</i>		1	1	2	9	13
<i>Uglspil</i>			1		8	9
<i>Euriolus og Lucretia</i>			1	1	1	3
<i>Fortunatus</i>				1	11	12
<i>Den skønne Mæglona</i>				1	14	15
<i>Faust</i>				1	11	12
<i>Kong Apollonius</i>				1	18	19
<i>Keyser Octaviano</i>				1	15	16
<i>Tvende Købmænd</i>				1	9	10
Total	2	1	4	12	106	125

Table 5: Number of editions of texts first appearing in sixteenth century prints in different periods

It is clear from Table 5 that most of the works that first appear in Danish prints in the sixteenth century came to be reprinted in numerous editions up to around 1800, with the exception of *Sigismunda* and *Euriolus og Lucretia* of which there we only know three editions each. The new texts were thus in general more successful than the medieval texts of Table 4, and the tales of *Griseldis* and *Sigismunda* represent the first examples of the new repertoire. It is important to stress, however, that most of the texts in Table 5 actually had medieval origins but had not appeared in Scandinavia before. They thus represent something new in the Scandinavian text history but not in the European medieval textual culture.

The connection between the texts of the Scandinavian medieval manuscript culture and the early modern printed book culture of secular narratives in Denmark exists but is not strong. The medieval manuscript texts survived to some limited extent in the Danish printed book culture, while a new corpus of texts with continental and medieval European origins came to be more successful in general, especially when printing accelerated from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. These new texts were international ‘bestsellers’,

many of them among the most printed books in Europe.³⁹ In Horstbøll (1999: 476) the history of texts in early modern Denmark has been described as a process of combined continuity and change, as old texts were reprinted, but sometimes abandoned, while new texts were added to the corpus. A similar process took place between the Middle Ages and the early modern era, but it is also justifiable to speak of a large-scale change. During the Middle Ages, there was a cumulative expansion of works within the category of secular narratives, but with the transition to the early modern era, only small parts of this literary heritage survived. It is not a sharp break, but it is striking how the *Eufemiavisor* romances are copied in manuscripts until the introduction of printing and how they thereafter fall out of the picture – with the exception of *Flores og Blanseflor*.⁴⁰ It is time to examine this particular text more closely and consider possible reasons for why it might have been chosen to be printed at this tipping-point between the medieval manuscript and early modern printed book culture and how it managed to stay relevant to its audience. To accomplish this, we must first take a look at the printer, Gotfred van Ghemen, and his prints of this text.

4 Gotfred van Ghemen and the printing of *Flores og Blanseflor*⁴¹

The professional activities of Gotfred van Ghemen have been explored and discussed by book historians, but the scarcity of sources leaves plenty of room for uncertainties and speculation. Almost everything that can be said about Gotfred is derived from the books he printed; he has left almost no traces in other historical records.⁴² From his name it is assumed that he originated from the town of Gemen in Westfalen, and the first traces of him are a few preserved books he printed in Gouda, South Holland, sometime between 1486–1492. These were *Die ghestelike minnenbrief* ('The spiritual love-letter') and the *Historie van den edelen Lantsloet ende die scone Sandrijn* ('The history of the noble Lancelot and the fair Sandrine'). Both prints are relatively small products, twelve and twenty leaves, respectively, but there are a number of other prints that have been attributed to Gotfred with more or less certainty.⁴³

39 At least five of them are among the twelve most popular European narratives from the viewpoint of German book culture up to the nineteenth century, in Schlusemann's (2019) analysis.

40 In a European perspective, much scholarly work has been published on this transition between late medieval and early modern printed book culture in the last decade, for instance in Booton (2010), Boffey (2012), Cayley/Powell (2013), Frazier (2015), Tether (2017). As to the Scandinavian material, several studies by Jürg Glauser and Anna Katharina Richter (for instance, Richter (2009, 2012, 2018/2019, 2019), Glauser/Richter (2013)) have shed light on different early modern narratives.

41 In the following I use abbreviations to refer to the different Scandinavian versions of *Flores og Blanseflor*. FB/Sw stands for the Old Swedish version as edited in Olsson (1921), FB/D K 47 stands for the Danish manuscript version, FB/D 1505–1510 for the fragmentarily preserved first print of Gotfred and FB/D 1509 for Gotfred's 1509 edition. When needed, it is further specified which Swedish manuscript or copy of a printed edition is referred to.

42 The biographic overview in Bruun (1890) is still useful, but a shorter and updated account is provided in Larsen (1979–1984).

43 Bruun (1890: 9–13) discusses other books that Gotfred might be responsible for, partly due to the identification of Gotfred with some other printers with similar names. Hellinga/Hellinga (1968:

Gotfred was one of the printers of these times who moved to different cities during their career, and after his first printing activities in Gouda, he printed books in Copenhagen in the 1490s, probably for the newly founded university, and became the first known printer in Denmark. He also printed the *Den danske Rimkrønike* ('The Danish Rhyme Chronicle'), the first printed book in Danish to our knowledge. Gotfred was thereafter active as a printer in Leyden, not very far from Gouda, for a couple of years, but by 1505 he had returned to Copenhagen and printed books until 1510. A relatively large number of books from his printing workshop are preserved from this last Copenhagen period, stretching from lawbooks to educational books, devotional literature and also a few titles that belong to the group of secular narratives, namely *Karl Magnus' Krønike*, *Den danske Rimkrønike*, *Den strid af Rhodos* and *Flores og Blanseflor*.⁴⁴

Flores og Blanseflor was printed twice by Gotfred: one fragmentarily preserved text was printed sometime between 1505 and 1510 (LN 66), while the other edition, which is preserved in full, is dated to 1509 (LN 67).⁴⁵ The dated edition from 1509 includes his printing mark and a colophon stating Gotfred as the printer, but the 1505–1510 print is only attributed to him through the types. Two copies remain of the 1509 edition, one of which (LN 67 8° copy 1) is complete, while the other (Hielmst. 1860 8° (LN 67 8° copy 2)) has lost its first page. The first page of the complete copy begins with the large rubric "Hær begyndes en historie aff Flores oc Blantzefflor" ('Here begins a history of Flores and Blantzefflor') followed by a large S-initial of four lines height.

Two damaged copies of the 1505–1510 fragmentary print remain, namely Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, Danica. vet. 26 and Danica vet. 26a (FB/D 1505–1510 26 and 26a). Both of them consist of just six leaves: two intact and four fragmentarily preserved leaves, of which one is the first leaf with a wood-cut illustration of the three main characters supplied with the text *Clares Flores Blantzefflor* on both the recto and the verso side. The text of the 1505–1510 print is not identical with that of the 1509 edition, but the differences are mainly on the orthographic level.⁴⁶ Both editions probably go back to the same text in contrast to both the Old Swedish manuscripts and the Danish version in K 47, which can be illustrated with Example (1).

13–14, 19) are sceptical towards such identifications in their typological analysis of Gotfred's works, and they did not test the other books attributed to Gotfred.

44 A catalogue can be found in Hellinga/Hellinga (1968: 34–37), and the works are described in Dahlerup (2010).

45 The fragmentarily preserved edition is dated to c. 1504 in LN 66, perhaps relying on Bruun (1890: 18), but the typological analysis of Hellinga/Hellinga (1968: 20) resulted in a dating 1505–1510, with no more specification possible. Tolde (1962: 57–61) suggested that the *Flores og Blanseflor* fragment (LN 66), together with the print of the chronicle *Den danske Rimkrønike* (LN 233), would have been the first print of Ghemen in Denmark, already around 1490, but he admitted that a thorough typological analysis would be needed before any conclusions could be drawn with certainty, and the results in Hellinga/Hellinga (1968) did not support his suggestion.

46 According to Brandt (1877: 324), there are some small differences between the two copies (26 and 26a), but nothing that questions them being part of the same edition.

(1)

FB/Sw in Olsson (1921: 8–9) ¹	FB/D K 47:	FB/D 1505–10: 1r, l. 13–16	FB/D 1509: 3r, l. 18–21
Min kære son, thet radher iak thik, at thu nim væl ok idhelik ² ok forsuma ey thina tima huarce sirla æller snima ³ .	myn kieræ søn thet radher jech thik thw neme wel och ideligh ath thu time ey for spillæ kan tha bliwer thu rigeth jen mektug mand	Myn kæræ søn iek radher tegh lær nv vel och indherligh Ok forsømmæ ey thyn thymæ huerken arlæ eller syllæ	Mijn kiere søn ieg rader teg lær nw wel oc inderlig Oc forsomme ey thin tijmæ hwerken orlig eller sijlle

¹ In the Olsson (1921) edition, the FB/D K47 is marked with an F in the apparatus criticus, and the FB/D 1509 with an E. A is MS D 4, B is MS AM 191 fol., and C is MS D 4a.

² C: hederlik

³ A: arla æller sirla, B, C: arla eller snima

While the two printed versions (FB/D 1505–1510 and FB/D 1509) are almost identical in Example (1) on the level of lexicon (but not orthographics), they depart clearly in wording from the version in the Swedish manuscripts (FB/Sw) and Danish manuscript version in K 47 (FB/D K 47). It must be said that the differences between the Danish prints and Danish manuscript versions are usually not as big as what we see in the last two lines in Example (1); however, they still diverge quite often on the level of wording and syntax.

What is curious about the two 1505–1510 exemplars is that both consist of exactly the same six pages. This was already commented on by Brandt (1877: 324), but it has not been thoroughly discussed, and we will therefore look closer at the material. On the recto side of the second leaf, the text begins at the top of the page with the following lines, equivalent to Brandt (1870: 291, l. 81) and Olsson (1921: 6, l. 97).

(2)

Palma søndagh i thet samma aar
drotninghen fød hæ en søn saa klar
Ok en mø then cristnæ quinnæ
then feyrsthæ ther man kunne fyndæ (FB/D 1505–1510: 2r, l. 1–4)⁴⁷

The text thus starts describing the birth of the two children and their naming, Flores and Blanseflor, and we can see that it does not start out abruptly in the middle of a sentence, but rather in what could be described as the beginning of a new part in the story. The text then goes on with how the two children grow up and fall in love with each other to the great disappointment and indignation of Flores' royal parents, and how Flores is sent to a school in another city. It finally ends at the point in the story when Blanseflor is sold by Flores' father to a Babylonian merchant while Flores is still away. The lower part of the last page in both copies are lost, so we can never know if the edition included more leaves or on exactly which line the text ended. In both copies the page is torn off horizontally, in 26 after 13 lines and in 26a after 15 lines. In Example 3, the complete text of the last page of FB/D 1505–1510, 26a is shown with the corresponding lines in other text witnesses.

47 “On Palm Sunday in the very same year / the queen gave birth to a son so bright / and the Christian woman to a girl / the fairest that one could find anywhere”.

(3)

FB/Sw in Olsson (1921: 18–19) ¹	FB/D K 47: 223r
<p>The fōra hona swa lankt bort, at vi fa aldre til hænna sport.” Konungin² lot sik længe bidhia til, fōr æn han thet gōra vil; sidhan lot han kalla sik een kōpman, honum var hemelik³, ther kunne margha handa maal.⁴ Han badh hafua the iomfru fall⁵ ok badh⁶ wærdh for henne taka;⁷ thet giordhe han ey for pæninga saka.⁸ Han togh medh hænne til skip at løpa⁹ ok genast faar then hænne monde kōpa,¹⁰ aff Babilonia en kōpman riik; i thera hampn var ængin sliik.¹¹ Thrætighi¹² mark gull han ther wt talde, ok tiwghu pæll the varo wt valda, ok tiwghu march silff at thet sama sin ok tiwghu mantla medh safuilskin, tiwghu kiortla aff examit vidha ok mantla aff biald øfrith sidha,</p>	<p>the fōræ himnæ saa langt borth ath wi fonge aldrig til himnæ sport han lodh segh lengy bede til fōrræ han thet giør wil sidhen lodh han kallæ til seg jen kiōbman hanum war hie mmelig som kunde mange handhæ maal och haffdæ tha then jomfrv fal werdh willæ han for himnæ tage thet giordhe han ey for pænning sage han lodh til skibs medh himnæ løbe han fandh then ther himnæ mwn kiøbe aff babelonia jen kiōbmand righ i thieræ haffn war jnghen sligh trōduge mark guld han vd tolde och tywe peld the waræ vd wolde tywæ mark sylff ath thet sinnæ och tywe mantel medh sabel skinde tywe kiortel aff sayen widhe och tywe mantel aff blialt side</p>
FB/D 1509: 6r ⁴⁸	FB/D 1505–10, 26 & 26a: 6v.
<p>Oc the fōre henne saa langt bort at wij faa ejj tijl henne sport Han lod seg lenge bedæ tijl fōr han thet gerne giore wil ☛ Kongen lod siden kallæ sig een kōbman saa hemelig Som kunnæ mange hande maal oc han bōdh hanum then iomfrw faal Werd wijlle han for henne tagæ han giorde thet ejj for pennige sagæ Han lod til skips met henne løbæ han fand then henne wille kōbæ Aff babilon en kōpman rijg ther war ingen anden slijg Xxx mark han genisten gaff oc tywæ pæll paa samme laff Oc tywæ mark sølff at thet sindh oc xx mantle met sabel skindh Oc xx kiortle aff harmer hwijde och tywe kaaber øfret side</p>	<p>Ok the fōræ henne saa langth borth ath wi faa ey tijl henne sporth Han lodh segh lenghæ bedhæ tijl Fōr han thz giōra vijl Konningh bad kallæ saa hemmeligh en righ kōbmandh tijl segh Som kunnæ manghe handhe maal ok hanum hafuæ then iomfrv faal Wer wille han for henne taghæ han gioræ thz ey for pennighe saghe Han lodh tijl skebs mz henne løbæ han fandh then henne ville kōbæ Af babilon en kōpmandh righ^[a] ther var inghen en andhen ligh xxx mark han genesthen gafh [...] [...] [...] [...] [...]</p>

48 “(...) And they will take her so far away / that we never will hear from her again.” He allowed himself to be appealed to for some time / before he accepted to do it. / The King thereafter sent for / a well trusted merchant, who knew many languages, / and he entrusted him the fair maiden. / He accepted to take the value of her, he did not do it for the sake of money. He took her to the ship, he found one who wanted to buy her. / A rich merchant from Babylon, there was no one of the same kind. Thirty marc he gave right away, and twenty furs as well, and twenty marc silver that time, and twenty mantles with sable fur, and twenty kirtles of white ermine, and twenty very long copes.’

¹ In the Olsson (1921) edition, the FB/D K 47 is marked with an F in the apparatus criticus, and the FB/D 1509 with an E. A is MS D 4, B is MS AM 191 fol., and C is MS D 4a. The list of variants in footnote 2–12 below is not complete but represents the most notable differences between the text witnesses.

² B, C: Han

³ C the full line: aff babilonia en køpman rik

⁴ C two lines from *ther kunne* to *iomfru fall*: I then hampn war ey hans liik / sannerlige thet sigher iach tik

⁵ B: the line is missing

⁶ C: lot

⁷ A: the line is missing

⁸ A adds: vtan for een annan mata

⁹ B: brath til skipa medh henne løpthe

¹⁰ C: two lines from *Han togh* to *monde køpa* are missing, B: han fan then køpman hona køpthe

¹¹ A: the two lines from *aff Babilonia* to *ængin sliik* are given in inverted order, C: the same two lines are missing here (cf. note 7 above)

¹² A, B, C: tiwghu

The FB/D 1505–1510 thus ends exactly when the King has found a merchant to sell Blanseflor to in the harbour, another merchant from Babylon. On the very last line in 26a, the text tells that the Babylon merchant offered thirty marc in exchange for Blanseflor. The following five lines, which are missing due to the mutilation of the page, list further treasures that the merchant pays for Blanseflor. If the text had continued on a new page, it would have started to introduce a marvellous Trojan cup, which is the most lavish prize given for Blanseflor, described over 20 lines.

The text is thus a small fragment of the whole story, about a tenth of the whole text. However, if we consider the text of FB/D 1505–1510 from the perspective of textual units, it is actually a text that could work on its own, if it was meant to give the reader just a piece of the whole. It introduces the main characters and leaves the reader at a ‘cliff-hanger’, when everything looks hopeless, though it still is possible that Flores will return and rush to Blanseflor’s defence. Could it have been a kind of advertisement for the planned complete edition or a publication in parts? Other examples of similar printing products from the same period would be necessary to consider such an interpretation, but it is still striking how the fragment works on its own, and, furthermore, that two copies have been preserved containing exactly the same pages, and damaged in the same way.

One other important detail about the fragment are the two missing leaves. Both exemplars of FB/D 1505–1510 contain only six leaves each, but a full printed sheet would have left eight leaves in an 8vo format book.⁴⁹ In his description of the two FB/D 1505–1510

49 It is curious that both copies lack the same pages, and they have in general the same kind of damages: The front pages of both exemplars are cut off horizontally just below mid-page at approximately the same height and leaf 5 and leaf 6 are torn off horizontally approximately at the same place on the pages of both copies (at line 13 and line 15 respectively), while the text of leaves 3 and 4 are intact in both copies. On leaf 2 some single lines are missing at the bottom of the page in 26 but

copies, Brandt (1877: 324) claims that the second and seventh leaf is missing, but contrary to what might be expected from Brandt's description, the text is intact from where it starts to its end – there are no lacunae due to lost leaves at the end, which would be natural if the seventh leaf was missing. However, there is another place where two missing leaves would fit in better. All pages contain exactly 20 lines of text, and if the two missing leaves are leaves 2 and 3, directly after the cover picture leaf, there would be room for 80 lines of text. It happens to be exactly the number of lines that are needed to fill the gap from the beginning of the *Flores og Blanseflor* text in the 1509 edition up to the line before the one that reads *Palma søndagh i thet samma aar*, where FB/D 1505–1510 starts out. It seems too much of a coincidence, but a closer examination of the volumes and binding is necessary.

The two copies of the FB/D 1505–1510 need a more thorough philological, book historical and codicological analysis, and we can only conclude now that it is possible that it never was a complete edition of the whole work *Flores og Blanseflor*, but instead might have fulfilled other purposes than offering its reader the full story.⁵⁰ Anyway, we might conclude that either *Flores og Blanseflor* was so successful that two editions were proposed soon after one another, something that had only happened once before with *Den danske Rimkrønike* in Gotfred's production of secular narratives, or he invested in a marketing product to increase interest. In both cases we can expect that he aimed at a rather large group of customers for this text, and he seems to have expected that it would sell. It is then, finally, time to turn to the question of why this particular text was chosen in the first place.

5 The choice of *Flores og Blanseflor*

Flores og Blanseflor was part of a long and complex European textual tradition that can be traced to the Old French *Le Conte de Floire et Blanchefleur* from the middle of the twelfth century.⁵¹ It also became very popular in the early modern era, where it was one

not in 26a. The copy 26a does, however, bear marks of what looks like a folding at the bottom at approximately the same height as the lost part of the page in 26. Both copies were found in Uppsala universitetsbibliotek pasted into "et gammalt bind" ('an old bind') (Brandt 1877: 248). The 26a includes an ex libris of Johan Henrik Schröder, who was Library director at Uppsala University Library from 1830 to his death 1857. At that time doublets were not always kept in the collections, which probably is the reason for how it came into his possession, but after his death, it was returned to the library. The books must have been found and bound into new volumes before 1857. I would like to express a special thank you to Helena Backman, librarian at Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek, for help with the inquiries.

50 It has been noted by Toldberg (1962: 60) that the front-page picture actually is not well suited for the Danish/Swedish version of *Floire et Blanchefleur*. It is a picture of Clares, Blanseflor's friend or maiden, and Flores and Blanseflor, with their names written out above them. Like Blanseflor, Clares is depicted as a married woman wearing a hat, but in the Scandinavian version of the text, Clares never married but disappears in the last part of the story in contrast to the ending in other versions. (About the Scandinavian ending, see Degnbol 2014: 89–90). The woodcut was probably originally from the Netherlands and brought to Copenhagen by Gotfred (Bruun 1890: 28). It would work better with a print that only contained the beginning of the text rather than the whole text, but perhaps such a detail was not so important.

51 For references to the continental and Scandinavian traditions, see Richter/Glauser (2018/2019). A detailed analytical discussion of the Old Norse and Old Swedish textual transmission and the relation

of the twelve most successful early modern narratives printed in Germany (Schlusemann 2019). Its widespread popularity was probably one reason behind its publication by Gotfred van Ghemen, as printers preferred to reduce risks and bet on safe outcomes – something important for printers on the commercial market of all times. There were other popular stories, however, and even if its popularity in different parts of Europe probably contributed to the printer's decision, this is not an explanation for its obvious success and why it managed to stay relevant to the reading public for centuries, especially in contrast to other romances like *Herr Ivan/Ivan løveridder*.

Gotfred's choice to print *Flores og Blanseflor* could have had trivial reasons; he may just have happened to have a copy of the manuscript or perhaps he liked it – it is impossible to rule out such personal or psychological factors. There are also connections to his professional history, as it was a text that was spread in the Netherlands, and Gotfred seems to have brought the woodcut of the 1505–1510 print from the Netherlands with him (see footnote 50). The story also had a convenient short format, at least in comparison with the longer *Ivan løveridder*, which is over twice as long. However, *Hertug Frederik af Normandi* is of the same length, and the other three Danish chivalric texts were even shorter (see Table 2). Nothing is known of the popularity of the other texts, aside from the fact that some of them proved to be successful printing material later in the sixteenth century. This still does not explain the lasting success of *Flores og Blanseflor* in the new era and its potential as a bridge between the medieval romance and early modern chapbooks.

One feature in *Flores og Blanseflor* that speaks in favour of it specifically, rather than the other *Eufemiavisor* texts, is its treatment of the topic of love and male-female relationships. In a comparison between the three Swedish *Eufemiavisor*, Lodén (2015b) notes that the love between Blanzefflor and Flores is not the same as the love between the male and female central characters in *Herr Ivan* and *Hertig Fredrik*: “While Laudin [in *Herr Ivan*] and Floria [in *Hertig Fredrik*] represent the honour of Ivan and Fredrik, the relationship between Flores and Blanzefflor is that between equals.” (2015b: 185). Such a model of love and male and female roles presented in *Flores og Blanseflor* seems to fit with the tendencies among the French late medieval romances as discussed in Brown-Grant (2008). She argues that marriage in the late Middle Ages came to be seen as “a companionate union based on the reciprocal (if not necessarily equal) rights and obligations of the married couple, a view which was actively propounded in late medieval marital treatises and sermons” (2008: 215).⁵² Until this topic is better explored for the case of medieval Scandinavia, we do not know if the same sentiments developed there. It does, however, fit with the rewriting tendency visible in the Danish translations of the Swedish *Eufemiavisor* discussed above, where the place and interest of women were taken into consideration. There are other specific features exclusive to the 1509 edition that point in this direction, of which I will only give a single example here. It is from the last part of the tale, when Flores is going to fight a duel, and Blanseflor declares her love to him in front of the other people.

to the French sources is given in Degnbol (2014). A recent overview with a focus on the Danish reception can be found in Richter (2018/2019).

52 Also, the absence of the typical relation in romance between a knight and a *married* woman is in tune with the development within late medieval French romance, but less exclusive for *Flores og Blanseflor*, cf. Brown-Grant (2008: 216).

(4)

FB/Sw in Olsson (1921: 118–119)	FB/D K 47: 250r–250v	FB/D 1509: 34v
<p>iak var honom stolin fra Væl hafuin ij sidhan giort vidh mik;</p> <p>thu vilde mik hafua til siælfan thik. Thet sigher iak her oppinbara:</p> <p>før æn thet skulde nakan tiidh vara, at iak skulle tagha annan man</p> <p>vtan Flores, ther iak væl an,</p> <p>iak ville før medh een kniiff skæra sunder mit eghith liif.”</p>	<p>jech war hanum medh swig tagen fra</p> <p>thet i willæ sielff hawe mæg thet seyer jech for sannen thik</p> <p>ath jech skullæ tage annen man æn flores ther jech i hierthet wel and jech seyer thet obenbaræ ath føræ thet skullæ sa wæræ</p> <p>jech willæ føræ medh myn kniiff skieræ synder myt eget liiff</p>	<p>ieg war alt hannum ijle stollen fraa Wel giorde kongen siden mod meg</p> <p>han wille meg haffue til hustrw seg Thet sijer ieg eder openbare</p> <p>før mit brvillop sculle saa ware</p> <p>ieg sculle før met mijn egen kniiff sønder skoreth mith eget lijff</p>
<p>I was stolen from him You have thereafter done well to me</p> <p>you wanted to have me for yourself</p> <p>before there would be any time</p> <p>that I would take another man and not Flores, who I love so much,</p> <p>I would rather with a knife shred my own life</p>	<p>I was taken from him through deceit</p> <p>as you wanted to have me yourself I say that truly to you</p> <p>that I should take another man than Flores, which I love well in my heart, I say it openly that before that would happen</p> <p>I would rather with my knife shred my own life</p>	<p>I was maliciously stolen from him Well did the king then to me.</p> <p>He wanted to have me as his wife I say that openly to you</p> <p>before my wedding should stand that way</p> <p>I would rather with my own knife shred my own life.</p>

The main content is all the same in the three versions, but the 1509 edition has rewritten the lines in which Blanseflor formulates how she would enter a relationship with the King of Babylon (unwillingly). In both the Swedish and Danish manuscripts, the expression is that she would *take another man* [than Flores], whereas the 1509 edition says *before my wedding should stand that way*, and she also speaks of the king wanting her to become his *wife*. Such a new stress on the institutional forms of relations could have different explanations, but it is perfectly in line with the tendencies that Brown-Grant (2008) argues is a part of the late medieval romance development.

One could thus say that *Flores og Blanseflor* seems to have been in tune with the currents of the late medieval and early modern days in terms of the view of relations between men and women. The text also seems to have been adjusted to meet such ideals, although a more thorough comparison between the text witnesses is needed before a definitive conclusion can be drawn. Among the other three Danish chivalric tales, two of them, *Den kyske dronning* and *Persenober og Konstantianobis*, also deal with the theme of love, but in neither case is the reciprocal love the driving force of the story from the beginning as it is in *Flores og Blanseflor*. In *Dværgekongen Laurin* female characters play a very small part.

The lack of fantastic elements in *Flores og Blanseflor*, like giants or talking animals, is also something that connects it with what seems to have been a general taste among the late medieval audience, at least in the case of late medieval French and English romance,

where there is a tendency towards realism in general (Brown-Grant 2008: 7). *Flores og Blanseflor* begins with the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, a well-known place, and continues later with the two main characters travelling to the city of Babylon. The realism, or perhaps more adequately the minimal use of fantastic elements, and the historical setting of the story, are in tune with the currents within late medieval romance and share this characteristic with the other secular narratives printed in this early period, *Sigismunda* and *Griseldis*.

There is yet another characteristic that distinguishes *Flores og Blanseflor* from all the other romances we know circulated in manuscripts in the late Middle Ages, and that is its connection to the urban scenery and gallery. The main story of *Flores og Blanseflor* takes place either in cities or on journeys between them with the help of and in interaction with merchants. Flores is himself disguised as a merchant on his first journey towards Babylon and does not travel as a knight in shining armour. The city silhouette is not always so foregrounded in the actual scenery, but the hero never travels into the wilderness for adventure, an archetypical topic in romance; he stays in the cities he passes during the journey. This urban setting of the story is unique in relation to the other *Eufemiavisor* and the Danish chivalric tales, which take place at courts and castles or in the wilderness. Would this urban frame have mattered for the choice to print this particular text? It was certainly not the only reason, but as printing and the sale of printed books was concentrated to towns, it might have been a characteristic that contributed to make *Flores og Blanseflor* particularly well suited to connect to a potential urban audience in contrast to the traditional rural or courtly settings of the other romances.

There were probably several reasons that made *Flores og Blanseflor* a convenient choice and piece well suited for a new late medieval audience. No single explanation is perhaps sufficient, but they may have been essential qualifications for a text to be printed at all. Perhaps it was necessary that the love relationship was not of the type found in other romances, that it did not take place in the wilderness with too many supernatural ingredients or was not too long etc. Was *Flores og Blanseflor* perhaps the only one of the old texts that could meet the standards? This touches upon a question posed by Dahlerup in the quotation earlier in this article, namely why was *only* the *Flores og Blanseflor* printed and no other texts of the courtly literature. (For one thing, we cannot know if texts were published which are now lost, but we just need to ignore that possibility here.⁵³) It could

53 In his thoroughgoing and comprehensive study of the Danish printing history, Horstbøll (1997: 53–56) shows that in late discoveries of prints (published in the supplements to the national bibliography *Dansk bibliografi* of Lauritz Nielsen), only single specimens represent previously unknown works, the bulk being reprints of already known printed works. This speaks in favour of a conclusion that the preserved corpus of prints from the early modern period actually represents more or less the total number of works printed. For our case here, the problem remains that there might have been earlier prints of texts that are only preserved in editions from, for instance, the late sixteenth century.

be that *Flores og Blanseflor* was the only text that fit the bill, but we would need to analyse patterns of publication policies in comparable situations for a more proper understanding.⁵⁴

I would like to suggest another possible explanation that takes the other titles printed in Gotfred van Ghemens's workshop during the latest period of 1508 to 1510 into consideration, namely a long range of popular religious texts: *Jesu barndoms bog*, *Gudelige Bønner*, *De femten Steder*, *De femten Tegn*, *Lucidarius*, and *Sjælens Kæremaal paa Kroppen*.⁵⁵ Together with *Flores og Blanseflor*, they might, as a text collection, offer a printed parallel to the miscellanies discussed earlier in the article that mix mainly religious texts with some single romances that were intended for a religious or moral reading. In such a context, one romance is perhaps enough; it seems to have been sufficient in the case of MSS K 4 and E 8822. Moreover, instead of the knightly and aristocratic *Ivan løveridder*, we get the somewhat urban-based story of Blanseflor and Flores, who after their adventures lived a long life built on mutual love and finally took refuge in a monastery. Was this collection of texts, including *Flores og Blanseflor*, perhaps meant to interact with ambitions among a new audience in the towns to emulate the reading culture of the late medieval aristocracy? It is well known that the early printing culture followed the medieval manuscripts in layout and formats before the potentials of the technology were developed. Here I would suggest that the publication strategies might also have been modelled on the selection of texts which we see in some miscellanies: a main body of works of piety with some single, morally appropriate secular narratives.

To bring this long discussion to some final thoughts, it is clear that something happened in the literary culture in East Scandinavia when the printing technology was introduced. Within the groups that participated in the medieval manuscript culture, some texts of old age had been copied together with new texts in different constellations, but when the production and distribution of texts was more or less taken over by printers, a new repertoire of works developed and a large number of the old texts were left behind. It is reasonable to think that there was rational planning underlying these choices, calculated with a new group of customers in mind. What disappears is the mounted knight on a quest to win glory and his lady, the emblematic character of *Herr Ivan* and *Hertig Fredrik*. The main characters could still be knights in name, but it is a feature in the tale that is not prominent. In these new surroundings, *Flores og Blanseflor* was a text that still worked. For one thing, Flores fought a duel at the end of the story on a horseback and with his sword, but before that he does not show much of the martial proficiencies expected of a knight. The story had other qualities, which happened to meet the values and world-view of audiences that could perhaps not identify themselves in either the knight as a character or the male-female-relations upon which some romances were built. At the tipping-point

54 It is clear that attitudes to printing romance shifted, and it was not always favoured by printers. In England, no romance was printed before Caxton's *Le Mort d'Arthur* 1485, soon followed by the first Arthurian romance prints in France (Montorsi 2019). Many verse romances were printed in England in the first three decades of the sixteenth century and then disappeared, according to Sánchez-Martí (2019), because of the Reformation, before appearing again when Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1569.

55 'The Childhood of Christ', 'Pious Prayers', 'The Fifteen Places', 'The Fifteen Signs', 'Lucidarius', and 'The Claim of the Soul against the Body'.

between two textual cultures, *Flores og Blanseflor* seems to have offered room for the whole audience of men and women, aristocratic as well as religious and urban readers. It was a lovely text with a flavour of the past, but, more importantly, it was still relevant to its early modern readers.

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