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# DRESS, IDENTITY AND VISUAL DISPLAY: SELF-FASHIONING IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

ROMANCE by Alice Christina Stamataki

## *Abstract*

Clothing ‘speaks’. The act of dressing confers narratives of identity upon the wearer. The elite of late-medieval England understood the significance of dress; they utilised rich materials, strong colours and contemporary fashions to express, visually, statements of identity. These attitudes inform the expansive descriptions of rich dress in Middle English romance, in which a wealth of valuable materials, opulent accoutrements and contemporary fashions appear. Dress functions in romance as a visual representation of identity, providing an avenue through which wider thematic concerns find expression. For the Fair Unknown, the attaining of chivalric dress represents the integration of the individual into the courtly society. In the Middle English Breton *lais*, dress illustrates the internal fortitude of the Constance figure; it communicates also the transience of chivalric bonds and of kingship. In the northern Gawain romances, arming rituals and rich visual display represent the means through which chivalric communities affirm their identities. Using sociocultural detail, this study explores the significance of dress in Middle English romance, demonstrating that dress in romance suggests publically inner aspects of identity.

DRESS, IDENTITY AND VISUAL DISPLAY: SELF-FASHIONING IN  
MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCE

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2018

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AOA</i>	<i>The Awntyrs off Arthur</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>The Carl of Carlisle</i>
<i>DTRM</i>	<i>De Tribus Regibus Mortuis</i>
<i>FOR</i>	<i>Le Bone Florence of Rome</i>
<i>GAG</i>	<i>The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain</i>
<i>GGK</i>	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i>
<i>JSG</i>	<i>The Jeaste of Sir Gawain</i>
<i>KC</i>	<i>King Arthur and King Cornwall</i>
<i>LD</i>	<i>Lybeaus Desconus</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>The Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>POG</i>	<i>Perceval of Galles</i>
<i>SO</i>	<i>Sir Orfeo</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>Sir Launfal</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Summer Sunday</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Sir Thopas</i>
<i>TGK</i>	<i>The Greene Knight</i>
<i>TOG</i>	<i>The Trental of Gregory</i>
<i>TSG</i>	<i>The Turke and Sir Gawain</i>

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Dress, Identity and Visual Display*

#### ***Materiality, Gaze Theory and Identity***

This thesis examines the relationship between identity and visual display in late-medieval English romance. It argues that opulent visual display plays an intrinsic role in courtly communities and is integral to the establishing of both public and private chivalric identities. It focuses particularly on the implications of visual display in relation to internal and external representations of identity. It utilises socio-cultural-historical detail to provide a new perspective on the significance of dress in Middle English romance. Middle English romance of the later Middle Ages is situated within a period of rapid cultural and economic development which resulted in a renewed interest in dress and a rapid development in contemporary fashion and styles. It is this mix of characteristics that leads some critics to characterise this period as the ‘birth’ of fashion.<sup>1</sup> It is surprising, then, that existing criticism relating to dress in romance has predominantly failed to engage with this wealth of contextual detail that provides such a relevant and precise mode for navigating these textual representations of clothing. This thesis attempts to fill this critical gap. It represents a detailed exploration of the interaction between the elaborately performative late-medieval contextual environment and the detailed and expansive accounts of rich apparel that appear in later medieval romance writings in Middle English. For this reason, it focuses on Middle English romance to more carefully examine these very specific cultural interactions between contextual detail and textual depictions of material

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the clearest support of this characterisation can be seen in Odile Blanc’s essay, ‘From Battlefield to Court: The Invention of Fashion in the Fourteenth Century’, in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet Snyder (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002). Further discussion of other instances of this term, as well as the critical discourse surrounding it, can be found in the Methodology section of the introduction, which also elaborates on the period’s contextual links to the rich dress found in Middle English romance.



culture.<sup>2</sup> This thesis examines the externalisation of identity present in dress, arguing that dress constitutes an integral aspect of performative visual displays of identity. This thesis' exploration of dress is arranged around three modern scholarly categories: the Fair Unknown, the Breton *lais*, and the northern Gawain romances, with representative textual examples carefully selected of each instance.<sup>3</sup> Uniting the thesis' examination of dress, identity and visual display is a focus on the contemporary socio-cultural attitudes informing these topics. As such, it is necessary to first establish the contemporary context surrounding gaze theory. The following sections present an overview of relevant medieval and modern gaze theories. I then provide a detailed account of my own theoretical approach and framework for the study of dress in romance, as well as the texts and specific approach that I utilise in my examination of visuality and dress in Middle English romance.

Medieval gaze theories were informed by an awareness of and engagement with the competing classical notions of intromission and extramission.<sup>4</sup> Classical Atomist thinkers envisioned a gazer who takes in (figuratively, and literally) atomic films from the gazed-upon universe. These films—*eidola*—transmit from the exteriority into the interiority and become—either temporarily or permanently—a part of it. In Ptolemaic and Euclidean extramission theories, radiation instead emits from the gazer into the universe and instigates a refraction that

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<sup>2</sup> Though the thesis' primary focus is on Middle English romance, comparative reference is given to source texts (where extant) in order to evoke, briefly, the significance of their adaptations and alterations. Further details are provided in the Methodology section of this introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Further details on the topics and texts chosen, as well as a rationale for textual selections made, can be found in the Methodology section of this introduction.

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth account of the development of optical theory from the classical period to the Enlightenment, see: David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision From Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), and A. Mark Smith, *From Sight to Light: The Passage from Ancient to Modern Optics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015). Alternatively, a concise summary of classical and medieval modes of thought regarding optical theory can be found in Lindberg's chapter, titled 'The Science of Optics', in his edited collection of *Science in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 338–368. Suzannah Biernoff also presents a detailed discussion of medieval optical theory in *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, *The New Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). Analytical summaries of classical and medieval optical theories can be found in Suzanne Conclin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2004), pp. 21–44, and A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–25, as well as in Molly Martin, *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur*, *Arthurian Studies* LXXV (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 2–7.

results in sight.<sup>5</sup> Western visual theories developed as a response to classical and Islamic theorists. Scholars such as Ibn al-Haytham and Abu Yusuf Al-Kindi developed classical modes of thought and contributed to the pre-eminence of intromission theories throughout the Islamic and Christian worlds.<sup>6</sup> In this way, western European scholars inherited a multitude of competing theories and ideas. Thirteenth-century scholars such as Roger Bacon, Witelo and John Pecham sought to compile, unify and reconcile optical theories as well as develop and expand existing modes of thought.<sup>7</sup> Works such as Bacon's *Perspectiva* were, therefore, both a perpetuation of the intromissive view developed by Alhazen and also an attempt to unify the work of diverse classical and Islamic scholars: Bacon's model, which Lindberg suggests was intended to represent the 'perfect synthesis among competing schools', argued that though sight was primarily the result of rays transmitted into the eye from the universe, it also resulted from a transmission of peripheral rays from the eye into the universe.<sup>8</sup> Bacon's views proved influential; they were developed in Witelo's *Perspectiva* and John Pecham's *Perspectiva Communis* and continued to be considered into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For a critical edition, see *Ptolemy's Theory of Visual Perception*, ed. by A. Mark Smith, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 86/2 (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1996), 19–35. For an account of Euclid's optics, see the second chapter of Smith's *Ancient to Modern Optics*, pp. 47–68.

<sup>6</sup> For critical editions of Ibn al-Haytham's work, see Ibn Al-Haytham, *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham: Books I–III on Direct Vision*, trans. and ed. by A. I. Sabra, 2 vols. (London: Warburg, 1989) and A. Mark Smith, *Alhacen's Theory of Visual Perception*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 91.4 and 91.5 (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 2011). For a critical edition of Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Al-Kindi's work on optics, see *Propagations of Ray: The Oldest Arabic Manuscript about Optics (Burning-Mirror), from Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi*, trans. by Mohamed Yahia Haschmi (Aleppo: al-Hāshimī, 1967). For an in-depth examination of the development of visual theory by Islamic scholars, and its impact on Western theorists, see chapters 2–7 of Lindberg's *Theories of Vision* and chapters 4–6 of Smith's *Ancient to Modern Optics*.

<sup>7</sup> For critical editions of Bacon's work, see *Roger Bacon's Philosophy of Nature: A Critical Edition, with English translation, introduction, and notes, of De Multiplicatione Specierum and De Speculis Comburentibus*, trans. and ed. by David C. Lindberg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) and *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages: A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's Perspectiva with Introduction and Notes*, trans. and ed. by David C. Lindberg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For a critical edition of Witelo's work, see *Witelonis Perspectivae liber primus: An English Translation with Introduction and Commentary and Latin Edition of the Mathematical Book of Witelo's Perspectiva*, trans. and ed. by Sabetai Unguru, Studia Copernicana 15 (Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences, 1977). For a critical edition of Pecham's work, see *John Pecham and the Science of Optics: Perspectiva Communis*, ed. and trans. by David C. Lindberg (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> Lindberg, 'The Science of Optics', p. 352.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the influence of medieval optics on early modern theorists, see chapters 7–9 of Lindberg's *Theories of Vision* and chapters 7–9 of Smith's *Ancient to Modern Optics*.

Having briefly summarised the major contextual theoretical principles involving medieval notions of the gaze, I can now proceed to set out their relevance to my topic. I see these early optical theories as theories of contact, in which the relationship between gazer and gazed-upon represents a transmissive, communicative and active exchange. The impetus of this exchange is in turns placed upon the gazer (in extramission theories of sight), or the gazed-upon (in intromission theories). Though proponents of competing models of sight did not agree on the locus of this activity, I would therefore argue that extramission and intromission theories are unified by their mutual emphasis on the inherent communicability of vision. To simplify my perspective greatly: in extramission theories, the gazer ‘touches’ the universe; in intromission theories, the gazer is ‘touched by’ the universe. Both modes of seeing, therefore, ensure some element of contact is present between the gazer and gazed-upon. In this way, gaze facilitates the communication of the private with the public, and the public with the private.

In this bi-directionality, it seems to me that medieval theoretical gaze models display a correspondence with those proposed by some modern theorists. Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytical model emphasises the duality of the gazer, positioning him or her as both gazer and, simultaneously, object of the gaze.<sup>10</sup> Medieval models of gaze find seem to find less in common with modern theories that posit a single direction of sight, such as Laura Mulvey’s ‘male gaze’ model, which examines the power imbalance influencing visual depictions of women by men.<sup>11</sup> Its corresponding analogue, the ‘female gaze’, is similarly one-directional.<sup>12</sup> The bi-directionality of other proposed modes of gaze seem to me to be more inherently congruent with medieval perceptions of gaze that emphasise spectacle, communication, and contact. It seems to me that a more congruent point of comparison may also be found in John Berger’s theoretical perspective, which positions the focus of the gazed-upon as corresponding

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<sup>10</sup> For a critical edition of Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theories of sight, see Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Norton, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989), pp. 14–26; first printed in *Screen*, 16/3 (1975), 6–18.

<sup>12</sup> The ‘female gaze’ has been the topic of a number of scholarly works, though a single definitive originator is challenging to determine. For an early example, see Stephanie McBride, ‘The Female Gaze? Looking at Women in Popular Cinema’, *Circa*, 44 (1989), 19–21.

with that of the gazer.<sup>13</sup> Just as Berger's renaissance nudes appear to watch themselves being watched, I would suggest that so does *Sir Launfal's* Dame Tryamour, who appropriates the Arthurian court's gaze. Arriving at the court to prove her beauty, she constructs an elaborate panoply of visual display. A vast procession of fair maidens, beautiful goods, and wealthy materials heralds her arrival, the climax of which is an authoritative appropriation of the gaze:

Sche dede of her mantyll on the flet,  
That men schuld her beholde the bet,  
Wythoute a more sojour.<sup>14</sup>

Tryamore's victory lies in successfully appropriating the gaze of the court, which she achieves the moment in which she perceives the assembled court watching her. The subsequent admission, that the courtly ladies are to her 'As ys the mone ayen the sonne' (*SL* 989), feels both obligatory and redundant: Tryamour knows she has already won; she perceives her victory by observing the gaze of the watching court.

In this environment of simultaneous gazers and gazed-upon, it is easy to see why Bacon's synthesis of extramission and intromission models became so well-established in the later Middle Ages. It seems to me that for medieval gazers, visibility and gazing represented a mutual exchange in which the gazer and the gazed-upon established simultaneous contact. This contact then becomes a form of communication between the interior and the exterior, the individual and the universe, the external and the self. It is here that the issue of identity arises. Directing, navigating and to a certain extent formulating the gaze is a consciousness that is subject equally to the eye's intromissions and extramissions. I suggest that it is this consciousness—what we would call the individual—that touches (according to extramission models) and is touched by (according to intromission models) the external world. Medieval concepts of individuality were (to simplify somewhat) characterised by a focus on the universality of humanity: in them, the individual's inner self is united by the image of God, in

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<sup>13</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> *Sir Launfal*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), lines 979–981. All subsequent references to *Sir Launfal* (*SL*) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

whose image humanity was created, that is shared by all.<sup>15</sup> Medieval conceptions of the ‘inner self’—identified as the *homo interior*—were, therefore, universal as much as individual. As Caroline Walker Bynum demonstrates, this does not, however, preclude the development of an individual inner self.<sup>16</sup> I suggest that an application of intromission theory to the *homo interior* (and to its corresponding analogue, the *homo exterior*) successfully facilitates the conceptualisation of an individual whose ‘inner self’ or *homo interior* absorbs the external world, producing within itself (as in Bacon’s theories) a sympathetic reflection or multiplication of forms. In theories of extramission, this contact is reversed: the interiority is projected outwards, and the *homo interior* becomes the *homo exterior*. As I have suggested, then, the gaze facilitates contact between the internal and external world, making the innermost externalised and the external internalised.

An example of this kind of exchange may, perhaps, be seen in religious sermons of the period. In sermons relating to visual display through dress, I identify what I perceive to be a unifying line of shared perspective. The female form, as described by Friar Waldeby, is ‘like the chimney-top with garlands, crowns and gems set therein: nevertheless nothing comes forth thence but foul smoke and temptation to lechery.’<sup>17</sup> A clearer example is found in Friar John Bromyard’s description:

In the woman wantonly adorned to capture souls, the garland upon her head is as a single coal or firebrand of Hell to kindle men with that fire; so too the horns of another, so to the bare neck, so the brooch upon the breast, so with all the curious finery of the whole of their body.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For a broader discussion of conceptions of the self in the later Middle Ages, see John F. Benton, ‘Consciousness of Self and Perceptions of Individuality’, in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, with Carol D. Lanham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 263–295.

<sup>16</sup> For a greater discussion of this perspective, as well an account of the medieval divisions of the self into the *anima*, *seipsum* and *homo interior*, see Caroline Walker Bynum, ‘Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31/1 (1980), 1–17.

<sup>17</sup> Sermon of Friar Waldeby, quoted in Gerald Robert Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), p. 392.

<sup>18</sup> Sermon of Dominican John Bromyard, quoted in Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit*, p. 395. It is interesting here to note the level of familiarity with contemporary fashions that Bromyard displays. His speech seems to reference, specifically, the low-cut necklines of the sideless gowns (worn as over-garments and not as revealing as the name might suggest) and the horned headdresses that were all

According to this description of vision, the corruptive female form transmits some quality of itself, through the gaze, to the men who behold it. I see within this evocative description of sight as a contactable, communicative exchange, a reflection of the intromission model that had achieved dominance within this period.<sup>19</sup> I would suggest that Bromyard's (heteronormative) description of sight presents the sexuality of the female form as a tangible, inherent quality that transmits, in an intromissive manner, to the interiority of the male gazer, where it is absorbed and echoed. Just as early atomist proponents of intromission models conceived of the *eidolon* of gazed-upon objects entering the interiority of the gazer's eye to produce sight, similarly, the gazed-upon form appears in Bromyard's account to transmit and enter the interior of the gazer's eye. Sexual desire appears, therefore, as a communicable disease spread invisibly through the power of the gaze, and sexual corruption a danger that befalls the gazer of sexually-desirable forms. In Bromyard's description, simply gazing at a corrupted subject transmits the subject's corruption, intromissively, into the *homo interior* of the observer. It is difficult to determine the appropriate emphasis of the moral issue here. Does the problem lie with the corruptive nature of the gazed-upon object (the female form), or the easily-corrupted nature of the gazer? Does the moral issue, then, as Bromyard and Waldeby seem to suggest, lie with the sexuality emitted by the inherently sexual female form, or with the gazer who interprets these signals as desirable? Some solution may be offered by a Baconian synthesis of ideas, which allows for some small notion of mutual exchange and small amounts of extramission within an intromission theory.<sup>20</sup> According to Bacon's theory of multiplication of species, form 'produces a likeness to itself' and does not change place, instead multiplying through the different parts of the medium.<sup>21</sup> They are, therefore, unified by a correspondence of properties; similarly, in Bromyard's view,

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fashionable during the 1300s. One can only conclude that Bromyard's alarm at the corrupting influence of the female form did not prevent him from observing it in detail.

<sup>19</sup> Lindberg acknowledges that proponents of extramission theories did continue into the later Middle Ages, albeit in vastly reduced numbers; intromission theories instead gained dominance. Lindberg, 'Medieval Optics', pp. 350–351.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion of Bacon's theories as pertain to the reciprocity of vision and of desire, see Biernoff's *Sight and Embodiment*, especially pp. 85–103 and pp. 114–124.

<sup>21</sup> Roger Bacon, *Opus maius*, v.1, dist. 9, chapt. 4, in *A Source Book in Medieval Science*, trans. and ed. by Edward Grant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 394.

the adorned female form is but a 'coal' of the 'fire' kindled within the eye of the male gazer. Therefore, as presented in Bromyard's account, this exchange establishes a correspondence between the gazer and the gazed-upon in which the *homo exterior* of the gazed-upon form is united in its shared properties with the gazer's *homo interior*.

I come now to the central focus of this thesis: the external performance of identity, as played out, through dress, on the surface of the body. It is this interaction that facilitates the formulation, through visibility, of selfhood. Judith Butler's characterisation of gender as a performance positions the 'acts, gestures, and desire' that 'produce the effect of an internal core or substance' on the 'surface of the body'.<sup>22</sup> Molly Martin's subsequent discussion of this aspect of Butler's gender performativity in relation to medieval visual displays of masculinity, such as tournaments, is insightful.<sup>23</sup> I would, however, suggest that a much more literal application is also possible. If it is on the *surface* of the body that expressions of identity are performed, then it is likely the *surface* of the body that is the most easily manipulated to express that performativity. In Butler's locating of gender performativity on the surface of the body, I find a thematic link to medieval notions of selfhood and particularly the distinction between the *homo interior* and *homo exterior*. If *homo interior* represents the 'inner self', then where is its analogous companion, the *homo exterior*, located? According to Lionel J. Friedman, the *homo exterior* is a 'collection of iconographic detail' that is made up of 'speech [...] attributes, of gestures, of clothing, of external marks or signs'.<sup>24</sup> This seems to me find to congruence with Butler's description of gender performativity, the 'acts, gestures, and desire' which take place on the 'surface of the body'.<sup>25</sup> It seems to me, then, that the *homo exterior* is also situated on the surface of the body: the same location for Butler's gender performativity. It is, therefore, the examination of the interaction between *homo interior* and *homo exterior* that makes up the interaction between inner identity and external display. Just as Bacon's theories of sight allow

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<sup>22</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990; rpt. 1999), p. 173.

<sup>23</sup> Martin, *Vision and Gender*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>24</sup> Lionel J. Friedman, 'La Mesnie faux semblant: Homo interior  $\neq$  Homo exterior', *French Forum*, 14/1 (1989), 435–446, at p. 440.

<sup>25</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 173.

for a mutual exchange of intromissive and extramissive rays, I suggest that identity is projected inwards through contact with exteriorities and outwards through contact with the interiority of the self. As the primary means of artificial manipulation of the human form, dress represents the means through which this contact is facilitated, and therefore also constitutes the medium between the *homo interior* (the ‘inner man’) and the *homo exterior* (the ‘exterior man’).

As I have attempted to demonstrate, dress is a visual illustration of inner conceptions of selfhood and represents a public externalisation of the private interiority. This is not, I would suggest, an anachronistic and decontextualised attitude to apply to medieval perspectives. On the contrary, medieval dressers were perhaps more attuned to the communicative possibilities of dress than contemporary dressers are now. Admittedly, this effect was most clearly-seen among the wealthy minority who possessed both the means and the motivation to participate in this elaborate panoply of display. Medieval courtiers were particularly attuned to the significance of dress and highly aware of the opportunities it presented as an assertion of both identity and status. Susan Crane describes them as men and women who ‘understand themselves to be constantly on display, subject to the judgment of others, and continually reinvented in performance.’<sup>26</sup> I find in this description an echo of Lacan’s gazer, who is both watching and watcher, anxiously self-aware of his or own self as a gazed-upon form.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps it is this anxiety that facilitates the development of the medieval courtier’s dress into what Susan Crane identifies as a ‘visual manifesto for its wearer’.<sup>28</sup> Janet Snyder calls this as the ‘language of dress’: a ‘system of immanent signs, communicating subtle messages between contemporary “authors” and “readers”’.<sup>29</sup> Desiree Koslin instead presents a system of ‘sartorial signals’ that ‘conveyed a complex message to the informed viewer’,<sup>30</sup> and E. Jane Burns describes courtly

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<sup>26</sup> Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Lacan, Book XI.

<sup>28</sup> Crane, *The Performance of Self*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Janet Snyder, ‘From Content to Form: Court Clothing in Mid-Twelfth-Century Northern French Sculpture’, in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet Snyder (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 85–102, at p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> Désirée G. Koslin, ‘Value-Added Stuffs and Shifts in Meaning: An Overview and Case Study of Medieval Textile Paradigms’, in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 233–250, at p. 236.



identities that become ‘social bodies forged from both fabric and flesh’.<sup>31</sup> This abundance of assenting critical voices, as well as the theoretical framework that I have just laid out, seem to me to establish beyond doubt that dress was invested with esoteric and public resonance within the medieval period. These visual languages demonstrate to me an earnest desire to control the narrative transmitted within the gaze and to manipulate the asserted projections emitting from the *homo exterior*. It is this public projection of identity that interests me, and that serves as the primary focus of this thesis.

Before I turn to the details of how I bring this approach to literature, it is necessary to first explore further the contemporary aristocratic impetus towards visual display, in order to evoke the context surrounding literary depictions of rich clothing, and to establish what I believe to be an important variation between modern and medieval attitudes towards dress, which has the possibility to unduly colour critical approaches if left unaddressed. The nineteenth-century sociologist Thorstein Veblen described what he perceived to be a female form both ornamented and imprisoned by fashion and a male body largely exempt from the onus of conspicuous consumption through dress.<sup>32</sup> In the following century, Germaine Greer described similarly gendered imperatives towards dress in *The Female Eunuch*.<sup>33</sup> This gendering of visual display in dress continues in the twenty-first century. The artist and transvestite Grayson Perry notes the lack of opportunities for visual display afforded by male clothing.<sup>34</sup> Bright colour ‘is too demonstrative’, he claims, and colour and pattern ‘shriek out’ as feminine.<sup>35</sup> Modern cultural narratives regarding dress and visual display are, therefore, so gendered that it is easy to assume that men occupy ‘naturally’ (and without regard to cultural

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<sup>31</sup> E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 12; see also Adrian Ailes, ‘Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda’, in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), pp. 83–104.

<sup>32</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, ed. by Martha Banta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Paladin, 1971), pp. 57–59.

<sup>34</sup> I occasionally, in this introduction and elsewhere, make mention of ‘male’ and ‘female’ clothing. This is a shorthand to avoid the constant repetition of ‘female-coded’ and ‘male-coded’. Of course, no garment, style, or fashion is inherently masculine or feminine. It is, however, invested with that significance and reinforced by frequent (though not ubiquitous) use – hence the convenient shorthand.

<sup>35</sup> Grayson Perry, *The Descent of Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), p. 58.

context) the role of gazer and women that of gazed-upon. An appraisal of medieval uses of dress demonstrates, however, a different rationale.

Modern methods of conspicuous consumption are gendered in a way that would appear alien to medieval eyes, though our late-medieval counterparts would instantly recognise the practise. I find a medieval analogue to modern conspicuous consumption within the aristocratic principle of *vivre noblement*. This attitude of ‘making one’s resources visible’ appeared through the visible consumption and display of valuable goods, particularly clothing.<sup>36</sup> In accordance with this principle, male aristocrats used dress to communicate their wealth and social status. This was achieved primarily through opulent displays upon their own person, and secondarily with displays upon the person of their wives, children, animals, and other dependants such as retainers and servants.<sup>37</sup> The dressing of these dependants represented a public demonstration of status: hence the fur, silk, and dyed-wool liveries that appeared in servants’ dress of the later medieval period.<sup>38</sup> The clothing of dependents remained a significant but secondary concern for the feudal lord, who positioned himself in the centre of his community’s visual display. The same impetus informs, in medieval literature, the rich apparel of royal envoys Elene and Imayne, and also the dishonour of the impoverished Launfal, who cannot clothe his retainers properly (*SL* 139–141).<sup>39</sup> Conspicuous consumption, manifest through public displays of luxury

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<sup>36</sup> For further details on the principles and enactment of *vivre noblement*, see: Jonathan Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 34; Wim De Clercq, Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers, “‘Vivre Noblement’: Material Culture and Elite Identity in Late Medieval Flanders”, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 38/1 (2007), 1–31.

<sup>37</sup> On the habit of dressing animals in expensive costume, and its significance as a form of status display, see John Block Friedman, ‘Coats, Collars, and Capes: Royal Fashions for Animals in the Early Modern Period’, in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Twelve*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), pp. 61–94.

<sup>38</sup> For a brief overview of this topic, see Benjamin Wild, ‘Livery’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 337–338.

<sup>39</sup> Elene appears in *Lybeaus Desconus* and her rich apparel is described in lines 133–144 of Eve Salisbury and James Weldon’s edition, *Lybeaus Desconus (Lambeth Palace, MS 306)*, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013). Unless otherwise specified, all subsequent references to *Lybeaus Desconus (LD)* will be to this edition and cited by line number. Imayne appears in *Ipomadon*, and an account of her appearance can be found in lines 6454–6465 of Rhiannon Purdie ed., *Ipomadon*, Early English Text Society OS 316 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). All subsequent references to *Ipomadon* will be to this edition unless otherwise specified and cited by line number.

materials and goods, was therefore fundamental to male social status.<sup>40</sup> For this purpose, upper-class men of the late-medieval period encased themselves in restrictive dress resplendent with rich ornamentation and lavish designs that was often of greater ornamentation and value than the garments worn by women of the same class.<sup>41</sup> I believe that it would be wrong, then, to assume that visual display is more commonly associated with female forms, either in contemporary socio-cultural reality, or in their literary textual representations. Rather, enthusiastic engagement with performative visual display through dress is not restricted to one gender. In reflection of these contemporary attitudes, this thesis does not restrict its focus to any one gender in particular. Rather, it recognises that visual display through dress was an important element of medieval aristocratic society and seeks to explore more broadly its significance for both male and female dressers.

To briefly sum up my theoretical understanding informing my approach to my topic: it seems to me that the significance of the gazed-upon performer is inherently interrelated with the communication of identity. This manifests as a desire to manipulate and confound, through the elaborate performative artifice of dress, the gazer's value judgements. In this, medieval and modern gazers and gazed-upon are united, as the act of dressing remains an elaborate form of narrative control. The shape of this narrative is subject to the changes of contemporary influence, with the details of the gazed-upon form (such as fashions, garments) and the needs of the dresser/performer constantly changing. The essential narrative remains to dress is to perform a narrative of identity for the benefit of both the gazer and the gazed-upon. It is this perspective that informs my study of dress in Middle English romance, and I now proceed to clarify my implementation of this focus.

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of the link between male social status and conspicuous consumption, see Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the Market: Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 56–83.

<sup>41</sup> See: Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, translated by Caroline Beamish (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 87.

## *Methodology*

With the theoretical and contemporary context of my topic established, I now proceed to set out my methodological approach. This thesis is a part of a wider conversation regarding the interrelated topics of dress, identity, and the gaze in critical studies of medieval literature and culture. It is necessary, therefore, to begin this discussion with a brief review of the relevant literature in these areas. An early, influential example of gaze theory as applied to medieval literature can be found in Linda Tarte Holley's discussion of narrative and perspective in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, as well as A. C. Spearing's examination of vision in love-narratives.<sup>42</sup> Subsequent scholars working in this area often apply, like Holley, gaze theory to Chaucer.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, like Spearing, they take this lens to issues of love and gender.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps it is this particular emphasis of focus that guides Martin to conclude that 'the gaze has always been inextricably linked with gender'.<sup>45</sup> There are, however, notable works that explore the gaze and medieval literature without also focusing on gender and love. These include Suzanne Conclin Akbari's authoritative study of optics in medieval allegory.<sup>46</sup> Interdisciplinary approaches have also been carried out without the focus on gender.<sup>47</sup> Some of the potential

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<sup>42</sup> Linda Tarte Holley, 'Medieval Optics and the Framed Narrative in Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde"', *The Chaucer Review*, 21/1 (1986), 26–44; Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*.

<sup>43</sup> In addition to Holley's essay, notable examples include: Carolyn Collette, 'Seeing and Believing in the "Franklin's Tale"', *The Chaucer Review*, 26/4 (1992), 395–410; Michelle Kohler, 'Vision, Logic, and the Comic Production of Reality in the "Merchant's Tale" and Two French Fables', *The Chaucer Review*, 39/2 (2004), 137–50.

<sup>44</sup> In addition to Spearing's study, notable examples include: Norman Klassen, *Chaucer on Love, Knowledge and Sight* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995); Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003); Emma Campbell and Robert Mills eds., *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*, The New Middle Ages (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2004); Josephine Bloomfield, 'Aristotelian Luminescence, Thomistic Charity: Vision, Reflection, and Self-Love in "Pearl"', *Studies in Philology*, 108/2 (2011), 165–88.

<sup>45</sup> Martin, *Vision and Gender*, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Akbari, *Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*. Other examples include: Mary M. Paddock, 'Rhetorical Species: A Case Study of Poetic Manifestations of Medieval Visual Culture', *Speculum*, 85/2 (2010), 302–20; Michael J. Huxtable, 'Colour, Seeing, and Seeing Colour in Medieval Literature', PhD thesis (Durham: Durham University, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Notable examples include: Michael Camille, 'Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge, U.K; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 197–223; Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*; Giselle de Nie and Thomas F. X. Noble eds., *Envisioning Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Dynamic Patterns in Texts and Images* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). Biernoff mentions the emphasis on gender in critical discussions of gaze

difficulties in applying decontextualized forms of contemporary visual theories to medieval texts are explored in Suzanne Conclin Akbari's introduction to her book on optical theory and medieval allegory.<sup>48</sup> In agreement with the perspective outlined by Caroline Bynum, she argues for a comparative approach between medieval and modern conceptualizations of the body, particularly in relation to personal identity.<sup>49</sup> My own approach is to situate the gazed-upon and gazer within the contemporary context that informs and surrounds it, which I achieve through close examination of socio-historical-cultural detail that underpins depictions of dress in Middle English romance texts. The resultant aim of this approach is to produce a theoretical perspective that is underpinned and informed by contemporary realities, and to engineer a focus that is 'analogous and proportional', in accordance with the principles underlined by Bynum.<sup>50</sup>

The topic of dress in medieval studies has seen a great increase in interest within recent decades. Chapters on medieval clothing appear in early, wide-ranging studies of British dress: both James Robinson Planché's *History of British Costume* and Doreen Yarwood's *English Costume* include sections on medieval dress.<sup>51</sup> Some detailed studies of medieval dress also appear within this early period: Herbert Norris's *Costume and Fashion* series, originally published in the 1920s and 1930s, has since been reprinted in several new editions; the later medieval material has helpfully been collected in the 1999 edition, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*.<sup>52</sup> The publication in 1931 of Dorothy Hartley's *Mediaeval Costume and Life* was followed by a number of works focused on clothing, such as Joan Evans' 1951 publication,

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theory and medieval texts on pp. 57–59 of her work, concluding that 'the gazes surveyed in this chapter cannot easily be classified according to gender' (p. 58).

<sup>48</sup> Akbari, *Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>49</sup> Caroline Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone, 1991), pp. 244–252.

<sup>50</sup> Caroline Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective', *Critical Inquiry*, 22/1 (1995), 1–33, at p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> James Robinson Planché, *The History of British Costume* (London: Charles Knight, 1834); Doreen Yarwood, *English Costume: From the Second Century B. C. to 1952, With Introductory Chapters of the Ancient Civilisations* (London: Batsford, 1952).

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion* (London: J. M. Dent, 1927; rpt. New York, NY: Dover, 1999).

*Dress in Medieval France*.<sup>53</sup> Detailed studies of textiles and clothing have also been carried out.<sup>54</sup> The topic has gained in prominence during recent years; modern versions of these sorts of close studies are found in the work of Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, Sarah-Grace Heller and Margaret Scott.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, essay collections, such as Catharine Richardson's *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650*, also examine clothing and material culture in medieval and early modern periods.<sup>56</sup> Gale Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward's *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles* provides an enormous depository of wide-ranging information.<sup>57</sup> The *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* series, edited by Robin Netherton and Gale Owen-Crocker, is currently up to its fourteenth volume, while organisations such as *The Medieval Dress and Textiles Society* promote scholarly interest in this area.<sup>58</sup> Historical research into material culture often draws on many disciplines, including art history as well as literature and material culture.<sup>59</sup> These resources present a rich source for sociocultural-historical analyses of literary depictions of clothing.

Critical attention to the subject of dress in medieval literature has also seen significant development over the last few decades. Some early examples, such as Harvey Eagleson's 1932 essay, position dress as meriting extensive and self-sustained literary analysis.<sup>60</sup> Eagleson's 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances' examines what dress might tell us about

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<sup>53</sup> Dorothy Hartley, *Mediaeval Costume and Life: A Review of their Social Aspects Arranged Under Various Classes and Workers with Instructions for Making Numerous Types of Dress* (London: Batsford, 1931); Joan Evans, *Dress in Medieval France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952).

<sup>54</sup> See: N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting, *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus Wilson* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982; Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard and Kay Staniand, *Textiles and Clothing 1150–1450* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992; rpt. 2001).

<sup>55</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*; Sarah-Grace Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007); Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion* (London: British Library, 2007); Margaret Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Catherine Richardson ed., *Clothing Culture 1350–1650* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>57</sup> Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward eds., *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450–1450* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012).

<sup>58</sup> Robin Netherton and Gale Owen-Crocker, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Fourteen* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018); *The Medieval Dress and Textiles Society*, last accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 <<http://medats.org.uk/>>.

<sup>59</sup> Recent examples include: Anne H. van Buren ed., with the assistance of Roger S. Wieck, *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325–1515* (London: Giles, 2011); Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring eds., *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Harvey Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', *PMLA*, 47/2 (1932), 339–345.

the romance form, and he draws on socio-cultural-historical material to date texts through their use of precise dress-related instances. My thesis utilises and expands upon this approach, in so far as it also draws on socio-cultural-historical detail to explore the romance form. It diverges from Eagleson's approach (and later critics with similar approaches, such as Purdie's edition of *Ipomadon* and Laura Hodges' work Chaucer), however, with its focus on identity and visual display. Like Jane Bliss' *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance*, it seeks to examine identity within the genre. My approach varies, however, in so far as I utilise specific historical-cultural material to inform my analysis. It is informed by the work of the many scholars who have centred gender in their analysis of clothing, dress, and the body in medieval texts, though it diverges from these foci.

It was traditionally rarer to find dress as the central focus of critical discussion. Instead, dress in romance was often touched on tangentially as part of a wider focus, or else in very specific terms, such as Gawain's green girdle, the pentangle on his costume, and Emaré's magnificent robe.<sup>61</sup> Dress in romance often relates to studies of identity or disguising, as in the work of Jane Bliss.<sup>62</sup> Texts like the cross-dressing *Le Roman de Silence* have also achieved a great deal of attention because of their unusual use of clothing, and much of the subsequent critical discussion of dress has been through the lens of gender. The advent of feminist criticism has accelerated interest in this area, and critical analysis of dress in literary studies in many respects develops from feminist discussions of the textual representation of the body. Scholarship on dress in medieval studies holds itself slightly apart from fashion theory: work that looks at clothing through the lens of gender is as likely to engage with Barthes, Butler and Foucault as that of any other discipline.<sup>63</sup> It is, however, less likely to engage with the work of

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<sup>61</sup> For more scholarly perspectives on Emaré's robe, see chapter two, 'Emaré'. For a detailed analysis of clothing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, see: 'The Gawain-Poet: Fashioning Penance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' in Nicole D. Smith, *Sartorial Strategies: Outfitting Aristocrats and Fashioning Conduct in Late Medieval Literature* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2012), pp. 95–136.

<sup>62</sup> Jane Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008)

<sup>63</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990).

fashion theorists such as Georg Simmel<sup>64</sup> or Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>65</sup> Increasingly, literary research underpins thematic analyses with a strong understanding of garments as objects, often through the contextualisation of dress with historical and cultural detail.

The persistent attention of scholars such as E. Jane Burns has helped to bring new interest to the area, and a chronological ordering of her major works reflects the development of a subject that is establishing and refining itself by degrees: 1993's *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* is followed by 2005's *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* and, in 2009, *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature*.<sup>66</sup> Burns' influential position was recently reflected with the publication of a collection of essays. *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns* demonstrates the position clothing now holds within the field of gender studies; reflecting the tone of contemporary medieval clothing studies, the collection is interdisciplinary.<sup>67</sup> Essays range from 'traditional' explorations of gender in literature, to work on material culture, to the characteristic mix of literary analysis and sociocultural detail that Burns helped establish. Burns' work embodies the tone taken subsequently by much of the critical discussion in this field: broadly feminist, it is interested in interdisciplinarity, and is informed by a strong understanding of material culture. Increasingly, the lines between material cultures and literary studies are blurred, with collections including a variety of perspectives from several disciplines. Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder's 2003 collection, *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images* represents an

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<sup>64</sup> A select bibliography of Simmel's work on fashion: Georg Simmel, 'Zur Psychologie der Mode', *Wiener Wochenschrift für Politik, Volkswirtschaft, Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 54/5 (1895), 22–24; *Philosophie des Geldes* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1900; 2nd edn 1907); 'Fashion', *International Quarterly* 10 (1904), 130–155.

<sup>65</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).

<sup>66</sup> E. J. Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Laine E. Doggett and Daniel E. O'Sullivan eds., *Founding Feminisms in Medieval Studies: Essays in Honor of E. Jane Burns* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016).



early example of the growing interest in this area.<sup>68</sup> The field has, within the last few decades, expanded significantly; wider studies on the topic of clothing have been carried out in the area of French romance as well as the literature of Chaucer. Burns' *Sea of Silk: A Textile Geography of Women's Work in Medieval French Literature* focuses on French romance, while Laura Hodges explores extensively the topic of clothing in Chaucer.<sup>69</sup> Amanda Hopkins analyses clothing in some Middle English romance in relation to the erotic in her essay "'Wordy vnthur wede": Clothing, Nakedness and the Erotic in some Romances of Medieval Britain'.<sup>70</sup> A relatively early examination of clothing in literature comes in Raymond van Uytven's 1983 essay, 'Cloth in Medieval Literature of Western Europe', in which the author surveys cloth in a large number of primarily French and German texts, though he briefly also looks at the work of Lydgate and Gower.<sup>71</sup> More recently, other scholars in the field bring expertise from interdisciplinary backgrounds; Sarah-Grace Heller looks at dress through culture in *Fashion in Medieval France* and *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion: Volume 2: The Medieval Age*.<sup>72</sup> Nicole D. Smith looks at clothing in a range of texts.<sup>73</sup> Louise M. Sylvester, Mark C. Chambers, Gale R. Owen-Crocker's *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook* provides a useful collection for further research.<sup>74</sup> The publication, in 2015, of the essay collection *Medieval Romance and Material Culture* reflects the more centralised position the topic of dress now occupies in medieval literary studies.<sup>75</sup> Up to the present, however, a wide-

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<sup>68</sup> Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder eds., *Entering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> Laura Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume: The Secular Pilgrims in the General Prologue* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000); *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005); *Chaucer and Array: Patterns of Costume and Fabric Rhetoric in The Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde and Other Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Amanda Hopkins, "'Wordy vnthur wede": Clothing, Nakedness and the Erotic in some Romances of Medieval Britain', in *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 53–70.

<sup>71</sup> Raymond van Uytven, 'Cloth in Medieval Literature of Western Europe', in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson*, ed. by N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1983), pp. 151–183.

<sup>72</sup> Sarah-Grace Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007); ed., *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

<sup>73</sup> Smith, *Sartorial Strategies*.

<sup>74</sup> Louise M. Sylvester, Mark C. Chambers, Gale R. Owen-Crocker eds., *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> Nicholas Perkins ed., *Medieval Romance and Material Culture* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

ranging analysis of dress in Middle English romance has not been the primary focus of an extended work. It is, then, to these diverse areas that my own work seeks to contribute by presenting an extended study of dress, identity and the gaze in Middle English romance.

Having established the relevant critical context surrounding the area of my study, I now proceed to set out my methodological approach. This thesis represents a study of dress, gaze and identity in Middle English romance. It is arranged around a series linked motifs and explores the use of dress in the Fair Unknown texts, in the Middle English Breton *lais*, and in the northern Gawain romances. In order to ground more fully medieval texts in their own historical contexts, the thesis' discussion of clothing in English romance is prefaced with an introductory sociocultural section detailing contemporary dress in the British Isles of the later Middle Ages. The subsequent chapters present a text-based examination that draws also from the field of material culture. Texts are arranged in a broadly chronological order. The first chapter focuses on Fair Unknown texts dating roughly from the early to late fourteenth century; the second looks at four Middle English Breton *lais* dating from the late fourteenth century; the third and final chapter examines some northern Gawain romances dating from the late fifteenth to early sixteen centuries and beyond. I have chosen my texts carefully and deliberately with a view to presenting the most interesting and relevant representative examples within a subset (Middle English) of a genre (romance). Of course, not all Middle English romances engage with the topic of dress, and not all of those that do, do so substantially. For this reason, I have avoided discussing many texts that present only cursory or absent instances of clothing. I have limited my discussion to a number of texts linked by common motifs. Some texts presented here for analysis had more interesting or expansive details of clothing, and this thematic emphasis underpins the ways in which the texts are related. Similarly, for reasons of space and relevance, this thesis is not designed to provide an exhaustive study of all genres and motifs linked to Middle English romance. Instead, it explores representative examples of the Fair Unknown texts, the Breton *lais*, and the Northern Gawain romances to the exclusion of other potentially interesting instances of dress, such as those found in the prose romances. These texts have been

selected on the basis of interest, arguing that all selected examples utilise dress in a significant or noteworthy way. With this approach, I hope to present a survey of identity and dress in medieval romance that is broad enough to be representative, but not too broad to be lacking in specificity and depth. It is, of course, impossible to compile a detailed compendium on clothing in Middle English romance in a single doctoral thesis. Instead, this thesis presents a close analysis of representative cases, arranged around a series of connected motifs, that provides insight into the romance form but does not preclude further development or study of this area. These texts, arranged roughly in chronological order, are chosen to coincide with the specific historical period that saw a rapid and specific development of fashions and styles of England.<sup>76</sup> They have been deliberately selected as what I perceive to be examples of the literary evocation of this period. The selection of these particular texts, therefore, facilitates my contextual approach by enabling me to include the socio-cultural-historical detail that informs my analysis of romance. Additionally, these choices have been made with reference to the limitations of space as well as their suitability regarding thematic, literary and contextual connections. It is not possible, in a study of this size, to include every notable grouping within Middle English romance, while also preserving what I see as a desirable depth of focus. For these necessary reasons, other groupings, such as the prose romances, have been excluded. These, of course, also have their own conventions and, as tightly-linked texts, work in a different fashion to the texts studied here, though they would, however, prove an interesting subject for further research into this topic. My choice of critical editions has similarly been both wide-ranging and selective. This study draws on the scholarly details of the Early English Text Society editions. However, for ease of reference, quotations are drawn from the more recent Middle English Texts Series, supplemented by material from Early English Text Society editions. I now proceed to outline the reasoning underlying specific textual selections.

The texts chosen as representative examples of the Fair Unknown grouping are *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Perceval of Galles* and *Ipomadon*. These texts were chosen because of their tight

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<sup>76</sup> For a full account of this period, see the Culture and Clothing section of this introduction.

thematic and narrative links and what I perceive to be their interesting and noteworthy use of dress. I am interested in examining the significance underlying what I perceived to be Gingalain and Perceval's preoccupation with the getting and wearing of armour. As a slightly more unusual reworking of the Fair Unknown motif, I believe that *Ipomadon* functions as an interesting contrast to these two texts. *Ipomadon*'s lack of interest in chivalric armour, and its later development into a preoccupation with elaborate performances of chivalric identities through deliberate manipulations of courtly dress, reveals what I perceive to be a more complex and conflicted exploration of chivalric identities than those depicted in the other Fair Unknown texts chosen for this study. The first chapter is, therefore, an exploration of the Fair Unknown grouping in which *Lybeaus Desconus*, as the chapter's first text, plays the motif straight. The second text, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, demonstrates what I perceive to be a subversion of the motif through comedy. The third, *Ipomadon*, deviates still further, representing, in my view, a deliberate and self-referential reworking of the motif's tropes and providing a meditation on courtly values. Perceval and Gingalain struggle to gain the chivalric armour that represents their inclusion within the chivalric community, while *Ipomadon* instead deliberately manipulates the significance of his own appearance. Taken together, my examination of *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Perceval of Galles*, and *Ipomadon* is designed to illustrate the range of attitudes towards and usage of dress within the Fair Unknown grouping.

The texts chosen as representative examples of the Breton *lai* are *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, *Emaré*, *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo*. This slightly wider range of texts hopes to illustrate the variety of dress in the Breton *lai*. Two of its texts are representative examples of the Crescentia cycle, and as such, focus on female characters; the other two are male-focused. This balance is designed to provide an illustration of the thematic and textual variety present in the Breton *lai*'s presentation of dress and identity. I designed this chapter, therefore, to present two contrasting views of identity in the Breton *lai*: I examine first the Constance narrative, which I argue presents, through clothing, female identities as unchanging and immutable. I then contrast this with *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo*, which, I believe, present a more transient view of male

identity. *Emaré* contains one of the most notable examples of clothing in Middle English romance; despite its popularity within scholarship, an examination of clothing in the Breton *lais* does not feel complete without some discussion of this text. In order to provide a more original contribution to scholarship, this text is paired with its analogue, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, to provide a comparative analysis of the depiction of dress and visual display within the two texts. *Le Bone Florence of Rome* is chosen for what I believe to be its notable and interesting examples of dress, which appear to me to be represent a constantly-returning motif that indicates the wearer's unchanging inner identity. *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo* illustrate the opposite, and both texts have been selected due to their interesting use of clothing. Many critics have remarked upon *Sir Launfal's* evocative depictions of material wealth, among which number extensive descriptions of fine clothing. What existing scholarship predominantly fails to do, however, is to center these descriptions of fine clothing in reference to the wearer's inner identity, which is the focus of this thesis' chapter here. *Sir Orfeo* likewise demonstrates an interesting use of dress: I find that specific mentions encircle the character's departure from and return to the court, illustrating what I believe to be, the character's inner progression of identity. These texts represent, then, carefully-chosen elements of my comparative approach. Taken together, my exploration of these texts is designed to function as representative examples illustrating the variety of depictions and usages of dress and visual display in the Breton *lais*.

The texts chosen as representative examples of the northern Gawain romances are *The Awntyrs of Arthur*, *The Knightly Tale of Sir Golagros and Gawain*, and *The Greene Knight* (with some shorter, comparative reference made to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). These less studied romances include what I believe to be some of the most evocative, exciting and interesting examples of dress in Middle English romance. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* has, of course, been widely discussed by critics, and for this reason I keep my main analytical focus on its less widely-known analogue, *The Greene Knight*, which presents a very similar narrative—if not quite thematic—approach. *The Awntyrs of Arthur* and *Golagros and Gawain* merit their position in this study due to their extensive, expansive and beautifully-evoked

depictions of dress, in which a wealth of descriptive detail appears. I enjoy bringing a real contextual emphasis to my analysis of these texts, which afford so many opportunities to do so: my comparative study, for instance, of gem lore in relation to *The Awntyrs of Arthur* provides what I feel is a fresh and interesting new illumination of the characters, such as Guinevere, upon whose person many of these fine gems can be found, and upon whom much of the critical discussion has previously focused. I selected these texts also due to their shared thematic and textual values. *The Awntyrs of Arthur* and *Sir Golagros and Gawain* share a diptych structure and are frequent companions in scholarship. I believe that, like *The Green Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Awntyrs of Arthur* and *Golagros and Gawain* are both concerned with the proper enactment of chivalric values. These texts then invite comparison. Taken together, my study of these texts is designed to illustrate the variety of presentations and usages of dress in the northern Gawain romances.

Having provided a rationale for the textual selections made, I can now proceed to establish my reasoning underlying my choice of topic. I believe Middle English romance merits a thorough and sustained survey of this kind because of several reasons, which I now proceed to outline. The first (and arguably most important) of these is that the texts invite questioning along these lines. Dress in medieval romance, and particularly in Middle English romance, is characterised by the repeating motif of extended passages of ornamented, opulent, and often rather beautiful descriptions. These descriptions often extend to several stanzas and display specific and evocative terminology drawn from contemporary fashion. This suggests to me these extended descriptions do not function (as was sometimes suggested in early scholarship) merely as formulaic ornamental deviations from the central narrative and thematic action. Although descriptions of clothing do enliven and add interest to the text, as well as render more clearly the splendid and often nostalgically-presented chivalric topos of romance, this does not preclude the existence of meaningful significance. These descriptions are not ubiquitous within romance, but frequent enough to present a theme. I am, therefore, curious to examine what the presence of such passages could indicate. I am aware of the significance of clothing in terms of

identity and self-fashioning in a modern context, and I am interested in whether this conceptualisation of identity through clothing might apply also in the medieval period. Romance, however, with its beautiful textual ornamentation and detailed descriptive passages, seemed to invite questions more suited along these lines, as lavish descriptions of clothing are characteristic of the romance form. It is in romance, more than any other genre that medieval elites appear, and, where medieval elites appear, so too does their clothing. Chivalric romance, with its emphasis on courtly life and frequent vested interest in establishing a superlatively excellent, often Arthurian, past, provides a natural venue for these detailed descriptions of opulent clothing. Within medieval literature, it is through the ornamented richness of these descriptions that aspects of self-fashioning through clothing become more pronounced. Though the wearing of clothing by any person, of any social class, represents a deliberate act of self-fashioning, the medieval period furnishes the knightly elite with an assortment of materials with which to construct detailed and complex statements of self.

The second reason that I believe dress in Middle English romance merits an extensive and detailed study of this kind pertains to scholarship and what I perceive to be a gap in the contemporary critical landscape. At the time in which I began this project, the topic of clothing in French romance had seen a substantial amount of attention and English romance had not. Since then, there has been an increase of interest relating to the topic of clothing in English romance. I would suggest that this reflects the general tendency of medieval scholarship to turn first to French and second to English romance, rather than any comment on the English texts' quality or interest. As I previously described in the literature review introducing this discussion of my methodology, there has not to date been an in-depth and widescale exploration of dress in Middle English romance. As I have just attempted to illustrate, this area does seem to merit this approach. There is no reason, therefore, not to fill this gap, which my study seeks to do.

The third reason that Middle English romance merits an in-depth study relates to contextual aspects of contemporary history. The composition of the English romances of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and occasionally sixteenth centuries coincides with the rapid development

of styles, fashions, and fabrics that is sometimes referred to in scholarship as the ‘birth’ of fashion. I am not entirely convinced as to the applicability of this phrase, as fashion has always, to an extent, existed, if not in the western Europe of the early medieval period then certainly in Byzantium, Imperial China, and in the early civilisations of Greece, Rome, and Egypt.<sup>77</sup> These arguments are usually made along the lines that the European later Middle Ages represent the period which first saw the birth of consumer culture, during which clothing production was centralised and dress preferences were rapidly changing, widely disseminated, and subject to the general imitation of the elite by the poor.<sup>78</sup> Moving on from the applicability issue regarding this term, it is indeed the case that the fourteenth to sixteenth century represented a period of new developments relating to clothing and fashion. During this period, the stabilisation of new dyes led to the widespread wearing, for the first time in Europe, of colours such as blue and green, and advancements in manufacturing techniques lead to new fabrics, such as velvet a little earlier. Similarly, the solidification of production and trade routes throughout Europe and on into the silk road lead to a greater availability, for more of the populace, of textiles and materials than ever before.<sup>79</sup> If not quite a fashion birth, this period was certainly a fashion renaissance. These new developments contextualise later medieval texts, infusing them with the contemporary excitement surrounding dress. Perhaps for these reasons, the descriptions of clothing present in the French texts are often expanded upon and enlarged by English writers: the elegant simplicity of *Lanval’s* fairies is developed into the rich opulence of *Sir Launfal’s* fairies.<sup>80</sup> Later English adaptations of earlier French romances bring the texts, forcibly, into this new age of sartorial splendour: Ipomadon’s unfashionable *bliaut* is replaced in the English text with a modern doublet of the newly-invented velvet.<sup>81</sup> This is not to suggest that the English texts’ presentation of clothing is more worthy of interest than that of the French texts; quantity

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<sup>77</sup> For a corresponding view, see Sarah-Grace Heller, ‘The Birth of Fashion’, in *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*, ed. by Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeil (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), pp. 25–39.

<sup>78</sup> Critical views supporting this characterisation can be found in the following: Samuel Adshead, *Material Culture in Europe and China, 1400–1800: The Rise of Consumerism* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997); Blanc, ‘The Invention of Fashion in the Fourteenth Century’; Stuard also takes this view in *Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy*.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter one, ‘Fashion and Style’.

<sup>80</sup> See chapter three, ‘*Sir Launfal*’.

<sup>81</sup> See chapter two, ‘*Ipomadon*’.



does not always equal quality, and some of these later descriptions of clothing can be mechanical in their verbosity. Their vast catalogue of materials and fabrics, furs and fashions, accoutrements and styles, do, however, provide a rich seam for those interested in material culture and its presentation in literature. For these reasons, I have focused my study of romance on English texts, with reference to French texts made only in comparison to the former. These instances are selective, rather than extended, as my focus here is to discuss identity and self-fashioning in Middle English literature, and not to present a detailed comparison of clothing within English and French texts. When appropriate, I do, however, signal significant variations between sources. It is these reasons, then, that inform and support my choice of topic and thematic focus.

With the reasoning behind my textual focus now established, I proceed to outline my use of terminology within this study. Some complexities are reflected in the issue of language pertaining to this topic. Early criticism on this subject often refers to ‘costume’, while ‘dress’ becomes a more popular term during the middle period of this arc in scholarship. It is only very recently that this topic has begun to be codified as ‘fashion’, and rarer still that it is referred to as ‘clothing’. These terms are, in my view, slightly unwieldy. ‘Costume’ is a little old-fashioned and retains a performative element that is relevant to my focus but generally out of place in other critical works on topics other than identity. ‘Costume’ introduces artificial and performative elements which undermine the historical context that underpins these literary representations of contemporary dress. This confusion is particularly pronounced in historical scholarship: the medieval man or woman did not wear a costume any more or less than the modern man or woman wears a costume (that is to say, quite a lot, but not perhaps in the way that it is intended). Another alternative, ‘fashion’, is a specific term that pertains to cultural, economic, and historical changes, and should not, therefore, be broadly used as a synonym for clothing articles. ‘Clothing’ is restricted in the fact that it relates specifically to garments worn upon the body and thereby excludes other forms of display, such as the styling of hair. It also at times creates confusion when applied to items, such as armour, that are not fashioned out of

textiles but are worn upon the body. It seems to me, therefore, that ‘dress’ is the least problematic of these three terms. It is the term preferred by Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher for studies of this sort, and I have used it throughout this thesis when other terms are not more appropriate.<sup>82</sup> This term allows for a more nuanced discussion of performativity and identity in relation to appearance. The act of dressing (and of ‘dressing up’) incorporates a number of styles, fashions and garments that are not limited to articles of clothing worn upon the body. ‘Dress’ does not exclude modifications of the body and manipulations of general appearance, as well as the wearing of jewellery, accoutrements, and other non-clothing related articles. For these reasons, I find it the most applicable term for discussing the wide-ranging descriptions of appearance that appear within medieval romance.

I use this term also because I avoid making a division (beyond what is reasonable) between the textile-based garments predominantly worn by women and the armoured dress predominantly worn by men. The distinction between militaristic male armour and soft female clothing is also not as binary as it may first appear; even in the chivalric romances, male characters often appear in fine tunics as well as fine armour. Armour, like any other object of dress, represents a deliberate self-fashioning of presentation, and as such, provides illuminating material for my focus here. It is tempting to extend this consideration of self-fashioning beyond clothing; after all, where does the presentation of self truly end? Castles, towers, even horses, also represent physical means through which the chivalric elite visually fashion their identity. I have, however, predominantly restricted my gaze to objects worn upon the body and fashioned deliberately for that purpose, with brief reference to some articles not worn but included in the general survey of clothing and appearance (such as ornamented saddles). My gaze has also, on one or two occasions, extended to soft furnishings such as tapestries, bed-spreads, and bed-linens; these references are often, as in the case of *Sir Orfeo*, paired with fabrics worn upon the body and interwoven with the text’s presentation of chivalric identity. On a couple of notable

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher, ‘Dress and Identity’, in *Dress and Identity*, ed. by Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson (New York, NY: Fairchild Publications, 1995), pp. 7–18, at p. 9.

occasions, I have also examined the dress of horses. Ipomadon's merry parade and Galeron's pseudo-unicorn both represent substantial examples of self-presentation before hostile courts and, as such, are as relevant to the topic as Tryamour's 'purpere palle' (*SL* 943).

With the details of my theoretical perspective, topic, texts and terminological approach now established, I proceed to justify my contextual approach to medieval romance. The relationship between medieval literature and contemporary reality is, in my view, a symbiotic one. This is arguably true in many areas, but as I now demonstrate, particularly in relation to dress. Literary accounts are made in imitation of contemporary dress. Contemporary dress also takes inspiration from fictitious accounts of clothing, as each tries to outdo the other in splendour. Towards the end of the Hundred Years' War, heavily ornamented armour and lances became commonplace; knights participated in tournaments with lances decorated as shepherds' crooks, teardrops, and other designs.<sup>83</sup> These articles are suggestive of the more fantastical designs of knightly dress appearing in contemporary chivalric literature, such as Galeron's ornamented horse-as-unicorn in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*.<sup>84</sup> The precise nature of the relationship between these fantastical historical objects and their literary counterparts is difficult immediately to define. Certainly, they were symbiotic and there was a large appetite for both watching and reading about this opulent clothing. The medieval public were keenly interested in dress; in the written accounts of these tournaments, descriptions of the combatants' and ball attendees' fine clothing are often longer and rendered in greater detail than that of the contests and results.<sup>85</sup> Evidently, medieval men and women were interested in hearing about fine clothing. These contemporary attitudes contextualise and create the detailed, lavish descriptions of clothing appearing in romance. The lengthy descriptions of clothing in romance, with their slightly dislocated appearance and large appropriation of stanzas, now appear to be left

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<sup>83</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 74.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), at line 388. All subsequent references to *The Awntyrs off Arthur* (*AOA*) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>85</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 74.

deliberately long; perhaps such accounts were in part a major appeal of engaging with this type of literature.

More evidence of the interrelated nature of Middle English romance and medieval dress is apparent in Chaucer's satirising of the romance form. By the fourteenth century, fine dress is so integral to the romance form that it plays a prominent role in Chaucer's pastiche of the genre. Dress in *Sir Thopas* is constructed in clear imitation of the romance form: the text's garments and accoutrements are opulent; precise accounts of material and origin are provided; the description itself is protracted, extensive, misaligned with the central narrative and thematic action, and occupies several stanzas. Frequent tropes appear, such as the arming ritual, shining imagery of light and recurring stock phrases (Thopas is, like Sir Perceval—and many others—'So worly under wede' *ST* 916). The initial instance of description is, as is conventional, in Thopas' introduction, and accompanied by a general description of his appearance and his general courtly virtues and abilities:

Sir Thopas wax a doghty swayn;  
Whit was his face as payndemayn, [fine white bread]  
His lippes rede as rose;  
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,  
And I yow telle in good certayn,  
He hadde a semely nose.

His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun,  
That to his girdel raughte adoun;  
His shoon of cordewane. [Cordovan leather]  
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,  
His robe was of syklatoun,  
That coste many a jane.<sup>86</sup>

Attentive adherence to convention is subverted for comic effect; Chaucer dresses Thopas in a robe of 'syklatoun', and this detail occupies the position in which a rich material would typically be placed.<sup>87</sup> The use of colour, too, is formulaic, though the colour itself is not; the

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<sup>86</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *Sir Thopas*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, third edition, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), at lines 724–735. All subsequent references to *Sir Thopas* (*ST*) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>87</sup> For a detailed examination of clothing in this passage as well as others in Chaucer, see Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Array: Patterns of Costume and Fabric Rhetoric in The Canterbury Tales, Troilus and Criseyde and Other Works* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), as well as Craig E. Bertolet, *Chaucer*,

brown hose that possibly imitates the golden-brown of the topaz contrasts with the bold, bright colours that were preferred by medieval elites in literature and in life. Here, the juxtaposition between convention and variation creates comedy from bathetic humour. An arming scene also occurs, in which extended details of armour appear. The sheer length of the passage and the level of minute detail that appears, extends to ludicrous proportions the arming scene:

He dide next his white leere	[flesh]
Of cloth of lake fyn and cleere,	[fine linen]
A breech and eek a sherte;	
And next his sherte an aketoun,	[quilted jacket]
And over that an haubergeoun	
For percynge of his herte;	

And over that a fyn hawberk,  
 Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,  
 Ful strong it was of plate;  
 And over that his cote-armour  
 As whit as is a lilye flour,  
 In which he wold debate.

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,  
 And therine was a bores heed,  
 A charbocle bisyde;  
 And there he swoor on ale and breed  
 How that the geaunt shal be deed,  
 Bityde what bityde!

His jambeaux were of quyrbouilly,	[greaves, of hardened leather]
His swerdes shethe of yvory,	
His helm of latoun bright;	
His sadel was of rewel boon,	[ivory]
His brydel as the sone shoon,	
Or as the moone light.	

His spere was of fyn cipress,  
 That bodeth werre, and nothyng pees,  
 The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;  
 His steede was al dappull gray,  
 It gooth an ambil in the way  
 Ful softely and rounde  
 In lond.

(*ST* 857–2077)

The formulaic praising of these material objects is transformed by Chaucer from a rich catalogue of materials and wealth to a bathetic juxtaposition of high ideals and bourgeois materiality. The objects are, by turns, more and more ridiculous, and more and more detailed in

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*Gower, Hoccleve and the Commercial Practices of Late Fourteenth-Century London* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

their verbosity. The formulaic comparisons to light and shining appear, though here Chaucer adds, meditatively, that they also shine like the sun or like the moon. The relentless catalogue only ends with the narrator's exhausted interjection; still, he threatens to keep going:

Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit!  
If ye wold any moor of it,  
To telle it wol I fonde. (ST 2078–2080)

By the fourteenth century, the conventions regarding dress in romance are well-established enough to be satirised by Chaucer; the over-worked motifs provide rich material for his mocking eye. The sheer length of his focus on dress, and the detailed references he makes within *Sir Thopas* to clothing, demonstrate the significant role dress occupies within the romance form. It appears, to Chaucer, as a fundamental—though perhaps not desirable—characteristic of the genre: to satirise romance is to satirise also its presentation of dress.

In conclusion, then, I believe that sartorial and visual display within Middle English romance represents a reflection of contemporary medieval sensibilities regarding dress. Literary depictions of medieval clothing reflect contemporary realities, constructing ensembles that are sometimes exaggerated through exotic, hyperbolic or unnatural elements. Though Sir Galeron's horse is transformed, through dress, into a unicorn, he appears before the Arthurian court in a military ensemble reflecting contemporary fashions (AOA 388). These texts do not, however, always provide specific sartorial evidence of contemporary fashions. Interpreting with precision the depictions of clothing within romance is made difficult by the vast vocabulary used in conjunction with garments and clothing.<sup>88</sup> Though recent projects such as the *Lexis of Cloth and Clothing* project have simplified the taxonomical issue, some challenges remain.<sup>89</sup> A great number of names of items are used within the medieval period in conjunction with everyday

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<sup>88</sup> Mark Chambers and Louise Sylvester, 'Lexicological Confusion and Medieval Clothing Culture: Redressing Medieval Dress with the Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain Project', in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, ed. by Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 71–84.

<sup>89</sup> *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project*, Manchester University  
<<http://lexisproject.arts.manchester.ac.uk/>>.

garments.<sup>90</sup> Certain garments, such as the *cotehardie*, represent specific garments or fashions; other terms such as the *gide* are more generalised. The large volume of clothing worn and the numerous terms—sometimes regional in nature—used to define garments presents an additional challenge in identifying and interpreting with precision the literary representations of contemporary clothing. Despite these challenges, it is possible to contextualise literary representations of clothing within contemporary material cultures, though, as Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder acknowledge, ‘we can probably never reconcile the medieval images of idealized dress, body, gesture, brilliance of color and pattern with any “accurate” idea of the medieval reality’.<sup>91</sup>

In medieval literature, dress is central in providing a means through which the visual presentation of the self takes place. Clothing does not just represent a set of visual signs and symbols present for the onlooker; it also represents an external confirmation of inner identity. At the most extreme level, this results in visual languages such as heraldry and the rich symbolism of colour in the medieval period. Like modern dressers, medieval elites utilised clothing to send a set of signs and signals to their external environment; the same is true for literary depictions of medieval elites. This study demonstrates that clothing is used to illuminate issues of identity and self-fashioning in romance in ways that are comparable to those in contemporary elites. From the Fair Unknown’s deliberate appropriation of knightly armour, to the wealthy garments of courtly ladies in the Breton *lai*, to the fine opulence of the Arthurian court in the Northern Gawain romances; each instance of clothing provides a mechanism through which the dresser fashions, deliberately and performatively, their own identity. This underpins a broad exploration of dress that facilitates a close examination of self-fashioning in romance. Throughout this thesis, I have focused on texts that make substantial and significance use of dress. This leads naturally to the many-coloured armour of the Fair Unknown; to the

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<sup>90</sup> Robin Netherton, ‘The Tippet: Accessory after the Fact?’, in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume One*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 115–132, at p. 116.

<sup>91</sup> Koslin and Snyder, ‘Introduction’, in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, p. 1.

elaborate garments worn by the Constance figure; to the elaborate riches worn by the Arthurian company in the Gawain romances. It becomes apparent how closely these articles are linked with identity. Like their historical counterparts, elites in medieval literature consciously perform and self-fashion identity through dress.

### *Culture and Clothing in Late-Medieval England*

I now proceed to establish the contemporary details of dress and clothing in England during the later Middle Ages in order to more fully evoke the context that surrounds and informs depictions of dress in Middle English romance texts. Due to constraints of space, I focus on three main areas that together provide insight into the major influential factors affecting dress in later medieval England. These are: an overview of the broad changes in fashion and style in the period from 1100 AD to 1500 AD; a discussion of colour symbolism, including an account of medieval gemlore; and the legal statutes and lasting influence of the sumptuary laws. Other significant areas of medieval dress, such as armour and heraldry, are covered in great depth in numerous other publications and I do not, therefore, discuss them here.

In the later Middle Ages, European dress displayed regional variation between countries and a north-south divide; differences were, to a lesser extent, affected by climate and to, a greater extent, textile production and dissemination. After the Norman Conquest, English and French styles and fashions began to move along similar lines; clothing styles were transmitted through trade, conquest and immigration.<sup>92</sup> An individual's clothing was determined by a series of factors: class and gender most predominantly, with other considerations such as religion and profession secondary significant determining factors. Even without the enforced regulation of sumptuary laws, fashion was class-based; the arrival of foreign queens often instigated a change

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<sup>92</sup> For an overview of textile production and trade routes, see Donald King, 'Currents of Trade: Industries, Merchants and Money', in *The Flowering of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joan Evans (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966; rpt. 1998), pp. 199–230.



in the domestic courts' fashion.<sup>93</sup> Fashion was not, however, particularly focused on women. Accounts demonstrate that men spent more on clothing than women did; men dressed more extravagantly than women of the same class, and female fashions were often delayed adaptations of male styles. Dress in Europe during the late medieval period began to display what today might be identified as fashion: with their greater access to materials and overseas travel, fashions were set by the upper classes and emulated by the lower classes, and when black silk became fashionable among the upper classes in northern Europe, the lower classes adopted the more affordable garments in black wool.<sup>94</sup> I now proceed to outline these changing fashions.

### *Fashion and Style 1100–1500*

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, clothing was predominantly loose, draped, and long.<sup>95</sup> Men and women wore an ensemble of similar garments; differences between the genders were marked by the length of hems and the tightness around the torso. A woman's gown fitted more tightly around the torso than a man's; her hemline was very long and sometimes trailed on the floor, while the man's instead rested above the ankle.<sup>96</sup> During the twelfth century, a three-layer ensemble was worn by both men and women: the *chemise* or *sherte* was a loose undergarment worn close to the skin and occasionally exposed deliberately at the neck or hemline.<sup>97</sup> A *bilaut* or a *cotte*—a kind of loose tunic—was worn over the *chemise*; both were topped by the mantle, a sheet of draped cloth functioning as an overcoat.<sup>98</sup> Various styles and fashions of mantle developed over the later twelfth century; they were elaborately ornamented,

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<sup>93</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 87.

<sup>94</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, pp. 71–73.

<sup>95</sup> Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, p. 172.

<sup>96</sup> Janet Snyder, 'From Content to Form: Court Clothing in Mid-Twelfth-Century Northern French Sculpture', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet Snyder (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 85–102, at p. 91; for examples of trailing hemlines, see Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 86–97.

<sup>97</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 109.

<sup>98</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 87.

draped across one arm, or worn as a full garment.<sup>99</sup> Accessories and accoutrements emphasised the differences between the genders. Women of all classes wore a veil or headdress; upper class men traditionally wore hats and lower class men wore hoods, though hoods became a more popular choice for the aristocracy during the later medieval period.<sup>100</sup> A knotted girdle wrapped around the woman's waist, emphasising the female silhouette.<sup>101</sup> Girdles, sometimes with magical properties, appear often within medieval romance; in *Wigalois* and *Summer Sunday*, Dame Fortune appears in a circular girdle, mimicking fortune's wheel, while Gawain is tempted with a marvellous green girdle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>102</sup>

The same ensemble was worn by all ranks of society; class distinctions were rendered through the use of expensive textiles and length of tunic. During this period, men of the middle and lower classes were more likely to wear a knee-length tunic with hose underneath, while women's gowns emulated the length of the upper classes in less expensive and ornamented materials.<sup>103</sup> The mantle was worn for practical reasons such as warmth, but as the most clearly-discernable layer it also functioned as a deliberate marker of the wearer's social identity.<sup>104</sup> Luxury textiles and rich colours demonstrated the wearer's rank. The external significance of the mantle persists beyond this period; in the fourteenth-century *Ipomadon*, Ipomadon's rich mantle suggests his princely identity despite his travelling incognito:

His mantell was of skarlett fyne,  
 Furryd wyth good armyne,  
 Ther myght no better been;  
 The bordoure all of red sendell,  
 That araye became hym wele  
 To wete wythouten wene.

(*Ipomadon* 370–375)

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<sup>99</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 108–115.

<sup>100</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 117; see also Melanie Schuessler, 'French Hoods: Development of a Sixteenth-Century Court Fashion', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Five*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gail R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), pp. 129–160.

<sup>101</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 87.

<sup>102</sup> Wirnt von Grafenberg, *Wigalois: der Ritter mitt dem Rade*, ed. by J. M. N. Kapteyn (Bonn: Fritz Klopp Verlag, 1926); Rossell Hope Robbins ed., 'Summer Sunday: A lament for Edward II', in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959); Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, fifth edition (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007).

<sup>103</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 111–113.

<sup>104</sup> Netherton, 'The Tippet', p. 116.

In royalty, the mantle was replaced with a knee-length regal dalmatic that fastened on the right shoulder with a brooch.<sup>105</sup> During this period, royal garments used silk instead of linen and a fitted tunic took the place of a bilaut. Like the mantle, the dalmatic functioned as an externally visible sign of rank; the dalmatic, as well as the kingly hairstyle of four long curls, indicated kingship in art objects.<sup>106</sup> The regal dalmatic, and its brooch, persisted on into the thirteenth century; on his royal seal, Louis IX is depicted seated, wearing a mantle fastened with a brooch on the right shoulder.<sup>107</sup> Margaret Scott, writing of a twelfth-century manuscript illumination of King Mark and King Arthur, finds that ‘The king on the right [Arthur] is made more venerable by his beard and by his special over garment, which bears three horizontal bars at the shoulders.’<sup>108</sup> This effect is replicated in medieval romance; there is a correspondence present in the way in which medieval art objects and texts conceptualise royalty. The late fifteenth-century text *The Awntyrs off Arthur* presents a comparable view of kingship:

The mon in his mantell sittes at his mete  
 In pal pured to pay, prodly pight,  
 Trofelyte and traverste with trewloves in trete;  
 The tasses were of topas that wer thereto tight.  
 He gliffed up with his eighen that grey wer and grete,  
 With his beveren berde, on that burde bright.  
 He was the soveraynest of al sitting in sete  
 That ever segge had sen with his eye sight. (AOA 352–359)

Here, Arthur’s mantle is richly ornamented and his beard is thick; together, these aspects indicate visually Arthur’s kingly identity.

During the thirteenth century, the influence of pious kings in both England and France—Henry III of England and Louis IX of France—encouraged a focus on simplicity and unadorned fabrics.<sup>109</sup> New ways of wearing draped fabrics preserved the previous silhouette of long and loose clothing, though it introduced several new garments to the fashionable ensemble. The *cyclas* (known also as a *ciclatoun* or *surcote*) was a loose circular garment worn by upper

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<sup>105</sup> Snyder, ‘Court Clothing in French Sculpture’, p. 93. See also Norris’ account of Henry II’s clothing, including an illustration depicting the regal dalmatic pinned across the right shoulder, in Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, p. 81.

<sup>106</sup> Snyder, ‘Court Clothing in French Sculpture’, p. 93.

<sup>107</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 149.

<sup>108</sup> Margaret Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty, 2011), p. 59.

<sup>109</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 143.

class men during this period; this often sleeveless over garment was at least partially open at the front or sides and was usually worn with the addition of a mantle and a hood.<sup>110</sup> Men of the middle and lower classes often preserved the garments of the previous century, adding, in prosperous cases, a *cyclas* over the older *cotte*.<sup>111</sup> Female clothing also reflected the new taste for simplicity, though the silhouette and general ensemble of female clothing was largely unaffected by the changing fashions; thirteenth-century gowns retain the length, trailing sleeves and hemlines of the previous century.<sup>112</sup>

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw English clothing change rapidly. Abandoning the previous century's focus on simplicity, a number of new fashions and styles appeared. The loose, natural shapes of the earlier period gave way to tighter, more artificial styles, as the long, flowing silhouette of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was replaced by tighter and shorter garments in a more elaborate style; this more fitted silhouette resulted in a clear distinction between male and female clothing.<sup>113</sup> Men's clothing became shorter, fitted, and more tightly-tailored.<sup>114</sup> Within this period, there was a movement away from the natural shape of the body, and a tendency towards concealment, manipulation or exaggeration of the form; tight sleeves were fashionably slashed to reveal additional layers beneath, often in a contrasting colour.<sup>115</sup> During the fourteenth century, the *cotehardie* and *houpelande* became fashionable garments for men and women. The *cotehardie*, as worn by men, was short and tight, a thigh or hip-length tunic; the *houpelande*, when worn by men, was a flowing, ankle-length gown, which retained the length and voluminous silhouette of previous eras. Both garments were richly ornamented according to rank, with luxury textiles and materials in profligate use.<sup>116</sup> Female clothing also became tighter, though unlike the male garments, they retained their length. The resulting silhouette was restrictive, with a long torso emphasised by a cone-shape bodice and a closely-

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<sup>110</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 151–156.

<sup>111</sup> Norris's troubadour wears one such *cotte* and *cyclas* ensemble; Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 171.

<sup>112</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p.159–162.

<sup>113</sup> Netherton, 'The Tippet', pp. 115–116.

<sup>114</sup> Blanc, 'The Invention of Fashion', p. 157.

<sup>115</sup> Blanc, 'The Invention of Fashion', p. 162.

<sup>116</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 246–247.

fitting skirt.<sup>117</sup> The female *cotehardie* was ornamented with a dropped waist, sideless overgarment, and rich detailing, leaving the shoulders and neck bare; women did not adopt the *houpelande* until the following century.<sup>118</sup> The tippet trod the line between accessory and ornamental feature; it was a common feature of the *cotehardie*.<sup>119</sup> As sleeves became shorter, protruding lengths of fabric known as ‘tails’ or ‘tippets’ began to trail from garments.<sup>120</sup> These decorative strands encircled both arms above the elbow and hung to below the knee; in contrast to the vivid colours otherwise used in expensive garments, they were either purely white or marked by a thin black band extending vertically down.<sup>121</sup>

During the fifteenth century, clothing became increasingly more elaborate. In the early half of the century, the *houpelande* continued to be a popular garment, though as the century progressed, English styles became increasingly exposed to and influenced by continental styles.<sup>122</sup> During this period of heightened military activity, military garments became absorbed into everyday wear; male styles emphasised broad shoulders, slim waists and long legs, sometimes utilising padding to create artificially manipulated forms.<sup>123</sup> Though overtly militaristic styles were abandoned in 1453 with the conclusion of the 100 years’ war, the short and fitted silhouette continued on throughout the fifteenth century; 1460–70 saw a general elongation of the silhouette, with wealthy men and women wearing tall hats or headdresses, and long trains on the skirts of women and long toes on the boots of men.<sup>124</sup> During the first period of the fifteenth century, women continued to wear the previous century’s *cotehardie* underneath an overgarment; this was gradually replaced with the *houpelande*, a loose and flowing

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<sup>117</sup> Netherton, ‘The Tippet’, p. 115.

<sup>118</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 232–23, 358.

<sup>119</sup> Netherton, ‘The Tippet’, p. 121.

<sup>120</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 23.

<sup>121</sup> Netherton, ‘The Tippet’, p. 116.

<sup>122</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 357–358.

<sup>123</sup> Blanc, ‘The Invention of Fashion’, pp. 164–169; Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 358.

<sup>124</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 40.

garment.<sup>125</sup> During the 1460s, fashion abruptly changed; loose sleeves vanished and long trains were absorbed into a tighter, cylindrical shape that was more closely moulded to the body.<sup>126</sup>

Headdresses and veils were also subject to the changing fashions of the times. For men, a great number of styles appeared; men's hair could be short or long.<sup>127</sup> Twelfth-century English ladies wore their hair long and flowing in imitation of Byzantine fashions; the hair was parted in the middle and divided into three or two sections that were braided or tightly bound with ribbon.<sup>128</sup> To attain the desired length, women sometimes supplemented their natural hair with other materials such as wool, silk or flax.<sup>129</sup> Within this period, hairstyles within Europe varied from region to region, though all retained the characteristic length: German women also confined their hair in long braids; Italian women remained hat- or hoodless, perhaps due to climate.<sup>130</sup> During the thirteenth century, hair became more confined; the long braids were brought forward and secured around the head in a variety of styles.<sup>131</sup> Wealthy women wore headdresses of high quality textiles and materials. Silk, gold thread and fine linen were popular materials of headdress construction; the creation of such items required a high level of skill, and they were sometimes elaborately decorated with embroidery or precious materials, contributing to their cost.<sup>132</sup> Headdresses gradually become more elaborate and the natural hair became incorporated into the headdress and veil ensemble.<sup>133</sup> Some of these garments intertwined with the hair to create a headdress ensemble that made the natural hair an element of artificial design. The thirteenth-century 'ramshorn' headdress covered the head with pieces of silk, twisted into the natural hair; these styles were usually worn in conjunction with another head-covering or

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<sup>125</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 370, pp. 394–395.

<sup>126</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 418–419.

<sup>127</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 83.

<sup>128</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 89; Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 56.

<sup>129</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 57.

<sup>130</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 89.

<sup>131</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 178.

<sup>132</sup> Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, 'The Margaret Fitzgerald Tomb Effigy: A Late Medieval Headdress and Gown in St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 209–222, at p. 212.

<sup>133</sup> Carla Tilghman, 'Giovanna Cenami's Veil', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume I*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 155–172, at p. 168.

veil.<sup>134</sup> Hair also became a method to display jewellery; caul of gold, silver or silk became fashionable, securing the hair and adorned with jewels and gems.<sup>135</sup> Such styles remain popular after the end of the medieval period; Anne of Cleves' hair appears confined under a net of golden silk.<sup>136</sup> In the fourteenth century, hair remained parted in the middle and tightly braided over the ears, but a greater variety of styles developed; in many such styles, the hair was arranged over, and intertwined with, the fillet or coif.<sup>137</sup> The fifteenth century saw a great development of such styles; with the return of elaborate reticulated headdress into fashion, hair became a supporting feature of the headdress and veil ensemble.<sup>138</sup> A similar style is worn by Galeron's lady in the late fifteenth-century text *The Awntyrs off Arthur*. Her description entwines both hair and decorative features:

Here fax in fyne perré was fretted in folde,  
 Contrefelet and kelle coloured full clene,  
 With a crowne craftly al of clene golde. (AOA 369–371)

Other styles were also popular around this time; the horned headdress, known in England as 'Bohemian' after Anne of Bohemia, was popular around 1400.<sup>139</sup> Erik Kooper suggests this type of headdress is worn by the lady Melydor in *Sir Degrevant*, who appears 'With ryche boses a payr', though John Scattergood instead identifies 'boses' as hair 'buns' gathered at each side of the head.<sup>140</sup> The fifteenth century also saw the introduction of tall, steeple-shaped headdresses; these 'hennin' or 'cornet' headdresses were towering, cylindrical constructions upon which a thin veil was suspended.<sup>141</sup> Though only the wealthiest could afford these elaborate constructions, most Northern European women, from peasant to prostitute, covered their heads.<sup>142</sup> The high cost of materials meant that middle and lower class women

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<sup>134</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 180.

<sup>135</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costumes and Fashion*, p. 181.

<sup>136</sup> Heckett, 'The Margaret Fitzgerald Tomb Effigy', p. 215.

<sup>137</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 270.

<sup>138</sup> For examples of this style, see Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 438.

<sup>139</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 61.

<sup>140</sup> Erik Kooper ed., 'Sir Degrevant', in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), at lines 662–663; John Scattergood, 'Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1987), pp. 255–272, at p. 257.

<sup>141</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 445; Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 41.

<sup>142</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 35.

could not emulate strictly the styles of the aristocracy; however, the strict wearing of headdresses or hoods was less common in hotter climates; Spanish women wore their hair long and loose and only sometimes covered by cloth headdresses.<sup>143</sup> A square sheet of fine linen, veils were also usually incorporated into these headdress ensembles; Désirée Koslin suggests the veil may have been introduced to Europe from the East during the Crusades.<sup>144</sup> Numerous styles of wearing the veil existed, though often the veil encircled the face and confined the hair. The highest-quality veils were constructed of high-quality linen known as lawn. Contemporary styles differ between geographical regions.<sup>145</sup> Older women wore a longer form, while younger women wore a shorter, more revealing veil.<sup>146</sup>

The fashions of the later medieval period demonstrated, in their impracticality, their aristocratic provenance. Short and tight clothing restricted movement and often required assistance in dressing.<sup>147</sup> Disapproving chronicler accounts of these impractical fashions are supported by modern evidence that the wearer of these tightly-seamed garments could only extend his arms with difficulty.<sup>148</sup> Female clothing was also impractical; headdresses comprised of linen structures bound around the chin and around the ears. Contemporary evidence suggests that these types of headdresses significantly affected the hearing ability of the wearer.<sup>149</sup>

### *Colour*

Strong juxtapositions of bold colours were popular throughout the later Middle Ages. Though the high Middle Ages retained the classical focus on white, red, and black, the later

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<sup>143</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 30.

<sup>144</sup> Désirée Koslin, 'The Robe of Simplicity: Initiation, Robing and Veiling of Nuns in the Middle Ages', in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. by Stewart Gordon (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 255–274, at p. 264.

<sup>145</sup> Heckett, 'The Margaret Fitzgerald Tomb Effigy', p. 215.

<sup>146</sup> Snyder, 'Court Clothing in French Sculpture', p. 89.

<sup>147</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 44; Blanc, 'The Invention of Fashion', p. 161.

<sup>148</sup> Blanc, 'The Invention of Fashion', p. 167.

<sup>149</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 47.



period embraced fully a broad range of colours; red and green, and blue and red, were colour combinations frequently used in clothing during the later medieval period. The palette was extended from three to six; suddenly in medieval art, iconography and clothing, white, red and black appeared alongside green, yellow, and blue.<sup>150</sup> Despite this love of colour, strict rules remained regarding the juxtaposition or placement of certain shades with certain colours. Clean, unbroken, bright shades were the most popular; anything spotted, dappled, or mottled was the most vilified. Such patterns and textures appeared abhorrent or even immoral; those on the fringes of the social order, such as prostitutes, lepers, or figures of misrule, wore multi-coloured garments that indicated their special status.<sup>151</sup> In this way, the clothing of the poor, with its inconsistent shades and rough texture, deviated further from the ideal colours represented in the strong, bold shades and smooth textiles worn by the elite.

Colour was also imbued with symbolism influenced by biblical and philosophical traditions. Influenced by the natural world and biblical descriptions of precious stones, medieval perceptions of colour came to be defined by hue, pattern and intensity.<sup>152</sup> During the twelfth century—the period in which the language of heraldry was also codified—these ideas became engrained in the public consciousness.<sup>153</sup> Unlike the subsequent Protestant dress reforms of the early modern period, medieval conceptions of colour did not usually simply assign negative or positive significance to particular colours; each colour contained the potential for positive and negative significance, and meaning was rendered in the symbolic variation of hue, tone, context, and position.<sup>154</sup> For instance, though red indicated nobility and the ruling classes, it was also the

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<sup>150</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Black: The History of a Color*, trans. by Jody Gladding (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 40.

<sup>151</sup> Pastoureau, Michel, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabrics*, trans. by Jody Gladding (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> Pulliam, 'Colour', p. 4.

<sup>153</sup> For more on the biblical influence on medieval colour perceptions, see P. J. Heather, 'Colour Symbolism: Part I', *Folklore*, 59/4 (1948), 165–183, at pp. 70–71; see also Désirée Koslin, 'Medieval Textile Paradigms', p. 235.

<sup>154</sup> A rare exception is the red-brown russet invested with almost wholly negative significance during the later Middle Ages. Michel Pastoureau, *Red: The History of A Color*, trans. by Jody Gladding (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 102.

colour of lust; it was a popular choice for regal dalmatics, but it was also the colour of a prostitute's headdress that distinguished her from other, more respectable women.<sup>155</sup>

During this period, technological and economical advances resulted in a greater variety of coloured clothing being made available to all sections of society. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, advances in dyeing techniques and distribution meant that coloured clothing was accessible to the majority of the population. Textiles were distributed in greater numbers across the European continent; British wool came down from the north and Italian silks came up from the south.<sup>156</sup> Dyeing processes were industrialised and centralised. The value of colours was affected by the availability of the materials and the ease of dyeing process. The increased availability of dye-producing materials led to certain colours becoming more highly-prized than others. The most vivid and pigmented colours required a more involved and, consequentially, more expensive dyeing process. Blue was derived in a simple process from the easily-accessible and affordable woad; it was a popular choice for peasantry and aristocracy. Other colours were inaccessible to all but the wealthiest: *purpura* was derived after a lengthy process from a specific sea whelk; vivid reds used for *scarlet* were extracted from the kermes, a rare and expensive Mediterranean insect that was difficult to produce.<sup>157</sup> Even in the case of easily accessible colours such as blue, the darker, richer hues were the province of the aristocracy, while cheaper dyes and textiles with less saturated colours were worn by the peasantry.<sup>158</sup> Medieval dressers preferred bright and vivid colours, often in contrasting colours; blue and red, red and green were popular combinations before the widespread popularisation of black in the late fourteenth century.<sup>159</sup>

Early dyeing techniques were sufficient to produce a steady, clear red; possibly for this reason, red was the primary colour of art and clothing from the sixth to the fourteenth

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<sup>155</sup> Koslin, 'Medieval Textile Paradigms', p. 236.

<sup>156</sup> King, 'Currents of Trade', pp. 218–226.

<sup>157</sup> Heather Pulliam, 'Colour', *Studies in Iconography*, 33 (2012), 3–14, at p. 9; Pignonier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 16.

<sup>158</sup> Pignonier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 17.

<sup>159</sup> Pulliam, 'Colour', p. 5; see also: John H. Munro, 'The Anti-Red Shift—To the Dark Side: Colour Changes in Flemish Luxury Woollens, 1300–1550', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Three*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 55–96.

centuries.<sup>160</sup> Medieval wills and clothing inventories demonstrate that red clothing was popular among all classes of society, though it was the colour of the ruling elite since the crowning of Charlemagne in 800.<sup>161</sup> Charlemagne, who wore an outfit entirely of red at his coronation, imbued the colour with a royal and aristocratic significance that remained resonant until the end of the medieval period. Despite these royal associations, widespread options for the wearing of the colour were available to the medieval populace; upper classes wore *scarlett*, crimson silks produced from the rare kermes, while lower classes wore more inexpensive textiles such as wool in inferior shades produced from madder or orcein.<sup>162</sup> In the later medieval period, advances in dyeing techniques meant that red was eclipsed by blue in popularity. Despite this, red remained in use during this period; red and blue was a pleasing combination of colours to the medieval eye, and lower-class French women often wore blue woollen gowns with a red hood.<sup>163</sup> Though eclipsed in popularity by blue, and then by black, red remained a reasonably popular colour for clothing until the early modern period when it became indicative of immodesty under Protestant dress reforms.<sup>164</sup>

The symbolic significance of red was codified strongly through two associations that were both positive and negative: fire and blood. Red was the colour of hellfire, and the dragon of the Apocalypse, but it was also the colour of the burning bush and the Pentecostal tongues of flame. It was the colour of ‘blood’ crimes—violence, murder, rape—but it was also the colour of warfare, of Christ’s crucifixion, and of saintly martyrdom.<sup>165</sup> Red was linked to Mars and the planets, indicating holy charity and God’s love for mankind.<sup>166</sup> Various properties were attributed to the colour red; the medical humours theory attributed prophylactic powers to it, and

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<sup>160</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 56.

<sup>161</sup> Burkholder, ‘Dress and Textiles in English Wills’, p. 140; for more on the clothing inventories of Florence, see Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 92.

<sup>162</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 90.

<sup>163</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, pp. 43–44, 107.

<sup>164</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Colour*, trans. by Markus I. Cruse (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 80; Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 106.

<sup>165</sup> On the significance and use of red, see: Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 58–63; Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 119; Koslin, ‘Medieval Textile Paradigms’, p. 235.

<sup>166</sup> P. J. Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, *Folklore*, 60/3 (1949), 316–31, at p. 136.

red paint was thought to have light-reflecting properties.<sup>167</sup> Crimson took on the significance held by purple during the classical period; it became the colour of authority and was worn by rulers, aristocrats, and judges and was used in the initiation ceremonies of the new in those orders, such as young knights.<sup>168</sup> In southern Europe, red held differing associations; in some areas it became the clothing of engaged couples, while in fourteenth century Rome it was worn by the Jewish population as a clearly identifiable outer garment.<sup>169</sup>

As might be expected of a genre focusing almost exclusively on the deeds of the elite, the wearing of scarlet clothes is widespread in medieval romance. P. J. Heather identifies several examples.<sup>170</sup> Red was often paired with green, making it one of the more popular combinations of colours in medieval clothing.<sup>171</sup> In *Octavian*, the falsely accused empress is sentenced to be burned; she wears a ‘kirtyll of sckarlett rede’ when led to the flames.<sup>172</sup> Red appears more frequently in the context of heraldic and militaristic devices; in *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, the Arthurian camp is depicted with much fine imagery and a multitude of colours, including silver, gold, and red; ‘thair baneris schane with the sone, of silver and sabill, / and uthir glemyt as gold and gowlis so gay’.<sup>173</sup> The ‘red knight’ motif appears consistently within the Fair Unknown texts. Perceval covets the red knight’s red armour;<sup>174</sup> like other Fair Unknowns, Ipomadon changes his armour from white, to red, and finally, to black.

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<sup>167</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 57; Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, p. 320.

<sup>168</sup> Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, p. 321; Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 16, p. 57; Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 71–73.

<sup>169</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 111, 138.

<sup>170</sup> Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, pp. 320–321.

<sup>171</sup> Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, p. 325.

<sup>172</sup> Harriet Hudson ed., *Octavian*, in *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour or Artois, Sir Tryamour* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), at line 238.

<sup>173</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), at line 21. All subsequent references to *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain* (GAG) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>174</sup> Mary Flowers Braswell, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, in *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), at lines 667–668. All subsequent references to *Sir Perceval of Galles* (POG) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

Red is associated with some fairies in romance; in *Sir Degaré* the fairy knight wears a ‘robe of scarlet’ and the fairy maidens are clothed ‘some in scarlet, some in grene’.<sup>175</sup>

During the later medieval period, blue became the most popular colour for clothing in northern Europe. Blue clothing was widely available to all classes in the northern European region. Advances in woad cultivation and dyeing techniques coincided with and contributed to a general elevation of the status of blue; previously excluded from classical color schemes, blue began, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, to be assimilated into the cult of the Virgin Mary and became identifiable as her colour.<sup>176</sup> Blue was among one of the three most popular clothing colours present in Kristen Burkholder’s study of late medieval English wills.<sup>177</sup> Lower quality dyes were an accessible and inexpensive choice; as such, blue became a popular colour for peasant and aristocratic clothing.<sup>178</sup> Blue wool, often of coarse and inferior quality, was worn by the lower classes, while darker shades like *ynde* and *brunette* were applied to silks and worn by the gentry and aristocracy.<sup>179</sup> Blue remained the most popular colour until the end of the fifteenth century where it was superseded, first by violet, and then by black.<sup>180</sup> Late medieval conceptions of colour positioned blue positively; as a celestial colour, blue symbolised heaven (Mark is, in the Bible, dressed in blue and associated with Christ’s resurrection).<sup>181</sup> It was the colour of the Virgin Mary and of the French monarchy and, in some texts, King Arthur; it embodied positive qualities: loyalty, love, joy and peace.<sup>182</sup>

Green was produced by mixing woad with other colours; after the advancement of dyeing techniques in the later Middle Ages, it became, like blue, a relatively inexpensive and

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<sup>175</sup> Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury eds., *Sir Degaré*, in *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), at lines 92 and 805.

<sup>176</sup> Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 50, 63.

<sup>177</sup> The other two being red and black. See: Kristen M. Burkholder, ‘Threads Bared: Dress and Textiles in Late Medieval English Wills’ in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume I*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 133–154, at p. 140.

<sup>178</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 16, 43–44.

<sup>179</sup> P. J. Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, *Folklore*, 60/3 (1949), 316–31 at p. 327; Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 60.

<sup>180</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 89.

<sup>181</sup> See: Heather Pulliam, ‘Looking to Byzantium: Light, Color and Cloth in Insular Art’, in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton, NJ: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp. 59–78; Pulliam, ‘Colour’, p. 8.

<sup>182</sup> Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 50, 60, 80.

easily accessible colour choice for clothing in northern Europe.<sup>183</sup> Along with blue and red, green was one of the most popular clothing colours until the fourteenth-century love for dark clothing; it was an especially popular colour for young men and women, indicating spring and new life, and was customarily worn on the mayday festival.<sup>184</sup> When combined with yellow, it signified non-Christian identities in continental Europe.<sup>185</sup> It features only rarely in Burkholder's survey of English wills; perhaps by this period the fashion for darker clothes had affected its popularity.<sup>186</sup> As with all colours, the symbolic significance of green relied heavily on context. Medieval conceptions of colour positioned green in the middle of the chromatic range; it was perceived as a particularly 'balanced' colour and associated with moderation and temperance.<sup>187</sup> However, it was also the colour of inconstancy. Early difficulties with colour techniques led to green also being the colour of changeability; it was the colour of youth, hope, of marriage prospects and pregnancy and especially of young love, but it was also the colour of fickle affection.<sup>188</sup> Like blue, green was a celestial colour symbolising the heavens, hope, joy, and resurrection.<sup>189</sup> Green robes, and the green emerald became associated with St. John's iconography in the late Middle Ages, though green was also, since the ninth and tenth centuries, the color of Islam.<sup>190</sup> During the later Middle Ages, green became the colour of Satan, sorcerers, and dangerous monsters such as dragons and serpents.<sup>191</sup> Later folkloric tradition invests the colour green with a number of significances; in the early modern period it is an unlucky colour and becomes associated with fairies.<sup>192</sup>

Green clothing appears frequently within medieval romance. A great number of romances begin with or include the set-piece of a hunt, in which hunters traditionally appear in green garb; Hunters dressed in green appear in a variety of texts, including *Sir Perceval of*

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<sup>183</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 16.

<sup>184</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Green: The History of A Color*, trans. by Jody Gladding (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 71–72; Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 89, 105, 145.

<sup>185</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 137.

<sup>186</sup> Burkholder, 'Dress and Textiles in English Wills', p. 140.

<sup>187</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, pp. 56–57.

<sup>188</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, pp. 71–80.

<sup>189</sup> Désirée Koslin, 'Medieval Textile Paradigms', p. 235.

<sup>190</sup> Pulliam, 'Color', p. 8; Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 82.

<sup>191</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, pp. 90–96.

<sup>192</sup> John Hutchings, 'Folklore and Symbolism of Green', *Folklore*, 108 (1997), 55–63.

*Galles*, *Ipomadon* and *The Carl of Carlisle*, among others. Green becomes the colour of peaceful, courtly activity; in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, Arthur is unable to fight Sir Gromer: “Thou armyd and I clothyd butt in grene, perde”.<sup>193</sup> Tristrem wears a kirtle of green in *Sir Tristrem*.<sup>194</sup> Green is also a popular colour for clothing worn by women; Galeron’s lady wears a ‘gresse grene’ gown in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* (AOA 366). Perhaps the most famous instance, the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, has been the subject of much critical discussion. Gawain is often associated with green; the girdle with which Gawain is tempted by Bertilak’s lady in *Gawain and the Green Knight* is of ‘grene sylke’, echoing the Green Knight, whose clothing and appearance is, in the alliterative text, bright green.<sup>195</sup>

Other colours, such as yellow, were less popular, and clothing of this shade is the most unusual colour in Burkholder’s survey of English wills.<sup>196</sup> Yellow dyed wool was during the late medieval period sometimes used as a contrasting fabric for garments of other colours; its predominant use, however, was to identify non-Christians, as, like red, it was a bright and clearly-visible colour.<sup>197</sup> In romance, yellow’s significance is usually eclipsed by gold, as descriptive passages often contain references to shining gold.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, improvements in dyeing techniques led to the popularisation of darker shades. Black was the most popular of these shades, while dark blues, dark greens and dark violets were also widely worn.<sup>198</sup> This fashion arose in northern Europe in response to Italian sumptuary laws that prohibited the wearing of coloured silks to all but the highest degrees of the aristocracy; the wealthy gentry sought an alternative colour that would

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<sup>193</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), at line 83.

<sup>194</sup> Alan Lupack ed., ‘Sir Tristrem’, in *Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), at lines 1954–1956.

<sup>195</sup> Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, fifth edition (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), at line 1832. All subsequent references to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (GGK) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>196</sup> Pionnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 60; Burkholder, ‘Dress and Textiles in English Wills’, p. 140.

<sup>197</sup> Pionnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 71, 137, 140.

<sup>198</sup> Pionnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 17.

denote their wealth and status without breaking the laws.<sup>199</sup> The development of dyes resulting in a rich, steady black increased production of dark silks and exports to foreign countries. The northern European upper classes embraced these imported darker silks in ignorance of their original associations in southern Europe.<sup>200</sup> The late-medieval popularisation of black clothing illustrates the shift in colour associations that took place during the Middle Ages. During the high medieval period, black was one of the central three colours alongside white and red; it was a popular colour used in art and architecture. Its connotations were often negative; from classical times, it was the colour of mourning, and it was associated with death and poison.<sup>201</sup> It was the colour of darkness, of hell and of devilry; in high medieval art, sorcerers and heretics often wore black.<sup>202</sup> The practice of malevolent magic was known in romance as ‘nigromancy’, originating from the Latin word for black, *niger*.<sup>203</sup> Towards the end of the high Middle Ages, the significance of black—and particularly, the wearing of black clothing—began to change; black became the colour of the mysterious incognito knight in chivalric romance, the colour used by honourable knights to conceal their identity.<sup>204</sup> The widespread availability of Italian black silks coincided with a post-Black Death desire to denote, publically, one’s worthiness and lack of interest in worldly matters, and black became the colour of virtuous restraint. Educated and religious men began to dress in black; it became the colour of the law, of some monastic orders, of government.<sup>205</sup> It gradually became widespread throughout society, from the royal silks of the prince to the black woollens of the peasant.<sup>206</sup> The northern European lower classes could not afford or legally wear black silks, but followed the trend for darker colours and started dressing in black wool.<sup>207</sup> During this period, black and grey furs also became popular.<sup>208</sup> At the

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<sup>199</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, p. 100.

<sup>200</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 72.

<sup>201</sup> This was not however always the case; in mourning, French kings wore purple and queens wore white until the early 1500s; Pastoureau, *Black*, p. 71. For more on the classical traditions of black with mourning see P. J. Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part I’, *Folklore*, 59/4 (1948), p. 169.

<sup>202</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, pp. 51–54.

<sup>203</sup> See: Corinne Saunders, *Magic and The Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 152–178, and for the Latin origins of the term, p. 154.

<sup>204</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, pp. 72–74.

<sup>205</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, p. 95–96.

<sup>206</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, p. 102.

<sup>207</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 89.

<sup>208</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 58.



end of the fourteenth century, the finest furs were *sable* (marten) and *budge* (black lambskin), while grey furs such as squirrel and rabbit were popular among the middle classes.<sup>209</sup> The fashion for black was less readily adopted by women; they retained bright colours for longer and preferred lighter furs such as miniver, ermine, and lamb.<sup>210</sup> Black appears as a mourning colour in the ‘Knight’s Tale’ and Gower’s *Apollonius of Tyre*, the *Morte Arthure* and several others.<sup>211</sup>

Colour significance also plays a role in the symbolism of precious stones. Throughout the medieval period, precious stones were invested with magical or healing properties. Bede’s interpretation of the allegorical and religious significance of precious stones in his explanation of the apocalypse retained relevancy throughout the medieval period, influencing scholarly and wider perceptions surrounding precious stones.<sup>212</sup> Gemstones’ magical properties and symbolic significances were contextualised within a Christian framework; medieval pilgrims would purchase gemstones from religious sites or else bring their own to touch to holy relics and statues.<sup>213</sup> Medieval lapidaries explained the significances of individual stones; a large number of French and Latin lapidaries are extant, though only seven Middle English lapidaries survive.<sup>214</sup> Darker analogues to the lapidaries were the medieval grimoires that contained instructions for the demonic, magic-focused workings of gemstones.<sup>215</sup> People really did believe in the *vertu* of gemstones; gems could be both helpful and harmful, and were often worn as amuletic talismans.<sup>216</sup> It is difficult to ascertain precisely what the mechanism behind these beliefs was thought to be; whether the *vertu* of the stones was thought to lie in the stone itself or

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<sup>209</sup> Compton Reeves, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), p. 53.

<sup>210</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 79.

<sup>211</sup> P. J. Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part II’, *Folklore*, 60/1 (1949), 208–16, at pp. 211–213.

<sup>212</sup> See William C. Weinrich ed., *Latin commentaries on Revelation: Victorinus, Petavionensis; Apringius, Pacensis; Caesarius, van Arles; Beda, Venerabilis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011); Faith Wallis trans., *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

<sup>213</sup> David Humphrey, ‘Gemstones’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 226–229, at p. 228.

<sup>214</sup> Arne Zettersten ed., ‘A Middle English Lapidary’, *Acta Universitatis Lundensis*, Sectio I, Theologica Juridica Humaniora 10 (Lund: Gleerups, 1968), p. 9.

<sup>215</sup> Humphrey, ‘Gemstones’, p. 227.

<sup>216</sup> P. J. Heather, ‘Precious Stones in the Middle-English Verse of the Fourteenth Century, II. (Continued)’, *Folklore*, 42/4 (1931), 345–404, p. 360; Humphrey, ‘Gemstones’, p. 227; for a detailed look at the ways in which gemstones were worn, see Eleanor R. Standley, *Trinkets and Charms: The Use, Meaning and Significance of Dress Accessories, AD 1300–1700* (Oxford: Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford, 2013).

its colour, or in combination with the occult powers of the stars and planets, with which symbols they were often inscribed.<sup>217</sup> Precious stones arrived in medieval Europe through trade with the East; lapidaries often reflect this, ascribing eastern origins to most precious stones. Topaz is one of several stones to which English lapidaries attribute eastern origins; it is, in the London lapidary, ‘of þe Este & of arabie cometh þe best’.<sup>218</sup> European gem lore originated in classical and Hellenistic medicine, incorporating Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian traditions.<sup>219</sup>

Sapphires, rubies, pearls, turquoises, emeralds, and diamonds were among the most valuable and popular gems.<sup>220</sup> Gemstones were most commonly used in jewellery, though they were also popular embellishments for high-quality textiles such as *purpura* and *scarlett*.<sup>221</sup> Jewelled brooches were popular and useful ways of securing garments like cloaks and hats.<sup>222</sup> They could become incorporated into armour, like the ruby that adorned the helmet of Henry V at the battle of Agincourt.<sup>223</sup> A similar instance appears in *Guy of Warwick*:

Colbrond was sore aschame  
 And smot Gii with michel grame.  
 On his helm he hit him tho  
 That his floures everichon  
 And his gode charbukel ston  
 Wel even he carf atuo.<sup>224</sup>

Chaucer's Sir Thopas has a jewelled shield:

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,  
 And therinne was a bores heed,  
 A charbocle bisyde... (ST 2059–2061)

Precious stones often appear in medieval romance adorning buildings, clothing, crowns, rings and armour.<sup>225</sup> The use of precious stones within chivalric literature contributes significantly

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<sup>217</sup> Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, pp. 326–327; Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 103.

<sup>218</sup> Joan Evans and Mary S. Serjeantson eds., *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, Early English Text Society OS 190 (London: H. Milford; Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 19.

<sup>219</sup> Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 102.

<sup>220</sup> Reeves, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Medieval Europe*, p. 59.

<sup>221</sup> Heather, ‘Colour Symbolism: Part IV’, p. 321.

<sup>222</sup> For more on the fashion of fifteenth-century hat brooches, see Norris, *Medieval Costume and Style*, pp. 433–434.

<sup>223</sup> Humphrey, ‘Gemstones’, pp. 228–229.

<sup>224</sup> Alison Wiggins ed., *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), at lines 3133–3138.

towards the superlatively splendid atmosphere with which the texts are invested, in which the profligate quality with which these highly sought-after materials appear creates an air of lost splendour. Texts do occasionally suggest an awareness of the gemlore that fills the medieval lapidaries, though any precise familiarity is difficult to definitively establish.

### ***Regulation and Control: Sumptuary Laws***

Sumptuary laws were in effect in English territories throughout the late-medieval period; four statutes of apparel tightly regulated the distribution of luxury textiles and materials from 1336 to 1482. The laws were of varying severity and specificity; they were all concerned with the regulation of clothing among the secular population. The first statute of apparel was enacted under the reign of Edward III in 1337. It demonstrated a kind of economic protectionism, prohibiting the importing of foreign wools into England, Ireland and Wales: ‘no marchaunt foreign or denizen, nor none other [...] shall bring or cause to be brought [...] any wolles out of realme til by the king and his counsel it be thereof otherwise provided.’<sup>226</sup> It also prohibited the purchasing of cloth made outside the British Isles by every ‘man nor woman great nor smale of England, Ireland, nor Wales, nor of our soveraigne lorde the kings power in Scotlande, of what estate or condition he be’; from this law, were the ‘king, queene and their children onely except’.<sup>227</sup> With the exception of wool, continental textiles were predominantly of better quality than English fabrics.<sup>228</sup> With this statute, then, rich, high quality foreign textiles became the sole province of the ruling elite. The second act of the first statute was more specific: it prevented the wearing of new furs from all except the royal family, the upper

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<sup>225</sup> This is the categorisation used by Heather, in ‘Precious Stones in the Middle-English Verse’, pp. 345–404.

<sup>226</sup> Quoted in Clifford R. Bell and Evelyn Ruse, ‘Sumptuary Legislation and English Costume: An Attempt to Assess the Effect of an Act of 1337’, *Costume*, VI (1972), 22–31, at p. 22.

<sup>227</sup> Bell and Ruse, ‘Sumptuary Legislation and English Costume’, p. 22.

<sup>228</sup> Tilghman, ‘Giovanna Cenami’s Veil’, p. 167.

aristocracy, landed gentry, members of the clergy.<sup>229</sup> Both acts cited economic reasons for their reforms.

The second statute of apparel coincided, in 1363, with a great development in the availability of fashions and styles. During this period, clothing moved away from the simplicity of earlier periods and towards ornamentation and opulence. Richer clothing was more accessible to a greater amount of people. These developments were regarded with some dismay in clerical and moralist quarters; for medieval moralists, the new fashions 'seemed to threaten sexual as well as economic morality.'<sup>230</sup> A greater threat also lay in the perceived destabilisation of the social order; numerous complaints regarding the indistinguishable nature of high and low reflected a society in disarray.<sup>231</sup> The second statute of apparel was built upon the foundations of the preceding laws and attempted to define more carefully the statutes' regulatory powers. To achieve this, the second statute made an increasing number of distinctions between classes and materials. For the first time, sumptuary laws distinguished between ranks within the middle classes; artisans, yeomen and merchants were accorded different degrees of freedoms and privileges, with wealthy merchants granted access to some higher-value materials such as miniver.<sup>232</sup> This statute made use of a complex scale of distinctions and limits. This system distinguished between both rank and economic power; the gentry were permitted to dress freely only if their annual value reached the annual minimum; lower orders as well were distinguished by occupation and by income, with the greatest limitations being upon those of lowest orders and lowest income.<sup>233</sup> This period also saw a greater control of higher-value textiles: silk, cloth of silver, imported linens and higher-value furs were prohibited to the artisan and yeoman classes.<sup>234</sup> The extent to which these laws discriminated against the merchant class has been contested; Kristen Burkholder suggests that the majority of legislation within this statute was

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<sup>229</sup> Burkholder, 'Dress and Textiles in English Wills', p. 143.

<sup>230</sup> Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200–1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 88.

<sup>231</sup> Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 88.

<sup>232</sup> Burkholder, 'Dress and Textiles in English Wills', p. 144.

<sup>233</sup> Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p. 304.

<sup>234</sup> Burkholder, 'Dress and Textiles in English Wills', p. 144.

designed to curb the growing economic freedom of the rapidly expanding mercantile middle classes,<sup>235</sup> while Alan Hunt suggests that the measures ‘did not discriminate in any serious way against the urban burghers.’<sup>236</sup> These complex reforms did, however, demonstrate more clearly a deliberate attempt to enforce through dress a social hierarchy.<sup>237</sup> By relegating costly, high quality textiles and materials to the upper orders, the second statute’s attempt at curbing extravagance resulted in a greater embracing of luxury by the aristocracy and gentility; it accidentally enforced the idea that aristocracy and gentility were intertwined with rich clothing and visual display.<sup>238</sup> Though its reforms were quickly repealed due to commercial pressures, the second statute sets the tone for subsequent dress reform; a tone characterised by Hunt as ‘increasing particularism and declining generality.’<sup>239</sup> The second sumptuary law took place within a period of greater ordering of the upper orders; with the taxation reforms of 1379, the previously loosely-interchangeable terms of knight, baron, and earl, gained a specific hierarchical significance.<sup>240</sup> Society was becoming more ordered; clothing became an essential means of finding, and keeping, a position within this new scheme.

The third statute of apparel was not passed until the following century. The intervening one hundred years was not entirely unconcerned with dress; minor laws were brought in to prevent the silver-plating of objects worn by classes below the gentry.<sup>241</sup> Such reforms reflected a concern with appearance and status; they were designed to prevent people of lower means, barred from richer materials, affecting the pretence of the same. The third statute of apparel of 1463 took into account both wealth and profession and, unlike its predecessors, it was openly concerned with issues of propriety.<sup>242</sup> The preamble exhorted people to dress ‘according to their degrees’, a factor that it proclaimed lacking in contemporary society: ‘The commons of the said realm, as well Men as Women, have worn and daily do wear excessive and inordinate Array and

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<sup>235</sup> Burkholder, ‘Dress and Textiles in English Wills’, p. 144.

<sup>236</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 305.

<sup>237</sup> Scattergood, ‘Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages’, pp. 260–261.

<sup>238</sup> Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 89.

<sup>239</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 305.

<sup>240</sup> Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 13.

<sup>241</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 305.

<sup>242</sup> Burkholder, ‘Dress and Textiles in English Wills’, p. 145.

Apparel to the great Displeasure of God'.<sup>243</sup> The 1463 act utilised a similar set of determining systems to the 1363 act. It controlled luxury textiles among the gentry and aristocracy: velvet, satin, counterfeit silk or ermine could be worn by knightly ranks, while cloth of gold, sable, and purple silk were permitted to those above the rank of a Lord alone.<sup>244</sup> Like the second act, this act reflected contemporary fashions. It prohibited any man below the rank of a lord from wearing a coat that would not 'cover his members and buttocks', responding to the fashion for short, tight, thigh-length tunics in the later fifteenth century.<sup>245</sup> Unlike the preceding act, the third statute of apparel was not repealed; it was supported with further petitions for its enforcement.<sup>246</sup>

Citing a lack of compliance with previous measures, the fourth statute of apparel was enacted in 1483 and targeted the gentry and aristocracy.<sup>247</sup> The fourth statute reinforced the hierarchical division of the upper classes: knights were permitted to wear velvet, damask or satin, while lords and dukes could wear sable furs and cloth of gold of tissue; cloth of gold and purple silk, permitted to anyone above the rank of Lord under the 1463 reforms, were now prohibited to any but the royal family.<sup>248</sup> Dress control continued into the sixteenth century, with statutes in 1510, 1514, 1515 and 1533; these measures continued the concern for appropriate dressing and regulation of the knightly classes.<sup>249</sup> Legislation regulating the appropriate wearing of clothing continued to be passed well into the sixteenth century and beyond.<sup>250</sup>

It is difficult to position with certainty the effectiveness of the sumptuary laws. The later laws certainly claim widespread flouting of previous laws as justification for further reform. It is, however, difficult to ascertain the extent to which this represented a helpful pretence for

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<sup>243</sup> Preamble of the 1463 statute of apparel, quoted in Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 306.

<sup>244</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 307.

<sup>245</sup> Quoted in Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 307.

<sup>246</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 308.

<sup>247</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 308.

<sup>248</sup> Burkholder, 'Dress and Textiles in English Wills', pp. 146–147.

<sup>249</sup> Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions*, p. 309.

<sup>250</sup> See: Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: Clothing and the Law in Henry VIII's England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

further restriction or genuine reflection of medieval clothing habits. Attempts were made to reinforce the legislation; Edward IV introduced methods to prevent the flouting of clothing laws: for members of the aristocracy giving excessive amounts of livery to servants, penalties were increased and informers were encouraged to come forward, while justices of the peace were permitted to investigate and apprehend the illegal exporting of wool.<sup>251</sup> However, evidence found in medieval wills suggests that the majority of the population did dress in accordance with their station and consequentially in accordance with the laws.<sup>252</sup>

The clothing laws provide a useful context for the opulent garments of medieval romance. Frequently adorned with controlled textiles such as velvet and cloth-of-gold, opulent literary objects appear within this period of sartorial control. It is challenging to position with certainty the extent to which sumptuary legislation influences the rich apparel and textiles of romance. Difficulties of dating and provenance obscure the discussion, as too does the question of textual influence for the many English texts that are adaptations or analogues of French or other continental romances. *Sir Degrevant* is a good choice in exploring this difficult area, as it is an English text with no known French sources and its composition date and efforts at verisimilitude in matters of appearance are fairly well-established. Sylvester finds ‘its details provide a sense of verisimilitude that seems to be borne out by existing evidence’.<sup>253</sup> Erik Kooper positions its composition date between 1385 and 1410, while Louise Sylvester places it more firmly in the 1410s.<sup>254</sup> The text probably originates after the first two statutes of apparel, but before the third and fourth. In it, the lady Melydor appears dressed in fine textiles:

Sche come in a vyolet  
With whyghth perl overfret,  
And saphyrus therinne isett,  
On everyche a syde.  
All of pallwork fyn,

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<sup>251</sup> John G. Bellamy, *Criminal Law and Society in Late Medieval and Tudor England* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>252</sup> Burkholder, ‘Dress and Textiles in English Wills’, p. 143.

<sup>253</sup> Lousie Sylvester, ‘Mining for Gold: Inventing a Semantic Classification in the Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project’, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Eight*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), p. 75.

<sup>254</sup> For a discussion on dating the text, see Kooper, *Sir Degrevant*; Sylvester, ‘Semantic Classification of Gold’, p. 75.

With nuche and nevyn,  
Anurled with ermyne,  
And overt for pryde.  
To tell hur botenus was toor,  
Anamelede with azour,  
With topyes the trechour  
Overtrasyd that tyde.  
Sche was recevyd aspanne  
Of any lyvand manne;  
Of rede golde the rybanne  
Glemyd hur gyde.<sup>255</sup>

This is one of several instances in which it is possible to identify with precision both the nature of the material being worn, and the rank of the person upon whom it appears. The lady Melydor is the daughter of an earl; as such, her ermine costume is in accordance with the prescriptions of the sumptuary laws.

More problematic in this respect are the texts that fall outside of the relatively narrow chronological period and geographical region in which the upper classes are increasingly stratified. A society made hypersensitive by clothing laws to the minute visual distinctions between knights, lords, dukes and princes, is for the most part in England a fourteenth- and fifteenth-century development; the ermine, silk, brocade and gold of Chrétien's twelfth-century French knights could equally have been worn by a king, baron, or count.<sup>256</sup> This, then, complicates analysis of clothing in relation to social division and clothing laws in texts that are later English adaptations of earlier French texts, of which there are so many. *Lybeaus Desconus*, the fourteenth-century English reworking of Renaut de Beaujeu's c.1200 French romance *Le Bel Inconnu*, was composed around 1350 and dates from around the time of the second statute of apparel.<sup>257</sup> The English text utilises incongruously textiles and garments prohibited by contemporary sumptuary laws. The Lady Ellene appears in a number of rich textiles:

The mayde Ellyne, also tighth,  
In a robe of samyte  
Gaylie ganne hir atyre  
To do Lybeous prophite,

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<sup>255</sup> Kooper, *Sir Degrevant*, at lines 641–656.

<sup>256</sup> Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain*, p. 250.

<sup>257</sup> Salisbury and Weldon eds., *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 6. A more thorough discussion of manuscripts and dating appears in the text-based subsection in Chapter One.



In kerchevys fayre and white  
Aryved with gold wyre.  
A velvet mantill gaye  
Purfild with gryce and graye  
She did aboute hir swyre;  
The serkell upon hir moolde  
Of precious stones and goolde:  
The best of that empire.

(LD 861–872)

Ellene's rank is not clearly established, though she is associated with royalty through her position as the ruler of Synadowne's lady and emissary. She is certainly a noble lady and she wears a 'velvet mantill gaye' (LD 867) and the 'gryce and graye' (LD 868) squirrel furs. This is before the more rigid period of the third statute of apparel, which regulated these materials more closely. Other figures within the narrative are more tenuously positioned, though they also appear in materials that are similarly regulated:

And aftir hym come ryde  
A lady proude in pryde,  
Iclothed in purpyll palle.  
The folke came fer and wide  
To se them back and syde:  
Howe gent she was and smalle.  
Hir mantill was ryght fyne,  
Ipowderd with ermyne,  
Well riche and ryalle.  
The sercle on hir molde  
Of stones and of goolde  
And many a ryche amayle.

(LD 896–908)

Here, Sir Jeffron's lady is Ellene's rival in the beauty contest, and her rank is not precisely stated. Despite this ambiguity, she is also dressed in ermine. Contextualised by this period of regulation and control, the use of such materials announces, quietly, the wearer's status. Ellene's nobility, and consequently her beauty is enhanced through the use of such materials.

### ***Conclusion: Context, Clothing and Literature***

These attitudes inform the depiction of clothing in romance. Literary depictions of clothing in romance display the influence of contemporary fashions, in which textiles and

garments accurate to the period appear.<sup>258</sup> Earlier romance consistently presents its characters in the garments of the period; later romance texts demonstrate the changing fashions of the later Middle Ages.<sup>259</sup> Beyond this, however, the performative aspect of public self-fashioning seen in the clothing behaviour of courtly elites also extends to the depictions of their literary analogues. In romance, instances of clothing usually conform to a pattern of motifs. Extended descriptions most usually appear in the first introduction of a new figure; in these instances, the text often adopts a lingering gaze that catalogues in some level of detail the articles and appearance of the newcomer. This lingering gaze may or may not display evidence of *effectio*, the rhetorical head to toe catalogue. If so, this *effectio* may be presented in a straightforward fashion. It may also appear playfully altered, as in Hue de Rotelande's description of La Fièrre in *Ipomedon*. In Arthurian romance, these episodes frequently take place before the assembled court. In such instances, descriptions of the newcomer are usually interwoven with the effect these garments and apparel produces in the court. This responsive interaction between gaze and gazer is constructed in real time, orchestrating a responsive dialogue between performance and audience. It is into this dialogue that readers and listeners are invited through these detailed accounts of clothing and appearance. The text repeats in the audience's reactions the awe, horror or erotic feeling also displayed by the assembled gaze or gazer. The audience share in the Arthurian court's mingled horror and awe at the arrival of the Green Knight as 'aghlich mayster' (*GGK* 136); the astonishment at Perceval's goatskin-clad spectacle (*POG* 497); and the delight in Dame Tryamour's beauty, who facilitates, deliberately, this gazing (*SL* 979–981). These passages comprise an episode in which the individual willingly submits him- or herself to the interrogatory gaze of the assembled courtly community; to this end, they frequently take on the significance of a performance.

Like the medieval elites identified by Susan Crane, the courtly elites of medieval romance understand themselves to be on display.<sup>260</sup> Whether appearing, like *The Awntyrs off*

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<sup>258</sup> Sylvester, 'Semantic Classification of Gold', p. 69.

<sup>259</sup> Smith, *Sartorial Strategies*, p. 8.

<sup>260</sup> Crane, *The Performance of Self*, p. 4.

*Arthur's* Galeron, in opulent visual display before the assembled Arthurian court, or dressing in privacy in a palmer's sackcloth like Sir Orfeo, these acts of dressing constitute a deliberately performative kind of self-fashioning. Integral to these instances is a forceful kind of assertiveness that conflates appearance with identity. In the northern Gawain romances, chivalric identity is confirmed and confirmed through elaborate visual display and arming rituals. In the Middle English Breton *lais*, Florence and Emaré's retention of fine clothing during their loss of status is positioned as a challenge to the social order; with the donning of a 'sclavin' (SO 238) Orfeo transforms himself from king to hermit. In the Fair Unknown texts, this assertiveness often presents alongside naivety. Gingalain dresses himself in armour and sets off to the Arthurian court to become a knight; Perceval thinks himself a knight because he dresses like one. *Ipomadon*, with its emphasis on ritualistic disguise and chivalric performativity, satirises the courtly perceptions that correlate appearance with identity.

Medieval society constructed elaborate systems to facilitate the 'reading' of identities through clothing. The medieval mind was an 'organiser, a codifier, a builder of systems'; this was reflected in attitudes towards dress, as laws in both secular and religious communities formalised, through regulation, the association of public display with inner identity.<sup>261</sup> Sumptuary laws and canon clothing laws provided further codification through dress. Heraldry provided a visual language expressing identity among the warrior elite; colour was imbued with allegorical significance; precious stones conveyed magical virtues and religious properties. In response to these tensions, medieval fashion responded with the creation of a number of ever-changing styles and garments. Clothing in literary texts grows out of this climate of self-conscious performative display; literary depictions of clothing are imbued with analogous significance and resonance. Contextualised by the romance genre's thematic focus on identity, dress resonates with the performative self-fashioning of identity. The large number of garments incorporated into the fourteenth century ensemble contextualises the lengthy descriptions of medieval romance, in which numerous textiles, garments and materials are named in

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<sup>261</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 10.

concentrated descriptive passages. In this way, they evoke the contemporary context that informs and creates them.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Fair Unknown*

The Fair Unknown narrative centres issues of identity: concealed identity, revealed identity, adolescent identity, half-formed identity, unknown identity. Frequently, the narrative provides the mechanism through which these identities are established. Like the modern *Bildungsroman*, the texts present journeys of becoming through which their young protagonists emerge fundamentally changed. Many of these texts represent analogues or sources of each other.<sup>1</sup> The Fair Unknown motif appears in, among others, the German *Wigalois* and *Lanzelet*, the Italian *Carduino*, the Welsh *Peredur*, the Gaelic *Laoidh an Amadain Mhoi*, and the French *La Cotte Mal Taillée*. In it, a young boy, usually of noble lineage, grows up in isolation from courtly society and in ignorance of his chivalric heritage. He is drawn to the chivalric society and appears at a court—usually, though not always, Arthurian—where his beauty and nobility are much admired. His identity is mutable and unfixd; reinforcing this, he is given a temporary moniker reflecting his beauty and his unknown identity. The subsequent narrative consists of the Fair Unknown trying to gain admittance to the chivalric community (and thereby establish his own chivalric identity) through the successful completion of battles, quests or tournaments. The Fair Unknown successfully proves his right to admittance into this courtly society at the same time as his heritage is revealed. It is within this context of chivalric and dynastic identity that the Fair Unknown's social identity and position within society is realised. This pursuit of courtly identity often becomes a personal exploration of kinship; in many texts, the Fair Unknown is a kinsman of the Arthurian court and his admittance to the Arthurian community represents a kind of homecoming.

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the characteristics of the Fair Unknown group and a comparative summary of interrelated Fair Unknown texts, see M. Mills' edition of *Lybeaus Desconus*, Early English Text Society OS 261 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 42–72.

The Fair Unknown narrative contains elements of both *bildungsroman* and family drama. It contains a pleasing melodrama in the tensions between identities concealed and revealed, families divided and then united. *Lybeaus Desconus* represents a more straightforward representation of this motif, in which Gingalain's journey of acceptance and admittance progresses in a straightforward manner through his connection with Gawain. The other two texts discussed in this chapter represent self-conscious deliberations on the Fair Unknown theme. Tonally, though not structurally, *Sir Perceval of Galles* represents a slight deviation from the motif. Comedic and possibly parodic, it places a bumbling and uncouth knight in this exalted role. *Ipomadon* represents a more serious reinterpretation of the theme and a meditation on the impossibility of self-avowal. Unlike Lybeaus or Perceval, Ipomadon is not nameless or ignorant of his own identity. Instead, he conceals it deliberately to win *pris*. Despite these differences, *Ipomadon's* narrative also represents a kind of Bildungsroman. *Perceval of Galles* and *Lybeaus Desconus* are united by their Arthurian setting and interest in kinship and social isolation. Within this chivalric sphere, chivalric and social identities appear conflated. Both Perceval and Gingalain struggle to establish their chivalric identities, and with this, their inclusion within the courtly and social sphere of the Arthurian court. *Ipomadon* does not share their Arthurian setting or interest in kinship; its hero is not nameless or in search of his own identity. Instead, his pursuit to establish his chivalric identity is not contextualised by a desire to establish kinship or become included within social scheme, but rather the love he has for his lady.

Clothing and visual display plays a significant role in these Fair Unknown romances. Chivalric garments and accoutrements such as armour, swords, and spears, represent the means through which the hero's chivalric identity is expressed; the acquisition of chivalric garments marks the turning point for each Fair Unknown. Lybeaus is ceremoniously dressed in armour by the knights of the Arthurian court; the young Perceval dresses himself, clumsily, in the red knight's armour; Ipomadon deliberately manipulates his chivalric presentation through his

armour and appearance. In each instance, chivalric clothing identifies and facilitates the protagonists' realisation of an idealised chivalric identity.

### *Lybeaus Desconus*

*Lybeaus Desconus* is an English adaptation of *Li Biaus Descouneüs (Le Bel Inconnu)*. It is thought to be composed in the fourteenth-century and is extant in six manuscripts: British Library MS Cotton Caligula A. ii; Lambeth Palace MS 306; Lincoln's Inn MS Hale 150; Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61; Biblioteca Nazionale, Naples, MS XIII B. 29; British Library Additional MS 27879 (MS Percy).<sup>2</sup> Authorship of this text is often attributed to Thomas Chestre, author of *Sir Launfal*, though this has been the topic of some critical debate.<sup>3</sup> Though the amount of scholarship available is small in comparison to that of the French text, *Lybeaus Desconus* has recently been the focus of more critical attention, perhaps reflected in and encouraged by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon's recent edition for the Middle English Texts Series, which complements M. Mills' earlier 1969 edition for the Early English Text Society.<sup>4</sup> Earlier responses to the text are generally not favourable: Alan T. Gaylord discusses the language and metre in some detail with a critical view;<sup>5</sup> J. A. Burrow provides a brief textual overview in his chapter on fourteenth-century Arthurian romance, though he goes on to contrast

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the features and textual variation of the extant manuscripts, see Mills' edition of *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 1–9. A discussion of composition dates, including a reasoning for its dating to within the last quarter of the fourteenth century, may be found in pp. 66–68 of the same edition.

<sup>3</sup> This is largely, perhaps, owing to the work carried out by Maldwyn Mills, who supports this view and has written extensively on it, including a detailed account in the preface to his EETS edition of the text (pp. 60–68) and in his essay, 'The Composition and Style of the "Southern" Octavian, Sir Launfal and Libeaus Desconus', *Medium Aevum*, 31 (1962), 88–109. Here he develops the analysis carried out by M. Kaluza, 'Thomas Chestre, Verfasser Des *Launfal*, *Libeaus Desconus* und *Octavian*', *Englische Studien*, 18 (1893), 165–190. A skeptical response may be found in Stephen H. A. Shepherd ed., 'Sir Launfal', in *Middle English Romances: Authoritative Texts, Sources and Backgrounds Criticism*, Norton Critical Editions (New York, NY: Norton, 1995), n. 8, p. 218.

<sup>4</sup> M. Mills ed., *Lybeaus Desconus*, Early English Text Society 261 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Salisbury and Weldon eds., *Lybeaus Desconus*. Quotations are drawn from the more recent TEAMS edition, though the EETS is consulted for scholarly details and further supplemented material.

<sup>5</sup> Alan T. Gaylord, 'The Moment of "Sir Thopas:" Towards a New Look at Chaucer's Language', *The Chaucer Review*, 16/4 (1982), 311–29.

its narrative structure unfavourably to that of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>6</sup> Later critical responses are more positive. Cory Rushton establishes some interesting parallels between Gingalain and his father, Gawain.<sup>7</sup> Eve Salisbury discusses medieval depictions of female sexuality in relation to film critic Barbara Creed's notion of the 'monstrous-feminine', which she defines as a 'paradoxical figure of resistance and attraction, desire and revulsion, aggression and submission, the beautiful and the hideous, the familiar and the unfamiliar'.<sup>8</sup> In her article's final section, she considers the ways in which the English text's linguistic and cultural adaptation of its French source mirror the transforming female body, resulting in what she identifies as a 'transformed poetic corpus' that demonstrates a shift in emphasis away from 'the vicissitudes of courtly love to matters of legitimacy and marriage'.<sup>9</sup> James Weldon examines the significance of the transformed Lady's naked body in "'Naked as she was bore": Naked Disenchantment in *Lybeaus Desconus*'.<sup>10</sup> He compares in some detail the lady's appearance in the middle English romance to that of her analogue in the French text. Towards the end, the essay includes some analysis of the gifts of clothing given to her by Lybeaus at the poem's conclusion, though it presents these details in a very specific context: Weldon reads the transformed Lady's speech, actions, and appearance as indicative of her consent to be married, writing persuasively regarding their evocation of medieval marriage customs and legal contracts.<sup>11</sup> This chapter argues that a similar underlying significance can be seen in the rituals surrounding the conferral and wearing of chivalric garments. Like Weldon, I argue that clothing can be 'read' and interpreted in a variety of contexts, though my emphasis focuses instead on illuminating contemporary attitudes towards ritual and inclusion within courtly communities, rather than centring notions of consent within the marriage contract. Therefore, though critical

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<sup>6</sup> J. A. Burrow, 'The Fourteenth-Century Arthur', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (London: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 69–83, at p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Cory Rushton, 'Absent Fathers, Unexpected Sons: Paternity in Malory's "Morte Darthur"', *Studies in Philology*, 101/2 (2004), 136–152.

<sup>8</sup> Eve Salisbury, "'Lybeaus Desconus": Transformation, Adaptation, and the Monstrous-Feminine', *Arthuriana*, 24/1 (2014), 66–85, p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> Salisbury, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> James Weldon, "'Naked as she was bore": Naked Disenchantment in *Lybeaus Desconus*', *Parergon*, 17/2 (2000), 67–99.

<sup>11</sup> Weldon, 'Naked Disenchantment', pp. 91–98.



analysis has focused on the *Lybeaus* text, extensive analysis of its use of dress with reference to the thematic discussion and approach that I now pursue has not taken place. In this chapter, I seek to expand the existing critical discussion, adding to work, such as Weldon's, that analyses a singular instance (such as the Lady of Synadowne's appearance) or aspect (marriage) of dress within the text. I suggest that the acquiring of chivalric articles represents a fundamental means through which Gingalain's developing chivalric identity is evoked. Unlike previous critical works, I do not focus on one instance or example. Instead, I provide in-depth close readings of each significant instance of clothing within the text. Such a wide-ranging but close thematic treatment of the topic has not yet been attempted within scholarship. In this way, this chapter analyses Gingalain's personal journey of chivalric development, but it also examines the wider courtly world which he seeks to join.

In *Lybeaus Desconus*, Gawain's illegitimate son grows up isolated from courtly society and in ignorance of his true identity. Equipping himself in a fallen knight's armour, he journeys to Arthur's court. Arthur is impressed with the boy's beauty and nobility; making him a knight, he gives him the moniker of Lybeaus Desconus, the 'Fair Unknown'. After many adventures, Gingalain becomes a knight of the Round Table, freeing the imprisoned lady of Synadowne, marrying her and becoming a ruler. The early revelation of Gingalain's identity centres issues of identity within the narrative.<sup>12</sup> The style and form of the English text lacks the complex features that characterise the French source; the courtly narrator's meditations on knightly courtesy are absent, and the text presents instead a greater emphasis on action and narrative development. Gingalain's victories are consistently informed by an awareness of the Arthurian court and his position within this chivalric society. The development of chivalric identity is illustrated through clothing. Gingalain's early errors signify his bumbling inexperience; their mature revisiting provides a venue for chivalric and personal growth. In violation of the chivalric code, the young boy dresses himself in a dead knight's armour; this solitary action is transformed through the subsequent, extensive arming ritual at the Arthurian court, becoming a public

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<sup>12</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 3.

celebration of Gingalain's induction into the chivalric community. Masculine, chivalric armour contrasts with the feminised clothing worn by women and figures associated with women; it illustrates the conflict between the courtly and chivalric spheres, as Gingalain struggles to position himself within these spheres.

The French source of *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Le Bel Inconnu*, is longer than the English text and is filled with details of material culture as well as philosophical asides from the narrator. Visual display is emphasised, with lengthy accounts of dress appearing in the text. Weldon finds evidence for what he characterises as the text's 'focus upon clothing' in the setting of the transformation scene within the *aumaire*.<sup>13</sup> Several lengthy descriptions of clothing and armour appear. In some cases, these utilise some of the same details as the English text (such as squirrel fur). Particular emphasis is given to the descriptions of the several lovely ladies that appear throughout the text; an abundance of descriptive elements appear, illustrating in depth the details of the ladies' beauty and clothing. In one notable instance, the description of the mantle worn by the princess Blonde Esmeree occupies just over thirty lines.<sup>14</sup> The mantle's exotic nature (it is a robe 'd'outre mer', l. 5144), the use of rich materials such as gold thread, sable and silk, as well as the significance of the subject of embroidery and the positive effect this has on her appearance, are all fully and in some detail evoked.<sup>15</sup> The appearance of other characters, such as the transformed Lady of Synadowne, is also comparatively different in the French source: rather than appearing naked, the Lady is dressed in a green silk robe with a rich cloak.<sup>16</sup> Though the English text incorporates several passages of rich description, it filters and prunes the instances found in the French text. It seems to me, therefore, that the English text displays a reduction in the overall effect of these descriptions. The passages of rich description survive, but are fewer in number. I believe this reflects the English text's more compact nature, rather than

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<sup>13</sup> Weldon, 'Naked Disenchantment', p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> Renaud de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. by Michèle Perret, trans. by Michèle Perret and Isabelle Weill, Moyan Âge (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), p. 306, lines 5141–5173.

<sup>15</sup> Renaud de Beaujeu, *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. by Michèle Perret, trans. by Michèle Perret and Isabelle Weill, Moyan Âge (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), p. 306.

<sup>16</sup> Weldon discusses the materials and potential significance of the lady's appearance in the French text in some depth: see 'Naked Disenchantment', pp. 83–86.

suggesting any particular adaptive emphasis on omission or alteration of dress-related passage. This is because both texts demonstrate a similar use of opulence, with long descriptive passages (shorter, as I have just established, in the English text) of dress, and the adaptation preserves the function of these dress-related passages. In both texts, the richness of the materials emphasises the beauty of the female wearers and the glory of the Arthurian court. The time given, in the French text, to the description of a single mantle, is in accordance with the principles of a society that emphasises visual display as a form of communication and identification. The mantle, worn as the topmost article of clothing, plays a significant role in identification and visual display, as seen in other romances such as de Roteland's other romance, *Ipomedon* and its English adaptation, *Ipomadon*. In the English text, similar usages can be identified in the rich description of Ellene's dress, as well as the others studied within this section. In this way, the principles guiding the presentation of clothing in the French text are broadly consistent within both English and French romance.

Gingalain's induction into chivalric society begins when he stumbles across the body of a dead knight. The knight is clad in 'armes stoute and gaye' (*LD* 35), and Gingalain strips the body of its armour.

He toke off that knyghtis wede;  
Hym sylffe therin well fayre can shrede,  
All in that bryght armour.  
Whan he had do that in dede,  
To Glastynbury the childe him yede,  
Ther lay Kyng Arthure. (*LD* 37–42)

Gingalain's motivations for seizing this armour are unclear, as the text does not provide an insight into the impetus for his actions. Here, Gingalain conforms to the Fair Unknown narrative established in other texts. Perhaps, like Chrétien's Perceval, who covets the Red Knight's armour, Gingalain is simply attracted to the fair appearance of knight's armour, as its description as 'stoute and gaye' (*LD* 35) and 'bryght' (*LD* 39) seem to suggest. In accordance with the gentler treatment afforded to knightly practitioners of warfare, removing a fallen

knight's armour was a dishonourable and discouraged practice.<sup>17</sup> The dissonance of Gingalain's position is presented in the erroneous action of dressing in the armour: Gingalain's desire to see himself in knightly armour positions him within the chivalric sphere at the same time as his dishonourable action excludes him. With this action, misguided as it is, Gingalain attempts a clumsy kind of self-fashioning. His desire to become a knight leads to his (erroneous) self-presentation as a knight. To the boy's mind, performance and identity are the same thing: knights wear armour, Gingalain wears armour; therefore, Gingalain is now a knight. Unlike in *Perceval of Galles* or *Perceval*, these miscalculations are not characterised as arrogant presumption or holy innocence. They are simply misapprehensions, and the text moves swiftly on. There is not, as in *Le Conte du Graal*, a lengthy discussion as to the various elements and accoutrements of knightly dress; nor is there, as in *Perceval of Galles*, a protracted comic scene demonstrating to the fool's ignorance of knightly gear. Instead, Gingalain seems instinctively to understand the use of the items before him. Despite his errors, a change from peasant clothes to the armour of knighthood initiates his journey of chivalric becoming.

In comparison to other Fair Unknowns, Gingalain undergoes a comparatively short learning trajectory in which he swiftly acquires his armour and immediately seeks out other knights. The problems Gingalain now poses for Arthur, the gatekeeper of the Arthurian community, are complex: does Gingalain's performative self-fashioning in and of itself represent a statement of identity? If so, is this enough? Is Gingalain's desire to be assimilated within the chivalric scheme more significant than his otherness? The answer to this question is a resounding and immediate yes. Upon arriving at the Arthurian court, Gingalain and Perceval immediately ask to be made knights:

I am a child unknowthe  
 And come out of the southe  
 And wolde be made a knyght; (LD 49–51)

This is reminiscent of Perceval's definition of himself as “myn awnn modirs childe, / Comen fro the woddess wyld” (*POG* 506–507). Both Gingalain and Perceval lack the means through

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<sup>17</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 142.

which to adequately contextualise their identities; their self-presentation as would-be knights is at odds with the domestic sphere their words evoke. Their self-definitions are childish and unformed; perhaps struggling with the dissonance between his Gingalain's childish speech and courtly manner, Arthur asks further about his identity. The boy answers:

Sayde Gyngelayn, 'Be Seint Jame!  
I ne wote whate is my name;  
I am the more nyse;  
But while I was at home,  
My moder, on hir game,  
Clepped me Bewfice.' (LD 61–66)

Lybeaus moves from the sphere of women to the brotherhood of men; Arthur gives him a moniker to replace that given by his mother: 'Lybeus Disconeus' (LD 79–80). Here, Gingalain progresses from the domestic to the courtly sphere. The names are similar, both referring to Gingalain's beauty; 'Bewfic' meaning 'Beautiful Son' and 'Lybeaus Desconus', the 'Fair Unknown'. Salisbury and Weldon also find within it a pun on "'Bewvisage.'"<sup>18</sup> His childhood name contextualises his relationship with his mother ('beautiful son'); his courtly name contextualises his relationship with the court ('Fair Unknown'). The key significance here lies not with the name but the namer; through granting him a name, Arthur inducts the boy into the social sphere. In this way, Gingalain gains a courtly identity. Gingalain's subsequent knighthood underlines his induction into this community; Perceval is made to wait until partway through the narrative, whereas Gingalain is knighted immediately (LD 85–87).

For Gingalain, this induction into the social sphere is intertwined with the chivalric sphere. He seeks to prove himself:

Whan he was a knyght made,  
Of Arthure a bone he bade  
And sayde, 'My lorde fre:  
In hert I were full glad  
The first fyghtinge that ye hadde  
That men will aske of thee.' (LD 94–99)

Gingalain understands implicitly the significance of reputation in this honour-based society; he seeks to establish his own identity within the chivalric sphere. An opportunity to do so duly

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<sup>18</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 143.

presents itself; the feast is interrupted by the arrival of a lady and a dwarf who ask for aid. Both are magnificently dressed:

She was clothed in tarse,  
Rownd and nothingscarse,  
I-pured with blawdenere;  
Hir sadill was overgilt  
And with diamondis fylt:  
Milke white was hir destere.

(LD 118–129)

Formulaic descriptions of feminine beauty appear; the lady is ‘bryght and shene’ (LD 19) and ‘so semely on to sene’ (LD 122). With her dress, the lady Ellene demonstrates the status and power of her mistress, the lady of Synadowne, for whom she acts as emissary and envoy. Her clothing, and that of her dwarf, is described at length; it suggests, with its opulence, the importance of the visitors and also the significance that they represent to Gingalain: the great wealth and power that he will amass through them. The lady’s gown denotes her exotic provenance and her mistress’s wealth. She wears *tarse*, a rich silk of many colours popular in the fourteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Originating in the East and associated with Tharsia and the Mongol Empire, it was sometimes added to cloth of gold and richly adorned with flowers and animal designs, contributing to its cost.<sup>20</sup> *Blawdenere* refers to an expensive fur difficult to determine with certainty; Salisbury and Weldon suggest ermine in this instance.<sup>21</sup> However, the preceding ‘I-pured’ (LD 120), meaning trimmed, is a term usually applied to miniver.<sup>22</sup> Squirrel fur was most fashionable from the thirteenth to late fourteenth century; a vast number of terms existed referring to particular processes of its use. Miniver was a white fur, edged with gray, produced from the white stomachs of the grey Baltic squirrel.<sup>23</sup> The lady’s saddle is decorated with diamonds, indicating strength, virtue, and a resistance to temptation and poison.<sup>24</sup> This resistance towards temptation and poison will perhaps be particularly useful in reminding Gingalain of his duty when seduced by Dame Amour. A final rather more puzzling element is

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<sup>19</sup> Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, p. 282.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Tars’, *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project*, University of Manchester, last accessed: 13th March 2018, < <http://lexisearch.arts.manchester.ac.uk/entry.aspx?id=4633> >.

<sup>21</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 221.

<sup>23</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 83.

given to her with the inclusion of a destrier. The mention of a horse is not in and of itself unusual, as horses often appear in medieval romance and can ‘characterise [their] riders’.<sup>25</sup> A conventional feature of the metrical romance and the *chanson de geste*, this destrier or warhorse is rare and valuable and emphasises her mistress’s wealth. This horse, then, perhaps introduces a combative quality to the lady, potentially emphasising the chivalric testing that she represents for Gingalain.

The dwarf is similarly dressed:

The dwerf was clothed in ynde,  
Byfore and eke behinde:  
Stoute he was and pertte.  
Amongis all Cristyn kyng  
Suche sholde no man fynde;  
His surcote was so ryche bete. (LD 130–135)

Like Ellene, he is also dressed in luxury garments and textiles. He appears here in *ynde*, a dark blue, indigo shade popular from the twelfth century onwards.<sup>26</sup> Darker shades were more difficult and costly to produce, so wearing this shade becomes a statement of class. His garments are of high craftsmanship (‘his surcote was so ryche bete’, LD 135). Other manuscripts retain the significance of the association, though they change some details; the dwarf appears also in the richest of medieval textiles, *scarlett*.<sup>27</sup> This elevates his position still further; red, the colour of power, imbues him with a regal aspect rather than the nobility suggested by the dark blue. He wears a surcoat, a garment worn throughout the medieval period by both men and women.<sup>28</sup> This surcoat is ‘richly worked over’, indicating some sort of decoration, most likely embroidery; this frequently within the late medieval period used gold, though earlier examples utilised silver thread. The dwarf’s appearance is more fully described than the lady:

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<sup>25</sup> Thorlac Turville-Petre, ‘Alliterative Horses’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 112/2 (2013), 154–168, at p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> Heller, *Fashion in Medieval France*, p. 3; Stella Mary Newton, *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince: A Study of the Years 1340–1365* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1980), p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 145.

<sup>28</sup> For an account of the changing fashions of the surcoat throughout the late medieval period, see Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 217–260, 362–413.

His berde was yelewe as wax,  
To his girdyll hange his fax:  
The sothe to say in sertenté,  
Of gold his shone were dight  
And coped as a knyght:  
That signyfiyd no poverti.

(LD 136–141)

Though the dwarf is introduced with the extended detailed descriptions usually associated with women in the text, the romance contains several instances of such extended description-introductions: the first occurs with the introduction of Ellene and the dwarf (LD 118–153); the second is in Ellene's appearance at the beauty contest (LD 861–872); the third is the introduction of the rival lady and winner of the beauty contest (LD 897–920); the fourth with the return of the lady of Synadowne to her people (LD 2145–2159). Interestingly, the seductive Dame Amour is the only lady who is not introduced in this fashion; her description consists only of one formulaic descriptor: 'a lady bright as floure,' (LD 1461). Despite this lengthy introduction, the dwarf's description indicates nobility and positions him within the chivalric sphere. He does not wear the armour and accoutrements associated with knighthood, but the dwarf's shoes are 'coped as a knyght' (LD 140). The dwarf's long beard conveys gravity and authority.<sup>29</sup> The lady is beautiful, the dwarf noble; both are richly dressed. These companions facilitate Gingalain's further induction into the chivalric sphere. The text subsequently emphasises the dwarf's chivalric reputation: 'wyde were spronge his fame, / by northe and eke by southe' (LD 143–144). It is with these companions that Gingalain departs from the court to establish his own chivalric reputation.

Gingalain's departure is preceded by a lengthy arming ritual. In it, Gingalain is presented with knightly garments and accoutrements by a select number of Arthur's inner circle; this marks the formalisation of the induction into the chivalric community begun by the boy's journey to the Arthurian court. Both the dresser-knights and the articles in which Gingalain is dressed are described in great detail, illustrating Gingalain's connection to this chivalric scheme. The small number of knights is significant both for their literary reputation and personal

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of the royal associations of beards in medieval art, see Margaret Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 59.



connection to Gingalain. Echoing the initial meeting of Perceval with the knights of the Arthurian court (*POG* 257–264), the scene emphasises kinship and belonging. The ritualistic aspect of this scene is highlighted by the ceremonial, measured way in which the knights appear in the text:

The fyrst was Syr Gawayne,  
That othere, Syr Persyvale,  
The third was Syr Iwayne,  
The fourthe highte Agfayne: (*LD* 241–244)

Gingalain is dressed by his kinsmen; Gingalain’s father, Gawain, is the first knight to appear (*LD* 241), cementing Gingalain’s right to belong in this chivalric scheme. Perceval appears next, to whom Gawain and Arthur are in many texts related. The next two knights are Ewain and Agfayne: like Gawain, Ewain/Yvain is often Arthur’s nephew; this is, then, another kinsman. Out of all of these figures, Agfayne is the only one to whom Gingalain is not directly related; his identity is contested; he could alternatively be Griffayn, Agravain, or Griflet.<sup>30</sup> There are echoes, here, of Perceval’s first meeting with the Arthurian knights: ‘And all were of his kyn’ (*POG* 264). Though the poet concludes the knights’ introduction with ‘thus telleth the Frensshe tale’ (*LD* 245), the selection of the knights is likely to be his own; *Le Bel Inconnu* does not contain an analogous arming scheme. Together, the knights dress Gingalain in a ‘sorkett white as mylke’ (*LD* 247); white was a pure colour and as such, always the colour for garments worn close to the skin.<sup>31</sup> This shirt is not associated with a singular knight; instead, the joint action of the many knights represents the individual’s induction into the chivalric community. A mail shirt or ‘haubryk’ (*LD* 249–251) is then placed above this. Like the shirt, this article is not associated with any singular knight; instead, the individual links of the chainmail shirt evoke the unity of chivalric brotherhood. To rend it breaks the association and positions Gingalain as an outsider to this scheme. These associations bring new significance to the hostile knights’ threats: “‘Thyne haubrek we shall rende / Ther to we bethe full bounde.’” (*LD* 475–476).

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<sup>30</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 149.

<sup>31</sup> Pastoreau, *The Devil’s Cloth*, p. 64.

The joint action then divides into a number of individualised exchanges. The order established in the first stanza is repeated in the second; Gawain is the first to arm Gingalain:

Syr Gawyn, his owe syre,  
Henge aboute his swyre  
A shelde with one cheferon;  
And an helme of riche atyre  
That was stele and none ire (LD 252–256)

The link between Gingalain and Gawain is made explicit through heraldry. Though the design here appears as a ‘cheferon’, other manuscripts record the design as a griffon,<sup>32</sup> a heraldic device sometimes associated with Gawain.<sup>33</sup> Gingalain is inducted into Gawain’s family through the use of his chivalric crest. The other knights arm Gingalain with defensive and offensive articles; Perceval dresses him in a ‘helme of riche atyre’ (LD 255), while Lancelot equips Gingalain with a spear and a ‘fell fauchone’ (LD 260). The *MED* defines the *fauchoun* or *fachoun* as ‘a large, broad sword with a curved blade, a falchion; also, a short stabbing-sword or dagger.’<sup>34</sup> This weapon appears in *Sir Gowther* and other Saracen romances, in which it is imbued with ‘exotic’ Eastern connotations.<sup>35</sup> Gowther’s falchion seems to function in a similar fashion to this article. It ‘seems almost to function as a symbol of his knighthood’.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Ewain brings him a steed that is ‘egir as eny lyoun’ (LD 264); this is possibly an allusion to Chrétien’s *Yvain (Le Chevalier Au Lion)*.<sup>37</sup> The knights arm Gingalain with articles that evoke in some way their own identities; their careful attention and mentorship represent the means by which Gingalain’s own chivalric identity is formed.

The arming ritual represents a cleansing response to Gingalain’s dishonourable dressing in the fallen knight’s armour. The young Gingalain dresses himself, in isolation, wrongly, in

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<sup>32</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 150.

<sup>33</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 390.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Fauchoun’, *The Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan, last accessed 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED15356>>.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the falchion’s significance in *Sir Gowther*, see Raluca L. Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 64–65.

<sup>36</sup> Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 265–72.

<sup>37</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)*, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: édités d’après la Copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, ed. by Mario Roques, *Les Classiques Français du Moyen Âge IV* (Paris: H. Champion, 1960).

armour taken from a fallen knight; here, Gingalain is dressed by his peers in chivalric garments given by the Arthurian court. The first arming scene displays Gingalain's isolation from society and his ignorance of chivalric conduct; the second arming scene constitutes Gingalain's induction into society and initiation into chivalric ritual. The first arming scene represents a kind of wilful self-fashioning: a statement of intention rather than of origin. The child fashions, in solitude, his own identity; he procures ill-fitting accoutrements that represent the intention of identity rather than the identity itself. He dresses himself in a chivalric manner and parades in front of his intentioned peers. The second arming ritual represents a joyous celebration of initiation and acceptance; the maladapted elements are stripped away and replaced with the symbols of the community. He is now one of them. In this way, Gingalain is fully armed with the equipment of knighthood; his initiation into the chivalric community is complete. Perceval is similarly inducted into Arthurian society through Gawain's dressing him in armour (*POG* 765); though Arthur possibly intends some sort of analogous public arming scene, Perceval leaves before this can happen (*POG* 649–660).

No sooner is Gingalain invested with these knightly articles but he must fight to keep them. After leaving the Arthurian court, Gingalain triumphs over his first foe and is pursued by three knights. Gingalain's challenge here is to face enemies seeking to strip him of the chivalric identity recently conferred by the Arthurian court through the arming ritual. The knights taunt him with honour-based insults: he is a 'traytor' (*LD* 472) who must 'torne agayne and fight, / Or leve here thi rennoun!' (*LD* 472–473). These words are accompanied by a specific threat: "thyne haubrek we shall rende, / ther to we bethe full bounde." (*LD* 475–476). The knights threaten here to destroy the physical representation of Gingalain's chivalric identity; though the threat to 'rende' the hauberk carries with it implications of violence, it is Gingalain's honour, not his life, that is explicitly targeted here. The significance of this line rests upon the meaning of the word 'rende'; Mills gives 'rip to pieces (lacerate)',<sup>38</sup> while the *MED* gives several meanings: 'to cleave'; 'to severely wound'; 'to remove (sth.) violently, tear off, tear out; also,

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<sup>38</sup> Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, at line 451.

tear (board from board)'.<sup>39</sup> Salisbury suggests the line indicates that 'the brothers threaten to [...] unravel or break Lybeaus' chain mail to pieces.'<sup>40</sup> There are discrepancies in the manuscripts; two give 'unlace', enhancing this undressing element.<sup>41</sup> The knights' threat possibly contains elements of all these meanings; Gingalain's armour will be pierced or destroyed, but his defeat will be primarily chivalric. In this context, the knights' threat to Gingalain is multiple; the physical danger is not that he should sustain any bodily damage, but that his chivalric identity could be torn, broken, or stripped away.

This repeats the defeat that initiates the episode; Gingalain shows his innately courtly ability, avoiding the 'grete vylonye' (*LD* 384) of slaying an unarmed knight. Instead, he demonstrates an innate understanding of chivalric conduct, contrasting with his earlier unchivalric appropriation of the dead knight's armour.

'In haste knele thu downe  
 And swere on my fauchon  
 Thou shalt to Artor wende  
 And say, "Lord of renon,  
 As overcome person,  
 A knyght me heder ganne sende,  
 That ye cleppen in your use  
 Lybeus Disconous,  
 Unkothe of right and kynde.'"

(*LD* 393–401)

The defeated knight is made to go, in dishonour, to Arthur's court and recount the tale of Gingalain's victory. In this way, Delaraunche's honour is conferred on Gingalain as the boy's chivalric reputation grows. Delaraunche's defeat is of reputation and thus primarily chivalric in nature. Here, Gingalain's behaviour compares favourably with the bloodthirstiness of Perceval (*POG* 676–708). Gingalain's victory over the brothers affirms his knightly identity; he sends these knights to Arthur's court to repeat the tale (*LD* 555–561). The victories of this episode establish and then reinforce Gingalain's chivalric reputation; he begins the slow acquisition of

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<sup>39</sup> 'Rēnden', *The Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan, last accessed 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED36764>>; Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconous*, p. 135.

<sup>40</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconous*, p. 135.

<sup>41</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconous*, p. 135.

*pris*. Gingalain's subsequent adventures sees him defeat two knights, and the rescued maiden's grateful father grants Gingalain gifts:

The Erle, for his gode dede,  
Yave him full riche mede:  
Shelde and armes bryght,  
And also a noble stede  
That was gode at nede  
In turnament and in fyght.

(LD 718–723)

The chivalric nature of these articles affirms Gingalain's knightly identity; the courtly accoutrements represent a 'formal recognition of Gingalain's status as a knight.'<sup>42</sup> As his reputation grows, his influence extends beyond the Arthurian court.

The focus now switches from chivalric combat to wider courtly conduct. Gingalain desires to conquer a rival knight and volunteers the lady Ellene to compete in a beauty contest against the knight's lady. This scene echoes the details previously seen in Ellene's introduction, though more details appear here. There is a pleasing continuity; she is clothed in the same fabric ('samyte'). Every element suggests opulence; her 'kerchevys fayre and white' (LD 865) are 'aryved with gold wyre', indicating a coif fashionable in the thirteenth century.<sup>43</sup> She wears a 'velvet mantill gaye / Purfild with gryce and graye' (LD 867–868); her mantle is of velvet, a high-quality silk textile fashionable for use in the mantles of the elite during the thirteenth century and often trimmed with fur for warmth.<sup>44</sup> Ellene's mantle is trimmed with two kinds of high-quality squirrel fur most popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>45</sup> The 'serkell upon hir moolde' (LD 870) is crafted of 'precious sstones and goolde / The best of that empire' (LD 871–872). Some details of colour and effect are given; her 'kerchevys' (LD 865) are white and her velvet mantle is brightly coloured (LD 867). Overwhelmingly, however, this description focuses on the richness of the clothing and not its overall appearance.

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<sup>42</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 159.

<sup>43</sup> Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, p. 148, pp.161–162.

<sup>45</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 133.

Ellene's rival is also dressed in rich garments; she is 'iclothed in purpyll palle' (*LD* 899), her mantle is 'ipowdered'—sprinkled—'with ermyne' (*LD* 904); meaning, her furs have been decorated with the animal's black tails, or, alternatively, with pieces of black lambskin (*budge*).<sup>46</sup> The circlet on her head is of 'stones and of goolde / And many a ryche amayle' (*LD* 907–908). These garments equal, if not exceed, Ellene's for value; purple, a regal colour since classical times, maintained some of these associations in the medieval period.<sup>47</sup> The textile is not specified, though the use of 'palle' assures the value. She wears the ermine that is more fashionable than Ellene's squirrel furs in the period from the late fourteenth century onwards; at the time of the English text's composition, this was more likely to be a more fashionable choice.<sup>48</sup> She wears a rich circlet of gold on her head, and her beauty is described in some detail:

As rose hir rudde was rede;  
 The here shone on hir hede  
 As gold wyre shynynge bryght.  
 Hir browes also blacke as sylke threde  
 Ibent in leynthe and brede;  
 Hir nose was streght and right.  
 Hir eyen gray as glasse,  
 Milke white was hir face:  
 So seid they that sawee that syght.  
 Hir swyre longe and smale;  
 Hir bewté to tellen alle  
 No man with mowthe myght. (*LD* 909–920)

More specific detail is here provided than in the formulaic phrases accompanying Ellene's introduction; Ellene is 'so semely on to sene' (*LD* 122), 'gentyll, bryght and shene, / a lovely messengere' (*LD* 119–20). The vivacity of description reflects the contest's outcome; Ellene loses, and Gingalain is humbled by the rival knight. This scene effectively illustrates the text's association of non-chivalric clothing with women, and, in the case of Ellene's dwarf, figures positioned tenuously between the chivalric and courtly spheres.

Gingalain's subsequent encounters similarly illustrate the conflict between the chivalric and feminine spheres. After journeying on from the beauty contest, Gingalain encounters the

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<sup>46</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 221.

<sup>47</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 40–42.

<sup>48</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, pp. 134–135.

beautiful Dame Amour; she gives him gifts of rich clothes and seeks to delay him, through enchantment, from his duty:

A lady bright as floure,  
That men calleth la Dame Amoure,  
Resseyved him wele and fayre  
And thanked hym with honour  
That he was hir socoure  
Agayne that giaunte file.  
To chambyr she him ledys  
And did off all his wedis  
And clothed hym in palle,  
And profirde him with worde  
For to be hir lorde  
Of cité and castell.

(LD 1461–1472)

Dame Amour strips him of his armour (LD 1468), replacing his chivalric garments with fine cloth. Palle is otherwise associated with sorcery in the text; the only inhabitants of the enchanted castle imprisoning the Lady of Synadowne are ‘mynstralis cladde in palle’ (LD 1850). With this gift, Dame Amour destabilises Gingalain’s position in courtly society and curtails his journey of chivalric questing. Once more, Gingalain is dressed by others; echoing the maiden’s grateful father, Gingalain’s demonstration of chivalric prowess is rewarded with gifts. The knight’s chivalric gifts of armour and mount (LD 718–723) do not, however, destabilise Gingalain’s position within the chivalric scheme but instead confirm it. In this instance, Gingalain is uncomfortably positioned between two conflicting spheres. Dame Amour’s spell ends when Gingalain is reminded of his duty by the lady Ellene. She evokes specifically his knightly identity, addressing him as “Knyght” (LD 1501): “thou arte false in thi laye / Ageynes Kynge Arthure!” (LD 1501–1502). In response, Gingalain sets aside the soft cloth of femininity and dresses himself once more in the masculine chivalric garments:

There he ganne outebreke  
Fro that gentyll dame,  
And toke with hym his stede,  
His shelde, his iren wede,  
And reden forthe all in same.

(LD 1513–1517)

Here, he re-establishes his chivalric identity in response to the conflicting influence of love that attempts to destabilise it.

Gingalain's systematic acquisition of *pris* is rewarded with further initiation into the chivalric brotherhood, as his mentors grant him a seat on the Round Table:

Kynge Arthur had gode game,  
And so had alle in same,  
That herde that tale ytolde.  
And chosyn hym prophytable,  
By knyght of the Rounde Table,  
To fyght with spere and shelde. (LD 1263–1268)

Throughout the narrative, Gingalain establishes his position within an honour-based system; he sends numerous defeated enemies to relate his deeds before the Arthurian court. The arming ritual illustrates the beginning of Gingalain's journey towards establishing his chivalric identity; this second knightly ceremony confirms Gingalain's position within chivalric society. He joins the knights who dressed and armed him, becoming their equal. With it, his transition from an isolated outsider ('I am a child unknowthe / and come out of the southe' LD 49–50) to a member of the chivalric brotherhood is complete. In this way, Gingalain's chivalric identity is intertwined with his chivalric reputation; his social identity is reliant on both.

The position of this scene is significant; Gingalain's identity as an Arthurian knight is affirmed before his struggle to complete his quest. With this formal inclusion in the Round Table grouping, he represents, through his actions and conduct, the Arthurian court; his triumph is their triumph, but his failure is also theirs. Gingalain's worries that he should be 'shulde be defamed/ To Arthur kynge his lorde' (LD 1993–1994) demonstrate more than a courtly concern with dishonour; though his induction into the community is repeatedly formalised through the narrative, Gingalain still struggles to conceptualise his own chivalric identity. He has lost his external representations of knighthood: he has 'lorne his swerde' (LD 1991), and 'his stede was lamed' (LD 1992); he worries that his chivalric identity will prove similarly transient. Lybeaus' imperfect preparation contrasts with the two sorcerers he faces:

He loked into the felde  
And sawe, with spere and shelde,  
Men in armes twayne,  
In pured pure armoure  
Was lyngell and trappure,  
Wyth golde gaylye dight. (LD 1899–1904)



Their armour is magnificently beautiful, rich and opulent; its pure, unalloyed surface is adorned with gold. Though the sorcerers' use of magic sets them apart from the chivalric sphere, they outwardly present themselves as knights; the former clerks now dress in high-quality armour. It is difficult to ascertain with any certainty Lybeaus' appearance here. His own armour, if he still retains it here, is as impressive as theirs:

‘That one is armyd full severe  
 In roose rede armoure  
 With thre lyons of goolde.’ (LD 1599–1600)

There is some question as to whether he retains his armour at this point. The one manuscript sees Gingalain straighten his garments before entering the enchanted hall; the other five manuscripts give ‘Syr Lybeaus, knyght curtays’ instead of ‘Sir Libeous reyght his corcis’.<sup>49</sup> Salisbury and Weldon suggest that this ‘action suggests the young knight’s trepidation’, identifying the garment as a “‘corcis,” that is, corset, a piece of body armor or corselet’.<sup>50</sup> The *corset* also refers however to a kind of cloak or mantle; the *corset rond* was a circle-shaped mantle worn by men and women of all classes during the early 1300s, while other variations of the *corset* mantle were popular throughout the fourteenth century.<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to identify with precision the clothing worn here by Gingalain. The sorcerers taunt him, calling him a ‘knyght in palle’ (LD 1909). ‘Palle’ can refer to any kind of fine clothing, but is used throughout the text to identify fine dress of a non-chivalric kind and to provide a contrast to the chivalric armour worn by knights and other warriors: Dame Amoure replaces Gingalain’s armour with palle during her seduction and his subsequent dereliction of duty (LD 1469); the denizens of the enchanted hall are ‘mynstralis cladde in palle’ (LD 1850). The clerks’ words seem to suggest Lybeaus is not dressed in armour; “‘*They* thou be knyght in palle/ Fyght thou moste with us!’” (LD 1909–1910) they exhort him. Chivalric conduct governing conflict supports parity between opponents; for an honourable victory, each combatant must be equipped equally. This extends to clothing: in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, Arthur refrains from fighting Sir Gromer because

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<sup>49</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 178, at line 1854.

<sup>50</sup> Salisbury and Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 178.

<sup>51</sup> See: Evans, *Dress in Mediaeval France*, pp. 32–33; Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion*.

while Gromer is armed, Arthur is “clothyd butt in grene, perdé”.<sup>52</sup> Any disregard for this convention demonstrates the sorcerers’ monstrous nature and positions them further outside the chivalric sphere. It could be, however, that the significance of the ‘they’ (‘although’) instead lies with the dishonourable nature of the clerks; the line could instead suggest some form of ‘though Gingalain is a knight (and his knightly identity is confirmed by his courtly appearance), he must now fight these two clerks-turned-magicians’. In each instance, the conflict is unequal; either through the dress of the combatants, or through the dissonance between their chivalric and social status.

The choice to dress the sorcerers in chivalric garments is an interesting one. Though they appear in the external knightly accoutrements of swords and spears, they are not presented in heraldic terms as knights. Iran and Mabon represent a kind of monstrous subversion of the social order; they are lowly clerks whose use of black ‘nigromancy’ furthers their goal of attaining the highest position in the land (they imprison their mistress with a view to forcibly marrying her, *LD* 1784–1790). The sorcerers’ dressing in armour presents a wilful kind of self-fashioning similar to the boy’s first dressing in the fallen knight’s armour; both represent non-externally-sanctioned statements of identity. The contextualisation is, however, completely dissimilar. Gingalain’s pretension to higher status is vindicated by the subsequent narrative events and his own royal blood; his adoption of armour, though practised in ignorance, represents an unconscious alignment of inner and outer selves. The opposite is true for the sorcerers. Their affectation of chivalric gear represents a misalignment of identity and presentation and further disruption to the social order; though they are clerks and sorcerers, they aspire to be knights and kings. Gingalain’s affront to the chivalric code is made in ignorance; it is something that he does, rather than what he is; the clerks’ affront to the chivalric code lies less in what they do, but what they are. The sorcerer’s fine armour helpfully constructs a venue for chivalric contest, equalising the combatants and presenting the battle in terms of chivalric conflict. There is, after all, little glory to be won by defeating clerks; their status must be

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications), at line 83.

elevated so that Gingalain's victory is more suitably impressive. Though the sorcerers are similarly outside the chivalric sphere, they are Gingalain's equals in a way that the monstrous giants are not, and Lybeaus' triumph of these quasi-chivalric enemies then adds further to his chivalric *pris*. As the text makes clear, the deliberate co-opting of chivalric symbols does not avail the two clerks: 'Ne halpe hym not his armour, / His chawntementis ne his chambur' (*LD* 1974–1975). Their false distortion of chivalry cannot stand up to the true knighthood embodied in Gingalain's person. The ensuing battle is a struggle; the clerks fight dishonourably with sorcery and poisoned swords (*LD* 2022). The weaker of the two is quickly defeated, while 'the more shreweos' (*LD* 1985) gives Gingalain more trouble. Lybeaus, with his lost sword and lame horse appears at first to be at a disadvantage (*LD* 1987–1988); however, this one too is at last defeated.

Gingalain's victory over these figures represents the triumph of legitimatised chivalry over outlying, disruptive forces. It brings to a close his process of becoming initiated by his donning of the fallen knight's armour. Gingalain has successfully created a complete and mature chivalric identity; his chivalric identity is formulated through consistent and sustained attention; he is fully enmeshed within chivalric society and his dynastic and courtly connections are fully-formed. This conflict represents the culmination of the honour-reputation accrued deliberately by Gingalain throughout the narrative. Chivalric and social identity are intertwined; though Gingalain's efforts throughout the narrative to construct a chivalric and social identity have been rewarded with his elevation to the Round Table, there is a level of instability still present in this identity. Chivalric identities require constant affirmation. This contest is the most significant of the narrative; victory fulfils the vow Gingalain makes after joining the Arthurian court, representing in many ways his first inclusion within this scheme. Through his elevation to the Round Table, Gingalain comes to represent the Arthurian court. His identity now is significantly assimilated within the Arthurian scheme; through triumphing over him, the sorcerers also triumph over Arthur. In triumphing over the sorcerers, Gingalain confirms once more and finally his chivalric identity, and also establishes the Arthurian court's dominance

over alien spheres. This achievement is contextualised firmly by the Arthurian court; he achieves the quest he sets out on, fulfilling the vow to his lord and enacting his own chivalric duty. This battle constitutes Gingalain's fulfilment of the vow he makes in the beginning of his quest: 'I shall do that fight, And wyn that lady with myght,' (*LD* 169–170). Gingalain here demonstrates his understanding of the violence underpinning chivalric ritual. His quest requires 'strenthe and myght' (*LD* 175) and is only achieved 'with dynte of sper and swerde' (*LD* 176).

This victory is rewarded by a further confirmation of Gingalain's position within the social scheme. Transformed through the sorcerers' magic into a serpent, the lady of Synadowne requires the kiss of Gawain or his kinsman to regain her human form. In gratitude, she asks him to marry her (*LD* 2109–2114). Unlike Perceval, Gingalain's introduction into the social sphere progresses in orderly stages; Gingalain becomes a knight first, then a knight of the Round Table, then finally a king. Perceval instead becomes a knight, husband and king mid-way through the narrative, before returning to his earlier position. The narrative concludes with a final dressing scene; the lady stands before Gingalain 'as naked as she was bore' (*LD* 2137). In its erotic and redemptive tones, this scene echoes the baptism of Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras*, whose naked appearance before the Christian knights is erotically charged:

Wan þys lordes had seyzen hur naked,  
 In alle manere wyse well y-maked  
 On hure þay toke lekyng<sup>53</sup>

Though the Lady of Synadowne is stripped of her true identity by the sorcerers' machinations; she regains it in her return to her people:

A robe of purpyll riche,  
 Pillured with pure grice,  
 He sent hir on hyenge;  
 Kerchewes and garlandis ryche  
 He sent hir preveliche,  
 A byrd hit ganne hir bringe; (*LD* 2145–2150)

The textiles indicate her position in society; the purple reinforces her royalty. While figures throughout this text wear indigo, this is the first specific instance of purple, a colour associated

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<sup>53</sup> Sidney J. Herrtage ed., *Sir Ferumbras: Edited from the Unique Paper MS. about 1380 A.D.*, Early English Text Society ES 34 (London: Trübner, 1879), at lines 5887–5888.

with royalty from classical times.<sup>54</sup> Her purple robe is trimmed with ‘pure grice’, a high-quality squirrel fur made from the only the dark backs of grey northern squirrels.<sup>55</sup> This kind of fur was also associated with royalty in other romances.<sup>56</sup> The lady is joyfully adorned with ‘kerchewes and garlandis ryche’ (*LD* 2148); with this, she regains her human form and also her social identity. The clothing of the lady’s nakedness facilitates her reintroduction into society; she returns only ‘whan she was ready dight’ (*LD* 2151). The procession that follows echoes that of other returned rulers, such as Orfeo, in which the joint action of the community similarly demonstrates the return of the ruler to their people (*SO* 587–89). Like Orfeo, who ‘newe coround is’ (*SO* 593), the lady’s return is emphasised by a second crowning: ‘Of gold and stonys a crowne / Upon hir hede was sett’ (*LD* 2158); this does not take place in the privacy of her dressing scene, but ‘when she was comen to towne’ (*LD* 2157). This affirms, publically, her induction back into society.

In *Lybeaus Desconus*, the circle that is opened by Gingalain dressing himself in armour is closed with the Lady’s donning of her royal garments; both actions represent a deliberate self-fashioning in which the individuals seek to align interior identity with misaligned external presentation. Throughout the narrative, Gingalain establishes his own chivalric and social identities. This he achieves through the construction of a chivalric reputation. Clothing and armour play a significant role in the text’s depiction of chivalric identity; they constitute the means by which Gingalain’s chivalric identity is confirmed or destabilised. Chivalric dress constitutes the means by which courtly society inducts alien elements; the arming ritual and the earl’s gifts establish Gingalain’s chivalric identity. This is an identity he reinforces through the construction of a chivalric reputation. He triumphs over foes who seek to destroy or destabilise his chivalric identity: the three brothers who threaten to destroy his knightly armour; Dame

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<sup>54</sup> Lloyd B. Jensen, ‘Royal Purple of Tyre’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 22/2 (1963), 104–18. For more on purple’s royal heritage during the classical period, see Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 40–44.

<sup>55</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p.24.

<sup>56</sup> As subsequently discussed in Chapter Two, Orfeo’s loss of his kingship is emblemised by the ‘fowe and griis’ that he gives up in his time as a hermit. For line reference, see *Sir Orfeo*, ed. by Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, in *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), line 241.

Amour who replaces his armour with gifts of palle; and the two sorcerers, for whom victory against Gingalain would also signify victory against the Arthurian court. Detailed descriptions of non-chivalric garments serve to illustrate the dissimilarities between the masculine chivalric spheres and feminine courtly spheres. Within this narrative, women—and those associated with them, such as Ellene’s dwarf—appear in detailed descriptions of rich courtly dress. Ultimately, dress is used within the narrative to discuss ideas of chivalry and of duty, and it is the means by which Gingalain’s chivalric identity is established, contested, and ultimately confirmed.

### *Sir Perceval of Galles*

A late addition to the *Perceval* canon, *Sir Perceval of Galles* is extant in one manuscript dating from the mid-fifteenth century, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91.<sup>57</sup> The text’s metre is rough and its style unsophisticated. It was lampooned by Chaucer, whose Sir Thopas ‘Hymself drank water of the well / As dide the knught sire Percyvell’ (*ST* 916–916). Perhaps in part as a result, critics often emphasise the text’s stylistic failures and perceived superficiality of focus in contrast to the French text; the textual ‘emphasis is on simple effects’ and ‘farcical naivety rather than holy innocence’.<sup>58</sup> The relationship between *Sir Perceval of Galles* and Chrétien de Troyes’ *Perceval (Le Conte du Graal)* is contested; while earlier critics, such as Arthur C. L. Brown, position the two texts as unrelated,<sup>59</sup> later scholarship often pursues tighter comparisons of the Middle English and French texts.<sup>60</sup> Critics have also pursued more independent thematic textual analyses: Caroline D. Eckhart emphasises the liveliness of the text and the efficacy of its

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<sup>57</sup> For further details of the manuscript and the dating issue, see Braswell, *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain*, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Stephen Coote, *English Literature of the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 278.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur C. L. Brown, ‘The Grail and the English “Sir Perceval” (Continued)’, *Modern Philology*, 18/12 (1921), 661–673.

<sup>60</sup> David C. Fowler, ‘*Le Conte du Graal* and *Sir Perceval of Galles*’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 12/1 (1975), pp. 5–20, at p. 5.

comedy,<sup>61</sup> while Yin Liu analyses the boundaries Perceval traverses during his journey of becoming.<sup>62</sup> Raluca L. Radulescu interprets the text's emphasis on familial connection, suggesting that Perceval's quest, and the text's narrative shape, are circular, mimicking the ring given to Perceval by his mother.<sup>63</sup> In response to the nuances identified by Radulescu, I demonstrate that the reoccurring nature of the goat skin garb underlines the circular shape of the narrative, highlighting its emphasis on familial reconciliation and reconnection. Similarly, in response to Liu's development of 'boundaries' in *Sir Perceval*, I argue that this circularity of the reoccurring clothing motif does not negate Perceval's progress towards establishing a fully-formed chivalric identity. Instead, I suggest that the development of courtly identity and social connections are illustrated by the text's use of chivalric dress. This section, like the previous section on *Lybeaus Desconus*, presents a wide-ranging and in-depth analysis of each significant instance of dress within the text. Though there has been some critical discussion of dress in the text, this particular focus has not been carried out before now in scholarship.

*Perceval of Galles* develops the existing tensions and significances regarding dress in its French source. Unlike *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Le Bel Inconnu*, which provided more of a 'lessening' effect through a paring-down of long dress-related descriptive passages, *Perceval of Galles* exaggerates, alters and develops the thematic elements that appear in Chrétien de Troyes' *Li Conte du Graal*. Despite the strong tonal shift, some interrelated significances remain: the elements that are, in Chrétien's text, mildly humorous, are developed into full comedy (or parody) in the English text. Perceval's rustic but respectable Welshman's canvas shirt and breeches are transformed into rough, untreated goat skins (*POG* 273–274) which are described evocatively and repulsively.<sup>64</sup> In both texts, Perceval's changing dress suggests his status as an

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<sup>61</sup> Caroline D. Eckhardt, 'Arthurian Comedy: The Simpleton-Hero in "Sir Perceval of Galles"', *The Chaucer Review*, 8/3 (1974), 205–220.

<sup>62</sup> Yin Liu, 'Clothing, Armour, and Boundaries in *Sir Perceval of Galles*', *Florilegium*, 18/2 (2001), 79–92.

<sup>63</sup> Raluca L. Radulescu, 'Sir Percyvell of Galles: A Quest for Values', in *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. by Leah Tether and Johnny McFadyen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 389–402, at p. 392.

<sup>64</sup> Mention of Perceval's Welsh garb can be found at line 497 of Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: édités d'après la Copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, volume one, ed. by Mario Roques (Paris: H. Champion, 1952).

outsider, illustrating his journey towards chivalric maturity and social inclusion. Perceval's immediate challenge is to acquire and wear the Red Knight's armour and in so doing, acquire an outward appearance that suggests knighthood. Again, the English text develops and makes more plain what is only suggested in Chrétien's text. The boy is reluctant to part with the clothing his mother gives him, even after achieving the red knight's armour. This is repeated with further emphasis in the English text, in which Perceval believes himself a knight once he has dressed himself in the Red Knight's armour. Both texts utilise material details that are in keeping with the period's contemporary materials. In recognition of his new status, the French text's Gornemant (absent in the English text, though much of his significance is transferred to Gawain) dresses the boy in red-dyed hose and violet silk from India. Though this passage is not directly adapted in the English text, comparable use of dress as gifts appear: in recognition of his new inclusion within the Arthurian scheme, Arthur attempts to dress Perceval in armour, though comically fails to do so as the boy instead rushes off to battle (*POG* 650-656). Despite tonal variations and differing material details, therefore, the utilisation of dress across the two texts demonstrates a consistency of approach. In both texts, dress is used to illustrate externally Perceval's inner development of chivalric and courtly identity.

After the death of his knightly father, the young Perceval is brought up by his mother deep within a forest. He is wild and uncivilised, dressing himself in the skins of the creatures he has killed. Encountering by chance Arthur and his knights, he follows them to the Arthurian court. He subsequently triumphs over a successive number of seemingly invincible foes, before returning to the forest to bring his mother back to civilisation. Unlike in *Lybeaus Desconus*, many of these exploits are comedic or satirical in tone; Perceval's arrogance and bloodthirstiness are a source of comedy, as is his total ignorance of chivalric conduct. Fundamentally however, like many Fair Unknowns, the Perceval narrative is of identity lost and regained. Like Gingalain, Perceval begins as an outsider to the Arthurian court and becomes a knight, husband, and king. Clothing illustrates much of Perceval's journey from ignorant boy to mature knight. Perceval initially dresses in rough, naturalistic goatskins; he is astonished by the



rich appearance of the Arthurian court and covets the armour of the knights. He fights to win the Red Knight's armour; he eventually sets his armour aside; the penitential Perceval—now a knight—dresses himself once more in the animal skins of his youth. These images encircle the poem and are returned to with new significance in the concluding passages; they issue in themes of reconciliation and redemption, closing the narrative cycle and concluding Perceval's journey of chivalric becoming.

The narrative begins with the marriage of Perceval's parents. His mother is Arthur's sister; the dowry that Arthur grants her is rich and lavish. It takes the form of 'brode londes' (*POG* 34) and 'mony mobles' (*POG* 35) and 'robes in folde' (*POG* 33). The luxurious quality of these descriptions contrasts with the subsequent primitive nature of Acheflour's life in the forest. After the sudden death of her husband, she appears to leave these luxuries behind in her grief-stricken rush to the forest:

With wilde bestes for to playe,  
Scho tuke hir leve and went hir waye,  
Bothe at baron and at raye,  
And went to the wodde. (*POG* 177–180)

The material that is mentioned here is *raye*. This is a striped cloth made in Flanders, France or Italy; its stripes were grouped horizontally in different colours.<sup>65</sup> The stripe evokes Acheflour's rejection of the courtly community; in modern French, *rayer* ('to stripe') contains elements of exclusion, or of 'removing, deleting, eliminating'.<sup>66</sup> With her retreat into the forest, Acheflour removes herself from society. Stripes, with their unsettling disturbance of pure, unbroken forms, were coded negatively in the medieval period, and continental Europe also saw stripes worn by those othered by society; lepers, hangmen, Jews and prostitutes were sometimes required to wear distinctive striped clothing under sumptuary laws.<sup>67</sup> The nature of this cloth, then, reinforces Acheflour's self-exile; she excludes and others herself through her enforced retreat from society. The severity of her grief renders Acheflour unable to perform the expected roles

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<sup>65</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 188; Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Ray', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, p. 442.

<sup>66</sup> Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>67</sup> Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, pp. 13–14.

of widow and mother, and she rejects the courtly scheme entirely and the objects in which it is manifest:

Off all hir lordes faire gere,  
Wolde scho noghte with hir bere  
Bot a lyttill Scottes spere,  
Agayne hir son yode. (POG 186–189)

This is not, however, as straightforward as it seems; the narrative later reintroduces these rich robes. After Perceval's meeting with the knights, Ache flour produces rich fur, hitherto hidden, to introduce Perceval to the concept of social ranks: 'Scho schewede hym the menevaire - / Scho had robes in payre' (POG 409–410). Is this the clothing worn by Ache flour on the day of her departure? The abundance of these robes suggests otherwise; they appear 'in payre', or 'in sets', a qualification of indeterminate quality, but suggestive of quantity.<sup>68</sup> Is this, then, a textual oversight? The uneven quality of the verse certainly does not render this impossible. Whatever their origin, the significance of these robes remains identifiable; they represent a significant link to Ache flour's identity and social standing, and through her, to Perceval's true identity. The robes that conveniently re-appear for Perceval's lesson on social classes have been rejected by Ache flour. They have been hidden, presumably for some years; they are completely new to Perceval, who has not seen them before. The robes illustrate Ache flour's ambivalent attitudes towards her own identity; has she rejected her courtly position completely? If so, why are the robes here? If not, then why are they hidden?

The rich robes furnish the plot; this is now Perceval's story and they serve a useful purpose of teaching the boy about the complexities of social ordering. Through opulent dress, Ache flour introduces the concept of nobility; she also, silently, introduces the boy to his own conception of himself as noble. These garments contain personal significance for Perceval; this 'abundance of robes' constitutes a physical link to Ache flour's former life and her position within the Arthurian court. Ache flour is Arthur's sister; in this way, like Gingalain, Perceval is

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<sup>68</sup> Paire is defined as '(a) A set or suit (of clothes or vestments); -- also sg. with pl. meaning; in ~, in sets;' in the *Middle English Dictionary*. Last accessed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2018, <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32195>>.

intrinsically linked to the Arthurian court. Achefflour's disappearance constitutes a rejection of the Arthurian court and of her association with Arthur. Perceval's narrative is positioned as a progression towards re-establishing this lost kinship. In leaving behind her fine clothes, Achefflour rescinds her identifying symbols of her former identity. She strips herself of her identity as wife and sister, her connection to her late husband, and to Arthur; she is both nameless and kinless. The clothing illustrates her loss of position; Achefflour once wore silk, while her son now wears animal skins. The consequence of these actions is largely borne by Perceval; she deprives her son of tangible links to his true identity, until he decides to leave her. These tensions speak to the increased importance of male kindred and connection in relation to the rise of male primogeniture in the later Middle Ages. Within this scheme, women's significance lies primarily in the form of marriage; her role is fundamental both to the forging of alliances, and the accumulating and passing on of wealth through dowries. The significance of female connection decreases, however, with the rise of male primogeniture and entail in the later Middle Ages; in this context, male lineage and male connection becomes more significant as it is through these relationships that the dynastic line continues and the material wealth is preserved.<sup>69</sup> Achefflour's appearance is in accordance with the earlier scheme; she appears as a wealthy heiress; she ensures, with her marriage, the forging of alliances and passing of wealth between the elder Sir Perceval and Arthur. The death of the elder Perceval does not disrupt this scheme; the young Perceval now inherits his father's wealth, position and status. It is Achefflour's abrupt flight from court that frustrates the courtly system of male inheritance and connection. In this context, Achefflour's retreat from court becomes also a quasi-abduction of Perceval; she deprives her son of his inheritance, of his noble status, and of his identity as a member of the courtly elite. Her actions are dangerously disruptive to the social order, perhaps indicating the madness that is to follow.

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<sup>69</sup> See: Jennifer C. Ward, 'Noblewomen, Family and Identity in Later Medieval Europe', in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. by Anne J. Dugger (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 246–262.

In this isolation, Perceval grows up wild and uncourtly. He is ignorant of courtly society and his own role within it; he knows not ‘nurture ne lare’ (*POG* 231) and he is ignorant of Christianity (*POG* 242–244). This characterisation is not solely negative; though the young Perceval ‘wexe and wele thrafe’ (*POG* 212), ‘He was a gude knave!’ (*POG* 216). While hunting, Perceval encounters several Arthurian knights in a forest clearing. This first meeting between Perceval and the Arthurian knights positions Perceval as simultaneously connected to and removed from the chivalric sphere. The text juxtaposes the richly dressed knights with the boy in his rough animal skins:

In riche robes thay ryde;  
 The childe hadd no thyng that tyde  
 That he myghte in his bones hyde,  
 Bot a gaytes skynn. (*POG* 265–268)

The wearing of goatskins is unusual, though not entirely unprecedented; peasant women sometimes wore clothing made out of goatskins. This would be a kind of leather jerkin that was lined with the fur from the same animal, often lambskin, rabbit, or kid.<sup>70</sup> Medieval ascetics sometimes wore goatskins in rejection of more luxurious materials, while other, longer garments such as *piches*—a kind of fur coat—could also be made with goatskins.<sup>71</sup> The nature of these skins appears to be an addition unique the English text in the French *Perceval*, the boy is dressed like a Welsh peasant, in ‘de chenevaz grosse chemise’, and in a deer-hide tunic.<sup>72</sup> These rough garments do not immediately position the French Perceval as outside the social order; it is both the low degree of the animal used (domestic goat as opposed to courtly deer) and the extremely primitive finish of the goatskin hide, which identify the English Perceval as a figure on the fringes of the social order. Present in both texts is a sense of decline in this once-courtly dynasty. Dress indicates their changing status: Perceval’s mother was dressed in *raye* (*POG* 179), his father was dressed in armour (*POG* 67), and the boy now appears wearing animal skins (*POG* 268).

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<sup>70</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 24.

<sup>71</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 4, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, *Les Romans de Chrétien de Troyes: édités d’après la Copie de Guiot (Bibl. nat. fr. 794)*, volume one, ed. by Mario Roques (Paris: H. Champion, 1952), at line 497.

The boy's primitive dress is juxtaposed by the opulent appearance of the Arthurian court: 'in riche robes thay ryde' / the childe hadd no thyng that tyde' (*POG* 265–266). Like *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Ipomadon*, the hunters are dressed in green; 'Thay were clothede all in grene; / Siche hade he never sene' (*POG* 277–278). They are beautifully dressed for peacetime pleasures; their appearance evokes the civilisation, order and stability of the courtly society. Though Perceval is similarly presented as a hunter, he appears in very different terms. Perceval slays a variety of animals, such as 'Smalle birdes' (*POG* 217) and 'Hertys, hyndes also' (*POG* 218). Birds and deer are more traditional quarry of courtly hunts; in the English text, Perceval does not appear dressed in deer skins. Goat skins were not typically used for clothing; their use here is deliberate, positioning him immediately as a figure outside the social order. The dressing in goat skins is atypical in romance. Their use is also comedic, and possibly a parody of a nobleman's furs.<sup>73</sup> The knights' rich robes reflect the polished civility with which they rebuff Perceval's impertinent questions; when Perceval threatens to "sla yow all three" (*POG* 293), Kay—not usually known for his forbearance—mildly inquires into his identity (*POG* 298); this contrasts with his appearance in the French text, in which he appears in a more antagonistic capacity. Like Kay, the other knights' presentation is here uniformly positive; their gracious actions echo their fine appearance. In both instances, they embody a uniquely perfect civilisation which Perceval is simultaneously removed from and related to.

Through its use of clothing, the text constructs barriers between the knights and Perceval; simultaneously, however, it emphasises his connection to the Arthurian court:

One was Ewayne fytz Asoure,  
 Another was Gawayne with honour,  
 And Kay, the bolde baratour,  
 And all were of his kyn. (*POG* 261–264)

The text centres on the kinship theme; Perceval is doubly connected to the Arthurian court through the ties of friendship and blood. He is the king's nephew; his mother is Arthur's sister (*POG* 21–22) and his father is a knight of Arthur's court, a 'noble man' (*POG* 9). Despite his

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<sup>73</sup> Eckhardt, 'Arthurian Comedy', p. 209.

uncourtly appearance, Perceval is not, therefore, entering a realm from which he is intrinsically barred. The encounter with the knights in the forest clearing in some ways re-establishes the association between Achefflor and the court previously severed by her departure: the knights' appearance 'in riche robes' (*POG* 265) echoes the 'robes in folde' (*POG* 32) that Achefflor leaves behind. The knights he encounters in the forest constitute for Perceval exemplars of behaviour; these are the identities that Perceval, in his quest to become a knight, comes to emulate. Perceval's encounter with the Arthurian court carries overtures of reconciliation and the renewal of old bonds. The English text places the identity theme first and foremost, and this emphasis on identity fundamentally alters the significance of the encounter between Perceval and the knights: 'Nearly all the main participants are given a name or a genealogy or both. Thus, what is perhaps lightly suggested in Chrétien becomes explicit in the English poem.'<sup>74</sup> In the English text, the small group of knights Perceval encounters numbers three; in the French text it is five, and none appear by name; the smaller number facilitates a closer focus on the identities of the knights. These representatives of Arthur's court are within the English text contextualised by their names and dynastic identities. Gawain, the foremost English knight, is here 'Gawayne with honour' (*POG* 262). The impetuous and rash Kay is 'the bolde baratour' (*POG* 263). These knights represent a society, culture, and literary tradition, into which Perceval now enters. Like the knights that arm Gingalain, they function as mentors or exemplars to the young boy, representing the means through which he will realise his chivalric identity. Gawain is the main focus of attention here; this alteration potentially reflects the English nature of the text, reassigning much of the significance of the traditional Perceval mentor (Gornemant) to the most prominent knight within the English tradition.

Perceval is cognisant of the simultaneous connection and disparity between himself and the knights. He seeks to gain access to this community:

Then said Percyvell the lyghte,  
In gayte-skynnes that was dyghte,

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<sup>74</sup> Fowler, 'Le Conte du Graal and Sir Perceval of Galles', p. 11.

‘Will Kyng Arthoure make me knyghte,  
And I come hym till?’ (POG 313–316)

The Arthurian knights represent a courtly sphere from which Perceval, with his rough, natural goat skins, is removed. The narrative positions the boy as the Arthurian court’s quarry; the hunters, dressed in green, catch a boy, dressed in goatskins. As if with a prize catch, they return with their quarry; Perceval follows them to the court. He first returns to his mother, who instructs him in courtesy:

‘Lyttill thou can of nurtoure:  
Luke thou be of mesure  
Bothe in haulle and in boure,  
And fonde to be fre.’

Than saide the lady so brighte,  
‘There thou meteste with a knyghte,  
Do thi hode off, I highte,  
And haylse hym in hy.’ (POG 396–404)

Acheflour’s advice constitutes an induction into the chivalric world from which she has hitherto withdrawn. She affirms with these words Perceval’s position within this sphere, a position that is confirmed by the use of clothing:

‘Swete moder,’ sayd he then,  
‘I saw never yit no men;  
If I solde a knyghte ken,  
Telles me wharby.’  
Scho schewede hym the menevaire—  
Scho had robes in payre.  
‘Sone, ther thou sees this fare  
In thaire hodes lye.’  
‘Bi grete God,’ sayd he,  
‘Where that I a knyghte see,  
Moder, as ye bidd me,  
Righte so schall I.’ (POG 405–415)

Acheflour shows the boy miniver; this white fur is produced from the underside of grey northern squirrels. The fur would usually be white with an edging of grey, except in the case of *pured* miniver, in which the grey was removed.<sup>75</sup> The miniver indicates his noble heritage; frequently worn by nobility and associated with royalty in other medieval romances, it provides a tangible link to Perceval’s status within the Arthurian scheme. Similarly, the ‘robes in payre’

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<sup>75</sup> On the different types of squirrel furs in use for clothing during the medieval period, see: Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 24, 223–229.

(*POG* 410) echo the dowry's 'robes in folde' (*POG* 32) left behind by Acheflour during her retreat from the court.

Perceval leaves his mother and journeys to Arthur's court. When asked to identify himself, Perceval, like Gingalain, positions himself in the domestic and familial sphere; lacking the context of a wider society, Perceval's self-conceptualisation takes the form of 'myn awnn modirs childe' (*POG* 506). The text subsequently plays with the ideas of identity and appearance:

'Thou arte so semely to see,  
And thou were wele dighte!  
He saide, 'And thou were wele dighte,  
Thou were lyke to a knyghte  
That I lovede with all my myghte  
Whills he was one lyve.'(*POG* 543–548)

The repetition emphasises Perceval's appearance; though he is poorly dressed, Arthur recognises the boy's true identity. Unlike Perceval, who conflates identity with appearance (*POG* 801–804), Arthur possesses a more sophisticated understanding of social nuance; he is cognisant of, but able to see beyond, the correlation between clothing and identity. Acheflour's advice leads Perceval to construct this correlation; it is some time before he sheds this simplistic understanding and achieves a more nuanced understanding.

Perceval feels keenly the loss of his identity but lacks the nuance to articulate it properly; when Arthur tells the boy his father's fate, Perceval is bored. He demands:

He sais, 'I kepe not to stande  
With thi jangleyns to lange.  
Make me knyghte with thi hande,  
If it sall be done!'(*POG* 577–580)

Perceval—otherwise totally ignorant of chivalric knightly conduct—displays here intimate knowledge of the knighting ceremony; he understands that the king must make him a knight 'with thi hande' (*POG* 579). Perceval fruitlessly implores Arthur to make him a knight. Unlike Gingalain, Perceval is not immediately made a knight:



Than the Kyng hym hendly highte  
That he schold dub hym to knyghte,  
With thi that he wolde doun lighte  
And ete with hym at none.

(POG 580–585)

Arthur here separates kinship from knighthood; though the two concepts are connected, Arthur's confirmation of Perceval's identity functions as a confirmation of kinship, not of knighthood. Perceval is, through his kinship with the Arthurian court, inducted into the knightly sphere; though he gains in this way a social identity, he must progress further to attain a chivalric identity.

The court's feast is interrupted by the entrance of a knight dressed in fine red armour:

So commes the Rede Knyghte in  
Emanges tham righte than,  
Prekande one a rede stede;  
Blode-rede was his wede.  
He made tham gammen full gnedede,  
With craftes that he can.

(POG 603–608)

Red knights are a frequent feature of Fair Unknown narratives; Chrétien's red knight functions much the same way as his English counterpart and Ipomadon presents himself as a red knight (as well as the black and white knights) during his contest for the Fere's hand. The red knight is one of a number of mysterious knights in romance whose appearance and identity centres around a single solitary colour; red knights, black knights, white knights, green knights, and, more rarely, yellow knights are present throughout romance. This colour scheme is very old; it demonstrates its age through its preference of red, black and white—the three cardinal colours in the classical, early, and high medieval traditions—and in its avoidance of blue, which only gained precedence in the later medieval period.<sup>76</sup> The colour becomes the identity; incognito knights' identities are sometimes revealed, but are often superseded by their colour-based identity, as in the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* Sir Bertilak. This single-coloured clothing emphasises the knight's unique status; he is set apart from the usual courtly combatants present in chivalric romance. Incognito knights represent a foil for the hero; they might present a challenge, a quest, or some other means through which the hero can develop his own chivalric

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<sup>76</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 80.

identity. The colour with which the incognito knight appears suggests the knight's identity and purpose. There are enough similarities in the ways in which they appear to draw broad connections between these figures: black knights can be good or bad and are often of primary significance to the narrative; white knights are aged, usually good, and represent mentor-figures for young knights; green knights are associated with youth, and their inexperience and audacity upsets the social order, and whose actions can be good or bad; red knights are antagonistic figures, sometimes evil, who may also be associated with the otherworld.<sup>77</sup> *Perceval of Galles'* red knight is associated with magic through his mother, and Mary Flowers Braswell suggests that 'the blood-red clothing worn by this character seems to indicate that he [...] is an enchanter against whom everyone is powerless except the one whose destiny it is to slay him.'<sup>78</sup> Red was sometimes used to identify enemies of the Christian faith.<sup>79</sup> In other contexts, red is a regal colour; the colour most favoured by the ruling elite, it is also the colour of blood and of fire, with—like most medieval colour associations—both positive and negative connotations.<sup>80</sup> In the red knight's case, both positive and negative qualities are amplified. He is warlike and violent in his appearance and manners, but courtly also; his behaviour and appearance contrasts markedly with the boy's rough clothing and ignorant behaviour. He represents the gateway through which Perceval will enter into chivalric society. Just as Lybeaus volunteers for Ellene's quest, Perceval seeks to establish his own identity within the new scheme he has stumbled into. This knight steals a cup from Arthur's court and Perceval volunteers for the quest:

'Petir!' quod Percyvell the yonge,  
 'Hym than will I down dyng  
 And the coupe agayne bryng,  
 And thou will make me knyghte.'  
 'Als I am trewe kyng,' said he,  
 'A knyghte sall I make the,  
 Forthi thou will bryng mee  
 The coupe of golde bryghte.'

(POG 641–648)

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<sup>77</sup> Pastoureau, *Black*, p. 73; Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 59; Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 80.

<sup>78</sup> Braswell, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, p. 72.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas M. Izbicki, 'Forbidden Colors in the Regulation of Clerical Dress from the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) to the Time of Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464)', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Vol. 1*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gail R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), pp. 105–114, at p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 72–79.

This exchange constitutes the first instance in which Perceval correlates actions, rather than appearance, with identity. In the French text, Perceval covets the Red Knight's armour; no such admiration appears in the English text; instead, Perceval boasts: "a knyght I sall be made / for som of thi gere" (POG 667–668). Inherent in these lines is an understanding that knighthood is constructed through action. This knowledge is, however, gained in stages; the conflict with the Red Knight demonstrates Perceval's struggle to understand fully these concepts.

Arthur attempts to clothe the child in armour (POG 649–656); perhaps this would have lead to some kind of arming ritual comparable to that seen in *Lybeaus Desconus*. This is, however, a very different text. The boy is simply too impatient to wait; still clad in his goatskins, he jumps astride his pregnant mare in pursuit of the Red Knight. Perceval rides into battle with the Red Knight dressed in his rough animal skins and equipped only with a simple dart:

With his foo for to fighte,  
None othergates was he dighte,  
Bot in thre gayt-skynnes righte,  
A fole als he ware. (POG 657–660)

Of course, the boy's goatskin garb contrasts comically with crimson armour of the Red Knight. The David and Goliath aspect of this encounter is heightened by the disparity of their clothing; Chrétien's Perceval departs from his mother 'A la meniere et la guise / de Galois fu aparelliez', in leather shoes.<sup>81</sup> These rough skins eventually cause Perceval's victory:

And for to see hym with syghte,  
He putt his umbre on highte,  
To byhalde how he was dyghte,  
That so till hym spake. (POG 677–680)

Perceval's goatskins distract the Red Knight, and Perceval defeats the Red Knight in just a few short lines. Here, Perceval uses Achefflour's dart to defeat his first foe; unwittingly, he avenges the death of his father:

At the knyghte lete he flee,  
Smote hym in at the eghe

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<sup>81</sup> de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, at lines 600–602.

And oute at the nakke.

(*POG* 690–693)

Defeating the Red Knight constitutes a substantial step in Perceval's progression towards maturity and knighthood, but further illustrates the journey Perceval has yet to make. Like Gingalain, Perceval rushes to dress himself in the fallen knight's armour; unlike Gingalain, though, he realistically struggles with this complicated procedure. Gawain eventually appears and helps him:

Than Sir Gawayn doun lyghte,  
Unlacede the Rede Knyghte;  
The childe in his armour dight  
At his awnn will.

(*POG* 785–788)

Their roles are reversed as Gawain acts as a squire for the boy. This is also suggestive of an initiation ceremony; like Gingalain, Perceval is physically inducted into the chivalric community through the dressing in armour. It is significant that he does so 'at his awnn will' (*POG* 788); in defeating the Red Knight, Perceval earns the respect of the court. These actions begin Perceval's initiation into the chivalric brotherhood. This scene constitutes a significant moment in Perceval's progression towards initiation within courtly society. Perceval previously demands that the king 'make me knyghte with thi hande' (*POG* 579); here, Gawain dresses him 'at his awnn will' (*POG* 788).

After successfully dressing himself in the Red Knight's armour, Perceval demonstrates his incomplete understanding of social and chivalric conventions; like Gingalain, he conflates appearance with identity:

He loked doun to his fete,  
Saw his gere faire and mete:  
'For a knyghte I may be lete  
And myghte be calde.'

(*POG* 801–804)

He understands that clothing functions as an indicator of identity but he makes the error of conflating appearance with identity. Perceval's assertions here are comically naive; the more he thinks himself a knight because he possesses the appearance of one, the more he shows himself to not be a knight. However, this passage also indicates a degree of growth; this passage constitutes a transitional moment in which Perceval is being brought by degrees into the social

sphere. The use of ‘may be lete’ (*POG* 803) and ‘myghte be calde’ (*POG* 804) demonstrates Perceval’s growing awareness of his own position within society and the perception of others. The boy who previously defined himself only as ‘myn awnn modirs childe’ (*POG* 506), gradually gains a wider framework in which to situate his self-conception. This exchange reflects the attitudes taught to him by Acheflour, but for the purposes of comedy, the boy understands the social interactions on the most basic level. Though Perceval is introduced here into the complex social systems of courtly society, he misses much of their significance.

In Perceval’s subsequent adventures, he becomes ‘kyng and knyght’ (*POG* 1873) and husband (*POG* 1743). With this further induction into the courtly and social spheres, Perceval perceives with clarity his former errors. Falsely believing her son to be dead, Acheflour tears her clothes in madness (*POG* 2157). The tearing of clothing is commonly associated with madness in medieval romance: Chrétien’s Yvain rends his clothes when rejected by his lady.<sup>82</sup> Upon hearing this, Perceval is stricken with grief and shame; his growing inclusion and integration within society comes at the expense of his mother, whose exclusion and isolation grows in his absence.

‘I will assaye full snelle  
 To make that lady to duelle;  
 Bot I will noghte ryde:  
 One my fete will I ga,  
 That faire lady to ta.  
 Me aughte to bryng hir of wa:  
 I laye in hir syde.’

(*POG* 2170–2176)

The realisation of this error destabilises Perceval’s self-view, challenging his established identities of knight, husband and king. A circularity is present here in Perceval’s self-image; when asked by Arthur who he is, the boy identifies himself as ‘myn awnn modirs childe’ (*POG* 506). Now, the mature knight, king, and husband returns to the reasoning of the boy; when conceptualising himself, he comes up with “‘I laye in hir syde’” (*POG* 2176). The circularity is

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<sup>82</sup> See: Monica L. Wright, ‘Dress for Success: Béroul’s “Tristan” and the Restoration of Status through Clothes’, *Arthuriana*, 18/2 (2008), 3–16; Corinne Saunders, “‘The Thoughtful Maladie’: Madness and Vision in Medieval Writing’, in *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Corinne Saunders and Jane Macnaughton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 67–87.

reinforced by the manner in which he returns to the forest; he sets aside his knightly armour and dresses himself once more in the goatskins of his youth.

His armour he leved therin,  
Toke one hym a gayt-skyne,  
And to the wodde gan he wyn,  
Among the holtis hare.

(*POG* 2197–2200)

Caroline Eckhardt sees within this return to animal skins an expression of immaturity and rusticity:

The hero remains a comic rustic from beginning to end, a country fellow who makes a triumphant excursion into the world of chivalry but then seeks the forest again, resuming his childhood identity and his goatskin garments, so that his rusticity is not superseded and seems to be his true and essential trait.<sup>83</sup>

There is however something else going on here. The dressing of noble men in humble furs was a practice both condemned (as indicative of miserly nature) and admired (as indicating a concern with spiritual, rather than earthly, matters) within contemporary accounts, and goatskin was the ‘fur’ of choice for medieval ascetics who sought an alternative to luxurious furs such as marten.<sup>84</sup> Far from indicating Perceval’s innate and irrevocable rusticity, this return in deliberately humble dress establishes his emotional and spiritual development. His return to the forest appears as a penitential pilgrimage, through which Perceval engages in a sophisticated ritual of Christian chivalry. He vows:

‘Ne none armoure that may be  
Sall come appone me  
Till I my modir may see,  
Be nyghte or by day.’

(*POG* 2181–2184)

This is Perceval’s first vow that does not function as a consolidation of his own positive self-image; it contrasts with his earlier vows:

‘Petir!’ quod Percyvell the yonge,  
‘Hym than will I down dyng  
And the coupe agayne bryng,  
And thou will make me knyghte.’

(*POG* 641–644)

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<sup>83</sup> Eckhardt, ‘Arthurian Comedy’, p. 205.

<sup>84</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 4.

This vow is accompanied by fasting: ‘Of mete ne drynke he ne roghte, / So full he was of care’ (*POG* 2203–2204). Like a penitential pilgrim, he replaces his fine clothing with rough, humble garb: the ill-fashioned goat skins. Reinforcing these associations, his return home is evoked in terms resembling a sacred quest. Symbolic periods of time appear: his search for his mother is a ‘sevenyght long’ (*POG* 2201–2202), and Gawain returns to the Green Chapel after a year in *Gawain and the Green Knight*. Similarly, Gawain’s approach to the chapel contains desolate images of nature; the chapel is also associated with water, which bubbles with a supernatural energy: ‘Bokez byled and breke bi bonkkez aboute’ (*GGK* 2082). Perceval is also associated with water:

His righte name was Percyvell,  
He was fosterde in the felle,  
He dranke water of the welle,  
And yitt was he wyghte. (*POG* 5–8)

So strong is his association with water that Chaucer’s *Sir Thopas* also ‘drank water of the well / As dide the knyght sire Percyvell’ (*ST* 915–916).

The temporary giving up by Perceval of his armour does not represent a permanent rejection of knighthood; instead, the wearing of goatskin clothing is a humbling action designed to remove, temporarily, the wearer’s emphasis from the earthly to the spiritual world. Through mortification of the body—also achieved through abstaining from food and drink, a practice Perceval engages in here—the penitent reaches spiritual absolution.<sup>85</sup> The goatskins are a humbling garment: a material not used in fine clothing, they associate Perceval with the natural world and place him outside the natural order of society. The mature Perceval understands this significance, hitherto lost on the young boy. It is Perceval’s own sense of wrongdoing that causes him to temporarily surrender his own identity as a knight. Perceval is here fully cognisant of the errors he has previously committed; he resigns, temporarily, his chivalric garments until such time as he is fully worth of them. This realisation brings about his final transformation; it is only through realising his unworthiness, that Perceval becomes worthy. The

goatskins are liminal; they express a significant moment of transition between Perceval's identities. Further to this penitential quality, the goatskins also symbolise Perceval's origins and early life. As Radulescu states:

When he puts on the clothes he used to wear, for the sake of his mother, so as to bring her back to sanity, he clearly acknowledges both the long way he has come, and the value of those family bonds he was taught by his mother.<sup>86</sup>

Returning to them in this context does not indicate that rusticity is Perceval's 'true and essential trait'; this penitential action denotes instead an acceptance of his identity, his family, and—most significantly—his place within it.<sup>87</sup>

This is an assertion of dynastic identity; in returning in this manner, Perceval consolidates the kinship between them. Ache flour rejects the Arthurian court, fleeing to the woods with nothing but a short staff. Perceval here mimics her actions by setting aside his courtly gear and returning to the forest only with natural articles. In so doing, he closes the narrative cycle opened by her actions: the rejection of chivalric society ends with Ache flour's return to the Arthurian court. Perceval's mother constitutes an open circle of narrative waiting to be closed; their reunion provides the themes of reconciliation and renewal central to the romance form. The text emphasises the themes of renewal and regeneration through the repetition of images found in the opening passages:

That he come to a welle  
Ther he was wonte for to duelle  
And drynk take hym thare (POG 2210–2212)

Speirs suggests this repeated emphasis on wells stems from an earlier version of the Perceval narrative in which Perceval's mother is a naiad.<sup>88</sup> This echoes Perceval's first introduction:

His righte name was Percyvell,  
He was fosterde in the felle,  
He dranke water of the welle, (POG 5–7)

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<sup>86</sup> Radulescu, 'Sir Percyvell of Galles', p. 399.

<sup>87</sup> Eckhardt, 'Arthurian Comedy', p. 205.

<sup>88</sup> John Speirs, *Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 138.



Perceval's return here to the forest re-establishes broken social bonds and facilitates the images of reconciliation and reintegration that close the narrative cycle. It is with this return that his quest concludes. Radulescu suggests the manuscript's location within the Thorton's "family" collection of romances explains the textual focus on heritage and dynastic connection; she argues, 'Percyvell's quest, in this romance, points to the un-ending circle of family duty rather than the spiritual duties of his literary Grail predecessors.'<sup>89</sup> This return is, then, the culmination of his journey from outsider to insider; the final confirmation of his position within chivalric society. The goat skin episode brings to a close many of the central themes of the poem. Issues of 'becoming', of chivalric and dynastic identities, of obligation and of atonement, of reconciliation and renewal are brought to conclusion here. Through the course of the narrative, Perceval moves from ignorant outsider to a knight fully integrated in social and chivalric spheres. He learns to temper the wild violence of his youth with the moderation characterised by Eckhardt as 'heroic concentration on a further purpose'.<sup>90</sup> The young Perceval marvels at the knights' appearance; the mature Perceval gains a sophisticated understanding of the chivalric code. Perceval's struggles with courtesy constitute important steps on the journey towards chivalric perfection. Perceval returns to the forest, rescues Acheflour, and returns with her to the court. The narrative ends with images of happy reconciliation, after which Perceval is slain in the Holy Land (*POG* 2283), representing the achievement of Christian chivalry; with this, his cycle of 'becoming' is complete.

*Sir Perceval of Galles* is the quest for identity of a young boy who progresses from ignorance to wisdom and innocence to experience. Its use of comedy does not obscure the narrative's other interests in social and chivalric identities. The text's rough poetry and unsophisticated language does not undermine the text's discussion of chivalric identity. These tensions between civilisation and barbarism, between courtesy and wildness, come to characterise Perceval's developments on his journey of 'becoming'. These issues of identity are manifested clearly through clothing; the young Perceval wears animal skins that are indicative

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<sup>89</sup> Radulescu, 'Sir Percyvell of Galles', p. 391.

<sup>90</sup> Eckhardt, 'Arthurian Comedy', p. 212.

both of his loss of social and chivalric identity. Through his meeting with the knights, Perceval regains his social identity; his encounter with the Red Knight constitutes an early progression towards establishing his chivalric identity. This chivalric identity is further confirmed and tested through a variety of episodic adventures, until it is finally consolidated in Perceval's penitential return to the forest; in acknowledgement of his errors, he resigns his chivalric accoutrements in favour of the rough animal skins. His reunion with his mother and their return to the Arthurian court constitute a triumph of civilisation over the wilderness. Through the course of the narrative, Perceval establishes a complex and sophisticated understanding of social and chivalric nuance; it is this understanding that facilitates the construction of chivalric and social identities.

### ***Ipomadon***

*Ipomadon* constitutes in many respects an unusual variation of the Fair Unknown motif. This adaptation into English of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* centres on the prince Ipomadon and his love for the Fere Lady of Calabria.<sup>91</sup> Three Middle English translations of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomadon* survive in one manuscript each; *Ipomadon A* in MS Chetham 8009,<sup>92</sup> *Ipomadon B* in MS Harley 2252,<sup>93</sup> and *Ipomadon C* in Longleat House MS 257.<sup>94</sup> *Ipomadon* is the earliest of the three. This tail-end romance is thought to have been composed between 1390

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<sup>91</sup> All line references to the Middle English tail-end romance *Ipomadon* (by Kölbing's system, *Ipomadon A*) are to Rhiannon Purdie ed., *Ipomadon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). References to the couplet romance *Ipomydon* (otherwise known as *Ipomydon B* or *The Lyfe of Ipomydon*), and to the prose *Ipomedon* (otherwise known as *Ipomedon C*) are to Eugen Kölbing ed., *Ipomedon in Drei Englischen Bearbeitungen* (Breslau: W. Koebner, 1889). I subsequently refer to each text in accordance with Kölbing's system of A, B and C. I refer to protagonists with the spelling in which they appear in the texts, i.e. 'Ipomadon' refers to the protagonist of *Ipomadon A*; 'Ipomydon' to the protagonist of *Ipomydon B*; 'Ipomedon' to the protagonist of *Ipomedon C* ('The Prose Ipomedon').

<sup>92</sup> For a full descriptive account detailing the manuscript, see the introduction to Purdie's critical edition, pp. xviii–xxiii.

<sup>93</sup> Kölbing, *Ipomedon*, p. xiii.

<sup>94</sup> Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'Longleat House MS 257: A Description', *Atlantis*, 27/1 (2005), 79–89.

and 1450 in the north midlands.<sup>95</sup> The third is the prose *Ipomedon* (*Ipomedon C*) that predates the sixteenth century; Sánchez-Martí identifies the manuscript's date of origin as 'between 1457–1469'.<sup>96</sup> The second is a shorter sixteenth-century couplet romance entitled *The Lyf of Ipomydon* and referred to in Eugen Kölbing's system as *Ipomydon B*.<sup>97</sup> Several critical editions of *Ipomadon* and *Ipomydon B* have been published in recent decades.<sup>98</sup> *Ipomydon B* and *Ipomedon C* are often positioned in scholarship as 'popular' romances; as such, perhaps, they have not received as much critical attention as *Ipomadon*.<sup>99</sup> Critics have examined the relationship between *Ipomadon* and Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*.<sup>100</sup> Evidence of contemporary alterations is apparent in material details such as clothing. Purdie identifies a deliberate 'updating' of clothing in *Ipomadon A*; these alterations reflect authorial intent rather than scribal interference, as 'the terms used for costume were relatively long-lived [...] so it is unlikely that later scribes would have encountered any unfamiliar words that they would have felt moved to change.'<sup>101</sup> In a comparison of the French and English texts' use of clothing, Harvey Eagleson finds in the textual clothing choices evidence of a deliberate effort towards realism in which the clothing of the texts reflects the contemporary reality of both writer and audience.<sup>102</sup> The French *Ipomedon*, like the English text, contains many specific and detailed descriptive passages relating to clothing: the material wealth of the chivalric society is evoked by use of specific rich materials. As Eagleson demonstrates, these are period-specific and reflect the context in which the poems were composed. The earlier French text, for instance, utilises the earlier *bliaut* garment, which is replaced in the later English text with a more contemporary

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<sup>95</sup> Purdie provides a narrower dating of c. 1390-1400 in her detailed account of the dating process, which includes a detailed analysis of the text's depiction of contemporary dress with a view to providing a more definitive date. This can be found on pp. liv–lx of Purdie's edition of the text,

<sup>96</sup> Sánchez-Martí, 'Longleat House MS 257', p. 80.

<sup>97</sup> Tadahiro Ikegami ed., *The Lyfe of Ipomydon* (Tokyo: Seijo University Press, 1983).

<sup>98</sup> Ikegami, *The Lyfe of Ipomedon*; Rhiannon Purdie, *Ipomadon* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001); Nora Mayer ed., 'An Edition of the *Ipomedon B* and *C* texts', MPhil Dissertation (York: University of York, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> See Jordi Sánchez-Martí, 'Reconstructing the Audiences of the Middle English Versions of "Ipomedon"', *Studies in Philology*, 103/2 (2006), 153–177.

<sup>100</sup> Field, 'Ipomedon to Ipomadon A', pp 135–41.

<sup>101</sup> Purdie, *Ipomadon*, p. lv.

<sup>102</sup> Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', p. 341.

doublet.<sup>103</sup> This pattern is repeated through the text. Eagleson suggests the following passages as suitable for comparison:

Ipomedon pas ne se ublie,  
Ke il asez ne penst de s'amie,  
Un sun ke il out fet vet chantant,  
Sur un bel palefrei amblant;  
Bel tens feseit e grant chaline,  
Il meisme adestra sa cusine.  
Legerement vestuz esteit;  
Un mantel d'un samit aveit,  
De sun col l'aveit avalé,  
Andui les pans aveit jeté  
Sur le col de sun palefrei;  
Mut chevache par grant noblei,  
E pur la hadle out un chapel,  
De fresaus aturné mut bel,  
A or purtreit, a beaus butuns,  
Unc si blancs ne de poüins.  
Chauces aveit d'un paile freis,  
Unc plus riches n'out quens ne reis;  
Uns esperuns out de fin or,  
En Inde les out fet un mor,  
Les peres sul ke il aveit  
Uns reis esliger ne purreit;  
Asez chevauche par grant brut.<sup>104</sup>

Lyghttly was he clade to ryde  
In a mantell panyd wyth pryde  
And semys sette grette plente.  
He losyd his mantell band for hete  
And downe fro his neke he it lete,  
It covyrd ouer his kne.  
Hose he had of clothe of Ynde,  
Suche shull no man now fynde,  
To seke all crystyante.  
Spurrys of gold he had vpon;  
Was neuer kyng better weryd none  
Ne no man in no degre.

(*Ipomadon* 2456–2467)

Quickly comparing the two passages demonstrates, I believe, that the later English text is selective with the elements it adapts and those it alters. The two texts utilise the same or similar materials: the mantle, still in use during the later medieval period survives, as do some materials that maintain their value and significance: Ipomadon's knighthood is evinced by gold spurs in

<sup>103</sup> Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', p. 341.

<sup>104</sup> Hue de Rotelonde, *Ipomedon*, ed. by A. J. Holden, Bibliothèque française et romane, Série B, Éditions critiques de textes; 17 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979), p. 188, lines 2721-2743.

both texts. Exotic, high-value materials are both signified by eastern origins ('en Inde'/'of Ynde'). The more modern hose, however, are introduced in the later text, while the earlier text focuses more heavily on armour. These passages, therefore, seem to me to exemplify the kind of transmission and alteration that takes place between the English text and its French source. Materials that maintain their cultural relevancy survive the textual adaptation: garments that are specific to an earlier time, such as the *bliaut*, are replaced with contemporary articles such as hose. The reasoning informing these alterations has been explored by Eagleson and Purdie, who find within them evidence of a concern with audience and of realism.<sup>105</sup> Though I do not believe overt realism is a primary function of romance, I find nothing to directly contradict this view in my study of the English text.<sup>106</sup> The effect these alterations have is certainly to maintain cultural relevancy, while also communicating the same fundamental nuances informing the French text's use of clothing.

I believe that as a result of these changes, dress more efficiently and effectively communicates issues of identity such as wealth, class and status, as well as other messages, such as intentions of love or erotic pursuit. In both English and French texts, this significance is maintained, and dress is used to convincingly evoke the material wealth that characterises courtly societies of superlative cultural and moralistic value. Though both Eagleson and Purdie have written briefly about the significance of clothing in determining the date of the text, critical discussion has not yet pursued a wide-ranging, in-depth analysis of clothing and dress in the middle English *Ipomadon*. This section therefore, pursues this direction and argues that *Ipomadon*'s repeatedly-changing appearance is motivated by the Fere Lady's boast that only the 'best knight [...] in armus bryghte / Assayde vnder his shelde' (*Ipomadon* 118–120) would win her love. This section demonstrates that this clothing imagery used by the Fere informs the text's structure and results in *Ipomadon*'s pattern of repeated dressing, undressing, and changing

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<sup>105</sup> Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', p. 345.

<sup>106</sup> I discuss further the romance genre's use of 'realism' in relation to dress in the Conclusion of this thesis.

of armour, as he adopts the identities of multiple knights ‘in armus bryghte’ (and occasionally, dull with rust) in order to amass the necessary *pris* to be worthy of her love.

Regarding the critical discussion examining the textual relationship between French and English texts, much has been written about Hue de Roteland’s perceived negative treatment of women, which Felicity Cable contrasts with the English poet’s more sympathetic approach.<sup>107</sup> Critical discussion has often focused on issues of identity and concealment: Jane Bliss, J. A. Burrow, and Susan Crane analyse disguise in *Ipomadon A*.<sup>108</sup> Jordi Sánchez-Martí focuses on the question of audience, and Carol M. Meale discusses the textual manuscripts.<sup>109</sup> Though it is considerably shorter than the French text, the English *Ipomadon* is notable for its length and for its faithfulness to the original, though this too has been contested by some scholars.<sup>110</sup> Critics are predominantly in agreement that de Rotelande’s *Ipomedon* is the central source of *Ipomadon A*, though the relationship between the three English texts remains unclear. Rhiannon Purdie suggests that each of the English texts is an independent translation of the French text,<sup>111</sup> while Jordi Sanchez-Martí positions *Ipomydon B* as an adaptation of *Ipomadon*.<sup>112</sup> The alterations and omissions of the English texts are the result of English modernisations of the older French text; Sánchez-Martí suggests that such inter-textual alterations ‘adapt the story to a new socio-historical reality’,<sup>113</sup> while Rosalind Field characterises *Ipomadon* as ‘a careful, critical

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<sup>107</sup> Felicity Cable, ‘Misogamy as Heresy: The Impossible Choice for a Woman in Late Medieval Romance’, in *Heresy and Orthodoxy in Early English Literature, 1350–1680*, ed. by Eilean Ni Chuilleanain and John Flood (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 75–89.

<sup>108</sup> Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance*; J. A. Burrow, ‘The Uses of Incognito: *Ipomadon A*’, in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 25–34; Susan Crane, ‘Knights in Disguise: Identity and Incognito in Fourteenth-Century Chivalry,’ in *The Stranger in Medieval Society*, ed. by F. R. P. Akehurst and Stephanie Can Van D’Elden (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 63–79.

<sup>109</sup> Jordi Sánchez-Martí, ‘Longleat House MS 257’; Paola Scarpini, ‘Locating the Audience(s) in Hue de Rotelande’s “Ipomedon”’, in *In Search of the Medieval Voice: Expressions of Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Paola Scarpini (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 90–108; Carol M. Meale, ‘Wynkyn de Worde’s Setting-Copy for “Ipomydon”’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 35 (1982), 156–171; Rhiannon Purdie, ‘Sexing the Manuscript: The Case for Female Ownership of MS Chetham 8009’, *Neophilologus*, 82/1 (1998), 139–148.

<sup>110</sup> See: Rosalind Field, ‘Ipomedon to Ipomadon A: Two Views of Courtliness’, in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 135–41, at p. 135.

<sup>111</sup> Purdie, *Ipomadon*, p. xiv.

<sup>112</sup> Jordi Sanchez-Martí, ‘Reading Romance in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Middle English *Ipomedon*’, *Philological Quarterly*, 83/1 (2004), 13–39.

<sup>113</sup> Sánchez-Martí, ‘Reconstructing the Audiences’, p. 159.

transformation and modernisation of Hue's work which provides valuable insight into attitudes towards, and expectations of, courtly romance in fourteenth-century England.'<sup>114</sup> Bernhard Diensberg suggests that the English text provides a central logic and driving focus to the hero's more inexplicable actions that remain absent in the French text.<sup>115</sup> In this way, though there has been some critical attention to the topic of dress in *Ipomadon* in relation to dating the manuscript, my own particular focus in presenting an extended examination of dress and identity has not previously been attempted in scholarship.

*Ipomadon* preserves much of the French text's extensive length and episodic nature. In it, the Fere Lady of Calabria vows to marry only the best knight in the world. Hearing of her boast, the prince Ipomadon travels to Calabria; he conceals his true identity and is known as the 'stravnge valete' (*Ipomadon* 431). The Fere falls in love with him and chastises him for his lack of chivalric prowess; Ipomadon leaves the court, returning in disguise to win the Fere's hand in a tournament. Ipomadon's armour is white on the first day, red on the second, and black on the third. After winning the tournament, Ipomadon leaves once more, returning to assist the Fere against an enemy knight. After defeating the knight, he takes on his identity and proclaims himself the victor. Ipomadon's series of convoluted deceptions concludes with the discovery of his identity, and he and the Fere finally marry. *Ipomydon B* presents the greatest departure from the French text; in it, the narrative is much shortened and there is a greater focus on entertainment. The passages detailing Ipomydon's time as a fool are rendered with numerous amusing embellishments that convey with some enthusiasm Ipomydon's foolish behaviour and appearance. *Ipomedon C* presents a significantly pared-down narrative, lacking the numerous authorial asides of the French poem and the focus on love that informs *Ipomadon A*. Sánchez-Martí suggests that this change reflects 'the historical transition towards [the prose medium] for narratives, while most changes in *Ipomydon B* are attributable to a stage of memorial

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<sup>114</sup> Field, 'Ipomadon to Ipomadon A', p. 138.

<sup>115</sup> Bernhard Diensberg, 'The Middle English Romance *Ipomadon* and its Anglo-Norman Source', in *Proceedings of the Anglistentage 1989 Wurzburg*, ed. by Rüdiger Ahrens (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990), pp. 289–297, at p. 293.

transmission'.<sup>116</sup> It is more faithful to the Anglo-Norman text than *Ipomydon B*; though passages are dramatically shortened, they are otherwise largely unchanged. *Ipomadon C* preserves much of the central narrative action that relies upon instances of clothing but provides little precise descriptive detail. The mantle that Ipomedon 'put vpon him' is not described, and, though Ipomedon 'ordaynt him in array in the maner of a hunter', further details do not appear.<sup>117</sup>

While *Perceval of Galles* positions centrally themes of kinship and *Lybeaus Desconus* emphasises the significance of reputation in honour-based chivalric societies, *Ipomadon* grounds its exploration of chivalric identity in the love theme of courtly romance. The Fere falls in love with the 'stravnge valet' who wears no armour and scorns the public acquisition of *pris*. The narrative then explores the ultimately unachievable nature of the Fere's vow. To win the Fere's love, Ipomadon must become the best knight in the world: to this end, he embarks upon a series of chivalric deeds. Ipomadon's complex game of performative humility confounds deliberately the construction of a chivalric reputation through a series of repetitive concealments of identity. In this respect, he represents in some ways the antithesis of Gingalain, whose achievement of chivalric *pris* is enacted through the deliberate construction of a chivalric reputation. Ipomadon's performative deferment of *pris* engenders greater honour; in a paradoxical fashion, his repeated demonstrations of humility result in greater glory.

At first glance, *Ipomadon* does not appear to follow Fair Unknown conventions. Unlike Gingalain or Perceval, Ipomadon's narrative is not a journey of self-knowledge; he is not in ignorance of his own identity:

Ipomadon's name is established for the audience at the outset and remains a stable and meaningless point of departure for a potentially endless series of incognito, disguise, and impersonation – showing the writer to be a self-conscious manipulator of point-of-view.<sup>118</sup>

In this text, the Fair Unknown motif appears in the form of a series of subversions, inversions and self-referential patterns. Ipomadon's deliberate manipulation of his appearance and

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<sup>116</sup> Sánchez-Martí, 'Reconstructing the Audiences', p. 159.

<sup>117</sup> Kölbing, *Ipomedon C*, p. 325, 334.

<sup>118</sup> Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness*, p. 122.



elaborate concealment of his identity presents these instances in an ironic context. Despite this, it is appropriate to position the text as an unusual variation of the Fair Unknown motif. *Ipomadon* presents himself, deliberately, as a Fair Unknown before the Calabrian and Sicilian courts. Like other Fair Unknowns, he adopts a moniker in lieu of a name: *Ipomadon* is known as the ‘stravnge valete’ (‘the unknown youth’) at the Calabrian court and the ‘quenes drewe’ (‘the queen’s draw’) at the Sicilian court.

Like *Perceval of Galles* and, briefly, *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Ipomadon* begins with a detailed account of the parents and upbringing of its central characters. Unlike the other two texts, however, *Ipomadon* does not immediately focus on the central hero but instead his lady, the Fere lady of Calabria. Only after establishing the Fere’s noble lineage and distinguished upbringing (*Ipomadon* 62–84) does the text turn to the hero. His introduction echoes similar patterns: ‘in the lond of Poyle, / a noble knyng there dwelled’ (*Ipomadon* 136–138); ‘A worthy wyghte he had to wyffe’ (*Ipomadon* 142). *Ipomadon*’s childhood is not contextualised by a lack of a social or courtly identity; he does not grow up in the wilderness or isolated from the courtly community. Instead, he is formally inducted into the courtly behaviour that characterises chivalric societies:

Fyrst he leryd the chylde curtessye  
And sethe [of] chasse [the] chevalrye,  
To weld in armys gaye.  
He waxed worthely, ware and wyse,  
Of hvntyng also he bare the pryce,  
The sertayne sothe to say.

(*Ipomadon* 151–156)

Unlike *Perceval* and *Gingalain*, whose violations of the chivalric code demonstrate their ignorance, the boy is educated in ‘curtessye’ (*Ipomadon* 151), ‘chevalrye’ (*Ipomadon* 152) and ‘hvntinge’ (*Ipomadon* 155). For *Perceval* and *Gingalain*, the acquisition of knightly armour constitutes a significant moment towards achieving knighthood; *Ipomadon*, however, appears in ‘armys gaye’ (*Ipomadon* 153) from childhood. In this way, *Ipomadon*’s role, within the Calabrian court, as a Fair Unknown is a performative role. The Fere demonstrates similarly this

chivalric environment in which she grows up; she vows never to love any but the best knight, boasting:

‘Man that is of lowe degre  
Shall never to wyffe me holde  
But yf he be the best knyghte  
Of all this world in armus bryghte  
Assayde vnder his shelde.’

(*Ipomadon* 116–120)

Ipomadon learns of the Fere’s boast; falling in love instantly, he journeys to Calabria to win her affections. Ipomadon understands that the Fere’s idea of chivalric perfection is grounded in tangible details of chivalric display; the only knight capable of winning her love is dressed in ‘armus bryghte’ (*Ipomadon* 119) and armed with a ‘shelde’ (*Ipomadon* 20). The evocative imagery positions the appearance of knightly virtue as a characteristic of chivalric identity. Ipomadon’s series of lengthy deceptions and disguises subsequently frustrate and confound this flawed perception.

Ipomadon’s departure reflects these tensions. The Polish court prepares him for his journey in a scene that parallels the arming ritual of *Lybeaus Desconus*, *The Greene Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Unlike the others, Ipomadon is not yet a knight; for this reason, unlike Gingalain and Gawain, the ‘chyllys’ (*Ipomadon* 295) Ipomadon is not presented with chivalric accoutrements or armour. Instead, he is given practical equipment: a ‘palffraye’ (*Ipomadon* 192), ‘two somers’ (*Ipomadon* 193) carrying his clothing; ‘gold and syluer i-nowghe to spende’ (*Ipomadon* 290). Though he presents himself at the Calabrian court as a Fair Unknown, Ipomadon’s identity is preserved through these gifts. With their opulence, they indicate his high position (‘gold and sylver’, *Ipomadon* 290); he is accompanied by two ‘currure’ (*Ipomadon* 296) or servants. As in *Lybeaus Desconus*, the society from which the individual departs affirms its connection through visual gifts.

Perceval demonstrates his isolation from the courtly sphere through his appearance in animal skins (*POG* 265–268), while Gingalain appears before the Arthurian court in garments that indicate simultaneously his connection to the chivalric sphere and his ignorance of it; he wears armour, stripped dishonourably from a fallen knight (*LD* 37–39). Unlike other Fair

Unknowns, Ipomadon's dress does not contain dissonant elements of uncourtliness. During Ipomadon's arrival at the Calabrian court, the text adopts the speculative gaze of the courtly onlookers; it picks out details previously ignored in the preparation scene:

His dobelett was of red welvet,  
Off bryght golde botuns ibete  
That worthely was wrovghte.

His mantell was of skarlett fyne,  
Furryd wyth good armyne,  
Ther myght no better been;  
The bordoure all of red sendell,  
That araye became hym wele  
To wete wythouten wene.  
A noble countenavnce he hade;  
A blyther and a better made  
Before they had not sayne.  
Also bryght his coloure shone  
All hym lovyd that lokyd hym one,  
Bothe lord and lady shene.

(*Ipomadon* 367–381)

The passage demonstrates a close attention to detail, referencing a variety of rich materials and textiles. Ipomadon appears before the court dressed at the height of contemporary fashion, as both Eagleson and Purdie demonstrate.<sup>119</sup> The English poet updates the material details found in the twelfth-century French source, transferring their significance to fourteenth-century English fashions. Ipomadon does not, as he does in the French text, wear the now outdated *bliant*; instead, he appears in a fashionably tight doublet, crafted from a textile that did not even exist in the twelfth century: velvet.<sup>120</sup> Though its minute details and methods of wearing changed with the centuries, the mantle was still a fashionable and much-worn piece in fourteenth-century England, and as such is allowed to remain here.<sup>121</sup> The text emphasises the material wealth of the piece, as a list of luxury fabrics appears; it is made of fine scarlet, trimmed with high-quality ermine, and the border is of red *sendell*. Each of these materials emphasises not only the mantle's material wealth, but also the status of the wearer. Medieval scarlet did not always indicate a hue; instead, this was a particular kind of textile of superlative quality. Like the royal purples of the classical and Byzantine periods, scarlets were the symbol of power and authority

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<sup>119</sup> Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', p. 342; Purdie, *Ipomadon*, p. lv.

<sup>120</sup> Eagleson, 'Costume in the English Metrical Romances', p. 342.

<sup>121</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 226.

in the Middle Ages.<sup>122</sup> A high-quality woollen textile, they were often dyed in bright, intense shades of red.<sup>123</sup> Mantles were furred for warmth but also as an effective demonstration of wealth and status; ermine is certainly one of the most prized furs during this period, but it lacks the particular status held by squirrel.<sup>124</sup> Ermine was among the most popular furs worn by the medieval elite during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps reflecting his immature status, Ipomadon does not wear the fashionable squirrel fur that dominated royal clothing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; *gris* and *vaire* are positioned in other texts, such as *Sir Orfeo*, as symbols of kingship. The ‘chylidis’ Ipomadon is perhaps unsuited to these furs, adopting instead a garment that suggest nobility, even royalty, but lacks the specific associations of kingship that are, at this point, inappropriate. The gray of the *gris*, or even its whiter variety miniver, would also perhaps disrupt the bright colour scheme established by the rich red, bright gold, and vivid white of the ermine. This mantle of scarlet and ermine is also trimmed with sendal. This is a variety of silk that was, in the late medieval period at least, fairly common and inexpensive; it is also, however, associated with Italy, in which the Calabrian court is located and in which the main action of this text takes place.<sup>126</sup> The use of *sendell* then potentially constitutes an effort towards realism, in accordance with the principles identified in the text by Eagleson.<sup>127</sup> All aspects of the boy’s appearance convey his nobility and wealth. Ipomadon is dressed almost exclusively in red; only the gold buttons of his doublet and the white of the ermine provide vivid contrasts. The buttons of bright gold provide a pleasing contrast to the red of the velvet. The colour red, best loved by the aristocracy, here proclaims clearly Ipomadon’s noble—if not royal—nature.<sup>128</sup> Though he arrives incognito, his clothing proclaims loudly and deliberately his royal identity.

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<sup>122</sup> John H. Munro, ‘The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendour’, in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson*, ed. by N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 13–70, at p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> John Munro, ‘Scarlet’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 477–481, at p. 477.

<sup>124</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 133.

<sup>125</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 17.

<sup>126</sup> ‘Sendal’, *The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing Project*, last accessed 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018 <<http://lexisproject.arts.manchester.ac.uk/index.html>>.

<sup>127</sup> Eagleson, ‘Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances’, p. 341.

<sup>128</sup> Pastoureaux, *Red*, pp. 78–79.

Ipomadon's appearance before the court is self-consciously performative; he constructs a spectacle designed to be gazed upon. Though he gives his name only as the 'stravnge valete' (*Ipomadon* 431) and divests himself thus of his former identity, Ipomadon's appearance in rich textiles and materials confirm his courtly nature. This performance is not lost on his audience; the text subverts *effectio*, the head-to-toe catalogue of female beauty, to demonstrate the watching eyes of the court. The description of Ipomadon's garments is orderly and measured; it progresses steadily from the inner garments (*Ipomadon* 367–369) to the outer mantle (*Ipomadon* 370–373). The French text subverts *effectio* in the description of La Fiére; Field identifies Hue de Rotelande's cheerfully vulgar description of La Fiére as a satirical play on *effectio*.<sup>129</sup> The description of Ipomadon in the English text does not constitute a strict instance of *effectio*; rather than progressing from the top to the bottom, the gaze moves from exterior to interior clothing. The description is roughly equal; three lines each are given over to outer and inner garments. A similar effect is created in *Ipomydon B's* analogous passage, though the use of less precise terminology makes this less successful. Only once does the poet give us any clue as to the composition of the robes worn by Ipomadon; the line given ('many was the ryche stone' *Ipomydon B* 241) is tantalising vague. It invites comparison to the other rich, gem-covered robes in romance, such as *Emaré's* marvellous robe; however, the text does not provide sufficient detail to make possible speculation as to the textual analogues or significance of this garment. The corresponding passage in *Ipomydon B* is rendered with less precision, as the text omits sartorial detail and *effectio*. *Ipomydon B* jumbles the description of the garments together: 'Robys had on and mantilis new / Off the richest þat myght bee,' (*Ipomydon B* 238–239). Descriptions are vague: the hero's garments are 'new' (*Ipomydon B* 238); they are rare (there are 'none suche in that contre,' *Ipomydon B* 240); they are valuable ('richest þat myght bee' *Ipomydon B* 239). In absence of named garments and textiles, the use of superlatives increases.

His speech and behaviour confirm the courtliness suggested by his clothing:

'I was callyd at home by the same name

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<sup>129</sup> Field, 'Ipomedon to Ipomadon A', p. 137.

And borne I was in ferre contre  
Forther wotte ye not for me  
Wheddyr ye blysse or blame.'

(*Ipomadon* 433–136)

Ipomadon is deliberately mysterious; unlike Perceval or Gingalain, whose accounts of self demonstrate their ignorance and isolation from society, Ipomadon is not ignorant of his own identity. Though his self-identification is typically vague, it illustrates the less tenuous position that Ipomadon finds himself in; unlike Gingalain, who comes 'out of the southe' (*LD* 50) or Perceval from 'the woddess wyld' (*POG* 507) Ipomadon leaves behind a 'ferre contre' (*Ipomadon* 434), a peaceful, civilised place, not an uncouth wilderness. He appears in a less tenuous position than the other heroes and it is this that allows him to manipulate deliberately his appearance, concealing his identity before the Calabrian court. Like Perceval and Gingalain, the boy's beauty evokes admiration from the court: 'All hym lovyd that lokyd hym one, / Bothe lord and lady schene' (*Ipomadon* 380–381).

These qualities suggest Ipomadon's position in the courtly sphere, constructing an association between him and the Calabrian courtiers. Unlike other fair unknowns, his admission to the courtly community is contingent on a formal demonstration of *courtesie*. The Fere's invitation presents an opportunity for the courtiers' to assess Ipomadon's behaviour. Ipomadon acts as page to the Fere (*Ipomadon* 444–448). He serves her while wearing his mantle, a *faux pas* that invites the court's derision.<sup>130</sup>

Rightte in his mantell as he stode,  
Wyth the botteler forthe he youde,  
The cupe on hande he bare:  
All that lovyd þat chyld before  
For that dede lovghe hym to skorne,  
Bothe the lesse and the more.

(*Ipomadon* 455–460)

This error destabilises the courtly image constructed by his fine clothing and beauty, disrupting the temporary kinship established between Ipomadon and the court. This perceived lack of *courtesie* causes the Calabrian court to identify him incorrectly as an outsider to the courtly scheme, provoking their rejection. This is, however, a carefully-constructed manipulation, and the first of several instances in which Ipomadon deliberately heaps ridicule upon himself. The

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<sup>130</sup> Burrow, 'The Uses of Incognito', pp. 32–33.

court's condemnation quickly turns to adoration, as Ipomadon takes off the mantle and presents it to the butler:

To the boteler than went hee;  
'Syr, this mantell gyff I the:  
As I haue happe or sele,  
And thow wilte take þis sympull gyfte,  
It shall be mendyd be my thryfte  
Wyth efte so good a wille.'

(*Ipomadon* 467–472)

Ipomadon's actions here are exceptionally generous, as the butler's delighted response makes clear: "For this VII yere, be my thryfte, / Was not gevyne me suche a gyfte!" (*Ipomadon* 479–480). As previously demonstrated, Ipomadon's mantle is the most highly-adorned and materially wealthy in his ensemble; it also functions as an outrageously bald status symbol. As the most visible garment, the mantle, worn as an over-garment on top of several layers, the mantle functioned as a 'visible sign of class and wealth'.<sup>131</sup> The giving over of this visible symbol of status was imbued with significance; 'For medieval culture, any cloak is a medium for signs, and any handing over of a cloak is linked to a rite of passage, to entering into a new state.'<sup>132</sup> Ipomadon's exchange of clothing with the butler also contains an exchange of identities, as Ipomadon invests the butler with his garments, thereby creating parity between them. The butler is not elevated to the position of a prince, but the prince is lowered to the position of a butler; the prince lowers himself more than the butler is elevated in this situation. It is all a performative, courtly game, of a ritualistic and ultimately empty nature; the butler is still a butler, though he wears a prince's mantle, and the prince is still a prince, though he constructs equality with the butler. The wearing of garments above or below the wearer's rank represented a sign of debasement or pride; both were dangerous transgressions that destabilised the social order.<sup>133</sup> Ipomadon's game is only, however, a self-effacing, courtly gesture with very little consequence and long-term significance; this game does not have the capacity to destabilise the social order and, perhaps for this reason, is much admired by all involved.

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<sup>131</sup> Netherton, 'Accessory after the Fact', p. 116.

<sup>132</sup> Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, p. 9.

<sup>133</sup> Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, p. xiii.

Ipomadon recalls performatively other generous knights of romance. While Sir Launfal's gift-giving results naturally from his *largesse*, Ipomadon's gift instead represents a deliberate invoking of chivalric values. This episode places Ipomadon within the courtly scheme of the Calabrian court, but also functions as a kind of visual exemplar of perfect chivalry; the honour gained by Ipomadon through this public demonstration of *largesse* is made even greater by the humiliation that precedes it. His elaborate performance satirises both courtly conventions and the fickleness of the Calabrian court, challenging both the superficiality of courtly convention and the arbitrary nature of the court's approval. The episode rebukes not only the court's inconstancy, but also the limited imagination of its chivalry. The court believes they are testing the boy; they find themselves being tested instead. This abrupt *volte-face* evokes other courtly games, like riddles or misrule, that lead to dramatic conclusions and the overturning of the social order. The court is forced to admire the thoroughness of the boy's victory, even as they are shamed by it:

All them that thowght skorne before  
 Thought themselfe folys therefore;  
 They satt and held them stille,  
 And sayden, 'It was a gentill dede;  
 There may no man, so God vs spede,  
 Otherwyse say be skylle.'

(*Ipomadon* 482–487)

Ipomadon remains at the Calabrian court for several years. During this time, he avoids the tournaments and jousts that constitute the usual mechanisms for the public acquisition of *pris*. In so doing, he establishes an identity that is courtly but not necessarily chivalric. Unlike other Fair Unknowns, Ipomadon does not immediately dress himself in the chivalric garments and accoutrements of armour and weaponry; instead, he appears first as a page and a hunter:

As a hunter all in grene  
 He come before that bryght and shene  
 And on his foot he lyghte;  
 His kyrtell covyrd not his kne.

(*Ipomadon* 657–660)

The simplicity of his dress contrasts with the richness of his initial appearance before the Calabrian court; he has discarded the crimson doublet that suggests, with its richness, Ipomadon's princely identity. He wears instead a short, green kirtle; this is another term for the



short, tight, *cotehardie* tunic popular during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>134</sup> In clothing, green is the colour of youth and of spring-time; it was traditionally worn during May-day celebrations and brings with it all aspects of freshness and vitality.<sup>135</sup> Ipomadon's clothing reflects his position in the Calabrian social scheme; he has discarded his princely scarlet and wears instead the green garb traditionally worn by youths during their education at court, and also by hunters in romance.<sup>136</sup> His kirtle is fashionably, and suggestively, short (it 'covyrd not his kne' *Ipomadon* 660). The potentially erotic undertones of this meeting are heightened by the setting; in medieval art and literature, lovers commonly meet outside, and orchards and gardens are the traditional settings for lovers' trysts.<sup>137</sup> Hunting, too, was associated with sexual conduct: the pursuit of a woman by a man was known colloquially as a mouse- or rabbit-hunt; medieval elites sometimes used hunts as opportunities for amorous encounters, and hunting was also disapproved of by the clergy, who found in it dangerous erotic energy.<sup>138</sup> Ipomadon's green clothing enhances, but also complicates, this significance; green was associated with love, but it was a fickle, changeable colour that signified youthful inconstancy in love as much as love itself.<sup>139</sup>

Ipomadon and the Fere find themselves within a context that engenders naturally romantic attachment; mindful of her vow, the Fere curses Ipomadon's lack of chivalric interest:

All that she sawe of oþur men  
 Tille hym she held but fablis then,  
 So deyntely dede hee.  
 Agayne into her tent she turnys;  
 In hertte for hym full mekyll she mornys  
 And cursyd his destonye,

That in so mekyll fayrenes forȝete,  
 That ne hade poynte of prowese sete:

(*Ipomadon* 687–694)

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<sup>134</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 358.

<sup>135</sup> Pignonier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 147; Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 71.

<sup>136</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 72.

<sup>138</sup> Malcolm Jones, 'Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art III: Erotic Animal Imagery', *Folklore*, 102/2 (1991), 192–219, at p. 198; Marcelle Thiébaux, 'The Mediaeval Chase', *Speculum*, 42/2 (1967), 260–274, at pp. 263–264.

<sup>139</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, p. 71.

The passage is full of unfulfilled desire: ‘agayne into her tent she turnys’ (*Ipomadon* 687). The Fere chastises Ipomadon for his reluctance to engage in knightly combat. Ipomadon leaves the court and returns home with ‘many a syghyng sore’ (*Ipomadon* 1249). Like Perceval and Gingalain, he presents the request of knighthood to his king:

Ipomadon wolde no lenger abyde,  
But prayed his fader at that tyde  
To graunt hym the order of knyght,  
And he assent wyth noble chere:  
Abowte his sonne that hym [was] dere,  
He gyrdythe a bronde full bryght.  
The order of his fader he tas;  
That kepes he welle were he gas,  
Ryghte yt wolde wyth all his myghte. (*Ipomadon* 1688–1696)

Unlike other Fair Unknowns, reaching knighthood does not represent a formal induction into courtly society. Perhaps because of this, less emphasis is placed by the text on this scene. Fewer details of clothing appear, though the link between knighthood and armour is retained:

Ipomadon thus is a knyhte made;  
All that he wold to wille he hadde  
Of hors and noble armowre. (*Ipomadon* 1724–1726)

Ipomadon’s knighthood is affirmed with the granting of ‘hors and noble armowre’ (*Ipomadon* 1726). Like the horse and armour given to Gingalain in repayment for noble, knightly deeds (*LD* 718–723), these articles hold both performative and practical significance; they function as visual representations of knightly identity, but also enable the knight to enact chivalric deeds. Here, Ipomadon continues the deferral of public acclaim introduced in the mantle scene and repeated throughout the narrative; he uses these articles anonymously to carry out chivalric deeds. Unlike Gingalain, who sends evidence to Arthur after every victory, Ipomadon divorces identity from achievement: ‘Men covthe not calle hym there he came / But “the worthy knyghte pat had no name”’ (*Ipomadon* 1748–1749). As previously, this deferment of public acclaim results in even greater honour. His arrival at the Sicilian court reflects Ipomadon’s desire to fulfil the impossible task of becoming the best knight in the world. J. A Burrow discusses Ipomadon’s desire to accumulate glory through dishonour:

Ipomadon's intention throughout was to win more glory in the end [...] it is as if, by not claiming immediately the praise that is due to him, the glory is left to accumulate undiminished [...] and [he] is so able to establish, to his own and his lady's satisfaction, that he is indeed the best knight in the world.<sup>140</sup>

Additionally, Burrow explains the hero's tendency to heap upon himself undeserved contempt: 'the receiving of undeserved scorn has the same effect as the refusal to receive deserved praise.'<sup>141</sup> Dishonourable conduct represents a substantial contribution to the 'strange honorific calculus' by which Ipomadon proves his worth.<sup>142</sup> This paradoxical logic informs *Ipomadon* and brings a sense of design to even its more odd passages.

After the loss of her 'stravnge valet', the Fere organises a tournament for her hand. After hearing of this, Ipomadon journeys to the neighbouring Sicilian court. His arrival is carefully constructed to be a self-consciously chivalric display.

Wyth hym he ledde a maye;

His syster doghturr, sib full nere;  
A maydon chaste and myld of chere,  
Lufflye of chynne and cheke.  
Greete hors many wyth his harnes,  
And also III spare palffreys  
Toke he wyth hym eke;  
Greyhondys wyghte wyth small brachettys,  
Rei[a]ll hawkys and yonge valettys  
That were both myld and meke.  
Wyth hem he ledde stedys thre,  
In erthe þer myȝtte no better bee  
Thorowe all þus world to seke;

(*Ipomadon* 2371–2383)

Ipomadon arrives at the Sicilian court with three horses, gear, and garments; these are in the colours of white, red, and black. The textual focus is equally divided between the three animals; the white, the red, and the black horses are allotted a stanza each. The mounts appear in ascending order: the first to appear is the white, 'the [l]jest stede of them thre' (*Ipomadon* 2393). The red appears second, and 'that stede was sum dele more' (*Ipomadon* 2407). Finally, the black appears, and is 'So well made of lythe and lym / That in hym was no lake' (*Ipomadon* 2409–2410). The three horses appear in the sequence in which Ipomadon uses them at the

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<sup>140</sup> Burrow, 'The Uses of Incognito', p. 31.

<sup>141</sup> Burrow, 'The Uses of Incognito', p. 32.

<sup>142</sup> Burrow, 'The Uses of Incognito', p. 32.

tournament; white on the first day, red on the second, and black on the third. Each horse is ridden by a page in garments of the same colour: ‘a chyld in white’ (*Ipomadon* 2387) on the first, a ‘chyld in rede’ (*Ipomadon* 2402) on the second, and upon the third, ‘The chyld bare on his launse / A pensell all off blake’ (*Ipomadon* 2418–2419). A great array of chivalric articles and accoutrements are included in this display: the white has ‘abowte his neke a white sheld, / A white spere in his hand he helde’ (*Ipomadon* 2390–2391); the red has a ‘Redde sadull, shyld and spere, / Redd was all his oþur geyre’ (*Ipomadon* 2399–2400); the black has ‘A blake sheld aboute his halsse, / Blake was all his armur else’ (*Ipomadon* 2414–2415). The incorporation of this finery results in an impressively chivalric spectacle. The description is at this point overwhelmingly martial; fine clothing is not described in any detail, though a solitary textile appears in the ‘white sylke’ (*Ipomadon* 2385) that covers the first horse’s saddle. These articles constitute the mechanisms by which *Ipomadon* enacts the chivalric concealment of his identity. Though the articles that accompany him are articles of warfare, *Ipomadon*’s appearance is curiously courtly, rather than martial; he wears no armour, and his spurs alone indicate his knightly status.<sup>143</sup>

Lyghttly was he clade to ryde  
 In a mantell panyd wyth pryde  
 And semys sette grette plente.  
 He losyd his mantell band for hete  
 And downe fro his neke he it lete,  
 It covyrd ouer his kne.  
 Hose he had of clothe of Ynde,  
 Suche shull no man now fynde,  
 To seke all crystyante.  
 Spurrys of gold he had vpon;  
 Was neuer kyng better weryd none  
 Ne no man in no degre.

(*Ipomadon* 2456–2467)

*Ipomadon*’s appearance here is lively and attractive; in its proud display it emphasises both courtly and martial elements. His mantle is embroidered richly, and he wears fashionable hose, worn during the fourteenth century as part of the *cotehardie* ensemble.<sup>144</sup> The colour of these is a deep indigo blue (*Ynde*); this is a noble colour that indicates, with its richness, the wearer’s

<sup>143</sup> Maria Hayward, ‘Spurs’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 541–542.

<sup>144</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 222.

status, but does not represent such an obvious statement as the rich scarlet in which Ipomadon previously presented himself. The rich materials convey to the Sicilian court Ipomadon's high status, without strictly tying him to any particular rank or identity. Like his appearance in the forest, there is a note of the erotic in his appearance:

He loysyd his mantell band for hete  
And downe fro his neke he it lete,  
It covyrd ouer his kne. (*Ipomadon* 2459–2461)

Heat is connected with the erotic in medieval English romance, and Ipomadon's appearance it indicates his youth and vitality.<sup>145</sup> With 'it covyrd ouer his kne' (*Ipomadon* 2461), the text echoes the imagery used in the hunting scene, in which 'his kyrtell covyrd not his kne' (*Ipomadon* 660). Ipomadon's presentation is now more mature and assured; he is older, and as such, covers up more of his body. Despite this deliberate covering, a trace of the erotic remains in his appearance here: 'He loysyd his mantell band for hete / And downe fro his neke he it lete' (*Ipomadon* 2459–2460). *Ipomedon C* utilises the presentation of heat as a shorthand for erotic feeling; the Fere's affections for Ipomadon are presented as 'full hote' (*Ipomadon C*). Hue de Roteland's *Ipomedon* is straightforward in its vulgarity, and the English texts frequently mitigate or remove its more bawdy passages.<sup>146</sup> Here, with this pageantry and display, Ipomadon deliberately manipulates his appearance to effectively conceal his identity. He repeats elements of his earlier arrival at the Calabrian court; in both instances, he deliberately constructs images of courtly, rather than martial, opulence. The greater level of detail and the tighter order renders the corresponding passage in *Ipomadon A* more effective than the other English texts in conveying Ipomadon's elaborate performance here; the analogous scene appears in *Ipomydon B* with characteristic brevity and a reduced amount of detail. It is condensed into just a few lines:

He purvayed hym III noble stedis  
And also thre noble wedys;  
That one was white as any mylke,  
The trappure of hym was white sylke;

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<sup>145</sup> Robert Allen Rouse, 'Some Like it Hot: The Medieval Eroticism of Heat', in *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007) pp. 71–81.

<sup>146</sup> Sánchez-Martí, 'Reconstructing the Audiences', p. 165.

Pat other was rede, bothe styffe and stoure,  
 The trappure was of þe same coloure;  
 Blake þan was þat othir stede,  
 The same coloure was his wede;  
 Thre greyhondis with hym he ladde,  
 The best, þat his fader had,  
 Rede and whyte and blake they were.

(*Ipomydon B* 643–653)

Though it preserves the general emphasis on appearance present in *Ipomadon A*, this scene lacks the same focus on order. It removes entirely the ascending aspect of the horses' introduction; each steed is instead presented as equally noble (*Ipomydon B* 643). The horses' appearance echo the text's confused description of Ipomydon's outer and inner garments; just as Ipomydon's description before the Calabrian court demonstrates no sign of *effectio*, the horses' entrance before the Sicilian court shows no focus on order. *Ipomydon B* omits entirely the riders of the horses, though the white silk detail is retained, as well as the 'white milk' image.

Ipomadon's elaborate display is successful; the Sicilian courtiers are suitably impressed:

'Ser, synne I was of my moder borne,  
 I sawe neuer suche a syghte beforen  
 In this world so wyde.'

(*Ipomadon* 2561–2563)

Another descriptive passage prefaces Ipomadon's introduction to the court. The long descriptive passages appear initially redundant, as Ipomadon's appearance has already been described in some detail during his approach to the court (*Ipomadon* 2456–2467). This scene presents new details previously not seen in his approach. As in his previous arrival at the Calabrian court, the text adopts the perspective of the watching court. Ipomadon here self-consciously submits himself to the viewers' curious gaze; he manipulates, deliberately, his presentation of self. His mantle or overcoat, which previously he 'loysyd his mantell band for hete / And downe fro his neke he it lete,' (*Ipomadon* 2459–2460) now appears in its proper place. Ipomadon's arrival at the Sicilian court echoes his arrival at the Calabrian court; in both instances the mantle, or the topmost layer of his clothing, provides the central point for the courtiers' focus (*Ipomadon* 370–375). The effect is repeated here with the introduction to the 'syrket' or surcoat (*Ipomadon* 2696–2701). Ipomadon wears a surcoat of fine cloth, trimmed with ermine, and bordered with gold embroidery. The surcoat is an overgarment in use throughout the medieval period, though

different styles and modes of wearing it existed. It was particularly popular during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during which the *cyclas* (or, variously the *ciclatoun* or *surcote*) was a long, loose, sometimes sleeveless garment that gathered around the waist; the richest of these were usually made of silk, though rich fabrics of woven gold were also popular.<sup>147</sup> Like the fine mantle given earlier to the butler, Ipomadon's surcoat is trimmed with ermine, indicating his high status but not positioning him firmly in any particular rank within that scheme. It is edged with ermine and gold; the 'orfrayes' represent a rich border of gold embroidery, evoking the mantle's 'bordoure all of red sendell' (*Ipomadon* 373).

The structure of these passages emphasises the correspondence between the two introductions; in both passages, the ermine is mentioned first, with the borders appearing second. This progression from inner to outer garments echoes the ordered presentation of Ipomadon's clothing in the Calabrian court scene. The description is structured, and measured; items appear imbued with significance and patterns are consciously and consistently repeated. During Ipomadon's introduction to Melengere's court only his 'sycket of palle' is mentioned. His inner clothes have previously been described and as such do not appear here; the arrival scene contains reference to his hose 'of clothe of Ynde' (*Ipomadon* 2462). A passage describing the mantle is prefaced with a passage describing Ipomadon's doublet:

His doblett was of red welvet,  
Off bryght golde botuns ibete  
That worthely was wroghte. (*Ipomadon* 367–369)

As in the earlier description, the description progresses in an orderly fashion from the inner to the outer clothes. The 'sycket' discussion is positioned later. It is relegated deliberately to appear before the many eyes of the court; its opulence is most usefully employed here. Ipomadon's procession towards the Sicilian court is more informal, showing human vulnerability; affected by the heat, he lays his mantle down. Once arriving at the Sicilian court, he presents before the assembled courtiers a more elaborately constructed spectacle. His mantle, once laid informally over his knee, now covers his clothing and invites, with its richness, the admiration of the

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<sup>147</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 151.

watching courtiers. In this way, Ipomadon's awareness of the ways in which he is perceived invests his fine mantle or surcoat with the significance of a costume.

Ipomadon's actions at the Sicilian court represent an inversion of his actions at the Calabrian court. Previously, Ipomadon is keen to prove his chivalric virtue; here, he deliberately offends and upsets as much as he can. Ipomadon offers to stay and serve at the King's court, upon the condition that he will act as the Queen's page and have sole access to her. He will, he says, 'be callyd þe quenes drewe' (*Ipomadon* 2739). The precise meaning of term this is difficult to determine; with its derivation from the verb 'draw', it implies proximity and intimacy. In practical terms, Ipomadon proposes taking on a serving role; however, both his manner and the term he uses suggests impertinent and adulterous impropriety:

Yet mvste thou graunt me thus;  
That I may lede hur vp agayne,  
Beffore her bedes syde, sertayne,  
Att eche a tyme her kys. (*Ipomadon* 2746–2749)

Like his anonymous acts of chivalry, or the deliberate *faux pas* at the Calabrian court, Ipomadon achieves greater *pris* through his deliberate deferment of honour. The greater the scorn, the greater the honour; as such, he courts humiliation at the Sicilian court, and, anonymously, glory at the Calabrian court during the night.

This duality characterises Ipomadon's time at the Sicilian court; during his days as the queen's 'drewe', he accumulates shame and dishonour, while during the evenings he wins glory at the Calabrian tournament. This switch from honourable to dishonourable identities is facilitated through clothing. The dishonourable queen's 'drewe' wears the rich courtier's clothing in which Ipomadon is first introduced; the honourable knight wears chivalric armour. Here, Ipomadon consciously manipulates his external presentation to frustrate the public gaze. He appears at the tournament as the white, red and black knights. Each day, Ipomadon wins the Calabrian tournament, but vanishes before he claims his prize. By constantly changing his armour, Ipomadon frustrates the construction of a single public identity; his victories are not attributed to one knight, but to several. At the conclusion of the tournament, he reveals to the



Fere that the white, red and black knights and the ‘Quene’s drewe’ are her ‘stravnge valet’; by connecting the achievements of these seemingly separate identities, Ipomadon seeks to convey to the Fere that his *pris* is equivalent to that of several men. The secrecy that accompanies these achievements heightens, through its suggestion of humility, the composite value of these achievements. This is, however, still not enough to equal the best knight in the world, and, to this end, Ipomadon departs once more.

Ipomadon subsequently learns that the Fere is threatened by an enemy knight and returns once more to save her. Ipomadon’s next transformation facilitates his return, unrecognised, to the Sicilian court. His hair is shorn ‘Wondyr ille faringlye’ (*Ipomadon* 6228). His armour, too, is mangled:

A blake soty sheld he gate;  
VII yere before, I wott well þat,  
Hit had hange vp to drye.  
An old rustye swerd he hadde,  
His spere was a plowgh gade,  
A full vnbryght br[yni]e;  
Vpon the to[n] legge a brokyn bote,  
A rente hose on the other foote,  
Two tatrys hangyng bye.

(*Ipomadon* 6229–6237)

The description continues:

His helme was not worthe a bene,  
His hors myght vnnethe goo for lene,  
Hit was an old crokyd meyre;  
An vncomely sadull behynde, seker,  
His brydull was a wrethe wekyr;  
Off othere rekkes he nere.

(*Ipomadon* 6238–6243)

Here, Ipomadon closely resembles Perceval, who also rides a mare and appears ‘unborely [...] dyghte’ (*POG* 525) before the court. Ipomadon’s arrival is different in every way to his previous arrival at court; Ipomadon replaces his rich clothing with torn and poor clothing. Though he presents himself as a knight—or a fool who thinks himself a knight—he represents a dissonant note in the courtly community. His bizarre appearance and anti-social actions once more function as an instance of performative humility. He deliberately establishes himself as a foolish character, boasting:

‘God loke the, Mellengere!  
I am the best knyght vnder shild  
There no man comythe in the feld -  
That brought þou onys full dere!’

(*Ipomadon* 6282–6285)

In his costume of blackened and tattered accoutrements, Ipomadon here echoes with irony the words of the Fere; she will marry only the best knight “‘Of all this world in armus bryghte / Assayde vnder his shelde”” (*Ipomadon* 119–120). Both Ipomadon and the Fere use the ‘under shield’ image as a shorthand for chivalric merit and Ipomadon challenges, with his appearance, these associations. The irony is heightened by Ipomadon’s private accumulation of *pris*; at this point in the narrative, it is fair to say that Ipomadon may very well have a claim to being among the best knights of the world. A duality is maintained through his appearance, which is ‘not worthe a bene,’ (*Ipomadon* 6238), and the quiet succession of chivalric victories underpinning his identity.

Like Gingalain and Perceval, Ipomadon requests a quest; this amuses the court. With his tattered clothing and bumbling performance, Ipomadon lacks the appearance of merit, and yet his request is in accordance with chivalric practice. The request for ‘the fyrste battayle / That is askyde off thee’ (*Ipomadon* 6323–6324) is conventional, creating a parity between him and other questing knights of romance. The significance of this is not realised by the court, who remain transfixed by the spectacle Ipomadon presents; the text intersperses descriptions of Ipomadon’s actions with frequent descriptions of the courtiers’ reactions: ‘Wyth so good will low3e they all’ (*Ipomadon* 6269).

Knyghttys att his attyre low3e  
And sum off them was ferd i-nowgh,  
Ladyes chaungyd þere chere.

(*Ipomadon* 6277–6278)

This attitude is echoed by the lady Imayne, who, like *Lybeaus Desconus*’ lady Ellene, arrives richly and opulently dressed to request aid on behalf of her mistress.

Apon a palfreye white as mylke,  
In a sadull all of sylke,  
The sege off rewell bone,  
The trapoure well ordayned therefore,  
Frette aboute wyth gold so dere;  
In the world was better non.

Here gyte was velvet to her f[ee]te,  
Hyr syrkote syngell it was for heete,  
Besett wyth many a stone;  
Her mantel all of red sendell,  
That araye become her well;  
As the sonne hyr coloure shone.

(*Ipomadon* 6454–6465)

Imayne wears a ‘gyte’, a general term for dress that gives no details of its specific design; in this case, this is an undergarment worn under a ‘surcoat’. Like *Ipomadon*’s red doublet, her appearance also bears the marks of the English poet’s ‘updating’ eye; she wears the modern, recently-invented velvet. Both the nature of the garment and the length to which it falls demonstrate the great wealth of her mistress, for whom she now, like *Lybeaus Desconus*’ Ellene, acts as envoy; a great deal more fabric is required to construct a long gown, rather than a boy’s short tunic. This length, also, is fashionable; during the fourteenth century, while the hemlines of garments worn by men proceeded upwards, those worn by women increased in length. Trailing hemlines were fashionable, covering the feet entirely and extending, in an abundance of fabric, to pool on the ground.<sup>148</sup> Like *Ipomadon*, she wears a fashionable surcoat; the female equivalent of this garment was often sideless or armless, and worn over other garments to reveal their colours.<sup>149</sup> It is adorned with many rich jewels, and worn under a mantle that is, like *Ipomadon*’s, both red and of silk sendal. The description of her appearance also progresses in an orderly fashion; the poet begins with the unseen underclothes (the generalised ‘gyte’), then progresses to the surcoat, and finally finishes with the topmost layer; the mantle.

Imayne is vibrant and lively: ‘As the sonne hyr coloure shone’ (*Ipomadon* 6465). Like *Ipomadon* during his first arrival at the Sicilian court, she is affected by the heat, imbuing her appearance with an erotic sensibility: ‘Hyr syrkote syngell it was for heete’ (*Ipomadon* 6461). Imayne’s appearance is calculated to impress; she carries ‘A yard of gold in hand’ (*Ipomadon* 6475). Through its use of expensive materials (‘gold so deere’) Imayne’s appearance indicates the wealth and power of her mistress, the Fere. The lady Imayne’s echoes in several respects

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<sup>148</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 213–218.

<sup>149</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 217.

*Lybeaus Desconus*' Lady Ellene: both ladies appear in opulent dress. This too echoes *Lybeaus Desconus*, in which Ellene's clothing acts as a visual representation of her mistress' significance and power; there is also a connection with *Sir Launfal*, in which the fairy lady's envoys appear at the Arthurian court in progressively opulent dress to herald her arrival (*SL* 849–972).

Imayne's appearance is constructed with some effort to convey wealth and power; she appears firmly placed in the courtly continuum that conflates appearance with virtue. Dismayed by Ipomadon's tattered appearance, she dismisses his offer and repeats the derision of the court:

'Do away, foole, for God avowe,  
It is no tyme to Iape now;  
Therefforre come I not hedyr!' (*Ipomadon* 6535–6537)

After Ipomadon insists on helping her, she laments:

'Alas!' [sayd] Imay[n]e to Melengere,  
'Sertys, and I gette no helpe here,  
To goo I wot neuer whedyr!' (*Ipomadon* 6541–6543)

In *Lybeaus Desconus*, the lady Ellene rejects Gingalain on the base of his youthful appearance; though she subsequently revises her opinion, she is correct in her initial observation that Gingalain is untried and untested (*LD* 178–189). The worthiness of Ipomadon's nature, however, positions the lady Imayne's rejection as a failure of perception; like the courtiers, she conflates appearance with reality.

Imayne continues to represent within the narrative the courtly community's failure of perception. Imayne falls in love with Ipomadon, upon which he begins to deconstruct his elaborate manipulations of appearance. She struggles to believe that the fool is indeed the queen's 'drew' and the tournament knights, upon which he takes off his tattered clothes and dresses himself once more in fine apparel:

The dwarffe hym seruyd wonder well,  
A mantill to hym he broughte,  
Blake wythin and red wythoute.  
He wrapud hym worthely abowte  
That richely was iwroughte.

Off sylke he hade one a s[erk]e  
Wrought of a wondyr worke

Sowyde bothe well and clene;  
A kyrtyll and a crochette fyne ...  
Full wele idyght all bedene.

(*Ipomadon* 7069–7078)

Imayne is still firmly positioned in the courtly scheme that conflates appearance with virtue; seeing him so clothed, she struggles to reconcile his disparate identities:

Imayne hym behyldys on the face,  
A fayrer knyght thanne he was  
Her thought she hade not sene;  
'Ys this a fole? Nay certes, hee!  
In hertte sore for-thynkys mee,  
So str[a]unge that I have been.'

(*Ipomadon* 7079–7084)

The colours black and red are significant. Ipomadon wears both colours in the Calabrian tournament for the Fere's hand. The appearance of the mantel 'blake wythin and red wythoute' (*Ipomadon* 7071) suggests a synthesis of identities and reflects Ipomadon's deceptions; just as the red of the exterior conceals the black interior, so does Ipomadon present himself consistently throughout the narrative as what he is not.

Ipomadon's lengthy deceptions finally conclude with the rescuing of the Fere. After fighting and defeating the enemy knight besieging her castle, he begins another in his series of convoluted deceptions. Ipomadon dresses in the armour of the fallen enemy knight and proclaims himself the victor. The game only ends when Ipomadon's disguise betrays him: his glove flies off, revealing an identifying ring:

At the laste one away smote  
The halfe of his glove of plate  
And made his hande all bare;  
A ringe on his fyngur shone,  
Cabanus lokyd on the stone,  
He syghyd wonder sore.

(*Ipomadon* 8469–8474)

This interruption interrupts the 'apparently endless process' of Ipomadon's accumulation of *pris*.<sup>150</sup> Fulfilling the Fere's vow is impossible; the succession of performance and deception could continue with no conclusion:

'When me[n] to dede of armus drewe,  
I went to the grene wood bovgh,  
A huntere as I were.  
Lordis and ladyes, lesse and more,

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<sup>150</sup> Burrow, 'The Uses of Incognito', pp. 28–29.

To skorne lowde loughe they me þerfore,  
My Ioye was mekill the more.  
Off a vowe I hard hyr speke,  
That wold I nought she shuld it breke;  
That made me fro her fare.'

(*Ipomadon* 8535–8543)

The revelation of Ipomadon's true identity concludes the narrative, as the Fere and Ipomadon are reunited and married. Ipomadon dismantles the elaborate disguises he has created, corralling the disparate identities into one person; Ipomadon is the queen's 'drewē', the white, red and black knights, and the fool:

'He traveld hathe thorowe many a soyle,  
For your love aventurs sought,  
For your love he made kytte his heyre,  
For your love he made hym fole euerywhere,  
For your love grette wonder wrought,  
For you love hathe sufferd payne,  
And for your love Lyolyne hathe slayne,  
And to the ground hym brought.'

(*Ipomadon* 8671–8678)

This is the reason for Ipomadon's deceptions. Unlike Perceval and Gingalain, Ipomadon's journey is not one of self-knowledge; he is not an outsider trying to establish himself within a strange and unfamiliar code. Instead, Ipomadon's self-knowledge allows him to manipulate, deliberately, the presentation of his identity through the affectation of elaborate disguises. He plays with his own identity, revelling in the comedic humiliation he accrues as much as the chivalric acclaim he defers. Love ultimately allows him to reconcile these identities and cease his elaborate game.

Ipomadon's game is reliant on the external transformation facilitated by clothing. The entire scheme begins with the mantle and butler scene, in which Ipomadon's deliberate invitation of humiliation and obscurity lead ultimately to greater honour and acclaim. Through the course of the narrative, he blackens his armour and disguises himself as a fool; dresses himself in armour of different colours; and wears the same colours as an enemy knight. This elaborate denial of identity results, perversely, in the construction of a chivalric identity; Ipomadon's performative humility results in his acquisition of *pris*. Though *Ipomadon* engages with Fair Unknown conventions, Ipomadon's deception often invests them with an air of irony.

In *Ipomadon*, the Fair Unknown is unknown not to himself but to the court; he is not in search of his own identity. At times these garments appear to derail his chivalric progress; he wears deliberately the blackened armour of a fool, and the green garments of a hunter. This deceptive avoidance of chivalry is the means by which Ipomadon establishes his chivalric value and facilitates his pursuit of the Fere. *Ipomadon* painstakingly builds up a pattern of repetition and emphasis throughout the text. Each new disguise constitutes a self-referential repetition of previous courtly introductions. At all times, the wider scheme of the poem is maintained. With each encounter, Ipomadon ceaselessly moves towards his goal: the acquisition of glory sufficient to win the hand of a lady who has vowed to marry none but the ‘best knyghte / Of all this world’ (*Ipomadon*, 118–119). This is, as Burrow points out, an impossible task: the seemingly endless acquisition of more and more glory only ends when Ipomadon’s identity is discovered.<sup>151</sup> The narrative is controlled, measured, and infinitely ordered: events happen in ways that adhere to a central, consistent—though at times paradoxical—logic. *Ipomydon B*, by contrast, presents a narrative that appears by degrees lacking the internal logic that informs *Ipomadon*. In *Ipomydon*, substantial revisions reduce or omit entirely self-referential passages. The love theme is consequentially undermined by these omissions, and the internal logic of the piece starts to give way. Ipomydon’s actions begin to lack focus and meaning. Ipomydon appears less a dutiful lover in search of ultimate glory. Instead, he appears as an anarchic figure of misrule, wilfully up-ending the social order and causing chaos with antics that, though entertaining, lack the deeper significance of *Ipomadon*. Despite Ipomadon’s complex and seemingly contradictory disguises and actions, the poem remains focused heavily on the love-theme; every action informs this theme, facilitating the construction of a chivalric identity contextualised by Ipomadon’s love for the Fere lady of Calabria.

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<sup>151</sup> Burrow, ‘The Uses of Incognito’, p. 27.

### *Social and Chivalric Identity in the Fair Unknown Romances*

This section now proceeds to present a summary of my own original conclusions and ideas, drawn from the extensive and in-depth textual analysis carried out in this chapter's preceding sections. I have attempted to demonstrate that dress functions as a visual representation of the fair unknown's social and knightly identity. This chapter argues that the acquisition of armour often represents a major plot point of the narrative and marks the inclusion of the hitherto-isolated fair unknown within the chivalric community. I have demonstrated that this can, as in *Lybeaus Desconus*, take place in a ritualistic ceremony that formalises the boy's induction into the chivalric brotherhood. Alternately, in *Perceval of Galles*, the fair unknown's obsessive focus on armour is exaggerated for comedic effect, as the ignorant boy struggles to dress himself in the red knight's armour. This chapter shows that there is often an element of wrongness in the initial stages of this process: Gingalain dresses himself, dishonourably, in the armour of a fallen knight; Perceval attempts to do the same. Both errors are subsequently neutralised by the formal induction of the immature individual, through mentorship, into the chivalric community: the arming ritual of Gingalain by the Arthurian court, and the dressing of Perceval by Gawain, constitute a redemptive return to the themes of the earlier dressing scenes. Similarly, this chapter demonstrates that clothing becomes representative of chivalric identity: when the enchantress, Dame Amour, sways Gingalain from his purpose, she steals away his armour and clothes him instead in fine *palle*. Armour is also given in response to chivalric achievement; in recognition of his knightly status, a saved damsel's father gives Gingalain armour. The opposite is also true: when Perceval is shamed by his moral error, he surrenders his armour and, as a penitent, he adopts the rough clothing of his youth.

This chapter also argues that clothing in *Ipomadon* functions in a similar but more complex manner. It argues that Ipomadon represents a self-aware manipulator of visual display, deliberately utilising dress to establish a narrative regarding his identity. This text appears to be more aware of the tropes of the Fair Unknown motif and repeatedly, deliberately subverts them.



For Ipomadon, too, the acquiring of knightly armour marks an important step on his journey towards becoming a chivalric knight. This is not, however, a main focus of the narrative. Instead, Ipomadon self-consciously manipulates his appearance through a series of disguises and incognito presentations. He appears at the Calabrian court in the guise of a Fair Unknown, at the Sicilian court as the ‘quene’s drew’, and once more as the fool. Throughout all of this, his inner identity is consistent. Motivated by his adoration for the Fere, he seeks the endless acquisition of *pris* enough to be worthy of her hand. His series of protracted disguises ends by accident; he is forced to surrender his elaborate pretence and openly adopt once more his true identity, and it is through this recognition of identity that Ipomadon and the Fere are able to marry. This chapter argues that *Ipomadon*’s focus on appearance is established and formed by the Fere Lady’s claim that only the ‘best knight [...] in armus bryghte / Assayde vnder his shelde’ (*Ipomadon* 118–120) would win her love. Here, the text immediately positions chivalric appearance as analogous to chivalric merit and identity. This chapter argues that Ipomadon’s repeated dressing and undressing is the logical result of such a conflation: Ipomadon tests this idea by adopting several different disguises, occasionally including those that outwardly contradict this conflation, such as the rusted armour of the fool. In this way, he amasses, privately, the *pris* accorded by watching spectators to several knights. This chapter argues that Ipomadon’s repeated disguises function as a way in which he confounds the prescriptive gaze that conflates chivalric appearance with chivalric identity. In this way, the chapter demonstrates that this text functions well as a comparative choice to *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Sir Perceval of Galles*, in which this conflation of chivalric identity and appearance provides one of the central means through which the protagonists knightly identities are established.

In conclusion, then, this chapter argues that *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Ipomadon* focus acutely on *pris*. The acquisition of chivalric glory represents the means through which the *Lybeaus Desconus*’ discussion of identity and belong takes place. For *Ipomadon*, however, the fair unknown motif is an opportunity to problematise chivalric convention by extending it to the most extreme logical possibility. *Perceval of Galles*, too, plays games with chivalric

convention: its hero is a bumbling ignoramus whose arrogance foolishness subverts entirely the romance scheme. Both texts, however, conclude conventionally: clothing facilitates the recognition of the knights' identities and through the themes of reconciliation, the texts embrace the conventional romance structure once more.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Middle English Breton *Lais*

The Middle English Breton *lais* retain many of the thematic interests of their French sources and analogues. Their concise narrative structures emphasise adventure, *courtoisie* and love.<sup>1</sup> This chapter explores the significance of dress in the Middle English Breton *lais* through close examination of representative textual examples. These texts have been carefully selected in accordance with the principles outlined in the Methodology section of the general introduction, and function as particularly significant examples in which dress and clothing appear as significant thematic interests. The focus of *Emaré* and *Sir Launfal* on clothing and dress is well-represented in critical discussion, demonstrating that these two texts suitably provide appropriate avenues for this kind of thematic discussion. This chapter seeks to contribute a new focus to existing scholarship on this topic through its comparative focus on identity and visual display. To provide a fresh perspective, it presents a comparative focus on more frequently-studied texts, such as *Emaré*, with its less widely-studied textual analogue, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*. Though critics have discussed *Emaré*'s robe in some detail, these texts have not before been the focus of such a comparative perspective, particularly in relation to dress. These two texts have been selected to function, then, as representative examples of the Constance subtype, and this chapter, therefore, provides original conclusions regarding the significance of visual display within the Breton *lais* and the Constance narrative. The chapter continues its comparative focus with its analysis of dress, identity and visual display in two male-focused Breton *lais*. Though *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo* have been the subject of much critical discussion, critics have predominantly focused primarily on the texts' use of dress in relation to its function as an expression of material wealth (*Sir Launfal*) or identity and disguise (*Sir Orfeo*). This chapter contributes to the existing debate by expanding the discussion of dress

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the characteristics of the Breton *lai*, see: Mortimer J. Donovan, *The Breton Lay: A Guide to Varieties* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 121–123.

in *Sir Launfal* to examine dress in relation to identity and visual display. It argues that dress and visual display plays an integral role in both texts as regards the signposting and navigating of liminal, transitional identities. The chapter's original contribution lies in its comparative focus and the wide-ranging connections and conclusions regarding the generic conventions of the Breton *lai* that it draws from its close analysis of these carefully-chosen representative examples. It argues that identity in the Breton *lais* is firmly placed within extremes in which the protagonists' identities are either rigidly static and immutable, or fluidly transitional and liminal. *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and *Emaré* are Constance narratives that present, through dress, their heroines' identities as static and impervious to the destabilising influence of antagonistic masculine energies. On the other hand, *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo* use dress to illustrate the transitional inner journey undertaken by the protagonists.

Three of the four texts are concerned with the influence of external factors on identity: *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and *Emaré* present Florence's and Emaré's fortitude in the face of threatening masculine influence, while in *Sir Launfal*, Launfal successfully navigates the destabilising feminine influence of Guinevere on the chivalric brotherhood, but journeys from the courtly world to the fairy otherworld under the influence of Dame Tryamour. Alternatively, *Sir Orfeo* establishes an inherent mutability of identity that originates not from external influence but from internal transition. This chapter argues that in each instance, dress functions as a visual signpost of the characters' inner identity: Florence and Emaré's immutability is expressed through their retention of their fine garments throughout the narratives; Launfal's alienation from the human courtly community is demonstrated through his lack of appropriate clothing, and his fairy-given garments signpost his transition of allegiances to the fairy otherworld; similarly, through his changing appearance, Orfeo is transformed from king, to hermit, and king again.

## *Le Bone Florence of Rome and Emaré*

*Le Bone Florence of Rome* survives in several manuscripts, though only one exists in English. These are: MS Nouv. acquis; franc. 4192 of the Bibliothèque Nationale; Lansdowne 362; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Notre-Dame 198), MS24384 of the fond français of the Bibliothèque Nationale; Biblioteca Escorial; as well as the sole surviving Middle English text, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38 (folio: 239r-254v).<sup>2</sup> Dates of composition range from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Though they are linked by shared folklore motifs, there is a good deal of textual variation between the extant French Florence texts.<sup>4</sup> Though less critical attention has been afforded frequent topics of critical discussion include textual analogues,<sup>5</sup> the interplay between east and west,<sup>6</sup> and the representation of femininity and the female body in the text.<sup>7</sup> A contrast appears in Wanchen Tai's exploration of the text's representation of the aged male body.<sup>8</sup> In this way, though there has been critical attention to the topic of materiality in *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and particularly *Emaré*, my own particular focus on identity and dress has not yet appeared. Anne Thompson Lee suggests that the English text is a late fourteenth-century adaptation of *Florence de Rome*, a thirteenth-century French romance.<sup>9</sup> The English text is significantly shorter than its French analogues, and the poet removes much of the original's discussion of astrological, biblical, and magical material.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For further details of the manuscripts and textual analogues, see Carol Falvo Heffernan ed., *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), pp. 1–8. All subsequent references to *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (*FOR*) will be to this edition and cited by line number. For critical editions of the French text, see Axel Wallensköl's edition, *Florence de Rome*, volumes 1 and 2, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 55 (Paris: 1907–1909).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the dating of the text, see the account provided in Heffernan's introduction of her critical edition, pp. 7–8.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Sarah Crisler, 'Epic and the Problem of the Female Protagonist: The Case of *Florence de Rome*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 106/1 (2005), pp. 27–33.

<sup>5</sup> Carol F. Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Felicity Riddy, 'Temporary Virginity and the Everyday Body: *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and Bourgeois Self-Making', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. by Nicola McDonald (London: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 197–216.

<sup>8</sup> Wanchen Tai, "'Al We Wilniþ to Ben Old. Wy Is Eld Ihatid": Aging and Ageism in "Le Bone Florence of Rome"', *Studies in Philology*, 112/4 (2015), 656–79.

<sup>9</sup> Anne Thompson Lee, 'Le Bone Florence of Rome: A Middle English Adaptation of a French Romance', in *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*, Harvard English Studies 5, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 343–354, at p. 344.

<sup>10</sup> Lee, 'A Middle English Adaptation of a French Romance', p. 344.

Some additional changes between the English and French texts are discussed in the introduction to Heffernan's critical edition, who identifies what she terms as the 'religious intent of the English adapter', suggesting that the changes result in an adaptation which 'underlines the exemplary character of the romance.'<sup>11</sup> Reflecting this focus, the magic broach which protects the French heroine is absent, and in the English text, Florence's prayers save her instead.<sup>12</sup> I would argue that the absence of this broach is in accordance with the general principles surrounding the English text's use of dress, which, like *Lybeaus Desconus*, sees a general 'lessening' effect. Here, detailed accounts of opulent dress are pared-down and presented less frequently and in less depth. As I previously argued in relation to *Lybeaus Desconus*, however, I believe this should not be taken as evidence that the English romances are less interested in dress than their French counterparts, or that these elements were somehow particularly and especially chosen for elimination during the adaptation process. Instead, the comparatively short focus afforded to dress within these texts illustrates the more compact nature of these English adaptations. When the opposite is true, as it is in Thomas Chestre's lengthy adaptation of Marie de France's *Lanval*, dress does indeed appear in more detail in the English texts than the French sources. I would suggest, then, that this primarily represents a stylistic choice in accordance with the general principles of the adaptor's focus on length.

*Le Bone Florence of Rome* sees its protagonist consistently challenged by aggressive masculine forces that threaten her repeatedly with sexual violence. Florence is betrayed, exiled, falsely accused, and finally triumphs over the men who have wronged her. The aged Garcy's marital advances constitute an attempted ravishment through which sexual violence is legitimised by state warfare. Florence is threatened with rape three more times in different contexts; this catalogue of repeated assaults concludes with Florence's arrival at a Jerusalem nunnery, in which she heals each of her tormentors. Florence is subsequently reunited with her lover and returns to Rome. The text draws equally on elements of hagiography and romance; descriptions of fine clothing and armour predominantly appear in the first section:

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<sup>11</sup> Heffernan, *Florence of Rome*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>12</sup> Heffernan, *Florence of Rome*, p. 25.

The extensive first section [...] is full of typical romantic elements: the arrival of messengers from distant lands; the detailed descriptions of journeys, clothes, armour, costly gifts, palace halls, and battle scenes; and the love between a conventional chivalric knight and lady.<sup>13</sup>

Though external forces seek to divest her of her clothing, Florence retains consistently her rich Roman garments. These garments remain static throughout the text until she eventually surrenders them by choice. Fine clothing once more appears in the conclusion of the narrative, illustrating Florence's return to her former position. Emaré's rich robe illustrates similar tensions in the narrative: 'Like Le Freine's fine cloth or Orfeo's harp, the robe is the one object which accompanies Emaré as she moves from one country to another, from one identity to another.'<sup>14</sup> Emaré's narrative is sometimes read as one of identity lost and regained, as demonstrated by the changing of her name from Emaré to Egaré; present throughout these external transformations is, however, the unchanging symbol of Emaré's true identity: her magnificent robe.<sup>15</sup> In both instances, clothing provides a mechanism through which Florence and Emaré's identities are preserved throughout the tumultuous episodes of the narratives.

*Le Bone Florence of Rome* is thematically and structurally linked to the Constance narrative *Emaré*, which survives in a single manuscript dating from the fifteenth century. This is: MS Cotton Caligula A. ii.<sup>16</sup> In it, Emaré rejects the incestuous designs of her father and is exiled. Taking the name of Egaré, she marries the king of a far country. She is twice exiled. Ultimately, she is reunited with both her husband and her repentant father. Unlike Florence's garments, Emaré's rich robe is described in detail; some five stanzas are given over to its description. Like Florence's fine clothing, Emaré's robe serves as an external expression of her inner identity. It is a 'touchstone for determining the spiritual state and charting the spiritual

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<sup>13</sup> Hefferman, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*, p. 111.

<sup>14</sup> Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury eds., *Emaré*, in *The Middle English Breton Lais* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 149. All subsequent references to *Emaré* will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>15</sup> Yin Liu takes the view that Emaré's narrative is one of identity lost and regained, in 'Incest and Identity: Family Relationships in Emaré', in *The Court Reconvenes: Courtly Literature Across the Disciplines*, ed. by Barbara K. Altmann and Carleton W. Carroll (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 179–188.

<sup>16</sup> For further details of the manuscript and date of composition, see Edith Rickert's introduction to her critical edition, *The Romance of Emaré: Re-edited from the ms., with introduction, notes, and glossary*, by Edith Rickert, *PH. D.*, Early English Text Society, extra series no. XCIX (London: K. Paul Trench, Trübner & Co, 1906), pp. ix–x and p. xxvii, as well as the more recent discussion prefacing Laskaya and Salisbury's more recent critical edition of the text.

progress of those who behold and respond to it',<sup>17</sup> and the rich decoration of the robe is imbued with meaning. Mortimer J. Donovan characterises it as 'a gallery of ideals',<sup>18</sup> while Dieter Mehl,<sup>19</sup> Maldwyn Mills,<sup>20</sup> and Lee C. Ramsey discuss the potential ability of the robe to inspire sexual attraction in beholders,<sup>21</sup> and Jamie McKinstry analyses the figures depicted on the robe in the context of memory.<sup>22</sup>

The opening passages of *Florence of Rome* and *Emaré* establish both ladies' beauty, virtue, and nobility. Florence and Emaré are accomplished ladies with courtly skills:

He set to scole that damysell,  
 Tyll sche cowde of þe boke telle,  
 And all thyng dyscrye,  
 Be þat she was xv yere olde,  
 Wel she cowde as men me tolde,  
 Of harpe and sawtyre. (FOR 58–63)

Emaré is introduced similarly:

The chyld, that was fayr and gent,  
 To a lady was hyt sente,  
 That men kalled Abro.  
 She thawghth hyt curtesye and thewe,  
 Golde and sylke for to sewe,  
 Amonge maydenes moo.  
 Abro tawghte thys mayden small,  
 Nortur that men useden in sale (Emaré 55–62)

With their beauty and accomplishments, Florence and Emaré are firmly positioned in the courtly society and representative of its values. Their social position reflects this. Florence sits 'be hur fadur syde' (FOR 60) and shares in his power; 'a coronel on hur heed sett,' (FOR 61) and her robe is 'ryght *ryall* bowne' (FOR 58, emphasis my own). She commands the attention of powerful men: 'Aryls and dewy who reknyeth all, / Full a hundured that tyde' (FOR 187–

<sup>17</sup> Ross G. Arthur, 'Emaré's Cloak and Audience Response,' in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. by Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), pp. 80–94, at p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> Mortimer J. Donovan, 'Middle English *Emaré* and the Cloth Worthily Wrought', in *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 337–342, at p. 339.

<sup>19</sup> Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969).

<sup>20</sup> Maldwyn Mills ed., *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> Lee C. Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Jamie McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).



188). Every eye turns to her; she shines ‘full wondur wyde’ (*FOR* 66). Her gown is bright and eye-catching; it is ‘robe ryght ryall bowne, / Of a redd syclatowne’ (*FOR* 58–59). She wears red, the colour of royalty and of power but also the colour of power transferred from a higher authority, such as papal and judicial reds, and Florence derives here her power from her father.<sup>23</sup> This is also the colour of blood, justice, and martyrdom; all aspects that bear significantly on subsequent events.<sup>24</sup> Like *Ipomadon’s* Lady Imayne, she wears a long, trailing, sideless overgarment fashionable in the fourteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Like Emaré, her gown is embroidered, though in style it pursues the slightly more conventional decoration also seen in Galeron’s lady in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*: ‘Hur cloþys wyth bestys and byrdys were bete, / All abowte for pryde’ (*FOR* 182–183). Her ‘ryche perre’ (*FOR* 64), fine jewellery, indicates her wealth and status.

Emaré’s robe functions in an analogous fashion to Florence’s rich clothing; frequent repetitions of formulaic phrases see her consistently referred to throughout the text as ‘that comely unthur kelle’ (*Emaré* 303). Emaré is given a robe by her father that is fashioned from a marvellous cloth; the cloth is divided into four corners and each corner is allotted a full stanza of description. This measured division is unusual, as is the level of detail with which it is rendered. Perhaps, as Shearle Furnish suggests, these kinds of rhythmic divisions evoke the revolution of Fortune’s wheel; certainly, the abrupt transitions of fate have a bearing on the Constance narrative.<sup>26</sup> Emaré’s robe is decorated with famous lovers from romance; the first corner depicts Ydoyne and Amadas (*Emaré* 122). The French romance *Amadas et Ydoine*, adapted in the English *Squire of Low Degree*, is a tale of socially unequal lovers. Though the romance ends happily, their love is at first thwarted, while Amadas’ lady is married to another man. This section emphasises fortitude and persistence; Ydoyne and Amadas’ symbol is a ‘trewe-love-flour, of stones bryght of hewe’ (*Emaré* 125–126). The permanence of the jewels

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<sup>23</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 72–74.

<sup>25</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 217.

<sup>26</sup> Shearle Furnish, ‘Thematic Structure and Symbolic Motif in the Middle English Breton *Lais*’, *Traditio*, 62 (2007), 83–118.

evokes the enduring power of the lovers' affection, which is reinforced by repetition: 'wyth love that was so trewe' (*Emaré* 123); 'wer wyth trewe-love-flour' (*Emaré* 125). The 'trewe-love-flower' is 'a herb whose four leaves resemble a love knot'.<sup>27</sup> The stones used here reflect Emaré's situation:

Carbunkull and safere,  
Kassydonys and onyx so clere  
Sette in golde newe,  
Deamondes and rubyes,  
And othur stones of mychyll pryse (*Emaré* 126–131)

Carbuncles emphasise fortitude and endurance. Like Emaré, their brilliance is not overcome by darkness; it 'schineth as feyre whose schynnyng is not ouercom by nyt'.<sup>28</sup> Carbuncles were also used to describe feminine beauty; the medieval admiration for small, plump, red mouths led to poetic comparisons between *escarboucle* (carbuncle) and *bouche* (mouth).<sup>29</sup> Sapphires have several magical powers, including the ability to 'lettheth the man fro enprisonyg'.<sup>30</sup> Chalcedony reflects Emaré's courtesy, imbuing the wearer with 'wele spekyng' and 'grace',<sup>31</sup> and courtesy is the quality that characterises both Emaré's courtly upbringing and provides the mechanism through which she battles hardship; Donovan suggests the *lai*'s central focus is to 'stress manners as a mark of breeding'.<sup>32</sup> Diamonds are associated with fertility; they 'kepeth the sed of man wythinne the wombe of his wyfe' and 'kepeth the childis membres hole'.<sup>33</sup> Emaré is later falsely accused of bearing a demonic child.

The second quarter depicts 'Trystram and Isowde so bryght' (*Emaré* 134). While Ydoyne and Amadas love each other 'wyth honour' (*Emaré* 124), Tristram and Isoude 'loved hem ryght' (*Emaré* 157). Tristan was a popular choice for contemporary decoration; as well as the *Guicciardini* quilt, there survive also fifteenth-century slippers decorated with images of

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<sup>27</sup> Laskaya, 'Emaré', *The Middle English Breton Lais*, p. 188.

<sup>28</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Donovan, *The Middle English Breton Lays*, p. 223.

<sup>33</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 83.

Tristan.<sup>34</sup> They are embellished with ‘topase and of rubyes,’ (*Emaré* 139) and ‘crapawtes and nakette’ (*Emaré* 124). Rubies suggest Emaré’s purity and nobility; ‘the gentil rubie that is fyne and clene is lorde of al stones.’<sup>35</sup> Emaré’s narrative is cyclically marked by travel at sea, and rubies are linked with water.<sup>36</sup> Topaz staunches blood, evoking Tristram’s near-death by the Irish champion’s sword, during which blood-loss and sickness nearly defeat him.<sup>37</sup>

The third quarter is embroidered with Florys and Blancheflour; like Amadas and Ydoine, they ‘loved wyth honour’ (*Emaré* 148). Also like Amadas and Ydoine, they are portrayed ‘wyth trewe-love-flour’ (*Emaré* 149). The repetition reinforces the cyclical nature of this motif, binding the lovers and Emaré closer together.

Emerawdes of gret vertues,  
To wyte wythouten wene;  
Deamoundes and koralle,  
Perydotes and crystall,  
And gode garnettes bytwene. (*Emaré* 145–156)

Florys and Blancheflour are decorated with emerald, peridot, crystal, and garnet. Emerald protects against lechery and promotes chastity and clean living,<sup>38</sup> while coral ‘yeveth a gode begynnynng and a good endyng.’<sup>39</sup> Crystal is also associated with chastity; like the diamond, it also promotes fertility.<sup>40</sup>

The final quarter moves away from literary figures; describing instead the cloth’s weaver. She positions herself and her lover in the context of these famous lovers (*Emaré* 157–168). Through association with these figures, the text contextualises Emaré in the romance form. The robe’s embroidery, in and of itself, is not unusual, though the form in which it appears is somewhat more special; decorative embroidery patterns typically take the form of beasts and birds like those seen in Florence’s gown (*FOR* 182–183). Narrative embroidery on

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<sup>34</sup> See: Kathryn Starkey, ‘Tristan Slippers: An Image of Adultery or a Symbol of Marriage?’, in E. Jane Burns ed., *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork and Other Cultural Imaginings* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 35–54.

<sup>35</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 110.

<sup>36</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 107.

<sup>38</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *Medieval English Lapidaries*, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *Medieval English Lapidaries*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *Medieval English Lapidaries*, p. 76.

textiles is less common in medieval romance, though not completely unheard-of; the rich embroidered cloth in *Galeran de Bretagne* includes depictions of the ‘lives’ of Floire and Blacheflor, as well as of Helen’s abduction to Troy.<sup>41</sup> Real-life analogues of these garments are rare but not unheard-of; the late fourteenth-century Tristan and Guicciardini quilts that depict Tristan and Iseult in various scenes represent several such examples.<sup>42</sup>

The embroidered lovers on Emaré’s robe seem to both herald and inspire tragedy, as the emperor crafts out of this marvellous cloth a robe and dresses his daughter in it. Dieter Mehl,<sup>43</sup> Maldwyn Mills,<sup>44</sup> and Lee C. Ramsey discuss the robe’s potential to attract or inspire erotic attention.<sup>45</sup> The robe seems to instigate the emperor’s incestuous desires:

Then was the Emperour gladde and blythe,  
And lette shape a robe swythe  
Of that cloth of golde;  
And when hyt was don her upon,  
She semed non erthely wommon,  
That marked was of molde.  
Then seyde the Emperour so fre,  
‘Dowghtyr, y woll wedde the,  
Thow art so fresh to beholde.’ (Emaré 241–250)

Like Emaré, Florence also attracts the attention of an unsuitable older man. Florence’s beauty, independence, and accomplishments reach Garcy of Constantinople, who seeks to marry her. The aged suitor motif commonly appears in the Constance narrative, appearing also in Chaucer’s *The Man of Law’s Tale* and Gower’s ‘The Tale of Constance’ (in the *Confessio Amanatis*). Though not incestuous, the match is similarly unsuitable. Garcy’s appearance is feminised, contrasting sharply with the active masculinity of Florence’s young suitor; the text

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed examination of the significance and context of these images, see Margaret Burland, ‘Narrative Objects and Living Stories in “Galeran de Bretagne”’, *Yale French Studies*, 110 (2006), 32–43.

<sup>42</sup> The Tristan quilt is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum; images and a brief description are available online from the Victoria and Albert Museum, last accessed 28<sup>th</sup> March 2018 <<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O98183/the-tristan-quilt-bed-cover-unknown/>>. For a detailed examination of the Guicciardini quilt, see: Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, Marco Ciatti, Susanna Conti, and Maria Grazia Vaccari eds., *The Guicciardini “Quilt”: Conservation of the Deeds of Tristan* (Florence: Edizioni Firenze, 2010). See also: Sarah Randles, ‘One Quilt or Two? A Reassessment of the Guicciardini Quilts’, in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Five*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gail R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), pp. 93–128.

<sup>43</sup> Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*.

<sup>44</sup> Mills, *Six Middle English Romances*.

<sup>45</sup> See: Ramsey, *Popular Literature in Medieval England*.

emphasises the disparity in age between the young Florence and her aged suitor. Garcy's introduction positions him outside of the chivalric sphere; like a woman, he appears in 'ryche parell' of 'sylke and golde' (*FOR* 85–86). Garcy is aged; unlike a young knight, he wears no chivalric armour but instead courtly garments. His adoption of the role of lover appears as an affront to the natural order; 'whyte was hys hare' (*FOR* 87) and 'he was bresyd and all tobrokynf, / ferre trauelde in harnes and of warre wrokyn' (*FOR* 103–104). Though his rich apparel indicates Garcy's wealth and status, this image of aged masculinity contrasts unfavourably with the young martial masculinity embodied by Florence's lover, Emere:

Syr Emere bare in hys schulde:  
 A whyte dowve who so beheld,  
 A blakk lyon besude.  
 The whyte dowve sygnyfyed  
 That he was full of knyghthedd,  
 And mekenes at that tyde;  
 The lyon þat he was ferse and felle,  
 Amonge hys enmyes for to dwelle,  
 And durste beste in batell byde. (*Emaré* 418–429)

Garcy's description eschews chivalric elements, positioning him instead in the courtly sphere occupied by Florence and the other women of the court. Florence wears a 'robe right ryall bowne / of a red syclatowne' (*FOR* 178–179), like Garcy's rich dress (*FOR* 85–86). The inherent unsuitability of this match is emphasised by the revulsion expressed by Florence:

And sche seyde, 'Jhesu ferbede!  
 Sche seyde, 'Be God þat boght me dere,  
 Me had leuyr þe warste bachylere,  
 In all my fadurs thede,  
 Then for the lye be hys bresyd boones,  
 When he coghyth and oldely grones,  
 I can not on hyslede.' (*FOR* 238–249)

This echoes *Emaré*'s horror at her father's advances:

'Nay syr, God of heven hyt forbede,  
 That ever do so we shulde!  
  
 'Yyf hyt so betydde that ye me wedde  
 And we shulde play togedur in bedde,  
 Bothe we were forlorne!' (*Emaré* 251–255)

Both men persist, oblivious, with their suit; Garcy sends a messenger to the Roman court. He presents the Roman court with rich gifts:

‘An xl horsys chargyd right,  
Wyth clopys of golde, and besawntys bright,  
Into thy tresory.  
He byddyth, wythowte avysement,  
That þy doghtur be to hym sente,  
For to lygghym by.  
Hys body ys bresyd, hys bones are olde,  
That sche may kepe hym fro þe colde,  
Haue done now hastelye.’

(*FOR* 205–210)

Like rich clothing or fine horses, Florence is a valuable accoutrement of chivalric societies: an object to be exchanged between men. This view of marriage as a financial transaction sits discordantly with the courtly romance tradition embodied by the lovers on Emaré’s robe, and the courtly affection between Florence and the young knight Emere. Garcy intends to conquer Florence by will and consume her identity entirely; the messenger says:

‘In comely clopyng sche shall be cledd,  
I haue grete hope he wyll hur wedd,  
Sche ys a feyre lady.’

(*FOR* 202–213)

This detail seeks to assure Otis that his master intends to maintain Florence’s high status. Here, however, the messenger evokes Florence’s setting aside her Roman clothing and taking on foreign, Byzantine, garments. This exchange of clothing marks definitively the loss of her former life; both her autonomy and her national identity are consumed completely. With this detail, the messenger closes the proposed cycle of transformation initiated by the gift of the horses.

Unsurprisingly, Florence emphatically rejects Garcy’s suit. She competently deconstructs the image constructed by Garcy’s rich presentation; though he is ‘arayed in ryche parell / of sylke and golde wythowtyn fayle’ (*FOR* 85–86), Florence perceives clearly the aged flesh that lies beneath (*FOR* 238–249). Florence demonstrates an innate awareness of the courtly scheme and her position in it. She is free of pride; she prefers a low-ranking but chivalric suitor above the aged Garcy, whose amorous overtures subvert the natural order.

Florence and Emaré are subsequently divorced from their courtly communities; Florence is kidnapped and Emaré is exiled for refusing her father's incestuous designs:

He lette make a nobull boot,  
And dede her theryn, God wote,  
In the robe of nobull ble.  
She moste have wyth her no spendyng,  
Nothur mete ne drynke,  
But shate her ynto the se. (Emaré 268–273)

In both instances, Florence and Emaré retain their clothing. Emaré is not allowed meat and drink, but is exiled with her robe. In an analogous passage, Florence also retains her rich clothing. Garcy besieges Rome; though he is eventually defeated, Florence's father is killed. Two sons of the Hungarian king assist Florence and both fall in love with her. While Emere and Florence are engaged, Emere's vengeful brother, Mylys, attempts to deceive and ravish Florence. He kidnaps her, forcing her to ride deep into the forest. Florence evades the first of several attempted rapes by praying for deliverance. This attempted ravishment issues in the hagiographical elements of text's second section:

He bonde hur be þe tresse of þe here,  
And hangyd hur on a tre there,  
That ylke feyre bodye;  
He bete hur wyth a 3erde of byrke,  
Hur nakyd flesche tyll he was yrke,  
Sche gaf many a rewoffull crye. (FOR 1513–1519)

This passage emphasises Florence's loss of position, as Mylys attempts to transform forcibly Florence from queen to exile. He attempts to divest Florence of her name, and thereby, of her identity:

He made þe lady to swere an othe,  
That sche schulde not telle for lefe nor loþe,  
Neuyr in no cuntre,  
Fro whens þou came nor what þou ys,  
Nor what man broght þe fro þy blysse,  
Or here Y schal brenne the. (FOR 1489–1494)

This contains echoes of other rapes; unlike Philomela, Florence retains the use of her tongue, though she is similarly silenced.<sup>46</sup> In swearing this oath, Florence is abruptly divorced from her former identity; she cannot tell anyone where she came from or what her position is. Instead, she must forsake her position in society to venture forward to numerous strange lands ('neuyr in no cuntre' *FOR* 1491). In this way, Mylys conceals his own actions while also divorcing Florence from her former courtly community.

Mylys here constitutes the first of numerous antagonistic masculine forces faced by Florence throughout the narrative; each threatens to destabilise or destroy her self-image and identity. With his repeated attempts at seduction and ravishment, Mylys threatens her virtue; with this banishment and oath, he divorces her from her former identity. Her clothing, however, remains; when a passing knight hears Florence's 'rewfull crye' (*FOR* 1519), he stumbles across the following sight:

The feyrest palfrey lefte he there,  
And herself hangyd be the here,  
And hur ryche wede;  
Hur sadull and hur brydull schone,  
Set wyth mony a precyus stone,  
The feyrest in that thede. (*FOR* 1531–1536)

The brutality of his actions does not dull her beauty:

Sche was the feyrest creature,  
And thereto whyte as lylly flowre,  
In romance as we rede;  
Hur feyre face hyt schone full bryght,  
To se hyt was a semely syght,  
Tyll hur full faste they yede. (*FOR* 1537–1542)

These references to shining beauty are to a certain extent formulaic; they construct, however, a connection between her current state and her appearance at the beginning of the narrative, echoing her introduction at her father's side in the Roman court:

The lyghtness of hur ryche perre,  
And þe brightness of hur blee,  
Schone full wondur wyde. (*FOR* 64–66)

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<sup>46</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis: Book 5*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, trans. by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004).



Though Mylys attempts to divest her of her identity and position, he can do so only superficially. Florence remains inherently unchanged by Mylys' actions; he removes her clothing, but her beauty remains. Though he forbids her to disclose her name to others, but he cannot erase her innate self-knowledge. Similarly, though he strips her of her clothing, she quickly regains it. In a similar fashion, Emaré's clothing facilitates her rescue:

A boot he fond by the brym,  
And a gylsteryng thyng theryn,  
Therof they hadde ferly.  
They went forth on the sond  
To the boot, y unthurstond,  
And fond theryn that lady.  
She hadde so longe meteles be  
That hym thowht gret dele to se;  
She was yn poynt to dye.  
They askede her what was her name:  
She chaunged hyt ther anone,  
And sayde she hette Egaré. (Emaré 349–360)

As with Florence, the physical hardships of Emaré's suffering are made plain. Like Florence, Emaré is isolated from her former identity. Emaré creates a separation with the construction of Egaré, echoing the divorce of Florence's former identity with the oath. Through these external transformations, clothing echoes their inner identities; it remains static and unchanging.

In their new situations, both ladies retain their courtly natures; in new households, they use their skills. Florence is rescued by the knights of Tyrry's household; like Emaré, she retains the skills of a courtly lady. Though she remains estranged from her former identity ('nor ones aske of whes sche were' *FOR* 1557), she finds a position in this new society. She is briefly tutor to the young daughter of the household. After Florence spurns a steward's advances, the steward contrives to frame her for the young girl's murder. Sir Tyrry's wife exclaims:

'Ye might see be hur feyre clothing,  
That sche was no erthely thyng,  
And be hur grete feyre hede.  
By some false fende of helle  
Ys comyn þy doghtur for to qwelle,  
Let me quyte hur hur mede.' (*FOR* 1666–1671)

The antagonistic or villainous mother-in-law is an archetype common to the Constance narrative.<sup>47</sup> The lady's accusations are not, however, wholly without reason. Florence's clothing is exceptionally fine; it is bright enough to render her visible in a dark forest and, though no colours are given, it is reasonable to assume they conform to contemporary literary and contextual examples that present fairies dressed in bright colours. In their bright opulence, it is possible that Florence's fine clothing evokes, to the lady's suspicious mind, dangerous associations of *diversitas*; the gaudiness that rendered stripes, spots and other irregular forms of colour, texture, and pattern abhorrent and potentially immoral.<sup>48</sup> It is also possible that Florence's mysterious appearance within a forest—an area associated with magic and with the otherworld—as well as her beauty and rich appearance, invest her with an unearthly aspect reminiscent of the fairy otherworld; the material goods of the otherworld are often marvellous as they are untrustworthy - for these reasons, perhaps, the lady mistrusts Florence.<sup>49</sup> The parallels she constructs are not completely lacking in context; Florence's appearance conforms in both beauty and lavish dress with depictions of fairies in Breton *lais*. Both *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo* present fairies that are richly dressed, extremely beautiful, and break the social covenant with their actions. Florence's alleged actions constitute a violation of social bonds, and her rich garments echo the opulence with which fairies are usually presented. The lady summarily contextualises her in relation to fairies, which operate within an otherworld and are not bound by human convention. The analogous passage within *Emaré* lacks these nuances; her husband's mother simply dislikes Emaré's appearance and her rich robe:

The olde qwene spakke wordus unhende  
 And sayde, 'Sone, thys ys a fende,  
 In thys wordy wede!  
 As thou lovest my blessyng,  
 Make thou nevr thys weddyng,  
 Cryst hyt the forbede!'

(*Emaré* 445–450)

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<sup>47</sup> Eugene Clasby, 'Chaucer's Constance: Womanly Virtue and the Heroic Life', *The Chaucer Review*, 13/3 (1979), 221–33.

<sup>48</sup> For more on *diversitas* and its negative connotations, see Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, pp. 13–24.

<sup>49</sup> On the appearance and behaviour of fairies in medieval romance, see Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 179–206.

Florence subsequently temporarily loses her clothing; she is stripped of her rich clothing and dressed instead in humble garments:

They dyȝt hur on the morne in sympull atyre,  
And led hur forthe vnto the fyre,  
Many a oon wyth hur ȝede. (FOR 1672–1674)

The attempted humiliation inherent in this change of clothing does not affect Florence's internal courtliness or virtue; Florence demonstrates with her speech her innocence and wins her own freedom. Sir Tyrry spares her from the fire, as, for the second time, her fine clothing is restored to her:

The lorde that had þe doghtur dedd,  
Hys herte turned in that stedd,  
To wepe he can begynne.  
He seyde, 'Florence, also mote Y the,  
I may not on thy dethe see,  
For all the worlde to wynne.' (FOR 1684–1689)

As in the Mylys episode, Florence is stripped of her clothing by external masculine energies, and her fortitude is rewarded by its return. She cannot, however, regain her position in the household's social scheme; she is banished, with her clothing:

To hur chaumbur he can hur lede,  
And cled hur in hur own wede,  
And seyde, 'Y holde hyt synne.'  
They set hur on hur own palfraye,  
In all hur nobul ryche arraye,  
Or euyr wolde he blynne; (FOR 1684–1695)

Emaré is similarly exiled with her clothing; after giving birth to a child that her mother in law accuses of being a demon, she and the child are exiled again:

And putte her ynto the see,  
In that robe of ryche ble,  
The lytyll chylde her wyth;  
And lette her have no spendyng,  
For no mete ny for drynke,  
But lede her out of that kyth. (Emaré 585–594)

Like Florence, Emaré loses her position in the second society; she retains, however, her clothing. Evoking hagiographical imagery, her robe protects her and her child from the waves:

The lady and the lytyll chylde  
Fleted forth on the watur wylde,  
Wyth full harde happes.  
Her surkote that was large and wyde,  
Therwyth her vysage she gan hyde,  
Wyth the hynthur lappes;

(*Emaré* 649–654)

Here, the narratives begin to diverge; Florence divests herself of her rich clothing. In gaining passage to Jerusalem, she gives up her rich saddle and bridle:

Sche gaf þe burges wyfe hur palfray,  
Wyth sadyll and brydyll þe soþe to say,  
And kyste hur as hur frende.

(*FOR* 1800–1803)

This is a voluntary divestment distinct from the attempted coercive removals of clothing present in the narrative. This exchange signals the conclusion of this episodic wandering. After a third and final attempted rape, a shipwreck delivers Florence to an abbey. In turn, each of the men who have wronged her comes to be healed. Their misdeeds are revealed and Florence is reunited with her lover.

*Emaré* follows a similar pattern of redemption; her robe, however, remains present and facilitates these reconciliations. Though both narratives contain spiritual elements of redemption and hagiography, *Emaré* does not, like Florence, engage in healing; perhaps for this reason, she retains her courtly garments. *Emaré* appears before both her husband and her father while wearing her distinctive robe. Her husband is initially sceptical about her survival, but the visual appearance of *Emaré* in her robe proves her identity:

The kyng yn herte was full woo  
When he herd mynge tho  
Of her that was hys qwene;  
And sayde, ‘Sone, why sayst thou so?  
Wherto umbraydest thou me of my wo?  
That may never bene!’  
Nevurtheles wyth hym he wente;  
Ayeyn hem come the lady gent,  
In the robe bryght and shene.  
He toke her yn hys armes two,  
For joye they sowened, both to,  
Such love was hem bytwene.

(*Emaré* 925–936)

*Emaré*’s reconciliation with her now repentant father takes place in the same way (*Emaré* 1009–1020). *Emaré*’s robe facilitates her reconciliation with both her husband and father; in so doing,

it brings about the return of her former position within courtly society. At the conclusion of the narrative, the courtly societies come together in a unifying act of celebration. With ‘A grette feste ther was holde, / Of erles and barones bolde,’ (*Emaré* 1027–1028), Emaré is reintegrated into the courtly community; with this, the text ends.

Similarly, Florence’s return to her former position within society is evoked through clothing. After healing the men who have wronged her, Florence returns to Rome and marries her lover Emere. Descriptions of fine clothing once more appear:

Soche a brydale as þere was oon  
In that lande was neuyr noon,  
To wytt wythowten wene.  
There was grete myrþe of mynstrals steuyn,  
And nobull gyftys also geuyn,  
Bothe golde and robys schene. (*FOR* 2152–2157)

Opulent cloth or clothing appears frequently in the context of bridal gifts; medieval queens brought great numbers of fine gowns upon the occasion of their marriage.<sup>50</sup> This is echoed in romance; rich clothing is part of Acheflour’s dowry in *Sir Perceval of Galles* (*POG* 33–34). Here these ‘robys schene’ (*FOR* 2157) suggest the closing of the narrative circle. Florence’s internal fortitude and unchanging identity facilitate the return of her external position. The cyclical structure is reiterated in the christening of Florence’s child with the name of her father (*FOR* 2165). Order is at last returned to Rome, as the destabilising effects of external masculine forces are ended.

In both instances, Florence and Emaré’s internal fortitude and inherent immutability facilitate their return to their previous positions. The trials they endure are predominantly external in nature; they do not affect their inner identities. Vindicated through their virtue, both Florence and Emaré’s internal identities are untouchable and remote. The changes that Florence and Emaré undergo are largely external; both are steadfast throughout the repetitive, cyclical stripping and return of clothing that characterises their narratives. Unlike Orfeo’s exile, Florence and Emaré’s exiles do not constitute a voluntary resignation of courtly identity; perhaps for this

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<sup>50</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, pp. 10–11.

reason, Florence and Emaré retain their fine clothing. In these ways, identities in *Florence of Rome* and *Emaré* appear fixed and inviolate, consistently out of reach of the destabilising forces that seek to influence them.

### *Sir Launfal*

*Sir Launfal*, Thomas Chestre's fourteenth-century adaptation into English of Marie de France's *Lanval*, draws on the French text *Graelent* and finds a Middle English analogue in *Sir Lavendale*.<sup>51</sup> It is a tail-rhyme romance and survives in one manuscript, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.ii.<sup>52</sup> Critical analysis of the text has often focused on the thematic issues; Martin analyses *Sir Launfal*'s Celtic and folkloric links.<sup>53</sup> Lane finds in the text a 'primitive archetypal opposition between forces of good and evil, harmony and discord'.<sup>54</sup> Scholars have criticised the text's perceived lack of 'sensibility and refinement'.<sup>55</sup> Recent scholarship has analysed the text in the context of symbolic motifs<sup>56</sup> or as an expression of cross-cultural conflict.<sup>57</sup> The text's emphasis on the material, absent in the French *Lanval*, has led some critics to believe the text presents a satirical view of the bourgeoisie.<sup>58</sup> These details, however, evoke more richly the material world in which the text is situated, and provide an expression for the central narrative themes of transformation.<sup>59</sup> In this way, though there has been critical attention to the topic of materiality in *Sir Launfal*, my own particular focus on transformative

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<sup>51</sup> William C. Stokoe, 'The Sources of *Sir Launfal*: *Lanval* and *Graelent*', *PMLA*, 63/2 (1948), 392–404; Peter J. Lucas, 'Towards an Interpretation of *Sir Launfal* with particular Reference to Line 683', *Medium Aevum*, 39/3 (1970), 291–300.

<sup>52</sup> For a full account of the manuscripts and date of composition, see the discussion provided in A. J. Bliss' critical edition: *Sir Launfal*, Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library, ed. by A. J. Bliss (London: T. Nelson, 1960), pp. 3–5, and the account provided in Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury's edition, on p. 201.

<sup>53</sup> B. K. Martin, 'Sir Launfal and the Folktale', *Medium Aevum*, 35/3 (1966), 199–210, at p. 200.

<sup>54</sup> Daryl Lane, 'Conflict in "Sir Launfal"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 74/2 (1973), 283–287.

<sup>55</sup> B. K. Martin, 'Sir Launfal and the Folktale', pp. 199–200.

<sup>56</sup> Furnish, 'Thematic Structure and Symbolic Motif', pp. 83–118.

<sup>57</sup> Katherine McLoone, 'Strange Bedfellows: Politics, Miscegenation, and *Translatio* in Two Lays of Lanval', *Arthuriana*, 21/4 (2011), 3–22.

<sup>58</sup> Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, p. 106.

<sup>59</sup> See: Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 186–187.

identity and dress has not yet been carried out. The text's focus on the material, while unusual for the cluster of *Lanval* texts to which it belongs, is perhaps less remarkable than might otherwise appear. Some of the northern Gawain romances, particularly *The Awntyrs off Arthur* and *Golagros and Gawain*, pursue a similar emphasis on the material world in the Arthurian topos.

Thomas Chestre's English adaptation of an earlier French source by Marie de France displays a general principle of elaboration. This is more broadly focused (the episode with Sir Valentyne, does not of course appear in the original), but also pertains to the general presentation and use of dress. In *Sir Launfal*, the fine garments and rich materials that appear in the French *lai* are increased in number and expanded upon in depth. In this way, it offers a contrast to *Florence of Rome* and *Lybeaus Desconus*, which both demonstrate a 'lessening' principle as pertains to cross-adaptation depictions of dress. As I have previously demonstrated, this is, I believe, due to the constraints of length, rather than any particular emphasis on paring down clothing in English romance. *Sir Launfal* supports this conclusion: unlike the other two, which pare down a lengthy text into a compact adaptation, *Sir Launfal* develops and embellishes the more concise French source into an adaptation that is almost twice as long.<sup>60</sup> In certain instances, the same or similar materials appear between analogous passages of the text. It is interesting, also, to note that like *Ipomadon*, the English text demonstrates an 'updating' of older fashions found in its French source. These will be discussed subsequently as they occur. Such alterations are, I believe, reflective of the English text's pronounced emphasis on material wealth and the material world. I also believe that providing a higher level of material detail grounds the text more strongly in the 'real', thus providing a more immediate context for Launfal's poverty.

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<sup>60</sup> The precise difference in length will, of course, vary between editions. As an example, however, Laskaya and Salisbury's edition of *Sir Launfal* is, at 1040 lines, just under four hundred lines longer than the 646 lines of Marie de France's *Lanval* in Jean Rychner's edition, *Les lais de Marie de France*, Classiques Français du Moyen Age; 87 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1966).

Launfal is an impoverished but virtuous knight, whose fairy lover grants him riches on the condition that he never speaks of her. In rejecting the adulterous energies of Guinevere, Launfal breaks his promise to Tryamour. Exiled from both realms, Launfal is falsely accused of seduction. Tryamour arrives to save him, and she and Launfal depart the Arthurian court. Launfal's identity is liminal, transitional, and subject to the transformative energies of external forces. Like Orfeo, he undergoes a series of transformations. Orfeo is translated from king to hermit to king again; Launfal progresses in a linear fashion from the human world to the fairy otherworld. Clothing indicates the heroes' alienation from human society and the growing influence of the fairy otherworld. In both texts, fairy influence is manifested by precious and ornate clothing and accoutrements. Chestre draws on the clothing instances found in *Lanval* and *Graelent*, expanding these instances with precise sartorial detail; they constitute a visual representation of Launfal's transitional progression towards the fairy otherworld.

The opening passages of *Sir Launfal* evoke a cohesive courtly community unaffected by the destabilising external forces of malign feminine influence. Launfal is firmly positioned within the masculine chivalric brotherhood that includes Gawain, Perceval and other figures of romance (*SL* 13–24) and, as such, he is well-integrated into the chivalric community. The world that appears is courtly, chivalric, and unmarked by sin or injustice, and Launfal is an active participant in this chivalric scheme; his stewardship affirms his position in the courtly community.

Launfal, forsoth he hyght.  
He gaf gyftys largelyche,  
Gold and sylver and clothes ryche,  
To squyer and to knyght.  
For hys largesse and hys bounté  
The kynges stuward made was he  
Ten yer, I you plyght;  
Of alle the knyghtes of the Table Rounde,  
So large ther nas noon yfounde  
Be dayes ne be nyght.

(*SL* 27–36)

The scheme is, at this point, functional; Launfal's virtue, evidenced by his frequent displays of *largesse*, is rewarded by further integration in the chivalric scheme. The social system rewards



those who embody the court's values, and presumably, excludes those that do not. This idyllic period is short-lived; it is brought to a close with Guinevere's arrival:

So hyt befyll, yn the tenthe yer  
Marlyn was Artours counsalere;  
He radde hym forto wende  
To Kyng Ryon of Irlond, right,  
And fette hym ther a lady bright,  
Gwennere, hys doughtyr hende.  
So he dede, and hom her brought,  
But Syr Launfal lykede her noght,  
Ne other knyghtes that wer hende;  
For the lady bar los of swych word  
That sche hadde lemmannys under her lord,  
So fele ther nas noon ende.

(SL 37–48)

The text's use of Guinevere evokes earlier narrative traditions in which she suffers from overwhelmingly negative characterisation.<sup>61</sup> She is a 'flat figure whose function it is to embody evil and hostility'<sup>62</sup> and 'the evil that clashes with [Launfal's] goodness':<sup>63</sup>

Launfal is the steward of Artour's court, a symbol of its order, generosity and fellowship; Gwennere is the instrument of discord that has the power to destroy all of this.<sup>64</sup>

Launfal and Guinevere represent inherently antithetical forces. Upon her arrival, Guinevere immediately undermines the honour code upon which the chivalric code is constructed:

The Quene yaf yftes for the nones,  
Gold and selver and precyous stonys  
Her curtasye to kythe.  
Everych knyght sche gaf broche other ryng,  
But Syr Launfal sche yaf nothyng -  
That grevede hym many a sythe.

(SL 67–72)

In this new scheme, Launfal's *largesse* is no longer rewarded or recognised by the chivalric community. Guinevere's exchange of gifts echoes, with irony, Launfal's generosity:

He gaf gyftys largel yche,  
Gold and sylver and clothes ryche,  
To squyer and to knyght.

(SL 28–30)

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<sup>61</sup> Laskaya and Salisbury, 'Sir Launfal'.

<sup>62</sup> Martin, 'Sir Launfal and the Folktale', p. 208.

<sup>63</sup> Lane, 'Conflict in "Sir Launfal"', p. 285.

<sup>64</sup> Lane, 'Conflict in "Sir Launfal"', p. 285.

Here Launfal enacts with sincerity a chivalric ritual that holds for Guinevere only performative significance. Launfal's *largesse* results naturally in such acts; it is 'not a requirement imposed by knightly society, but seems to be a truly natural generosity of the spirit that is extended to the poor and the imprisoned'.<sup>65</sup> Guinevere's gifts instead represent a deliberate appropriation of courtly convention. Guinevere is aware of the performative values of her actions; she gives gifts to demonstrate her courtliness ('her curtasye to kythe' *SL* 69). Her influence constructs a pseudo-chivalric community from which Launfal, with his sincere enactment of chivalric ritual, is excluded. This ritualistic gift-giving binds together the Arthurian court and evidences the corruption that Guinevere is spreading throughout the court. The gifts are expensive goods ('gold and selver and precyous stonys' *SL* 68), but also brooches and rings (*SL* 70). These gifts draw connections of adultery between her and the knights of the court. In medieval romance, rings appear consistently in the context of love-exchanges; rings are given as love tokens in a number of texts, including *Perceval of Galles* and *Floris and Blancheflour*. In twelfth century England, rings were used as love-gifts signifying unrequited male love.<sup>66</sup> The virtuous Launfal is immune to Guinevere's adulterous energies and therefore excluded from this exchange. Launfal's sincere embodiment of chivalric virtue fits uneasily into this conspicuously performative chivalric framework. A precarious equilibrium is established, in which the court sees Launfal's virtue but cannot celebrate it, and Launfal sees their elaborately performative chivalry but cannot participate in it.

Launfal's increasing alienation from the chivalric sphere is emphasised through clothing. Launfal's poverty causes him to fail in his duty to his dependants. Two knights appear before him to protest their poverty:

They seyde, 'Syr, our robes beth torent,  
And your tresourys all yspent,  
And we goth ewylly dyght.'

(*SL* 140–142)

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<sup>65</sup> Martin, 'Sir Launfal and the Folktale', p. 284.

<sup>66</sup> David Hinton, 'Brooch', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 98–99, at p. 99.

Providing retainers with adequate provisions is a duty of the chivalric knight.<sup>67</sup> Launfal's adherence to one tenet of chivalry—*largesse*—results in his inability to properly observe others. He subsequently further confuses chivalric conventions in asking his knights to conceal his poverty, leading the knights to lie to their king:

‘But upon a rayny day hyt befel  
An huntynge wente Syr Launfel  
To chasy yn holtes hore;  
In our old robes we yede that day,  
And thus we beth ywent away,  
As we before hym wore.’

(SL 169–174)

Here, Guinevere's influence facilitates deceit between men; she engineers the breakdown of social rules and destabilises the chivalric brotherhood. This exchange tests the rites of chivalry and bonds between men; as Peter J. Lucas states:

The two knights do keep their world to Launfal by not disclosing his abject poverty to Guinevere and Arthur (160 ff.); in so doing, ironically, they lie to their lord the king. This incident is another example, in miniature, of an ironic situation arising from conflicting loyalties.<sup>68</sup>

The disordering of the social hierarchy increases as the knights put their duty to their lord, Launfal, above that of their king. Though Launfal commands loyalty from his brother knights—Lane suggests that this scene positions Launfal as ‘the best-loved of all Artour's knights’—Launfal's growing isolation is evidenced by the disruption he brings to the courtly scheme.<sup>69</sup>

Launfal's isolation from the chivalric community is increased further by his lack of appropriate clothing. He is excluded from both secular and religious gatherings:

Erles and barones of the countré  
Ladyes and borjaes of that cité,  
Thyder come, bothe yongh and old.  
But Launfal, for hys poverté,  
Was not bede to that semblé—  
Lyte men of hym tolde.

(SL 181–189)

He is also prevented from participating in the communal worship underpinning the Christian society:

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<sup>67</sup> Laskaya and Salisbury, *The Middle English Breton Lays*, p. 245.

<sup>68</sup> Lucas, ‘Towards an Interpretation of *Sir Launfal*’, p. 298.

<sup>69</sup> Lane, ‘Conflict in “*Sir Launfal*”’, p. 285.

‘Today to cherche I wolde have gon,  
But me fawtede hosyn and schon,  
Clenly brech and scherte;  
And for defawte of clothyng,  
Ne myghte y yn the peple thrynge.  
No wonder though me smerte!’

(SL 199–204)

Launfal’s poverty confuses social perceptions and obscures the courtly convention that correlates appearance with virtue. His honour and virtue are no longer easily perceptible; as a result, he is isolated from the courtly community. Guinevere’s introduction of sin into the courtly community destabilises the correlation between external appearance and internal identity; here, human men and women are unable to identify Launfal’s inherent virtue, seeing only his external appearance. This is not, however, the critique of the visual system of chivalric communities inherent in other texts such as *Ipomadon*; had the system been functioning properly, as it did before Guinevere’s arrival, Launfal’s generosity would have been rewarded with even greater generosity and his external riches would signify his inner virtue. Launfal’s exclusion from the social scheme is the result not of a conscious rejection but of a series of social confusions brought about by Guinevere’s disruptive influence. With the introduction of sin into the honour-framework, courtly society no longer functions properly. Launfal cannot find a position in this flawed scheme and subsequently abandons it:

Launfal dyghte hys courser,  
Wythoute knave other squyer.  
He rood wyth lytyll pryde;  
Hys hors slod, and fel yn the fen,  
Wherefore hym scornede many men  
Abowte hym fer and wyde.

(SL 211–216)

The corresponding passage of *Lanval* mentions specifically Launfal’s tattered clothing; Chestre removes these references, though the significance remains implicit in the text.<sup>70</sup> Launfal’s appearance hinders the onlooker’s abilities of perception; his poverty confuses the onlookers’ ability to ‘read’ through clothing. Here, the individual members of both courtly and uncourtly communities demonstrate their limited powers of perception. In this way, Launfal is alienated

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<sup>70</sup> See: Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook eds., *Graelent*, in *French Arthurian Literature IV: Eleven Old French Narrative Lays* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), lines 200–204.

from the human world at multiple levels: rich and poor, noble and bourgeois—all scorn Sir Launfal.

This series of social confusions, through which Launfal's identity is concealed, facilitates his departure from the human world and instigates his introduction into the fairy otherworld. Riding into the woods, Launfal leaves behind the human sphere. He sets aside his tattered clothes:

And, for hete of thewe dere,  
Hys mantell he feld togydere,  
And sette hym down to reste.  
Thus sat the knyght yn symplyté,  
In the schadwe under a tre,  
Ther that hym lykede beste. (SL 223–228)

This change of clothing represents a significant moment of renewal in which Launfal moves from the human sphere to the influence of the fairy otherworld. The flawed human perception, and the rejection that it causes, is juxtaposed with the fairy Dame Tryamour's mysterious, all-seeing omniscience; as he sits 'yn symplyte' (SL 226) he is met by several fairy ladies whose rich dress emphasises his own nakedness:

As he sat yn sorow and sore  
He sawe come out of holtes hore  
Gentyll maydenes two:  
Har kerteles wer of Indesandel,  
Ylased smalle, jolif, and well -  
Ther myght noon gayer go.  
Har manteles wer of grene felvet,  
Ybordured wyth gold, ryght well ysette,  
Ypelured wyth grys and gro.  
Har heddys wer dyght well wythalle:  
Everych hadde oon a jolyf coronall  
Wyth syxty gemmys and mo.

Har faces wer whyt as snow on downe;  
Har rode was red, her eyn wer browne.  
I sawe nevir non swyche!  
That oon bar of gold a basyn,  
That other a towayle, whyt and fyn,  
Of selk that was good and ryche.  
Har kercheves wer well schyre,  
Arayd wyth ryche gold wyre. (SL 229–248)

The two ladies wear kirtles, a fourteenth-century term for the *cotehardie* worn by women.<sup>71</sup> This was typically a long gown, tight-fitting around the torso, with a low-cut neckline and closely-fitting sleeves from which tippetts descended, and indeed, the fairy maidens' garments are laced 'smalle, jolif, and well' (*SL* 233).<sup>72</sup> There is a note of the erotic present in their appearance.<sup>73</sup> They wear mantles of fashionable green velvet; as in *Ipomadon's* green kirtle, the green suggests youthful love (and youthful inconstancy in love), reinforced by the natural setting.<sup>74</sup>

Chestre expands on the details found in the corresponding passages of *Lanval*; in accordance with earlier fashions, Marie de France's account presents these ladies as possessed of a graceful simplicity:

Vestues ierent richement,  
Laciees mut estreitement  
En deux blians de pupre bis;  
Mut par aveient bel le vis.<sup>75</sup>

The French ladies are very beautiful and are dressed in tightly-laced dark purple tunics. The purple and tightly-laced costumes remain the same, but Chestre supplements these descriptions with the introduction of additional colours, notably green, and other sartorial details. He draws on contemporary English fashions to construct a fairy otherworld that is vivid, brightly-coloured, opulent and wealthy. The fairy ladies wear fashionable mantles of green velvet (*SL* 235), a popular material for the nobility from the late fourteenth century onwards.<sup>76</sup> The 'syxty gemmys' that decorate the ladies' headpiece are not described in any detail; they are not as in other romances significant in terms of restorative qualities. Instead, the large number indicates the overwhelming richness of the fairy otherworld. The ladies' mantles provide an image of sumptuous luxury and lavish richness; they are 'ybordured wyth gold, ryght well ysette, / ypelured wyth gryns and gro.' (*SL* 236–237). Gold thread was used in embroidery throughout the

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<sup>71</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 358.

<sup>72</sup> Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, pp. 229–231.

<sup>73</sup> See: Smith, 'Marie de France: Guigemar and the Erotics of Tight Dress' in *Sartorial Strategies*, pp. 23–56.

<sup>74</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>75</sup> Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. by Alfred Ewart (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1944; repr. London: Bristol Classical Press, 1995), lines 57–60.

<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth Coatsworth and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, 'Velvet', *Encyclopaedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, p. 613.

Middle Ages, though subsequent sumptuary laws prohibited its use by any but royalty.<sup>77</sup> The mantles are decorated with gold and trimmed with two kinds of squirrel fur, the preferred fur of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The skins here are arranged in pleasing contrast of colours; the *gris*, dark grey from only the backs of the squirrels, paired with *gro*, a white fur from the stomachs.<sup>78</sup> This fur is sometimes associated with royalty; the finest kinds were frequently worn by medieval royalty, while liveries of inferior kinds were given in the royal household.<sup>79</sup> The fairy ladies also demonstrate their connection with the exotic east; ‘Har kerteles wer of Indesandel,’ (*SL* 232). Throughout the narrative, those associated with Tryamour consistently appear in *ynde*, the indigo shade, or clothing of ‘Ind’, of India; as Katherine McLoone states:

In both [texts], the beauty of the fairy-woman who seduces Lanval is described in terms of eastern luxury [...] When Tryamour enters the court, her saddle is decorated with “twenty stones of Inde”.<sup>80</sup>

The ladies’ dress also contains erotic undertones: their gowns are fashionably form-fitting; they are laced ‘smalle, jolif, and well’ (*SL* 233). Chestre’s additions emphasise the fairy ladies’ associations with royalty; they wear coronets, and, like Orfeo, squirrel fur. These details convey effectively the wealth and royalty of their mistress; they also emphasise the ladies’ exotic foreignness. The fairy ladies suggest with their dress an otherworld that is prosperous and stable; with their inclusion of Launfal, they evoke a world that is unmarked by Guinevere’s destabilising influence. The resulting effect is one of heightened colour and exaggerated richness. Martin finds elements of romance in the description:

The influence of popular romance is clearly marked in the detailed descriptions of the pavilion (265 ff.), of the dress of the various ladies, and of the tournaments. The eroticism of 289 ff. and certain expressions of strong feeling similarly belong to romance.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Garside, ‘Gold and Silver Metal Thread’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 237–239, at p. 239.

<sup>78</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 24; Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 283.

<sup>79</sup> Maria Hayward, ‘Squirrel Fur’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, p. 542.

<sup>80</sup> McLoone, ‘Politics, Miscegenation, and *Translatio*’, p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Martin, ‘*Sir Launfal* and the Folktale’, p. 210.

In their rich dress, the fairy ladies correspond to the depictions of the fairy otherworld seen in *Sir Orfeo* and other romance texts. Though Orfeo's fairies are dressed in white garments, the king's court is marvellous in its opulence.

The fairy ladies lead Launfal to their mistress. Dame Tryamour is half-dressed and her appearance indicates both wealth and eroticism:

For hete her clothes down sche dede  
Almost to her gerdyl stede  
Than lay sche uncovert.  
Sche was as whyt as lylzeyn May,  
Or snow that sneweth yn wynterys day -  
He seygh never non so pert. (SL 289–394)

The description inverts *effectio* to emphasise the erotic connotations of their meeting.<sup>82</sup>

Tryamour demonstrates immediately her otherworldly powers of perception:

She seyde, 'Syr Knyght, gentyll and hende,  
I wot thy stat, ord and ende;  
Be naught aschamed of me!' (SL 313–315)

Unlike the courtly society that conflates appearance with reality, Tryamour perceives with clarity Launfal's virtue. With her removal of his shame, Tryamour disrupts Launfal's dependence upon the honour-based framework. Simultaneously, she also facilitates his reintroduction into the chivalric community:

Yf thou wylt truly to me take  
And alle wemen for me forsake,  
Ryche I wyll make the.  
I wyll the yeve an alner  
Ymad of sylk and of gold cler,  
Wyth fayre ymages thre.  
As oft thou putttest the hond therinne,  
A mark of gold thou schalt wynne  
In wat place that thou be. (SL 313–325)

Tryamour gives Launfal a magic purse that contains never-ending gold coins; her other gifts reflect his knightly identity in the chivalric community:

'Also,' sche seyde, 'Syr Launfal,

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<sup>82</sup> See: Kevin S. Kiernan, 'The Art of the Descending Catalogue, and a Fresh Look at Alisoun', *The Chaucer Review*, 10/1 (1975), 1–16.



I yeve the Blaunchard, my stede lel,  
And Gyfre, my owen knave.  
And of my armes oo pensel  
Wyth thre ermyns ypeynted well,  
Also thou schalt have.  
In werre ne yn turnement  
Ne schall the greve no knyghtes dent,  
So well y schall the save.'

(*SL* 325–333)

Here, Tryamour corrects the disparity between appearance and identity that leads to Launfal's exclusion from the social scheme. She re-establishes with her gifts parity between internal identity and external appearance. Tryamour is not here concerned with freeing the human courtly community from Guinevere's sinful influence; the idyllic period at the opening of the narrative cannot fully re-emerge. Tryamour's rich gifts instead correct the lack of clarity in human perception in so far as it pertains solely to Launfal.

With her rich gifts, Tryamour creates a space for Launfal in the chivalric community that is simultaneously connected to the fairy otherworld. Launfal returns to the Arthurian court bearing Tryamour's sigil (*SL* 329–331). Tryamour corrects Arthur's lack of adequate provision to his knights, and in so doing, takes on the significance of his liege-lord. Katherine McLoone suggests that Launfal 'replaces his king with a "queen"':

By granting the largess of herself—by being both the subject and the object of the giving—the fairy-woman places herself in the position of both king (gift-granter) and wife (gift granted).<sup>83</sup>

Launfal is at this point equally positioned between the realms of the human and the fairy.

Tryamour's most significant request appears later:

'But of o thyng, Syr Knyght, I warne the,  
That thou make no bost of me  
For no kennes mede!  
And yf thou doost, I warny the before,  
All my love thou hast forlore!'

(*SL* 360–365)

Tryamour here places Launfal in a peculiar position. Though she corrects, with her gifts, the disparity between his internal virtue and external presentation, she engineers a conflict between his public and private worlds. Tryamour constitutes for him a hidden universe that follows him

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<sup>83</sup> McLoone, 'Strange Bedfellows', p. 9.

through his re-induction into the chivalric realm; he continues to meet with her, secretly, throughout his time at the Arthurian court.

These realms co-exist uneasily for a time, as Launfal returns to the human world with great ceremony and pomp. Launfal returns to the human world in the tattered clothing in which he left it:

Launfal lepte ynto the arsoun  
And rood hom to Karlyoun  
In hys pover wede. (SL 370–373)

Launfal's new riches appear in a passage of public pageantry. Here, Launfal inadvertently indicates to the human community his changing fortunes:

Than come ther, thorwgh the cité, ten  
Well yharneysyth men  
Upon ten somers ryde;  
Some wyth sylver, some wyth gold -  
All to Syr Launfal hyt schold;  
To presente hym, wyth pryde,  
Wyth ryche clothes and armure bryght,  
They axede aftyr Launfal the knyght,  
Whar he gan abyde.

The yong men wer clothed yn ynde;  
Gyfre, he rood all behynde  
Up Blanchard whyt as flour. (SL 376–387)

Tryamour here once again indicates an understanding of the significance of visual display in the human world; she self-consciously manipulates these conventions to further her own purposes. As with her other envoys, the fairy envoys wear the rich, dark blue shade *ynde*, creating a pleasing consistency in the narrative. This impressive visual display creates a dissonance between Launfal's public perception and his new identity. When asked about Launfal's location, the boy's retort is contemptuous: "Nys he but a wrecche! / What thar any man of hym recche" (SL 394–395). This characterisation changes abruptly once Launfal's riches are made public. Launfal is now enthusiastically welcomed back into the social scheme, a situation of which he is self-consciously aware:

'Sir Meyr, God foryelde the!  
Whyles y was yn my poverté,

Thou bede me never dyne.  
Now y have more gold and fe,  
That myne frendes han sent me,  
Than thou and alle thyne!  
The Meyr for schame away yede.  
Launfal yn purpure gan hym schrede,  
Ypelured wyth whyt ermyne.  
All that Launfal hadde borwyth before,  
Gyfre, be taylor and be score,  
Yald hyt well and fyne.

(SL 409–420)

Launfal dresses himself immediately in the opulent *purpura*; this is a high-quality silk cloth, originally purple in colour but, by the medieval period, not always in this shade.<sup>84</sup> *Purpura* was thought to absorb light and was prized for its colourfast nature; in certain contexts, it was used to denote Christ's incarnation.<sup>85</sup> His *purpura* is trimmed with white ermine, denoting both his wealth and his nobility; unlike Tryamour and her maidens, he does not wear squirrel fur. Here, Launfal is caught between two worlds; through his familiarity with the superior knowledge of the fairy otherworld, he acknowledges the superficiality of the human world but is unable to operate outside of it. Though he rebukes the superficiality of the mayor, he confirms with his rich dress these assumptions, dressing himself in the rich *purpura* and ermine that indicate among the human society his worth.

Launfal's sudden wealth issues in a new period of inclusion in the chivalric community:

And whan Syr Launfal was ydyght  
Upon Blauncharde, hys stede lyght,  
Wyth helm and spere and schelde,  
All that sawe hym yn armes bryght  
Seyde they sawe never swych a knyght,  
That hym wyth eyen beheld.

(SL 565–570)

Launfal's appearance demonstrates the conflict of his identity. Though he performatively encapsulates the chivalric identity, and the court affirm, with their acclaim, his belonging (SL 669), he bears upon him the symbols of the fairy world. Like Tryamour herself, and those associated with her throughout the narrative, he is finely dressed in ermine and *purpura*. Subsequent passages, such as his lengthy contest with Sir Valentyne (SL 505–612), reinforce

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<sup>84</sup> Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion*, p. 204.

<sup>85</sup> Pulliam, 'Color', p. 9.

Launfal's courtly chivalry. In recognition of his victories and his virtues, the office of steward is returned to him:

For Kyng Artour wold a feste holde  
Of erles and of barouns bolde,  
Of lordynges more and lesse.  
Syr Launfal schud be stward of halle  
For to agye hys gestes alle,  
For cowthe of largesse. (SL 619–624)

This passage deliberately returns to the scheme established before Guinevere's intrusion into the chivalric brotherhood. Previously isolated and alienated, Launfal is now well-loved and recognised in the chivalric scheme. His chivalric virtues are recognised and prized once more; 'for hys largesse he was lovede the bet / sertayn, of alle tho' (SL 644–645). The liminality, however, continues; though he performs publically the chivalric rites of courtly identity, he is visited privately by Tryamour:

And every day Dame Triamour,  
Sche com to Syr Launfal bour  
Aday whan hyt was nyght.  
Of all that ever wer ther tho  
Segh her non but they two,  
Gyfre and Launfal the knyght. (SL 499–504)

Tryamour's visits take place most often before chivalric conduct between men; Launfal consistently bids her goodbye to participate in tournaments and knightly contests (SL 625–627). Like Guinevere, Tryamour's female influence influences the bonds between men. While Guinevere's destabilising influence is immediately coded as negative, Tryamour's is less obviously negative. With her gifts of chivalric accoutrements, she facilitates Launfal's participation in the chivalric brotherhood; ultimately, however, Launfal leaves behind the chivalric brotherhood in pursuit of the fairy otherworld.

During this period of brief reintegration within the Arthurian courtly scheme, Guinevere attempts, fruitlessly, to seduce Launfal; angered by her taunts, Launfal breaks his vow to Tryamour:

'Hyr lothlokest mayde, wythoute wene,  
Myghte bet be a Quene

Than thou, yn all thy lyve!

(SL 694–699)

After his confrontation with Guinevere, Launfal returns to the behaviour he has maintained consistently throughout his return to the chivalric court; he seeks, in privacy, the hidden world of the fairy. His access to this realm is, however, denied:

He lokede yn hys alner,  
That fond hym spendyng all plener,  
Whan that he hadde nede,  
And ther nas noon, for soth to say;  
And Gyfre was yryde away  
Up Blaunchard, hys stede.  
All that he hadde before ywonne,  
Hyt malt as snow ayens the sunne,  
In romaunce as we rede;  
Hys armur, that was whyt as flour,  
Hyt becom of blak colour.

(SL 733–743)

The stock-phrase in line 741 possibly refers to the changing colour of some Fair Unknowns' armour. Launfal's armour passes over the 'red' stage and transitions directly to black. Here Launfal's appearance illustrates his transition from moral purity to tarnished honour. The blackened armour seems suggestive of the flawed morality of the human court. Love-tokens sometimes turn black or tarnish to demonstrate danger or betrayal within romance, as in *Florios kai Platziaflora*, the fifteenth-century translation into Greek of *Floris and Blanchefleur*.<sup>86</sup> In it, Platziaflora gives her lover a magic ring that tarnishes when she is in danger. Medieval lapidaries contain accounts of gems that tarnish or change colour in relation to evil or disease. White clothing and armour is often associated with fairies in Middle English romance, and the changing colours of Launfal's armour demonstrate his move away from the influence of the fairy lady, towards the flawed and unjust human world. The transformation of his armour from white to black signals publically his exile. Launfal has betrayed the virtue that attracted Tryamour in the first instance; this casts into doubt his position within the idealised fairy otherworld. With this passage, Launfal is quite abruptly exiled from the fairy world. He also loses the materials that facilitate his inclusion in the chivalric scheme: the riches upon which his

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<sup>86</sup> Wilhelm Wagner ed., *Ἡ Διήγησις Φλωρίου καὶ Πλατσιαφλώρης*, in *Medieval Greek Texts: Being a Collection of the Earliest Compositions in Vulgar Greek Prior to the Year 1500*, part one, The Philological Society (London: Asher, 1870).

position, in this now flawed framework, depend. Balanced precariously between two worlds for much of the narrative, Launfal now finds himself excluded from both.

Falsely accused of an attempted seduction by the vengeful Guinevere, Launfal loses his position as steward and is in danger of losing his life. Launfal waits uncomfortably for ‘twelwe moneth and fourtenyght’ (*SL* 818) before Tryamour appears to save him; this period constitutes a transitional period in which the loss of his identity is fully felt. During this period, Launfal is excluded entirely from the fairy otherworld and incorporated only superficially in the chivalric scheme. This liminal period concludes with Tryamour’s arrival. Tryamour once more demonstrates the understanding of performative visual display inherent in Launfal’s return to the human community; she self-consciously manipulates her appearance to impress the chivalric society. Her arrival is heralded first by her ladies, who arrive in two groups:

Ten maydenes, bryght of ble.  
Ham thoghte they wer so bryght and schene  
That the lod lokest, wythout wene,  
Har Quene than myghte be. (*SL* 849–852)

The second group is more fully described:

Tho saw they other ten maydenes bryght,  
Fayryr than the other ten of syght,  
As they gone hym deme.  
They ryd upon joly moyles of Spayne,  
Wyth sadell and brydell of Champayne,  
Har lorayns lyght gonne leme.  
  
They wer yclodeth yn samyt tyre;  
Ech man hadde greet desyre  
To se har clothyng. (*SL* 883–891)

Tryamour’s ladies once more prove the mediators between the fairy world and the human world. Their numbers are multiplied by ten, reflecting the magnitude of their audience; two maidens conveyed Launfal to an intimate rendezvous with their scantily-dressed mistress, and twenty ladies introduce Tryamour to the assembled host of the Arthurian court. The ladies’ appearance is both exaggerated and minimised in the text, as the two ‘gentyll maydenes’ (*SL* 229) that guided Launfal to their mistress are allotted two full stanzas of description (*SL* 229–249). The twenty maidens (*SL* 883) that now introduce their mistress to the court appear in only

thirteen lines of description; the effect here is consequentially more impressive and more fantastical. Their appearance is both more impressive and less intimate than the previous instance; Tryamour appears before the court not as a lover but a foreign power before an unfamiliar and hostile court. Her appearance, and that of her maidens, indicates clearly that they are outsiders to the court; as before, the details of Tryamour's ladies appearance suggest both exoticism and eroticism. In the first passage, the maidens introducing Launfal wear 'indesandel' (SL 232) and are 'ylased smalle, jolif, and well' (SL 233). In the second passage, eroticism appears largely through suggestion; the twenty maidens stir a 'greet desyre' in 'ech man' (SL 890) to see their "clothing". In the first passage, the ladies appear in rich and exotic materials; 'they ryd upon joly moyles of Spayne, / Wyth sadell and brydell of Champayne,' (SL 886–887). In the second passage, the ladies wear 'samyt tyre;' (SL 889) a rich silk fabric of eastern origin, this produced a slightly shiny effect and was popular until the fourteenth century.<sup>87</sup> John H. Munro connects *samit* with the Arabic *siklatun*, a 'rich, heavy damask silk, usually ornately brocaded and often embroidered in gold.'<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Coatsworth states:

Samittir means clothing made of samite; [...] samite is a specific weave [...] it is possible however that the term sometimes meant only a rich, heavy silk fabric. [...] The textual context always suggests rich fabric, mentioned with other rich fabrics, such as velvet or satin; of various colours (for example red, green, white, brown), often further embellished with embroidery in gold.<sup>89</sup>

As emblems of an unchanging otherworld, the essence of the ladies' appearance is the same as before. The intimacy with which they are presented has, however, changed.

Tryamour's description echoes the qualities found in the description of her ladies. Tryamour's former appearance presented her as erotically dishevelled; in this second passage, Tryamour wields her sexuality as a weapon:

Sche dede of her mantyll on the flet,  
That men schuld her beholde the bet,  
Wythoute a more sojour. (SL 979–971)

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<sup>87</sup> Scott, *Medieval Dress and Fashion*, p. 204.

<sup>88</sup> Munro, 'The Medieval Scarlet', p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Samite', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, p. 475.

Tryamour adopts the significance of an aristocratic nobleman; she self-consciously positions herself at the centre of a tableau of riches, presenting herself as the giver of riches and clothing herself more lavishly than those of her dependants, including Launfal. In this arrival, Tryamour constructs before the Arthurian court her appearance for many eyes; her appearance is self-consciously performative: ‘A softe pas her palfray fond, / That men her schuld beholde’ (*SL* 262–263). Her appearance emphasises both her power and wealth. She wears not a coronet but a crown: ‘sche hadde a croune upon her molde / of ryche stones, and of golde’ (*SL* 940–941). She wears high-quality textiles and furs; ‘the lady was clad yn purpere palle’ (*SL* 943) and ‘her matyll was furryd wyth whyt ermyn’ (*SL* 945), echoing the garments adopted by Launfal upon his new-found wealth: ‘Launfal yn purpure gan hym schrede, / ypelured wyth whyt ermyne’ *SL* 416–417). The ‘twey stones of Ynde,’ emphasise Tryamour’s exotic nature and her wealth.<sup>90</sup> It is difficult to identify the stones indicated with this description, as the majority of precious stones originate in the east and medieval lapidaries reflect these eastern origins.<sup>91</sup> Tryamour’s wealth is emphasised in the text: ‘the paytrelle of her palfraye/ was worth an erldome, stoute and gay’ (*SL* 958–959). The hunting animals that surround indicate her courtly gentility and supernatural otherness: ‘A gerfawcon sche bar on her hond’ (*SL* 961) and ‘Twey whyte grehoundys ronne hyr by’ (*SL* 965); ownership of falcons and greyhounds was in the medieval period the sole province of the aristocracy, and fairies frequently appear hunting in medieval literature.<sup>92</sup> The use and display of animals represented a significant means through which elites demonstrated wealth and status; Tryamour here appears in accordance with this presentation.<sup>93</sup> Tryamour consistently demonstrates herself to be a self-conscious manipulator of her appearance; she is profoundly aware of the effect she creates, and alters it for each situation. In her first appearance before Launfal, she presents herself in an erotic, dishevelled, intimate and immensely desirable state; writing of the English text’s close source *Lanval*, Corinne Saunders

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<sup>90</sup> McLoone, ‘Strange Bedfellows’, pp. 6–7.

<sup>91</sup> For examples, see: Evans and Searjantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*.

<sup>92</sup> Dorena Allen, ‘Orpheus and Orfeo: The Dead and the “Taken”’, *Medium Aevum*, 33/2 (1964), 102–111, at p. 15.

<sup>93</sup> See: John Block Friedman, ‘Coats, Collars, and Capes: Royal Fashions for Animals in the Early Modern Period’, in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles: Volume Twelve*, ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), pp. 61–94.



finds the verse ‘skilfully presents her beautiful body and countenance as the exquisite gems at the heart of the extravagant tent, with its costly bed and covers.’<sup>94</sup> The same care is taken with Tryamour’s appearance here; the proud display of her carefully-adorned body represents the climax of this lavish procession of riches, attendants, and chattels. She surrounds herself with physical manifestations of her power and status, and the effect constructed by this self-conscious pageantry is responsive and accumulative; the opulence of her materials enhances the beauty of her appearance, which in turn enhances again the opulence of her materials, and so on. The effect is overwhelming, and Tryamour’s arrival is a complete and total victory.

Tryamour’s beauty exonerates Launfal immediately. It is, however, too late to retain his position in the chivalric community; he does not choose to remain in the courtly community. Tryamour blinds Guinevere, and Launfal leaves with her: ‘That noble knyght of the Rounde Table, / Was take ynto Fayrye’ (*SL* 1034–1035). The positive conclusion of romance here finds expression here not with the reintroduction of the individual into the social group, but with the reconciliation of the lovers and the individual’s escape from the social group. Launfal is lost to the human world, but he finds a new context in the fairy world. In many respects, Launfal is out of place from the start in the Arthurian court; Laskaya and Salisbury characterise him as an epic, rather than courtly, hero.<sup>95</sup> Impulsive, frequently destructive, acting largely without forethought or moderation, he evokes the fairies frequently found in the canon of medieval romance. Bruckner identifies the anagram element of Marie de France’s Lanval and his anagram-home Avalon; in this context, Avalon becomes a homecoming for Lanval, and he finds some element of identity through his association with the Lady.<sup>96</sup>

Launfal’s inner transformation is illustrated visually through dress. The court’s inability to ‘read’ Launfal’s identity through the veil of his poverty contributes to his alienation and instigates his growing identification with the fairy otherworld. Tryamour’s gifts to Launfal

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<sup>94</sup> Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 185.

<sup>95</sup> Laskaya and Salisbury, ‘Sir Launfal’, p. 206.

<sup>96</sup> Matilda Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia, PE: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

constitute not only a release from the physical and emotional hardships of poverty; they signify kinship, belonging, and unity. Ultimately, Launfal escapes the flawed perception of the human world entirely, departing with Tryamour to a realm of more perfect perception; the conflict between the 'failed ideals of the court and the perfection of an ideal otherworld' results in a divergence between the two.<sup>97</sup> The text's use of clothing establishes a fairy otherworld that is morally, aesthetically and visually superior to the human world; though Tryamour's appearance, and that of her servants, displays material wealth, she is not constrained or bound by it. Unlike the human court, she recognises Launfal's value when he is poorly dressed. Conversely, the human world is preoccupied with appearance and material wealth; they fail to recognise his value when he is poorly dressed, accepting him only after his external appearance corresponds with his internal identity (SL 410–411). Launfal's interactions with the otherworld begin with Launfal increasingly isolated from the human world's inability to recognise interior value due to external appearances. In this context of growing disillusionment and alienation, Launfal's departure with Tryamour constitutes a kind of voluntary abduction. Unlike Orfeo's queen, Launfal is not taken by force; instead, Launfal's departure with Tryamour constitutes a rejection of the human world's failures and injustices. This is largely—but not completely—a failure of courtly society; the negative perspective is cast wide, extending from the courtiers to the lower classes who also mock Launfal's poor appearance. In a detail unique to Chestre's text, Launfal returns cyclically to challenge the human world. In this way, he represents a permanent reminder of the values that they have lost.

### *Sir Orfeo*

*Sir Orfeo* is frequently included in collections of Breton *lais* despite a lack of extant French or English sources. Evidence exists to support the characterisation of *Sir Orfeo* as a

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<sup>97</sup> Saunders, 'The Enchantress in Middle English Romance', p. 41.

Breton *lai*, as the existence of such a source text or texts has been widely hypothesised by scholars.<sup>98</sup> This medieval reworking of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth draws from various traditions; it has been thought to be endowed with folklore motifs and Celtic material, though Aisling Byrne's recent work in this area calls into question the idea of Celtic origins.<sup>99</sup> Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and certain Anglo-Saxon texts are also potential sources.<sup>100</sup> With its emphasis on regeneration, reintegration and redemption, the text contains elements of Christian allegory; Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis writes at some length on the ways in which the poet has 'christianized the classical myth'.<sup>101</sup> Felicity Riddy characterises the text as 'profoundly Christian'.<sup>102</sup> Orfeo also appears as a pilgrim figure.<sup>103</sup> Scholars have compared, with varying levels of agreement, *Sir Orfeo*'s links to other thematically similar romances such as *King Horn*.<sup>104</sup> In this way, though there has been significant critical attention to the text, my

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<sup>98</sup> For more discussion of the Breton connections of *Sir Orfeo*, see: A. J. Bliss ed., *Sir Orfeo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954); Roy Michael Liuzza, 'Sir Orfeo: Sources, Traditions, and the Poetics of Performance', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 21 (1991), 269–84; Constance Davies, 'Notes on the Sources of "Sir Orfeo"', *The Modern Language Review*, 31/3 (1936), 354–57; Furnish, 'Thematic Structure and Symbolic Motif in the Middle English Breton Lays'.

<sup>99</sup> For more discussion of the classical and Celtic sources of *Sir Orfeo*, see: Constance Davies, 'Classical Threads in *Orfeo*', *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961), 161–116; Corinne Saunders ed., *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005); Allen, 'The Dead and the "Taken"'; John B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Patrizia Grimaldi, 'Sir Orfeo as Celtic Folk-Hero, Christian Pilgrim, and Medieval King', in Morton W. Bloomfield ed., *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 147–152. For a different view, see Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>100</sup> For more on Boethius as a source, see Severs J. Burke, 'The Antecedents of *Sir Orfeo*', in MacEdward Leach ed., *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 187–208; for more on the text's Anglo-Saxon links, see Dominique Battles, 'Sir Orfeo and English Identity', *Studies in Philology*, 107/2 (2010), 179–211.

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, 'The Significance of Sir Orfeo's Self-Exile', *The Review of English Studies*, 18/71 (1967), 245–252 at p. 251; D'Arcy presents the Fairy King as an 'an imperial figure, but one untrammelled by the theological concerns and sacerdotal duties of these rulers of Christian polities', and one diametrically opposed to Orfeo's Christianity in: Anne Marie D'Arcy, 'The Faerie King's Kunstkammer: Imperial Discourse and the Wondrous in "Sir Orfeo"', *The Review of English Studies*, 58/233 (2007), 10–33, at p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> Felicity Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 6 (1976), pp. 5–15.

<sup>103</sup> For further discussion of Orfeo as a pilgrim or Christian figure, see: Penelope B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 158–207; Grimaldi, 'Sir Orfeo as Celtic Folk-Hero, Christian Pilgrim, and Medieval King'; Michael Masi, 'The Christian Music of *Sir Orfeo*', *Classical Folia*, 28 (1974), 3–20; Jeff Rider, 'Receiving Orpheus in the Middle Ages: Allegorization, Remythification and Sir Orfeo', *Papers on Language & Literature*, 24 (1988), 343–66.

<sup>104</sup> For more on the comparison between *Sir Orfeo* and *King Horn*, see: Mary Hynes-Berry, 'Cohesion in King Horn and Sir Orfeo', *Speculum*, 50/4 (1975), 652–70; John McLaughlin, 'The Return Song in Medieval Romance and Ballad: *King Horn* and *King Orfeo*', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 88/349 (1975), 304–07.

own explorative focus on the significance of dress and transformative identity has not previously appeared. The composition dates from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century, and the text exists in three surviving manuscripts. As well as Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck), the other existing manuscripts are: London, British Library, MS Harley 3810; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61.<sup>105</sup> The earliest of these is the Auchinleck manuscript, which provides the basis for Anne Laskaya's and Eve Salisbury's edition of the text.

*Sir Orfeo* is the tale of King Orfeo, whose queen, Heurodis, is abducted by the fairy king. Following her loss, Orfeo exiles himself and spends ten years in the wilderness before meeting her again by chance. He disguises himself as a minstrel and wins her back from the fairy king. After returning home disguised, he tests his courtiers' loyalty; finding them still faithful, Orfeo reveals his identity and is crowned once more. Orfeo's identity is mutable and transitional; unlike Launfal, who progresses in a linear fashion from one sphere to another, Orfeo undergoes a circular progress of transformation that concludes with his return to his former position and his re-integration into the courtly community. Through the course of the narrative, Orfeo is transformed from king, to hermit, to king again. These transformations are signalled through, and in part facilitated by, the use of dress. Clothing in *Sir Orfeo* is inextricably linked to concepts of identity, appearing consistently in terms of disguises. It depicts systematically various identities that are assumed and then discarded. Exiling himself into the wilderness after the loss of his wife, Orfeo takes on the dress of a pilgrim; he exchanges his kingdom for a pilgrim's mantle: 'Al his kingdom he forsoke; / Bot a sclavin on him he toke' (*SO* 227). Through the course of the narrative, Orfeo adopts and discards the clothing and identities of king, pilgrim, minstrel, beggar, before returning once more to king. This is a

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<sup>105</sup> For further discussion of manuscripts and date of composition, see the account provided in A. J. Bliss' critical edition of *Sir Orfeo*, pp. ix–xv. Additional details can be found in Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury's edition of *Sir Orfeo* in *The Middle English Breton Lays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995). All subsequent references to *Sir Orfeo* (*SO*) will be to this more recent edition and cited by line number.

circular poem of patterns and parallels: Orfeo's loss of his queen precipitates the loss of his kingdom, which then precipitates the people's loss of their king.

The first appearance of the fairy king and his court contains a level of precise descriptive detail not found in the comparatively shorter description of Orfeo and Heurodis. The fairy court's introduction focuses more on the tangible elements of opulence, rather than the abstract virtues embodied by Orfeo and Heurodis:

With an hundred knightes and mo,  
And damisels an hundred also,  
Al on snowe-white stedes;  
As white as milke were her wedes.  
Y no seighe never yete bifore  
So fair creatours y-core.  
The king hadde a croun on hed;  
It nas of silver, no of gold red,  
Ac it was of a precious ston -  
As bright as the sonne it schon.

(SO 143–152)

The introduction of Orfeo and Heurodis does not describe their riches or the opulence of their appearance; instead, it establishes their virtues and nobility:

In Inglond an heighe lording,  
A stalworth man and hardi bo;  
Large and curteys he was also.  
His fader was comen of King Pluto,  
And his moder of King Juno,  
That sum time were as godes yhold  
For aventours that thai dede and told.  
[...]  
The king hadde a quen of priis  
That was y-cleped Dame Heurodis,  
The fairest levedi, for the nones,  
That might gon on bodi and bones,  
Ful of love and godenisse -  
Ac no man may telle hir fairnise.

(SO 40–55)

The grandeur of the fairies contrasts with the understated effect of the human court. The reader is not led to assume that the human court lacks grandeur, or is somehow impoverished, but the effect of the poetic focus is to exaggerate the vividness of the fairy court and to deemphasise the wealth of the human court. In this way, the fairy court appears rich but threatening. Its lavish appearance contrasts with the virtues presented by the human court; the materiality of the

Otherworld, ‘with its burnished gold pillars and spectacular jewels and precious stones, is all very dazzling, and all very artificial’.<sup>106</sup>

After Heurodis is abducted by the fairy king, Orfeo exiles himself to the wilderness. This is sometimes mistakenly presented as a quest to reclaim his queen; there is, however, no element of quest or adventure to his wanderings.<sup>107</sup> Instead, Orfeo’s self-exile represents a rejection of courtly society. As with the widow Acheflour in *Sir Perceval of Galles*, loss turns into further loss, as the individual retreats from the community. As Louis states:

He is obviously not on any kind of heroic quest – he has ‘euermore’ abandoned the world of ‘castels & tours’ (245); he has given up his life of ease for the existence of a hermit; he has exchanged his royal robes for a pilgrim’s mantle.<sup>108</sup>

Characterising Orfeo’s pilgrim garb as a ‘disguise’ correlates with the misapprehension of his exile as a quest; ‘disguise’ suggest an action, aim, or a deliberate concealment of identity. Orfeo’s pilgrim’s garb does not constitute a deliberate concealment of identity, but signals instead a transformation of identity. Unlike other romance quests, it is ‘not a time for self-improvement for future gain’; Orfeo’s wandering concludes by chance when Orfeo comes across Heurodis by chance after ten years apart.<sup>109</sup> The text provides only glimpses into Orfeo’s motives regarding his self-exile:

‘For now ichave mi quen y-lore,  
The fairest levedi that ever was bore,  
Never eft y nil no woman se.  
Into wildernes ich ilte  
And live ther evermore  
With wilde bestes in holtes hore;  
And when ye understond that y be spent,  
Make you than a parlement,  
And chese you a newe king.  
Now doth your best with al mi thing.’ (SO 209–218)

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<sup>106</sup> Louis, ‘The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile’, p. 251.

<sup>107</sup> See: Lewis J. Owen, ‘The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*’, *Medium Aevum*, 40/3 (1971), 249–53; Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, pp. 179–211; Louis, ‘The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile’, pp. 245–52.

<sup>108</sup> Louis, ‘The Significance of Orfeo’s Self-Exile’, p. 246.

<sup>109</sup> Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, p. 199.

This moment represents ‘renunciation, withdrawal, ascetic self-denial.’<sup>110</sup> Exposure to the fairy court’s opulence, overwhelming and unfamiliar and at odds with the apparent simplicity of his own court, leads into the ‘ascetic self-denial’ of his self-exile.<sup>111</sup> Yet Orfeo’s motivations are predominantly unclear; Louis identifies Celtic analogues of grief and madness to the self-exile episode, but rejects their influence, stating ‘Orfeo does not [...] rush into the wilderness in a fit of emotional despair’.<sup>112</sup> Instead, he reads Orfeo’s self-exile as an ‘act of love’:

Orfeo is characterized by deep humility. His acceptance of the inevitability of death coupled with his great love for his lost wife lead him to renounce the world and to take up the life of a hermit. The ten years he spends in the wilderness constitute a kind of penance, and because of it, Orfeo receives a gift of grace – Heurodis is returned to him.<sup>113</sup>

In this way, Orfeo’s self-exile is a central component of the poet’s Christianisation of the classical myth. Other scholars read Orfeo’s self-exile in terms of a political and military defeat:

The abduction of Queen Heurodis in the Middle English *Sir Orfeo* is as much, if not more, a political crime as a personal one, and how the loss of Heurodis very quickly turns into the loss of a kingdom. [...] Orfeo’s failure the next day to protect the queen becomes, therefore, not simply a personal loss but a military defeat of sorts, witnessed by hundreds of fighting men, to a foe whose land holdings, as far as we can tell, outclass Orfeo’s own. The invasion of Orfeo’s realm, the failure of his forces, and the subsequent exile of the king himself clearly mirror the storyline of political conquest.<sup>114</sup>

Felicity Riddy is among the scholars who find in the poem a ‘profoundly Christian view of the world’, though she positions Orfeo’s self-exile as an issue of identity.<sup>115</sup> She speaks not of Orfeo’s ‘disguise’ as a pilgrim but of his transformation, though she reads it in terms of ‘figures’ and ‘symbols’:

Orfeo’s divestiture of his kingship, his transformation from king to poor man, is a means of conveying his desolation in terms whole appropriate to the limits of this kind of art. The focus of the poet’s attention is not on Orfeo’s motives but on the propriety of the gesture [...] The psychological compulsion that drives a bereft husband away from his fellow men would be, in another kind of art, a valid area for exploration, but the syntax of this art, and of this passage in particular, does not aim to establish complex relations between event. The wilderness is, in contrast to the court, simply an emblem

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<sup>110</sup> Owen, ‘The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 251.

<sup>111</sup> Owen, ‘The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 251.

<sup>112</sup> Louis, ‘The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile’, p. 247.

<sup>113</sup> Louis, ‘The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*’s Self-Exile’, p. 247.

<sup>114</sup> Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, p. 179.

<sup>115</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 6.

of deprivation and the figures of pilgrim, minstrel, and beggar are, in contrast to the King, types of the dispossessed.<sup>116</sup>

Orfeo rejects and renounces his identity as king, leaving behind his obligations and his accoutrements of kingship. This moment is deeply transformative: the giving up of the king's clothes and the donning of a pilgrim's robe marks not a disguise as a pilgrim, but a moment in which he surrenders his kingship. Louis briefly touches on this:

[Orfeo] is a pilgrim travelling nowhere, a hermit living in a timeless void – it is as if he, not Heurodis, were in Hades. [...] In this purgatory of repetitious, purposeless activity where he is acknowledged by no one and no thing, Orfeo undergoes a kind of purification, and learns how little it is to be a king.<sup>117</sup>

Orfeo is a pilgrim-figure and a hermit, but he is not disguised as such:

'Into wildernes ich ilte  
And live ther evermore  
With wilde bestes in holtes hore;  
And when ye understond that y be spent,  
Make you than a parlement,  
And chese you a newe king.  
Now doth your best with al mi thing.'

(SO 212–218)

Orfeo quite clearly does not intend to return. This transformation from king into pilgrim is emphasised by a detailed passage contrasting the luxuries and delights of Orfeo's former life with his current hardship:

Al his kingdom he forsoke;  
Bot a sclavin on him he toke.  
He no hadde kirtel no hode,  
Schert, ne no nother gode,  
Bot his harp he tok algate  
And dede him barfot out atte gate;  
No man most with him go.  
O way! What ther was wepe and wo,  
When he that hadde ben king with croun  
Went so poverlich out of toun!  
Thurth wode and over heth  
Into the wildernes he geth.  
Nothing he fint that him is ays,  
Bot ever he liveth in gret malais.  
He that hadde y-werd the fowe and griis,  
And on bed the purper biis,  
Now on hard hethe he lith,  
With leves and gresse he him writh.

(SO 227–244)

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<sup>116</sup> Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*', p. 11.

<sup>117</sup> Louis, 'The Significance of *Sir Orfeo*'s Self-Exile', p. 248.



This section has attracted significant critical attention; Riddy links the list of pleasures to ‘contemporary moralizing lyrics in which the courtly life, serving as a symbol of vainglory, is evoked by means of suggestive and conventional details’.<sup>118</sup> However, the effect here is powerful in its nostalgia, presenting a kind of lament; ‘it seems clear that the poet of *Sir Orfeo* is drawing on the same conventions of expression and the authors of these lyrics, but with a quite different emphasis and different effects: he shares their feeling for the transience of things but not their contempt of the world.’<sup>119</sup> In this way, the court represents ‘not [...] a symbol of the pride of life but a source of “ays”’.<sup>120</sup> Battles finds in this episode traces of an earlier tradition:

In Old English poetry, this exilic meditation takes on the form of a description of lost pleasures, a feature we see reproduced in *Sir Orfeo*. [...] These lost relationships become codified in concrete images of property such as an empty mead hall or lost weapons; listed as an *ubi sunt* lament, these images become emblematic for lost civilization as a whole, lost both to the exiled figure and to the civilization that met with disaster. We find this same listing of lost pleasures, to the same end, in *Sir Orfeo*.<sup>121</sup>

Battles reads the episode’s catalogue of lost comforts as ‘all the things that constitute civilization’; ‘clothing, furnishings, dwellings, land holdings, knights and companions, ladies, and food and drink.’<sup>122</sup> This episode evokes associations with other texts and draws from wider canons of literature; it also provides insight into the transformative moment of Orfeo’s loss of kingship. Louis finds in this passage ‘a complete reversal of Orfeo’s fortune as king. Using his favourite device of contrast, the poet sketches for his audience the high and the low of fortune’s ever-turning wheel’.<sup>123</sup> The use of the clothing here is significant:

Al his kingdom he forsoke;  
 Bot a sclavin on him he toke.  
 He no hadde kirtel no hode,  
 Schert, ne no nother gode,  
 Bot his harp he tok algate  
 And dede him barfot out atte gate;  
 No man most with him go.

(SO 227–233)

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<sup>118</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 11.

<sup>119</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 13.

<sup>120</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 13.

<sup>121</sup> Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, p. 200.

<sup>122</sup> Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, p. 201.

<sup>123</sup> Louis, ‘The Significance of Orfeo’s Self-Exile’, p. 248.

The link between clothing and kingship is made explicit here with the immediacy of the imagery. ‘Al his kingdom he forsoke; / Bot a sclavin on him toke’ (*SO* 227–233); the rhyme further forces these lines together. Orfeo leaves behind his whole kingdom and takes only with him a pilgrim’s mantle; it is, quite literally, an exchange. This is not a case of simple exile, or demotion to a low rank from a high one; the text highlights the hardship of his pilgrim role, the isolation (*SO* 233) and the physical privation (*SO* 229–230). He also lacks the simplest of regular human clothing: the kirtle, shirt, or hood that was worn by the lowest in society. The lack of a hood here represents a deliberate evocation of physical hardship; only the very poor went without a hat, and hoods were, in the medieval period, primarily utilitarian articles with specific purpose for shielding the head against the weather.<sup>124</sup> Orfeo surrenders his identity as king and embraces the hardships of the penitent.

After establishing the poverty of Orfeo’s present situation, the text presents a nostalgic focus recalling Orfeo’s former life as king:

O way! What ther was wepe and wo,  
 When he that hadde ben king with croun  
 Went so poverlich out of toun!  
 Thurth wode and over heth  
 Into the wildernes he geth.  
 Nothing he fint that him is ays,  
 Bot ever he liveth in gret malais.  
 He that hadde y-werd the fowe and griis,  
 And on bed the purper biis,  
 Now on hard hethe he lith,  
 With leves and gresse he him writh. (*SO* 234–244)

Here, the specific details of Orfeo’s kingship appear for the first time: the crown, the fine clothing, and the rich fabrics on the soft bed. During his kingship, Orfeo wore ‘the fowe and griis’ (*SO* 240); this is the squirrel fur that is associated with royalty in a number of texts and was, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the fur most favoured by kings, queens, and the medieval elite. The type specifically worn by Orfeo was *gris*, a dark fur made out of the grey backs of northern squirrels.<sup>125</sup> The variegated nature of this material possibly suggests Orfeo’s

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<sup>124</sup> Hartley, *Medieval Costume and Life*, pp.74–95; Sarah Thursfield, ‘Hood’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 272–276.

<sup>125</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 24.

garment is a ‘furrura’ or ‘furrure’; this was a fur lining made out of several small skins sewn together.<sup>126</sup> His bedclothes are purple linen, a colour associated with royalty from classical times and still retaining some of its significance in the medieval period.<sup>127</sup> The nostalgic emphasis, with its dual perspectives on past and present, contrast pathetically past luxuries with present hardships; through its use of specific sartorial detail, the texture of Orfeo’s life as king is evoked. Felicity Riddy characterises the text as dealing ‘almost entirely with surfaces, with the public world of action, gesture, and speech’.<sup>128</sup> Here, the symbols of kingship—the crown, the rich fur, the royal purple—represent the nuances of Orfeo’s lost identity.

After ten years and a day, Orfeo encounters a group of ladies hawking; among them is the lost Heurodis. Their reunion is presented in emotional and evocative terms:

His owhen quen, Dam Heurodis.  
 Yern he biheld hir, and sche him eke,  
 Ac noither to other a word no speke;  
 For messais that sche on him seighe,  
 That had ben so riche and so heighe,  
 The teres fel out of her eighe. (SO 322–327)

Though ‘his here of his berd, blac and rowe, / To his girdel-stede was growe’ (SO 266–267), Heurodis recognises Orfeo despite his pilgrim garb and the hardships of the ten-year exile. It is not just the simple emotion of beholding a long-lost loved one that moves her; she is explicitly affected by the manner in which he appears before her. This transformation of Orfeo from king into hermit causes the tears to fall from her eyes (SO 326–327). Beholding her evokes a similarly emotional response in Orfeo:

‘Allas!’ quath he, ‘now me is wo!’  
 Whi nil deth now me slo?  
 Allas, wreche, that y no might  
 Dye now after this sight!  
 Allas! to long last mi liif,  
 When y no dar nought with mi wiif,  
 No hye to me, o word speke.  
 Allas! Whi nil min hertbreke!’ (SO 355–338)

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<sup>126</sup> Maria Hayward, ‘Fur’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 221–222, at p. 221; Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 219.

<sup>127</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 40–42.

<sup>128</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 9.

They recognise each other; ‘Yern he beheld hir, and sche him eke’ (SO 322). Finally, he spurs himself into action:

‘Parfay!’ quath he, ‘tide wat bitide,  
Whiderso this levedis ride,  
The selve way ichilstreche -  
Of liif no deth me no reche.’ (SO 339–342)

These moments are significant. This encounter brings to an end Orfeo’s pointless wandering. Orfeo is no longer a hermit; he has a goal, an aim. The following passage acquires the resonance of an adventurer setting out on a quest:

His sclavin he dede on also spac  
And henge his harp upon his bac,  
And had wel godewil to gon -  
He no spard noither stub no ston. (SO 343–346)

The text here once more draws attention again to the pilgrim’s garb. Orfeo dresses himself hastily in his poor clothing; and yet, the text has already emphasised that Orfeo has only the one garment. Are we to assume, then, that Orfeo appeared naked before the fairy ladies? This seems unlikely; a textual error instead causes Orfeo to appear to don his *sclavin* twice. The effect of this repetition is to convey vividly a sense of preparation, of initiation, of a new beginning; the recognition scene marks the ‘progress of Orfeo out of suffering and into action’, and it also represents the beginning of Orfeo’s transformation from hermit to king.<sup>129</sup> In this context, and for the first time in the text, this pilgrim’s mantle assumes the significance of a disguise through which Orfeo seeks deliberately to manipulate his appearance before others. The recognition scene marks an important moment in which Orfeo’s pilgrim garb is translated from an article that reveals identity, to one that conceals it.

Orfeo pursues the fairy ladies and finds their court. He enters the fairy otherworld through a wall of rock, and the mysteries of the fairy world give way to the familiar setting of castles and porters.<sup>130</sup> The disguise is successful; Orfeo deceives the porter and gains access to the castle:

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<sup>129</sup> Owen, ‘The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 252.

<sup>130</sup> Owen, ‘The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 252.

The porter was redi therate  
 And asked what he wold hav y-do.  
 ‘Parfay!’ quath he, ‘icham a minstrel, lo!  
 To solas thi lord with mi gle,  
 Yif his swete wille be.’ (SO 380–384)

This represents the first proper instance of disguise in the text. Orfeo is not a minstrel, though he carries a harp on his back. Nor is he, as he has done previously, renouncing one identity to take on another; he is instead deliberately concealing his identity by presenting himself as something which he is not. Orfeo ‘does not appear disguised until after his name has reappeared: he pretends to be only a harper in order to get his wife, and later his kingdom back’.<sup>131</sup>

Orfeo finds his wife in a vast courtyard tableau of frozen figures. These are the taken of the fairy court, and the figures range in action and appearance; some, as is the case of Heurodis, peacefully sleeping, and some frozen in stasis, missing limbs and heads.<sup>132</sup> Orfeo recognises her not from her face, but from her clothing:

Ther he seighe his owhen wiif,  
 Dame Heurodis, his lef liif,  
 Slepe under an ympe-tre -  
 Bi her clothes he knewe that it was he. (SO 405–408)

This second recognition scene falls curiously flat; ‘There is no sense of animation, nor any reciprocal recognition.’<sup>133</sup> This is because the transformative recognition scene has already taken place; this encounter confirms Orfeo’s purpose, rather than instigating it. The single line ‘bi her clothes he knewe that it was he’ (SO 408) renders keenly the disparity between Orfeo and Heurodis’ appearance, foreshadowing the fairy king’s subsequent objections to their reunion. Orfeo’s appearance is gruesomely changed by his ten years’ hardships: ‘his here of his berd, blac and rowe, / to his girdel-stede was growe’ (SO 265–266). Heurodis still wears the clothes that she wore ten years previously, indicating the curious un-passing of time in the fairy

<sup>131</sup> Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance*, p. 38.

<sup>132</sup> Much has been written about the gruesome tableau of frozen figures: see Allen, ‘The Dead and the “Taken”’, pp. 102–11; Ridy, ‘The Uses of the Past in Sir Orfeo’, pp. 5–15; Robert M. Longworth, ‘“Sir Orfeo”, the Minstrel, and the Minstrel’s Art’, *Studies in Philology*, 79/1 (1982), 1–11; Seth Lerer, ‘Artifice and Artistry in Sir Orfeo’, *Speculum*, 60/1 (1985), 92–109; D’Arcy, ‘The Faerie King’s Kunstkammer’, pp. 10–33; Battles, ‘Sir Orfeo and English Identity’, pp. 179–211.

<sup>133</sup> D’Arcy, ‘The Faerie King’s Kunstkammer’, p. 12.

kingdom.<sup>134</sup> In this way, the text provides a context for Heurodis' initial sorrow at the appearance of Orfeo. She has not undergone Orfeo's lengthy self-denial and transformation, and as such, retains visually aspects of her queenly identity; she has not experienced time in the same manner and, we assume, does not understand that the fairy king has taken ten years from them.

Progressing through the courtyard, Orfeo comes at last to the fairy king's court. Disguised as a minstrel, Orfeo's song pleases the fairy king and queen so much that the king promises Orfeo anything. He quickly repents this folkloric 'rash boon', as Orfeo requests 'that ich levedi, bright on ble, / that slepeth under the ympe-tree' (SO 455–456).

'Nay!' quath the king, 'that nought nere!  
A sori couple of you it were,  
For thou art lene, rowe and blac,  
And sche is lovesum, withouten lac;  
A lothlich thing it were, forthi,  
To senhir in thi compayni.'

(SO 457–463)

The fairy king's words are ironic; not only are the 'sori couple' (SO 458) husband and wife, but the disparity of appearance to which he objects is of his own making. Orfeo's disguise conceals his kingship, which is restored to him by his second crowning at the end of the poem. Couched in the fairy king's words are more than just an aesthetic objection; Orfeo, hideously changed by his ten-years' wandering, constitutes a particularly vivid reminder of the suffering of reality. As Riddy states, 'the human world of *Sir Orfeo* is also a world of suffering'; most importantly, this suffering is linked explicitly to the passage of time: 'throughout the poem suffering is related to the passage of time: grief is constantly expressed as nostalgia.'<sup>135</sup> The fairy king's reluctance to return Heurodis to the mortal world represents an unwillingness to surrender her to the suffering of time and aging of mortality. This is not to say that the fairy world is unequivocally pleasant; the courtyard tableau serves as a reminder that that the fairy world too contains grief.<sup>136</sup> The fairy king is by no means motivated by a sense of pity—he is a 'demonic [...] artificer' whose

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<sup>134</sup> For more on the 'un-passing' of time in the fairy king's realm, see Allen, 'The Dead and the "Taken"', p. 103 and Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*', p. 9.

<sup>135</sup> Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*', p. 9.

<sup>136</sup> Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*', p. 6.

interests lie in ‘imperial assertions of power over humankind in general and Orfeo in particular’.<sup>137</sup> Despite this, his actions are particularly contextualised by an awareness of the passage of time and the suffering that it brings. The earthly world, to which Orfeo proposes returning Heurodis, is one of transience and impermanence; even the May setting of the events positions the human world as one of change and renewal.<sup>138</sup> The transformation Orfeo undergoes through the course of the narrative speaks to the instability of the earthly world. There is, then, inherent in these stories an element of solace lacking in the classical Orpheus analogues; Orfeo ventures not into the underworld to steal back his bride from death; instead, he ventures into fairy land to take back his ‘taken’ wife from the fairy court – a court that preserves its inhabitants in a timeless state far from suffering. The fairy king’s perspective is, however, flawed: in stasis, there can be no renewal; it precludes the change upon which renewal is dependant. Eternal stasis results in limbo for his human prisoners. As her clothing indicates, Heurodis is trapped between worlds, unable to fully surrender her previous identity or to join fully the fairy host. Ultimately, Orfeo secures her release by calling upon qualities shared by both human and fairy courts; he appeals to the king’s honour (“nedes thou most thi word hold” *SO* 468) and escapes before the king can object.

This final reunion with Heurodis is not lingered on by the text; instead, the text moves immediately on to Orfeo’s regaining of his lost kingship.<sup>139</sup> The objective has been achieved—Heurodis has been rescued—and many texts traditionally end here, with the absent ruler’s joyous return to his or her people. *Lybeaus Desconus* and *Florence of Rome* both provide more ‘typical’ examples of this kind of motif; both the Lady of Synadowne and Florence of Rome return openly and immediately to their people after the conclusion of the narrative conflict. Orfeo’s return is grounded in a lengthy ‘testing’ scene in which he walks unknown among his people to ascertain their loyalty. In this way, his loss of community is replaced with a gradual and systematic re-integration into society. The recovery of Orfeo’s queen is not, in and of itself,

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<sup>137</sup> D’Arcy, ‘The Faerie King’s Kunstkammer’, p. 13.

<sup>138</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 9.

<sup>139</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p.14.

enough to transform him into a king again. The repentant Orfeo must return to his people before he can regain his crown, thereby closing the cycle begun with his self-exile. This reinforces the internal circular structure of the narrative:

The double loss will entail a double restoration: the wife must first be reunited with her husband and then he may return as a king to his people. Just as he has to earn her, so they—or their representative the steward—have to earn him.<sup>140</sup>

To this end, Orfeo returns in secret to his kingdom. The subsequent ‘testing’ scene represents as much a testing of faith as it does of loyalty, as Orfeo seeks to make amends for his self-exile, and ascertain whether he is forgiven; in a gesture demonstrating his humility, Orfeo dresses himself in a beggar’s clothing:

The beggers clothes he borwed anon  
And heng his harp his rigge opon,  
And went him into that cité  
That men might him bihold and se. (SO 499–502)

Thus disguised, he leaves Heurodis behind and walks, unknown, among his people. Heurodis’ absence here reinforces the cyclical nature of Orfeo’s homecoming: Orfeo leaves the city alone, in humble clothes, with only his harp; he returns similarly alone, in humble clothes, with only his harp. His appearance here is marked by both signs of change and of renewal; though Orfeo’s long beard establishes the passage of time, his harp signifies his true and essential identity.<sup>141</sup> There is a sense, also, that Heurodis’ presence would impede Orfeo’s purpose; not only would her unchanged appearance quickly dismantle his minstrel’s disguise, but she would also represent a dissonant note in subsequent re-establishing of male social bonds:

The hero’s tragedy has to do not merely with a single relationship (husband and wife) but rather with the loss of a broader social network of relationships [...] Orfeo experiences his exile as a permanent state, and the poet stresses his loss of community even more than his loss of a wife.<sup>142</sup>

It is this broader network of relationships that Orfeo now focuses on renewing.

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<sup>140</sup> Riddy, ‘The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*’, p. 7.

<sup>141</sup> Longworth, ‘*Sir Orfeo*, the Minstrel, and the Minstrel’s Art’, p.5.

<sup>142</sup> Battles, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity’, pp. 199–200.



Unlike Heurodis, the courtiers do not immediately recognise him. They are astonished by the marks that ten years of hardship have left upon him, but in ignorance of the minstrel's true identity:

Erls and barouns bold,  
Buriays and levedis him gun bihold.  
'Lo!' thai seyde, 'swiche a man!  
Hou long the here hongeth him opan!  
Lo! Hou his berd hongeth to his kne!  
He is y-clongen also a tre!' (SO 503–508)

Even when the steward recognises Orfeo's harp, he does not recognise the minstrel as his lost king: "Menstrel!" he seyde, "so mot thou thrive, / Where hadestow this harp, and hou?" (SO 532–533). Their reaction contrasts powerfully with that of Heurodis, whose sympathy is accompanied by recognition. The courtiers' great sorrow at Orfeo's supposed death reassures him that they are loyal; as such, he begins, tentatively, to identify himself. Orfeo's statement of his true identity takes place gradually, through a series of hypothetical statements:

'Yif ich were Orfeo the king,  
And hadde y-suffred ful yore  
In wildernis se miche sore,  
And hadde ywon mi quen o-wy  
Out of the lond of fairy,  
And hadde y-brought the levedi hende  
Right here to the tounes ende,  
And with a begger her in y-nome,  
And were mi-self hider y-come  
Poverlich to the, thus stille,  
For to asay thi godewille,  
And ich founde the thus trewe,  
Thou no schust it never rewe.  
Sikerlich, for love or ay,  
Thou schust be king after mi day;  
And yif thou of mi deth hadest ben blithe,  
Thou schust have voided, also swithe.' (SO 558–574)

Orfeo does not claim for himself his lost kingship; instead, he waits for the court to bestow it upon him. They do this unanimously in a moment that marks Orfeo's reintegration into society and brings the cyclical structure of the text to a close:

To chaumber thai ladde him als belive  
And bathed him and schaved his berd,  
And tired him as a king apert; (SO 587–89)

Orfeo is ritualistically dressed in the garments of kingship by his subjects. They accept him, once again, as their king, and the text emphasises Orfeo's reintegration into society; the many hands of the community tend to the individual, affirming, through their joint action, his 'belonging'. Orfeo's loss of identity is concluded; his periods of concealment and disguise are similarly ended. The text re-establishes the order present at the beginning; Orfeo is restored to his queen, his crown, and his court. The marks the wilderness has left upon him are undone, and the text concludes with 'Now King Orfeo newe coround is' (SO 593). This second crowning does not just represent a poetically pleasing symbol of renewal; it is a physical embodiment of Orfeo's second kingship. Orfeo's taking up of the pilgrim's garb does not constitute a 'disguise' but a sincere transformation of identity; as such, he has passed through the differing identities of king, pilgrim, and hermit.<sup>143</sup> His second crowning is a recognition of this; not just a symbol of rebirth, but also of a new beginning.

In these ways, clothing marks significantly the transformation of Orfeo's identity in the poem. Orfeo's donning of his pilgrim's *sclavin* marks a rejection not just of his kingdom but of his kinship; his simple hermit's garb is not a disguise until he arrives at the fairy court. Orfeo is transformed from hermit to adventurer and his self-exile is translated from penance to quest. His hermit's garb becomes a disguise that conceals his true identity and constructs a fictitious narrative. His king's clothes and his second crowning bring full circle this progression of identities. The narrative concludes with a return to the order established in the beginning of the narrative: Orfeo is once more a noble and beloved king, with his queen Heurodis by his side.

### *Changing and Unchanging Identities in the Middle English Breton Lais*

The following section presents a summary of my own original conclusions regarding identity, dress and visual display in the Breton *lai* texts examined within this chapter. This

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<sup>143</sup> Louis, 'The Significance of Orfeo's Self-Exile', p. 251.

chapter suggests that identity in the Breton *lais* is torn between the extremes of fluid, impressionable liminality or constant, unchanging rigidity. Three of the four texts here discussed are concerned with the effect of external influence on inner identity. Only *Sir Orfeo* discusses an internal transition, in which Orfeo voluntarily sets aside his former identity as king to take up the new one of hermit.

The two Constance texts, *Emaré* and *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, display identities that are immutable in the face of external influence. This comparative focus demonstrates that Florence's and Emaré's retention of their fine clothing is symbolic in nature and illustrates their internal immutability. Though Florence is stripped of the appearance of her nobility and virtue, this transformation is superficial in nature, and it does not affect or represent her identity. In this way, her identity is inviolate, though the narrative consistently challenges it with external and threatening masculine energies that seek to destabilise or destroy it. The *Florence* text embarks upon a repeated motif of divestment and renewal, which emphasises Florence's fortitude and unchanging identity: Mylys divests her of her name, position, and strips her naked, but her clothing provides the mechanism for her escape and is subsequently restored to her. Her fine clothing is then removed by a vengeful court but is returned in recognition of her innocence. Florence's rich clothing cannot be forcibly removed from her. Instead, it is removed only freely and by choice. Florence's return to Rome is marked by a reappearance of rich clothing, which emphasises her return to her homeland and the unchanging nature of her identity. Similarly, Emaré stands firm in the face of external pressures. She retains the courtliness that characterises her identity. In this way, the chapter demonstrates that her rich robe remains a visual representation of her inner identity and is constant throughout the trials she faces. In this way, this chapter demonstrates that material details of fabric and clothing exist to not only add texture and richness to the narrative, but also to illustrate the fortitude of Florence's identity in the face of transformative external forces that seek to influence it.

This chapter contrasts what I identify as these feminine images of consistency with the transitional and liminal masculine identities that I find in *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Orfeo*. This

chapter demonstrates that these masculine identities are subject to external influence and demonstrate inner transformative capabilities. In *Sir Launfal*, Launfal progresses in an orderly fashion from the human court to the fairy otherworld. He navigates successfully the corrupting influence of Guinevere but falls under the more positive influence of the fairy lady Tryamour. Though the narrative begins with him firmly positioned within the chivalric brotherhood, it concludes with his departure to the fairy otherworld. In some ways, Launfal remains a liminal figure: he returns annually to challenge the human court, presenting a visual reminder of the values they have lost. This chapter argues that Launfal's progression from Arthurian to Fairy courts is signposted and illustrated by his changing clothing. It is this signposted journey that it follows, first establishing the ways in which Launfal's alienation from courtly society is illustrated through his lack of appropriate clothing. It then examines the display of the fairy lady's heraldic devices in the human court, arguing that this demonstrates Launfal's inner transformation, and that his sudden gain of rich apparel exposes the superficiality of the human court, instigating his isolation and furthering his inner transition from the courtly world to the fairy otherworld. This chapter then draws a connection between this transitional narrative and Orfeo's rejections of his crown and of his kingship, who instead dresses in pauper's rags.

I argue that, in accordance with the disguise definition established by Jane Bliss, this scene does not constitute a genuine instance of disguise, but instead an instance of transformation.<sup>144</sup> This chapter suggests that a reflective parallel or echo exists between this initial 'true' transformation and the two subsequent transformation moments that appear later. It argues that the second transformation moment is a 'false' echo to the 'true' initial transition of that issues in the hermit identity, which is the minstrel disguise he later adopts at the fairy king's court. It argues that the third and final transformation moment is a 'true' echoing of the original. Orfeo's subsequent return to his people reinforces his kingship, and, united, his subjects dress him openly in kingly garments. Orfeo's journey is, therefore, not linear but cyclical. Unlike Launfal, he progresses from the human world to the fairy world and back again. His journey of

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<sup>144</sup> A discussion of Bliss's distinction between incognito and disguise can be found in *Naming and Namelessness*, pp. 36–39.

transformation is not subject to external influence but instead inner transition, in which he surrenders his identity as king, transforming himself into a hermit. Upon seeing by chance his lost queen, he transforms himself once more back into king again. In reclaiming his queen and returning to his city, Orfeo regains his kingship once more.

This chapter therefore demonstrates that in each instance, transformative and immutable identities are illustrated through dress and visual display. It demonstrates that the unyielding fortitude that characterises Constance heroines is established through Florence and Emaré's rich clothing. Through the external loss of position and social identity, the robes remain constant visual representations of their internal immutability. Similarly, it argues that clothing illustrates and signposts the transforming identities of both Laufal and Orfeo. This chapter, therefore, demonstrates that identities in the Breton *lais* can be both transformative and static, and in each instance, clothing plays a central role in establishing visually internal issues of identity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Northern Gawain Romances*

Gawain occupies a prominent position in English medieval romance: ‘all the glamour, mystery, and moral authority that chivalry might command were invested for late medieval audiences in the charismatic figure of Sir Gawain.’<sup>1</sup> Gawain is linked by blood to several of the Round Table knights; he is Arthur’s nephew, Perceval’s kinsman, and Gingalain’s father. The tensions surrounding Gawain in the English tradition are for the most part chivalric and courtly. This reflects the earlier French tradition that sees Gauvain as ‘the embodiment of all chivalric virtues’;<sup>2</sup> Chrétien’s Gauvain is ‘*courtois*, makes love readily, is helpful to the afflicted and unfortunate, intrepid, and ready to reveal his identity’.<sup>3</sup> In the later French tradition, and especially the prose romances, the character of Gauvain undergoes a transformation characterised by Keith Busby as a ‘complete degradation’; Gauvain is in *La Queste del saint Graal* ‘an unrepentant sinner’, while in the Prose *Tristan* he is an ‘out-and-out villain’.<sup>4</sup> A small number of English Gawain romances demonstrate a degree of this later characterisation. In *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*, Gawain’s amorous energies disrupt social and courtly conventions; they are, however, legitimised, ultimately, through the text’s celebratory and unrestrained performance of chivalric combat. It is far more usual, however, in the English tradition for Gawain to be imbued with several courtly and chivalric qualities. In *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, Gawain’s fine knowledge of *courtoisie* is tempered by diplomatic insight; he counteracts the rash actions of Sir Kay and occasionally Arthur.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fanni Bogdanow, ‘The Character of Gauvain in the Thirteenth-Century Prose Romances’, in *Gawain: A Casebook*, ed. by Raymond H. Thompson and Keith Busby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 173–182, at p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Nitze, ‘The Character of Gauvain in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes’, *Modern Philology*, 50/4 (1953), 219–225.

<sup>4</sup> Keith Busby, ‘Diverging Traditions of Gauvain in Some of the Later Old French Verse Romances’, in *Gawain: A Casebook*, ed. by Raymond H. Thompson and Keith Busby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 139–156, at p. 140.

The northern English Gawain romances date from the fifteenth century onwards, surviving primarily in the Percy folio.<sup>5</sup> *The Greene Knight* survives along with other northern Gawain romances such as *The Turk and Sir Gawain*, *The Carl of Carlisle*, *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*, *King Arthur and King Cornwall* in British Library Additional MS 27879 (The Percy Folio). They are united by a shared geographical location and thematic interest.<sup>6</sup> This chapter selects as its focus three texts that are less widely-discussed within scholarship. It argues that in each of them, dress plays a central role in establishing identity through visual display. This chapter examines the extensive use of opulent dress in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, *The Knightly Tale of Sir Golagros and Gawain* and *The Greene Knight*. I argue that the northern Gawain romances are predominantly chivalric in their focus, frequently utilising arming rituals and opulent visual display to affirm courtly values and identities. In *The Awntyrs off Arthur* and the closely-related *Golagros and Gawain*, substantial and precise depictions of opulent sartorial detail represent the means through which chivalric and courtly values are evinced. In the less descriptive *The Greene Knight*, this appears in relation to arming rituals. In this section, brief comparison is made to *The Greene Knight's* much more well-established in scholarship analogue, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. This chapter demonstrates that the Northern Gawain romances utilise visual display to present a meditative discussion of courtly identity and values.

### ***The Awntyrs off Arthur***

*The Awntyrs off Arthur* contains two distinct episodes that form together a diptych structure; the two sections are of an almost perfectly equal size.<sup>7</sup> The first section sees Guinevere and Gawain encounter the ghostly apparition of Guinevere's mother; the second

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<sup>5</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> A. C. Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems', *The Review of English Studies*, 33/131 (1982), 247–261, at p. 251.

deals with a territorial dispute between Gawain and the Scottish knight Sir Galeron.<sup>8</sup> The text is written in the alliterative style, with a distinctive thirteen-line stanza; it belongs to a ‘school’ of thirteen-line alliterative poets in Scotland and the north of England.<sup>9</sup> Andrew Breeze<sup>10</sup> and Andrew R. Walkling situate the text geographically.<sup>11</sup> The text survives in four separate manuscripts that originate in different regions of England. These are: Bodleian MS Douce 324, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, Ireland Blackburn MS and Lambeth Palace MS 491.<sup>12</sup> The date of composition is difficult to precisely determine, though it is usually placed within the very late fourteenth to early fifteenth century. In his critical edition of the text, Ralph Hanna places the date of composition within the range of 1400–1430.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hahn suggests that the large number of surviving manuscripts, and the variety of the regions in which they originate, indicate the *Awntyrs* enjoyed moderate popularity in the fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The *Awntyrs* is linked with the other Northern Gawain romances and particularly to *Golagros and Gawain*; it is connected also with the chronicle tradition.<sup>15</sup> Richard J. Moll connects it specifically with the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*,<sup>16</sup> while Leah Haught compares the *Awntyrs*’ presentation of Guinevere in

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<sup>8</sup> For an exploration of the text’s nationalist themes, see: Randy P. Schiff, ‘Borderland Subversions: Anti-imperial Energies in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* and *Golagros and Gawane*’, *Speculum*, 84/3 (2009), 613–632.

<sup>9</sup> Thorlac Turville-Petre, “‘Summer Sunday’, “De Tribus Regibus Mortuis”, and “The Awntyrs off Arthur”: Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza’, *The Review of English Studies*, 25/97 (1974), 1–14, at p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Breeze, “The Awntyrs off Arthur”, Caerphilly, Oysterlow, and Wexford’, *Arthuriana*, 9/4 (1999), 63–68.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew R. Walkling, ‘The Problem of “Rondolesette Halle” in “The Awntyrs off Arthur”’, *Studies in Philology*, 100/2 (2003), 105–122.

<sup>12</sup> For more details on the manuscripts and locations of their provenance, see Rosamund Allen, ‘Place-Names in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*: Corruption, Conjecture, Coincidence,’ in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 181–198; Ralph Hanna III, ‘The Growth of Robert Thornton’s Books’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 40 (1987), 51–61; ‘The Scribe of Huntington HM 114’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 42 (1989), 120–133; Thomas Howard Crofts, ‘The Occasion of the “Morte Arthure”: Textual History and Marginal Decoration in the Thornton MS’, *Arthuriana*, 20/2 (2010), 5–27.

<sup>13</sup> For further discussion regarding the date of composition, see the full account given in Ralph Hanna III’s critical edition, *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyn: An Edition Based on Bodleian Library MS. Douce 324* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), pp. 50–2, as well as the brief discussion in Robert J. Gates’ critical edition, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne* (Pennsylvania, PA: Robert J. Gates, 1969), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 169.

<sup>15</sup> Jeanne T. Mathewson, ‘The Displacement of the feminine in “Golagros and Gawaine” and the “Awntyrs off Arthure”’, *Arthurian Interpretations*, 1/2 (1987), 23–28.

<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).



relation to her depiction in the chronicle tradition.<sup>17</sup> The *Awntyrs* also finds analogues in other alliterative poems that share the thirteen-line stanza structure: *Summer Sunday*, *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*, and *The Awntyrs off Arthur* are thematically and structurally linked,<sup>18</sup> while *The Trental of Gregory* constitutes a potential source or ‘close analogue’ of the Guinevere-ghost episode.<sup>19</sup> The complexity of the language and the text’s polished appearance indicate that it was written, rather than composed orally.<sup>20</sup> Several editions of the text have been published in recent decades.<sup>21</sup> Early critical responses to the poem reflect a frustration with the poem’s perceived lack of cohesion, as the two episodes were initially thought to be unrelated.<sup>22</sup> Ralph Hanna III suggests that the text is comprised of two separate pieces.<sup>23</sup> More recently, A. C. Spearing identifies in the text a ‘diptych’ structure that positions the two episodes as connected:

The two episodes, like the two leaves of a diptych, are indeed separate and self-contained, but there are numerous links between them, and when put together they incite the reader to participate in the creation of a meaning that is larger than either possesses in isolation.<sup>24</sup>

A. C. Spearing’s diptych interpretation is accepted in Thomas Hahn’s modern edition of the text.<sup>25</sup> It appears also in the work of Richard J. Moll,<sup>26</sup> Leah Haught and many others.<sup>27</sup> Critical interest in the text has rapidly increased in recent decades. More recently, an in-depth discussion of the diptych appears in the work of Brett Roscoe,<sup>28</sup> while Alexander J. Zawacki presents a modification of this diptych view, suggesting the text’s dual structure is comparable to a

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<sup>17</sup> Haught, ‘Gender and Genre’.

<sup>18</sup> Turville-Petre, ‘Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza’, pp. 1–14.

<sup>19</sup> Turville-Petre, ‘Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza’, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> Robert J. Gates ed., *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyne: A Critical Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); Ralph Hanna ed., *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyn: An Edition Based on Bodleian Library MS. Douce 324* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974); H. Phillips ed., *The Awntyrs of Arthure, Lancaster Modern Spelling Texts, 1* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Department of English, 1988); Stephen H. A. Shepherd ed., *Middle English Romances* (New York, NY: Norton, 1995); Thomas Hahn ed., *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Kathryn Hume, “‘Amis and Amiloun’ and the Aesthetics of Middle English Romance”, *Studies in Philology*, 70/1 (1973), 19–41.

<sup>23</sup> Hanna, *The Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyn*, pp. 11–24.

<sup>24</sup> Spearing, ‘Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems’, p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 169–175.

<sup>26</sup> Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England*.

<sup>27</sup> Leah Haught, ‘Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in “The Awntyrs off Arthur”’, *Arthuriana*, 20/1 (2010), 3–24.

<sup>28</sup> Brett Roscoe, ‘Reading the Diptych: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, Medium and Memory’, *Arthuriana*, 24/1 (2014), 49–65.

cadaver tomb.<sup>29</sup> More recent scholarship, such as that of Jean E. Jost, has examined the significance of space within the text.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Andrew Murray Richmond's recently-published article focuses on the text's use of water.<sup>31</sup> Rosamund Allen has worked extensively on this text and has pointed to some of the tensions relating to Guinevere and other character's appearance, highlighting the significance of the text's use of visual display in her article, '*The Awntyrs off Arthure: Portraits and Property*'.<sup>32</sup> Most significantly for my focus here, Raluca Radulescu examines notions of the 'Other' and belonging within the chivalric community in relation to a number of Middle English romances, including *The Awntyrs off Arthur*.<sup>33</sup> This chapter argues that the text's emphasis on rich clothing and visual display functions as a means through which alienated and dissonant elements are recognised and incorporated within the chivalric unit of the courtly community. In this way, though there has been a substantial increase in critical attention within recent years, my own explorative discussion of the significance of dress and identity has not previously been undertaken.

The diptych structure adds cohesion and coherence to the narrative, facilitating the exploration of thematically connected but disparate episodes. The textual imagery is richly evoked and contains numerous detailed descriptions of clothing; the opening stanza displays immediately 'the lapidary brilliance and density' of the poem's style.<sup>34</sup> The alliteration is dense and the language specialised. 'Fayre by the fermesones in frithes and felles' (AOA 8) demonstrates that the textual alliterative choices are made deliberately; 'fermesones' was a

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander J. Zawacki, 'A Dark Mirror: Death and The Cadaver Tomb in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*', *Arthuriana*, 27/2 (2017), 87–101.

<sup>30</sup> Jean E. Jost, 'Marshy Spaces in the Middle English *Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne: Physical and Spiritual Territory*', in *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: The Spatial Turn in Premodern Studies*, ed. by Albrecht Classen with the collaboration of Christopher R. Clason, *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* 9 (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 589–606.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Murray Richmond, 'Fluid Boundaries in The *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Sir Isumbras*', *Open Library of Humanities*, 1/4 (2018), p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> See: Rosamund Allen, 'Some Sceptical Observations on the Editing of the *Awntyrs off Arthure*', in *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), pp. 5–25; '*The Awntyrs off Arthure: Jestis and Joustis*', in *Romance Reading on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative presented to Maldwyn Mills* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 129–142; '*The Awntyrs off Arthure: Portraits and Property*', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 26 (2000), 3–25.

<sup>33</sup> Raluca Radulescu, 'Liminality and Gender in Middle English Arthurian Romance', in *Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Beatrice Fannon, *New Casebooks* (London: Macmillan, 2016), pp. 30–44.

<sup>34</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 173.

technical term for the season during which the hunting of male deer was prohibited.<sup>35</sup> The text is densely-packed with carefully-chosen stock phrases, such as ‘the wlonkest in wedes’ (AOA 9) and ‘as the boke tells’ (AOA 2), which imbue the scene with a sense of grandeur.

In the tyme of Arthur an aunter bytydde,  
By the Turne Wathelan, as the boke telles,  
Whan he to Carlele was comen, that conquerour kydde,  
With dukes and dussiperes that with the dere dwelles.  
To hunte at the herdes that longe had ben hydde,  
On a day thei hem dight to the depe delles,  
To fall of the femailes in forest were frydde,  
Fayre by the fermesones in frithes and felles. (AOA 1–8)

The text emphasises the unity of the court; identified initially only as ‘thei’ (AOA 6), the hunters are presented with a single-mindedness of purpose. The practice of hunting represented for medieval elites a ritualistic affirmation of solidarity, and the text unifies the court further through its use of language and perspective.<sup>36</sup> Individual identities are gradually distinguished from the homogenous ‘thei’ of the hunting court as the narrator adopts the perspective of a distant gazer on this scene. Simultaneously, the generalised unspecificity of the stock-phrase ‘wlonkest in wedes’ (AOA 9) is refined into individual descriptions. Reflecting their rank, the King and Queen emerge first:

Thus to wodearn thei went, the wlonkest in wedes,  
Bothe the Kyng and the Quene,  
And al the doughti bydene. (AOA 9–11)

Gawain appears next: ‘Sir Gawayn, gayest on grene, / Dame Gaynour he ledes’ (AOA 13). Only here, in the stanza’s final lines, are individual names and characterisations rendered from the homogenous mass of the court.

These images are then repeated with more detail in the following stanza, as Guinevere and Gawain are described more fully. Guinevere’s description displays a wealth of descriptive detail. Like the richly ornamented alliterative text, Guinevere is densely covered. She presents a dazzling display, in which a multitude of colours and details create an overwhelming effect:

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<sup>35</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 203.

<sup>36</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 132.

Thus Sir Gawayn the gay Gaynour he ledes,  
 In a gleterand gide that glemed full gay -  
 With riche ribaynes reversset, ho so right redes,  
 Rayled with rybees of riall array;  
 Her hode of a hawe huwe, ho that here hede hedes,  
 Of pillour, of palwerk, of perré to pay;  
 Schurde in a short cloke that the rayne shedes,  
 Set over with saffres sothely to say,  
 With saffres and seladynes set by the sides;  
 Here sadel sette of that ilke,  
 Saude with sambutes of silke;  
 On a mule as the mylke,  
 Gaili she glides.

(AOA 14–26)

‘Gide’, a general term for gown, appears consistently in the text; Galeron’s lady also appears in a gide that is ‘glorious and gay’ (AOA 366). Though the text does not provide any specific details as to the type or fashion of the garment, Guinevere’s ornamentation is emphasised. She is concealed under a mass of articles; her ribbons are richly arranged to catch the eye of any ‘that here hede hedes’ (AOA 16). She wears a bluish-grey hood (‘of a hawe huwe’ AOA 18).<sup>37</sup> Blue was a popular colour during the late medieval period, particularly among women, who resisted the fashion for black clothing longer than men did.<sup>38</sup> Red hoods were however more common, both among the populace and in medieval romance: peasant women wore blue woollen gowns with red hoods;<sup>39</sup> Arthur, in the *Alliterative Morte Athure*, wears a ‘hood of scarlet full rich’.<sup>40</sup> The dullness of the colour, too, is unusual; medieval elites preferred bold, strong colours, with the richer colours indicating the quality of the dye and, consequentially, the wearer’s wealth. The hood itself is, however, richly adorned with fur, rich cloth, and jewels, indicating Guinevere’s status (AOA 19). The ‘short cloke’ sheds the rain; this is either because it is almost entirely ‘set over’ (AOA 21) or (‘covered’) with sapphires, or because it has been subjected to waterproofing methods. The medieval process of rendering a garment waterproof by waxing was prohibited to most of the population due to the high cost of wax; the less

<sup>37</sup> Possible variation of spelling for ‘haue’; glossed in the *MED* as ‘Bluish or gray’.  
 <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED20126>>.

<sup>38</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, pp. 71–74.

<sup>39</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> Larry D. Benson and Edward E. Foster eds., *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, in *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), at line 3459.

effective felting process known as fulling was used instead.<sup>41</sup> The effectiveness of the cloak's waterproofing suggests that this has been waxed, indicating Guinevere's wealth. Similarly, there is some historical precedent for Guinevere's decorated saddle, though the precious stones seem to be a hyperbolic feature of romance; thirteenth-century Castilian sumptuary laws prohibited saddles ornamented with gold embroidery and various other gold materials.<sup>42</sup> The silk covering is not as unusual; saddles used by medieval elites were often covered with rich ornamentation and luxury textiles such as silks and velvets.<sup>43</sup>

Guinevere's gown is richly adorned; it glitters with jewels. These precious stones on Guinevere's cloak are described in detail. She is 'rayled with rybees of riall array' (AOA 17). There is some ambiguity as to where, precisely, the rubies are located; perhaps they adorn the 'gleterand gide' (AOA 15), or they are attached to her 'ribaynes reversset' (AOA 16) in a way that evokes Arthur's topaz ornaments (AOA 335). The characterisation of the gown as 'gleterand' (AOA 15) seems to indicate that the rubies are placed on the gown, though this could also reference the high amount of gold (AOA 26) present in her costume. The text here emphasises what the eye sees; it lingers on the eye-catching details of the ribbons and the glittering gemstones, describing in some detail Guinevere's outer garments, accoutrements and paraphernalia. It establishes the gown's colour and effect (it 'glemed ful gay' AOA 15), but the type of gown is unknown, unseen, and unnoticed – instead, the text emphasises only effect: the gown glitters. The precious stones that adorn her hood and gown are referred to by name, reflecting their significance in this scheme; they are clearly visible and identifiable. The text avoids entirely elements that are unseen and unknowable. The cut or colour of Guinevere's gown is unseen beneath her cloak; so too are her face and hair and, as such, the text does not describe them. The passage here constructs deliberately a speculative perspective, emphasising the performative nature of Guinevere's visual display. The opulent details are described in full: the text self-consciously facilitates this speculative perspective. Guinevere's hidden face does

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<sup>41</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p.45.

<sup>42</sup> The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 'A Thirteenth-Century Castilian Sumptuary Law', *The Business History Review*, 37/1/2, (1963), 98–100.

<sup>43</sup> Maria Hayward, 'Saddles', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 471–472, at p. 471.

not represent an attempt to evade this gaze; instead, her hood provides protection against the inclement weather (the short cloak ‘the rayne shedes’ *AOA* 20). Guinevere’s appearance is indicative of the self-conscious pageantry of chivalric societies; she invites with her opulence the gazing perspective of on-lookers.

Crucial to this display are the large number of precious stones: each is mentioned specifically by name, not just indicating Guinevere’s wealth and royal position but also holding significance for the subsequent narrative events. The identification of the gems by name allows for comparisons with medieval lapidaries, with a surprising number of correspondences. Guinevere’s rubies are ‘of riall array’ (*AOA* 17); not only are they magnificent (and therefore suitable for royalty), but they are, through their colour, suggestive of royalty. Red was the colour of power in medieval Europe; it was particularly associated with royalty after Charlemagne’s red clothing during his coronation in 800.<sup>44</sup> Like the colour red, the ruby was considered superlatively excellent; in medieval lapidaries, it is ‘lord of all precyous stones’.<sup>45</sup> The ruby bestows the wearer with honour, grace, popularity, and virtue, perhaps reflecting Guinevere’s current position in Arthur’s court: ‘When the wearer comes among men all shall bear him honour and grace and be joyful of his presence.’<sup>46</sup> Several lapidaries draw a link between the light of the ruby and the light of Christ. It possesses powerful restorative qualities, and is particularly associated with ‘clene livyng’; ‘it driueth away all taches and ill confitions.’<sup>47</sup> Like the jewels covering Emaré’s rich robe, Guinevere’s rich clothing grants the wearer with magical and restorative properties. The ruby here is imbued with the positive symbolism of the colour red. Its fiery quality evokes the divine love represented in the Pentecostal tongues of fire; it is of ‘so gentle coulor lyke a burning cole’ and ‘it is saydyt this stone is in ye fleme of paradice’.<sup>48</sup> Guinevere’s rubies invest her with protection against the ghost, whose torments, through hellfire, are the opposite of paradise; the ghost glows with a hellish light and burns ‘as a

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<sup>44</sup> For more details, see: chapter one, ‘Colours’; Pastoureau, *Red*, pp.71–72.

<sup>45</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 21, 41, 123.

<sup>46</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, pp. 21–22, 124.

<sup>48</sup> Pastoureau, *Red*, p.61; Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 21, 41, 124.

belle' 'In bras and in brymston' (AOA 188). With its red colour, the ruby is emblematic of the divine love manifest in *caritas*; it represents the redemptive quality imbuing the ghost's interactions with her daughter, leading to the warning of the ghost to not succumb to 'luf paramour' (AOA 213), the resolution of Guinevere not to do so (AOA 235), and the final masses for her soul (AOA 703–08).

Guinevere's cape is covered with sapphires 'gracious & gode'; 'all ben virtuous & ful of grace.'<sup>49</sup> Like the ruby, the sapphire is connected with royalty; it 'is a ful comly stone vppon a Kynges fynger'.<sup>50</sup> It is 'emblen to the clene colour of heuen', and 'Who that sapphire beholdeth he shulde be in memoire of the blisse of heuen, & in gode memoire of hym-selfe', evoking medieval colour conceptions of blue as a celestial colour.<sup>51</sup> Some lapidaries refer to restorative qualities, such as the ability to cure poison and the staunching of blood; the Peterborough and the Sloane lapidaries include the curing of poison, which is absent in the London lapidary.<sup>52</sup> The sapphire also sets free the imprisoned and bestows the wearer with good counsel, wit and clean-living.<sup>53</sup> Most significantly, it treats or guards against ailments of the spirit, mind and soul; it 'comforteth the body & the membres'.<sup>54</sup> The sapphire also cures 'decencoun', guards against witchcraft, and is effective against infection; it 'shal cole the body of the hote sekenes', healing also 'biles and swellings'.<sup>55</sup> This suggests the burning of the ghost, whose moral corruption appears as a kind of infection and whose sunken and glowing eyes evoke a fever: 'With eighen holked ful holle / That gloed as the gledes' (AOA 116–117).

Variations of spelling mean that the 'seladynes' that also adorn Guinevere's cape are difficult to define with precision. Most likely a kind of chalcedony, this gem is an unusual addition to the text's use of otherwise fairly popular jewels; the materials most frequently used

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<sup>49</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 22.

<sup>51</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, pp 22–23.

<sup>52</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 102, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 22, 120.

in medieval jewellery were diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds and balas rubies.<sup>56</sup> The lapidaries suggest that this stone originates in the belly of a swallow; it consists of two varieties: black (in some cases blue) and red. The London, North Midland, Ashmole, Peterborough and Sloane lapidaries reference the swallow origin myth; the colours are given as black and red except the Sloane, which describes its colours as black and blue.<sup>57</sup> The red kind guards against madness, and, like the sapphire, also imbues the wearer with fair speech and the love of men; the black helps the wearer achieve great things. Like the sapphire, both kinds are efficacious against the ‘hote sekenesse’, or infection.<sup>58</sup> This repeats the sapphire and ruby’s qualities; the ruby and the chalcedony render the wearer well-loved, while the sapphire and the chalcedony guard against witchcraft and cure infection. The protection against madness looks towards the ghost, who ‘stemered, hit stonayde, hit stode as a stone, / Hit marred, hit memered, hit mused for madde’ (AOA 109–110). With the promise of ‘a myllion of Masses’ (AOA 236) Guinevere ‘cleanses’ her mother’s soul and brings her comfort. Similarly, the ruby imbues its wearer with the qualities of honour, grace and popularity; these qualities correlate broadly with Guinevere’s presentation through the text. The *Awntyrs* does not reflect the negative depiction of Guinevere found in other texts such as *Sir Launfal*. The ghost is associated with burning: she ‘glowed as a glede’ (AOA 118); ‘In bras and in brymston I bren as a belle’ (AOA 188); the gemstones that adorn Guinevere’s garments are effective in counteracting this burning.

These associations foreshadow Guinevere’s encounter with her mother’s ghost, as Guinevere and Gawain are separated from the hunting party. The forest of Ipomadon and the Fere’s courtly wooing, and the forest of the *Awntyrs*’ courtly procession, now disappears; it becomes at once a venue for the unknown and unfamiliar.<sup>59</sup> The text here repeats imagery used in the description of Guinevere. Guinevere gleams and shines ‘al in gleterand golde, gayly ho glides’ (AOA 27), while her deceased mother ‘al glowed as a glede the goste there ho glides,’

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<sup>56</sup> David Humphrey, ‘Jewellery’, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 295–298, at p. 297.

<sup>57</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 32.

<sup>59</sup> For more on the significance of the forest, see Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p.180.



(AOA 118). A *memento mori* mirror image is constructed, in which Guinevere is richly dressed and beautiful and the ghost is naked and gruesome:

‘I was radder of rode then rose in the ron,  
My ler as the lelé lonched on hight.  
Now am I a graceles gost, and grisly I gron;  
With Lucyfer in a lake logh am I light.  
Thus am I lyke to Lucefere: takis witnes by mee!  
For al thi fressh foroure,  
Muse on my mirroure;  
For, king and emperour,  
Thus dight shul ye be.’ (AOA 161–169)

The relationship between the living Guinevere and her dead mother is established through dress. Like the Arthurian court, Guinevere’s mother dressed finely, in ‘fressh foroure’ (AOA 166); this was an expensive fur lining made of several skins that were sewn together.<sup>60</sup> Both the nature of the fur and the high quantity required for its construction render the *furrure* of high monetary value. This article illustrates the wealth and high status that Guinevere’s mother once enjoyed; despite this wealth, she appears naked but for a grave-shroud. This comparison contextualises the expansive descriptions of opulent visual display that appear throughout the text; the splendour of the Arthurian court appears liminal and transient. Serpents and toads cling to her, and she glows with a ghostly light (AOA 117). The alliteration imbues the description with a rough and forceful power, and the description is richly evocative; ‘Umbeclipped in a cloude of cleth yngun clere, / Serkeled with serpentes all aboute the sides’ (AOA 119–120). As in *Tribus Regibus Mortuis*, a distinction is drawn between the naked dead and the richly-dressed living.<sup>61</sup> Through the lack of appropriate clothing, the text denies the ghost’s personhood: ‘Hit varied, hit wayment as a woman, / But on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde’ (AOA 107–108). Though the ghost’s actions resemble the actions of a human (it wails ‘as a woman’), it is not one; the ghost is consistently referred as ‘hit’ (it) throughout the text. The lack of clothing separates the ghost from the living, establishing its non-personhood: ‘But on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde’ (AOA 108). The *Awntyrs* preserves the *memento mori* aspect of this encounter found in its textual analogues, emphasising with a repetition of actions and

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<sup>60</sup> Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 219.

<sup>61</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 125.

appearance the connection between Guinevere and the ghost. “Alas! Now kindeles my care; / I gloppen and I grete!” (AOA 91) wails the ghost; and ‘then gloppenet and grete Gaynour the gay’ (AOA 92). These repeated phrases are found throughout the poem and frequently link the stanzas together.<sup>62</sup> The ghost echoes with its hideous appearance the beauty of Guinevere’s youth; ‘appearing as a degraded version of her former self, the ghost’s naked, disfigured façade ominously mimics the earlier description of Guinevere’s youthful beauty.’<sup>63</sup> Guinevere and the ghost are connected through the text’s concern with what Leah Haught identifies as ‘dangerously disruptive sexuality’.<sup>64</sup> The ghost’s sins are in the past; the toads and serpents that cling to it represent a visual representation of the ghost’s “luf paramour” (AOA 213); Haught here finds that ‘serpents and toads have a well documented association with demons who, although detained by baptism, may reclaim the sinner after death’.<sup>65</sup> Guinevere’s adulterous energies are established by the alliterative tradition and in the ghost’s prophecy, though ‘any specific association of Guenevere with dangerously disruptive sexuality must be made by audiences already familiar with the larger Arthurian corpus.’<sup>66</sup>

Here, the ghost demonstrates an omniscient perspective, displaying an awareness of Guinevere’s subsequent adultery and the death of Arthur. When asked by Gawain “How shal we fare [...] that fonden to fight” (AOA 261), she replies:

‘Your King is to covetous, I warne the sir knight.  
 May no man stry him with strenght while his whele stondes.  
 Whan he is in his magesté, moost in his might,  
 He shal light ful lowe on the sesondes.  
 And this chivalrous Kinge chef shall a chaunce:  
 Falsely Fortune in fight,  
 That wonderfull wheelwryght,  
 Shall make lordes to light -  
 Take witnesse by Fraunce.’ (AOA 265–273)

The ghost’s warning is reminiscent of lady Fortune in *Summer Sunday* and of the *Awntyrs off Arthur* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* in its allusion to conquests of France, Tuscany and

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<sup>62</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Haught, ‘Gender and Genre’, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Haught, ‘Gender and Genre’, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Haught, ‘Gender and Genre’, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Haught, ‘Gender and Genre’, p. 12.

subsequent disasters faced by the Arthurian community and to the Fortune motif.<sup>67</sup> The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* also adds a brief dream of a dragon and a bear that echoes, in its up-and-down movement, the revolving of Fortune's wheel.<sup>68</sup> *The Awntyrs off Arthur* transfers much of this significance to the ghostly encounter; Guinevere's mother warns that 'Whan [Arthur] is in his magesté, moost in his might, / He shal light ful lowe on the sesondes' (AOA 267–268). There is a distance between the calamitous vision of the future and the present splendour of the Arthurian court; Mordred's brief appearance playing underneath a table (AOA 309–312) signifies that this time is still some way off. The irrevocability of fate gives urgency to the ghost's words; according to her unearthly perspective, the doom of the Arthurian court is already occurring. In the context of this destined impermanence, the Arthurian glory simply serves to hasten the court's inevitable doom. These tensions are emphasised in the figures of the richly-dressed Guinevere and the naked ghost. The ghost's blackened body illustrates the futility and transitory nature of this ritualistic courtly display; Guinevere, now magnificently and opulently dressed, will also soon too be a bare and blackened figure.

This passage contains thematic and textual links to several other sources. Turville-Petre identifies *The Trental of Gregory*, *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*, and *Summer Sunday* as close analogues of this episode.<sup>69</sup> In *The Trental of Gregory*, the deceased mother of Pope Gregory appears before him to bemoan her former sins and to ask him to pray for her.<sup>70</sup> Gregory then has a second vision of 'a fulle swete sight' (TOG 146); his mother appears to him as a 'comely lady dressed and dyght' (TOG 146). Though *The Trental of Gregory* does not deal substantially with clothing, it echoes the *Awntyrs* in deliberately juxtaposing the appearance of the living and the dead. Both Guinevere's mother and Gregory's mother detail their torments in purgatory.

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<sup>67</sup> See: W. R. J. Barron, 'Bruttene Deorling: An Arthur for Every Age', in *The Fortunes of King Arthur*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 47–65, at p. 61.

<sup>68</sup> Siân Echard, "'For Mortals are Moved by these Conditions": Fate, Fortune and Providence in Geoffrey of Monmouth', in *The Fortunes of King Arthur*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 13–28, at pp. 16–17.

<sup>69</sup> Turville-Petre, 'Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza', 1–14.

<sup>70</sup> For critical editions of this text, see 'The Trental of St. Gregory', in Stephen H. A. Shepherd ed., *Middle English Romances*, as well as Albert Kauffmann ed., *Trentalle Sancti Gregorii: eine mittelhochdeutsche Legende in zwei Texten, Erlanger Beiträge zur englischen Philologie 3* (Erlangen: A. Deichertsche, 1889; repr. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1970). All subsequent references to the *Trental of Gregory* (TOG) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

Guinevere's mother 'in bras and in brymston I bren as a belle' (AOA 188); Gregory's mother burns 'in byttyr paynes' (TOG 72). The image of burning also appears in the ghost's appearance. As in the *Awntyrs*, the text juxtaposes darkness and burning fire in the ghost's appearance. Gregory's mother 'Aftur a fend ferde her feture; / All ragged and rente, elenge and evell' (TOG 55–56). Gregory's mother now burns in reflection of her deception during her earthly existence: her 'Mowthe and neose, eres and yes / Brennde all full of brennyng glyes' (TOG 57–58). After she is redeemed, light and clarity replace these images of fire and darkness:

A comely lady dressed and dyght,  
 That all þeworlde was not so bryȝt,  
 Comely crowned as a qwene,  
 Tweyn angellys ladde her hem between.  
 That nyȝ for joye he swooned right. (TOG 147–152)

Repetition here conveys the image of the passage; the emphasis is transferred from 'brennde' to 'comely'. Through prayer, Gregory's mother is redeemed.

This passage also finds an analogue in *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*; this is a fifteenth-century alliterative poem attributed to John Audelay, a Shropshire priest. The text survives in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302.<sup>71</sup> In it, three kings are separated from their hunting party; in the forest, they encounter the corpses of their dead fathers. They rebuke them for forgetting their souls and remind them that earthly life is fleeting. Afterwards, the three living kings found a church and inscribe the story of their ghostly encounter on its walls. Like *The Trental of Gregory*, both texts juxtapose living progeny with dead parents, emphasising the transience of life and the necessity of physical intercession on the part of the living for the dead. The kings are nameless, but identifiable through their accoutrements:

The furst kyng he had care, • his hert ovr cast,  
 Fore he knew the cros of the cloth • that coverd the cyst (DTRM 53–55)

The living king recognises the cross and the cloth that cover his dead father's chest. Unlike the *Awntyrs off Athur* and *The Trental of Gregory*, in which the opulent dress of the living is

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<sup>71</sup> John the Blind Audelay, *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*, in *Poems and Carols: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302*, ed. by Susanna Greer Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009). All subsequent references to *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis* (DTRM) will be taken from this edition.

contrasted with the bare body of deceased, the *Three Dead Kings* gives no description of the three living. This is unusual, as the motif in visual art often emphasises the lavish clothing of the living.<sup>72</sup>

*Summer Sunday* also contains thematic and textual links to the *Awntyrs* ghost episode.<sup>73</sup> This fourteenth-century alliterative poem survives in a single manuscript (MS. Laud Misc. 108).<sup>74</sup> The narrator of this dream vision experiences during a hunt a vision of Lady Fortune and her wheel. The narrator passes deeper into the forest, where he has a vision of ‘a wifman wiþ a wonder whel weue with þewynde & wond’ (SS 35). Lady Fortune appears with her wheel; she is a ‘loue loker leudei’ (SS 54) and is finely dressed in ‘worþlich wede’ (SS 55).<sup>75</sup> Her beauty is emphasised; she is ‘so ferly fair of face’ (SS 56) ‘blisful burde’ (SS 58). Though Fortune appears in ‘worþlich wede’ (SS 55), only one detail of her clothing is described: she wears a gold girdle that ‘gloud as a glede’ (SS 57). Lady Fortune’s gold girdle finds an analogue in the golden girdle that appears in *Wigalois*. In this thirteenth-century German text, Gawain and his son Wigalois acquire Fortune’s belt that confers ‘valour and well-being on its possessor.’<sup>76</sup> The belt appears in the text as follows:

den gürtel hât diu künigîn;  
der rieme was alsô getân  
daz ich iu niht gesagen kan  
welher hande er waere;  
er was ninder laere  
von gesteine noch von golde;

(*Wigalois* 321–326)<sup>77</sup>

[The queen holds the belt, which is so finely made that I cannot tell what it is made of, as it is completely covered with jewels and with gold.]

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<sup>72</sup> E. Carleton Williams, ‘Mural Paintings of the Three Living and Three Dead in England’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3/7 (1942), pp. 31–40, at p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> Turville-Petre, ‘Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza’, pp. 1–14.

<sup>74</sup> Rossell Hope Robbins ed., ‘Summer Sunday: A lament for Edward II’, in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 98–102. All subsequent references to *Summer Sunday* (SS) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>75</sup> For an extensive exploration of the clothing and appearance of Fortune in medieval literature, see Andrea Denny-Brown, *Fashioning Change: The Trope of Clothing in High- and Late-Medieval England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *Wirnt von Grafenberg’s Wigalois: Intertextuality and Interpretation*, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Wirnt von Grafenberg, Wigalois: der Ritter mitt dem Rade*, ed. by J. M. N. Kapteyn (Bonn: Fritz Klopp, 1926), p. 16.

Fortune's girdle also invites comparison to the girdle of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a text connected to *Summer Sunday* through *The Awntyrs off Arthur*. The miraculous girdle of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that protects the wearer from harm is green, not gold; there is no mention as to whether lady Fortune's girdle possesses similar magical or spiritual properties. In *Wigalois*, Fortune's belt possesses magical properties, granting the queen skills and abilities:

dô het diu vrouwe sa zêhant  
 vreude unde wîsheit;  
 sine truobte deheiner slahte leit,  
 die sprâche kunde si alle wol,  
 ir herze daz was vreuden vol,  
 swaz spils man dâ begunde,  
 si dûhte des wie siz kunde;

(*Wigalois* 31–37)

[She became joyful and wise, no sorrow troubled her, all languages she understood, her heart was full of joy, she won every game of sport, and she lacked no art or skill.]

Fortune's appearance here correlates with that in other texts. A Janus figure, she sometimes appears with two faces; these are often of different appearances, one beautiful while the other is ugly or one black while the other is white, one smiling while the other frowns. She is sometimes threatening—in Boccaccio, like the *Awntyrs'* ghost, her eyes burn—and demonstrates a quick changeability in mood.<sup>78</sup> Lady Fortune is sometimes, as in Chrétien's *Perceval*, as bald in the back, with hair on the front of her head, the hair being a forelock that one could "seize, like Opportunity" in order to pull oneself up.<sup>79</sup> Lady Fortune in *Summer Sunday* does not correlate with the traditions that present her as double-faced; she has only the one, lovely face and she is not explicitly bald. There are four figures on the wheel that accompanies Fortune. The first is a young man, 'bryȝt as þe blostme' (SS 67) who calls out impatiently for a crown; the second is a richly-dressed man dressed in a crown who boasts of his riches and power; the third is an aged man who bemoans the fickleness of fortune; the fourth is a silent 'bare body in a bed' (SS 131). Here, the poem abruptly ends; there is no further mention of the narrator or of the hunt. These encounters contextualise the ghost's appearance in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*. Guinevere's mother

<sup>78</sup> Howard R. Patch, *The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), pp. 43–44.

<sup>79</sup> Norris J. Lacy, 'The Ambiguous Fortunes of Arthur: The Lancelot-Grail and Beyond', in *The Fortunes of King Arthur*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 97–98.

is, like Gregory's mother, hideous and poorly dressed; as in the figures of *De Tribus Mortuis* and *Summer Sunday*, she illustrates the transience of earthly existence.

After the ghost's departure, Guinevere and Gawain return to the court; with this, the first section concludes. The second episode deals more directly with those who, in the words of Gawain, 'fonden to fight' (AOA 261); Arthur has to resolve a territorial dispute between himself, Gawain, and a Scottish knight Galeron. Despite this, it connects thematically with the first; both deal with unexpected outsiders to the Arthurian community. The episode begins with the court assembled at dinner, where Arthur is for the first time fully described. His eyes are 'greye [...] and grete' (AOA 356), conveying his nobility. Grey eyes are associated with beauty and nobility; Guinevere loses her grey eyes in *Sir Launfal* and Dame Tryamour also appears 'Wyth eyen gray, wyth lovely chere, / Her leyre lyght schoone' (SL 934–936). Similarly, Arthur's 'beveren berde' (AOA 357) conveys his royal position, visually signifying his kingship.<sup>80</sup> He is dressed in a mantle of 'pal pured to pay' (AOA 353). The richness of the cloth and the opulence of its decoration indicate Arthur's wealth; it is 'trofelyte and traverste with trewloves in trete' (AOA 355). 'Trewloves' or 'love knots' are historically and culturally linked to marriage and fertility and are commonly associated with literary depictions of lovers.<sup>81</sup> Emaré's robe depicts the lovers Ydoyne and Amadas, with a 'trewe-love-flour, of stones bryght of hewe' (Emaré 125–126). Though the love-knots appear with abundance ('in trete' AOA 355) this is contrasted with the tight, constricted nature of their appearance. Here, Arthur is criss-crossed with the love-knots; he is restrained or bound by them. Similarly, the 'tasses were of topas that wer thereto tight' (AOA 355) are tied to the mantle, reinforcing this idea. Topaz is associated with chastity and with royalty: the London lapidary claims that 'he that bereth this ston schall loue to lede his body chastly' while also advising 'Kynges shulde blithely beholde topaces, for he yeueth hem gode remembraunce to loke to the Ryal life coronede of heuen that shal neuer faile.'<sup>82</sup> Like the celandines of Guinevere's cloak, the topaz 'helpeth azens the

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<sup>80</sup> Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Cyrus Day, 'Knots and Knot Lore', *Western Folklore*, 9/3 (1950), 229–256, at p. 252.

<sup>82</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 19.

passioun of lynatik folke.’<sup>83</sup> It also guards against an illness that appears with a variety of spellings in several lapidaries; London refers to it as ‘fis’, while Peterborough gives instead ‘feyr’, and Sloane gives ‘fyes’.<sup>84</sup> MS Eng. misc. E. 558 provides more details; it claims ‘she is moche worthe to a sekeness þat is called Fy, þat is whenne prowde Flessh growith lyke a wete & she sewith þe mone’; perhaps this refers to some kind of fitting illness.<sup>85</sup> These associations emphasise Arthur’s constancy in love, counterbalancing the ghost’s warning to Guinevere of ‘luf paramour’ (AOA 213). Like Guinevere’s appearance, Arthur’s dress is self-consciously performative; his rich clothing functions as an essential element of the performative pageantry of the chivalric society. Echoing this, Arthur’s appearance is juxtaposed with the reactions of the court; he is ‘the soveraynest of al sitting in sete / That ever segge had sen with his eye sight’ (AOA 358–359). He occupies the ‘sovereign mid-point’, appearing in the very centre of the text.<sup>86</sup> The richness of Arthur’s costume provides a visual illustration of the ghost’s warning; ‘Whan he is in his magesté, moost in his might, / He shal light ful lowe on the sesondes’ (AOA 267–268). Contextualised by the prophecy, the text’s descriptions of glorious visual display are bittersweet; though the text delights in this rich display, Arthur constructs his own doom with every demonstration of majesty and glory.

The dinner is interrupted with the abrupt arrival of two courtly visitors: ‘A lady lufsom of lote ledand a knight’ (AOA 344). The courtly Sir Galeron and his richly-dressed lady are a stark contrast to the wailing terror of the ghost’s appearance. The Scottish knight and his lady arrive at the Arthurian court to protest the loss of Galeron’s lands, which have been given by Arthur to Gawain. The description is encircled by the speculative gaze of the court; it commences with ‘ho was the worthiest wight that eny wywelde wolde’ (AOA 365) and concludes with ‘her perré was praysed with prise men of might:’ (AOA 375). Galeron’s lady is presented in specific terms; unlike in Guinevere’s earlier depiction, details of her dress and cloak appear. Similarly, unlike Guinevere, whose face and head is hidden under a hood, the

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<sup>83</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 107.

<sup>84</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 19, 107, 122.

<sup>85</sup> Zettersten, *A Middle English Lapidary*, p. 26.

<sup>86</sup> Spearing, ‘Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems’, pp. 247–261.



lady's face and hair are consciously displayed before the court. Her hair is arranged with jewels ('fyne perre' *Awntyrs* 369) and in plaits ('fretted in folde' *AOA* 369) supporting a crowne 'al of clene golde' (*AOA* 371). This elaborate construction conforms to those frequently appearing in the later medieval period; hair was often arranged in tight artificial styles such as these.<sup>87</sup> The lady's head-dress is 'coloured full clene' (*AOA* 370) and includes 'kercheves' (*AOA* 372) ornamented with 'proude pene' (*AOA* 372) or rich brooches. Tryamour's handmaidens in *Sir Launfal* appear similarly: 'Har kercheves wer well schyre, / Arayd wyth ryche gold wyre' (*SL* 247–248), and like Galeron's lady, they also wear jewelled coronets: 'Har heddys wer dyght well wythalle: Everych hadde oon a jolyf coronall / Wyth syxty gemmys and mo' (*SL* 239–240).

Here gide was glorious and gay, of a gresse grene.  
 Here belle was of blunket, with birdes ful bolde,  
 Brauded with brende gold, and bokeled ful bene. (*AOA* 366–368)

Like Guinevere, Galeron's lady appears in a 'gide', a general kind of gown that gives no suggestions of its style or fashion. A colour scheme of green and gold does, however, emerge; the lady wears a 'gresse grene' (*AOA* 366) gown, a woollen cloak ('belle' *AOA* 367) of 'blunket' (*AOA* 367). This is embroidered with gold birds 'ful bolde' (*AOA* 367) and gold crown (*AOA* 371). The resulting image emphasises richness and material wealth. The text emphasises the pleasing effect of this fine craftsmanship; the cloak is 'bokeled ful bene' (*AOA* 368) and embroidered 'ful bolde' (*AOA* 368). The effect is lively and colourful; the lady's dress is eye-catching and attractive, echoing the 'riche ribaynes reversset' (*AOA* 16) with which Guinevere 'so right redes' (*AOA* 16). Her hair is bound in 'fyne perré' (*AOA* 369), and she wears a 'crowne craftly al of clene golde' (*AOA* 371). Like Arthur, she commands the attention of the assembled court; the lady's articles are 'praysed with prise men of might' (*AOA* 373). Arthur, Galeron and the lady appear in equal terms of opulence; in the description of the Scottish visitors, rich textiles and materials appear in extravagant quantities.

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<sup>87</sup> For more details of contemporary hair styles, see chapter one, 'Fashion and Style'.

Galeron subsequently enters. His introduction begins in heraldic terms; Galerón is ‘in his colours’ (AOA 378), and he proudly presents his crest to the court (‘With his comly crest clere to beholde’ AOA 379). His description demonstrates elements of material wealth: his headpiece is decorated with gold, there is silver on his shield, and his horse is draped in an abundance of silk that falls to its feet. Every element of his description is shining and bright; his ‘basnet’ or helmet ‘burneshed ful bene’ (AOA 380) and the precious metals provide the shining colours of gold, silver and white. His horse is fancifully decorated as a unicorn, with a threateningly sharp ‘anlas of stele’ (AOA 390) for a horn. This fanciful display represents an exaggeration of contemporary fashions that saw chivalric accoutrements ornamented richly with artificial decoration; towards the end of the hundred years’ war, lances covered in roses, teardrops, and other decorative motifs became popular.<sup>88</sup> Unicorns were associated with a specific set of ideals in medieval bestiaries; they represented chastity, purity, and, because they could not be captured without great trouble, freedom and independence.<sup>89</sup> The associations of chastity and autonomy give Galerón’s appearance an allegorical significance. Like the unicorn, Galerón demonstrates an inherent independence; he is not subject to the authority of Arthur until the worth of the court is proven, at which point he willingly submits. The unicorn’s associations with purity, chastity, and Christ suggest that Galerón here positions himself as justified in a moral Christian framework. The unicorn is bright, beautiful and richly adorned, but a note of physical threat lurks beneath the surface: ‘Als sharp as a thorne, / An anlas of stele’ (AOA 389–390). Galerón’s courtly appearance and fine apparel do not negate the threat he presents to the Arthurian court.

The second stanza emphasises Galerón’s wealth. Galerón’s armour is decorated with a pattern of gold stars, ‘al of sternes of golde, that stanseld was one straye’ (AOA 392). His gloves are decorated with beads of ruby (AOA 394–395). These echo Guinevere’s gown, ‘Rayled with

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<sup>88</sup> Piponnier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, p. 75.

<sup>89</sup> J. L. Schrader, ‘A Medieval Bestiary’, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 44/1 (1986), 1–55, at p. 18; Helmut Nickel, ‘Presents to Princes: A Bestiary of Strange and Wondrous Beasts, Once Known, for a Time Forgotten, and Rediscovered’, *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 26 (1991), 129–138, at p. 129; Florence Murdoch, ‘Trailing the Bestiaries’, *The American Magazine of Art*, 24/1 (1932), 5–12, at p. 9.

rybees of riall array' (AOA 17). The text constructs equality between Galeron and the Arthurian court; both Galeron and Guinevere wear the 'lorde of al stones'.<sup>90</sup> The effect is martial as well as opulent ('his schene schyn baudes, that sharp wer to shrede,' AOA 395). Here, the text reverses the previous perspective; details of Galeron's appearance are not interspersed with the court's reactive gaze. Instead, the subject responds to the court:

The freson was afered for drede of that fare,  
For he was selden wonte to se  
The tablet fluré:  
Siche gamen ne gle  
Sagh he never are. (AOA 399–403)

Here, the squire's inappropriately-chosen horse surveys the court and responds to it with fear. With its use of expensive and opulent materials, Galeron's appearance establishes a connection with the Arthurian court. The high value suggested in the materials used foreshadows Galeron's eventual incorporation into the Arthurian court.

In the ensuing battle between Galeron and Gawain, physical violence juxtaposes the elaborately visual nature of courtly display. Just as Galeron's fanciful unicorn, richly ornamented, supports an 'anlas of stele' (AOA 290), so the courtly decoration is stripped back to display the violence at the heart of this chivalric society:

Hardely then thes hathese on helmes they hewe.  
Thei beten downe beriles and bourdures bright;  
Shildes on shildres that shene were to shewe,  
Fretted were in fyne golde, thei failen in fight.  
Stones of iral thay strenkel and strewe;  
Stithe stapeles of stele they strike done stright. (AOA 586–591)

There is in this passage a discrepancy between Galeron's appearance and his previous description; beryls suddenly appear, while the only precious stone previously mentioned is the ruby. The beryl likely appears at least in part for its alliterative significance; the text demonstrates the same awareness of gem-lore in Guinevere's description. Beryl is 'best against strife and makes sure that a man cannot be overcome', and 'he who that bereth hit shall be much

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<sup>90</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 21.

worshipped'.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, beryls 'nourissheth loue between man and woman'; this perhaps reflects the conclusion of the narrative, in which Galeron and the lady marry.<sup>92</sup> The knights' depiction is glorious; the text lingers over the shining shields, the fine gold, the gleaming jewels that suggest, through their scattering, the combatants' strength. Simultaneously, however, the battle is destructive: in their combat they dismantle many of the visually pleasing details seen in the previous descriptions of clothing. A. C. Spearing finds in this scene a general profligacy borne out of the overabundance of chivalric societies:

The effect [of the battle/tournament] is not only aesthetically disturbing and pleasing; it perfectly expresses the nature of the aristocratic life, which consists in a generous willingness to waste those material possessions that seem to be its essence [...] the ample and often abundant style of this description is itself an enactment of such aristocratic waste, a form of conspicuous consumption of the poet's verbal substance and of his listeners' leisure.<sup>93</sup>

As in *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, courtly conduct is facilitated by, but not subject to, visual display. The richness of the jewels is rendered insignificant by a courtly continuum that values honour above wealth.

Opulent visual display in the *Awntyrs* is contextualised throughout the text by the ghost's prophecy of the death of Arthur. The ghost warns: 'whan he is in his magesté, moost in his might, / He shal light ful lowe on the sesondes' (AOA 267–268). The court's visual display illustrates the impermanence of the Arthurian reality. In its opulent celebration of chivalric display, the Arthurian court simultaneously affirms and destabilises its existence. Opulent visual display constitutes a public, performative means through which the chivalric scheme is propagated. In both sections of the text, the unity of the Arthurian community is juxtaposed with individual intruders who challenge its ideals. The text simultaneously legitimises and challenges these critical visions of Arthurian society. Though Guinevere's ghostly mother warns against "pride with the appurtenaunce" (AOA 239), opulent visual display is simultaneously presented as an inevitable consequence of an already-doomed society. The appearance of the Scottish knight Galeron before the court seems to represent a confirmation of Arthur's imperialist

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<sup>91</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, pp. 72–28.

<sup>92</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 28.

<sup>93</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 139.

energies; as with Sir Bredbeddle in *The Greene Knight* and Sir Gromer in the *Turk and Sir Gawain*, the challenge that Galeron presents to the chivalric community is neutralised with his eventual inclusion into the Arthurian scheme. Like Bredbeddle, Galeron and his lady are magnificently dressed; the text constructs deliberately a connection between the Arthurian court and the Scottish Galeron and his lady. Though they constitute a challenge to the Arthurian court, the court and their Scottish visitors are positioned equally in the chivalric framework; in this way, their opulent dress signifies the Scottish visitors' inherent courtliness. This is a scheme from which the ghost, in its nakedness, is excluded. The contrast between the rich clothing of the chivalric community and the bare body of their external threat is carefully constructed; unlike the ghost, Galeron and his lady are participants in the courtly scheme and as such do not challenge the Arthurian continuum. The issues evoked by Galeron's appearance are chivalric, dynastic and related to conquest; the issues evoked by the ghost are lust, greed, and calamity. The former issues result in the chivalric tournament, an avenue through which the courtly societies confirms their identity. There are no such easy solutions for the ghost's questions; though Guinevere dutifully purchases the requested masses and promises to heed her mother's warning, the immediacy of the prophecy (and the influence of the wider alliterative tradition) demonstrate that these are temporary measures. Like her mother, Guinevere will fall to lust; Arthur will prove too covetous and the Arthurian court will fall.

These tensions are emphasised by the text's sustained focus on dress. Nearly a whole stanza is given over to a detailed description of Guinevere's appearance (*AOA* 15–26); the ghost's appearance in shroud and serpents (*AOA* 105–120) is similarly evoked. The contrast between the richly-dressed Guinevere and the blackened ghost provides an illustration of the ghost's warnings against 'pride with the appurtenance' (*AOA* 239). Matthewson suggests that the richness of Guinevere's costume indicates that 'Guinevere is abundantly guilty of this sin, as

the opening scene's persistent dwelling on the splendour of her costume has made evident.'<sup>94</sup>

Spearing suggests that Guinevere is especially targeted by the ghost's warnings:

The emphasis on Guinevere's dress might seem to suggest that she is concerned only with externals, mere trimmings [...] the same suggestion emerges more strongly from the conversation between Guenevere and her mother.<sup>95</sup>

Despite this, he finds that the rich clothing does not function as a criticism of the Arthurian court: 'elegant dress does not necessarily imply shallowness, and the courtly world has a magnificence that is not totally negated by its transience and its imperfection.'<sup>96</sup> He also finds in the lavish descriptions of costume a demonstration of the poet's skill, suggesting 'we are meant to feel at every point the difficulty of what is being done, and the highly specialized craftsmanship necessary to do it.'<sup>97</sup> The 'ample and often abundant style of this description is itself an enactment of such aristocratic waste, a form of conspicuous consumption of the poet's verbal substance and of his listeners' leisure.'<sup>98</sup> Like Spearing, Thomas Hahn focuses on the literary significance of the lavish descriptions of clothing.

The poem's profligate consumption of formulaic phrases and type scenes, of nearly fetishized objects like tapestries, dress, swords, helmets, shields, or coats of arms, urges an audience not to extract a unique, internalized meaning, but to take delight in the structural, narrative, thematic, and stylistic variations that constitute the substance of such a performance.<sup>99</sup>

Thorlac Turville-Petre finds the text's lavish costume does not identify Guinevere as uniquely prideful but instead functions as a condemnation of the Arthurian court:

The ghost makes clear her condemnation of the pride of Arthur's court [...] The panoply of the hunt is set against the grisly and foul appearance of the ghost; it sharpens the contrast between the living and the dead, between present prosperity and the approaching destruction of the Round Table.<sup>100</sup>

Haught suggests that the rich and opulent description of Guinevere represents an expression of romance convention. She states:

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<sup>94</sup> Mathewson, 'Displacement of the Feminine', p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 135.

<sup>96</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>97</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 123.

<sup>98</sup> Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 139.

<sup>99</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 137.

<sup>100</sup> Turville-Petre, 'Three Poems in the Thirteen-Line Stanza', p. 10.

That Guenevere is, beyond a doubt, guilty of the sin of pride [...] is usually asserted on the basis of the poem's opening description of her ornate costume and while this description is, at the very least, ironic considering the nature of the ghost's subsequent criticisms of courtly behaviour it is not, in and of itself, enough to warrant an immediate dismissal of Guenevere as particularly prideful. In fact, occurring as it does before the ghost's spiritual plea, the text's description of Guenevere's superlatively beautiful attire functions as much as a popular convention of the romance genre as it does a potential basis for moral reprimand.<sup>101</sup>

The second section of the diptych structure problematises further the reading of Guinevere's costume as particularly indicative of pride; the two halves of the poem respond to each other, building up a correspondence of meaning. In their allegiances and providence, Galeron and his lady represent intruders to the Arthurian society. However, their adherence to chivalric rituals, and their rich and opulent dress—equal to that of the Arthurian court—position them as equals in the courtly tradition. As in *Golagros and Gawain, The Awntyrs off Arthur* culminates with a conclusion that rewards all participants in the elaborately ritualised chivalric contests with an accumulation of honour. Galeron and Gawain, Arthur and the whole of the court are united through participation in this public pageantry. Galeron and Gawain fight manfully to a stalemate and Arthur skilfully concludes the conflict to the satisfaction of all parties. Galeron wins back his lands, and Arthur replaces the lands lost to Gawain. In so doing, Arthur provides a response to the ghost's accusation of his covetousness (*AOA* 265) and incorporates dissonant elements into the Arthurian community. Through his elevation to the Round Table, Galeron is formally inducted into Arthurian society, and the courtly tradition continues—for now, at least, until the events of the ghost's prophecy come to pass.

### ***The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain***

*The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain* is among the longest and richest of the surviving northern Gawain romances. Exceeding 1300 lines and written in a densely alliterative style, it is closely linked in style, theme and structure with *The Awntyrs off Arthur*. A late-

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<sup>101</sup> Haught, 'Gender and Genre', p. 9.

medieval middle Scots romance, *Golagros and Gawain* is very loosely based on the *First Continuation* of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval*.<sup>102</sup> Some passages relating to dress appear to be comparable within the texts and function in a similar fashion. In the opening passages of the *Continuation*, silk-clad knights assemble on the riverbank in a gloriously-presented scene that mirrors the later text's depiction of the similarly-assembled Arthurian court.<sup>103</sup> In both texts, dress and visual display seem to function in a similar manner: rich dress communicates the impressive nature of the chivalric community; it emphasises courtly virtue and provides a mean through which chivalric identities to recognise one another. The later text's use of dress is, however, more warlike; its description of the assembled Arthurian host (*GAG* 14–26) emphasises the light reflecting from the bright, hard materials of their warlike dress, rather than the non-reflective soft silk that appears in the *Continuation*. This is in keeping with the martial themes of the Scottish text, which emphasise courtliness and honour in combat.

The text's date of composition potentially ranges from the 1420s to the early 1500s, though Ralph Hanna places it within the later half of the fifteenth century.<sup>104</sup> It is extant in no surviving manuscripts, though a printed edition survives from 1508.<sup>105</sup> Hahn finds the lack of critical attention to the text lies in its 'huge and difficult vocabulary, the poem's exceptionally demanding rhyme scheme and alliteration, and the formidable Scots dialect in which it survives (together with the general unavailability of the text)', suggesting that they have 'given *Gawain and Golagros* many fewer readers than the energy and excitement of the poem otherwise would claim.'<sup>106</sup> More recently, the text has been the focus of increased critical attention; *Golagros and Gawain* is frequently used as a companion-piece to the *Awntyrs off Arthur* in scholarship as the texts are thematically and stylistically linked, sharing a 'diptych' structure and a richly

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<sup>102</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 231–232.

<sup>103</sup> William Roach ed., *The Continuations of the Old French Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes*, vol. 1, Series in Romance Languages and Literatures, extra series, no. 10 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949); Nigel Bryant trans., *The Complete Story of the Grail: Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval and its Continuations*, Arthurian Studies LXXXII (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), p. 83.

<sup>104</sup> For a full account of the dating issue, see the discussion provided in Ralph Hanna's critical edition, *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, The Scottish Text Society, fifth series, no. 7 (Woodbridge: Scottish Text Society, 2008), pp. xxiv–xxxii.

<sup>105</sup> This is: *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane* (Edinburgh: W. Chepman and A. Myllar, 1508). For further details, see Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, pp. 231–232.

<sup>106</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 227.



alliterative form. Mathewson's work analyses the female position in *Golagros and Gawain* and *The Awntyrs off Arthur*;<sup>107</sup> Randy P. Schiff also compares the texts to analyse boundaries and geographical conflict.<sup>108</sup> More recently, there has been an increase in scholarly interest regarding the *Golagros* text. It appears in Barry Windeatt's overview of fifteenth-century Arthurian literature, who reads the text in relation to contemporary anglo-scottish tensions.<sup>109</sup> Lauren Jessie Chochinov examines the text's emphasis on English expansion and failed kingship in her doctoral thesis.<sup>110</sup> Anna Caughey suggests several ways in which the female gaze appears in late-medieval Scottish romance.<sup>111</sup> In this way, there has not been significant critical discussion of dress in relation to this text, and my own particular discussion of dress and identity in *Golagros and Gawain* has not previously been attempted in scholarship.

Like *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, *Golagros and Gawain* utilises a 'diptych' structure in which separate but thematically related narrative strands converge to create a composite whole. Unlike the *Awntyrs*, these episodes are not equally weighted in the text; instead, *Golagros and Gawain* sees the first, much shorter, episode take on much of the significance of a prologue or prelude to the main action. The analysis of honour, violence and chivalry introduced in the prologue episode is reworked in a sophisticated and well-developed second section. The two strands support each other to strengthen the whole:

In *Gologras* the two parts relate almost as orders of architecture, in which the larger structure both repeats and supports the smaller unit. The poem's second episode in this way recapitulates, and greatly elaborates, the pattern of action and meaning in the first part.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Mathewson, 'Displacement of the Feminine', pp. 23–28.

<sup>108</sup> Schiff, 'Borderland Subversions', pp. 613–632.

<sup>109</sup> Barry Windeatt, 'The Fifteenth-Century Arthur', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 84–102.

<sup>110</sup> Lauren Jessie Chochinov, "The gracioseste gome that vndir God lyffede": A Reconsideration of Sir Gawain in the Late Medieval Middle English and Middle Scots Romance Tradition' (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Anna Caughey, "'Ladyes War at Thare Avowing': The Female Gaze in Late-Medieval Scottish Romance", in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Perkins (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), pp. 91–110.

<sup>112</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 227.

With its focus on courtesy and honour in chivalric conquest, the early episode introduces many of the main themes of the narrative, which are returned to with added resonance in the second section. Progressing through Europe on his way to Jerusalem, Arthur sends Kay to gain supplies for his army from an unfamiliar lord; Kay attempts to gain these by force and fails, while Gawain impresses the lord with his courtesy and subsequently succeeds. In the second section, Arthur attempts to subjugate the autonomous lord, Gologras. The subsequent struggle positions chivalric violence at the fore; yet, for all the richly-evocative depictions of battle between the two armies, the situation is solved through a series of interlocking honourable conceits. Gologras submits to Gawain, who humbles himself in trust to Gologras, who then submits formally to Gawain and pledges allegiance to Arthur; Arthur then releases Gologras from his pledge. This series of submissions, identified by Hahn as ‘an economy of chivalric honor that produces all gains and no losses,’<sup>113</sup> is evocative of other combat- and honour-based narratives such as *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*.<sup>114</sup>

The text’s surface is polished, focused, and precise; it is written in an alliterative style that, like *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, delights in the practical details and physical manifestations of chivalry. The garments that appear throughout the text are opulent and rich; descriptions of the two armies include a large number of precious metals, luxury textiles, and precious stones. The text’s display of ‘lavish ornamentation and conspicuous consumption’ is inseparably entangled with its conceptualisation of chivalry.<sup>115</sup> Clothing and armour are elements of a complex and widely performative chivalric code that utilises specialised and highly valuable articles and accoutrements to confirm and affirm knightly identities. Armies on all sides appear in richly ornamented armour and carry out noble deeds; there is a parity of perspective here that elevates each knight to the role of noble participant in ritualistic enactments of chivalric pageantry. Though public, this chivalric pageantry is not hollowly performative. The text does not shy away

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<sup>113</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 228.

<sup>114</sup> Thomas Hahn ed., *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 393–418. All subsequent references to *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain* (*JSG*) will be to this edition and cited by line number.

<sup>115</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 277.

from depicting the cost of chivalric violence; gemstones fall from battered armour, shining blood covers shining shields. The text's use of the material provides a tangible sense of 'the cost [at which] chivalry purchases its glory':

The blunt materiality of this diehard performance—the stress and pain endured by the horses, the lavishness of war gear, the bodily hurt the knights expertly wreak on each other, the effort of moving in armor (ever greater as the fight proceeds)—hammers home the prodigal expense of spirit at the heart of chivalry.<sup>116</sup>

In the second section, the text interweaves images of chivalric violence with images of opulent chivalric gear; the 'shining armour' and the 'shining blood' that covers it ('fra schalkis schot schire blude ovr scheidis so schene.' *GAG* 690) are equally positioned as means through which the chivalric world is evoked. Both elements are presented as integral aspects of a complex and ritualistic chivalric code.

Opulent display plays a significant role in the visual pageantry of chivalry in *Golagros and Gawain*. This public and ritualized chivalry runs throughout the text; it reflects 'the public, spectacular nature of chivalric honor, which a knight earns for *ane luke*, before the gaze of onlookers.'<sup>117</sup> The details of the passage here are significant:

The brilliant surface, especially of the alliterative poems—their decorated, lapidary descriptive style—mirrors the centrality of public gaze and display within the romances, conveyed, for example, through lavish dress, the jewelled, embroidered accessories of ladies and warriors, and the exhibitionist quality of warfare.<sup>118</sup>

The text begins with a detailed account of Arthur's forces. Their description is resonant with magnificent and opulent detail, with fine textiles and precious metals:

Thus the Royale can remove, with his Round Tabill,  
Of all riches maist rike, in riall array.  
Wes never fundun on fold, but fenyeing or fabill,  
Ane farayr floure on ane feild of fresch men, in fay;  
Farand on thair stedis, stout men and stabill,  
Mony sterne ovr the streit stertis on stray.  
Thair baneris schane with the sone, of silver and sabill,  
And uthir glemyt as gold and gowlis so gay;  
Of silver and saphir schirly thai schane;  
Ane fair battell on breid

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<sup>116</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 230.

<sup>117</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 303.

<sup>118</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 227.

Merkit ovr ane fair meid;  
With spurris spedely thai speid,  
Ovr fellis, in fane.

(GAG 14–26)

Each detail is clearly rendered, and the text adopts a lingering gaze on materials, objects, tangible, physical accoutrements and paraphernalia of chivalry. This clarity of perspective focuses both on the details and on the overall picture. The imagery is vivid and lively, and details of colour and texture are selected and emphasized. Each element of the assembled host is shining and vivid. Present here is the superlative hyperbole of romance, in which everything and everyone is the finest, the most elegant, and the most impressive. It is an overwhelmingly positive depiction, in which Arthur and his court seem to be bathed in light; every action and every garment shines. The material details that are picked out—silver, sable, precious gems—are of high monetary value, yet they contribute also to the shining effect of this passage; the gemstones and burnished metals reflect the light, while the vivid colours exaggerate this effect.

Progressing on to Jerusalem, the Arthurian forces encounter a city that similarly reflects this superlative design:

As thay walkit be the syde of ane fair well,  
Throu the schynyng of the son ane cieté thai se,  
With torris and turatis, teirfull to tell,  
Bigly batollit about with wallis sa he.

(GAG 40–43)

Light is present in the description of both the city and the Arthurian forces, whose ‘baneris schane with the sone’ (GAG 20). This engenders an equality of comparison between the two forces; they are equally positioned in the superlative framework of romance chivalry. Sir Kay is chosen as envoy. Again, details of opulent display appear; the court is ‘astalit with pall’ (GAG 63) or fine cloth, and ‘payntit with pride’ (GAG 65). These elements of material richness are of secondary significance to the overall theme of the text, which is subsequently made plain:

The sylour deir of the deise dayntely wes dent  
With the doughyest in thair dais dyntis couth dele;  
Bright letteris of gold blith unto blent,  
Makand mencioune quha maist of manhede couth mele.  
He saw nane levand leid upone loft lent  
Nouthir lord na lad, leif ye the lele.  
The renk raikit in the saill, riale and gent,  
That wondir wisly wes wroght with wourschip and wele.

(GAG 66–73)

This brief scene ties together multiple thematic interests of the piece, giving voice to the composition of glorious chivalry through material richness. Objects of material wealth are consistently intertwined with concepts of honour and glory in this richly performative display of chivalry. The richness of the material ('palle' simply denotes indeterminate cloth of a high quality) and the workmanship of the embroidery, renders these objects of high monetary value. Embroideries were often expensively worked in gold thread, adding to their value.<sup>119</sup> The material richness of this canopy functions as a statement of identity of the court, in which the high value of the canopy reflects the high value placed on the concepts it expresses by the courtiers. In this way, material wealth plays an important part in facilitating discussions of chivalry; despite this, chivalry is consistently unobligated to it. One would not be possible without the other, yet the material wealth of this canopy is not as valuable as the message that is inscribed upon it. It is through this passage that the thematic concerns of this text are first made plain. The inscription seeks to 'makand mencioune quha maist of manhede couth mele' (GAG 69); so does the text. Yet the dais is vacant, conveying upon the inscription the significance of a question. 'Who, greatest in their manhood, could fight' is transformed into 'who, greatest in their manhood, can fight'? The text, like the court, is uncertain of the answer to the question it poses. Through its examination of ritualistic chivalric conflict, it seeks to find an answer.

Though Kay is exposed to these messages, he seems unwilling or unable to interpret them. His behaviour is consistently at odds with the values and system of the court; maddened by hunger, Kay grapples with a dwarf roasting a bird on a spit. The lord of the castle subsequently appears; there is no description of clothing or armour in this description. Instead, the text focuses on his countenance and strength. Every element of his description emphasises fortitude; his body is 'stalwart and strang' (GAG 89); he 'ane woundir grym sire' (GAG 79), with 'stout countenance' (GAG 80). He rebukes Kay for his actions:

'Me think thow fedis the unfair, freik, be my fay!  
Suppose thi birny be bright, as bachiler suld ben,

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<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Coatsworth, 'Embroideries: ante-1100', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 190–196.

Yhit ar thi latis unlufsum and ladlike, I lay.  
Quhy has thow marrit my man, with maistri to mene?  
Bot thow mend hym that mys, be Mary, mylde may,  
Thow sall rew in thi ruse, wit thow but wene,  
Or thow wend of this wane wemeles away!' (GAG 93–99)

It is easy to read into this passage a criticism of finery, as the lord does not appear in fine clothing, and specifically mentions the bright armour worn by Kay. Here, however, the lord rebukes Kay not for wearing bright, shining armour ('suppose thi birny be bright' GAG 95), but for being unworthy of it: 'Yhit ar thi latis unlufsum and ladlike, I lay' (GAG 94). More precisely still, he struggles with the dissonance underlying Kay's presentation of self. Though Kay wears the appearance of a knight (the 'birny bright' GAG 95) he does not appear to be one; his manners are 'unlufsum and ladlike' (GAG 94). This, for the lord, precludes knightly identity. He conflates opulence with chivalry: actions are the means by which identity is formed; Kay's actions are not those of a knight; therefore, Kay cannot be a knight. The lord's confusion is emphasised by the additional detail characterising Kay's gear as 'bright', as a knight's should be. In this way, the knight's behaviour fits into the scheme established by the tapestry's embroidery; he conflates opulence with chivalric identity. The former is subordinate to the latter, but in this court both elements work harmoniously together to construct elaborate and complex chivalric systems. The problem, therefore, with Kay's appearance here lies not with his opulent garments, but with the actions of their wearer.

The tensions of the exchange between Kay and the lord are returned to in the subsequent interactions between the lord and Sir Gawain. After the lord strikes Kay, Gawain is sent as an envoy to the castle. Here, the wider reputations and inter-textual associations of the two knights come into play; Kay, frequently characterised in romance as impetuous and brash, is a peculiar choice for a diplomatic envoy to begin with. This choice potentially casts Arthur's powers of judgment into question. Arthur's second choice, Gawain, is much better suited to the task, but is required to volunteer for the position. Gawain's mission is, of course, successful; such narrative patterning facilitates discussion in the realms of proper and improper chivalric conduct but does not always allow for the most consistent or positive characterisation of Arthur.

Here, a second introduction takes place, constructing that constructs a very different image to the previous one. The lord appears before Kay as grim and forbidding (GAG 86–89); he now appears before Gawain: ‘Than wes the syre in the sail, with renkis of array, / And blith birdis hym about, that bright wes of ble’ (GAG 133–134). Here, the lord is master of the hall; he is at ease, and surrounded by his dependents (his ‘bidis’ appear ‘hym about’ GAG 134). Here, the dual strands of knight and courtier are demonstrated in the differences between the depictions: the strange knight appears before Kay as a combatant, and before Gawain as a lord. This dissonance reinforces the wider thematic interests of the narrative: Kay invites combativeness with his improper behaviour; Gawain invites courtliness with his honourable behaviour. Much as Golagros, Gawain and Arthur later appear in interlocking schemes of honour, in this instance, honour here too begets honour. Gawain is treated courteously by the lord, who remarks contemptuously on Kay’s earlier performance, evoking the same tensions of the previous passage. The lord is contemptuous of Kay’s ‘girdill ovrgilt’ (GAG 158). He avoids recalling the details of Kay’s dress (‘uthir light gere’ GAG 158). He continues: ‘It kythit be his cognisance ane knight that he wes, / Bot he wes ladlike of laitiss, and light of his fere.’ (GAG 159–160). The dissonance between Kay’s appearance and his actions once again appears; ‘the lord here emphasizes the gap between Kay’s unmistakable chivalric appearance, and his unknighly behavior.’<sup>120</sup> Once more, he rebukes Kay not for wearing a ‘girdill ovrgilt’ (GAG 158), but for being ‘ladlike of laitiss’ (GAG 160). Within a system in which opulence and honour are intertwined, Kay’s actions confuse the elaborate system established up by the rich tapestry cloth of the dais (GAG 68–70). His actions also confuse the ‘reading’ of identities through appearance; this is a significant error in this ritualistic chivalric society, in which concepts of shame and honour are situated directly around reputation and the spectacle of public enactment of chivalry.

The second section of the text reinforces these concepts. Here, the discussion of fine armour is compounded by the public, ritualistic enactment of chivalry through combat. In the

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<sup>120</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 281.

second section, Arthur vows to conquer the independent knight Golagros. After determining that he must do so by force, the text presents a detailed description of the Arthurian forces:

Thai plantit doun ane pailyeoun, upone ane plane lee,  
Of pall and of pillour that proudly wes picht,  
With rapis of rede gold, riale to see,  
And grete ensenyas of the samyne, semly by sicht;  
Bordouris about, that bricht war of ble,  
Betin with brint gold, burely and bricht;  
Frenyeis of fyne silk, fretit ful fre  
With deir dyamonthis bedene, that dayntely wes dicht. (GAG 312–320)

This passage echoes the introduction of the forces in the opening stanzas. This similarly lavish description constructs a similar sense of wonder and awe. Each element demonstrates the strength and wealth of the chivalric society which the knights represent. From the rich cloth (GAG 313), to the fine silk (GAG 319) and expensive diamonds (GAG 340), in each aspect opulence and honour intertwine to convey a society at the peak of its prowess. The Arthurian host—and the opposing forces it encounters—is depicted in the highest possible terms; here, honour and chivalry lead to this sense of stability and well-being. The text goes some way towards establishing extensively the physical details of courtly life; the knights eat the finest food, wear the finest clothing (they are ‘the proudest in pall,’ GAG 235), take part in courtly occupations (they hunt deer). Every aspect contributes to the construction of a consciously performative chivalric community.

These harmonious images extend throughout the poem to the depictions of chivalric conflict. In this scheme, chivalry, opulence, and violence appear as interlocking factors that contribute towards the orderly progression of civilization. From the second section, descriptions of fine appearance begin to be intertwined with concepts of chivalric violence. The imagery of precious metals and rich colours is here returned to and enriched with a wider significance of purpose; the knights are here elevated both through their actions and their appearance. The knights are ‘gayest on grund grayne undir geir’ (GAG 471); the field is ‘felerit and faw / with gold and goulis in greyne’ (GAG 475–476) and the sun shines ‘in scheildis thai schaw’ (GAG 479). Their shining gear evokes Kay’s bright armour that the lord describes ‘as bachiler suld



ben,' (GAG 94). As in the second section of the *Awntyrs off Arthur*, the purpose underpinning these objects of fine display becomes apparent; they facilitate the tangible violence that underpins chivalric society. In this, the first explicit instance of warfare in a text otherwise so implicitly concerned with chivalric violence, the fine armour and opulence of the previous descriptive passages is repositioned in the framework of battle. The Arthurian host appears for the first time not as travelling pilgrims or courteous envoys, but instead in as warriors awaiting battle. The text makes apparent the implicit purpose served by fine armour: the glorification of chivalric combat.

This passage also introduces through heraldry concepts of honour, reputation and identity into the text's discussion of chivalry. This passage evokes the tangible weight of the two armies crashing into one another. The knights are weighed down with grieves and sashes ('in greis and garatouris, grathit full gay' GAG 482), carrying a range of defensive and offensive gear ('ane helm set to ilk shield' GAG 484, 'fel lans on loft' GAG 485). The description feels heavy, yet light also; though they carry a 'fel lans on loft', the knights 'lemand ful light' (GAG 485). They 'flourit thai the forefront' (GAG 486) and are 'fundin ferse and forssy in fight.' (GAG 487). There is an energy here, and not a little beauty; the knights are 'grathit full gay' (GAG 483) and 'lemand ful light', and they carry their 'cunysance' 'full cleir' (GAG 488). The knights bear their heraldic devices proudly aloft in anticipation of the glorious deeds they are about to accomplish; 'the honor of each knight depends upon the recognition by others of his distinctive arms, and then of his deed'.<sup>121</sup> The knights must ensure the proper attribution of deed to name, of honour and glory to reputation. It is unusual that their names are 'written all thare' (GAG); 'The writing of knights' names—a kind of captioned identity for a literate spectatorship—seems out of keeping with the highly visual character of heraldic sign systems.'<sup>122</sup> In a text that is itself written down, it is possible to read these 'written-down names' in the context of the wider Arthurian canon. Suggesting an awareness of storytelling that extends beyond death, this detail constitutes an attempt to become assimilated into this

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<sup>121</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances*, p. 291.

<sup>122</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances*, p. 291.

storytelling tradition. In these ways, the pageantry of this battle scene interweaves chivalric violence with beauty and opulence; both elements are positioned equally in this public scheme of ritualised chivalry.

The text's introduction of chivalric violence subsequently comes to fruition in a series of episodic and self-contained contests between pairs of knights. Each contest reiterates concepts established earlier in the text's discussion of chivalric display and violence. In one such episode, a noble knight from the opposing side appears without proper armour:

A gome gais to ane garet, glisnand to schaw,  
Turnit to ane hie toure, that tight wes full trest;  
Ane helme of hard steill in hand has he hynt,  
Ane scheld wroght all of weir,  
Semyt wele upone feir;  
He grippit to ane grete speir,  
And furth his wais wynt. (GAG 525–531)

Arthur and his knights marvel at this spectacle; this prompts Arthur to ask for an explanation:

'Quhat signifyis yone schene scheid?' said the Senyeour.  
'The luffly helme and the lance, all ar away,  
The brym blast that he blew with ane stevin stour?'  
Than said Spynagrus with speche: 'The suth sall I say.  
Yone is ane freik in his force, and fresch in his flour.  
To se that his schire weid be sicker of assay,  
He thinkis prouese to preve for his paramour,  
And prik in your presence to purchese his pray.  
Forthi makis furth ane man, to mach hym in feild,  
That knawin is for cruel,  
Doughty dyntis to dell,  
That for the maistry dar mell  
With schaft and with scheid.'

(GAG 532–544)

In this instance, the knight gains more honour by casting aside his armour and fighting without it. Evident here is the contempt for the body demanded by chivalry. As Hahn states, 'loving one's life is a major impediment to chivalric renown.'<sup>123</sup> The details of the text evoke the interplay between the appearance of chivalry and actualising of it. The shield image encircles the stanza; beginning with a question, it is returned to in the final line with further knowledge and a stronger awareness of chivalry. The text returns to the images only after describing their worth; with their context made clear by Spynagros, the details are more impressive.

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<sup>123</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 229.

In the conflict between opposing forces, images of beauty are juxtaposed frequently with images of human suffering:

Thai bet on sa brymly, thai beirnys on the bent,  
Bristis birneis with brandis burnist full bene.  
Throu thair schene scheildis thair schuldiris war schent;  
Fra schalkis schot schire blude ovr scheildis so schene.  
Ryngis of rank steill rattillit and rent,  
Gomys grisly on the grund grams on the grene. (GAG 687–692)

This evokes an analogous passage in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*:

Hardely then thes hathese on helmes they hewe.  
Thei beten downe beriles and bourdures bright;  
Shildes on shildres that shene were to shewe,  
Fretted were in fyne golde, thei failen in fight.  
Stones of iral thay strenkel and strewe;  
Stithe stapeles of stele they strike done stright. (GAG 586–591)

The contest in the *Awntyrs* is less violently presented; both texts demonstrate the physical effort and destructive capabilities of chivalric conflict. In *Golagros*, there is an abrupt juxtaposition between the shining beauty of the armour and the actualities of physical suffering. The text establishes parity between the two, delighting in the evocative description of suffering; frequent juxtapositions of shining armour and shining blood fail to differentiate substantially between the two. Both are equally encompassed by the wider scheme of chivalry; the text finds glory and chivalry in both. The human misery experienced in pursuit of honour elevates knights to the position of martyrs. As Hahn states, ‘the blunt materiality of this diehard performance—the stress and pain endured by the horses, the lavishness of war gear, the bodily hurt the knights expertly wreak on each other, the effort of moving in armor (ever greater as the fight proceeds)—hammers home the prodigal expense of spirit at the heart of chivalry.’<sup>124</sup> It is this ‘prodigal expense’ that simultaneously castigates and exonerates chivalry: though violence is a high price to pay for honour, this high price demonstrates how valuable honour is in chivalric societies.

This episodic, smaller-scale combat between pairs of knights concludes with the entrance of Golagros to the battlefield. Some two stanzas are given over to describing Golagros’

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<sup>124</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 231.

gear, reflecting perhaps the feeling that ‘To tell of his deir weid war doutles delite / And also ter for to tell the travalis war tight’ (GAG 887–888). Golagros’ description is unusually detailed, though the text lacks, for instance, the precise sartorial detail of specific textiles and materials, as well as the fanciful elements that appear in Galeron’s description in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* (AOA 378–403).

Thai hynt of his harnese, to helyn his wound;  
 Lechis war nocht to lait, with sawis sa sle.  
 With that, mony fresch freik can to the feild found,  
 With Gologras in his geir, grete of degre;  
 Armyt in rede gold, and rubeis sa round,  
 With mony riche relikis, riale to se.  
 Thair wes on Gologras, quhair he glaid on the ground,  
 Frenyeis of fine silk, fratit full fre.  
 Apone sterand stedis, trappit to the heill,  
 Sexty schalkis full schene  
 Cled in armour sa clene;  
 No wy wantit, I wene,  
 All stuffit in steill.

That berne raid on ane blonk of ane ble quhite,  
 Blyndit all with bright gold and beriallis bright -  
 To tell of his deir weid war doutles delite,  
 And also ter for to tell the travalis war tight.  
 His name and his nobillay wes nocht for to nyte;  
 Thair wes na hathill sa heich, be half ane fute hicht. (GAG 882–900)

So significant is this description that the poet directly addresses the audience:

To tell of his deir weid war doutles delite,  
 And also ter for to tell the travalis war tight.  
 His name and his nobillay wes nocht for to nyte; (GAG 897–899)

Golagros’ physical prowess and understanding of chivalric courtesy issues in the series of interlocking chivalric conceits through which the chivalric combatants gain in honour. Similarly, Golagros’ description reflects the significance of his position in the narrative. Every aspect of his description indicates his beauty and strength; opulent materials are well-incorporated into a resplendent scheme of chivalric virtue. His costume includes luxury textiles (silk) and precious metals (silver, gold), as well as precious stones (rubies, beryls). Like Galeron and Guinevere in the *Awntyrs off Arthur*, Golagros wears rubies; the ‘lord and king of stones

and of all gems.<sup>125</sup> Beryl is ‘best against strife and makes sure that a man cannot be overcome’, and ‘he who that bereth hit shall be much worshipped’.<sup>126</sup> It also appears in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, where it illustrates the violence and beauty of the chivalric contest between Galeron and Gawain:

Hardely then thes hatelese on helmes they hewe.  
Thei beten downe beriles and bourdures bright;  
Shildes on shildres that shene were to shewe,  
Fretted were in fyne golde, thei failen in fight. (AOA 586–589)

Here, the richness of his appearance indicates his prowess as a knight. Golagros appears in a position of authority, surrounded by knights whose appearance similarly suggests this conflation of opulent materials with physical strength.

The contest between Gawain and Golagros is fierce; ultimately, Gawain triumphs by a narrow margin. As a mark of good faith, Golagros invites him into the city. Gawain then humbles himself in trust to Golagros; in so doing, Gawain gains Golagros’ allegiance. Arthur in turn releases him from his allegiance, and, enriched by their participation in this ritualised system of honour, the Arthurian host depart. In the text, each episode navigates the issues introduced by the dais tapestry’s embroidered question, the ‘bright letteris of gold blith unto blent,’ (GAG 68) that ‘makand mencioune quha maist of manhede couth mele’ (GAG 69). It is through this elaborate series of honourable submissions that an answer is provided to the question. Each knight is enriched and elevated through participation in this chivalric scheme. Arthur, Golagros, and Gawain are all the ‘maist of manhede couth mele’ (GAG 69); so too are the Arthurian host and the opposing forces they encounter. The text effectively constructs through both narrative action and textual detail a society that is superlatively chivalric. The opulence of the armour, the courtesy of the knights, the glorification of chivalric violence all contribute to the enactment of a ritualised, public chivalric code. It is through these elements that the chivalric community establishes and affirms, publically, its identity. Opulence plays a significant part in the complex codes of interweaving chivalry present throughout the text. This

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<sup>125</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 123.

<sup>126</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Mediaeval Lapidaries*, p. 28, 72.

text emphasises public gazing; it presents an elaborately ritualistic scheme that centres on spectacle. Knights of superlative quality wear garments of similarly superlative quality; their ‘birny be bright, as bachiler suld ben’ (GAG 94). These elements reflect the duality of chivalric identity, with its courtly and combative elements. The chivalry this system expresses is performative, but not hollowly so; instead, violence and opulence function as integral elements of a complex code. *Golagros and Gawain*, like *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, does not present a critical view of fine clothing or armour. Instead, opulent display appears as an integral element in a scheme of ritualised, public chivalry.

### ***The Greene Knight***

Writing in 1905, George Kittredge characterised *The Carl of Carlisle* and *The Turk and Sir Gawain* as ‘two Middle English romances which deserve a closer study than they have yet received’.<sup>127</sup> Since then, critical interest in the northern Gawain romances has increased significantly. Criticism of these texts frequently takes a comparative focus, providing collective analyses of the northern Gawain romances and of the Gawain romances in the wider canon of Arthurian romance.<sup>128</sup> Jean E. Jost’s work on violence and Sarah Lindsey’s exploration of chivalric failure join earlier research such as R. E. Bennett’s analysis of textual sources and Patricia Ingham’s exploration of the ballad form.<sup>129</sup> Lauren Jessie Chochinov presents a wide-ranging and in-depth analysis of the Gawain figure in a variety of northern English and Scots

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<sup>127</sup> George Lyman Kittredge, ‘Disenchantment by Decapitation’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 18/68 (1905), 1–14, at p. 1.

<sup>128</sup> Raymond H. Thompson, ‘“Muse on þi Mirrou...”: The Challenge of the Outlandish Stranger in the English Arthurian Verse Romances’, *Folklore*, 87/2 (1976), pp. 201–08; Raymond H. Thompson, ‘The Perils of Good Advice: The Effect of the Wise Counsellor upon the Conduct of Gawain’, *Folklore*, 90/1 (1979), 71–76.

<sup>129</sup> Jean E. Jost, ‘The Role of Violence in *Aventure: The Ballad of King Arthur and King of Cornwall* and *The Turke and Gowin*’, *Arthurian Interpretations*, 2/2 (1988), 47–57; Sarah Lindsay, ‘Chivalric Failure in “The Jeaste of Sir Gawain”’, *Arthuriana*, 21/4 (2011), 23–41; R. E. Bennett, ‘The Sources of the “Jeaste of Syr Gawayne”’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 33/1 (1934), 57–63; Patricia Ingham, ‘The World of the Ballad’, *The Review of English Studies*, 8/29 (1957), 22–31.

texts, including *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, in which her discussion of identity and reputation charts the transition between the public and private spaces alternately occupied by Gawain in the text.<sup>130</sup> The northern Gawain romances represent in many respects a cohesive and responsive collection of texts; Gawain appears in all of them, though he does not always occupy a centralised role. These texts do often make sure of an arming ritual, in which dress and visual display play a significant role; in *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain*, *The Greene Knight*, and *King Arthur and King Cornwall*, arming rituals represent a precursory scene initiating a battle or quest. Arming rituals do not occur in *The Carl of Carlisle*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* and *The Awntyrs off Arthur*; in these texts, antagonistic forces appear before the Arthurian community while they are unprepared. These instances are distinct from texts that maintain the quest motif but are less concerned with chivalric combat; in *King Arthur and King Cornwall*, the arming ritual is replaced with an analogous disguising scene. Arming rituals may, as in *The Greene Knight*, occupy several stanzas in an extended scene. They may also, as in *The Jeaste of Sir Gawain* and *The Turk and Sir Gawain*, be reduced to a few short lines. They may be public or private; in *The Green Knight*, Bredbeddle's solitary arming ritual is juxtaposed with Gawain's public celebration of chivalry in the Arthurian court. Arming rituals introduce the chivalric quest or battle through which the accumulation of honour is achieved. In this way, arming rituals facilitate the affirmation of chivalric identities. In the arming ritual, knights clothe themselves in the visual manifestations of knighthood. The liminality of the arming ritual facilitates the convergence of the complex and occasionally antithetical values of the chivalric code.

*The Greene Knight* is a popular retelling of the kernel story found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Raymond H. Thompson characterises it as a 'very mediocre ballad version of the great alliterative poem', though Thomas Hahn suggests that 'one or more intermediate versions' may exist between the two texts.<sup>131</sup> Gillian Rogers notes the condensed nature of the later text in

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<sup>130</sup> Chochinov, 'A Reconsideration of Sir Gawain'.

<sup>131</sup> Thompson, 'The Challenge of the Outlandish Stranger in the English Arthurian Verse Romances', p. 202; Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 310.

her comparison of the two texts' depiction of the Beheading game.<sup>132</sup> This chapter focuses on dress in *The Green Knight*, though selective comparative reference is made at times to particularly significant instances of clothing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The topic of dress, as well as the appearance and significance of the Green Knight's emblems and colour, has long provided a rich topic for scholarly discussion. An overwhelming amount of criticism has discussed the greenness and the appearance of the Green Knight. This discussion is wide-ranging and extends over several decades, and for this reason, notable examples are provided here to contextualise the discussion surrounding this text which I utilise in a comparative capacity. Earlier examples, such as Douglas M. Moon's 'Clothing Symbolism in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"' and Stoddard Malarkey and J. Barre Toelken's 'Gawain and the Green Girdle' have been added to more recently by more scholars interested in the topic of appearance in the great poem.<sup>133</sup> Helmut Nickel's 'Why was the Green Knight Green?', provides an obvious point of reference for this section, as does Laurie Finkle's examination of the gaze and masculinity in relation to the alliterative text's Sir Bertilak.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, the work of Derek Brewer on the arming topos and the colour green contains many valuable insights in reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>135</sup> This chapter does not, however, focus on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In light of this high amount of scholarly attention, this chapter instead contributes to this discussion through a close and at times comparative analysis of its less-studied textual analogue, *The Green Knight*. In this way, though there has been intense critical discussion of dress and of identity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, my own thematic exploration and approach has not yet appeared in scholarship.

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<sup>132</sup> Gillian Rogers, 'The Grene Knight', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, Arthurian Studies (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997, rpr. 2007), pp. 365–372.

<sup>133</sup> Douglas M. Moon, 'Clothing Symbolism in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 66/3 (1965), 334–347; Stoddard Malarkey and J. Barre Toelken, 'Gawain and the Green Girdle', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 63/1 (1964), 14–20;

<sup>134</sup> Helmut Nickel, 'Why was the Green Knight Green?', *Arthurian Interpretations*, 2/2 (1988), 58–64; Laurie Finke, '(Dis)embodying Men: The Visual Regimes of Homosociality in the Middle Ages', in *Fleshy Things and Spiritual Matters: Studies on the Medieval Body in Honour of Margaret Bridges*, ed. by Nicole Nyffenegger and Katrin Rupp (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 209–228.

<sup>135</sup> See: Derek Brewer, 'Arming II: The Arming Topos as Literature', and 'The Colour Green', in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997, rpr. 2007), pp. 175–180 and pp. 181–190.



Like many of the northern Gawain romances, *The Greene Knight* survives in the Percy Folio (British Library Additional MS 27879, pp. 203-10) and was most likely composed for recitation.<sup>136</sup> *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is thought to have been composed in the later fourteenth century, and survives in a single manuscript: Cotton MS Nero A.x (ff. 94v-130r).<sup>137</sup> Though the shorter text lacks the richness of the alliterative *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the texts are thematically similar. In both texts, the Arthurian community is challenged by an external threat; in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Bertilak occupies this role, while in *The Greene Knight* it is Sir Bredbeddle. Gawain unwittingly travels to the Green Knight's castle. There, he is tempted and takes, in secrecy, the lady's gift. This gift is in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* a green girdle; in *The Greene Knight* it is a white lace. He ultimately meets with the Green Knight, is tried and spared. Bertilak and Gawain take leave of each other, while Sir Bredbeddle instead returns with Gawain to the Arthurian court. Bredbeddle subsequently appears in *King Arthur and King Cornwall* as a knight of the Round Table. Morgan le Fay is not present in *The Green Knight*, and her role is instead transferred to the otherwise unknown Agostes, a figure who does not appear in any other romance.<sup>138</sup> With the absence of Morgan le Fay, *The Greene Knight* is displaced from the wider alliterative tradition, and in this context, Bredbeddle takes on some aspects of a Fair Unknown figure; the individualistic challenge he poses to the Arthurian court is neutralised with his induction into the chivalric community.

Two arming rituals appear in the text. The first of these occurs in Bredbeddle's departure for the Arthurian court:

Earlye, soone as itt was day,  
 The Knight dressed him full gay,  
 Umstrode a full good steede;  
 Helme and hawberke both he hent,  
 A long fauchion verament  
 To fend them in his neede.

That was a jolly sight to seene,

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<sup>136</sup> For further details on manuscript and origin, see Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 309.

<sup>137</sup> For further details on the manuscript and date of composition, see Andrew and Waldron, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, pp. 1-4.

<sup>138</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 330.

When horsse and armour was all greene,  
And weapon that hee bare.  
When that burne was harnisht still,  
His countenance he became right well,  
I dare itt safelye sweare. (TGK 73–84)

Bredbeddle equips himself with combative articles and accoutrements: ‘When horsse and armour was all greene, / And weapon that hee bare’ (TGK 80–81); ‘helme and hawberke both hehent, / a long fauchion verament’ (TGK 77–78). This is the same weapon that is given to Gingalain by Gawain in *Lybeaus Desconus*, and appears here with the same connotations of chivalry and exoticness.<sup>139</sup> The text celebrates this enactment of chivalric ritual: Bredbeddle leaps out of bed ‘earlye, soone as itt was day’ (TGK 73), dresses himself ‘full gay’ (TGK 74) and rides a ‘full good steede’ (TGK 76). Both public and private viewers are encouraged by this spectacular enactment of chivalric ritual. Publicly, Bredbeddle presents ‘a jolly sight to seene’ (TGK 79), but he is also enriched by the private enactment of this chivalric ritual:

When that burne was harnisht still,  
His countenance he became right well,  
I dare itt safelye sweare (TGK 82–84)

The arming ritual establishes Bredbeddle’s chivalric identity in relation to the Arthurian court; in this way, it foreshadows and facilitates Bredbeddle’s eventual integration into the courtly community. *The Greene Knight* constructs a connection between Bredbeddle and the Arthurian knights. The knights appear with ‘helme on head and brand bright’ (TGK 22), echoing Bredbeddle’s ‘helme and hawberke’ (TGK 76). This connection serves Bredbeddle well on his arrival at the Arthurian court; the chivalric aspects of this appearance results in Arthur inviting Bredbeddle to dine with them. The dining scene constitutes a kind of ritualised test through which the chivalric community identifies outsiders. Bredbeddle ‘like a knight himselfe he feeds’ (TGK 175); his manners are leisurely and measured: ‘With long time reasnable’ (TGK 180). Here, Bredbeddle confirms with his actions the associations suggested by his appearance; he is polite, courteous, and well-mannered. This demonstration of chivalric conduct is recognised and acknowledged by the chivalric society; they remark, “‘this knight is nothing unstable”” (TGK

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<sup>139</sup> For a full description of the falchion’s significance, see Chapter One, ‘*Lybeaus Desconus*’.

186). The chivalric community subsequently correctly identifies him as belonging to the same courtly continuum. This effect is repeated in *The Awntyrs off Arthur*; the text similarly establishes a parity of appearance between the Arthurian court and its individual challenger, Galeron, whose lavish and opulent clothing echoes the rich apparel of the Arthurian court. Like *The Greene Knight*, *The Awntyrs off Arthur* concludes with the integration of the individual challenger into the Round Table scheme. By contrast, the analogous passages of *Gawain and the Green Knight* does not begin with an arming ritual; Bertilak simply arrives, as the text positions him primarily as the interrupter of the Arthurian feast, the ‘mayn meruayle’ (GGK 94) which Arthur wishes to see. Like Bredbeddle, Bertilak’s appearance provokes awe but horror also; though ‘wonder of his whe men hafe,’ (GGK 147) Bertilak is an ‘aghlich mayster’ (GGK 136). As such, he is not invited to dine with the Arthurian court, and not given the opportunity to demonstrate his courtliness. This reflects the tensions present at the conclusion of the narrative; unlike Bredbeddle, Bertilak is not assimilated into the chivalric Arthurian scheme.

This characterisation continues in the knights’ appearance and dress. Bredbeddle’s costume does contain elements of strangeness; the green garb signifies his exotic nature (“‘heer is a venterous knight / all his vesture is greene!’” GGK 104–105). This represents however a solitary element of strangeness in what is otherwise a thoroughly chivalric description. Bertilak’s monstrous size and marvellous hue neutralises the chivalric elements of his appearance; or, at least, they problematise the court’s ‘reading’ of Bertilak’s identity through his appearance:

Per hales at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,  
 On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe;  
 Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,  
 And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,  
 Half-etayn in erde I hope þat he were,  
 Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,  
 And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myzt ride;  
 For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,  
 Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,  
 And alle his fetures folzande in forme, þat he hade,  
 Ful clene.  
 For wonder of his hwe men hade,  
 Set in his semblaunt sene;

He ferde as freke were fade,  
And oueral enker grene. (GGK 136–150)

Though the Green Knight is a monstrous size and unnatural colour, he is beautiful and appears with chivalric articles. This juxtaposition between courtly and uncourtly elements continues in his costume:

Ande al grayþed in grene þis gome and his wedes:  
A strayt cote ful streȝt þat stek on his sides,  
A meré mantile abof, mensked withinne,  
With pelude pured apert, þe pane ful clene  
With blyþe blaunner ful bryȝt, and his hod boþe,  
þat watz laȝt fro his lokkez and layde on his schulderes;  
Heme wel-haled hose of þat same grene,  
þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder  
Of bryȝt golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,  
And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides.  
And alle his vesture uerayly watz clene verdure,  
Boþe þe barres of his belt and oþer blyþe stones  
þat were richely rayled in his aray clene  
Aboutte hymself and his sadel, vpon silk werkez;  
þat were to tor for to telle of tryfles þe halue  
þat were enbrauded abof, wyth bryddes and flyȝes,  
With gay gaudi of grene, þe golde ay inmyddes.  
þe pendauntes of his paytture, þe proude cropure,  
His molaynes and alle þe metail anamayld was þenne,  
þe steropes þat he stod on stayned of þe same,  
And his arsounz al after, and his aþel scurtes,  
þat euer glemered and glent al of grene stones. (GGK 151–172)

Unlike Bredbeddle, Bertilak wears no armour. Bertilak's coat is fashionably tight, perhaps reflecting the martial silhouette popular in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England.<sup>140</sup> The mantle that covers it is richly adorned with ermine, indicating Bertilak's rank. Bertilak's hood is thrown back and the fur of the mantle is 'pane ful clene' (GGK 154), inviting the gaze of the watching court. Rich materials, precious stones and metals provide visual representations of Bertilak's wealth. The silk supporting his saddle is embroidered with 'bryddes and flyȝes' (GGK 167). Such subjects are often seen in clothing; the cloak that Galeron's lady wears in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* is embroidered with 'birdes ful bolde' (AOA 367). These details are more unusual in saddle materials. So far, Bertilak's costume is not particularly extraordinary; the tight jacket and fur-trimmed mantle/surcoat are usual in the later medieval period. Similarly, ermine,

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<sup>140</sup> Blanc, 'The Invention of Fashion', pp. 164–169; Norris, *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, p. 358.

gold and precious stones are popular elements of descriptive display, frequently appearing in romance. The precious stones are, however, not referred to by name but by colour; like the knight, and the horse (*GGK* 175) they are all green.<sup>141</sup> More details of strangeness appear in Bertilak's subsequent description:

Wheþer, hade he no helme ne hawbergh nauþer  
 Ne no pysan ne no plate þat pented to armes  
 Ne no schafte ne no schelde to schwue ne to smyte;  
 Bot in his on honde he hade a holyn bobbe  
 (þat is grattest in grene when greuez ar bare)  
 And an ax in his oþer, a hoge and vnmete,  
 A spetos sparþe to expoun in spelle quoso myzt.  
 Þe hede of an elnzerde þe large lenkþe hade,  
 Þe grayne al of grene stele and of golde hewen  
 Þe bit burnyst bryzt, with a brod egge  
 As wel schapen to schere as scharp rasores.

(*GGK* 203–213)

Bertilak's lack of armour is emphasised with a series of repeated negatives; he wears no plate, displays no heraldic devices, and carries no shield and no spear. His head is uncovered and his weapon is not a chivalric falchion, but an axe. Bredbeddle's costume constitutes a celebration of chivalric convention; the alliterative text instead returns to this chivalric convention with a subversive perspective. With his lack of chivalric accoutrements, Bertilak constructs deliberately a disparity between himself and the courtly community. Unlike Bredbeddle, he occupies vigorously his role as external challenger.

In both texts, Gawain's departure from the Arthurian court is prefaced with a detailed arming ritual. In *The Greene Knight*, this scene constitutes a response to the previous arming ritual. Bredbeddle's solitary arming ritual illustrates his isolation from the Arthurian court;

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<sup>141</sup> Brewer explores extensively the significance of Bertilak's green hue in his essay, 'The Colour Green'; for this reason, as well as that of the numerous other publications discussing this and related areas, I have not extensively discussed it here. For a full account of the Green Knight's appearance, see Douglas M. Moon, 'Clothing Symbolism in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 66/3 (1965), 334–47; for a discussion of the significance of Gawain's armour, and a comparison to Chaucer's Knight, see Laura F. Hodges, 'Costume Rhetoric in the Knight's Portrait: Chaucer's Every-Knight and His Bismotered Gypon', *The Chaucer Review*, 29/3 (1995), 274–302; for a discussion of gender performativity in relation to the gaze, see Gail Ashton, 'The Perverse Dynamics of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Arthuriana*, 15/3 (2005), 51–74; while a broader discussion of boundaries and space can be found in A. C. Spearing's 'Public and Private Spaces in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Arthuriana*, 4/2 (1994), 138–45. This is, of course, a text and an area that has achieved a great amount of critical attention; for this reason, these texts are provided as meaningful and representative examples of a wider discussion.

Gawain's arming ritual constitutes a public affirmation of courtly identity. Bredbeddle arms himself; the community invests Gawain with armour and gear. The garments brought to Gawain are in both texts opulent and rich:

I tell withouten scorne.  
His bridle was with stones sett,  
With gold and pearle overfrett,  
And stones of great vertue.  
He was of a furley kind.  
His stirropps were of silke of Ynd;  
I tell you this tale for true.

When he rode over the mold,  
His geere glistered as gold. (TGK 268–278)

The shorter text here provides a full description. Gawain's bridle is richly adorned with precious stones and materials; his stirrups are silk. Though pearls were popular throughout the Middle Ages for use in jewellery and embroidery, they are absent in the lapidaries of the period,<sup>142</sup> and do not appear in Evans' and Serjeanton's compilation of English lapidaries,<sup>143</sup> or Arne Zettersten's edition of MS Eng. misc. e. 558.<sup>144</sup> Despite this, pearls were imbued with a wealth of religious symbolism during the medieval period as the various interpretations of its allegorical appearance in the *Pearl* poem—itsself linked to *The Green Knight* through *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—demonstrate. The materials of his bridle echo the twelve gates of heaven, and the city beyond; they are 'With gold and pearle overfrett,' (TGK 727) suggestive of the twelve gates and twelve pearls of the heavenly city.<sup>145</sup> Gawain's bridle is of Indian silk; 'Ynd' also suggest the indigo 'Ynde' shade that appears in a number of romances, notably *Sir Launfal*, in which it denotes Tryamour's exoticism and wealth. These rich materials demonstrate the significance and wealth of the chivalric community from which Gawain now departs. The joint action with which they are presented illustrates the care with which the community prepares the departing individual. Characterised by a single-mindedness of purpose, the court appears as a singular 'they': 'They brought Sir Gawaine a steed,' (TGK 268), and, in

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<sup>142</sup> David Humphrey, 'Pearls', *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles*, pp. 412–413.

<sup>143</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*.

<sup>144</sup> Zettersten, 'A Middle English Lapidary'.

<sup>145</sup> *King James Bible*, Revelation 21:21, last accessed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018  
<<https://www.biblestudytools.com>> .

the alliterative text ‘Penne set þay þe sabatounz vpon þe segge fotez’ (GGK 574) and ‘Then þay schewed hym þe schelde’ (GGK 619, emphases my own). The analogous section in the alliterative text is extensive and widely-developed, and the pentangle shield and its magnificent accompaniments are much discussed in scholarship. Gawain’s armour appears in some detail. Lavish descriptions of clothing rendered in precise terms appear throughout the three stanzas (GGK 566–669). Certain details are shared by both; in *The Greene Knight*, Gawain’s ‘geere glistered as gold’ (TGK 278) while in *Gawain and the Green Knight*, ‘miche watz þe gyld gere þat glent þeralofte’ (GGK 569). Similarly, ‘his bridle was with stones sett, / With gold and pearle overfrett, / And stones of great vertue’ (TGK 271–273); while ‘his harnays watz ryche: / Þe lest lachet oþer loupe lemed of golde’ (GGK 590–591). The alliterative text presents a detailed image of Gawain’s finery. Gold is the most frequently-mentioned material; he wears ‘gold sporez’ (GGK 590), a symbol of his knighthood, and his saddle ‘glemed ful fayly with mony golde frenges,’ (GGK 598). Additionally, the band of embroidered silk attached to his helmet is:

Enbrawdē and bunden wyth þe best gemmez  
 On brode sylkyn borde, and bryddez on semez,  
 As papjavez paynted peruyng bitwene,  
 Tortors and trulofez entayled so þyk  
 As mony burde þeraboutē had ben seuen wynter  
 In toune.  
 Þe cercle watz more o prys  
 Þat diamantez a deuys  
 Þat boþe were bryzt and broun. (GGK 609–618)

Gawain’s circlet is adorned with two diamonds clear and brown; in this instance, this most likely means free of all tints. Like the diamonds that Ellene wears in *Lybeaus Desconus*, these indicate strength, virtue, and a resistance to temptation and poison.<sup>146</sup> The untarnished aspect of the gems indicates their superior quality and high material value; they also emphasise the purity of the untarnished chivalric virtue. Gawain’s shield is, like Emaré’s robe, a special object; it is adorned with an unusual design that has obvious symbolic significance. The shield is of ‘schyr goulez’ (GGK 619) with the pentangle in ‘pure golde hwez’ (GGK 620); together, this scheme

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<sup>146</sup> Evans and Serjeantson, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, p. 83.

of red and gold is radiant, clearly-shining, and imbued with the highest of associations. Red is the colour of warfare, of spilled blood and martyrdom; it is therefore, the colour of the knightly ruling classes and all those in the scheme of chivalry. It is also an aristocratic colour; much-loved by the medieval elite, it signifies royal and regal power. It is also symbolic, through the apostolic tongues of fire and the Burning Bush, of God's divine love, and of the virtue of *caritas*.<sup>147</sup> Perhaps most relevant to its use here, however, is the superior place it occupies among the heraldic colours. The Sicilian herald Jean Courteois, writes:

Among the virtues, red signifies noble birth, honour, valor, generosity and daring. It is also the color of justice and charity, in memory of our Lord Jesus Christ. [...] among the planets, Mars, among the signs, the Lion [...] combined with other colors, red ennobles them. On a piece of clothing it gives great courage to the one who wears it. Paired with green, red is beautiful and signifies youth and joie de vivre. With blue, wisdom and fidelity. With yellow, avarice and greed. Red does not go well with black, but with gray. It is the sign of great hopes. And with white, these are two very beautiful colors, signs of the highest virtues.<sup>148</sup>

These connotations of courage, glory, and honour reflect the position Gawain occupies in the chivalric community. He represents the emblem of their values, the visual manifestation of their commitment to this courtly code. His subsequent testing at the hands of the Green Knight leads to the replacing of red with green, as the foremost chivalric colour gives way to the new colour of mutability and change.

Gawain arrives at Bredbeddle's castle and is tempted by the lady of the castle. The gift she offers him is not a green girdle but a white lace. This is not an article of dress, but instead an 'elaborately worked, ornamental braid used as a cincture or belt, or perhaps as a fastener (as in "shoelace").'<sup>149</sup> This scene constitutes in some respects a third arming ritual; like Bredbeddle departing for the Arthurian court, or Gawain leaving the Arthurian court, Gawain here 'arms' himself with accoutrements and articles in preparation for the conflict ahead. These actions are, however, outside the chivalric continuum, and thus problematic:

'For heere I have a lace of silke:

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<sup>147</sup> See Pastoureau, *Red*, pp. 61–63.

<sup>148</sup> Jean Courteois, 'Le Blason des Couleurse Narmes, Livrees et Devises', quoted in Pastoureau, *Red*, p. 79.

<sup>149</sup> Hahn, *Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 33.



It is as white as any milke,  
And of a great value.'  
Shee saith, 'I dare safelye sweare  
There shall noe man doe you deere  
When you have it upon you.'

Sir Gawaine spake mildlye in the place:  
He thanked the Lady and tooke the lace,  
And promised her to come againe.

(*TGK* 396–404)

Like *Lybeaus Desconus*' Dame Amour, the lady invests the hero with non-chivalric gifts designed to impede his progress. Here, Gawain is not dressed by the many hands of his community that are unified in their single, joint action. Instead, the lady appears as a singular, individualistic force that challenges the unity of the chivalric community. The text subverts the significance of the arming ritual by displacing it from its chivalric context. The arming ritual in Gawain's departure from the Arthurian court positions him as their champion and representative; the bedchamber scene subverts his associations, undermining Gawain's position within the courtly community:

Then spake that Ladye gay,  
Saith, 'Tell me some of your journey;  
Your succour I may bee.  
If itt be poynt of any warr,  
There shall noe man doe you noe darr  
And yee wil be governed by mee.'

(*TGK* 390–395)

In return for protection, Gawain takes on the associations of the Lady; he wears her symbols and, in so doing, accepts her authority. This evokes the conduct of *Sir Launfal's* Dame Tryamour, who sends Launfal back to the Arthurian court bearing her own heraldic devices (*SL* 328–330) and in so doing, makes plain visually Launfal's changing allegiances. The privacy of this exchange juxtaposes the public celebration of chivalry inherent in Gawain's departure from the Arthurian court. Instead, the secretive nature of Gawain's conduct is emphasised repeatedly in the text, as the acquisition of the lace is repeated three times. First 'He thanked the Lady and tooke the lace' (*TGK* 403); then, 'ever privilye he held the lace' (*TGK* 426) and again, 'Hee thanked her, and tooke the lace' (*TGK* 435). Removed from the chivalric continuum, Gawain conceals the lace and rides into uncertainty: 'he knew noe whitt the way' (*TGK* 437).

Gawain's failure and redemption constitute, paradoxically, a confirmation of the chivalric code. Though Bredbeddle is initially isolated from the Arthurian community, Bredbeddle is initiated into the chivalric community. He requests of Gawain, "take me to Arthurs court with thee – / then were all to my pay" (TGK 490–491). He is incorporated into the Arthurian brotherhood; analogous texts, such as *King Arthur and King Cornwall*, subsequently position Bredbeddle within the Round Table grouping. In so doing, Bredbeddle joins the *Awntyrs' Galeron* and the *Turk's Gromer* as a figure whose antagonism towards the Arthurian community facilitates a performative celebration of chivalry. Divested of his association with Morgan le Fay, Bredbeddle is not an external challenger to the Arthurian scheme. Instead, he appears before the Arthurian court as a kind of Fair Unknown, who seeks and acquires a position in the courtly community. In joining the Round Table, the text formalises the connection drawn throughout the narrative between Bredbeddle and the Arthurian court through his clothing and the text's successive series of arming rituals. In the shorter Gawain romances, the arming ritual functions as a means through which chivalric societies affirm their identities. *The Greene Knight* focuses on the ritualised public nature of the arming ritual in establishing the individual in relation to the chivalric community.

### ***Clothing Chivalric Identities in the Northern Gawain Romances***

This section presents a summary of my own original conclusions and analysis regarding dress, identity and visual display in the northern Gawain romances. The northern Gawain romances include both lengthy, richly-alliterated poems and less opulently-adorned texts. As I have demonstrated, the longer alliterative texts are textually embellished with evocative, detailed description; the shorter Gawain romances contain fewer instances of sustained description of visual or textual display, though the use of such instances often remains in a condensed form. Longer texts such as *The Awntyrs of Arthur, Golagros and Gawain* and *Sir*

*Gawain and the Green Knight* present dress in extended descriptions of precious materials, which may, as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, appear in the context of an arming ritual. Clothing in the less densely-alliterative texts is depicted in less detail, but may, as in *The Green Knight*, still remain evocatively-rendered. The chivalric focus of these romances lends unity to the collection. This chapter demonstrates that fine dress and opulent visual display appear within these texts as characteristics through which chivalric societies establish and affirm their identity. This chapter argues that opulent dress determines whether outsiders may be placed in the chivalric scheme; it is this calculation that differentiates between the external threats presented by the courtly Sir Galeron and Sir Bredbeddle (and to a lesser extent Sir Bertilak), and the uncourtly energies of ghosts such as Guinevere's mother. This chapter suggests that the incorporation of the knights Galeron and Bredbeddle into the Arthurian court is foreshadowed by their fine apparel; though initially separate from the community, they indicate, with their dress, their connection to the chivalric tradition. Other figures, such as the ghost of Guinevere's mother, cannot be incorporated into the Arthurian community. She must depart, though her message remains: 'For al thi fressh foroure,' she warns, 'Thus dight shul ye be' (AOA 166–169). This chapter argues that the ghost presents these opulent images as beautiful but transient. This chapter argues that though the Arthurian court's use of fine materials and visual display facilitate communication, recognition and reintegration between chivalric communities, the significance of dress is limited to the earthly realm. Beyond it, alliances, kinship, and identity disintegrate.

## CONCLUSION

### *Dress, Identity and Visual Display in Middle English Romance*

This study of dress and visual display in Middle English romance has endeavoured to demonstrate that dress functions in romance as a deliberate and self-conscious expression of inner identity. This thesis has examined a range of romance groupings to draw conclusions through close engagement with a number of carefully-selected textual examples. The instances of clothing are examined with reference to socio-cultural-historical detail. The texts I have surveyed demonstrate an awareness of contemporary fashions and in some cases may represent a deliberate attempt by the poet at ‘updating’ the material details of a now outdated older source. This may represent, as both Eagleson and Purdie suggest, an effort at realism.<sup>1</sup> It is certainly true that these materials are drawn from real life, and (as I have attempted to illustrate) demonstrate a wealth of socio-cultural-historical material on which my comparative focus draws. As I have done throughout this thesis, it is certainly helpful to consider these descriptions in relation to contemporary examples of and attitudes towards dress. I would suggest, however, that this does not necessarily indicate that these vast catalogues of rich materials function primarily to satisfy stylistic concerns with ‘realism’. That goal seems, to me, to be at odds with the attitudes of romance. Rather, I believe these opulent articles furnish instead the splendour of the romance topos. To elucidate this view further, I suggest it is helpful to look forwards to modernity and our own reconstructed views of the past.

It is worth considering here the attitudes evoked by the ever-present movement of fashion in the present day. Like Fortune’s wheel, fashion revolves. According to fashion theory, the styles of yesterday—once desirable, aesthetically pleasing, and of-the-moment—are now primitive, parochial and odious. The unfashionable is also the ugly, as the beauty construct is both particularly dependent on contextualisation and subject to taste. As identified by James Laver, fluctuations of perception render an article ‘smart’ while it is currently in fashion,

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<sup>1</sup> Eagleson, ‘Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances’, p. 341; Purdie, *Ipomadon*, p. lv.

‘hideous’ ten years after it is in fashion, ‘ridiculous’ after twenty, ‘amusing’ after thirty, and ‘romantic’ and ‘beautiful’ one hundred to one hundred and fifty years after it is in fashion.<sup>2</sup> These rapid revolutions in taste are resonant also to the attitudes displayed within the medieval period. This provides a context for the ‘updating’ in Middle English romance of unfashionable, older garments derived from earlier source texts. According to fluctuations in taste, these older garments are also ‘ugly’ and, as such, find no function in furthering the romance form’s scheme of superlative splendour. The view appearing in romance is nostalgic: it often extends backwards to an era that is impermanently perfect. Just as modern historical dramas—which often present, like medieval romance, a nostalgic view of the past—late-medieval depictions of earlier medieval realities are also subject to taste. When creating costumes for romantic heroines or other characters whose roles depend on beauty, costume designers often use colour patterns and designs that appeal to modern tastes: the intention being, in most instances, to avoid creating a costume that will strike the viewer as ‘ugly’. To this end, the more elaborate designs of some nineteenth-century fabrics vary rarely appear, unless in costumes for ‘ugly’ characters. Aesthetic appeal, and a nostalgic view of the past, dictate the shape taken by the past, in which creators and consumers of historical narratives discard dissonant elements, emphasising instead elements that appeal to contemporary sensibilities. I suggest, therefore, that it is also taste that informs the ‘updating’ of garments present in late-medieval English adaptations of earlier French texts.

Though they ornament and add interest to the verse, the vast and beautiful catalogues of opulent materials in romance do not, however, exist solely for this function. Medieval romance grows out of a context immersed in visual significance, and it is the product of a world that delights in the visually performative. Contemporary elites dress in recognition of a society of gazers and gazed-upon. Embedded within their apparel are elaborate statements of power, status, and identity. The messages could also be simpler: in some continental countries, women

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<sup>2</sup> See: James Laver, *Taste and Fashion: From the French Revolution to the Present Day*, new and revised edition (London: G. G. Harrap, 1945).

who were hoping to receive offers of marriage wore the colour green about their person.<sup>3</sup> This preoccupation with signs and signals—messages through appearance—appeared at every level of medieval society. It was codified, among the elite, in the visual language of heraldry. It was also found, among the lowest levels, in those excluded from society and in the stripes and parti-colours that signified visually an individual's otherness. As Michel Pastoureau states:

In medieval dress, everything means something: the fabrics (material, texture, source, decoration), the pieces and forms, the colors (quality of the dyes, solidity, luminosity, tones, and shades), the work of cutting and assembling, the dimensions, the accessories, and, of course, how the clothes are worn. It is a matter of using conventional and always carefully coded signs to express a certain number of values and to ensure the corresponding verification of them.<sup>4</sup>

These significances contextualise the rich garments and materials of the romance genre. The act of dressing represents for knights in romance the construction of a public identity. Ipomadon chooses, deliberately, to dress himself in regal red velvet before arriving at the Fere's court; Galeron chooses, deliberately, to dress himself and his lady in fine materials before appearing before the Arthurian court. In both instances, the dressers seek to achieve something: Ipomadon hopes to win the love of the Fere lady, while Galeron seeks to regain the lands lost to him through conquest. By dressing richly in royal scarlet, expensive velvet, and fashionable styles, Ipomadon presents himself as noble, beautiful and rich. He is, his dress proclaims, worthy of a noble lady's love. By dressing himself in rich armour, adorned with silver and precious stones, Galeron presents himself as a knight of honour: he is militarily threatening but positioned firmly in the courtly sphere, and as such, worthy of Arthur's respect. Both instances represent a kind of wilful self-fashioning. Not only do Ipomadon and Galeron seek to manipulate, before others, their identity, but they also seek to confer that identity upon themselves. These attempts are successful: as the happy culminations of the romance genre make plain, Ipomadon and Galeron are what they want to be, and both developments are initiated through clothing.

For the nobility of the Middle Ages, dress represented a significant element for the formulation and maintaining of aristocratic identity. In some respects, this would result in

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<sup>3</sup> Pastoureau, *Green*, pp. 75–76.

<sup>4</sup> Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth*, p. xiii.

codified languages such as heraldry. D. A. L. Morgan concludes that ‘Armorial bearings were the accepted hallmark of gentility—both lordly and non-lordly—and to the heralds the armigerous world comprised all ranks from duke to gentleman.’<sup>5</sup> Significant though heraldry is for the knightly classes, wider forms of visual display—such as clothing, dress, and fashion—are also fundamental to the construction of aristocratic identity. Medieval aristocrats were enormous consumers: some calculations see them disposing yearly of an amount more than ten times of the peacetime budget of the state.<sup>6</sup> Not all of this, of course, was spent on clothing and textiles, though a sizeable amount was. To clothe themselves and those in their household, the aristocracy and the gentry bought a vast amount of materials ranging from cheap woollens to high-quality imported textiles such as Mediterranean silks and Low Countries linen. The most high-ranking among the aristocracy were more likely to incorporate expensive silks and fashionable furs into their dress, increasing significantly the cost of their apparel.<sup>7</sup>

The attitudes underlying such expenditures are complex and at times contradictory. As indicated in the sumptuary laws and work of chroniclers and preachers, a concern with verisimilitude influenced attitudes towards dress throughout the late Middle Ages. To preserve social distinctions and impede the disintegration of social order, dressers of all ranks had a responsibility to demonstrate, truthfully, their social status through dress, though simultaneously exhortations existed against the luxuries and lavishness of rich dress.<sup>8</sup> The scepticism with which aristocratic adopters of modest dress were greeted, and the accusations of avarice and miserly conduct that accompanied them, demonstrate that transgressions on either side of the social scale were discouraged by medieval society.<sup>9</sup> This attitude contextualises the noble classes’ almost exclusive emphasis on luxury and opulence. By the late medieval period, however, aristocrats also embraced enthusiastically the opportunities provided by rich dress to

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<sup>5</sup> D. A. L. Morgan, ‘The Individual Style of the English Gentleman’, in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Michael Jones (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), pp. 15–35, at p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> For some of these negative perspectives on fine dress, as well as an account of their regulation and control, see: Scattergood, ‘Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages’.

<sup>9</sup> Further details of the modest dress movement, and its reception in medieval England, can be found in Veale, *The English Fur Trade*, p. 4.

influence, to impress, and to control. ‘Rich and elaborate dress was an easy way for the wealthy to advertise social superiority’ and silks became ‘part of the currency of power and patronage’, with valuable materials being accumulated, traded, and given as gifts between elites to cement alliances.<sup>10</sup> Members of the gentry also demonstrated similar concerns with dress and display, as indicated by their enthusiastic use of heraldry.<sup>11</sup>

Rich dress was a symbol of superior social identity, and the wearing of it signified one’s own superiority. Through the luxuriousness and stylishness of its construction, the medieval noble’s clothing declared, loudly, not just his own elevated position, but his own suitability to occupy that role. To his superiors, inferiors, and to himself, the aristocrat’s richly-ornamented clothing functioned as a visual reminder of the ordering that was essential for the governing and cohesion of society, and of his own role in securing and maintaining that stability. These tensions contextualise and inform the lavish descriptions of opulent clothing appearing in Middle English romance. This genre is particularly focused on the dealings of an elite class—both real and imagined—and, perhaps for this reason, this genre imitates with such precision both the material details and sociocultural significance of medieval aristocratic dress. Like their historical counterparts, elites in medieval literature utilise dress to fashion identity: from the bold aspirations of the young Fair Unknown who seeks almost instinctively the armour that signifies knighthood, to the fine clothing, lost and regained, that represents royalty in the Breton *lais*, and to the opulence and richness that provide the means through which chivalric societies in the northern Gawain romances affirm their identities; in every instance, dress represents the externalisation, through visibility, of inner identity. This significance resonates beyond the Middle Ages. In the early modern period, medieval attitudes towards clothing continued to survive.<sup>12</sup> The survival of sumptuary legislation into the seventeenth century demonstrates that

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<sup>10</sup> Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain*, p. 247.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Tolley, ‘Visual Culture’, in *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 167–182, at p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> See: Hayward, *Clothing and the Law in Henry VIII’s England*; Susan Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003) and *The Anatomy of Fashion: Dressing the Body From the Renaissance to Today* (Oxford: Berg, 2009).



preoccupations with dressing for one's rank continued beyond the medieval period.<sup>13</sup> By the sixteenth century, these attitudes were well-established enough to be rendered into maxims for Shakespeare's Polonius:

Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not expressed in fancy; rich not gaudy;  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
And they in France of the best rank and station  
Are of all most select and generous chief in that.<sup>14</sup>

Clothing, therefore, 'speaks': colour, textile, style and context converge to imbue garments with a variety of significances and possible interpretations. Although dress can be manipulated to conceal the wearer and confound the gazer, its 'voice' is never silent. In solitude, the significance of clothing remains, as even the absence of clothing becomes, in and of itself, a statement. In this climate, the wearing of clothing becomes a performative action in which the act of dressing confers identity upon the wearer. Dress facilitates the transformation of the wearer into both gazer and gazed-upon, which are interchangeable roles simultaneously embodied by the clothed self. Dress is the visual codification of identity: it can convey a series of ideas, demonstrate loyalty to a set of principles, or assert affiliations. Dress facilitates the gazer's and gazed-upon's value judgements, conferring upon the wearer myriad ways in which to assert identity. In every instance, the essential premise of dress remains unchanged: the act of dressing represents the creation of a narrative and it is through dress that the self-mythologising of the individual takes place. Value judgements inform and maintain the impulses surrounding dress. The selection of articles represents an assertion of identity: the choice of scent (*this* brand, not *that* brand), the choice of material (silk: rare and therefore valuable), the range of colours (*my* favourite) are ways in which the dresser formulates their own sense of identity, both internally for their own conception of self, and externally for the gazer's watching eye. Artifice cannot influence the qualities with which appearance is invested, as no garment is inherently 'flattering'. No garment is inherently anything. Instead, the significance lies, always, in the

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<sup>13</sup> Herman Freudenberger, 'Fashion, Sumptuary Laws, and Business', *The Business History Review*, 37/1 (1963), 37–48.

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, second edition, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York, NY: Norton, 2008), 1.3.70–74.

gazed-upon form. In these ways, dress represents the means through which the individual constructs, visually, their own identity; in this society of gazers and gazed-upon, what one is perceived to be (and, crucially, what one perceives one's self to be) is often what one is.

A great deal has, of course, changed since the Middle Ages. A larger number of clothing goods are available and affordable to a greater proportion of society than ever before; similarly, the constant connectivity brought about by the Internet has led to rapid global communication regarding fashion trends. Despite these new developments, the fundamental way in which dressers approach clothing—the instantaneous and simultaneous divisions into gazer and gazed-upon—remains the same. Dress remains the central means through which identity is visually represented. Socio-economic, ethnic, religious, gender and political identities are expressed through clothing: anti-Brexit protesters don hats, shirts and bags emblazoned with the blue and gold of the European Union flag; politicians wear flag-shaped lapel pins to indicate their patriotism; protesters against sexual harassment in the entertainment industry wear black to film awards. In this atmosphere, just as in the medieval period, who you are, what you wear, and the way you wear it, says as much as it ever did. Though the clothes have changed, the significance underpinning the act of dressing has altered very little. Clothing 'speaks' – just as loudly as ever.

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