

Text as thing. The dog lead in Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel*

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This paper focuses on the dog lead (*Brackenseil*) in Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel* and explores the relationship between its specific material qualities and the characters' actions. The *Brackenseil*'s features result in different levels of thingness that are related to the course of the story: firstly, as a dog lead, the *Brackenseil* is an everyday object that prevents a dog from running away. It is something restrictive that leads movements and is therefore an instrument to exert power. This action directing feature is clearly visible in the character's pursuit of the thing. Secondly, due to the gemstones and the luxurious design, this specific dog lead is extremely valuable and not made for everyday use, but represents wealth and status, which has also an impact on its significance as a gift. Thirdly, because of the text written on it, the *Brackenseil* becomes an object of communication. As a medium, it possesses a specific mediality that impacts the message. For the characters as well as for possible recipients of the *Jüngerer Titurel*, the thing alters the significance of the text as much the text alters the significance of the thing. Thus, by drawing on theories of gifts and media and exploring the inherent features of the thing I aim to show that the *Brackenseil* as a thing is not only important for the story and character motivation but has poetologic qualities, too.

Dieser Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Hundeleine (*Brackenseil*) in Albrechts *Jüngerem Titurel* und untersucht die Beziehung zwischen ihren spezifischen materiellen Eigenschaften und den Figurenhandlungen. Die Eigenschaften des *Brackenseils* führen zu verschiedenen Ebenen von Dinglichkeit (*thingness*), die mit dem Verlauf der Handlung zusammenhängen: Erstens ist das *Brackenseil* als Hundeleine ein Alltagsgegenstand, der einen Hund am Weglaufen hindert. Es ist etwas Einschränkungendes, das Bewegungen führt und daher ein Instrument zur Machtausübung ist. Diese handlungsleitende Eigenschaft ist im Streben der Figuren nach dem Besitz des Dinges sichtbar. Zweitens ist diese spezifische Hundeleine aufgrund der Edelsteine und der luxuriösen Machart äußerst wertvoll und nicht für den alltäglichen Gebrauch gedacht, sondern sie repräsentiert Reichtum und Status, was sich auch auf ihre Bedeutung als Geschenk auswirkt. Drittens wird das *Brackenseil* durch den auf es geschriebenen Text zu einem Kommunikationsobjekt. Als Medium besitzt es eine spezifische Medialität, die sich auf die Botschaft auswirkt. Sowohl für die Figuren als auch für mögliche Rezipienten des *Jüngerem Titurel* verändert das Ding die Bedeutung des Textes ebenso wie der Text die



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Featured Image

Sigune, Tschinotulander and the *Brackenseil*. Detail from BSB Cgm 8470, 157r. Accessible online via BSB digital collections http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00035326/image_319.

Bedeutung des Dings. Unter Einbezug von Gaben- und Medientheorie und mit Blick auf die dem Ding inhärenten Eigenschaften soll gezeigt werden, dass das Brackenseil als Ding nicht nur für die Geschichte und die Figurenmotivation bedeutsam ist, sondern auch poetologische Qualitäten hat.

Literary studies have shown an increasing interest in things, objects and material culture over the last years.¹ In sum, it became clear that the status of things in literature cannot be reduced to being pieces of equipment or having symbolic meanings. Rather, the investigation and analysis of things in literature have led to new insights in stories' dynamics, structure, and interpretation.² It became clear that due to their *Eigen-Sinn* ('self-will', 'waywardness') or agency,³ things are often powerful and influential for the course of a story.

One material object in medieval literature that has already drawn attention in research is the so-called *Brackenseil*, a dog lead with a text on it. This dog lead plays a central role in one of the largest Middle High German texts, Albrechts *Jüngerer Titurel* (JT).⁴ Drawing on Wolframs *Parzival* and including Wolframs *Titurel*,⁵ the *Jüngerer Titurel* recounts the lineage of the Grail's dynasty and how Titurel received the Holy Grail; after that, it focuses on the lives of Sigune and Tschinotulander and their love for each other. Apart from that, the *Jüngerer Titurel* tells of Tschinotulander's orient campaigns, the kidnapping of 300 women by Klingschor, the test of Arthur's *milte* ('generosity', 'benevolence') by Melianz, Tschinotulander's death in combat, and the story of Parzival. After more than 6,000 stanzas, the text ends with the Holy Grail's movement to India.

The *Brackenseil* episode, which had already been partly told by Wolfram in his *Titurel* fragments, is central for the relationship between Sigune and Tschinotulander: while the couple is camping in the forest, Tschinotulander catches a dog running past with an extraordinary lead bearing a text. Clauditte had sent this dog to her lover Ekunat, but it escaped him. Tschinotulander brings the dog with the lead to Sigune who immediately starts to read. However, the dog escapes with the lead before she has finished. Therefore, Sigune asks Tschinotulander to bring the dog lead back to her and promises him her love in return. At this point, Wolfram's fragment ends, but Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel* continues, bridging the gap to the mourning Sigune known from Wolframs *Parzival*.⁶ While Tschinotulander is searching for the dog with the lead, Orilus wins both in combat. However, the original owner Ekunat wants to reclaim the dog lead, so a combat between Orilus and Ekunat is arranged. In the meantime, the text on the *Brackenseil*, which is both a love letter and a moral treatise, is read aloud at king Arthur's court. After that, Sigune is allowed to read the text on her own, and her desire for the lead is satisfied. However, Tschinotulander insists on his quest before he leaves for an Orient campaign.

1 Mühlherr 2016 gives a good overview over the field's recent development. Cf. also Scholz/Vedder (eds.) 2018, esp. the chapter by Kimmich, Kimmich 2018, cf. Wernli/Kling (eds.) 2018, cf. Glasner et al. (eds.) 2019.

2 Cf. for example Christ 2015, Selmayr 2017, Nieser 2018. A special branch is research on things as gifts, cf. for example Oswald 2004, Sahn 2014, Zimmermann 2020.

3 Cf. Christ 2015, p. 64, pp. 159f, cf. Mühlherr 2014, pp. 261f, cf. Mühlherr 2009, pp. 489–492.

4 Albrecht von Scharfenberg 1955, 1968, 1992.

5 Wolfram von Eschenbach 2006, 2003.

6 Wolfram von Eschenbach 2006, 138,9–142,2; 249,11–255,30; 435,12–440,19; 804,21–805,2.

When he returns, the conflict about the *Brackenseil* arises again, combined with fights about Parzivals estates, which Tschinotulander administrates and Orilus occupies. Although Sigune had come into possession of the *Brackenseil* in the meantime and given it back to Ekunat, Tschinotulander still insists on fighting with Orilus and ultimately dies in combat. Ekunat avenges Tschinotulander, and the *Brackenseil*, being part of Ekunats crest, is destroyed.

Research on the *Jüngerer Titurel* so far has mainly focused on the motivational, representational and structural dimensions of the *Brackenseil*, often concentrating on the text on the dog lead and its reception.⁷ Although this perspective has given important insights into relationships between intradiegetic text, narration and character action, it has overlooked the potential of the thing itself to influence the characters' actions. Dietl has recently investigated this perspective and demonstrated how the *Brackenseil* as a thing affects characters' desires and emotions.⁸ However, a reading of the *Jüngerer Titurel* with a focus on the thing and its agency has to look closer at the link between the inherent features of the *Brackenseil* and the interactions it provokes. An exploration of the relationship between the *Brackenseil's* specific material qualities and the characters' actions shows that, although the textual and material aspects of the *Brackenseil* are closely linked, it is rather the *Brackenseil's* 'thingness' than its status as a text that is influential. Moreover, this 'thingness' provides the *Brackenseil* with poetologic qualities.

1. The *Brackenseil* – general features

The *Brackenseil* is a dog lead of twelve *klafter* length which equates to approximately 20 metres or 65 feet. It is considered the best possible ribbon, made of yellow, brown, green, and red silk, decorated with pearls and rings (JT st. 1185f). On the inside and on the outside of the folded lead is a writing made of valuable gemstones which are riveted with golden nails (JT st. 1187–1189). It is not quite clear how this dog lead has to be imagined as a concrete object,⁹ but it is undeniable that the *Brackenseil* is a very valuable object. The

7 Baisch investigates practices of reading and their functions and aims, drawing on Wolframs *Titurel*, the *Jüngerer Titurel* and their scholarly reception, cf. Baisch 2010, p. 18. Volting, too, focuses on the representation of literacy and textuality, cf. Volting 2007. Parshall highlights the symbolic meaning of the *Brackenseil* and its function as a structural element and motivator, cf. Parshall 2011. Kragl, too, points out motivational problems of the *Brackenseil*, cf. Kragl 2010, pp. 146–152. Bußmann argues that the *Brackenseil* is merely a realistic requisite and a legal object of dispute, whereas the text on the *Brackenseil* offers the background for the assessment of the characters' actions, cf. Bußmann 2011. Neukirchen recently focused on the language's beauty, cf. Neukirchen 2019. Philipowski showed the different consequences of reading or hearing the text on the *Brackenseil*. Although she took into account the writing's materiality, she focused on different modes of reception and the didactic intention, cf. Philipowski 2009.

Similar approaches characterize the research on Wolframs *Titurel*: In investigating the relation between love and literature, Kragl focuses on the writing, not the lead itself, cf. Kragl 2013, p. 283. Bleumer, too, does not consider the materiality of the text to be central, the writing is only a metaphor, cf. Bleumer 2011, p. 260. Krotz considers the narrator's focus on the *Brackenseil's* materiality as a strategy to set the reader on the wrong track, but the writing is more important, cf. Krotz 1999, p. 190. Liebertz-Grün interprets the *Brackenseil* as caricature on contemporary listeners and readers and considers the writing as access to a metalevel where the characters' fate is decided, cf. Liebertz-Grün 2001, p. 390. Haug, too, argues that Sigune sends Tschinotulander to his death because of a story, not because of a dog lead, cf. Haug 1994, p. 315.

8 Cf. Dietl 2016, esp. pp. 194–199.

9 Cf. Johnson 1989, 517f. Johnson examines the *Brackenseil* in Wolfram's *Titurel*, but as the central stanzas can be found also in the *Jüngerer Titurel*, his results can be transferred.

dog collar belonging to the lead is of similar value. It is made of green velvet with a trimming and gemstones (JT st. 1190), and once again the gemstones form a text, announcing the name of the dog: "Gardiviaz" (JT st. 1190,4), which means "hûte wol der verte" (JT st. 1190,4, 'mind the path well'). This refers to the central message of the text on the lead and the collar that tells the story of Clauditte and Ekunat (JT st. 1191-1200), turning into a lesson on morality, love, and virtues that focuses on moderation (*maze*) as the key virtue (JT st. 1874-1927). The text on the *Brackenseil* gathers all courtly virtues, but, as Guggenberger points out, it transforms their meaning through a Christian perspective and contradicts the Arthurian ethics, because a knightly quest in the service of a lady is not intended (JT st. 1901-1908).¹⁰

In sum, the *Brackenseil* is an extraordinary object that combines a special text with a high-quality materiality, being text and thing at the same time. Therefore, although the text is of course meaningful for the narrative, it seems reasonable to assume that the material dimension of this special dog lead should not be neglected either. Its materiality or 'thingness' is important and possibly significant.

Research on Wolframs *Titurel* has already followed up with this perspective. For example, the *Brackenseil* is seen as a reification of the text that makes the text unavailable.¹¹ Furthermore, research has also drawn on the meaningfulness of the materiality for the text¹² and considered the *Brackenseil* as a medium between nature and culture,¹³ as a caricature of contemporary readers,¹⁴ or as a reflection on contemporary media developments.¹⁵ However, although the *Jüngerer Titurel* includes Wolfram's *Titurel* and refers to Wolfram's *Parzival*, Albrecht puts the *Brackenseil* into a larger context, therefore the findings on Wolfram's *Brackenseil* should not be transferred on a one-to-one basis. Albrecht's text is of course closely related to Wolfram and can hardly be read without *Parzival* and *Titurel*,¹⁶ but it should also be acknowledged as individual text¹⁷ which presumably has its own conceptions and semantics of the *Brackenseil*.

There are at least three interesting and promising aspects of the *Brackenseil*'s thingness: its status as a dog lead, as a valuable object, and as a medium. First, as a dog lead, the *Brackenseil* is an everyday object that prevents a dog from running away. It is something restrictive that leads the movement of the

10 Cf. Guggenberger 1992, pp. 116–119. Guggenberger focuses on the *Brackenseil*'s ethical system and the different virtues.

11 Cf. Marshall 2018, 419–422.

12 Cf. Lieb 2015, 12f. Lieb sees the *Brackenseil* as the best example for an enhanced link between written materialised text and its material medium, because the materiality of the text cannot be neglected and is meaningful. In a similar way, Kiening showed that dog and lead cannot be separated, because the dog is message bearer and the message's manifestation at the same time. Cf. Kiening 2003, p. 265.

13 Cf. Gephart 2005, p. 123.

14 Cf. Liebertz-Grün 2001, p. 389.

15 Cf. Kiening/Köbele 1998, 262f, cf. Seeber 2010, p. 55, cf. Meyer 2006, S. 469f.

16 Dietl considers Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel* as a retelling of Wolframs *Parzival* and *Titurel*, cf. Dietl 2016, p. 170. Zimmermann, too, emphasises the close relationship between Albrecht's text and Wolframs *Parzival*, *Titurel* and *Willehalm* and considers Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel* as perhaps the most comprehensive and successful case of an implementation of various forms of retextualisation through strategies of reception, translation, revision, rewriting, *dilatatio*, *abbreviatio*, or intertextual cross-fading, cf. Zimmermann 2020, p. 320. For a closer look on the relationship between *Jüngerer Titurel*, *Titurel* and *Parzival* cf. for example Lorenz 2002; Neukirchen 2006.

17 Neukirchen, too, demands to see Albrecht as critical and autonomous poet, cf. Neukirchen 2019, p. 183 Cf. Neukirchen 2006.

dog or directs the movements of the dog's owner if the dog is out of control. As I want to argue, this specific feature of the thing also applies to the characters' interactions with it. Second, due to the gemstones and the luxurious design, this particular dog lead, however, is not made for everyday use. It is something special, something unique, something valuable, something that represents wealth and status but also immaterial values. This uniqueness and representative function provoke the characters' desires to possess it. Third, because of the text written on it, the *Brackenseil* becomes an object of communication, a medium that conveys a message. As a medium, the *Brackenseil* has a specific mediality that also has an impact on the message and consequently leads the way of understanding. Thus, the capacity to lead the way that the *Brackenseil* has qua its status as a dog lead, i.e. as a thing, constitutes its central poetologic quality and mirrors the text's intention.

2. The dog lead

The material status of the *Brackenseil* as a dog lead is accompanied by specific functions and meanings. As already shortly mentioned, a dog lead directs and restricts movements. The dog has to follow its owner or vice versa if the dog is strong enough and if the owner fails to impose their will (or are willing to let go of the lead and the dog). Furthermore, a lead is able to force something – generally a dog – to stay somewhere. The *Brackenseil* for example forces the dog to stay with Sigune at least for some time (JT st. 1202,1) and stops the dog's path through the forest when it becomes tangled up in thorns (JT st. 1293). In general, the entity at one end of the lead decides where to go while the entity at the other end is denied any decision-making power.

This feature of leading and restricting decisions and actions, which is also the purpose of the text,¹⁸ applies to the interactions of the characters and the *Brackenseil* in the *Jüngerer Titurel*.

When Tschinotulander catches the dog with the *Brackenseil*, he brings both directly to Sigune (JT st. 1185,1) and shows no interest in them but returns to fishing (JT st. 1201). By giving dog and lead to Sigune, they both become a gift, namely a love token (*minnegabe*).

While some consider the dog to be the main gift in both *Titurel* and *Jüngerer Titurel*,¹⁹ and others argue that dog and lead are inseparable,²⁰ I want to argue here with Bußmann²¹ that it is the *Brackenseil* that constitutes the main part of the gift. First, because a hunting dog would not be a gift suiting a courtly woman, as Brackert and Jolie already point out in their commentary on Wolframs *Titurel*.²² Second, because the wording of the *Jüngerer Titurel*, too, suggests that Tschinotulander's decision to bring both dog and lead to Sigune

18 The moral treatise and the chorus-like "hûte wol der verte" imply that it is the aim of the text to guide decisions and actions, cf. JT 1874-1927.

19 As Gephart argues for Wolframs *Titurel*, cf. Gephart 2005, 121f. Philipowski, too, considers the dog as the gift in the *Jüngerer Titurel*, cf. Philipowski 2012, p. 108.

20 For Wolframs *Titurel*, Kiening argues that dog and lead are inseparable because the dog is message bearer and the message's manifestation at the same time. Cf. Kiening 2003, pp. 265–268. Seeber, too, argues that there is a convergence between dog and text, cf. Seeber 2010, p. 56. However, this close connection between dog and message must not be mistaken for an inseparability of dog and lead.

21 Bußmann, too, considers the *Brackenseil* as *minnegabe*, cf. Bußmann 2011, p. 196.

22 Wolfram von Eschenbach 2003, p. 250.

is led by the *Brackenseil*: its gemstones and splendour are described right before and after Tschinotulander jumps towards the dog (JT st. 1180f) and after he has brought the dog to Sigune (JT st. 1185). This contiguity²³ between the description of the *Brackenseil*'s materiality and Tschinotulander's actions indicates that the dog lead as a thing is what attracts his attention. Sigune's explicit demand for "*di strang*" (JT st. 1216,4, 'the lead'), not the dog, supports this impression.

Parallels between the concepts of lead and gift also suggest that the *Brackenseil* is the gift that matters. As Mauss and Kohl have shown, there is a paradoxical logic to the gift: a gift is not given as an object of exchange but requires a gift in return nonetheless.²⁴ As a result, a gift establishes a lasting personal bond and dependencies²⁵ that direct and restrict actions. This capacity is therefore not only inherent to the lead as a thing but also an important feature of a gift in general. Giver and receiver are related and obligated to each other; their actions (giving, receiving, thanking, giving-in-return, receiving-in-return, thanking, and so on) are led by the gift. The *Brackenseil* as a gift establishes this relationship and at the same time materialises and symbolises this bond²⁶ by being a restricting connection between two entities and leading each of their further actions.

This starts even before Sigune's explicit demand for the *Brackenseil*. Although it was the dog's noise that first caught Tschinotulander's attention (JT st. 1173,1), it is then the lead that "*wundert in vil harte*" (JT st. 1180,2, 'astonished him very much'). When he hears that something is wrong (JT st. 1206,4), Tschinotulander immediately interrupts his current action (fishing) in order to re-catch the dog with the lead (JT st. 1206-1208). Thus, even before Tschinotulander is asked for any action, the binding and action directing features of the *Brackenseil* unfold to some extent.

They intensify when Sigune asks Tschinotulander to bring her the *Brackenseil* in order to earn her love (JT st. 1216-1219). The *Brackenseil* arouses Sigune's desire, making her demand it and consequently motivating Tschinotulander to set out for his knightly quest²⁷ "*zu werben nach dem seile*" (JT st. 1275,3, 'to campaign for the lead'). The former gift is now explicitly an object of exchange and becomes the key to Sigune's love: her *minne* will "*wilden*" (JT st. 1216,4) Tschinotulander, i.e. depart and become estranged from him, unless he brings her the *Brackenseil*. Only then, so she promises, she will give him "*Genade und swaz ein maget sol gen lieben vrunt verenden*" (JT st. 1219,1, 'favour and whatever a maiden shall do for her dearly beloved'). In accordance with the general function of a lead to exert control over something or somebody, the *Brackenseil* has the power to control Sigune's love, making it 'accessible' with its presence and 'inaccessible' in its absence.

It has been argued both for Wolframs *Titurel* and for Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel* that Sigune's desire is rather directed towards the text than towards the

23 For contiguity as a central characteristic of medieval narrative cf. Schulz 2010, 2015, pp. 333-343.

24 Cf. Mauss 2016, p. 18, cf. Kohl 2003, p. 133.

25 Cf. Kohl 2003, p. 133f.

26 Thus, while Gephart understands lead and dog in Wolfram's *Titurel* as a symbol for a crisis of social bonds, the lead alone and the actions that it causes establish social bonds. Cf. Gephart 2005, p. 124.

27 The motivating power of the *Brackenseil* has also been observed by Parshall, cf. Parshall 2011, p. 146, p. 153.

Brackenseil because she starts reading immediately (JT st. 1191,1) and identifies with the story of Clauditte and Ekunat.²⁸ In this perspective, the *Brackenseil* is just the medium that she needs to obtain in order to reach her main goal, the text. However, this point of view does not consider that the wording of the *Jüngerer Titirel* suggests once again a greater influence of the thing. The narrator clarifies that it is “[d]iu strang” (JT st. 1216,1, ‘the lead’) that her heart is bound to, and that it is “umb die strang” (JT st. 1231,3, ‘for the lead’) that she risks Tschinotulander’s life. Furthermore, when Tschinotulander returns after unsuccessfully trying to catch the escaping dog, the first thing Sigune worries about is “diu strange, verloren und nicht vunden” (JT st. 1210,1, ‘the lead, lost and not found’). In the following dialogues with Tschinotulander, Sigune expresses her desire for the *Brackenseil* as bearer of the text, not the text alone (JT st. 1214f, st. 1229,3f.), and expects Tschinotulander to fight “umb di strangen” (JT st. 1235,4, ‘for the lead’) for her love. At King Arthur’s court, too, her “herze ringet nach dem edeln, tiuren bracken seile” (JT st. 1855,2, ‘her heart strives after the precious, valuable *Brackenseil*’).

Although Sigune’s interest in the *Brackenseil* is motivated by the text on the thing, it is the thing her actions are directed towards; the thing leads her actions. The scene at King Arthur’s court supports this view. Sigune is not content with only hearing the text read aloud by Jeschute (JT st. 1505f) and in doing so, receiving the contents. Instead, she wants to read “in ir gewalt fur eigen di schrift [...] an dem seile” (JT st. 1624,4, ‘in her own control the writing on the lead’) and is only satisfied when she can hold the *Brackenseil* and read the story three times herself (JT st. 1869,3). Without its materiality, the text alone apparently is not enough. Although the reasons for this desire remain obscure,²⁹ it is evident that Sigune is attracted by the thing, and this thing allows her to have the text at her disposal. To be in control of the *Brackenseil* as a material fixation of the text is necessary for being able to control the text and to choose an individual way of reception. The thing does not only direct the characters’ actions by attracting attention and desire, it also allows the characters to control the text. Similar to the typical relation that a dog lead establishes between the two entities at both its ends, the *Brackenseil* allows its owner to be both subject and object of control and power at the same time.

Even after Sigune’s interest declines, the *Brackenseil* still has a significant impact on her and her actions because Tschinotulander insists that his quest is not fulfilled “biz si [Sigune] gewalticlichen daz bracken seil fur eigen mocht behalten” (JT st. 1957,4, ‘until she may keep the *Brackenseil* in her own control’). Sigune cannot stop Tschinotulander’s pursuit of the thing despite her explicitly telling him that she considers the quest fulfilled and offers her love (JT st. 1946, st. 1955). To such a degree, the *Brackenseil* restricts her power over Tschinotulander. Whereas once, she could persuade him to search for the

28 Concerning Wolframs *Titirel*, cf. Brackert 1996, p. 161, cf. Gephart 2005, p. 122, cf. Haug 1994, p. 315, cf. Kragl 2013, p. 283, cf. Krotz 1999, 192f, cf. Dietl 2016, p. 190, cf. Liebertz-Grün 2001, 389f. Concerning Albrechts *Jüngerer Titirel*, cf. Baisch 2010, p. 14, cf. Volting 2007, p. 52.

29 Viehauser argues that the reason for Sigune’s desire for possession of the *Brackenseil* is her identification with the text; she can only desist from her desire when it becomes clear that through the general *lère* (‘lesson’), the text is meant for everyone, cf. Viehauser 2015, p. 67, p. 75. However, this view does not consider that after Jeschute’s reading, Sigune’s identification should have decreased as she then should know that there is more to the *Brackenseil* than a love story similar to her situation. Philipowski sees the reason for Sigune’s desire in the gemstones, cf. Philipowski 2009, p. 60.

Brackenseil against his initial reluctance (JT st. 1213, st. 1267,4), now, she cannot convince him to quit. She does not have the power to influence him and his actions anymore. Instead, his actions are led by the *Brackenseil* because it remains the way to Sigune's love.

Although it is the intention of the text on the *Brackenseil* to lead the characters' actions, Sigune's and Tschinotulander's actions are rather directed towards and by the *Brackenseil* as a thing used as a gift and object of exchange. Consequently, the *Brackenseil*'s impact on the story lies not only in its status as a text but also in its status as a thing. As the intrinsic features of this specific thing are to lead and to restrict actions, the thing works in its intended way, doing exactly what a lead is supposed to do. This is also true for the other main characters. Quite literally, the *Brackenseil* leads Teanglis as he decides to follow it and the dog through the forest (JT st. 1295–1297). It also leads Orilus and Jeschute, who want to keep it, and Ekunat, who wants to have it back. Some reasons for this leading and restricting lie within the object's value.

3. The valuable object

Due to its materiality, the *Brackenseil* is not any common dog lead but a very valuable object. Nevertheless, it is not its material value that attracts the characters but rather the value they attribute to it throughout the story. Although the valuable materials of which the lead is made are described in detail as outlined above, no one wants to possess the *Brackenseil* just because it is made of gemstones, gold, and silk. Instead, the *Brackenseil* becomes valuable because of what it represents.

As a dog lead, the *Brackenseil* is technically an everyday object. However, it represents prosperity and preciousness because of the valuable material. Whoever possesses an object like this can be expected to possess even more treasures. As a result, the *Brackenseil* represents its owner's wealth. Yet, there is more to the *Brackenseil*'s value than that. Its material value has an impact on its status as a gift, as an object of exchange, and as a trophy as well.

Like every gift, the *Brackenseil* creates and represents a relationship between giver and receiver, not least because a part of the giver is inherent to the gift.³⁰ Furthermore, any gift renders the relationship at least for some time asymmetric, raising the giver's status.³¹ This representation and dynamic of the relationship is connected with what the materiality of the gift represents because a gift made of valuable material suggests that the giver considers the receiver and their relationship to each other to be valuable.³² Besides, the more valuable the gift, the more asymmetric the relationship becomes as the over-spending leads to a superiority of the giver. The *Brackenseil* as a precious object consequently represents the value of the relationships in which it is given as a gift and has an impact on the relationships' symmetry.

For Clauditte and Ekunat, the *Brackenseil* is not only a valuable but also a personalised gift because their story and their names are written on the lead

30 Cf. Kohl 2003, 133f, cf. Oswald 2004, p. 14.

31 Cf. Gregory 2015, 46f.

32 Of course, something without material value can also become valuable as a gift because of the emotional connection. However, it is unlikely that someone gives something valuable to someone when the giver does not consider the relationship as valuable in some kind.

(JT st. 1193–1200, st. 1469f). By giving the valuable object to Ekunat, Clauditte is not trying to raise her status by overspending; as a queen, she is of higher rank than Ekunat already. Instead, she illustrates with the valuable gift that the social difference in rank is not a flaw of the relationship. In the text on the *Brackenseil*, Clauditte emphasises that she appreciates Ekunat “*ob aller keiser wurde*” (JT st. 1877, ‘above all emperors’ dignity’), that no one would be “*baz zu nemende*” (JT st. 1878,2, ‘better to take’), and that she can never “[s]in *wirde gar vol prisene*” (JT st. 1881,1, ‘fully praise his dignity and worth’). The *Brackenseil* as a valuable object is the material equivalent to this appreciation. Ekunat and her love for him deserve the best object only, regardless of his lower rank. However, as “gift giving was a key source of honor”³³ in medieval societies, the value of the gift increases the existing asymmetry between them, giving Clauditte the superior position of the giver and Ekunat the inferior position of the receiver. Maybe this is one reason why they both feel uncomfortable about the reading of the text (JT st. 1469, st. 1942): it reveals who gave the *Brackenseil* to whom, thus making public that Clauditte increased her already existing superiority by giving Ekunat such a valuable gift. This could be understood as threat to his integrity and thereby be dishonourable for both.³⁴

For Sigune and Tschinotulander, the *Brackenseil* is a rather spontaneous gift that becomes an object of exchange; its acquisition is the “*dienst*” (JT st. 1243,3, ‘service’) that Tschinotulander has to and wants to fulfil in order to earn Sigune’s love as *lôn* (‘reward’). In a relation of exchange, one object (or action) is equated with another object (or action). They can be exchanged because they are considered to be of the same material or immaterial value and both giver and receiver feel that they benefit from the exchange, acquiring something they desire.³⁵ Sigune considers the *Brackenseil* worthy of her love and makes it its material equivalent (JT st. 1216). Even after she desists from her desire to possess the *Brackenseil*, Tschinotulander adheres to this idea, considering Sigune to be “*des wert, daz ich noch baz nach prise / von rehte werben sol.*” (JT st. 1953,2f, ‘Sigune is worth that I shall further campaign for praise’). As a result, the pursuit of the *Brackenseil* equates the pursuit of Sigune’s love. Therefore, the *Brackenseil* becomes a valuable object because it is the reification of the immaterial value of Sigune’s love. Looking at this from the other perspective, the valuable materiality of the *Brackenseil* supports the value of Sigune’s love – justifiably, she is a member of the Grail’s dynasty after all and therefore of high rank; it is hardly imaginable that her love could be earned with a worthless thing. By equating and exchanging, the *Brackenseil* becomes a valuable object in the relationship between Sigune and Tschinotulander because it is already a materially valuable object and therefore can be part of the exchange.

Finally, the *Brackenseil* is also a valuable object because it is considered a trophy, representing triumph and *aventure* (‘adventure’, ‘wondrous incident’), increasing and representing the owner’s *êre* (‘honour’). As *êre* can be under-

33 Cowell 2007, p. 51.

34 Cowell defines integrity as “something more idealized and more extreme than honor – specifically, a state of freedom from social bonds and obligations, such that the individual is ‘whole’ (Latin *integer*) and completely self-dependent” (Cowell 2007, p. 21f). Exchanges with or gifts from equals or superiors form a threat to a person’s integrity, cf. Cowell 2007, pp. 25–28. Thus, “receiving gifts could be a source of dishonour” (Cowell 2007, p. 51), and forcing Ekunat into a situation of threatened integrity could have negative effects for Claudittes honour as well.

35 Cf. Hillebrandt 2009, pp. 93–100, cf. Kohl 2003, pp. 141–147.

stood as a form of symbolic capital,³⁶ the *Brackenseil* as a thing is a material manifestation of symbolic capital,³⁷ not least because with Bourdieu, wealth is always combined with other's recognition and thus implies symbolic capital.³⁸ This already starts when Sigune's demand makes it the object of a knightly quest and accordingly the material proof that Tschinotulander has earned her love by proving to be the best knight through *aventure* (JT st. 1229-1235). Teanglis who is the next to find the *Brackenseil* connects it with *aventure*, too. He understands it as a call to adventure and thinks that "*dirre vremde brief ist uz gesant durch aventure wunder*" (JT st. 1296,4, 'this alien letter is sent by a wondrous adventure'). Thus, he decides to follow the dog with the lead to find *aventure* (JT st. 1297) which he ultimately does in a combat with Orilus. Just as Tschinotulander and Teanglis, Orilus, too, finds the dog with the valuable lead by chance when he hunts down the game Gardeviaz is following (JT st. 1298). At once, he takes possession of dog and lead, which leads to the combat with Teanglis (JT st. 1299). Orilus wins and thus enforces his possession of the *Brackenseil* (JT st. 1305,1). From now on, the *Brackenseil* does not belong to the person to whom it has been sent or who found it but to the person who fought for it (JT st. 1495). Whereas Kiening and Köbele argue for Wolframs *Titurel* that the text is *aventure* because it is an event that changes the situation irreversibly,³⁹ here, it is the *Brackenseil* as a thing. It is a wondrous event in its appearance, it leads to further *aventure*, and its possession proves the owner's success in such an *aventure*. As a trophy acquired in combat, it is a material sign of chivalry and strength, and its value reveals the status of its owner as the best knight.⁴⁰ Considering that, as Cowell noted, the "violent taking of the object functioned to further increase the object's symbolic value or rank",⁴¹ its status as a trophy even increases the *Brackenseil's* value. Although in the course of the story the *Brackenseil* is given from Jeschute to Sigune (JT st. 4950-4953) and from Sigune to Ekunat (JT st. 5050f) even before the arranged fights over it take place, there is always someone who considers the *Brackenseil* as the material manifestation of chivalry, power, or symbolic capital in general worth to fight for or because of.

In sum, the *Brackenseil's* material value at the same time is and is not the reason why it becomes a "coveted object".⁴² Its materiality alone does not arouse the desire to possess it,⁴³ but the fact that the materiality of the thing mirrors and affects the value the characters attribute to it. As a valuable gift object, it represents Clauditte's appreciation for Ekunat and their relationship. As a valuable exchange object, it is equivalent of Sigune's favour and love. Finally, as a valuable trophy, it reifies *être* and status. The *Brackenseil* leads the characters because of its material preciousness that mirrors the immaterial values it represents.

36 Cf. Cowell 2007, p. 37, p. 55.

37 Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as the capital that results from the relationship between any type of capital (here: *Brackenseil* as valuable object) and the actors who are socialized in such a way that they recognize and acknowledge this type of capital. Cf. Bourdieu 2017, p. 337. Cf. also Bourdieu 2001, pp. 309–315.

38 Cf. Bourdieu 2017, p. 338.

39 Cf. Kiening/Köbele 1998, p. 258.

40 The best knight possess the best things, cf. Cowell 2007, p. 61.

41 Cowell 2007, p. 54.

42 Parshall 2011, p. 153.

43 This is what Philipowski argues, who sees the reason for the characters' desires in the gemstones, cf. Philipowski 2009, pp. 59–63.

4. The medium

The *Brackenseil* is not only a dog lead and a valuable object but also a letter and hence a medium that conveys a message. As a medium, the *Brackenseil* has a specific mediality that is defined by the specific features of the medium.⁴⁴ This mediality influences the communicative act, i.e. how the message has to be presented and how it is perceived, making the medium itself a message.⁴⁵ Especially the materiality of the medium accounts for its specific mediality and conveys meaning, too.⁴⁶ Therefore, the specific features and functions of the *Brackenseil* as a thing have consequences for its status as a medium.

The material value suggests that the *Brackenseil* is a medium for important messages only. With its gemstones and precious fabric, its fabrication surely was expensive and time-consuming, which leads to the expectation that the message conveyed through this medium is valuable as well. This is confirmed by Sigune who regards the text as more valuable than her land Katelangen and all the richness that anyone can offer (JT st. 1215). However, not everyone seems to share this attitude: Tschinotulander is sceptical at first (JT st. 1213), and at king Arthur's court only the threat of punishment seems to guarantee everyone's attention (JT st. 1972), suggesting that the text is spontaneously not considered to be important.

Still, the materiality as part of the *Brackenseil's* mediality has power over the recipients. When the text is read aloud at King Arthur's court, everyone who hears or reads the text loses all distress or sorrow and feels joy instead (JT st. 1517, st. 1869). The reasons for this joy lie in the gemstones, not in the message: "*Von edelkeit der steine was disiu kraft der worte*" (JT st. 1507,1, 'this power of words came from the gemstone's preciousness'), "*die vreude der schrifte gie der steine krefte, / dar uz di bûchstab waren*" (JT st. 1930,3f, 'the joy of the writing came from the power of the stones of which the letters were built'). The power of the gemstones affects the recipients and thus their emotional condition.⁴⁷ In doing so, the *Brackenseil's* mediality influences the message's perception. The joy caused by the gemstones leads to an atmosphere of happiness in which the message with the rather serious advice for a good life can appear positive and pleasant. In this way, the *Brackenseil* as a medium with a specific mediality leads the characters. It attracts their attention, directs their emotions, and thus has an influence on their rating of the message while it should support the didactic success. However, the latter expectation is not fully met. The gemstones' powers do not work on Arthur whose grief over Ilinot's death is stronger (JT st. 1509-1513). In contrast, they work too well on the others who value the gemstones' powers more than the text's ad-

44 Cf. Hickethier 2010, p. 26.

45 Cf. Hickethier 2010, p. 26; cf. Ortlieb 2018, 38f. As McLuhan noted, „the ‚content‘ of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium” (McLuhan 1994, p. 8), although this character deserves attention and ‘is’ the message, cf. McLuhan 1994, pp. 7–21.

46 Ortlieb 2018, p. 39. Lieb, too, describes this connection between meaning and the medium's materiality, using the *Brackenseil* as an example, however, without mentioning the term ‘mediality’, cf. Lieb 2015, 12f.

47 Wegner points out that these powers were also attributed to these gemstones in medieval science, cf. Wegner 1996, S. 115f, cf. also Rausch 1977. Dietl criticises Wegner's method of adding up the gemstone's effects and argues for an interaction of didactic text and gemstone effects, cf. Dietl 2016, 193f. Baisch and Neukirchen, too, argue for the power of the jewels only, cf. Baisch 2010, pp. 24–26, cf. Neukirchen 2006, p. 211.

vice (JT st. 1930) and continue to live their lives as before (JT st. 1931).⁴⁸ The materiality overwhelms and impedes the *Brackenseil's* message, as both Philipowski and Volting point out as well.⁴⁹ The medium's materiality that supports its communicative intention by drawing attention and suggesting valuable content on the one hand is disturbing or blocking⁵⁰ the communicative process on the other hand. "[I]n communicative terms [...] the *Brackenseil* inscription is a disaster",⁵¹ and the choice of the medium plays a central role in this communicative catastrophe. The mediality of the medium stands in the way of the message.

The *Brackenseil's* status as a dog lead adds to this problem. To use the *Brackenseil* as a medium means to disregard its function as a dog lead. This becomes apparent when Sigune tries to read the text for the first time. In order to be able to read the message, she has to untie the knot with which the dog is bound (JT st. 1201,4) and in doing so loses control over the dog that runs away (JT st. 1204,4). Furthermore, the materiality of the lead makes it at least difficult to use the *Brackenseil* as a dog lead. Not only would it be too long and too heavy,⁵² Sigune's injury also shows that it can cause severe harm to anyone who wants to hold a strong dog with it (JT st. 1211).

Thus, the *Brackenseil* cannot exercise its medial and its dog-leading function at the same time because the respective modes of use impede each other. When using the *Brackenseil* as a dog lead, it is not possible to read the message; when using the *Brackenseil* as a message bearer, it is not possible to use it as a dog lead. This has also been noticed concerning Wolfram's *Titurel*: As Gephart argues, the gemstone letters impede the use of the *Brackenseil* as a dog lead, representing an alienation of culture from nature.⁵³ Besides, Marshall shows that the reification of the text as a dog lead makes it unavailable for the characters, not least because the dog keeps running away.⁵⁴ For both the *Titurel* and the *Jüngerer Titurel*, the *Brackenseil* restricts the characters' actions. Certain actions, such as reading or controlling a dog, are only possible in a certain 'mode' of the thing. Only when the dog has disappeared at King Arthur's court,⁵⁵ the dog-leading function of the *Brackenseil* is suspended, and the text can be read without interruption.

Yet, as soon as another, though artificial, dog comes into play the *Brackenseil* once again combines different modes of use. Ekunat uses the lead in combination with an artificial dog as crest (JT st. 4542f, st. 5878f), which provides the *Brackenseil* with a new characteristic function and thus adds a new aspect to its mediality. As a crest, it is part of a noble's coat of arms, serving to identify the bearer and to give information on the bearer's nobility, rank, family, and ideology, even becoming the bearer's personification.⁵⁶ The *Brackenseil*

48 As Volting notes, some characters are 'better' recipients than others, especially the male characters "seem entirely to miss the point of the treatise", Volting 2007, p. 64.

49 Cf. Philipowski 2009, 70f, cf. Volting 2007, p. 61.

50 Strohschneider refers to phenomena in which the materiality dominates the message („Kommunikat“) as blocked textuality („blockierte Textualität“), cf. Strohschneider 2006, 34f.

51 Volting 2007, p. 58.

52 Cf. Johnson 1989, p. 518.

53 cf. Gephart 2005, p. 123.

54 Cf. Marshall 2018, p. 421f, p. 434f.

55 Dietl explains the disappearance of the dog with the fact that it is no longer required here, as the *Brackenseil* now has an agency of its own, cf. Dietl 2016, p. 191. Bußmann argues that Albrecht suppresses the dog from the beginning and favours the lead, cf. Bußmann 2011, 190f.

56 Cf. Filip 1997, cols 2031–3033.

then mediates a different sort of text in a broader sense, giving information on Ekunat. However, it cannot mediate the moral text at the same time as the lead as crest is “gezirkelt” (JT st. 5878,4, ‘coiled’), probably because of its length. Again, the moral text is unreadable. Once more, two of the *Brackenseil*’s features obstruct each other: if on the one hand the *Brackenseil* would be uncoiled in order to render the text readable, it could not be part of a crest as it would be too long and cumbersome in combat. On the other hand, in order to use the *Brackenseil* as a crest, it has to be coiled, which impedes the moral text’s readability. Besides, the use as a crest exposes the *Brackenseil* to the violence of combat. This turns out to be fatal for the *Brackenseil* that is destroyed by Orilus’ sword strokes (JT st. 5888–5890).

Although the text’s fixation in gemstones suggests permanence,⁵⁷ the *Brackenseil* “constitutes the ultimate elusive text”⁵⁸ not only because the dog runs away with it, but because it is more than a medium, namely a valuable object, a dog lead, and later a crest. What Volfing calls a “mismatch between textual message and material form”⁵⁹ is then only one aspect of the problem that the choice of medium entails: These features give the *Brackenseil* a mediality that impedes its readability and consequently causes its elusiveness. The message cannot be understood because the thing is not permanently in the right medial mode, and its mediality turns out to be obstructive for the message, restricting the process of reading and understanding. Only when a part of its specific features and functions, i.e. of its mediality, is suspended, the *Brackenseil* has the chance to work properly as a medium.

5. Conclusion

„[H]ûte wol der verte“ (JT st. 1190,4, ‘mind the path well’) – this is the central maxime of the *Brackenseil* as a text. However, it goes astray. The text fails in its aspiration to guide the characters on their way of life. Because the message is not taken into serious consideration, it has no lasting or leading effect, which results in death and sorrow. In contrast, the *Brackenseil* as a thing is powerful and influential – it succeeds in leading the characters. As the *Brackenseil* is a dog lead, leading and restricting are its central characteristics and functions. These are fulfilled in the characters’ interactions with the *Brackenseil*; their actions are led by it. The reasons for this lie in the *Brackenseil*’s status as a valuable object and medium. As a gift, as an object of exchange, and as a trophy the *Brackenseil* possesses the ability to render immaterial aspects manageable and visible, which provokes the characters’ desires to own it. Its material features as well as its ambiguous functioning give the *Brackenseil* a problematic mediality that restricts and obstructs the message’s readability and understanding. To lead, to restrict, to prevent – these central features of a dog lead turn out to be the central features of the *Brackenseil* as a thing even beyond its function as a dog lead. It is then not the text on the *Brackenseil*, i.e. the thing in its function as a text, that has a poetologic quality but rather the thingness of this text, i.e. the text as a thing.

57 Cf. Hahn 1986, col. 1560.

58 Volfing 2007, p. 6.

59 Volfing 2007, p. 51.

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Title

Text as thing. The dog lead in Albrecht's *Jüngerer Titurel*

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