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Colour, Seeing, and Seeing Colour in Medieval Literature

by

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Abstract

Colour, Seeing, and Seeing Colour in Medieval Literature

This thesis re-approaches medieval literature in terms of its investment in visuality in general and chromatic perception in particular. The introduction raises the philosophical problem of colour: its status as an object for science, role in perception, and relationship to language and meaning as expressed within inter-subjective evaluation. Two modes of discourse for colour studies of medieval literature are proposed: the phenomenological (from the philosophical tradition of such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty) seeking localised networks and patterns of inter-subjective, embodied, perceptual meanings and values; and linguistic (informed by the philosophical psychology and language philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein), focusing on the lexicalisation of colour experience and creation of semantic distinctions corresponding with changing colour concepts, which in turn shape individual perceptions (both first-hand experience and that of reading).

Part One introduces key medieval ideas and theories pertaining to visual perception in general, and chromatic perception in particular. The authority for, and influence on medieval writers of Plato's *Timaeus*, Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Parva Naturalia*, and relevant biblical material is considered. Subsequent chapters explore Patristic and Neo-Platonist developments in extramissive thought, locating within this tradition the roots of a synthesis of natural philosophy with Christian theology that is found in later medieval thought and its dealings with perception and colour. A key movement in the theology of light in relation to colour is connected to the wider philosophical movement from largely "extramissive" to largely "intromissive" models of perception. This shift in theory and its significance for colour perception is explained in terms of the impact of Aristotle's material colour theory as found in *De anima* and the *De sensu et sensato* section of his *Parva Naturalia* from the late twelfth century onwards. The part concludes with a detailed study of the nineteenth chapter of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's thirteenth-century encyclopedia, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, which provides access to an important range of ideas and sources relevant for accessing the medieval mind in its intellectualized perception of colour. Lastly, such philosophical and theological sources and ideas as are found in Part One are compared with relevant examples from literary texts, ranging from the Middle English poem, *The Parliament of the Three Ages*, to Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre de la Cite des Dames*.

Part Two treats colour perception in relation to a particular medieval phenomenon: the rise of medieval heraldry and the armorial function of the herald. It considers the spiritual and secular ideologies of chivalry and their relationship to armorial displays as found portrayed and construed in various genres of chivalric literature. Texts under discussion include books of chivalry and arms from the early thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, such as those principally indebted to New Testament armorial allegory and motif (from writers such as Ramon Llull to Geoffrey de Charny), to later fourteenth-century treatises employing Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato* to establish a secular hierarchy of chivalric colours.

The study culminates with *Part Three*, offering responses to and discussions of particular medieval fictions in terms of their phenomenological, linguistic and intertextual treatment of colour perception. Medieval texts addressed include, amongst others, *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, and four Middle English metrical romances: *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Amadace*, *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Acknowledgements

Eek though I spoke of love unfelingly,
No wondre is, for it no-thing of newe is;
A blind man can nat juggen wel in hewis.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

Clown. Let her hang me: he that is well hanged in this
world needs to fear no colours.

William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Colour was seen differently in the past. This naïve statement is a useful starting-point for the study because it immediately introduces the philosophical problem of colour as it has been encountered throughout our cultural and intellectual history. Linguistic and philosophical questions: "What do you mean by the word *colour*?" and "What do you mean by the word *see*?" leap to mind, closely followed by and overlapping with philosophical and scientific questions: "What *is* colour?" and "What *is* seeing?" Some appeal to philosophy is necessary from the outset of an attempt to investigate the uses of and reference to colour in the creative arts. There has always been room in our approach to and understanding of colour, chromatic vision, and colour language, for more than is supplied by objective explanations of the apparatus of the eye, the brain, and interactions with light, these being the predominant physical and biological bases for explanations throughout the modern era and, in terms of differing concepts, much of our early history as well. The chromatic aspect of human experience has been both a subject for and medium of artistic expression and different societies' encoding of "meaning" throughout history. However, a fraught relationship between polarising categorical approaches, the objective and the subjective (from which derive very different modes of perception), has raised philosophical and moral problems that are enduring subjects for discourse in both arts and sciences. The history of writings about colour perception reflects the same species of debate.

Specifically, embedded within the opening statement is an idea that our "local" social and cultural ideas and concepts concerning colour, framed via our languages, influence, and to varying extents generate, our perceptions of the world. Our visual experiences may be said to be the materials from which our "seeing" is constructed – according to the rules and norms of "inter-subjective" fusions of the groups, linguistic

communities, cultures and societies in which we live. From this starting point, "colour talk" is discourse involving a set of communally shared perceptions, as opposed to discourse based on an *a priori* idea of perception *per se* or on an individual's private perceptions.

The philosophical question of the nature of colour exposes, therefore, a primary requirement for the present study: the need to explore past "inter-subjective" frameworks of meaning in order to understand how groups of people informed and constructed colour perceptions during a historical period. Thus the quest for a literary critic concerned with colour in medieval texts is to "re-see" a world from the point or points of view of "local" conceptual systems and taxonomies of visual experience that influenced the lives of the authors and sources of his study. This process assists a modern reader to engage with a text's complex chromatic associations and meanings, and elicit an authentic effect upon the imagination. If the relevant "inter-subjective" frameworks can be established, then critical responses to the chromatic aspects of texts can have a more "localised" acuity to the perceptual meaningfulness as inhabited and re-imagined by writers of the period.

(a) The phenomenological approach

Reference to "inter-subjectivity" inevitably places the study of a perceptual object or category on a phenomenological footing: in the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty it is to be a "study of essences",[1] and an "essence" in this context is understood to be an underlying meaning or set of meanings; the communally experienced nature of an object of which an individual can be conscious. Regarding this essence of visual experience, in the *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (1945) Merleau-Ponty develops a

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[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1963, 1989) vii.

"phenomenological reduction" (a concept derived from Husserl[2]) by which we may "re-see" the "inter-subjective" world of "embodied subjects," and through which we re-discover vision as a "gaze at grips with a visible world."[3] In overview his argument holds that the visual world, if phenomenologically reduced, can be described without necessitating confrontation between differing objective explanations (eye stories, brain stories and physics of light stories) and empirically inaccessible and unverifiable realms of private colour experiences.

It is typical of differing approaches to the analysis and explanation of colour to have a polarizing effect on claims to knowledge: a situation well attested to by philosophical and scientific literature from the ancient world to the present day. An example from contemporary philosophy is C. H. Hardin's provocatively entitled book, *Color for Philosophers* (1988), in which the author strikes the pose of a prophet scolding and re-educating supposedly (scientifically) ignorant philosophers, linguists, and artists who have not grasped how physics, neuro-psychology and biology, *et al* have solved the question of what colour really "is": a set of empirically discoverable facts which should be embraced as in some sense liberating.[4] Hardin assumes from the

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[2] Cf. Edmund G. A. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1913). Husserl's work is rooted in the absolute idealism of Georg W. F. Hegel (see especially his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807) and the Kantian distinction between "phenomenal" (derived from the senses) and "noumenal" (derived from the mind) realms (see Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781)). Of course such thinking has historically deeper analogues: Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, draws a distinction comparable to that of Kant, although his focus is on ontology and metaphysics (i.e., the nature of existence and its principles) rather than epistemology (the nature of knowledge). For the definition of phenomenology as "the study of essences" see Merleau-Ponty 1.

[3] Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* 153.

[4] Hardin asserts that "visual science has delineated much of the phenomenology of colours, and, with the assistance of neurophysiology, has explained a good deal of that phenomenology while showing the

outset that colour "is" a something: an object for science. At the other end of the spectrum, however, there is the cherished sentiment of artists, critics and philosophers, who consider that, in Josef Albers words: "In visual perception a colour is never seen as it really is – as it physically is."[5] The point is that our visual perception is contextualised and mediated by social and cultural factors that are framed and transmitted by language. It is a fact that predisposes humanity to seek meanings in experience as much as explanatory descriptions.[6] The true "facts" about the nature of

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promise of explaining more," and "We will be able to suggest some conditions under which it would be reasonable to claim that the qualitative character of colour experience is reducible to neural processes."
C. H. Hardin, *Color for Philosophers: Unweaving the Rainbow* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1988) xxii.
For criticism of the work and its assumptions see: M. J. Huxtable, "Colour, Seeing, and Seeing Colour," in *Postgraduate English* 6 (Sept. 2002) 15 March 2008
<http://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate.english/journal1.htm>; a balanced introduction to the problems of reducing colour to a binary opposition is given by Trevor Lamb and Janine Bourriau in *Colour: Art and Science*, The Darwin College Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995) 1-6; a mediating and persuasive position between cultural linguistic and hard scientific approaches to colour science is taken in Don Dedrick's excellent *Naming the Rainbow: Colour Language, Colour Science, and Culture* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998). Dedrick argues for an autonomous role in cognition for colour categorization, thereby avoiding the deterministic implications of colour viewed as an object for science and the crisis of relativity encountered by cultural and linguistic studies.

[5] Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New Haven and London: Yale U. P., 1963, rpt. 2006) 1.

[6] Isaac Newton, for instance, added the need for empirical and objectively construed proofs to persuade others (e.g. for his groundbreaking wave/particle theory of light which contradicted the pervading Aristotelian view of light as a single entity) to his primary intuitive, problem-solving approach to knowledge; throughout his life he was committed to seeking abstract knowledge of the "meaningfulness" of phenomena – a duality he was unable fully to reconcile. In a famous biographical paper in which Newton's interest in alchemy was first discussed, John Maynard-Keynes wrote: "His

colour established by colour science (including, for instance, psychological studies finding evidence that infants perceive differences between colours along broad spectral lines prior to learning language[7]) are, in perceptual terms, all finally subject to the "inter-subjectivity" of socio-cultural linguistic experiences.

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deepest instincts were occult, esoteric, semantic - with profound shrinking from the world, a paralyzing fear of exposing his thoughts, his beliefs, his discoveries in all nakedness to the inspection and criticism of the world." Keynes goes so far as to call Newton the "last of the magicians", "Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it as a riddle, as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence, certain mystic clues which God had laid about the world to allow a sort of philosopher's treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood." See John Maynard Keynes, "Newton, the Man," *Correspondence, notes and marked up catalogues and articles concerning Newton's life and writings* JMK-67-PP-60 (1946), King's College, Cambridge archives, rpt. *The Newton Project* 15 March 2008 <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/texts/images.php?id=OTHE00071&page=1> pp. 189-204, 193. For Newton's seminal findings on the nature of colour see *Opticks: Or, A treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflexions and Colours of Light. Also Two treatises of the Species and Magnitude of Curvilinear Figures* (London: 1704). For discussion of Newton's methodology in relation to his metaphysical beliefs see Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *The Janus Faces of Genius: the Role of Alchemy in Newton's Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810) is perhaps the most well known early modern philosophical text offering a theory of colour seeking to reconcile subjective and objective criteria, and is still regarded as a key text for the topic despite the numerous scientific errors it contains regarding the nature of light, optics and photo-physics. Cf. J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake (London: Cass, 1967), and Dennis L. Sepper, *Goethe contra Newton: Polemics and the Project for a New Science of Colour* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

[7] See Davida Y. Teller, Maria Pereverzeva and Iris K. Zemach, "Infant Color Perception and Discrete Trial Preferential Looking Paradigms" and Anna Franklin and Ian R. L. Davies, "Converging Evidence for Pre-Linguistic Colour Categorisation" in *Progress in Colour Studies: Vol. II. Psychological Aspects*, edited by N. J. Pitchford and C. P. Biggam (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006) 69-90 and 101-120.

Employing something akin to Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenological reduction" assists recognition of the fusion of a perceiver with his or her community: for this study, it is a fusion occurring in a medieval context. Medieval perceptual consciousnesses must be demarcated within its different explanatory stances and ways of talking about the world as an "object" ("objectifying" it). In the section of the *Phénoménologie* concerned with the synthesis of one's body, Merleau-Ponty proposed:

> To learn to see colours ... is to acquire a certain style of seeing, a new use of one's own body: it is to enrich and recast the body image.[8]

It is a key thought: we learn to see and "re-see" colour. Merleau-Ponty's proposition rests on awareness that colours, as a part of our bodily-rooted perceptual experience, have associations and meanings to be learnt. At a basic level, human beings, having incorporated these into their perceptual field come to find colour experiences instantaneously meaningful: from the warnings of danger and safety informing traffic-lights, to the complex interactions of particular shades of colours and formal associations imbuing advertisements with meaning and memorability (such as the golden arches and particular shade of a red signifying a MacDonald's restaurant), and still further to the radically sophisticated symbolic associations and meanings attached to colours in specific socio-cultural contexts and traditions (such as costume colours in ceremonial contexts; lapidary lore; colour magic, etc.). Merleau-Ponty portrays the fusing of an individual with his or her socio-perceptual world as a process which

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[8] Merleau-Ponty 153. The reference to the "body image" here links his views on perception with those on "embodied" existence: seeing is a function of "being in the world", and, since "being in the world" is an embodied condition, it has a primary share in visuality and understanding the interconnectedness of "self" and "others".

admits degrees of learning. A higher plane of perceptual consciousness is that of chromatic aesthetic experience, which informs, but also goes beyond the learnt perceptions of primary perceptual colour consciousness.

In overview, this study assumes that people learn the chromatic aspect of their perceptual world over time from what is given via sensation, synthesized or combined with communally-derived interpretations. Human beings give to each other their shared perceptual worlds; "what" is seen and "how" it is understood are intimately conjoined so that perception takes place at an intersection of seeing and thinking.[9] Hence the semantic range of the "perception" is infinitely extensive, and applies to the full spectrum of cognitive human life, from pre-linguistic infants to adults.

By accessing medieval visual perception through a Merleau-Ponty-esque phenomenological reduction we should, as previously noted:

> ...discover vision, not as a 'thinking about seeing', to use Descartes' expression, but as a gaze at grips with a visible world, and that is why for me there can be another's gaze.[10]

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[9] This formula for "interpreted" perception echoes Wittgenstein's discussion of "seeing aspects" and "seeing as" in the *Philosophical Investigations* (IIxi). His position stemmed from discussing dual-aspect phenomena such as Jastrow's famous duck-rabbit picture (a simple drawing which can be viewed as two animals, but not at the same time; a "gestalt shift" in perception must occur). Wittgenstein argued that, "...what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects." He referred to the seeing of signs within a context as "the echo of a thought in sight", and compared the inability to do it ("aspect blindness"), as for colour meanings, as "...akin to the lack of a 'musical ear'" (214). See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953) IIxi, pp. 193-229.

[10] Merleau-Ponty 351. Merleau-Ponty accounts for vision in terms of the ways the visible world forms itself to our eyes, as opposed to models rooted in Cartesian objectivism, which make seeing an intellectual operation engaged in deciphering the image products of the eye. His most specific depiction

The phenomenological approach to perception offers an important means of approaching differing communities and cultures within differing yet "inter-subjectively" coordinated, perceptual worlds. The phenomenological approach is innately sensitive to different contexts of visual perception. It is an inevitable consequence for the phenomenologist that different people within different communities throughout history have "co-constructed" and "inter-subjectively" shared their perceptual worlds. Vastly differing perceptual worlds have been learned, developed, intermingled and passed on to generations of communities and their offspring. In order to "re-see" the medieval world with something like a period-eye we would do well to begin by examining the distance between, and simultaneous "shared-ness," of our visual and chromatic concepts and sensory worlds of experience and those of our forebears.

Before undertaking this form of investigation, however, a limitation to the phenomenological approach needs to be born in mind. One of Wittgenstein's thought experiments, collected in what has come to be called his *Remarks on Colour* (1951),

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of the contrast is found in his last published paper, "L'Oeil et l'esprit," (1960, published 1961), translated "Eye and Mind" by C. Dallery and in the collection *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, edited by J. Edie (Evanstone, IL: Northwestern U P, 1964). Here Merleau-Ponty compared the eye of the scientist with that of the painter: "Science," he wrote, "manipulates things and gives up living in them" (...) and is a "...bold way of thinking whose basis is to treat everything as though it were an object-in-general." Hence scientifically motivated seeing is a "...thinking which looks on from above", "But art, especially painting, draws upon the fabric of brute meaning which activism [or operationalism – *Trans*] would prefer to ignore." Merleau-Ponty advocated, "Only the painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees... It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings" (Baldwin 291-2, 294).

can be re-applied to question the limits to comprehending the similar and dissimilar

worlds of perception of different cultures and historical periods:

> Can't we imagine people having colour concepts other than ours? And that in
> turn means: Can't we imagine people who do not have our colour concepts but
> who have concepts which are related to ours in such a way that we would also
> call them 'colour concepts'? [11]

If we find evidence of "colour concepts" in medieval literary sources it is only in

relation to and utilizing words that we identify and use in colour concepts ourselves.

Thus "period" chromatic meanings in the languages and art-works of past

communities can only be approached by coincidences in sense, not shared

conceptualization. The phenomenological approach cannot guarantee access to the

conceptual meaningfulness of phenomena because it only provides comparison with

held concepts.

An important way of re-calibrating the phenomenological approach so that it

takes this concern into account is through careful consideration of linguistic and

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[11] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977) paragraph 66. I

redirect Wittgenstein's main point for my own purposes. His question raises the philosophical problem

that whilst we assert that the parameters of our colour concepts are fixed by the visible spectrum, this is

despite the functioning of individual eyes not being perfectly comparable, nor their "inner" experiential

functioning accessible to objective scrutiny and processes of verification. Thus our ability both to

describe and understand remarks about colour sensations is unverifiable. What could constitute criteria

for verification? In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein considered this point with sagacity:

"Does it make sense to say that people generally agree in their judgments of colour? What would it be

like for them not to? One man would say a flower was red which another called blue, and so on. But

what right should we have to call these people's words "red" and "blue" *our* 'colour words'? – How

would they learn to use these words? And is the language game which they learn still such as we call

the use of 'names of colour'? There are evidently differences of degree here." (IIxi. p. 226).

literary context. The literature of any language is full of inter-textual resonances and provides its own inter-subjective matrix within which concepts have been stored, shared, re-learned, imitated, developed and transformed. Colour is a cumulative aspect of this phenomenon and has an identity in linguistic and literary terms that parallels and is influenced by (yet does not depend on) the development of scientific concepts and popular discourses that attempt to define colour as an object. The history of ideas during the medieval period, from the classical and biblical basis of Scholasticism to the emergence of Renaissance Humanism, incorporated numerous "sciences" of colour. A linguistic as well as phenomenological approach needs to be taken to untangle their varied modes of discourse and chart their semantic terrain.

(b) The linguistic approach

Colour language is the topic of a vast body of ongoing research pursued on the basis of various objective theories drawn from sociology, anthropology and psychology. The semantics of colour language are also studied as a purely phenomenological topic of philosophy. Underlying many of these approaches is a common conceptual structure, stated by Earl Anderson:

> To understand the nature of colour vocabularies we must recognize four features of colour perception: *hue*, determined by varying wavelengths of light, *saturation* or relative purity of hue, determined by varying degrees of admixture with grey, *brightness*, that is, relative light versus darkness, determined by the amount of light fiat reaches the eye, and *focality*. (...) The basic colour words in modern English, like those of other modern Indo-European languages are oriented toward hue, so much so that most speakers of the language think of achromatic colour words (*black, grey, white, silver*) as belonging to the same

conceptual category as chromatic ones (*green, yellow, orange, red, pink, purple, blue*).[12]

The approach classifies colour language according to categories of a relatively recent scientific model of colour perception, and it risks approaching all colour language as a by-product of physiologically explained conditions of human experience. We need to recall that a large part of language and much of its meaningful use are generated *a priori*, through concepts that are adapted to fit developing physiological explanations of the circumstances of experiences. Thus, for example, medieval scholars following Aristotle's theory in the *Meteorologica* "saw" and talked about rainbows with less than seven colours (see below). The categories of hue, saturation, brightness and focality provide a useful map for assessing colour language, but can also lead us astray if we seek their influence in all instances and semantic contexts.

The majority of colour studies offer a theory-led approach to the lexicalisation of colour experience and have defined its conceptualisation through evolutionary anthropology, linguistic and cultural relativity, and various types of psychological mappings of "colour-space".[13] Different approaches have advantages and disadvantages as explanatory tools, and have also influenced approaches to early (not "primitive") colour language.[14] The quest for a universal theory to synthesise data

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[12] Earl R. Anderson, *Folk-Taxonomies in Early English* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London: Associated UP, 2003) 59.

[13] For a wide variety of studies and approaches see: *Progress in Colour Studies Volume I: Language and Culture*, ed. C.P. Biggam and C. J. Kay (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006) and *Volume II: Psychological Aspects* ed. C.P. Biggam and N.J. Pitchford (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006).

[14] For aspects of Old English colour language see esp. Carole Biggam, "Sociolinguistic Aspects of Old English Colour Lexemes", *Anglo-Saxon England* 24: 51-65; *Blue in Old English* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997); *Grey in Old English* (London: Runetree P, 1998); for Old Norse colour language and possible

from different languages and across different periods has been as attractive a proposition to linguistic scholars as its cosmological equivalent in theoretical physics. Anthropologists Berlin and Kay have come closest to such as theory with the idea of "basic colour terms" that evolve according to a universal pattern across all languages.[15] The conceptual schema of Berlin and Kay's approach, despite a few notable voices of dissent, has become a cornerstone of modern colour studies.[16] However, perhaps the most relevant theoretical approach for later medieval colour theories, language, and cultural phenomena is that of "folk-taxonomies". Anderson defines these as "hierarchical semantic systems that lexicalise a domain of human experience such as colours, plant and animal life-forms, seasons of the year, directions, or the senses",[17] and in relation to colour posits a four-level hierarchy in modern English:

> Level I: "basic" colour terms:
> *black, white, red, green, blue, brown, grey, purple, orange, pink*

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influence on English see Kirsten Wolf, "The Colors of the Rainbow in Snorri's *Edda*," *Maal og minne* (2007): 51-62; "The Color Blue in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature," *Scripta Islandica* 57 (2006): 55-78; "Some Comments on Old Norse-Icelandic Color Terms," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 121 (2006): 173-192.

[15] The original stages in the Berlin and Kay colour sequence were (1) black & white (2) red (3) green or yellow (4) yellow or green (5) blue (6) brown, (7) grey, purple, pink, orange: see Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1969, rpt. 1991). This has since been revised variously to include the concept of "grue" terms and to make grey a wild-card capable of emerging anytime after stage (1).

[16] Anna Wierbicka and Barbara Saunders are notable opponents; see Anna Wierbicka, *Lingua Mentalis: The Semantics of Natural Language* (Sydney: Academic P, 1980); Barbara Saunders, *The Invention of Basic Colour Terms* (Utrecht: ISOR, 1992).

[17] Anderson, *Folk-Taxonomies in Early English* 21.

Level II: "secondary" colour terms:

crimson, scarlet, vermilion, maroon, magenta, aquamarine, turquoise, etc.

Level III: "specialized" colour terms:

Compounds: *blue-green, red-orange*, etc.

Comparatives: *ash-grey, chestnut, mahogany, olive, salmon*, etc.

Local semantic field terms: (for hair) *auburn, blonde, brunette*, etc.; (for horses) *bay, palomino, sorrel*, etc.; (for the human complexion) *ruddy, sallow, wan*, etc.

Level IV: commercially and otherwise coined terms such as paint colour names.[18]

Whilst the lexemes and level criteria vary, the hierarchical model is applicable to medieval languages and thought processes. The virtue of the taxonomy-based model is its flexibility in relation to the content of "levels": their definition, conceptualization, and associated reasons for colour terms being used in particular ways, details which can only be ascertained through detailed re-examination of primary sources.

The linguistic and literary aspects of colour in medieval texts need to be synthesised, not separated into artificial sets of linguistic data on the one hand and literary facts on the other. Linguistic "data" require a literary context to have meaning just as different responses to literature presuppose some basis of a shared linguistic understanding. The various approaches to colour and vision which permeated medieval thought and its perception are reflected in textual resources ranging from sophisticated intellectual, mythological and religious writings to informal works of entertainment. The surviving literature establishes a bed-rock of concepts by which we can discern how other language-shaping influences were defined. The most significant texts that influenced the medieval phenomenon of colour are the starting

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[18] Based on the outline given in Anderson 22.

point for this study and its attempt to "re-see" medieval writings through an embodied, yet literary, mode of perception.

PART I

Light, Colour, and Visual Perception in Medieval Thought and Imagination

The medieval gaze at grips with a medieval world

Merleau-Ponty's description of vision as "a gaze at grips with a visible world" has an

intertextual resonance for medieval studies when we remember that the main pillars

supporting medieval understanding of visual perception were Plato's *Timaeus* and its

semi "extramissive" theory of vision, and Aristotle's *De anima* and its intromissive

theory of seeing in which colours, having traversed the adjacent medium via light,

"touch" the organ of sense (the eye).[1] In the *Timaeus* the gaze literally did "grip" the

world via the emission of a beam or ray of fire from the eye which was thought to

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[1] The terms "extramission" and "intromission" and their derivatives describe a key dichotomy in the

history of optics: the sending out and/or taking in of information via the eyes. The theological and

metaphorical implications of the two models constitute a large part of the history of optical theory. See

Robert S. Nelson's edited volume: *Visuality Before and After the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*,

Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 2000)

Introduction, 5. The medieval inheritance of theories of visual sensation and perception from the

ancient world is discussed in C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and

London: Yale U P, 2006) and David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (London

and Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1976). An overview of classical colour theories in relation to classical

theories of perception is given in chapter one of John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning

from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993, rpt. 2001). As well as the Platonic

theory, (which is deemed to be both "extramissive" and "intromissive" since the outgoing tremors also

return to the eye) two significant others should be mentioned for providing its intellectual context: the

Pythagorean theory advanced by Alcmaeon and others (including Empedocles) that the eye emits fire

which causes vision (an idea based on identifying the function of the eye with that of the lamp) and that

of Epicurus which postulated that bodies give off particles which enter the eyes so causing vision. See

Lindberg 2-6 and Pastoureau 30.

interact with the fire of the atmosphere and transmit sensation – tremors – directly to the soul whenever the connection with the external fire was interrupted by an object of sight:

> The eyes were the first organs to be fashioned by the gods, to conduct light. (...) They contrived that such fire as was not for burning but for providing a gentle light should become a body, proper to each day. Now the pure fire inside us, cousin to that fire, they made to flow through the eyes. ... Now whenever daylight surrounds the visual stream, like makes contact with like and coalesces with it to make up a single homogeneous body aligned with the direction of the eyes. This happens whenever the internal fire strikes and presses against an external object it has connected with: ... it transmits the motions of whatever it comes in contact with as well as whatever comes in contact with it, to and through the body until they reach the soul. This brings about the sensation we call "seeing". At night, however, the kindred fire has departed and so the visual stream is cut off.[2]

The *Timaean* model of active vision drew its understanding by analogy with the sense of touch insofar as "seeing" was conceived as a mode of touching with the eyes ("the internal fire strikes and presses against an external object"). The extramissive concept, as we shall see repeatedly, pervaded early and to some extent later medieval thought regarding vision, and its influence in theology and optics can be found well into and even beyond the Renaissance.[3] Most significantly, the concept of affective piety by

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[2] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Cambridge, IN: Hackett, 2000) p.33 para. 45b-d.

[3] See Lindberg, chapters 2-7. An eighteenth century example is Charles Wesley's hymn "And can it be" (1738), containing the lines: "Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray; / I woke; the dungeon flamed with light." The immediate cause of the line seems to have been Pope's use of extramissive imagery in *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717), ll. 145-6: "Thy eyes diffused a reconciling ray, / And beams of glory brightened all the day." See *The Works of John Wesley, Volume 7: A Collection of Hymns for the Use*

which a medieval penitent understood engagement at a distance with a religious object of devotion owes much to this model of visual perception.[4] Indeed, it is through a theological master-narrative that the meaningfulness of light and seeing for medieval thought is to be primarily understood. However, the conceptualization of extramissive "eye-beams" or "rays" through which light, sight and truth operated as a form of touch, and by which divine truth was accessed also spread beyond the strictly ecclesiastical sphere into more secular conceptualizations of human devotion. Thus in romance writings visual discourse is a commonplace, and, in conjunction with the metaphorical imagery of Cupid's darts, it was typical for lovers to be depicted falling in love via the action of vision; the event caused by the connecting implications of a line of sight and its gaze connecting souls.[5] "Seeing" the loved one was portrayed as an erotic activity through which both lovers (or each individually) experienced a moment of genuine contact at a distance. In more sophisticated court romances such as Chrétien's de Troyes' *Cligés* (1176) we find the matter and its theory put with great eloquence and instructive detail. In the following example Alexander is cited as one under attack by Love; a man whose life has been rendered miserable by the

of the People Called Methodists, ed. Franz Hilderbrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1983) 322-3.

[4] The complexities of this concept are discussed in Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality", *Visuality Before and After the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, Cambridge Studies in New Art History and Criticism, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 2000) 169-196. Hahn discusses Gregory the Great, and later Augustine's articulation of visual experience of the divine. She writes that "In sum, the possibility of the vision of the divine, the *visio dei*, shifted from the momentary and the glance, received almost as a blow, to the prolonged gaze apprehended as an interactive experience."

[5] See also the "looking" sections of A.C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

experience of falling in love with a beautiful girl. At this point in the text he has finished describing his predicament using the classical motif of being shot by an arrow, one which enters via the eye, and subsequently comments that the eye itself has no feelings but is the mirror of the heart: it merely transmits the fire which has inflamed it.[6] Thereafter, most acutely, he associates the action of seeing with his condition in these words:

> Ce meïsmes sachiez des ialz
> Et del voirre et de la lanterne,
> Car es ialz se fiert la luiserne
> Ou li cuers se remire et voit
> La lumiere, quex qu'ele soit;
> Si voit maintes oevres diverses,
> Les unes verz, les autres perses,
> L'une vermoille et l'autre bloe,
> L'une blasme et l'autre loe,
> L'une tient vil et l'autre chiere.
> Mes tiex li mostre bele chiere
> El mireor quant il l'esgarde,
> Qui le traïst s'il ne s'i garde.
> Moi et les miens m'ont deçeü,
> Car an lui a mes cuers veü
> I. rai don je sui anconbrez,
> Qui dedanz lui s'est anombrez,
> Et por lui m'est mes cuers failliz.[7]

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[6] The primary source for the imagery of love's arrow for medieval authors was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. See subsequent chapter on *Le Roman de la Rose*.

[7] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, ed. Philippe Walter, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) pp. 173-336, 191; ll. 730-747.

[You may be sure the same is true of the eyes as of the glass and the lantern. *[Inside of which would have been a candle.]* For through the eyes comes the light by which the heart views itself and sees the outside world, whatever it may be. It sees many different objects, some green, others violet, one scarlet, another blue, finding fault here, praising there, having a low opinion of one, prizing another. But something may seem attractive to the heart when it looks at it through the mirror which may deceive it if it is not wary. My own mirror has betrayed me badly, for in it my heart saw a ray of light that has afflicted me by lodging within it, causing my heart to fail me.[8]]

Using visually arresting abstract imagery, Chrétien espouses a Christianised reworking of the *Timaean* model of sight – one mixed with the relatively new Aristotelian theory of intromissive perception: a light is emitted and re-admitted through the eyes which enables the heart or soul to have a vision of love, and, furthermore, *what* is seen is communicated fundamentally in terms of colours (the "proper object of sight" in Aristotle's *De anima* – see below). Eventually the heart's visual connection to the world brings about its romantic ruin or betrayal – because it makes contact with another's heart's ray which enters the subject lover's heart (through the eye) to lodge there and cause a permanent affliction. A direct connection to another's heart or soul is made, a channel through which tremors from each heart are transmitted directly each to the other; a situation which amounts to a "betrayal" because, being in such a state, a lover's control over what he or she might choose to reveal of the self is circumvented.

The role played by fiery eye beams in forming romantic bonds and exciting strong feelings and deep understanding found a place beyond the confines of *fin' amor* and religious writing into more prosaic material, so indicating the widespread or normative nature of extramissive thinking for the twelfth century. In Geoffrey of

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[8] Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligés*, trans. D.D. R. Owen (London: J.M. Dent; Everyman, 1993, 2001) pp. 102-3, l. 732ff.

Monmouth's epic prose history of the British kings, the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*c.*1138), we have the description of an early tournament during which the watching womenfolk inspire the men to compete harder:

> Ut tandem epulis peractis diversi diversos ludos composituri campos extra civitatem adeunt, mox milites simulachrum prelii sciendo equestrem ludum componunt; mulieres in edito murorum aspicientes in furiales amoris flammas ioci irritant.

> At length, after they had finished feasting, the military men composed a kind of diversion in imitation of a fight on horseback; and the ladies, placed on the top of the walls as spectators, in a sportive manner darted their amorous glances at the courtiers, the more to encourage them. [9]

Other recent, more literal English translations such as those of Thorpe, ("their womenfolk watched from the top of the city walls and aroused them to passionate excitement by their flirtatious behaviour"[10]) and Wright ("The ladies watching from the battlements playfully fanned the flames in the knights' hearts into furious passion") arguably do not capture (Wright) or address (Thorpe) the potential for extramissive visuality involved in the line "mulieres in edito murorum aspicientes in furiales amoris flammas ioci irritant." Flames of love excite the objects of sight, a condition derived from, or somehow enacted by, the subjects' intentional looking

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[9] Latin taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain: An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. Michael D. Reeve; trans., Neil Wright, Arthurian Studies 69 (Woodbridge: Boydell P, 2007) Liber IX, ll. 394-5. Its creative yet extramissive translation is from *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with Contributions to the Study of its Place in Early British History*, trans. and ed. Acton Griscom (London: Longmans, Green, 1929).

[10] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans., Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966) 230.

("aspicientes").[11] If the Platonic conceptulaziation of vision is indeed operating beneath this description, as seems likely, the implication is that internal flames are being directly "caused" by the action of an external visual fire, i.e., "physical" contact is being made via the extramission of the ladies' perceiving eyes.

By the late fourteenth century even as far as England such thinking about visuality had reconstituted as a literary trope, one employed masterfully by Chaucer to portray Troilus's first sight of Criseyde (a scene informed by the complex love-arrow imagery of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* and the original portrayal of the scene in Chaucer's immediate source, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*[12]):

> With-inne the temple he wente him forth pleyinge,
> This Troilus, of every wight aboute,
> On this lady and now on that lokinge,
> Wher-so she were of toune, or of with-oute:
> And up-on cas bifel, that thorugh a route
> His eye perced, and so depe it wente,
> Til on Criseyde it smoot, and ther it stente. [13]

The youthful, arrogant and love-scorning prince Troilus looks down upon the ladies of the Trojan court with disinterest except to see from where each has come (an unengaged mode of perception) until his eyes "perced" through a "depe" "route" and

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[11] A metaphorical translation might prefer the verb "to lick" to suit both the action of flames igniting by contact and the erotic intention behind this action.

[12] Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ll. 1679*ff*; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato* canto I. See also the discussion of *Le Roman de la Rose* in this thesis.

[13] Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (I: 267-73).

"smite" Criseyde, thereafter never to wander again. This binding, tactile imagery later gives over to the fully affective scene of its fruition after the temple festivities:

> Whan he was fro the temple thus departed,
> He streyght anoon un-to his paleys torneth,
> Right with hir look thurgh-shoten and thurgh-darted,
> Al feyneth he in lust that he sojorneth;
> And al his chere and speche also he borneth;
> And ay, of loves servants every whyle,
> Him-self to wrye, at hem he gan to smyle. [14]

The unfortunate Troilus is presented as the victim of the God of Love's dart – cast via the mould of extramissive vision: he has been "shoten" and "thurgh-darted" by Criseyde's "look" such that he is overpowered by desire and has gained a radical new insight into the true nature of that which he had previously despised. The basic elements of extramission are all here: a tactile transmission of spiritual meaningfulness coupled with the determination of a new, "true" vision given by the power of a substantial connection at a distance between spiritual materials (souls).

Whilst the motif was clearly much exploited by a wide variety of writers with different literary purposes, the underlying profundity of the *Timaean* model of perception, and its context within a creation mythology that was not entirely alien to the Judeo-Christian model, meant that it was also of great interest and inspiration for religious thinkers and theologians throughout the Middle Ages.

The Christian synthesis of optical extramission

The influence of the Platonic *Timaean* theory—transmitted to a medieval readership via Chalcidius's unfinished Latin translation (*c.* 321)—was secured for the medieval period by the text's overall compatibility with Christian scripture in terms of both the

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[14] Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* (I: 323-29).

Judeo-Christian account of the creation in Genesis 1, and the inherent value of light

and "true seeing" as understood by its relation to the revealed truth of God's relation

to his creatures as interpreted by Christian writers.[15] Seemingly in theological

sympathy with this the *Timaeus* presented the final cause of "seeing" as divine, with

its purpose being to secure knowledge of the divine:

> ...the god invented sight and gave it to us so that we might observe the orbits of
> intelligence in the heavens and apply them to the revolutions of our own
> understanding.[16]

The divine source for light and illumination is of course central to and the primary

point of access for medieval thought about visuality and optics. The centrality of the

visual in Christian theology and its dominant place influencing medieval thought has

been aptly described by Katherine Tachau as "the nexus of natural philosophy and

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[15] Plato's *Timaeus* was first translated into Latin during the first century BCE by Cicero, who only

translated paragraphs 27d – 47b (ending with the presentation of the significance of vision), arguably to

include it in a work of his own on cosmology and to show his mastery of a particularly difficult Greek

text. Galen (*c*. AD 129-200) also paraphrased and summarized parts of the *Timaeus*, with a specific

interest in the later parts (82a-86a) dealing with the origins of diseases. Galen's paraphrases were the

key source for the reception of the *Timaeus* in the Arab world, where it was translated and commented

upon by great scholars such as Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (1126-1198). Only much later,

through the translation of Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), did the western world have access to the

complete text. See P.E Dutton, "Medieval Approaches to Calcidius", in: *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural

Icon*, ed. by G. Reydams-Schils (Notre Dame, IND: Notre Dame UP, 2003) 183-205; a useful summary

of the transmission and reception of Plato's *Timaeus* is Barbara Sattler, *Plato's* Timaeus: *Translations

and Commentaries in the West*:

<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/rbx/exhibitions/Plato/Pages/Translations.html>.

[16] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Zeyl, pp. 35-6, 47b-c.

epistemology, all ultimately at the service of theology."[17] The significance of vision

in Platonic thought (as presented in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*[18]) – its having a

metaphysical source and value by providing the means for understanding, chimed

well with the Christian scriptural use of light as a symbol (and spiritual reality)

encoding the revealed "truth" of the incarnation of the divine. In the cosmological

narrative of Christian theology, God entered the world as a human being to provide

salvation for Adam's Fallen kind: a circumstance which is metaphorically compared

to light entering and illuminating (i.e., negating or destroying) darkness.[19] This theme

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[17] Katherine Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham: Optics, Epistemology and the Foundations of Semantics 1250-1345* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988) xvi.

[18] Access to the *Republic* for the Latin West of course was, unlike the *Timaeus*, minimal until after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and of an indirect nature via Latin translations of Arabic commentaries such as that of Averroes. However, the account of the origin and nature of eyesight and light found in the *Timeaus* supports Plato's emphasis of its significance in the *Republic*. Here, for example, the famous analogy of the cave rests upon comparison between the visible realm and the intelligible in which both require sources of "light" for access to truth and knowledge, and ultimately, the "good": "...in the visible realm it (the good) is the progenitor of light and of the source of light, and in the intelligible realm it is the source and provider of truth and knowledge" (*Republic*, 517b-c). Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: OUP, 1993) pp. 243-244.

[19] References to light and brightness (H216 אור ['ôr]; G5457 φως [phōs]; L *lux, lumen*; Wy *liyt, briytnesse*) in Judeo-Christian scripture are numerous (276 references to "light" (not derivatives) based on a key word search of a hypertext edition of the 1611 Authorised King James Bible (KJAV) with Apocrypha [Old Testament 181, New Testament 95]). Key texts for the theological significance of light include: the first creation *ex nihilo* (Gen 1:1-4); the rainbow (Gen 9:13) (symbolizing God's covenant of mercy with Noah after the Flood); mankind's prophesied salvation described as a coming light (Isa 1:18); the Psalmist's description of the Lord as "my Light and my salvation" (Ps 27.1); the Transfiguration (Mt 17.1-9, Mk 9.2-10, Lk 9.28-36); Jesus' description of his followers as "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14); the contrast between the "children of this world" and the "children of light" in

also permeates early Christian writings from the Apostolic and later Gnostic writers onwards, and was read back into the Hebrew Bible by Christian interpreters of the divinely originating and approved light initiating the Genesis account of creation. To varying degrees in the Gospels, Jesus Christ—simultaneously God and man—is presented as the point at which the divine light meets human darkness: he is, in effect, the terminus of a spiritually illuminating ray.[20] Human beings (dwellers in and lovers

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the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:8); Jesus's (*ego eimi*) claim to be "the light of the world" (John 8.12, 9:5 & 11:9); God described as constant light and "Father of lights" and source of the good (James 1:17); the apostle Paul's portrayal of the gospel of Christ as bringing light into human darkness (2 Cor 4:4); and his revelatory experience of a blinding divine light on the Damascus road (Acts 9.3); Peter's angelic release from prison (Acts 12.7); the new world after the second coming of the Christ in which all darkness is past and true light, the Lamb, reigns (Rev 21:23). References to "dark" and "darkness" (H2821 חשך [châshak] and H5939 עלטה [ʾălâṭâh]; G4652 σκοτεινός [skoteinos]; L *caligo*; Wy *derk, derknessis*) are also numerous (c. 164 references: OT 111, NT 51): its pejorative associations as a binary opposite including human suffering, sin, punishment, and the absence of truth: "darkness" is divided from "light", and the division is deemed "good" (Gn 1:18); the declaration (Isa 45.7) that "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things; the ways of righteousness contrasted with those of "darkness" (Prov 2.13); Daniel's praise of God as having light dwelling in him and knowing what is darkness (Dan 2:22); Zephaniah's description of the day of judgement as a day of "darkness" (Zep 1:15); the epistles warn against spiritual darkness (Eph 5.11) and its powers (Col 1.13); having been called out of darkness (1Pet 2.9) followers of the light have been spared the ultimate darkness into which the rebel angels have been cast (Jud 1.6). The two slightly later Synoptic gospels bring light and darkness into a memorable moral juxtaposition for perception reporting Jesus' saying (via the 'Q' source) that the eye is the lamp of the body: "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be euill, thy whole body shall be full of darknesse. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkenesse, how great is that darkenesse?" (Mt 6.23 and Lk 11.34).

[20] This view is primarily the theological interpretation of Jesus' life found in John's gospel. The statement in John 8.12 encapsulates much: "I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not

of "darkness", Jn 3.19) are provided with a way back to the "light" – a way characterized by the reclamation of sight: the spiritually blind receiving "true vision", just as the physically blind had their sight returned by Christ's miraculous interventions.[21] The recovery of true sight, access to the divine light and the transformative powers of that light are thus inextricably woven together in medieval Christian theology. As an introductory and profoundly moving example of the late medieval employment of this mode of discourse we have Thomas à Kempis's (1380-1471) prayer for "illumynacion of mynde" found in the third book of his great contemplative work the *Imitatio Christi*. Rendered in the words of its earliest English translation this begins,

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walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". It is a text which portrays salvation through Christ as a revelation of the action of light triumphing over darkness; light and dark not being able to co-exist in the same space. In John 9.5 Jesus teaches, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world", prior to healing a blind man on the Sabbath – a "sign" of his nature and role. The nature of the Christ as the divine light was of intense significance for early Christian Gnostic thinkers, who introduced Eastern philosophical ideas of a cosmic struggle between light and dark into Christianity before being suppressed as heretical in the fifth century. For a standard historical study see Robert McQueen Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[21] The four canonical gospels record six episodes of miraculous recoveries of sight, and refer four more times to the blind being healed: Matt. 9.27-28; 12.22; 15.30-31; 20.30-34; 21.14; Mark 8.22-23; 10.46-52; Luke 7.21-22; 18.35-43; John 9.1-41. Acts 9 tells of the reverse – a significant supernatural blinding, that inflicted upon Saul of Tarsis on the road to Damascus, who is then healed by one of those he has been persecuting. Paul continues to both heal *and* blind others (e.g. Acts 13.11). References to blindness signifying ignorance and spiritual misunderstanding include: Matt.23.16-26; Luke 6.39; Rom. 2.19; and 2Peter 1.9.

"Claryfie me, [gode Ihesu,] with þi clerenes of euerlastynge light and bringe
oute of þe habitacle of my herte alle maner of derkenes." [22]

And continues,

"Sende oute þi light and þi trouþe, þat þei mowe shyne vppon þe yerthe, for I
am ydel [or vayne] yethe and voyde, till þou illumine me..." [23]

Thomas clearly conceived of divine illumination both in terms of a means of salvation
(banishing darkness) and transformation (giving form and substance to his "earthen"
existence), and, by specifically seeking its presence within his mind, his prayer also
implies he envisaged light as a metaphor for the processes of human cognition: a
spiritual position redolent of its greatest early Christian proponent, Augustine of
Hippo.

Given the Christian import for "true" understanding for grounding the human
ability to experience visual phenomena, it is unsurprising that the model found in the
Timaeus appealed to, and was received with sympathy by the majority of medieval
Christian thinkers. Accordingly, Christian Neo-Platonists from Augustine (354-430)
to William of Conches (*c*.1085-1154) applied themselves to informing and
syncretizing their theological interpretations of Scripture with ideas derived from a
text that was in most other respects radically at odds with their belief system. [24]

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[22] *The Imitation of Christ: The First English Translation of the 'Imitatio Christi'*, ed., B. J. H. Biggs,
The Early English Text Society 309 (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 96, book III. *Capitulum* 27. The text of
this edition is composed from three translations dating from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries
(see preface p. vii).

[23] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* 97.

[24] The history of the Platonic influence on Patristic thought (and indeed previously even upon New
Testament writers) and later medieval theology and natural philosophy is beyond the scope of this
discussion. For more comprehensive overviews and thematic discussions see: F. C. Copleston, *A*

The twin significances of "seeing" and "light" in effect were held by the twin authorities of Holy Scripture and Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages, and stood out as fundamental motifs for the intellectual engagement with and imagination and creative reinterpretation of the medieval world. However, whilst the cosmological significance of the *Timaean* creation of human vision to an extent complemented Christianized readings of the Genesis account of creation, the details of the intellectual synthesis are by no means simple. To reach the theological position espoused by Thomas à Kempis entailed commitment to both an intellectual approach and literary background composed of a wider range of concepts of "seeing" and "light": received and interpreted via ancient pagan and biblical sources. To elucidate this foundation for medieval thought and its relation with colour, a brief sketch of the intellectual terrain of theological and philosophical ideas leading up to and informing the fourteenth century theological and literary context follows.

Of lux, lumens and divine significance

In the first of the Genesis accounts of the creation (Gen 1-2.2) "light" (*lux*) is created from the primary utterance of God (*Dixitque Deus fiat lux et facta est lux*),[25] and is

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History of Medieval Philosophy (London: Methuen, 1972) and David Luscombe, *Medieval Thought*, A History of Western Philosophy II (Oxford: Opus-OUP, 1997). A comprehensive collection of scholarly papers is: *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed., Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 24 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

[25] "And God said Let there be Light: and there was Light." Gen. 1.3. The Vulgate term *lux* translates the Hebrew word אור ('ôr), and also the Greek φως (phōs) – used in John's Gospel to define the divine light (Jesus) and in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible) for אור ('ôr). The Greek term at the time could be used for fire-light but came to be used primarily figuratively, especially of light conceived as a ray. *Lumen*, by contrast, translated λύχνος (luchnos), and was a term employed for light derived from an indirect source such as a lamp or candle. The problematic semantic difference

deemed "good" – it receives, literally, the first benediction. Hence it was held by early Christian writers such as St Basil the Great (*c*. 329-379) that light was an intrinsic property of matter and a direct emanation of God.[26] This mode of thinking was significantly developed by St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who argued that God's primary light (*lux*) was distinguishable from that which derive secondarily from heavenly bodies (*luminaria*). Key to his understanding is the Augustinian application of Platonic "ideas" or "forms" (and our access to them) to an account of divine creativity as a process of "illumination". Underlying this, (and revealing that integral to Augustine's thinking was an extramissive model of visual perception),[27] we have the view that both "external" and "internal" light are required for vision:

> iactus enim radiorum ex oculis nostris cuiusdam quidem lucis est iactus et contrahi potest, cum aerem, qui est oculis nostris proximus, intuemur, et emitti, cum ad eandem rectitudinem quae sunt longe posita adtendimus. Nec sane, cum contrahitur, omnino cernere, quae longe sunt, desinit, sed certe obscurius, quam

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between the two can be seen in verses such as John 5.35 where both come side by side: "John (the Baptist) was a burning and shining light (*luchnos*) and you were willing, for a season, to rejoice in his light (*phōs*)." The verse shows the complexity of the matter for theological exegesis: John as a light source is described using *luchnos*, suggesting that he was in fact a derivative light. His light, that in which followers are exhorted to rejoice, however is called *phōs*, suggesting a non-derivative light – perhaps therefore alluding to the divine light of which John was the proponent. The possibilities for interpretation are manifold.

[26] Saint Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, *The Syriac Version of the Hexaemeron by Basil of Caesarea*, trans. and ed. Robert W. Thomson, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Vols. 550-1; Scriptores Syri Tomus 222-3 (Lovanii: Peeters, 1995) Homily 6, pp. 85-112; trans. Vol. 551, pp. 71-93.

[27] Indeed, the active thought which defines vision in the *Timaeus* – the perceiver reaching out to grasp the world via the eye's beam and forming a direct link between the world and an internal "fire" or soul – also parallels Gospel references to the eye being "the light of the body" (Matt 6: 22).

cum in ea obtutus emittitur. Sed tamen ea lux, quae in sensu uidentis est, tam

exigua docetur, ut, nisi adiuuetur extraria luce, nihil uidere possimus;[28]

[...surely the emission of rays from our eyes is an emission of a certain light. And it can be gathered that this [light] is emitted, since when we look into the air adjacent to our eyes we observe, along the same line, things situated far away. Nor does this light sensibly fail, since it is judged to discern fully objects that are at a distance, though surely more obscurely than if the power of sight should [itself] be sent to them. Nevertheless, this light that is in vision is shown to be so scanty that unless it is assisted by an exterior light, we cannot see anything;][29]

Under Platonic influence Augustine understood visual perception to require two kinds of light: interior and exterior. Thus for the pre-eminence of the divine to be asserted, the light emitted from the human eye had to of a different, "inferior" kind from that originating from the deity. Therefore Augustine (a former Manichaean[30]) fused the Christian theology of the *logos* (that is the divine "Word" or second person of the Trinity pre-existing the world according to John 1.1, but in terms of Greek philosophical tradition implying the "meaning" or final cause of existence) with the

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[28] Augustine, *De Genesis ad litteram libri duodecim*, ed. Joseph Zycha, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum Vol. 28, part 1 (1894) 23.

[29] Translation from Lindberg, p. 90.

[30] Augustine converted to Christianity in 387 (see *The Confessions* books 7 &8 for his account of this). It has been argued that Augustine's Manichaean past influenced his Christian theology in numerous ways, perhaps the most obvious concerning the pre-eminence of light in his thinking about the divine. The Manichaeans, who originated in Persia (and were in turn influenced by Zoroastrianism), worshipped a pantheon of divine spirits of light and perpetually struggled with spiritual forces of darkness. However, this line of thought—attributing Augustine's emphasis on divine light to his Manichaean background—runs the risk of underplaying the distinct role of light as used theologically in the Gospels, and its influence readers and interpreters. Cf. Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn, eds., *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

"light of the world" – in order to parallel the Platonic sense of seeing being created
"for" the provision of (true or spiritual) human understanding. Discussing Gen 1.2
("But the earth was invisible and without form") in his *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*,
Augustine made a clear distinction between such teleologically differing kinds of light
(primarily in order to refute the argument made by the Manichaeans that before God
created light he must have existed in darkness):

> Vere ipsi sunt in tenebris ignorantiae et ideo non intellegunt lucem, in qua deus
> erat, antequam faceret istam lucem. Non enim norunt isti lucem nisi quam
> carneis oculis vident, et ideo istum solem quem pariter non solum cum bestiis
> maioribus, sed etiam cum muscis et vermiculis cernimus, illi sic colunt, ut
> particulam dicant esse lucis illius in qua habitat deus. Sed nos intellegamus
> aliam esse (p.73) lucem in qua deus habitat, unde est illud lumen, de quo in
> evangelio dicitur: *erat lumen verum quod illuminat omnem hominem venientem
> in hunc mundum.* Nam solis istius lumen non illuminat omnem hominem, sed
> corpus hominis et mortales oculos, in quibus nos vincunt aquilarum oculi, qui
> solem istum multo melius quam nos dicuntur aspicere. Illud autem lumen non
> irratlonabilium avium oculos pascit, sed pura corda eorum, qui deo credunt et ab
> amore visibilium rerum et temporalium se ad eius praecepta implenda
> convertunt; quod omnes homines possunt si velint, quia illud lumen *omnem
> hominem illuminat venientem in hunc mundum.*[31]

[They themselves [the Manichaeans] are truly in the darkness of ignorance, and for
that reason they do not understand the light in which God was before he made this
light. For they know only the light they see with the eyes of the flesh. And therefore
they worship this sun which we see, not only along with the larger animals, but even
with flies and worms, and they say that this sun is a particle of that light in which God
dwells. But let us understand that there is a different light in which God dwells. From

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[31] Augustine, *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, ed. Dorothea Weber, Sancti Augustini Opera, Corpus
Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum Vol. 91 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der
Wissenschaften, 1998) pp. 72-3, III. 6.

it there comes that light of which we read in the Gospel ... (p.54) For the light of this sun does not enlighten all of man, but the body of man and his mortal eyes, in which we are surpassed by the eyes of eagles which are said to gaze upon this sun much better than we. But that other light feeds, not the eyes of irrational birds, but the pure hearts of those who believe God and turn themselves from the love of visible and temporal things to the fulfilment of his commands. If they wish to, all men can do this, because that light enlightens every man coming into this world.] [32]

The differentiation between the light of mortal "carneis oculis", which humans share with other animals (albeit having weaker versions of the same compared to eagles), and the "lucem in qua deus habitat" entailed two kinds of light. However, the clarification of his understanding of the nature of fleshly vision in fact caused Augustine to think in terms of three kinds of light. In the unfinished work *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine considered how humankind and animals share fleshly eyes but not the faculty of rationality. He wrote therefore of the first distinction between inner and outer light needed for extramissive seeing, that:

> ...the light that is perceived by the eyes is one thing; the light which acts through the eyes so that sensation might occur is something else. [33]

But whilst there must be a basic difference between the external light provided by the sun and other sources and that of the subject's eyebeam, a third concept of light type is required because: "Even the souls of other animals do not lack such light". [34] This "light ... can be understood in creatures, that by which they reason. To this is opposed

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[32] *Saint Augustine on Genesis: Two Books on Genesis - Against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske, The Fathers of the Church, Volume 84 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic U. of America P., 1991) 53-54.

[33] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. Teske 159.

[34] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. Teske 157.

as darkness the irrationality, such as is found in the souls of other animals".[35] Augustine cites the ability to reason as the divine provision of another kind of "light" that distinguishes humanity (made in the image of God) from beasts.

The light of reason

Light, as a metaphor for the nature and operation of Reason, has of course profoundly influenced Western thought and culture. Two literary examples of the Christian re-formulation of the ancient concept are provided by Boethius's (*c*.475-525) *De consolatione philosophiae*, an important influence upon subsequent medieval thinkers and writers, and Christine de Pizan's (1364-1430) *Le Livre de la Cité des dames*.

Boethius, an early Christian of aristocratic Roman descent, wrote his most influential work towards the very end of the Roman period. Having fallen from political favour with his Gothic Roman emperor (Theodoric) he was imprisoned in Pavia in *c*. 524 and later executed.[36] Boethius' *De consolatione*, steeped in Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy, and possibly written whilst the author was under a death sentence, was to have seismic effects upon later Western literature. Boethius famously and influentially depicted the visit to his cell of Lady Philosophy, who takes him through a rigorous philosophical self-examination, ultimately to bring him consolation—via self understanding—in his plight. This Lady's awe-inspiring appearance on first arrival is described in these memorable lines:

> ...astisse mihi supra verticem visa est mulier reverendi admodum vultus oculis ardentibus et ultra communem hominum valentiam perspicacibus, colore vivido

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[35] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. Teske 160.

[36] The full details of this affair are uncertain but were likely to have been rooted in differences in theological sympathies. See Victor Watts's introduction to Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy: Revised Edition*, trans., Victor Watts (London: Penguin Books, 1999) xx-xxi.

atque inexhausti vigoris, quamvis ita aevi plena foret, ut nullo modo nostrae crederetur aetatis, statura discretionis ambiguae. Nam nunc quidem ad communem sese hominum mensuram cohibebat, nunc vero pulsare caelum summi verticis cacumine videbatur; quae cum altius caput extulisset, ipsum etiam caelum penetrabat respicientiumque hominum frustrabatur intuitum.[37]

[Chaucer translates (*c*. late 1370s): "I saw, stondyne aboven the heghte of myn heved, a woman of ful greet reverence by semblaunt, hir eien brennynge and cleer-seynge over the commune myghte of men; with a lifly colour and with swich vigour and strengthe that it ne myghte nat ben emptid..." *Boece* ll. 3-9, p. 398.]

Philosophy's "ardent eyes", "vivid colour" and "inexhaustible vigour" characterize her enormous significance for both the prisoner in the text and its readership, predominant in relation to other symbolic factors about her appearance.[38] The notion that her vision was "keen beyond the usual power of men" defines and controls the portrait – the rest of the descriptive material supporting what has already engaged the reader. Given that the character of Philosophy is a personification of "mind" and the ability to think and reflect clearly, it may seem counter-intuitive that her physical description should be so visually arresting and stimulating. However, this aspect of the portrayal operates as a perfect representation of the inversion of a blinding visitation. Rather than directly revealed knowledge, Lady Philosophy is bringing back a neglected process of insight and understanding to the prisoner, and, therefore, at a symbolic level, must be extravagantly visible herself (hence her colouration is at once

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[37] Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis: Libr Qvinqve*, ed. Karl Büchner (Heidelberg: Carl Winter-Universitätsverlag, 1947) pp.6-7, ll. 6-16.

[38] Including her indeterminable size and age and her imperishable clothing with its embroidered hem bearing the Greek letters Pi and Theta that represent the two schools of practical and contemplative philosophy, which is being long-neglected and covered in dust was perhaps a comment on the state of learning in Boethius's society.

vigorous and vivid). The description fully embraces the co-significances of light and seeing of the *Timaean* model, which were subsequently endorsed by Christian theology regarding the divine light. Philosophy itself, manifestly a quasi-divine expression of knowledge gained by Reason (part, it would seem, of the divine image bestowed on humanity) is metaphorically represented by her burning power of sight, and is also, in being the manifestation of "true sight", light's "final cause". The primacy of sight, light and visuality are thus conjoined within her description and upheld as divinely associated phenomena (she immediately produces reverence). The portrait may also be said to endorse what little we have seen of Augustinian theology - in terms of the position of the human being in relation to God: the angelic orders on the side of reasoning humanity and animals on the other. Philosophy's inexhaustible and vigorous colours encapsulate the visual results of "true" seeing: they are the metaphorical evidence of a divinely ordained ability to think and seek out true knowledge.

A much later yet still comparable use of these ideas and imagery, now further nuanced and informed by the intervening centuries, is found in Christine de Pizan's description (*c*. 1404-5) of the visitation of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice in *Le Livre de la Cité des dames*. Whilst lost in unhappy meditation, lamenting that God has made her exist in a female body, Christine's narrator (a version of Christine herself) recounts how a group of seemingly transcendental or celestial women visit and proceed to comfort and instruct her in the "true" worth of womankind. Their arrival within her daydream is heralded by a ray of heavenly light falling onto her lap:

> ...soubdainement sus mon giron vy descendre un ray de lumiere (p.622) si comme se le soleil fust. Et je, qui en lieu obscure estoye, ouquel a celle heure

soleil rayer ne peust, tressailly adoncques si comme se je feusse resveillee de somme. Et drecant la teste pour regarder dont tel lueur venoit, vy devant moy, tout en estant, trios dames couronnees, de tres souveraine reverence, desquelles la resplandeur de leurs cleres faces enluminoit moy meismes et toute la place.[39]

[…suddenly I saw a ray of light descending onto my lap as if it were the sun. And as I was sitting in a dark place where the sun could not shine at this hour, I was startled as if awakened from sleep. And as I lifted my head to see where this light was coming from, I saw standing before me three crowned ladies of great nobility. The light coming from their bright faces illuminated me and the whole room.] [40]

Christine first makes clear that the light was not of natural origin: she was sitting "qui en lieu obscure estoye, ouquel a celle heure soleil rayer ne peust." The light, she notices, was "de leurs cleres faces". The point of so emphasizing the description is to credit the three noble Ladies—living abstractions of human qualities—as sources of light themselves capable of illuminating the world and providing light for the benefit of others.

So far Christine's description fits in well with what we have noted regarding the metaphorical conceptualizations of light and seeing found in Christian Platonist understanding. However, in Christine's *Livre* the subject requiring transcendental illumination is an original one. The book proceeds with the Ladies each educating Christine in turn regarding the inadequacy of her thinking concerning the female lot: employing reason, example, and an appeal to the ultimately "good" nature of the divine as revealed through scripture. The process entails the autobiographical student acquiring her "new" sight through the provision of a metaphorical and spiritually

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[39] Maureen Curnow, *The* Livre de la Cite des Dames *of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition*, Ph.D diss. (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1975) 621-622.

[40] *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, translated by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, Norton Critical Editions (New York; London: Norton, 1997) 121.

"real" light. What is perhaps most interesting about Christine's text for contemporary readers is the application of the Boethian formula to female experience: the identities of the three light-giving Ladies are seen to be both feminine and female, and addressing a female (so in the extra-literary sense are addressing a gendered readership via a female voice), as opposed to being "grammatically" female entities addressing aspects of the male perspective from a male perspective. (Lady Philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation* is female because the word "philosophy" is a feminine noun in both Latin and Greek.) Because of the subject however, in Christine's *Cité des dames* we have a sense that the visiting Ladies represent biological as well as grammatical femininity.

V. A. Kolve has taken the implications of the situation further, to suggest that the initial tableau is evocative of, and hence intended to be read as an echo of, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin (Luke 1.26-38),[41] and he interprets the description

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[41] V. A. Kolve, "The Annunciation to Christine: Authorial Empowerment in *The Book of the City of Ladies*", *Iconography at the Crossroads: Papers from the Collquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University 23-24 March 1990*, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993) 171-196. [Also cited in Brownlee p.121 n2.] Kolve argues from the evidence of parallel (graphic) artworks depicting extra-scriptural light rays at the Annunciation. A supernatural light accompanying the angelic messenger was indeed a common feature of the medieval imagination of the event (also evident in literature: see poems such as Henryson's "The Annunciation" (ll. 19-20), which describes the aftermath of the occasion, "And quhen this carpin wes complit, / Brichtnes fra bufe aboundis" – Robert Henryson, "The Annunciation", in *The Makars: The Poems of Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas*, ed. J. A. Tasioulas (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999) 230-33). However, since light is a wide-ranging symbol of revealed truth throughout Judeo-Christianity, the Annunciation portrayed as such – i.e., also involving *lumens* – adds little to the story. One also suspects that Christine's knowledge of scripture would have made her aware of those allusions within works of visual art that were overtly interpretive.

of a ray of light falling upon Christine's lap ("mon giron") as an iconic allusion to the

Holy Spirit's role in the conception of Christ.[42] This entails recasting the rest of the

book as the imparting of a unique form of knowledge to an especially chosen female:

placing Christine in the role of a new Mary being visited by new (female) versions of

Gabriel, who bring news of another (allegorically understood) divine conception.

However, this potent reading is hard to sustain in terms of the wider use and

importance of the role of illumination as a biblical symbol, and given that St Luke's

account of the Annunciation—the only Gospel account thereof—does not mention a

supernatural light being present either before or after the event (facially or otherwise

derived). Kolve's interpretation also contradicts the overall sense of Christine as an

unassuming personality, a person unlikely to place herself directly in the same

company as the Virgin Mary, especially during a period of such extreme Marian

devotion as the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Other biblical correlations

for the illuminative aspect of the scenario available to be woven into Christine's

portrayal of the arrival of the three Ladies include the divine light heralding the

Apostle Peter's escape from prison (Acts 12.6-11), and the facial shining and

whiteness of robe occurring at the Transfiguration (Mat 17.2, Mk 9.2-8, Lk 9.28-36).

In the first case an angel appears, and, comparable to Christine's tableau, a

supernatural light shines in his cell (Acts 12.7). The angel frees Peter from his bonds

and leads him out of the jail. Recast in symbolic terms, this divinely illuminated

release highlights a new found spiritual freedom from another kind of metaphysical

blindness: Peter's release from jail occurs after his momentous acceptance of a radical

new perspective upon the Christian Gospel, i.e., that it is for Gentiles as well as Jews

(Acts 10). The light of another "new" understanding, to which Christine could have

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[42] Kolve 179-80.

been alluding, would be that Christian women, in the same way as the Gentiles need to be freed from a misogynist perspective and fully accepted into Christendom.

In Christine's depiction, a light is derived from the Ladies' faces, which illuminates both Christine and the room ("la resplandeur de leurs cleres faces enluminoit moy meismes et toute la place"). The Gospel accounts of Jesus' Transfiguration could have been the sources for the motif, and indeed the wording: the Vulgate refers to how Christ's face did shine ("et resplenduit facies") to translate the Greek πρόσωπον λάμπω ("prosōpon" G4383 "lampō" G2989). The Gospel accounts are in turn reliant upon the Torah's description of Moses' experience of the glory of God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19.18-25), in which the mountain is clouded (Ex. 24.16) and Moses has indirect experience of the divine (Ex. 33.20-23) such that his face shone with reflected glory (Ex. 34.30). Christine could be read as placing her three Ladies on a par with the three prophets present at the Transfiguration, who appear in order to witness and directly encounter the divine incarnate; and thus as putting herself into the role of the confused Peter and the other disciples, to whom the revelation of Christ's divine nature and commission were given.

Of hierarchies of light

It seems apparent, even from the few examples mentioned above, that the abstract realm of "higher" things envisaged by Plato as a metaphor for light, which via the *Timaeus* Augustine and his followers revised (employing Neo-Platonist thought) in terms of a perceivable light of "truth" emanating from God down to his created world and creatures, profoundly influenced a wider literary field and subsequent generations of artists, thinkers and writers. The idea of emanation of spiritual light and its illumination of spiritual darkness suggested an active experience of and participation in God's revealed "truth" for humanity, and also served as a metaphor for the

existence and attainment of "true" knowledge. The specifically hierarchical conception of a divinely ordered and illuminated universe received perhaps its most influential treatment in Pseudo-Dionysius's *De coelesti hierarchia* or *The Celestial Hierarchy* (c. late fifth century) in which the emanation of the divine light was charted on its course from the divine source to the created celestial order, as it illuminated and defined different levels of supernatural beings. This ordering is paralleled on earth by the natural hierarchy of men and beasts and the ecclesiastical hierarchy of church offices (treated in the parallel work *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* or *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*). *The Celestial Hierarchy* (henceforth CH) opens by quoting the beginning of the epistle of St James, a passage in which God is described as "the Father of Lights" (James 1.17). This formulation is taken further by the writer so that:

> ...every divine procession of radiance from the Father, while constantly bounteously flowing to us, fills us anew as though with a unifying power, by recalling us to things above, and leading us to the unity of the Shepherding Father and to the Divine One. [43]

The extramissive radiance—linking man to God—recalls Pseudo-Dionysius' description of prayer in *De divinis nominibus* or *The Divine Names* (as stretching towards "...the kindly Rays of God. Imagine a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below. We grab hold of it with one hand and

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[43] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, trans. Colm Luibheid in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, forward, notes, introductions by Paul Rorem, Rene Roques, Jaroslav Pelikan and others, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 121A, pp.145-191 at 145.

then another..."[44]), but is employed in CH as the basis for an exemplary hierarchy within heaven itself. The structure envisaged, drawing on biblical material and his "sacred initiator" for authority,[45] is triadic, nine types of being sorted into three threefold groups:

> The word of God has provided nine explanatory designations for the heavenly beings, and my own sacred initiator has divided these into three threefold groups. According to him, the first group is forever around God and is said to be permanently united with him ahead of any of the others, and with no intermediary. Here, then, are the most holy "thrones" and the orders said to possess many eyes and many wings, called in Hebrew the "cherubim" and "seraphim". Following the tradition of scripture, he says that they are found immediately around God and in a proximity enjoyed by no other. This threefold group says my famous teacher, forms a single hierarchy which is truly first and

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[44] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, trans. Colm Luibheid in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 680C, pp. 49-141 at 68.

[45] Pseudo-Dionysius' scriptural sources for "cherubim" are numerous, see e.g. Gn 3.24; Ex 25.18-22, 37.6-9; Num 7. "Seraphim" are only mentioned once in scripture: Is 6.2-6, a passage which is discussed at length in CH 300B-308B, pp. 176-181. "Thrones", as heavenly beings, are found in Col 1.16, but in Ps 80.1 and 99.1 they are formed out of cherubim. The members of the second tier ("dominions", "authorities" and "powers") are celestial personifications of terms used in Eph 1.21, 3.10; Col 1.16, 2.10, 1 Pt 3.22. The third tier also draws on some of these passages for "principalities", but human rulers are clearly intended in Lk 12.11, 20.20, and Ti 3.1. Most inconsistent for the writer is 1 Cor 15.24, Eph 6.12 and Col 2.15 in which they are hostile powers. "Archangels" are found in 1 Thes 4.16 and Jude 9. See also Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* 200C-273C, pp. 160-174. The "sacred initiator" referred to is one Hierotheus: a name mentioned throughout Pseudo-Dionysius' work and either a fictional source or perhaps an unknown historical Neoplatonist writer. The particular work of Hierotheus that Pseudo-Dionysius mentions (e.g. in 681A), *The Elements of Theology*, is unknown. (See *The Celestial Hierarchy*, p.69n128, and I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Ps. Dionysius and the Holy Hierotheus," *Studia Patristica* 8, Part 2 (1966): 108-117 [*Texte und Untersuchungen*, 93]).

whose members are of equal status. No other is more like the divine or receives more directly the first enlightenment from the Deity.

The second group, he says, is made up of "authorities", "dominions", and "powers." And the third, at the end of the heavenly hierarchies, is the group of "angels", "archangels", and "principalities".[46]

The three levels of groups have their triadic nature rehearsed in terms of the powers (primary, middle and lower order) accorded to each. Thus Pseudo-Dionysius encapsulates and helps inspire the spirit of an age, justifying hierarchical social and religious thought via theology and affording key significance to the visually perceived world. "In my opinion" he writes, "a hierarchy is a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine."[47] The triadic celestial order is reflected (albeit corrupted by sinful human nature) in the earthly condition of courts and courtiers, princes and principalities that are arranged in tapering structures beneath human heads. This is a divinely instituted reality for the writer of CH, one in which the emanation of light from a single, primary source is the key to unlocking understanding:

> And it [i.e., the hierarchical order] is uplifted to the imitation of God in proportion to the enlightenments divinely given to it. The beauty of God – so simple, so good, so much the source of perfection – is completely uncontaminated by dissimilarity. It reaches out to grant every being, according to merit, a share of light and then through a divine sacrament, in harmony and peace, it bestows on each of those being perfected its own form. [48]

Of course, the conception of the hierarchical order achieved via divine light (and the sacraments) raised many metaphysical issues and problems for medieval thinkers. For

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[46] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, 200D-201A, p. 160.

[47] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, 164D, p.153.

instance, in his commentary on *De coelesti hierarchia*, Johannes Scottus Eriugena

(*c*.800-877) discussed what it could have meant for the "Father of Lights" (of

illumination) also to be a light source; i.e., to ask is God himself a light (*lux*)? His

examination of the idea produces an unorthodox, near heretical hierarchy or "inner-

archy" of lights concealed within the tri-une nature of God himself – a problem

avoided by the categorisation of celestial levels in groups of three. Eriugena wrote:

> ...the Father of lights is the celestial Father, the first and innermost light, from
> whom the true light – his Word through whom all things were made and in
> whom all things are substantiated, his only begotten Son – is born. From him ...
> proceeds the light, coessential to him and to his Word, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit
> of the Father and the Son... And this is the triune light.[49]

Eriugena accordingly postulated an outworking from the primary divine light from

within the Trinity: i.e., from the Father of lights (the innermost, first light) is born the

Son (the true light), from who proceeded the "coessential" light of the Spirit. The

dilemma here was the extent to which a triune set of lights ran the risk of re-casting

the Trinity itself into a temporal and, as it were, two-thirds dependent hierarchy. The

emphasis on "co-essentiality" was a vital component to avoid its structural

implications, but, logically speaking, the outline of a heresy remains.

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[48] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, 164D, pp.153-154.

[49] Paul Rorem, *Eurigena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, Studies and Texts 150 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005) Appendix 2; p. 182. The relation between this thinking on illumination and the use of stained glass in religious buildings is explored by John Gage in *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993, rpt. 2001) 69-76.

Extramission and hierarchy in <u>Havelok the Dane</u>

The hierarchical model for the nature of light and its emanations provided a mystical and idealized formula for the purposes of religious contemplation and inspiration. However, late medieval evidence for the dissemination and longevity of this approach to light (as directly encoding a God-given, hierarchical truth) can be found also in the creative stylings of medieval poets. One possible example is the extraordinary "kingly light" emitted by the eponymous Havelok the Dane in the late thirteenth century Middle English metrical romance.[50] In this version of a much older tale of usurpation and restoration of rightful kingship, Havelok, the hero, and rightful heir to the throne of Denmark, is abducted and exiled from his country at the age of three by Godard the treacherous regent. On three occasions during the poem the "true" identity and regal nature of Havelok is revealed through his cross-shaped birthmark (or "kynemerk" l. 604) and by the emission of a bright light (a "lith", "a swithe fayr, a swathe bryth – Al-so brith, al-so shir, / So it were a blase of fir." ll. 1251-55) from his mouth: a miraculous sign and symbol of his status as the rightful monarch-in-waiting. In terms of a hierarchically construed extramissive model of illumination, Havelok is presented as one who is divinely sanctioned to be a symbolic source of light for a nation.[51] The Middle English *Havelok* is the later redaction, significantly reworked, re-imagined,

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[50] Editions include *Havelok the Dane*, ed. Donald B. Sands, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. Donald B. Sands (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1986, rpt. 2003) 58-129; *Havelok*, ed. Diane Speed, in *Medieval English Romances*, Third Edition, Part One, ed. Diane Speed, Durham Medieval Texts 8 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1993) 34-121..

[51] The three occasions are after Havelok's abduction, just prior to his attempted murder by the fisherman Grim and his wife, "Of hise mouth it stod a stem, / Als it were a sunne-bem" (ll. 588-594); the night of his wedding to Goldeboru (ll. 1247–1264); and whilst posing as a merchant, staying at the house of Earl Ubbe (ll. 2092-2114).

and incorporating other sources, of an Anglo-Norman tale, the *Lai d'Havelok*, composed over a hundred years earlier (*c.* 1190-1220).[52] The writer of this text was in turn using Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (*c.* 1135-40). In the Anglo-Norman versions of the romance, Havelok's luminous kingship indicator is a flame which issues from his mouth every time he slept - "such great heat there was in his body"; and moreover, the flame "...gave out a perfume that no one ever smelt anything better."[53] This phenomenon is suggested by Weiss (via d'Ardenne) as linked to a pre-Christian Germanic legend in which the royal origin of a human being was revealed by the emission of flames from the mouth. Weiss links this in turn to a reference to Odin's role in giving breath to the pieces of driftwood from which life is formed in the Norse poem *Voluspa* ("breath gave Odin, spirit gave Hænir").[54] It is significant that this potentially pagan dimension to the tale was dropped or recalibrated in favour

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[52] Cf. *The Birth of Romance. An Anthology: Four Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. and int. Judith Weiss (London: Dent-Everyman, 1992) xxiii-xxiv. For an edition see *Le Lai d'Haveloc and Gaimar's Haveloc Episode*, ed. Alexander Bell (London: Longmans, Green; Manchester UP, 1925).

[53] *Lai d'Haveloc*, trans. Weiss, p. 142, para. 51. See also n5 on p. 143. In *L'Estoire des Engles* the kingly sign is also described as a fire emitted from the mouth. Havelok remarks, "While I sleep my mouth catches fire; I sense nothing of the flame." Geffrei Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engles* in *Middle English Romances: Authoritative Texts, Sources and Background Criticism*, trans. and ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd (London: Norton, 1995) 319-329 at 322, l. 292. For an Anglo-Normnan edition see Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis* ed. A. Bell, Anglo-Norman Texts XIV-XVI (Oxford: Blackwell for A.N.T.S., 1960).

[54] See *Völuspá*: "Ǫnd gaf óðin / od gaf hen / laa gaf loðvr / ok litv goða." *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern, i: Text*, ed. Gustav Neckel, revised Hans Kuhn, 5th edition. (Heidelberg: Winter 1983). Translated as "The Seeress's Prophecy", in *The Poetic Edda*, trans., Carolyne Larrington, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: OUP, 1999) stanza 18, p. 6.

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of a clear allusion to the divinely extramissive light of the Christian deity by the time

of its late thirteenth-century retelling. A pagan root might, however, explain the fact

that the light was emitted from the mouth, and not as one might expect in accordance

with typical extramissive light imagery, from the eyes. The practical point that

Havelok's light only appears when he is asleep—presumably with his eyes shut—

provides half of the answer. If his light had originally derived from a pre-Christian

"oral flame" then we have a more complete and more persuasive understanding for

why the later English poet revealed Havelok's status through an oral manifestation of

divine illumination.

From the extramission to intromission of perceived light

The natural significance of light and extramissive mode of seeing grounded on the

Timaean model of the phenomenon recurred in force during what has come to be

called the "twelfth-century Renaissance". William of Conches (*c.* 1080-1150),[55] one

of the most important scholars of the period, embraced Platonic thought (known to

him via Chalcidius' commentary, a work heavily influenced by Galen) with the

particular desire of employing it to explain natural phenomena in natural terms. Thus,

in his *Glossae super Timaeum Platonis*, William advocated that for sight to occur the

interior ray, exterior light and opaque object are all needed, from which principle he

proceeded to give a "medical" description of the biological origins of the interior ray.

According to this food is digested secondarily in the liver, from which a vapour is

produced, and then transformed by various organ related means into a "natural

virtue", which, on reaching the heart, becomes a "spiritual virtue" and then enters the

brain. This virtue is refined again to become an "airy substance" which is called upon

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[55] See Lindberg 91 and 247n25 and R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford:

OUP, 1970) 61-85 for the revaluation of William's relationship to the Neo-Platonic school at Chartres.

to be emitted from the optic nerve to the eye and out of the pupil whenever the soul wishes to see.[56] In his Neo-Platonic dialogue, the *Dragmaticon*, William dealt with numerous practical problems associated with the idea of a sense impression being achieved via an extramissive action (such as the problem of the vast distance between the eye and visually contacted objects such as stars) through a rigid and unfailing commitment to the idea that the material composing the eyes' "airy substance" was infinitely subtle and swift.[57]

Significantly, however, the concerns of later Neo-Platonist thinkers such as William of Conches in approaching vision in this ostensibly theory-led manner also reveal a desire for natural explanations of phenomena that parallel the more significant or higher kinds of understanding operating within the abstract realms of metaphysics and theology. This concern was found most acutely expressed in the attempts by later university men to assimilate Aristotelian natural philosophy, and, eventually more importantly, its apparent method of observation, into their understanding of the natural world.[58] The impulse at work is perhaps best describable as a desire to read pagan philosophical texts "philosophically", rather than in terms of their theological implications.

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[56] William of Conches, *Glosae super Platonem: Texte Critique avec Notes et Tables*, edited by Edouard Jeauneau, Textes Philosophiques du Moyen Âge XIII (Paris: J. Vrin, 1965) 236-237.

[57] William of Conches, *Dragmaticon*, published as *Dialogus de substantiis physicis: Ante annos ducentos confectus, a Vuilhelmo Aneponymo philosopho* (Strasburg, 1567; facs. rpt. Frankfurt: Minerva, 1967) 281-2, and cited by Lindberg 92.

[58] See Charles H. Lohr, "The Ancient Philosophical Legacy and its Transmission to the Middle Ages" in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed., Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 24 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 15-22.

Approaches to visual and perception theory from the twelfth century onwards entailed two key changes of thinking: a different sort of distinction made between concepts of "light" and "colour" that showed the influence of Aristotelian thought from works including the *Meteorologica, Physica, De caelo, De generatione et corruptione* and the *Parva naturalia* (also *De coloribus* which is believed to be of the Peripatetic School but was attributed to Aristotle during the medieval period); and, gradually, variations on the intromissive theory of perception deriving from *De anima* and *Parva naturalia* and those commentaries and revisions stemming from them written by the great Arabic physicians and scholars of the Islamic Golden Age, the most significant of whom were Alhazen, (*Ibn al-Haytham*, 965-1039) Avicenna (*Ibn Sina*, 980-1037) and Averroes (*Ibn Rushd*, 1126-98).[59] The wider reception and scholarly penetration of this transition may be found by a comparison of sources for encyclopaedias such as Isidore of Seville's (*c*.560-636) *Etymologies* and Bartholomaeus Anglicus's (*c*.1203-1272) *De proprietatibus rerum* (and see below).

At root, Aristotle rejected the Platonic idea (and the underlying Empedoclean doctrine) of light being a corpuscular emanation, writing in *De anima* "...it is not fire [i.e., an element understood to have an atomic structure], or in general a body, or an

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[59] See A. I. Sabra, trans., *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham. Books I-II-III: On Direct Vision. English Translation and Commentary (2 vols.)*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 40 (London; Turin: Warburg Institute, 1989); F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege; OUP, 1952); Dag Nikolaus Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West: The Formation of a Peripatetic Philosophy of the Soul 1160-1300*, Warburg Institutes Studies and Texts I (Turin; London: Warburg Institute, 2000); and, Averroes, *Epitome of Parva Naturalia, translated from the original Arabic and the Hebrew and Latin versions by Harry Blumberg*, Corpvs Commentariorvm Averrois in Aristotelem, Vol. VII (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1961).

effluence from any body (for in this case it would still be a body of some kind)."[60]

Furthermore, in the *De sensu* section of the *Parva naturalia* he argued that the

extramission of a ray from the eye was absurd:

> It is, to state the matter generally, an irrational notion that the eye should see in
> virtue of something issuing from it; that the visual ray should extend itself all
> the way to the stars, or else go out merely to a certain point, and there coalesce,
> as some say, with rays which proceed from the object. It would be better to
> suppose this coalescence to take place in the fundament of the eye itself. But
> even this would be mere trifling. For what is meant by the 'coalescence' of light
> with light? ... And how could the light inside coalesce with the light outside it?
> (438b) For the environing membrane comes between them [i.e., the cornea].[61]

The problems for Aristotle were the idea of a limitless extension from the eye and the

nature of the coalescence between the internal and external lights. He raised another

obvious criticism (no doubt entertained by all who hear the theory for the first time) in

437b: "...if vision were the result of light issuing from the eye as from a lantern, why

should not the eye have the power of seeing even in the dark?"

However, Aristotle's *De anima* (*Peri psychēs*)—the primary source of his

alternative model for visual perception—was not translated into Latin, and hence not

available to literate Latin West, until at least the later twelfth century after James

(originally Jacob) of Venice produced his translation (*c*.1150),[62] which was revised by

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[60] Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) II.7.418b; p.
174.

[61] Aristotle, *The Parva Naturalia*; *De Sensu et Sensibili*, trans. J. I. Beare in *The Works of Aristotle
Volume III*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1908) 438a-b.

[62] L. Minio-Paluello, "Iacobus Veneticus Grecus: Canonist and Translator of Aristotle", *Traditio* 8
(1952), pp. 267-304; repaginated in Minio-Paluello, *Opuscula: The Latin Aristotle* (Amsterdam, 1972)
pp. 189-249); Hasse 7 and 7n29.

William of Moerbeke in the thirteenth century (c.1260-69). So whilst an encyclopaedist such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus clearly had access to this relatively recent translated work, Isidore of Seville composing his *Etymologies* six hundred years before did not. Isidore made use of those works of Aristotle that were available to him, but, it can be argued, had no definite knowledge of Aristotle's rejection of the Platonic theory of light. In the *Etymologies* Isidore wrote: "Light (*lux*) is the substance itself, while illumination (*lumen*) is so called because it emanates from light (*a luce manare*), that is, it is the brightness (or whiteness) of light (*lux*) - but writers confuse the two".[63] This formulation is clearly Augustinian and in turn Neo-Platonic in that it posits light as a substance, but also hints towards a re-formulation from the auspices of Aristotelian thought, insofar as it does not posit the topic from an *a priori* declaration of its metaphysical importance and the theological first principle of corporeal light. The distinction Isidore drew was instead simply between primary and secondary differences of kinds of light as opposed to the ontological nature of the phenomenon.

Bartholomaeus Anglicus revealed his access to a more complete Aristotelian position regarding perception in *De anima* through remarks such as (from the text of John Trevisia's translation, 1398): "And therefore secundo de anima Aristotil seith that colour chaungeth sight and yeueth thereto a likenesse by worchynge of light."[64] In this section of his *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus also considers light to be the perfection of "clearness" and "brightness" – again a Christianised Aristotelian

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[63] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. XIII.x.14. p. 274.

[64] M. C. Seymour, ed., *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Batholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum; A Critical Text, Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1975) XIX.27-28, p.1268. See also the discussion of book XIX in this study.

staple, grounded upon an underlying opposition to the notion that light is a substance. Bartholomaeus drew (XIX.11.p.1268) on Isidore (*Etymologies* XIX. *xvii*. p. 380) without qualms to propound his summary of the nature of colour. He refers to one of Isidore's definitions that derives the term from its similarity to the Latin verb *colere* (which Isidore uses to mean "drain" or "filter"), but does not comment further (e.g., upon the fact that this mode of thinking would involve a conceptual irreconcilability with the perceptual principles of Aristotle's *De anima*). Isidore also cited *calor* ("heat") as a root term for colour, which, although reconcilably "Aristotelian" if deemed to be associating colour with elemental mixtures existing according to different conditions of which heat is an elemental property, could also be read in line with a Platonic understanding of light as a (fiery) substance: a view we have already seen Isidore to hold (XIII.*x*.14), and on which Plato's theory (unknown in the West until Ficino's complete translation of *Timaeus*) of different colours deriving from their differences as qualities of fire was based.

The movement towards an Aristotelian "non-corporeal" theory and away from that of Neo-Platonism did not entail, however, that light was no longer be thought of in divine senses. Bartholomaeus plainly refers to the divine origins of light as a given when discussing the Aristotelian difference between seeing (which requires intromission of light) and the existence of colours (which are parts of things in the world). He writes, "...For the vertu of the light of heuene cometh unseye into the inner parts of thinges and gendreth colours byhelpe of the four qualities of elementis..."[65] Barthomaeus' differentiation between light and colours, which places colours as "in" the world and directly related to the qualities of the four elements, expresses the fundamental nature of colour in medieval thought as it was conceived

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[65] *De proprietatibus rerum* XIX. 34-36, p.1269.

along Aristotelian lines. At the same time, however, his conception retained the theological perspective of light deriving from God ("the light of heuene") but operating "byhelpe" the elements in their generation of colours.

Elemental colours in Aristotelian philosophy

So far this overview has revealed only the secondary nature of colour for early medieval scholarship, that is, in terms of its metaphysical significance. From a post-Keplerian and Newtonian point of view, colour in the perceptual world of the Middle Ages seems washed out or over-exposed by the primary significance of, and general interest in extramissive light: that is, in light being an illuminative essence and theological key to true understanding and perception. On this basis only by analogy do "whiteness" and "blackness" register as chromatic phenomena, for they represent the relative presence or absence of light. Gage has succinctly put the situation: "Colour was related to *lumen* rather than *lux* and thus was at two removes from the highest form of light."[66] Indeed, the Aristotelian progression away from this position—a move we shall see conceived of colour as existing as a material property revealed through the medium of an insubstantial light—could be argued to distance colour from the divine fount of primary "truth" and "meaning." Colour would also, and arguably as a response to the new mode of chromatic thinking, come to achieve a highly significant role within medieval cultures and societies and even achieve status as a potential theologically rooted "value" in and of itself. What can be said with certainty is that the intellectual roots of this contradictory situation are found in the rise of Aristotelian thought and its ramifications as a result of the establishment of the new universities and their gradual acceptance of Aristotle's works into the curricula,

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[66] John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993, rpt. 2001) 70.

and of the reading of philosophical texts "philosophically" and not merely as theologically encoded metaphors. The influence of Aristotle in the Latin West is attested by the fact that he became known simply as "the Philosopher".[67]

A momentous date in the history of philosophy and western culture at large was March the 19th 1255: when Aristotelian philosophy was officially adopted by the University of Paris, and its Arts faculty imposed the study of all the known (and some conjectured) works of Aristotle. It is in the context of setting up a new intellectual norm—and what this entailed in terms of a non-specialist "climate of thought" or "spirit of the age"—that Aristotle's writings had their greatest significance for this study of the embodied, chromatic world as perceived and represented within literary works of art of the period.[68] Since Aristotle's works held such a significant place within the medieval *zeitgeist*, it is worth considering in some detail what he had to say (and how it was interpreted) about colour and its relationship to "light" on one hand, and the perceptual process of intromissive vision on the other.

Colour, according to Aristotle (and in contrast to Plato) was a property of the material world revealed by light: the material world being that existing beneath the moon or "sub-lunary" sphere and composed of the four elements (fire, earth, air and water), each having differing properties and qualities and, in different combinations, comprising all the (continually transforming) physical bodies in the world.[69]

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[67]Chaucer, for example, refers to Aristotle as "the Philosopher" on two occasions (*CT* X.658, *LGW* F381) and names him at least six times (*CT* I.295, V.233; *HF* 759; *Bo*.3.pr8.40, *Bo*.5.pr1.62, *Bo*.5.pr6.30). Arabic commentators often referred to him as "the Master".

[68] See Gage, *Colour and Culture*. pp. 11-27 for an overview of the parallel influence of Aristotelian thought on medieval arts of the period.

[69] The source of the philosophical theory of the elements is usually traced to Empedocles' two philosophical epic poems, *The Physics* and *The Purifications*, written in the fifth century BCE.

Aristotle's colour theory was, therefore, contingent upon his wider theories of physics, cosmology and biology. The principal sources for his elemental understanding of the universe available to the post-twelfth century scholastic medieval readership were Aristotle's *De caelo*, (which inquired into the nature of the heavens in terms of its bodies and their movements and properties); *De generatione et corruptione* (specifically dealing with the four elements, their transformations and combinations in bodies, and the processes of generation and destruction); and the *Meteorologica* (which considered the nature of those natural phenomena occurring beneath the heavens but above the earth, such as clouds and rainfall). Aristotle's primary views on the nature of colour and its perception are contained in the *Meteorologica*, the *Parva naturalia,* and *De anima,* while various colour-related remarks and examples are found in other works including *De generatione animalium* and *De plantis* (concerned with plants and vegetation including coloration in foliage and flowers);[70] a further key text on "natural colour" for the Middle Ages was *De*

Empedocles, however, did not use the term "elements" (στοιχεῖον), but referred to four "roots" of matter from which all things spring. See Clara Elizabeth Millerd, *On the Interpretation of Empedocles* (Chicago: U of Chocago P, 1908; New York; London: Garland, 1980) 28. The concept of an "element" originally derives from the mathematical theorems of Pythagorus and Euclid (e.g., Euclid's *The Elements*) and was re-applied to cosmology in a different "atomic" way by Plato and others. Plato's discussion of the archetypal (triangular) shapes of the atomic elements is found in *Timaeus* (53b5-55c6). Aristotle, however, argued that the elements "transformed" into each other, and so had to reject a fixed atomic basis for their nature.

[70] E.g., *De generatione animalium* 779a and 784a and *De plantis* 820b and 828b, which explain eye, hair, and plant colours. Other important references to colour and colours in the wider corpus of Aristotle are those to white and black as archetypal colour referents in logical propositions *(Prior analytics)*, and the understanding that agreements and disagreements in the recognition of colours involve agreements and disagreements in perception *(Posterior analytics* 99a).

coloribus: believed by medieval scholars to have been written by Aristotle, but which scholars now agree was the work of the Peripatetic School (possibly by Theophrastus or Strato).[71]

Evidence for the use and importance of these texts is attested to in a manuscript dating from *c*.1230-40 in the Archives of the Crown of Aragon in Barcelona, which contains a curriculum guidebook for students in the Arts at Paris.[72] According to this document the University curriculum for natural philosophy was divided up into three areas: metaphysics, mathematics and physics. Physics, the *scientia naturalis inferior* (deemed less abstract and so concerned with inferior "truths" relative to other disciplines), included the study of Aristotle's *Physics*, *De caelo*, *De generatione et corruptione*, *Meteorologica*, *De anima*, *Parva naturalia*, *De plantis*, *De animalibus*, and *De motu cordis*. The document also notes that two other books had to be read in the faculty in addition to those assigned to particular branches of the course of study: Plato's *Timaeus* and Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*.

The Aristotelian thread led from the elemental nature of the material world to the elemental nature of colour: a state of affairs which filtered from learned commentators into the society at large, and helped allow a greater or more independent significance for colour within the culture as a whole. Aristotle's interlocking theory can be summarised as follows. In *De caelo* (268a-281a) he propounded a concentric cosmology in which an outer sphere bounds the universe (containing the fixed stars) within which exists a region stretching from the outer sphere to the moon (containing the various spheres of the planets), and another

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[71] *De coloribus*, trans. W. S. Hett, *Aristotle: Minor Works I*, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1936) 3.

[72] Ripoll 109 fo. 134r-158v. Also cited by Lohr, pp. 16-17.

sphere, the terrestrial - that stretching from the moon to the earth (the sublunary world) in which exists the physical world as people experience it. The outer celestial regions, he argued, were composed of a divine, imperishable substance called *aether*; the sublunary realm composed of finite, "transformable" elements. The basic nature of an "element" Aristotle accepted on these terms, "An element, we take it, is a body into which other bodies may be analysed, present in them potentially or in actuality (which of these is still disputable), and not itself divisible into bodies different in form" (302a II.14-18). The elements in simple form each have a primary defining property, which is their movement either towards or away from the centre of the cosmos, i.e., either upwards or downwards (300a-302a). Thus the fundamental defining feature of "air" and "fire" is that they move upwards (at different rates) and away from the centre, while "water" and "earth" sink downwards and towards it. This natural principle of movement is considered, however, finite, since each direction of movement has an opposite. By contrast, the circular movement around the centre, which defines the nature of the outer spheres, must preclude the notion of an opposing motion; hence the thought that it be composed of an "infinite" substance (*aether*)— incapable of change—that is, of transition in terms of "generation" or "decay" (268b-370b). The states of different complex bodies of matter within the sublunary realm were therefore contingent upon their elemental content and the overall progression of movement entailed by the natural properties of constituent elements. The matrix of natural "movements" also governed the changing nature of material bodies as they became "corrupt" in one form, and were "re-generated" in another (304b-305a).

Aristotle examined elemental transformation in greater detail in *De generatione et corruptione*, a text in which he distinguished between bodies "coming to be" and "passing away" on the one hand—as actual changes of substance caused by

the increasing or diminishing presences of elements in natural motion—and "alterations" of bodies caused by changes in qualities on the other (319b-320a). Aristotle then advanced a distinction between the existence of the "primary elements"—as having simple natural rates and directions of movement—and their existence in "simple bodies", recognised in the world through their contrary sets of qualities (hot and cold, dry and moist). These qualities, coupled with their "primary matter", are analogous to the earth, air, fire and water (328b-331a) of everyday experience. The so-called "simple bodies" of elemental matter were thus deemed to transform into each other in terms of the relative loss or acquisition of contrary qualities (331a-331b). Aristotle defined the coming to be of "compounds"—of different elements forming bodies—as a "generation" or "corruption", not a "combination", writing:

> ...wood does not combine with the fire – the fire is generating, the wood passing away. So also does shape generate form from wax rather than combining with it, (...) nor can body combine with white, nor (to generalize) properties and states with things: for we see them persisting unaltered. (327b)

This meant that within the Aristotelian system of thought, colour was posited a property of matter that was, as it were, "co-generated" from the four elements informing a complex body – a process ultimately brought about by the overall movement of the different elements either towards or away from the centre of the world, thereby being brought into contact with each other and obliged to interact. The model, as it is described in *De generatione*, follows the key formula of Aristotle's *Physics*, and as such, the differences between the different "species" of colours are to be understood as the product of elemental changes in relation to their contrariety:

Everything that comes to be or passes away comes from, or passes into, its contrary or an intermediate state. But the intermediates are derived from the contraries – colours for instance, from black and white. Everything, therefore that comes to be by a natural process is either a contrary or a product of contraries.[73]

The wider implications of this theory of elemental interactions included the logical determination that primary material properties could only affect similar properties: "whiteness could not be affected by line...for it is a law of nature that body is affected by body, flavour by flavour, colour by colour" (323b), and that only through contrariety were materials "susceptible" to the transformations of generation and corruption. This entails their being readily adaptable in shape by being "divisible" (328b). From this position of contrariety as the ground of generation (as caused by susceptibility to contact) Aristotle reaches an interesting conclusion for perception:

For such things can be combined without its being necessary either that they should have been destroyed or that they should survive absolutely unaltered: and their combination need not be a composition, nor merely relative to perception (328b).

This conceptually difficult difference between "combination" and "composition" implies ultimately that (colour included) a material property has an underlying "fixed" status in relation to its (subjective) perceptions: i.e., that it has its fundamental, independent basis as a property of the elemental nature of a substance, which can be accessed by a "true" perception of it, as it were.[74]

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[73] Aristotle, *Physics*, I. 188b.

[74] Such a view of perception, although advocated by Aristotle in the fourth century, anticipates a similar desire for conceptual symmetry that can be seen in contemporary reductivism, which insists upon a direct correspondence between subjective perceptions and neurological events. See, for

The significance of the four elements and their prime contraries in relation to colour within the natural world emerges further in the *Meteorologica*. In this work Aristotle recapitulated, then applied his theory of the elements and their transformations and contrary qualities to understanding particular examples of natural phenomena: including the sea, snow, rainfall, thunder, lighting, whirlwinds, comets, rivers, rainbows, earthquakes, and typhoons. His method was to describe these events and their qualities as products of elemental transformations and the generation or corruption of bodies. Thus patterns of activity emerge in terms of the various binary oppositions at work between hot and cold, and wet and dry bodies. For instance, in 365b-366a earthquakes are accounted for as "wind trapped in the earth"; the particular form of "air" in this case being a "dry exhalation" as opposed to "vapour" – the opposing wet variety. Again, in his treatment of rainbows (371b-375b), Aristotle applied an elementally rooted explanation which produced an understanding in terms of three colours:

> These are almost the only colours which painters cannot manufacture: for there
> are colours which they create by mixing, but no mixing will give red, green, or

example, Patricia Smith Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1986).

blue/violet. These are the colours of the rainbow, though between the red and the green a yellow colour is often seen (372a).[75]

The explanation extends from an inherited position that rainbows are caused by reflection (373a) and that the reflective surface involved is water, specifically: "...water in the process of formation ... for each of the particles which when condensed forms a raindrop will necessarily be a better mirror than mist" (373b). Moreover, Aristotle states that what each of the droplets reflects is a single colour, a colour which is magnified by the quantity of drops (we might say akin to an increase in the resolution of a digital picture). Thus the three different colours of the rainbow are accounted for by three apparent facts (374b): (1) Light reflected on a dark surface (like water) or passing through a dark coloured medium produces "red"; (2) Vision becomes weaker with distance; and, (3) Objects appear darker if seen with weaker vision (caused by distance or infirmity). Therefore, if our sight is weakened when seeing a reflection there are three stages of this diminishing strength involved in the

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[75] It is important to remember that the use of Aristotle in translation gives the false impression that ancient Greek colour terminology can be neatly captured by modern English. There has been considerable scholarly interest in the question of how to translate ancient Greek colour terms into other idioms and the cultural, psychological and conceptual problems involved. See especially P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Studies in Greek Colour Terminology, Volumes I and II* (Amsterdam: E. J. Brill, 1981) for the view that Greek colour terms require a contextual approach, as opposed to that espoused by Irwin who suggests that the relative anomalies in the Greek colour lexicon (which nineteenth-century historians motivated by an evolution theory explained as national colour blindness) show an overall absence of pure chroma concepts in Greek language and culture. This seems plausible but neglects the evidence of Greek philosophy. There are clearly "pure" colour concepts defined in the works of Plato and Aristotle – they are simply radically different from our own. See also Eleanor Irwin, *Color Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974).

seeing of rainbows (which produce the three colours): bright light directly reflected by the dark medium of water produces "red", while "green" and "blue/violet" are produced relative to further weakening of sight. "Yellow", Aristotle argues, can also be seen, but he accounts for this as a secondary product of the colour contrasts involved and not due to the primary reflection composition of the rainbow (375a).

The key significance of Aristotle's account of the rainbow for the wider field of medieval colour conceptualization is that it both located colour "in" the world as a physical property of a body as revealed by light, and maintained that, if it is thereafter transmitted by reflection, such colour will be perceived differently according to the material of the medium it is reflected by and the strength of the perceiving eye. Colour, therefore, for Aristotle and his followers, is fundamentally grounded and determined by matter, but what is "seen" is determined both by the ad-mixtures of the elements and their properties in bodies (which are revealed via contrary properties experienced by and through matter: hot, cold, wet and dry), *and* the affects of reflection and visual ability.

The theory has a perhaps more important philosophical significance in that by mistakenly positing a three colour rainbow, as opposed to what we now scientifically affirm is "in fact" a seven-colour visual phenomenon—i.e. the post-Newtonian spectrum of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet[76]—Aristotle obliges contemporary colour-theorists to note that visual perception is influenced by abstract

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[76] Contemporary scientific discourse describes a rainbow as having a continuous spectrum of colours and to be a meteorological phenomenon caused by the refraction and reflection of light by water droplets. The resultant spectrum of colours can be "quantised" (the process of approximating a continuous range of values by a small set of discrete symbols) according to various criteria, including those of our linguistically grounded human perception. An introductory scientific text is Robert Greenler, *Rainbows, Halos, and Glories* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1980).

reasoning, and that the dissemination of ideas in relation to an object of perception itself has perceptually influential results. On the evidence of what Aristotle, his followers, and subsequent generations of writers claimed to see, "seeing" must be mediated by the mind, and hence cannot be a fixed or standardized process determined by optical physics and human biology. Pastoreau notes that within ancient and medieval texts concerning rainbows which posit varying numbers of colours from three to six "...none described it as we do today (i.e., in terms of a spectral sequence of colours) or perceived in it the slightest trace of blue."[77] This does not mean of course that they saw a different phenomenon. Rather, historically located scientific definitions of the rainbow have influenced or supervened upon its perception, thus inviting overall Pastoreau's opinion that, in the last analysis, "...society...makes colour, defines it, gives it its meaning, constructs its codes and values, establishes its uses, and determines whether it is acceptable or not."[78]

Having established that within Aristotlelian physics material bodies have an elemental basis (entailing that colour perception operates only in relation to the elemental properties of the object or body perceived), the area of philosophy in which

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[77] Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Colour* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001) 32. Pastoureau's conclusion regarding the apparent absence of blue in the rainbow as it was perceived in antiquity and beyond stems from discussion of the "uncommonness" and "silence" of blue in pre-twelfth century indo-European cultures: the relative paucity of unambiguous linguistic references to it and its low social evaluation. He suggests this was the result of the domination of the primacy of the three colour system of white, black and red which dates back to the Palaeolithic period of nomadic tribes. However, this position also assumes that it is possible accurately to translate early Greek (and other languages') colour terms into the terms of later forms and states of western Indo-European languages. Simple correspondences are notoriously difficult to prove.

[78] Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Colour* 10.

Aristotle most explicity discusses colour is in its relation to human perception: i.e., as it is experienced by the living "soul" or *psuchē*.[79] *De anima* is a key text for engaging with the wider framework of ideas and concepts informing later medieval responses to colour and visual perception, and was again important in influencing specific theological and philosophical approaches to sensory knowledge. However, before broaching this difficult yet essential text, it is necessary to consider the culmination of his elemental approach to colour and what he wrote specifically about the elemental nature of colour in the *De sensu et sensato* section of what is called the *Parva naturalia*, in order to see how this understanding applied to various natural observations of coloured phenomena laid out by the Peripatetic writer of *De coloribus*.

Of colours as chemical mixtures

In *De sensu et sensato* Aristotle argued that our sensory organs are five in number but correspond to the four fundamental elements of material bodies because oral taste is in fact a particular kind of touching (436b-437a). The correlation of elements-to-senses therefore worked out as follows:

> ...we must conceive that the part of the eye immediately concerned in vision consists of water, that the part immediately concerned in the perception of sound consists of air, and that the sense of smell consists of fire [*because odour is a*

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[79] For insights into the complexity of Aristotle's ultimately indefinable concept of the *psuchē* (often misleadingly translated simply as "soul") see Stephen Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon-OUP, 1997) 2-4 and 290.

"smoke-like vapour" which arises from fire] ... The organ of touch properly consists of earth, and the faculty of taste is a particular form of touch."[80]

Of these Aristotle considered sight and hearing to be the most significant senses: sight because it accesses common sensibles like magnitude, number and motion, and hearing because it most contributes to the growth of intelligence through providing access to audible discourse (437a). The means by which objects are sensed via the watery medium of the eye is through an abstract notion of the "translucent" – this being a "common nature" or power which subsists in bodies in different degrees. Bodies in which the transparent subsists have determinate boundaries, and hence surfaces; colour is at the limit or boundary of a body, and at the limit or boundary of the bodies' translucent power. Outside a determinate body, however, the property of translucence occupies an indeterminate boundary (presumably ultimately occupying the whole sub-lunar region) and so is only seen when a fiery element is present within it, which is in fact what constitutes visible "light" (439a). "Colour" (as an object for sensation) is therefore defined as "the limit of the translucent power in a determinately bounded body" (439b).

Hereafter Aristotle argues that that which produces visible light in air (i.e., the aforementioned fiery element) may also be present in the translucent nature of determinate bodies (or not when it is "dark"). And this enables him to posit a key parallel between "light" and "dark" (in the indeterminate body of air) and "white" and "black" (in determinate bodies):

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[80] Aristotle, *De sensu et sensato*, trans. J. I. Beare, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, Volume I, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984, 1995) pp. 696-7; 438b-439a.

Accordingly, as in the case of air the one condition is light, the other darkness, in the same way the colours white and black are generated in determinate bodies (440b).

Aristotle advanced three theories in *De sensu* to account for the possible ways in which visible colours are produced out of the white and black properties of bodies: the first that they are the products of the juxtapositions of the white and black parts ("in quantities so minute that either separately would be invisible, though the joint product would be visible"); the second that they derive from their overlaying each other in different proportions ("the black and white appear the one through the medium of the other"), and third that they are produced from the mixing together of the white and black parts within bodies ("a mixture by which they are wholly blent together") (439b-440b); this last theory becoming his final considered opinion. In discussing and rejecting the first option—juxtaposition—as offering an incomplete concept of intermingling, Aristotle speculated that such a theory allowed comparison between the different colours and the musical scales produced by different ratios (intervals) of sounds (439b); thereafter he noted that this idea could also work for his favoured theory of "mixed" colours which derive from the admixtures of the parts: "Colours will thus too be many in number on account of the fact that the ingredients may be combined with one another in a multitude of ratios." (440b).

Whilst the "mixing" of bodies—defined as a "complete interpenetration" of their white/black properties—produces a great multitude of colours ("Colours…will be many in number on account of the fact that the ingredients may be combined with one another in a multitude of ratios") Aristotle categorized these as seven species of natural colours existing in the world:

> For there are seven species of each (colours and savours), if, as is reasonable, we regard dun [or grey] as a variety of black (for the alternative is that yellow should be classed with white, as rich with sweet); while crimson, violet, leek-green, and deep blue, come between white and black, and from these all others are derived by mixture.[81]

Aristotle established a materially rooted scale of colours, one which maintained that green is nearer to white than blue, and violet closer to black than crimson: i.e., giving a system of chromatic development from white to black via green, blue, crimson and violet. This pre-spectral approach to the nature of colour and the interaction of different hues would take on, for some medieval thinkers, hierarchical significance: i.e., that notions of primary, mediary and sub-mediary colours derived from their relation to the white/black dichotomy (and its basis in a light/dark differentiation) would suggest that the natural world could be seen to reflect the celestial and social rankings of the universe even in its visual appearance.

A detailed application of Aristotle's colour system was developed by the unknown writer of *De coloribus* – a text which dealt with colours in terms of various cases of their natural or artificial occurrence.[82] During the medieval period, and indeed until nineteenth-century scholarship ascertained it to be a text from the Peripatetic School, *De coloribus* was treated as one of Aristotle's works and accorded the same authority.[83] Its writer was, by his own admission, attempting to instigate a wider investigation of colour rather than construct a complete theory. The last line announces: "From what we have said one could best conduct an investigation into the

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[81] *De sensu et sensato*, trans. J. I. Beare 442a.

[82] All references are to Aristotle, *De Coloribus*, with English translation by W. S. Hett, in *Aristotle: Minor Works* (London: Heineman, 1936) 791a-799b, pp.1-45.

[83] Aristotle, *De Coloribus*, 3.

question of colours" (799b), i.e., that the present work was to be the basis for a proper

investigation. On the whole it is a much less sophisticated work than those of

Aristotle, extrapolating its points via the authority of an Aristotelian world view

without adding to (even occasionally obscuring) its underlying understanding of the

topic. The work has been sub-divided into six parts by later editors; the first of which

treats "simple" colours as the elemental properties of bodies (a definition which

instantly suggests a slight misunderstanding of Aristotle's concept of the translucent

is at work), positing that,

> Those colours are simple which belong to the elements, fire, air, water and earth.
> For air and water are naturally white in themselves, while fire and the sun are
> golden. The earth is also naturally white, but seems coloured because it is dyed.
> (791a)

Evidence offered for this position is the colour transformations observed in ash, which

becomes as white as moisture is "burnt out" (791a). As such, the author argued, the

simple elemental properties of "white" and "black" which underpin the material world

are constantly revealed through elemental transformations. In particular, the property

of "blackness" is revealed by elements undergoing transformation (according to the

principles laid out in *De generatione* mentioned above) in contrast with "whiteness" –

the underlying state to which elemental matter returns. Thereafter, "the other colours

are due to a mixture, when they are blended together with each other" (791a).

However, the writer further distinguishes between three different kinds of blackness:

the blackness of that which is not seen due to the absence of light; that which is black

because not much light is conveyed to the eyes (e.g. the blackness beyond the circle

of firelight), and that which appears black because it has not reflected very much light

(e.g. shadows) (791a). On these grounds the writer could explain how waves and

clouds sometimes appear black (791a). The twin recognition in the text that black is a colour of transformation and also "not a colour at all but merely the absence of light" (791b) compares to another bifurcated analysis – that of light, considered as both the means for seeing and the colour of fire:

> But that light is the colour of fire is clear from the fact that it is discovered to have no colour but this, and because it alone is visible by itself, whereas all other things are visible by means of it. (...) Some things which are neither fire nor forms of fire seem to produce light by nature. Unless the colour of fire is light, light is not the colour of fire alone; but it is possible that this colour does not belong to fire merely, but that light is actually its colour. Certainly visibility is impossible in any way except by light, just as the visibility of all other bodies is only possible by the appearance of colour. (791b)

This passage shows a reluctance on the part of the writer to commit to a definition of light and illumination which would involve ascribing to it a colour-value independent from material objects, whilst at the same time recognising that there is something significantly "colourful" about the element of fire. The writer is slightly unsure of his ground and does not seem to have fully mastered the subtle distinctions Aristotle had made in *De sensu* regarding the translucent properties of determinate and indeterminate bodies, and in *De anima* (see below) in which he proposes light to be both independent from, and yet also the means by which colour is carried – that it is a "receptacle" for colours.

The first · section of *De coloribus* concludes by summarising how the transformation of the elements produces the simple colour black – for instance, when fire burns moist objects, and when fire is quenched by water. The second part considers the other complex colours – those produced via mixtures of the simples "in greater or smaller proportions" (792a). The point is extended to propose that those

physical mixtures which comprise objects in the world achieve their colours via the inherent white/black mixtures of their elements coupled with the effects of light: for instance, "when what is black and shady is mixed with light the result is red" (792a). A distinction is drawn between the coloured *appearances* of objects and their "essential" colour (material) basis. The implications are applied in the third section which treats of indistinct and variegated natural colours, defined in terms of an "unequal and disproportionate share of light and shade" (793a). Examples include the golden colour perceived when yellow "gleams with great intensity" (793a) seen in a drop of water or dove's neck when a lot of light shines upon them. By contrast, the quantity and strength of a colour is seen to decrease according to the diminishing amount of light falling upon it. The position is summarized in part three, in what is a clear benchmark for the history of common-sense optics:

> We do not see any of the colours pure as they really are, but mixed with others; or if not mixed with any other colour they are mixed with rays of light and with shadows, and so they appear different and not as they are. Consequently things appear different according to whether they are seen in shadow or in sunlight, in a hard or a soft light, and according to the angle at which they are seen and in accordance with other differences as well [*including different types of light source: fire, moon, lamp*]: and also by the mixture of the colours with each other; for in passing through each other they are coloured; first when light falls on something, and, being tinted by it, becomes reddish or greenish, and then reflected light falls on another colour, being again mixed by it, it takes on still another mixture of colour. ... it sometimes reaches the eyes as a mixture of many colours, but producing the sensation most predominant. (...) So that all colours are a mixture of three things, the light, the medium through which the light is seen, such as air and water, and thirdly, the colours forming the ground, from which the light happens to be reflected. (793b-794a)

The recognition that a layering and reflecting of tinted lights results in visible and manipulable colour mixtures is an important insight for the work and subsequent readers: both for in philosophical reflection and the creative arts. Noting this phenomenon, the writer is able to ascribe infinite variability to the appearances of colours. The wider implications of the observation are left tantalizingly unexplored however.

The fourth section of *De coloribus* discusses colour dyes derived from natural sources (plants, animals, and minerals) and explains a theoretical process by which a recipient object takes on its new colour as the result of the dye's material penetrating the surface of and attaching itself to an object through the influence of moisture and heat, thereafter becoming "fixed" via drying and cooling: "for when the colours enter the passages of that which is being dyed together with the moisture and heat, when they are dried they take their colour from them" (794a-b). Different chromatic results occur due to the contrast between the original colour and the dye and because of the nature of the spaces or "passages" by which the dye has access and attaches itself to the other material. Dyes are washed out if the passages are too wide, and if too narrow (e.g., in metals), the dye may not be received at all.

The fifth part of *De coloribus* treats the topic of naturally occurring colours, such as those found in hair and plumage, flowers, fruit and plants, and also colour changes which occur according to natural processes. In the case of plants, the colour green is given to be the result of "whiteness" being affected by moisture mixed with sunlight (794b). By contrast, roots remain white because they are beyond the reach of sunlight (795a). The now familiar transition from white towards black is effected by the presence or absence of moisture and heat: "for anything moist ... as it grows old

by itself and dries up, becomes black" (794b). Seasonal colour changes in plants and their fruits are the products of the same basic phenomena:

> ...those of a green hue all change as they grow ripe to their natural colour. For they are all white, black, grey, yellow, blackish, dark, dull-coloured red, wine-dark and saffron and exhibit almost all the differences of colour. But since the largest number of colours appear when more are mixed with each other, it is obvious that the colours in plants must have the same mixture; for the moisture penetrating through them, and washing all the colours through with it, produces all the possible colours. (795a-b)

The underlying "sameness of property" held by plants—a consequence of moisture passing through and washing some or all the colours together— is greenness; "green" being the visual result of every colour/element becoming mixed together. The individual natural colours of fruit occur through the action of heat and sunlight upon this universal green, having the effect of changing it into a more "blackened" colour. More "wetness" added into the mix yields a darker result, whilst "drying" leads to "yellowing"– again according to the colour scale of white to black (and in the case of flowers, with variations occurring in individual blooms resulting from moisture and temperature variations on a very small scale) (796b). Akin to the dyeing process previously outlined, the colours of fruits are "fixed" via warmth and moisture acting together – making "ripening" intrinsically a colour concept in which white moves towards black. Incompleteness in ripening (perhaps due to the wrong heat/wet conditions over time) results in a deficiency of natural colour – a problem for both fruits and flowers (797a). The philosophical ramifications for this theory include the idea that there is a definitive seasonal "natural colour" for each species of plant life – and by extension for all forms of organic life.

The last part of *De coloribus* makes the conceptual leap from plant to animal life: animal and human hair, skin and plumage colours are said to operate as do plant colours, such that they depend upon moisture, temperature, and sunlight levels. Hence, skin, from birth is:

> ...white when the moisture which possesses its own natural colour dries up, and black on the other hand when the moisture about the skin at birth ... grows black when it grows old and has lasted a long time because of its quantity; ... Those are grey, red, yellow, and other colours, which dry before the moisture in them changes completely to black. Those in whom this change takes place unevenly have all kinds of variegated colours." (797b)

Moreover, whilst hair, plumage and hoofs, tusks, horns, etc. have their colour determined by skin colour, variations also occur during a creature's life span according to changes in levels of nourishment (supplies of food and water). The pale end of the spectrum, that which tends towards whiteness, evidences malnourishment and weakness, the dark end strength and health. Having presented a number of case studies to elucidate this process (797b-799a), the writer comes to the conclusion: "Speaking generally we say of the hair and plumage that they admit changes, in some cases as we have said because food fails, in others on the other hand because it is in excess" (799a). The understanding of animal coloration is thus analogous to that of "ripening" in plants, with an important distinction between ripening that occurs outside the body (e.g. of feathers) and within the flesh (e.g. of hair). Chromatic limitations to animal and human hair colours (compared to plumage) are also understood to be the result of these conditions: "in the case of hair none ever changes in such a way as to have red, purple or green or any such colour, because all such colours occur when the rays of the sun are mixed with them, but in the case of hair which is moist all change occurs within the flesh and does not involve any mixture"

(799b). Colour mixtures occurring "under the skin" are limited to the light/dark range according to the properties of the skin, and so are unable to be influenced by the warming and drying effects of sunlight.

A poetic example of Aristotelian natural colours

It is apparent that Aristotelian thought regarding the nature of organic colours included three memorable and easily transmittable ideas: (1) colour is an intrinsic, elemental property with a range of hue values between white and black; (2) colour indicates primary physiological information about that which is coloured; and, (3), colour changes inevitably indicate changes in the physiological state of any object according to the four contrary properties of hot/cold and wet/dry. These ideas, which along with the overall schema of the Aristotelian world view encouraged preoccupation with underlying causal dichotomies, were employed (especially from the twelfth century onwards) within a wide variety of literary and artistic works. One particularly appropriate (or indicative) formula for their use was the medieval debate-poem[84] in which conceptual opposites or counterparts could be given person and voice through which they would present relative and contrary points of view. For

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[84] The later medieval debate genre had its roots in Latin debate poems such as the eighth century *Conflictus Veris et Hiemis* (the *Conflict of Spring and Winter*) which in turn looked back to classical pastoral eclogues such as Virgil's third and seventh, and Ovid's *Amores* in its depiction (e.g. 3.1) of the poet listening to a debate between personifications of Elegy and Tragedy. See John W. Conlee's introduction to *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. John W. Conlee (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues P, 1991) xi-xxxvi at xiv. The particular debate topics of Old Age and Youth, and Life and Death have a further Aristotelian philosophical precedent however: his work *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, and Respiration*, in which binary accounts of the two opposing states (Youth and Life, contrasting with Old Age and Death) are given in terms of the processes of a cooling and exhaustion of natural heat.

instance, in the Middle English poem "The Parliament of the Three Ages"—a fourteenth century work often cited as part of the alliterative revival—a debate is held between personifications of the three Ages of Man: Youth, Middle Age and Old Age; each of whom expresses his individual perspective according to his particular stage of life (thirty, sixty and ninety years old), and then reacts to and criticises the others accordingly. The characteristics of the Ages in the poem employ Aristotelian colour values as symbols: Youth is green, Middle Age grey, and Old Age black. The portrait of Youth, one who is "ȝonge, ȝape and ȝernynge to armes" (l. 171), has his colour placed to the fore immediately:

> He was gerede alle in grene, …

The greenness of ȝouthe,[85] an allusion to his lack of maturity or ripeness is, however, woven into and saturated by costly stones and materials which add a further symbolic dimension to his appearance:

> … alle with golde by-weuede,
> Enbroddire alle with besanttes and beralles full riche;
> His colere with calsydoynnes clustrede full thikke,
> With many dyamandes full dere dighte one his sleues.
> Þe semys with saphirs sett were full many,
> With emeraudes and amatistes appon iche syde,
> With full riche rubyes raylede by the hemmes;
> Þe price of that perry were worthe powndes full many.[86]

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[85] The association of greenness with youth in medieval debate poems was common enough that by the time Henryson wrote his "The Ressoning Betuix Aige and Yowth" (mid to late fifteenth century) he was able to use it as the central defining point of difference between the two: Youth remarks at the end of each verse: "O yowth, be glaid in to thi flouris grene", to which Age responds "O yowth, thi flouris fedis ferly sone". See Robert Henryson, "The Ressoning Betuix Aige and Yowth" in Tasioulas 236-9.

As routinely noted by scholars, the costly aspect of this portrayal of Youth suggests the depiction has an aristocratic association: he is dressed according to status, and, further, is dressed in order to display himself as ostentatiously as possible to attract sexual attention[87] (with the subtext that the permanence of his gems contrasts ironically with the transience of his age.) However, if one reads the description assuming the colour imagery to be primarily Aristotelian, then it is possible to suggest an alternative reading. At the symbolic level, the character of Youth must be associated with economic prosperity (not necessarily aristocratic in source) via his possession of precious gems – inasmuch as they represent ownership of the great wealth that is his abundant life and health (something which the young share with each other irrespective of their social status). If the greenness of Youth's basic appearance is read to have further symbolic associations then the myriad colours involved in the rest of Youth's display must also be reconciled with his basic "unripe" greenness. I would suggest that the multiplicity of the other (more costly) colours represents, in addition to the generic association with riches (in terms of health and beauty) a sense of the multiplicity of experiences to which "green" Youth aspires: "greenness"—from an Aristotelian perspective—corresponding to an elementally mixed up state of pre-existent nature, whilst the vivid vibrancy of gold, blue and red

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[86] "The Parliament of the Three Ages", ed. Conlee, pp. 102-138 at 109: ll. 122- 129.

[87] Conlee notes "...the gems which adorn Youth's clothing indicate his aristocratic standing and his personal wealth, and they reflect his desire to display himself as ostentatiously as possible; also their permanence may provide an ironic comment on the fleetingness of youth." Conlee 109n129. This would connect the imagery with other youthful portraits such as Chaucer's Squire (CT Prologue: ll. 79-99) and possibly Waster in *Wynere and Wastour*, where the description, "ȝongest of ȝeris and ȝapist of witt" (l. 119) is attached to the King's knight sent to gather the disputants together.

could be achieved only after a time of "ripening" or "blooming". Hence it is arguable

that the display of colours overlaying the green of Youth's basic attire is indicative of

a diversity of prospects in his future growth, and as such, is symbolically detachable

from him as are all pieces of "moveable property" – they are temporal trappings

which he will eventually either lose or take responsibility for by choosing between.

The case of *Medill Elde* in the poem is also simultaneously straightforward

and complex. His portrait seems to weave an underlying Aristotelian perspective of

colour into a more symbolically sophisticated whole:

> The seconde segge in his sete satte at his ese,
>
> A renke alle in rosette þat rowmly was schapyn,
>
> In a golyone of graye girde in the myddes,
>
> And iche bagge in his bosome bettir than othere.
>
> One his golde and his gude gretly he mousede,
>
> His renttes and his reches rekened he full ofte,
>
> Of mukkyng, of marlelyng, and mendynge of howses,
>
> Of benes of his bondemen, of benefetis many,
>
> Of presanttes of polayle, of pufilis als;
>
> Of purches of ploughe-londes, of parkes full faire,
>
> Of profettis of his pasturs, that his purse mendis;
>
> Of stiewardes, of storrours, stirkes to bye,
>
> Of clerkes, of countours, his courtes to holde;
>
> And alle his witt in this werlde was one his wele one.
>
> Hym semyde for to see to of sexty ȝere elde,
>
> And þerfore men in his marche Medille Elde hym callede.[88]

The extract offers a traditional set of features for Middle Age as a personified age

group: that is, he is a working man possessing accurately accounted for amassed

wealth (accrued from rents and trade profits, etc), having a worldly-wise attitude and

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[88] *The Parliament of the Three Ages*, ed., Conlee, pp. 102-138 at 110: ll. 136- 151.

enjoying an indulgent surrender to a life of ease, with a practicable, non-ostentatious or flamboyant, appearance: – "In a golyone of graye girde in the myddes".[89] In Aristotelian colour language his grey attire reads as symbolic of the median nature of his age: half-way between white and black, he is half-way through the transformational procession from generation to corruption. The wealth of past youthful opportunities has matured into a more substantial and carefully possessed lucre, whilst his more sombre appearance and absence of flamboyant display suggests serious-mindedness and, physically speaking, the beginnings of decrepitude. If we recall the criteria of *De coloribus* (797b) the "greyness" might also indicate that his state is one between poles of weakness and strength, and (essential) hunger and nourishment: one in which the necessary vitality of warmth and moisture is still present, but half on its way towards drying out and cooling down.

Lastly, the narrator in this dream vision espies a third person, one whom he discerns to be Old Age. The portrait of this archetype is as follows:

> The thirde was a laythe lede lenyde one his syde,
> A beryne bownn alle in blake with bedis in his hande,
> Croked and courbede, encrampeschett for elde;
> Alle disfygured was his face and fadit his hewe,
> His berde and browes were blanchede full whitte,
> And the hare one his hede hewede of the same.
> He was ballede and blynde and alle babirlippede,
> Totheles and tenefull, I tell ȝowe for sothe;
> And ever he momelide and ment and mercy he askede,
> And cried kenely one Criste and his crede sayde,
> With sawtries full sere tymes to sayntes in heven;

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[89] In these respects an archetypal Middle Age informs characters such as Chaucer's Merchant (see his portrait in *CT*, Prologue ll. 270-275) and Winner ("the riche") in *Wynere and Wastour* (*WW* l. 263).

Envyous and angrye, and Elde was his name.[90]

The non-chromatic elements of Old Age's physical appearance here are his ugliness ("laythe", "disfigured", "ballede", "babirlippede"); wizened posture ("croked and courbede"); blind mumbling for mercy clutching at his rosary beads ("blynde", "momelide and ment", "bedis in his hande"); and cantankerous nature ("envyous and angrye"). These descriptors are set within a colour context of the extremes of black and white: he is "all in blake" and simultaneously is "fadit his hewe". His beard and brows are "blanchede full white", and the hair on his "ballede" (bald?) head is "hewede of the same". Read as an Aristotelian view of the progress of natural corruption, the blackness motif pervades, which is coupled with the whitening effects on hair of extreme old age – indicator of virility and vitality undergoing drying and cooling.

The poet animates his personifications by employing a series of narrative discourses which further identify, expose, and exploit traditional social and psychological "truths" about the human experience of aging. The three key colours again play their part: they provide quick reference for establishing the current speaker—"Bot then this gome alle in graye greved with this wordes...", and, "Than the gome alle in grene greved full sore...", etc. (a technique also employed by romance writers working with armorial colours) and keep in the reader or audience's mind a clear demarcation of the differences between the three as they are differently pronounced through the characters' interactions. In summary of the debate, Middle Age complains that Youth is squandering his wealth by seeking to woo ladies and win honour in combat rather than sensibly investing it in land (ll. 170-93). In making this charge, he sees Youth's gilded and bejewelled clothing and effects as all he has (i.e.,

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[90] "The Parliament of the Three Ages", ed., Conlee, pp. 102-138 at 111: ll. 152- 163.

who he is): he has no rents to provide him with any new wealth ("For alle thy ryalle

araye renttis hase thou none" l. 186). (Metaphorically one might argue he implies that

Youth has only dreams.) In effect Middle Age pits Youth's wealth "as" health, beauty

and opportunity versus his wealth "as" actual stable investments and accumulated

goods, and judges his own sort of wealth to be the more valuable. Youth retorts that it

is better to live life to the full as he does (hunting, loving ladies, reading romances and

playing games, etc.) than to be in constant fear of losing his possessions like Middle

Age ("And thou with wandrynge and woo schalte wake for thi gudes" l. 257). Middle

Age would then quit the debate, reasoning that only fools argue with the foolish

("Fole es that with foles delys; flyte we no lengare" l.264); Old Age steps in,

however, to argue that they are both wrong – having experienced both Youth's

carefree exuberance and Middle Age's preference for comfort and security, Old Age

feels that upon him there is only the inevitable grip of death, which he dreads most,

and, using imagery drawn from the optical effects of mirrors, advises them both to

view his example as one that should be held up before them at all times:

> Makes youre mirrours bi me, men, bi youre trouthe:
> This schadowe in my schewere schunte ye no while.
> And now es dethe at my dore that I drede moste;
> I ne wot wiche day ne when ne whate tyme he comes,
> Ne whedirwardes, ne whare, ne whatte to do aftire. [91]

Old Age reveals that his only solace in life comes from considering others who have

died – great men whose fate he now faces.[92] Most of the rest of the poem is an

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[91] "The Parliament of the Three Ages", ed., Conlee, pp. 102-138 at 109: ll. 290- 294.

[92] Old Age employs a conventional formula of the nine most worthy military men from posterity: three

Pagan heroes; Sir Ector (Hector), Sir Alysaunder (Alexander), Sir Sezere (Julius Caesar); three Jewish

heroes; Josue (Joshua), David, and Judas Machabee (Macabee); and three Christian heroes; Sir Arthure

outpouring of Old Age's accumulated knowledge: having disposed of the lives of the Nine Worthies, and almost as an afterthought ("Of wyghes that were wyseste will ye now here", l.584), Old Age proceeds with an account of the lives of various archetypal wise men of history – presumably brought to mind by his own example). Pertinently for the present study, and hardly unsurprising given the folk-psychological nature of the poem, the first choice of the poet to be mentioned by Old Age is the Philosopher himself, Aristotle:

> Arestotle he was arste in Alexander tyme,
> And was a fyne philoʒophire and a fynour noble,
> The grete Alexander to graythe and gete golde when hym liste,
> And multiplye metalles with mercurye watirs,
> And with his ewe ardaunt and arsneke pouders,
> With salpetir and sal-ieme and siche many othire,
> And menge his metalles and make fyne silvere,
> And was a blaunchere of the beste thurgh blaste of his fyre.[93]

The Aristotle that we are presented with here represents the more traditional, non-scholarly, perception of a legendary figure; the Aristotle of medieval popular imagination, a magical and mysterious alchemist rather than writer of specific texts studied by medieval scholars. An irony is achieved, however, by using the popular portrait of the Philosopher in an "Aristotelian" poem. Aristotle the ingenious

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(Arthur), Sir Godfraye de Bolenn (Godfrey of Bouillon), and Sir Cherlemayne (Charlemagne) ll. 300-583. The precedent for three triadic groups may derive in general from *The Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius (see above), but the Nine Worthies as a literary conceit are believed to have been invented by Jacques de Longuyon of Lorrainein his poem *Les Voeux du paon*, written for Thibaut de Bar, Bishop of Liège in 1312. See Edward Billings Ham, *Three Neglected Manuscripts of the Voeux du Paon*, Modern Language Notes (1931).

[93] "The Parliament of the Three Ages", ed., Conlee, pp. 102-138 at 134: ll. 586-593.

alchemist, one able to "blaunchere" metals (in order to transmute them), contrasts well with the moribund figure of Old Age—a man whitened by time—and suffering the loss of vigour, warmth and moisture, representing the one who needs (and is perhaps even appealing for) a reverse transmutation to recover the envied green vitality of Youth. The poet may have received his understanding of the natural colours indirectly, by popular transmission, whilst his use of Aristotle as a "legend" is also interesting for its reinforcement of key traits in psychology.

Old Age, having recounted his tales of deceased wise men, and showing another propensity of his stage of life (to ramble on seemingly without direction or final cause), continues by recounting the lives of several famous pairs of lovers, his point being to make a scripturally redolent statement that death will come to us all, and that all human concerns are vanities: "That alle es vayne and vanytes and vanyte es alle" (l.640). This bald proposition also helps the poet introduce a practical moral that all men should amend their sinful lives and, "To schryve yow full schirle and schewe yow to prestos" (l.646) – this last an appeal for Middle Age to note, since Old Age is his father (hence also for Youth, who is by turns Middle Age's son). At this last stage in the poem the poet makes use of a final revealing colour association. What had been the Aristotelian extremes of black (indicating transforming corruption) and white (indicating frailty), and had been put to the fore by Old Age, are now made to give way to the dreamer's re-awakening just as "the sone was sett and syled full loughe" (l. 658). The poem reverts to its opening setting in the mirthful month of May, where the narrator finds shelter amongst the green leaves: "And lugede me in the leves that lighte were and grene" (l.663). The final colour code is that symbolic Youth, the present stage in life of the dreamer, is unable to remain depressed for very

long and will enjoy its time, even if it is seasoned occasionally with moments of true circumspection and reflection.

Intromission and "the proper object of sight"

Chrétien de Troyes's description of "what" is "seen" being essentially "colours," (*Cligés* ll.730-47) gestures towards a comparatively recent species of philosophical thought. Whilst clearly employing a Neo-Platonist understanding of tactile, extramissive vision—in his description of rays and the passage of light through the eyes—Chrétien may not have had a purely Platonic understanding of colour in mind. Chalcidius' translation of the *Timaeus* stopped at paragraph 53b, well before the discussion of colours as the particular "flames from bodies" in which different colours (as different flames) are perceived via their interactions with the emanating fire of the perceiving eye. The Greek text was not translated in full until Ficino undertook the task in the late fifteenth century.[94] Therefore the Platonic approach to colour, which allowed individual hues simple and complex identities according to nuanced connections between internal and external fires could not have influenced medieval readers and writers specifically. It is possible to argue, however, that the description in *Cligés* is evidence of the early influence of Aristotle's *De anima*. *De anima*, as already noted, was translated out of the Greek into Latin by James (or Jacob) of Venice in 1150, thus recovering for the Latin West access to Aristotle's most complete thoughts on perception. The ideas it contained, and which were absorbed

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[94] In the *Timaeus* Plato wrote that, "Colour is a flame that flows forth from bodies of all sorts, with its parts in proportion to our sight so as to produce perception." The nature of transparent, black, white, bright, red, orange, purple, violet, grey, amber, beige, cobalt blue, turquoise and green are specified in terms of the relations between the perceiver's "ray" and the flames of bodies. The speaker notes that some colours are admixtures of others. Plato, *Timaeus* pp. 61-2: 67c-68d.

and transmitted by countless commentators, did far more to establish and disseminate an "intromissive" mode of understanding of perception—including chromatic—than any other text. "Intromission" itself would eventually become part of the empirically based understanding of vision held by the current era.[95]

Initially the new model gave many medieval scholars to pause since it so abruptly contradicted the predominant mode of extramissive Christianized Neo-Platonic thought. It had to be, therefore, systematically commented upon and reworked by proponents in order that the two classical authorities might be both reconciled and synthesized with orthodox Christian doctrine. The most notable attempt in the West being that of Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) in his *Summa Theologica*, whilst in England Roger Bacon (*c*.1214-1292) was perhaps the most influential synthesizer in terms of natural philosophy. The greatest exponents and developers of Aristotelian theory—men who were in turn to assist the Latin West in its deliberations—were his translators and commentators in the Arab world during the period known as the Islamic Golden Age. These individuals included Alhazen (*Ibn al-Haytham*, 965-1039), Avicenna (*Ibn Sina*, 980-1037) and Averroes (*Ibn Rushd*, 1126-98), great linguists and proto-scientists who provided insightful commentaries, analyses and applications of numerous Aristotelian texts and their derivatives (all

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[95] The dominant understanding of chromatic perception in recent times is that of "opponent process" theory, first advanced by Hering in 1964. Visual receptor cells work in opposing pairs to respond to the differing wavelength properties of light. See Ewald Hering, *Outlines of a Theory of the Light Sense*, trans. Leo M. Hurvich and Dorothea Jameson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1964), and L. M. Hurvich, "Opponent-Colours Theory" in *Central and Peripheral Mechanisms of Colour Vision*, ed. D. Ottoson and S. Zeki (London: Macmillan, 1985) 61-82.

obviously written without influence from the Patristic tradition).[96] In Oxford, Robert Grosseteste (*c*.1168-1253) and Roger Bacon (*c*.1214-1292) produced works that attempted to reconcile the new mode of intromissive thought and its commentaries with the Neo-Platonist (especially Augustinian) legacy of extramission. Later scholars of note in Paris who also engaged with the contents of *De anima* and its mediation through the Arabic commentary tradition included John Buridan (*c*.1295-1358) and his disciple Nicole Oresme (*c*. 1320-1382).

In short, sensation and perception in *De anima* are a passive affair, involving intromission of the "sensible" via the "sensitive".[97] Aristotle defined the five external senses comprising the human sensitive faculty via their receptive organs; three of which have their own "proper objects" whilst all were said to participate in the experience of "common sensibles" such as shape or movement (although the status of the latter was disputed by Grosseteste and others who argued that recognising movement involves perceiving the passage of time, which must also involve the action of an internal sense, i.e., some aspect of memory). The senses together produce the sensitive faculty through which we are acted upon by the world: a process that sees the senses temporarily corresponding to their objects and so becoming them; being assimilated, as it were, as the potential to register a particular sense comes to register it in actuality. Thus:

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[96]See, Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Translations and Translators", *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1982) 421-462.

[97] The following discussion is indebted to Stephen Everson's seminal book on the subject: *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

...the sensitive faculty is such as the sensible object is in actuality. While it is
being acted upon, it is not yet similar, but, once it has been acted upon, it is
assimilated and has the same character as the sensible object.[98]

This teleological system is grounded upon Aristotle's wider understanding of
perception as that which distinguishes animals from plants (*De sensu*, I, 436b10-12), a
position which is made more explicit in *De anima* where a basic structure of
designated and purposeful behaviour is established that links the existence of
perception and the *psuchē* directly with a bodily capacity for independent movement:

If anybody were capable of locomotion but did not have perception, it would
perish and not reach its goal, which is the function of nature: for how could it
feed? Stationary living things, it is true, have as their nutriment that from which
they have arisen; but it is not possible that a body which is not stationary but
produced by generation should have a *psuchē* and a discriminating intellect
without also having perception. [99]

The capacity for movement entails perception, which operates by the sensitive
faculties, which correspond to the sensible nature of the physical world.[100] The
sensibles available for sensation, as we have seen, are either "common" to more than

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[98] Aristotle, *De Anima* II.418a.

[99] Aristotle, *De anima* III. 12, 434a30-b4, also cited in Everson 13-14.

[100] This relationship did not establish a conceptual overlap between perception and movement, rather it
helped base a clear distinction between the two which lasted as the conceptual norm well into the
Enlightenment. Perception came to be viewed in terms of sets of sense impressions categorically
separated from actions, which were seen as responses to external impressions. See e.g., John Locke, *An
Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Vol. I, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon,
1894) 121-2. Diverse evidence of the early medieval emergence of this conceptual divide is discussed
in Harald Kleinschmidt, *Perception and Action in Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press;
Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2005) esp. pp. 13-36.

one sense (movement, rest, number, figure, magnitude) or else "proper" to one sense only (*De anima* II. 6 418a17-25). Colour is the "proper" object of sight and its sensory organ is the eye, but vision participates with the other senses in the perception of a "common sensible" like the size or shape of an object. The primary function of the eye is therefore to be interpreted as the perception of colour:

> The object then of sight is the visible: what is visible is colour... colour is universally capable of exciting change in the actually transparent, that is, in light; this being in fact the true nature of colour.[101]

The strict teleology of Aristotle's philosophy establishes a mutual dependence between the means and ends of perception, manifested in the way the organs of sense passively assimilate their "proper" objects – as in *Timaean* vision operating on a model of physical contact or touch. Colours, which in perception actively cause change in the transparent – i.e., the light "receptacle" (which he defines along the same lines as in *De sensu* as "the presence of fire or something fiery in the transparent"[102]) enter the relevant passive organ – the eye – and bring about visual perception by converting its sensory potentiality into its having the same character in actuality (*De anima* II. 6. 418a3-6).

The nature of perception in *De anima* progresses from the reception of sensory perceptions to the corresponding experience for the individual established internally by the processes of psychology. In relation to the external organs of sense are "internal" senses by which the incoming sensations are formulated, interpreted,

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[101] Aristotle, *De anima* II.418b.

[102] In Lawson-Tancred's translation (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) "...light is as the colour of the transparent, when it is rendered transparent in actuality by fire. (...) light...is not fire or in general a body...but the presence of fire or something like it in the transparent." *De anima* II.7.418b.

intellectually acted upon and recorded or remembered. The numbers of these internal senses vary according to different medieval Aristotelian scholastic commentators and illustrators, but typically are five (corresponding to the five external senses), and include aspects of what we would discuss today in terms of psychological functions of conceptualization, association and information storage and retrieval.[103]

Perhaps the greatest significances of Aristotle's model of perception for medieval thinkers, and eventually the culture as a whole, was its move from an active to a passive model for sensation, and in locating the intellect (or soul) within the body (as its vitality, located in the heart) and explicitly linking the two. As such, the emphasis in perception shifted to the object of perception as that which passed on the content of its signification to the perceiver, as opposed to its signification initially deriving from the subject or perceiver, and, subsequently, becoming a part of a

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[103] Avicenna's *De anima* (a commentary which develops the original) gives these as: *i. Sensus communis vel sensatio* (common sense): by which the sense impressions are amalgamated to provide a compound perception. *ii. Ymagination vel formalis* (image formulation): by which compounded sense perceptions are retained after their initial sensation. *iii. Cogitativa vel formalis* (cognitive imagination): by which things in the imagination are combined or divided on demand. *iv. Estimativa* (judgement or instinct): by which non-sensible intentions are understood, e.g., that the lamb is safe whilst the wolf is not. *v. Vis memorativa* (memory): by which the intellectual soul stores its perceptions. See Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: OUP, 1952), a study that includes a translation of Avicenna's *De Anima*. For the context of the commentary and discussion of other redactions see Michael Camille, "Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing", *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 198, and Dag Hasse, *Avicenna's De Anima in the Latin West*, London: The Warburg Institute, 2000) – a study of the impact of Avicennan psychology upon the scholastics focusing on five key issues. Aquinas counted only four "internal senses" in the *Summa Theologica* (1a.78), combining the second and third senses into one.

subject/object interaction (manifest explicitly in the contact made between the internal and external fires of the Platonist model). How, exactly, inferences were taken from reality—how an object directly acted upon the subject based on the new model—was to be disputed, especially in terms of the exact nature or even existence of the intervening "species" or ideas of objects which were somehow transmitted from the world to the mind via sensation: e.g. in the case of vision, how complex physical images enter via the eye to be seen or recognised as objects. On this point Aristotle was himself ambiguous, allowing room for much interpretive license. It is enough, however, for our purposes to note that a fundamental shift was at work in which concepts of the "sensible", "sensation" and the "sensitive" were becoming isolated and conceptually fixed according to a dominant philosophical doctrine. The understanding that colour perception is produced by an active change in the transparent, and carried along by the medium of light so that light becomes visible, offered a model for different colours also to be viewed as, in a sense, different levels of brightness. This situation, however, revealed a problem for the primary conceptual distinction between light and colour: a matter already difficult to draw on the Aristotelian model of intromissive perception, at the heart of which lay a transition from a potential to an actual state, but which made material colours the final cause of visuality in conjunction with their receptacle – light. In Aristotle's words, which herald the inner or outer perspective dilemma of colour perception theory past and present: "For in a manner light, too, converts colours which are potential into actual colours."[104] Medieval scholars would have to wrestle with Aristotle's definitions of potential versus actual colours which inhabit the light "receptacle" and are transmitted by it – sometimes finding the interpretation in the Peripatetic *De coloribus* more

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[104] Aristotle, *De anima* 430a5.

readily conceivable – a description in which colour and light are essentially the same species, with different colours comparable to levels of brightness: "…visibility is impossible in any way except by light," and tantalizingly, "…the colour of fire is light."[105] Such thinking, we shall see, held out the potential for another hierarchically organised conception of visuality to emerge in line with the Neo-Platonic understanding of divine illumination and its progressive revelation of truth. However, Everson has identified the dilemma at the heart of Aristotle's description of perception as the problematic distinction Aristotle drew in some places and not others between, in the case of vision, "what it is to be a colour and what it is to be a (proper) object of sight".[106] The mention of colours existing somehow as potentialities prior to perception suggests they have an existence as an object *for* perception. This contradicts the overall sense in Aristotle's *Physics* whereby the elementally transforming external materials of the world with which the perceiving organs engage must be, ultimately, independent and distinct from the processes of perception themselves.

Whilst this kind of discourse seems intellectual and exclusive, there is simple evidence that it penetrated the culture at large: the "new" Aristotelian thinking regarding sense impressions can be found in an everyday medieval saying, "beat a dog to tame a lion" (used, for example, by Chaucer in his *Squire's Tale* (l. 491)) which expresses the idea of learning by example, but implies that the lion's imagination is conceived as directly affected or "imprinted" by the model of submission it witnessed.

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[105] Aristotle, *De coloribus* 7.

[106] Everson 125.

In summary, the differences in understanding that would emerge from the influence of Aristotelian psychology were the intromission as opposed to extramission of vision in the first instance, and the materially sensitive nature of the soul in the second.[107] Whilst it can be said that the intromissive understanding was dominant in educated circles that extended to England by Chaucer's lifetime (*c.*1343-1400) this did not mean that extramissive understanding had simply been replaced. Chaucer certainly made use of both for the various purposes of his fictions.[108] The two models of perception and their derivatives co-existed, with the extramissive model remaining in evidence in popular culture and theological writings well beyond the Renaissance.

The encyclopaedic approach: visual perception and colour theory in Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De proprietatibus rerum

The wider transmission, interpretation, and synthesis by the Latin West of Aristotelian thought on visual perception and colour, the many commentaries on it, and the influence of Patristic and Neo-Platonic sources is too vast a topic for the present

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[107] Aristotle rejected the Platonic view of the transcendental soul, using the term to refer to the intellectual faculty of human nature produced by the internal senses through which consciousness was said to operate. Such a view of the soul proved difficult to assimilate into Christian theology and so made Aristotle problematic for the medieval church. Concerns about erroneous teachings culminated in the "condemnations" of 1270, 1277 and 1284 of numerous propositions taught in the University of Paris.

[108] Compare, for instance, Chaucer's use of the extramissive mode of narration in *Troilus and Criseyde* (III.128ff. discussed above) and the distinction he draws between looking and acting in *The Miller's Tale* (3590ff.) "For that bitwixe yow shal be no synne, / Namoore in lookyng than ther shal in deede" (a point made by the clerk Nicholas, a student of the liberal arts.) The comparison suggests that the extramissive model had become a trope associated with a particular mode of poetics and allegorical narrative.

study.[109] Of special importance in England was Robert Grosseteste's pursuit of natural final causes in relation to thinking God's thoughts after him, and his resultant masterpiece *De luce*[110] (composed *c*.1225-8), in which he constructed a cosmological model rooted in an Aristotelian conceptualization of causation that took as its starting point the original light produced by God's command (the regularity and economy of nature thereafter described as conforming to the overall supernatural final cause).[111] Roger Bacon's *Opus maius*[112] (*c*.1267), largely under the influence of Avicenna's commentary on Aristotle, Alhazen's *Optics* and Grosseteste's light metaphysics, reconstructed via mathematical reasoning the idea of vision being the primary sense. Bacon (following Alhazen) construed visible objects as sources generating or multiplying *species* of light – rays – within the air (the adjacent medium), which act upon the senses and the intellect via sensation: the object-derived visible *species* (a

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[109] See *Mind, Cognition and Representation: The Tradition of Commentaries on Aristotle's De anima*, ed. Paul J. J. M. Bakker and Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) which traces the roots of cognitive science as presented and discussed in the tradition of commentaries on *De anima* from 1200-1650; see also Lindberg esp. pp. 87-146 for his exposition and discussion of visual theories and their transmission in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

[110] For exposition and discussion including a translation of *De luce* see Iain M. MacKenzie, *The 'Obscurism' of Light: A Theological Study into the Nature of Light, with a Translation of Robert Grosseteste's De luce by Julian Lock* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1996). The standard study of the Grosseteste corpus remains James McEvoy's *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982).

[111] See McEvoy 18.

[112] For an edition see J. H. Bridges, ed., *The Opus Maius of Roger Bacon* (Oxford: OUP, 1897-1900) and David Lindberg, *Roger Bacon's Philosophy of Nature: A Critical Edition, with English Translation, Introduction, and Notes, of De multiplicatione specierum and De speculis comburentibus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

concept combining the Aristotelian notion with Alhazen's conception of a multiplication of rays of light proceeding point to point from an object to the eye[113]) requisite for vision to occur represents the material colours from which they derive. Tellingly, given its theological import, for the sixth part of the *Opus maius* Bacon employed the example of the rainbow for his ongoing discussion of the notion of perspective (*perspectiva*) to consider its causes and the nature of its colours.[114] His conclusion—that the appearance of the rainbow changes according to the perspective of the observer but is not itself dependent upon or created by an observer—provides a valuable distinction in the history of optical ideas: i.e., a visual image or representation of an object can be observed, disassembled, reassembled, magnified or interpreted by an observer separate from the existence of the object from which it was derived.

Since a comprehensive examination is unfeasible, a more economical means of revealing something of the wider scholarly investment in and transmission of Aristotelian (and related) ideas concerning visuality and colour during the later medieval period is offered by a consideration of the sources for and treatment of ideas found in an influential compilatory work such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus' nineteen-

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[113] This revolutionary synthesis in optics was derived from Alhazen's *Kitab al-Manazir* (*Book of Optics*), written c. 1011 to 1021 and available in Latin translation in West from the early thirteenth century. The book is mentioned by name by, among others, Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Roger Bacon and Jean de Meun in his continuation of *Le Roman de la Rose*.

[114] Bridges, *The Opus Maius of Roger Bacon*, pt. 6, 2-12. The study of the rainbow as a natural object recurs throughout the history of optics: its relation to Christian theology was obviously a criterion for wider interest.

volume encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum* (henceforth DPR).[115] This was widely known and much copied during the later medieval period, as its translation into English by John Trevisa's (*c*.1340-1402) translation nearly one hundred years after its original creation testifies.

A Franciscan monk, Bartholomaeus Anglicus (*c*.1200-1272) is thought to have composed his encyclopedia whilst a *lector* in Magdeburg, Saxony in *c*. 1245 as an aid for his students.[116] The work as a whole is an encyclopedia of theology and science "...arranged in nineteen books; the number, the sum of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the seven planets, signified universality."[117] M. C. Seymour has convincingly suggested that the books follow an orderly progression: the first three are concerned with the Creator and the spiritual creation, angels and the soul; books four to seven explore the nature of man, the humours, the parts of the body, social roles, the maladies and diseases that man is subject to; books eight and nine describe the celestial and temporal context of mankind's existence; books ten to eighteen present the elemental surroundings and resultant phenomena of human existence; book nineteen details aspects of the natural sciences relevant to the human experience of these phenomena, that is accidents of substance and their perception by human beings. It would seem, therefore, that the writer's underlying schema was fundamentally extramissive, perhaps influenced by a sentiment of divine outworking found in

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[115] Page references and line numbers are to the Middle English edition *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum*, Vol. II, ed. M.C. Seymour *et al* (Oxford: OUP, 1975).

[116] For a summary of the evidence for the life of Bartholomaeus and the sources and writing of his encyclopedia, see M. C. Seymour *et al, Bartholomaeus Anglicus and his Encyclopedia* (Aldershot: Ashgate; Variorum, 1992) 1–35.

[117] Seymour 11.

Augustinian theology and works such as the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius.

The encyclopaedic genre and approach of the work employed by Bartholomaeus was by no means his own invention; contemporary encyclopedias were Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum* (*c.*1157-1217) and *De natura rerum* by the Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré (*c.*1201-72), both of which failed to achieve the level of circulation as did Bartholomaeus' larger, yet more lucid and concise offering. In its turn, Bartholomaeus' more practical and useful encyclopedia was to assist the greatest scholastic complier of the thirteenth century, Vincent of Beauvais, in his vast encyclopaedic project the *Speculum naturale* ("mirror of nature"), the first three books of which were completed *c.*1250.[118]

Bartholomaeus drew on a vast array of authorities available to scholars of the day, utilizing, and at times copying verbatim, the classical, patristic, and Arabic commentaries available to him in Latin, which would also have been accessible to generations of students in the libraries of Universities such as that at Paris. He also occasionally shows knowledge of the work of contemporary scholars such as Robert Grosseteste, whom Bartholomaeus may have known as master of the schools during an initial period of study in Oxford between *c.*1214 and his enrolment in Paris in 1220.[119] It is generally accepted that his method as a compiler did not entail great

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[118] For details regarding these and other thirteenth century encyclopedias see, for example, R. Collison, *Encyclopaedias: their History through the Ages; A Bibliographical Guide with Extensive Historical Notes to the General Encyclopaedias Issued Throughout the World from 350 B.C. to the Present Day* (New York: Hafner, 1964).

[119] See D. A. Callus, *Robert Grosseteste Bishop and Scholar* (Oxford: OUP, 1953) 7-8, and Seymour 10. It is only possible to surmise, as many scholars have done, that *BA* studied at Oxford. See Seymour p. 2, and p. 2 n4 for further sources on this biographical point.

innovation or harmonisation of materials, but still his accuracy and lucidity in conveying complex ideas and natural descriptions is notable. Seymour views Bartholomaeus as essentially blind to the implications of his materials and argues that unlike a brilliant scholar such as Grosseteste, he "...eschews (if indeed he was conscious of) the fundamental disharmony between the biblical view of the universe and the Aristotelian view," that "...wherever Bartholomaeus is confronted by serious contradiction in his sources or his experience, he turns aside and refuses to become partisan."[120] However, Seymour also suggests Bartholomaeus' religious motives for his compilations: "It is a Franciscan book, nurtured and produced in Franciscan schools and in the simplicity and humility of their faith at its beginning. (...) The work is primarily a statement of faith and charity."[121] Bartholomaeus may have recognized inconsistencies in his sources, but if so it was not his purpose to comment on them. His task was that of an educator who wished to offer his readership an accurate presentation of diverse information and materials for study and further deliberation. His final goal was devotional, and followed the formula derived from Augustine and famously articulated by Bonaventura (c.1221-74), to seek and promote knowledge of the universe insofar as it was useful for salvation and glorifying to God.[122] Bartholomaeus is perhaps more aggravating and less defendable for the present commentator in his treatment of visuality and colour in book nineteen. He does, however state his sources' positions without much engagement or recognition of

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[120] Seymour 12.

[121] Seymour 15-16.

[122] See Bonaventura, *Breviloquium* 3: "Faith describes the whole universe insofar as it is useful to know it for salvation"; and Augustine, *De doctrina* II.16.23-6, 39.59 on the need for encyclopaedias to enable better scriptural interpretation. For Bartholomaeus' clear sympathy with this approach see his Prologue and Epilogue (p.1395, l.9 – p.1396, l.6), see also Seymour 12.

their at times contradictory stances, laying them beside one another simply to create a

large body of material that appears all the more undigested because of its pseudo-

objective tone.

It is also worth remembering that any survey of the sources of DPR requires

caution.[123] Those sources usually noted in the manuscripts and early printed editions

(based on a list probably compiled at Paris at an early date) are suspect and contain

errors. Some of Bartholomaeus' named references exist only in abbreviated form,

allowing wrong identifications to be made (e.g. *Alb* could be "Albert" magnus or

"Albumazor"), and references simply to "auctor" are always open to educated

guesswork. Seymour makes this point clearly in his introductory section and offers

the example of the term "auctor Perspecif" (p.1269, 1.17) used by Bartholomaeus in

the first chapter of book nineteen; a term which follows a paraphrase from Alhazen's

Perspectiva (I.42), but which has at times been credited to Grosseteste.[124]

Unfortunately, as we shall see, this discovery may have overly determined Seymour's

view of Bartholomaeus' knowledge of Grosseteste's work. Seymour cites two more

pitfalls regarding the attribution of sources in DPR: the existence of secondary

sources and referents embedded within sections of materials transcribed from a

primary source, and ambiguities caused by Bartholomaeus' mistaking or conflating

references as a result of working either from memory or from reports of documents

rather than materials actually witnessed or present to hand.[125] A further pitfall not

cited by Seymour is one that he himself falls into – that Bartholomaeus at least once

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[123] Seymour 17.

[124] See T. Plassman, "Bartholomaeus Anglicus", *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* XII (1919) 92,

and A.C. Crombie, *Robert Grosseteste and the Origins of Experimental Science 1100-1700* (Oxfrod:

Clarendon, 1953) 112, cited also in Seymour 17n3.

[125] Seymour 17-18.

gives a verbatim transcription from a recent source without referencing its author in any way.[126]

Book nineteen of DPR contains one hundred and forty-six chapters of which the first thirty-seven are concerned with seeing, seeing colour, and colours (pp.1268-96). These chapters can be read to follow (albeit imperfectly) a similar plan in microcosm to that of the encyclopedia as a whole: from a central definitional understanding of colour and its relation to light the topic is pursued outwards, to explore the cosmological existence of colour, its presence in human beings, in organic life, and ultimately in inorganic matter. The first ten chapters compile various theories of colour as a material and visual phenomenon, whilst the next twenty-seven name and describe particular colour terms with either general significance and use, or specific meanings according to their uses or sources in plants and minerals and for dyes, pigments, inks, etc. Indeed, the range of the work tails off considerably and the last ten chapters on colours are composed mostly from extracts from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*. In his book *Bartholomaeus Anglicus and his Encyclopedia* (1992) Seymour has picked out and commented upon many of the named and implied sources of the work. The following paragraphs summarize the ideas and their main sources used by Bartholomaeus for his treatment of colour, and mention one important absence from Seymour's summary of sources in chapter eight of book nineteen.

In Trevisa's translation, Bartholomaeus introduces the first chapter of book nineteen by saying he has come "atte laste" to "some accidentes that folweth the

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[126] This move was perhaps akin in spirit to Chaucer's use of a Petrarchan sonnet (*Vita* 88) in *Troilus and Criseyde* (ll. 400-20). Rather than merely plagiarizing, such inclusions may suggest respect for the source.

substaunce of bodyliche thinges" (p.1268, l.7-8). He proceeds to give definitions of the term "colour" taken from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*: it comes from *calor* ("for it is ymade parfyte by hete of the fuyre other by clereness of the sonne"), or *colere* ("for coloures beth ydreyned and yclensede to make hem ful sotile and clere and also clene"). This etymological opening will provide an effective lead into his presentation of Aristotelian natural colours as existing in relation to the elementally derived qualitative matrix of temperature and levels of moisture. However, in the first instance Bartholomaeus is keen to distinguish between the aspect of his topic related to elemental colours and that relating to the seeing or perception of the phenomenon. Bartholomaeus refers to Aristotle's *Meteorologica* lll.2.312a-b (p.1268, l. 17-19) to define colour as "the outemest party of som cleere thynge other bright in a body that is determyned," and book II.7.418b-19a of *De anima* to state that visual perception happens because "...colour changeth sight and ӡeueth thereto a likenesse by worchynge of light". As such, light is needed for colour to be seen and vision to occur, but this, he hastens to explain, does not imply that colour does not exist except in light conditions, for at root it is an elementally composed quality of matter:

> For light is the perfeccioun of cleere thing and bright. For it bryngeth the kynde of colour that is ymedled in a body kyndeliche by maystrie of some element to chaungynge and dede of perfeccioun of the sight. For though colour be essencialliche and kyndeliche a medled body, ӡit hath colour no might to schewe himself but by light that schyneth in dede thervpon. (...) For if light lakketh, the qualite of colour is nouӡt yseye. But in dede colour is inne derknesse, as the comentor seith *secundo de anima* there he treteth of chaungyng and likenes of colour and of the sight. And light maketh nouӡt the colour, for the colour is in dede by maystry of som element in a body that is ymedled. But light schyneth withoute vpon colour and in the space and the place that the colour is inne, and disposeth the place and ӡiueth his schap, by the which it may fonge the liknesse of colour. And so light disposeth likenesse in

the space by the whiche dyuersite of colour cometh to the yhe, there the dome is
of colour. Therefore in dede colours abydeth in derknesse, as the comentor seith
openliche. (p.1268-9, ll.27-17)

The "comentor" is Averroes, and the emphasis upon material colours still existing in
darkness is found in his commentary on *De anima* VI. 147.[127] An interesting aspect of
Trevisa's translation here is the use of "dome" for the final cause or destination for
colour – the eye.

After this point in the chapter, however, Bartholomaeus makes reference to the
"auctor Perspectif", Alhazen, in order to describe how colour needs light in order to
be seen. Paraphrasing *Perspectiva* I.42 he writes, "For withoute light the schappe and
liknesse of colour spredeth nouȝt in the ayer. Other though it be in derknesse yspradde
in the ayre, ȝit it worcheth nouȝt in the yhe sight. And so light nedeth nought to the
beynge of colour, but oonliche to the schewynge therof." (p.1269, ll.19-23). Here we
see a connection being made between two relevant ideas from different souces—each
responding to a need to defend the existence of colours during times of darkness—and
being laid side by side despite having roots in very different theories of perception
(the Aristotelian view of intromissive, visual tactility by which the eye's potential for
vision is converted into actual seeing by the intromission of a coloured *species* of the
object of sight, and Alhazen's theory of rays of light proceeding to the eye from the
object of sight). Bartholomaeus continues to summarize the difference between colour
perception and material colours and then ends the chapter on a devotional note, one
which will help lead into the next chapter:

> Thanne if auctours telleth in eny place that colour is nouȝt in dede withoute
> light, it is to vnderstondynge of dede of sight and nouȝt of the dede of beynge.

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[127] Seymour 233.

(…) For the vertu of the light of heuene cometh vnseye into the inner parties of thinges and gendreth colours by helpe of the foure qualities of elementis. Whanne they beth ygendred and beth in kynde, thanne cometh light that we seeth and maketh hem clere and noble, and sheweth hem to the sight and to the yhen. (p. 1269, ll. 28-38).

What is remarkable about this passage is the sudden intrusion of Augustinian extramissive theology into what has been a philosophical discourse based pedominantly on intromissive thinking. Even though it should not be a surprising sentiment given Bartholomaeus' Fransciscan identity and motivation for writing, in context the discrepancy of the line leaps out. Suddenly evoking a transcendental mode, Batholomaeus defines the final cause of colours to be the "virtue of the light of heaven", which is not limited to surface contact but reaches the "inner parts of things", an idea which relies upon a metaphysical understanding of a more fundamental kind of light (divine illumination) and its creative power. Only after this stage can colours, engendered by the qualities of elemental bodies, be revealed by "the light that we seeth" that "sheweth hem to the sight and to the yhen", i.e., a different kind of light based upon a theological model such as that given by Augustine in his commentary on Genesis.

Chapters two to seven present Bartholomaeus' researches into the material dimension of colour and draw on key Aristotlelian texts discussed earlier in this study: *De generatione et corruptione, De generatione animalium, Meterologica, De coloribus, De anima* (and Averrois' commentary) and most importantly, *De sensu et sensato.* Chapter two outlines the context for material colours: – that a bodies' "cleernesse hath thre material dyuersitees. For the matiere is thynne other thikke or mene" (p.1270, ll. 9-10) according to its composition of elements and their corressponding qualities of moistness and temperature. For example, "If it is mene,

thanne ther is moche more moysture of water than druynesse of eorthe, and passynge

the moysture of ayre" (p. 1270, ll. 10-12). Chapter three shows how this entails

different material colours. The Aristotelian extremes of white and black are invoked

so that "white colour is ygendred of scarsete of humour in druye matiere by maystrie

of hete that worcheth and maketh the matiere sotile othur smal" (p.1270, ll.26-8) –

examples of which being "lyme and in bones ybrende". Black, by contrast, is the

result if "colde hath the maistry and worcheth in druy matiere" (p.1270, ll.28-9). The

chapter is clearly derived from Aristotle, but Bartholomaeus confuses his sources by

correctly referencing *De generatione animalium* twice (p.1270, l.26 and p.1271, l.20,

corresponding to *De generatione animalium* V.6.786a and V.1.779b),[128] but also

redundantly mentioning *Metereologica* twice (p.1271, l.8 and l.16) where he might

conceivably have mentioned either *De coloribus* or a lost commentary of Richard

Ruphus.[129] Chapter four develops the position with regard to the generation of white

and follows the same key sources. In chapter five Bartholomaeus' attention moves to

the generation of the medium colours between white and black in terms of their

expression of the mastery of a particular elemental quality: "Bitwene whitenesse and

blaknesse beth many mene grees, folwynge the maistry of qualitees that beth actiue

and passyue 'worchinge' and 'suffrynge' as they beth more stronge or feble, and that

in many grees" (p.1272, ll.20-3).

Chapters six and seven of book nineteen introduce and outline Aristotle's

position in *De sensu* (IV. 442a) regarding the scale of mixed colours between white

and black. On the whole, Bartholomaeus follows his source here and expands rather

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[128] Seymour 233 n1270-1.

[129] See Seymour 233 n1271 and 55n138. A reference to *De coloribus* 791a-b would have settled the

matter more simply.

than changes the original, except that, as Seymour notes, he changes the colour sequence (p.1276, ll.3-4).[130] This was clearly an intentional act and not a mistake. In the first part of chapter five Bartholomaeus reiterates the generation of colours according to the white-black dichotomy linked to temperature and moisture levels that "worcheth" or "suffreth" together, arriving at the position that "ther beth tweye ottemeste colours, that beth white and blake, and fyue mene colours" (p.1275, ll.13-14). The existence of only five mean colours he derives from *De sensu* as the logical product of ratios of elemental qualities and their mastery in different bodies, but it is a number obviously at odds with Bartholomaeus' previous sentiment (perhaps also derived from Grosseteste – see below) that there are "many mene grees bitwene whitenesse and blaknesse." He states therefore in a rather disappointed tone "...it semeth that the colours mowe nouȝt be distyngued in mo dyuerse kyndes, as it is declared by this diffynycioun, that is ymade of contrary membres withoute defaute and withoute superfluyte" (p.1275, ll.14-17). In order perhaps to bolster his own doubts about the situation he reiterates that "Aristotil bereth witnesse that ther beth oonliche fyue mene colours" (p.1275, ll.18-19). Bartholomaeus then proceeds in the latter part of chapter six to outline the argument for the intermixing of elements causing the five medium colours in Aristotle's *De sensu,* which he continues on into chapter seven: noting red to be the middle point between white and black. However, thereafter he describes the scale of colours as follows:

> Aristotil nempneth thise fyue colours by name, and clepeth the furst ȝolow, and the secounde cytrine, and the thridde rede, the fourthe purpure, and the fifthe grene; so that bitwene whyte and rede the ȝolow is toward the white and the citryne toward the rede; bytwixe blak and rede, purpure is toward the rede and the grene toward the blake. (p.1276, ll.1-7)

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[130] Seymour 234, n1275-6.

Certainly in *De sensu* IV.442a Aristotle mentions yellow first, but is only to be included, he says, if it is not to be classed with white and considered as an alternative to grey (if that colour is considered a variety of black). He then lists crimson, violet, green and blue. Bartholomaeus clearly changes the order here, but why? There is a brief digression as he mentions the difference between Greek and Latin colour terms, and then he continues:

> For ʒolow hath more of white than of blak and rede. ... Citryne and purpure beclipeth the rede colour. For eyther of hem hath more of the rede than of white or blak. But cytryne is further fro blak than is purpure, as Aristotil meneth in *secundo de sompno et vigilia* there he speketh of corrupcioun of thise colours and tornyng into blak. And he seuth that citryne passeth by purpure into blak, and therefore purpure moot be bitwene reed and blak, and citryne bytwene white and blak. And of al this it folweth that grene moot be ysette toward the blak. And so the cause is yknowe of the ordynaunce of these fyue colours, as Aristotil meneth.

Bartholomaeus has substituted the reasoning and order of *De sensu* for a different Aristotelian passage remembered from elsewhere, which he mistakenly cites as *De sompno et vigilia* – a text which does not mention colour, but a reasonable mistake to make given that the source for his rearrangement of the scale seems to have been *De somniis* (II.459b).[131] This part of Aristotle's short section on dreams considers the way in which the sensory organs operate in sleep based upon speculations regarding what happens when perception is fixed on the same object for a long time. Aristotle states that in vision, after staring for a long time at something of a particular colour and then transferring the gaze to something else, "our gaze appears to be of the same

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[131] Noted by Seymour 234, n1276. Seymour does not connect the use of this source with the change of colour and order from *De sensu*, which he describes simply as "misordered".

colour," and, moreover, "...if, after having looked at the sun or some other brilliant object we close the eyes, then, if we watch carefully, it appears in a right line with the direction of vision (whatever this may be), at first its own colour; then it changes to crimson, next to purple, until it becomes black and disappears" (*De somniis* II.459b). On this basis Bartholomaeus inserts purple into the scale between red and black, and replaces the other colours so that two are between red and black – (green and purple) with yellow and citryn between red and white. Green ends up, therefore, on the darker end of the scale, tending towards black (though less close to black than purple).

After this deliberate confusion we come to chapter eight, the longest and most difficult compilation of ideas on colour in DPR. The chapter—ostensibly concerned with the nature of light in relation to the substance of colours—opens into a world of scholarly confusion with a discourse on light and colour that completely redefines the Aristotelian colour scale in terms of levels of brightness. The passage describes light according to four parameters: clearness, dimness, much or little, and then mentions an experiment involving a mirror to define how "moche light and grete light" may be observed: "as whanne an holow3 merour is ysette in the sonne beme, and the light falleth on al the merour and reboundeth into the myddel therof, and gaderynge and reboundynge of that light setteth the merour afuyre and brenneth ful soone" (p.1276, ll.32-5). This third dimension of brightness is applied to the Aristotelian scale of colours to present a series of colours extending towards either white or black, starting from a base in whiteness or in blackness. This necessitates sixteen colours overall – the two extremities plus seven ascending and seven descending mediary colours. The passage is narrated by a different, more confident voice than that of Bartholomaeus, but determining its source has proven problematic. The text mentions that "Albumaser seith" that whiteness is produced by "moche" light in "pure matiere and clere"

(p.1277, l.3) – a reference Seymour believed was to Albumazar's *Introductorius maior* IV. 2-3, but noted it had been falsely expanded.[132] We are told that "this expouneth the word of Aristotle and Averroes that meneth that blaknesse is priuacioun of clereness" (p.1277, l.6-7). Specific texts are not given but the sense certainly could have come from *De anima* II.7.418b or *De sensu* III.439b (and Averrois commentary thereon) which mention blackness in relation to dimming light. However, these texts certainly do not mention a three dimensional sixteen colour scale – it is an ingenious piece of expansion if that is the case. The answer may be that the passage is difficult to place because it was intended to be so: that whilst the reference to Aristotle and Averroes was embedded in a secondary source, that to Albumaser and its "expansion" was either a mistake or else a deliberate attempt to divert attention away from a contemporary source. In fact, the source for most of the first thirty-four lines of chapter eight (p.1276, l.24 – p.1277, l.22) was Robert Grosseteste's minor work *De colore*.[133] The following text of *De colore* is interspersed with the relevant parts of DPR book nineteen chapter seven – Trevisa's

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[132] Seymour 234, n1277.

[133] Seymour does not credit Grosseteste's influence on Bartholomaeus or this text in his book – a fact for which it was rightly criticised by A.S.G. Edwards in his review in *Speculum*; he writes: "Occasionally, possible sources claimed as among those used by Bartholomaeus are not noted: for example 1276/1-21, at which S.H. Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste* (Cambridge, Eng., 1940), p.93, argues that Bartholomaeus used Grosseteste's *De colore...*"[133] What Thomson noted of *De colore* was not an argument but demonstrably an accurate claim to fact: "This work was known to Bartholomaeus Anglicus (†1250 or 1275), who quotes it in his *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (Bk. XIX, chap.7) without, however, naming the author."[133] Comparing the relevant portions of *De colore* and DPR shows Thomson was right and the former was in some way obtained and used by Bartholomaeus.

translation here serving as a translation and part paraphrase of most of the Latin of Grosseteste's text:

> Color est lux incorporate perspicuo. Perspicui vero duae sunt differentiae: est enim perspicuum aut purum separatum a terrestreitate, aut impurum terrestreitatis admixtione.[134]

[Some meneth that light is the substance of colour. And he meneth that colour is in clene and clere matiere. And clerenesse haueth these dyuersitees. For clere matiere is clene and pure and nou3t eorthy, other vnpure and eorthy.] (p.1276, ll.24-7)

> Lux autem quadrifarie partitur: quia aut est lux clara vel obscura, pauca vel multa. Nec dico lucem multam per subiectum magnum diffusam. Sed in puncto colligitur lux multa, cum speculum concavum opponitur soli et lux cadens super totam superficiem speculi in centrum sphaerae speculi reflectitur. Cuius etiam lucis virtute in ipso centro collecta combustibile citissime inflammatur.

[And light is distingued in foure manere wyse. For light is clere other dymme, litel or mochil. But I clepe nou3t light gret nouther moche, though it schyne in a gret place and moche. But vertual light ygadered in a litel place other in a poynt is ycleped moche light and grete light; as whanne an holow3 merour is ysette in the sonne beme, and the light falleth on al the merour and reboundeth into the myddel therof, and gaderynge and reboundynge of that light setteth the merour afuyre and brenneth ful soone, and so if herden other [other] druye matiere is ydo therinne, it is ybrende sodeinliche and ysette afuyre.] (p.1276, l.28 – p.1277, l.2)

> Lux igitur clara multa in perspicuo puro albedo est. Lux pauca in perspicuo impuro nigredo est. Et in hoc sermone explanatus est sermo Aristotelis et Averrois, qui ponunt nigredinem privationem et albedinem habitum sive formam.

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[134] Latin quotations from Robert Grosseteste, *De colore*, in *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, 9, ed. L. Baur (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1912) 78-9.

[Thane if ther is moche liȝt and clere, [whitnes is ygendred] in pure matiere and clere, *as Albumaser seith*. And if the light is litel and dymme in clere matiere, and nouȝt ful clere but somdel dymme, thanne blaknesse moot nedes be ygendred. And this expouneth the word of Aristotil and of Aueroys, that meneth that blaknesse is priuacioun of clerenes.] (p.1277, ll.2-7)

> Sequitur etiam ex hoc sermone, quod colores proximi albedini, in quibus potest fieri recessus ab albedine et permutatio, septem sunt, nec plures nec pauciores. - Similiter septem erunt proximi nigredini, quibus a nigredine versus albedinem ascenditur, donec fiat concursus aliorum septem colorum, quibus ab albedine descenditur. Cum enim albedinis essentiam tria constituant, scilicet lucis multitudo, eiusdemque claritas et perspicui puritas, duobus manentibus cuiuslibet trium potest fieri remissio, eritque per hunc modum trium colorum generatio; vel quolibet trium solo manente, duorum reliquorum erit remissio, et sic fiet aliorum colorum a tribus prioribus trina generatio; aut omnium trium simul erit remissio; et sic in universo ab albedine erit septem colorum immediata progressio.

[And for to speke in this wise, it foloweth that ther ben seuene colours, that strecche fro white toward blake. And this is yknowe. And thre thinges maketh whitenesse: brightnesse of light and plente therof and purenesse of clere matiere; and while [two] meue, colour may abate. Thanne in thi wise is generacioun of thre colours. If oon abydeth allone, the othere tweyn abateth. And so of white cometh seuene colours and streccheth fro the white toward blak.] (p.1277, ll.8-14)

> Consimilis est ratio, per quam ostenditur a nigredine per septem colores illi proximos versus albedinem ascensio. Erunt ergo in universo colores sedecim: duo scilicet extremi et hinc inde septem extremis annexi hinc per intensionem ascendentes illinc per remissionem descendentes ac in medio in idem concurrentes. In quolibet autem colorum mediorum gradus intensionis et remissionis sunt infiniti. Unde qui per numerationem et combinatione eorum, quae intenduntur et remittuntur, multitudinis scilicet et claritatis luminis et etiam puritatis perspicui et oppositorum his, fiunt colores novem, per numerationem graduum intensionis et remissionis erunt infiniti.

[Also fro blak to white streccheth seuene. And by this consideracioun coloures beth sixtene, tweye principal, blak and white, and fourtene mene. For seuene streccheth fro white toward blak, and seuene fro blak toward white. And in the strecchynge the first seuene abateth in whitenesse, and the othere seuene abateth in blaknesse, and meteth in the myddel. In eueriche mene colour beth as it were endeles meny grees of deep colour and of light, as they beth fro white other blak, other nyh therto.] (p.1277, ll.14-22)

The text of *De colore* ends with a summarizing section not borrowed by Bartholomaeus.[135] It seems possible that Bartholomaeus brought the near complete text from Grosseteste into play at this point because of dissatisfaction with the "cap" of seven colours required by the Aristotelian logical system of colour *species* existing according to ratios of mixing. Grosseteste's ingenious third dimension of brightness allowed the conceptualization of twice as many colour *species* and an infinite number of degrees thereof between white and black. By employing this addition to the

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[135] Quod autem secundum dictum modum se habeat colorum essentia et eorundem multitudo, non solum ratione, verum etiam experimento manifestum est his, qui scientiae naturalis et Perspectivae profundius et interius noverunt principia. Quod est, quia sciunt figurare perspicuum, sive fuerit purum sive impurum ita, ut in ipso recipiant lumen clarum, sive si maluit obscurum et per figuram formatam in ipso perspicuo lumen paucum faciant, aut ipsam pro libito multiplicent; et sic per artificium omnes modos colorum, quos voluerint visibiliter ostendere possunt. Explicit tractatus de colore secundum Lincolniensem.

After the aforesaid manner is the essence of the colours and the multitude of the same detected, not only an account, but the tested truth is here, which the physicist and Perspectivist has more deep knowledge of and others have learned the beginnings. Which is, because they form the transparent, whether pure or unclean if they receive the clear light, or if obscure through the shape formed in the transparent from the little light they may have, or it may multiply itself on behalf of what is taken away; and thus through the arts, all manners of colours, which they will have wished visible, are able to be shown. This is the explanation of colour from the one of Lincoln.

Aristotelian understanding of optics Bartholomaeus was perhaps able to satisfy a sense that a bridge between logically derived colour categories and his experience of more varied colours was needed.

Once this had been achieved he returns to more familiar ground. The Aristotelian concept of transparency derived from *De anima* and *De sensu* is presented next along with the difference between objects which have the same colour throughout ("the white of an ey and in broken glas that is ycoloured" p.1278, 1.7) and objects with surface colours different from inner colours ("blak peper and in appulles greyness" p.1278, 1.10). Apart from *De sensu* and *De anima*, he refers once to the *Metaphysics* (X.2. 1053b)[136] to provide support for the theme that "eueriche mene coloure is ygendred by white and blak that semeth more priuacioun of white than colour, as derknesse is priuacioun of light" (p.1279, ll. 19-21). He then refers again to Albumazar (the *Introductorius maior*[137]) on this theme to argue that "it nedeth nouʒt that vnyte of kynde folweth vntye of liknesse of coloure", and posits the working of colour to "prente likenesse in the sight by worchinge in dede of light", and so "prente likenesse in the yhe" (p.1279, ll.23-8). Further Aristotelian observations follow, including the effects on the eye of over exposure to brightness or prolonged darkness: "For gret whitenesse ofte schedeth the spirit of sight and dissolueth the yhe and maketh it water. And to grete blakenesse gadereth the spirite, and maketh thikke and reboundeth the sight, and maketh him dymme, as it fareth in hem that beth longe yclosed in derke place, that seeth lyte or right nought whanne they beth sodeinlyche ybrought into light" (p.1270, ll. 31-6). The idea of sight thickening and rebounding

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[136] Seymour 234, n1279.

[137] Seymour deduces this from the phrase *Albumasar in differencia*, because *differentiae* are the sections of each book of the *Introductorius maior* (Seymour 234, n1279).

from darkness implies an extramissive sense of rays of light either coming out from the eye or else, as in Alhazen's *Optics* and its followers, coming from an object into the eye. The next and concluding paragraphs of chapter eight deal with the implications for the human body of elementally derived colours, both in terms of temperament and aesthetic appearance, an important matter for our recognising the role played by colour as a signifier of psychological and moral truths in the medieval period (discussed further in the next section of this study). The essential point he makes is that "...by the otter colour the innere qualities of thinges beth yknowe" (p.1280, l.10). Bartholomaeus reminds the reader that "...colde maketh moyste thinges white, and druye blak. And hete maketh wete thynges blake, and druye white, as Aristotil and Auicen meneth" (p.1280, ll.2-4), and then shows how this relates to the four humours of human psycho-physical nature:

> And therefore whitnes, that is the doute[r] of colde, is tokne of fleume and of moyste and fletynge humour. And blaknesse is tokne of malencolik disposicioun [and] of druye humour that hath maistry in the body, and is sometyme tokne of gret brennyng of humours and of chaungyng and tournyng into [vn]kynde malencoly, as it schal be yseyde hereafter. (p.1280, ll.4-9)

The colour-scale thus helps indicate temperament – the medium colours that tend towards white showing the phlegmatic and choleric, those tending towards black showing more melancholic and sanguine dispositions. Bartholomaeus extends this inner and outer correspondence of bodily chromatic appearance by referring to Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* (VIII.62). He opines that "Proporcional dyuersite of colour exciteth kyndeliche the sight of lokers to loke and wonder theron, as Plinius seith *libro viii*..." (p.1280, l.24): this from the zoological section commenting upon the visual appeal of the panther. The final two paragraphs of the chapter consider facial colouring and the moral aspect of fair appearances; by way of introduction

Bartholomaeus refers to Avicenna's *De complexionibus* (though Seymour suggests Galen's *De complexionibus* may also have been used) and Augustine (*De trinitate* III.4): "For ordinat colour and fayre is complexioun of faymesse, whanne it answereth dueliche to the makynge and composicioun of members and lymes as Auicen seith. And Austyn seith that fairenesse is semeliche schap of body with plesyng colour, and aʒeinward, for vyle colour and vnsemeliche is foul thing in a body" (p.1280, l.30-4). He asserts that "colour is tokne of accidentes and of passiouns of the soule" giving the examples of paleness as the colour of dread (because "hete…ydrawe inward" and the "scarstee of blode"), and redness the colour of shame or wrath ("for hete cometh outwarde and blood maketh the skyn rede withoute"). After another reference to Avicenna's *De complexionibus* for the notion that natural bodily colour (as an accident of kind) cannot be hidden except through covering up with a compounded colour, the chapter ends on a summarizing statement. The reference here to the maternal status of light hints back to the primary metaphysical mode Bartholomaeus used earlier in his overview of visual perception: "Also colour acordeth to light, as the doughter to the moder, and foloweth light in dede. For with grete light colour encresceth, and with litel light colour abateth" (p.1281, ll. 11-14).

In chapter nine Bartholomaeus takes up further the subject of colour change (or *mutacione*) in bodies from plant and animal life through to that of human beings. Bartholomaeus refers to Alfred of Sareshel's translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian work *De plantis*, Hunain ibn Ishaq's *Isagoge* (called "*Iohannecio*" by Bartholomaeus) and Petrus Hispanus' commentary, *De colore cutis*.[138] The absence of any direct reference to or apparent use of *De coloribus* here is again notable given that the territory for ideas and examples is similar. The ripening of fruit is reported as a

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[138] Seymour 235, n1281-3.

process of darkening (an elemental transformation) caused by the sun's heat: "For the hete hath maystry, and dissolueth and setheth and defyeth the eorthynesse, and taketh as moche as nedeth and torneth into fruyte, and wasteth the other dele or putteth oute of the fruyte and bryngeth it to the vtter parties" (p.1281, ll.30-4). The changing colour of skin, eyes, hair and nails in "bestes" follows: in skin, "…it is ygendred and cometh of inner thynges, somtyme of humours and somtyme of passiouns of the soule (p.1282, ll. 10-11). A rehearsal of skin colour encoding passions follows (red for anger and pale for dread, according to the heat of the blood) after which there is a paragraph reporting the difference between black and white skin colours deriving from race, which refers by name to Macrobius, Aristotle, Avicenna and "the comentor…*super Iohannico*" (p.1283, l.4-5).[139] This is revealing for its presentation of racial skin colour as caused by external conditions but also showing innate, inner properties of different peoples:

> Also [in] men of the nacioun of Maures here blak colour cometh of the inner parties, and whytissh colour in Almaynes 'Duchissh men'. For that contre Marytanya is the moste hoot contre in Ethiopia, in the which contray for gret hete the blood is ybrende bitwene felle and fleisshe and maketh al the members blake. But afterward by continual hete of the sonne suche blaknesse sprong into al his ospringe, and of blak fader and moder cometh blak children. But that place onnliche the[r] fader and moder beth contynualliche ybrende with hete of the sonne, and therfor in temperate contrees and londes that beth somdele colde, blo men geteth children temperate in colour, Macrobius, Aristotil, and

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[139] Identified by Seymour as Petrus Hispanus' *De colore cutis*, a commentary on Hunain ibn Ishaq's *Isagoge* amongst other texts in the *Articella* collection of medical texts. Seymour 235, n1283. Seymour further comments that "the Aristotelian references may echo *Historia animalium* III.9.517a and VII.6.586a, and that the reference to Macrobius is unlocated in his extant works or commentaries.

Auicenne meneth. And the contrary is in Almaynes and in Scottes, that wonyeth in colde londes. Therfore in hem colde stoppeth the holes and pores withoute, and the hete is ydrawe inward, and therfore the skynne is white withoute. (p.1282, l.25 – p.1283, l.4)

The first black-skinned person became so or "was made" due to his wandering in Ethiopia and having his blood – between "felle and fleisshe" – burned. His offspring were also made black by the continual heat of the sun. On the other hand, in temperate countries that are sometimes cold, "blue men" have children that are temperate in colour, because the cold stops the skin's pores so that body heat withdraws inwards leaving the skin white. These archetypes of natural skin colour, employing Constantius' *Pantegny* I.1.24,[140] are said to be further affected and changed by an individual's temperament, external conditions and health, so that in the next paragraph Bartholomaeus cites the complexions of the melancholic ("somtyme yuel complexioun"); choleric ("for to grete passing hete...beth citryne of colour"); wayfarers and shipmen (also citryne due to "hete of the sonne and druyenes of ayer"); and the spreading of "corrupte humours" between bodies that occur in "*morphea* and *lepra*", liver complaints and distemper of the "galle" (bile) causing jaundice, measles, pox, wounds, bruises and burns – all these being examples of "chaungynge of kynde colour into foule colour and vnsemeliche" (p.1283, ll.14-15). Finally, the chapter ends with the subject of hair colour, for which Bartholomaeus refers his reader back to his earlier chapter on the subject (DPR.V.66), which drew on Aristotle and Constantius. We are reminded that hair colour is diverse and caused by "qualite of fumosite that is resolued of the body" (p.1283, ll.18-19). The humours are said to be directly responsible for natural hair colouring: "...of fleume cometh white heer; of blood,

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[140] Seymour 235, n1283.

rede; and of kynde malencoly, ȝollow; and of colera *adusta*, [singed] blak" (p.1283, ll.19-21); moreover, according to "defaute of kynde", comes "hore here, as it fareth in olde men". Lastly Bartholomaeus distinguishes between hair that is naturally white: "whanne horenesse bygynneth in the roote of the here, thane it cometh of moche fleume" and that due to old age: "whanne it bigynneth in the otter ende, thane it is a tokne that it cometh of defaute of kynde hete" (p.1283, ll.22-25).

The tenth chapter of book nineteen of DPR briefly treats the diversity of eye colours and the colour of nails, taking its lead from Bartholomaeus' earlier chapters on eyes and nails (DPR V.5-6, 30) in which, according to Seymour, he employed Hunain ibn Ishaq's "De coloribus oculorum" (*Isagoge* 19) and the *liber pronosticorum*, both from the *Articella* collection of medical texts.[141] He reports four types of eye colour: "blak, whitish, dyuers, and ȝolow" (p.1283, l.28). The primary causes of their variety are the "clerenesse of the spirit of siȝt other of dymnesse thereof, or of scarsete of cristallyne humour or of deepnesse therof, or of superfluyte of the whitishe humour or desturbance therof, or of scarsete or of superfluyte of humour of the curtel that hatte *vuia*" (p.1283, ll.29-33). In effect, this is an application of the white-black colour scale: the eye's visual function is understood to work via its essentially watery composition, which varies in quantity and nature to cause more whiteness or blackness in the eye's colouring (after these two extremes there being the mediary states of "ȝelowe...somewhat more blak than white", and, "dyuers is somewhat more white than blak" (p.1284, ll.5-7). The implication of this position is that to an extent eye colour indicates the strength of an organism's eyesight (a position that has a little support in contemporary ocular science in the sense that blue eyes, having less pigmentation in the iris, are more sensitive to light and so more

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[141] Seymour 235, n1283-4.

likely to water and cause squinting). Regarding nail colour, Bartholomaeus merely states that "...the colour therof schal be whitissh and clere as a meroure. Whanne this colour chaungeth in wan other blo colour, thane it is a tokne of dyuerse passiouns (p.1284, ll.9-11). It is not clear whether this describes how nails change colour due to impact damage (likely to be caused by an emotional situation) or refers simply to an internal transformation brought about by a state of passion.

The remaining twenty seven chapters on colour in book nineteen of DPR deal with particular colours found in the natural world and named, in most instances, according to their sources. As such, in places Bartholomaeus refers the reader to other sections of the encyclopedia for more information: regarding blue he writes, "And suche is the colour of heuene for maystry of ayre in a clere body withoute, as it fareth in sapphires of the est londes and in iacinctes. Also such colour is in azure. But hereof loke tofore in the tretys of gemmes and precious stones, and of the stoon *lazulus*" (p.1292, ll.22-26). Of these chapters, the last fourteen dealing with *synopis, siricum pigmentum, minium, synobium, prassin, sandaracha, arsenico, ocra, indicum, atramentum, melinus, stibium, cerusa* and *purpura* derive their content directly from Isidore of Seville and have very short entries – only one sentence in a few cases. The other chapters are longer and utilize a wider range of references. The chapters of colour terms receiving this more extensive treatment are white (from various Latin terms: *candor, albor, pallor, lyuor* and *flauor*), ʒolow (Trevisa's translation of *glauco siue flauo* – bluish/greenish/grey or golden), pale colour (*pallido colore*), rede (*rubeo colore*), saffron/punyceus/cytrine (*colore croceo*), saffron (*colore croceo*), mineus/coccinus/vermiculus (*colore mineo*), cytryne (*colore punicio*), grene (*colore viridi*), wan – a bluish colour (*colore liuido*), wanne (*colore liuido malo*), blew

(*colore blauio*) and blak (*nigro colore*). The most significant will now be briefly discussed in turn.

First and foremost, in chapter eleven Bartholomaeus deals with white: "the chief fundament and ground of mene colours" (p.1284, 1.113-14). He then rehearses what has been said before, that it is "ygendred of moche light and clere in pure matiere and clere" citing Algazel as his source.[142] Whiteness is increased by brightness and the clearness of a body, "the lasse ymedled with blak" (p.1284, 1.18). The Aristotelian material cause is repeated in various arrangements for the elemental qualities underpinning colours, so that, e.g., "if the matiere be moyste in substaunce, and colde hath maistry in worching theeinne, thane white colour is ygendred, as it fareth in snowe and in dew. Therfore white is ygendred of ayre that is somdel watry, as Aristotil seith *libro xix de animalibus*, and that by worchinge of colde" (p.1284, 11.25-9). Bartholomaeus posits further that white "is the grounde of alle coloures. And the mene colours beth ygrounded in non colour better than in white" (p.1284, 1.37 – p.1285, 11.1-2), before listing various aspects of whiteness via other terms used for it, from the Latin *candor, albor, pallor, lyuor* and *flauor* to uses of terms by physicians including "watry colour" and mylky colour" and the Greek "*karapos*, that is whitish or pallish" (p.1285, 11. 6-9). He lists "*Ysaac, Theophili, Constantini, Egidii de vrinis*" as sources, which have been identified by Seymour.[143] The chapter ends with consideration of *candor*, which is given as the extreme or perfect form of whiteness corresponding to the absolute purity of light. Again there is the suggestion of an Augustinian and Neo-Platonic mode as Bartholomaeus emphasises the purity of the concept in these terms:

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[142] Seymour notes that the exact place of this reference is unlocated. See Seymour 235, n1284.

[143] See Seymour 235, n1285.

Suche whitenesse is ycleped *candor* that is furst yseye of whitnesse by doynge of light withoute corrupcioun of sight, and is ycleped candor for the ottemest whitnesse is nou3t yseye with yhe. For it voydeth the dome of sight, for nothing may be yseye vnder the ottemost colour. For the ottemeste colours beth vnseye by himself for clerenesse therof, as it yseyde *in libro de sensu et sensato capitulo viii.*" (p.1285, ll.17-23)

The notion that the colour extremities cannot be seen in the usual manner because they preclude the operations of the eye is indeed Aristotelian (*De sensu* II.449b), but there is also a sense in the passage that the impossibility of seeing this perfect form of light might be due to the "corruption" of bodily sight – with its lesser form of light (emitted via the eyes on the *Timean* model of perception) incapable of illuminating that which is brighter than itself.

After white Bartholomaeus turns his attention to yellow, suggesting that his initial task was to follow the scale of seven colours from white to black as he had previously determined it. He cites the colour accordingly as "ygendred of whyty[sshe] drawynge somdel toward rede, and is ygendred, as Auicenne meneth, in matiere that is somdel temporate in comparisoun to grene colour" (p.1285, ll.26-8), and becomes the colour of leaves at harvest time. He offers a formula derived from the "comentor" (Alfredus) on the pseudo-Aristotelian *De plantis*[144] that "colde that hath maistery in mene matiere gendreth nedeliche mene colour" and is more successful at this transformation than dryness – explaining how evergreens like "box" keep their leaves due to "moche thynne moysture in the roote. And the leues ther[or] falleth nou3t" (p.1285, l.34 – p.1286, l.5). The yellowing effect in most leaves is thus a combination of cold and dryness – cold causes the humour to recede, leaving "druyenesse

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[144] See Alfred of Sareshal, *Super librum de vegetabilius*, ed. J. R. Long, *Mediæval Studies* 47 (1985) 125-67, 164-5.

withoute". Compared to green at the last, he reports that "ȝelow hath more temperat matiere" (p.1286, ll.10-11).

Bartholomaeus discusses "pale colour" in chapter thirteen in terms of similar qualitative causes, and rehearses what he has said previously concerning skin colour. On the subject of red ("*rubeo*") in chapter fourteen, Bartholomaeus reiterates that it is the "myddil colour bitwene white and blak" and is the presence in a body of "clere fuyry light and pure" (p.1286, ll.33-5). He goes on to comment on how it "toschedeth the sight, as bright light doth" such that "draperes that selleth clothe hongeth rede clothe tofore the light, for rednesse scholde toschede the spirit of sight, and men that seeth other clothes of other colour schulde knowe the worse the verrey colours" p.1287, ll.5-10). This practical point seems to have been Bartholomaeus' own observation, and is a particularly telling one in its indication of a possible universal sensitivity for human colour perception regarding red and its power within colour interactions. The rest of the chapter details the point that "Rede colour is general tokne of maystry of hete in a medled body" (p.1287, ll.10-11), with exceptions, in dry and cold kinds of bodies (such as the redness of the rose) explained in terms of their having "ful sotil substaunce" that "fleeth the maystrye of colde and cometh outward" (p.1287, ll. 13-16). The process is likened to "worching of fuyre".

There follow two chapters on *croceo* (deemed darker than both yellow and red by its position in the order), the first offering information from Isaac and Giles,[145] which explain the relationship between urine colours and states of health, for example that this colour may "in a fleumatike body or malencolike...tokne dyuers sikenesse and yueles" (p.1287, ll.29-30). The second on *croceo* describes a darker shade again (translated by Trevisa as "saffron colour") and is the hot colour of a distempered liver

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[145] Seymour 236, n1287 notes this to be from Aegidius, *De urinis* ll. 122-4 (ed. Choulant p.9).

caused "by medlyng of colera" and of a jaundiced body. Thereafter he describes it as the colour of birds' feet and bills: "And that cometh of moche colerik and hoote fumosite that kynde casteth into the vttere parties…" (p.1288, ll.4-13), deemed to need to be hot in order to maintain body temperature against cold air and water. Two more varieties of a darker yellow or orange[146] are discussed hereafter: *mineus* in chapter seventeen, and *punico* (translated "cytryne" by Trevisa) in chapter eighteen. The presentation of *mineus* "hatte also *coccinus* and *vermiculus*" derives from Isidore's *Etymologies* (XIX.28.1) and mentions its brightness as of fire and closeness to red, also its source in cliffs around the Red Sea and use as a strong dye, paint and ink "that cleueth faste and abydeth" (p.1286-7, ll.15-5). In chapter eighteen, on the subject of *punico* or "citryne", Bartholomaeus repeats his reordering of the Aristotelian scale based (in error) upon *De sompno et vigilia*, and states that it is "next to the rede in the oon side, as purpure is next therto in the other side. And cytryne hath more of the rede than of the white, or of blak, and is nerre to the white than to the blake. And the purpre a3einward is next to the rede, and next to the blak than to the white (…) And purpure is nerre than rede to the blak" (p.1289, ll.7-13). Whilst this sounds convoluted, the pattern Bartholomaeus is describing is in fact logical if the colours are located as operating on three layers:

$$YELLOW \quad\quad GREEN$$
$$WHITE \rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow RED \rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow\rightarrow BLACK$$
$$CITRYN \quad\quad PURPLE$$

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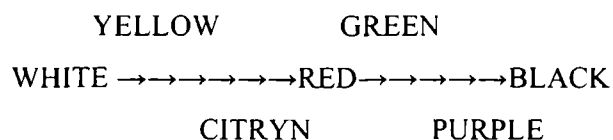
[146] Possibly a term derived from the Arabic *naranj*, "orange" was not widespread in the Latin West until the fourteenth century and is not found in Middle English until the fifteenth. See "Orange," (Etymology), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989; CD-ROM v. 3.1, 2004. (Herafter OED.)

Chapter eighteen ends (presumably because of its focus on a discussion of the ordering of colours) with a digression into the subject of purple and its role in the dyeing of cloth that refers to Gregorius' "*super Canticum capitulo vii*".[147] This pre-empts purple's specific treatment in chapter thirty-seven.

The longest chapter on a single colour is the nineteenth and concerns "grene". Bartholomaeus follows his previous approach of first describing the colour according to its nature as a property deriving from elemental qualities. As such it is "...ygendred by worchynge of hete in mene matiere in the which moisture hath somdele the maistrye" and is seen in leaves, herbs, fruit and grass (p.1289, ll.22-4). It is the product of "moche blak in a moyst body" and "whanne the hete that worcheth in the matiere may nought brenne the moysture nouther sethe it atte fulle to turne alle and fulliche into blak." The result is that "grene colour in grasse, herbes, and fryte is tokne of raw humour and vndygest" (p.1289, ll.22-31). Thereafter Bartholomaeus reports several more observations, mentioning Aristotelian sources he has previously used (Isidore, Alfredus, Gregorius). Green is described as a "mene coloured ygendred bytwene rede and blak" and to be visually enjoyed because of its temperate nature in contrast to red, "for comynge togyderes of fuyry parties and of eorthe. For briʒtnesse of fuyre that in grene is temerat pleseth the sight"; as such it "comforteth the visible spirit. Therfore no colour is so likyng to the sight as grene colour" (p.1290, ll.8-19). – a fact he exemplifies by example of the eye-comforting virtue of the "smaragd stoone" mentioned by Isidore (*Etymologies*, XVI.7.1). The remaining paragraphs of the chapter develop and reiterate the same points, introducing one other important idea: that green holds, as it were, a "submediary" status because it is produced from the transformative mixing together of a mediary colour with a primary, as opposed to

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[147] Seymour has identified this as Gregory. *In Ezechielem* II.8. Seymour 236, n1289.

the direct mixing together of the primaries white and black. Leaves, herbs, and so forth exhibit greenness because of the mastery of the element of earth that grounds them being dissolved by the element of fire making that earth "sotil and thynne", so that it is then drawn "outwarde of fumosite therof" dyeing the leaves "nouʒt with blak nouther with rede but with grene. For blak tempereth the schedyng blasenes of rede. And clerenesse incorporate in that blak maketh it mene and temperate. Thanne grene is ygendred by maistry of eorthy parties and fuyry." Flowers and blossoms, however, are not green or black "for sotilte of the matiere" which "fongeth none suche medlynges" (p.1290, ll.20-31). This distinction regarding the difference of earthy materials in relation to fire leads Bartholomaeus to clarify his last significant point regarding the material basis of green, which serves as a useful overview of the overall Aristotelian schema of colours:

> In the matiere, if the mayster partyes beth watry and ayry, the colour schal be white. And if watery and fuyry parties haueth the maistry, the colour is reede. And if watry parties and erthy haueth the maistry, the colour is blu or blewisch. And if fuyry parties and erthy haueth eueneliche moche maystry, thanne mich might the colour be grene or blak. (p.1290, l.32 – p.1291, l.1)

The chapter ends with a paragraph again reporting on the pleasant nature of green for the eye – this being a consequence of its temperate position between red and black – and further suggests that beasts in the wild "loueth and haunteth grene place, and noght oonliche for mete, but also for likynge and for sight" (p.1291, ll.6-8). The green worn by hunters therefore operates as a way of reducing the dread felt by the animals on seeing them: they "dredeth the lasse the periles of hunters whanne they biholdeth on grene", or so, at least, says Gregorius (p.1291, ll.8-11).

As with his brief digression into terms relating to darker yellows (*croceo*, *etc.*), Bartholomaeus follows his treatment of green with three short chapters on blue

terms. The first two of these are *liuido* (translated "wan" by Trevisa), which he describes as "ygendred of watry and eorthy parties that haveth maystry" and found in things "that haueth colde humour and thikke" such as "lede and certeyn stones" (although he points out that lead is white "by kynde" and only "wanne withoute" such that *serusa* is made from it). Because of its association with cold, Bartholomaeus points out that it is a token of death (as seen in urine "as Giles seith")[148] and many other evils including gout (p.1291, ll.13-25). His second paragraph on *liuido malo* continues the theme of its signalling coldness and hence "euil" bodily events to include "superfluyte of malencolik blood that defouleth the skynne withoute"; the anguish of the heart "as it fareth in enuyous men"; bruises or the "smytyng that corrumpeth the blood bitwene felle and flesish"; malice that "corrumpeth and infecteth the skynne" according to Isaac's book on the liver; failing spirits and sacristy of heat in them suffering from "the dropesy and ethice and in hem that consumpteth and wasteh, as Giles seith"; also gout (p.1291, l.27 – p.1291, l.9). Bartholomaeus gives up naming all the maladies betokened by the wan colour and apologizes for his limitations before finishing on a more optimistic note to point out that recovery from such afflictions is likewise betokened by a colour transformation – away from wan towards red, and claiming to quote Giles (*Aegidius*) in the process: "...grene other blak torneth into wanne by worching of kynde, and thane out of wannesse into rede other cytryne. Thanne it tokneth that kynde hath the maystery of the euel. As Giles meneth, 'if it is first wanne and afterward rede, the kynde of the brayne ryseth and strengthe is recouered.'" (p.1292, ll.12-17). A short paragraph on the blue ("blew") that is *indicus* and *fenetus* follows, which passes wan in brightness and fairness because it "hath more of water and of ayre ymedled and y-ooned with

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[148] Seymour 236, n1291 cites Aegidius 42-4 for this.

eorthy parties" (p.1292, ll.19-22). Perhaps in recognition of its use in religious iconography and decoration Bartholomaeus opines further that it is "the colour of heuene for maystery of ayre in a clere body wothoute, as it fareth in sapphires of the est londes and in iacinctes" (p.1292, l.22-4). He ends with mention of azure, lapis lazuli and refers the reader to "the tretys of gemmes and precious stones".

The last significant colour of Bartholomaeus' Aristotelian scale is black, which he treats after blue in the twenty-third chapter of book nineteen of DPR. Of it he says it is the "priuacioun of white in clere matiere, as bitter is priuacioun of swte in moiste matiere", a line which reflects the parallel between the seven colours and seven savours described by Aristotle in *De sensu* (ll.439b). He says it is the absence of clearness and, with a statement reminiscent of an extramissive view of perception, that "blaknesse gadereth the spirit visible and smyteth it aȝein and greueth therfore the sight and maketh it dym whan the blak is to blak, as it fareth hem that ben longe in prosoun that seeth litel or nouȝt whan they cometh out of prisoun" (p.1292, l.28 – p.1293, l.2). The rest of the chapter redescribes the qualitiative causes of material blackness: a mastery of heat blackens a wet body (as in wet wood that is burnt), and cold "mastery" blackens a dry body, which is a token of death. Black urine "tokeneth yuel" according to Giles (p.1293, l.13).

At the end of his chapter on black, Bartholomaeus announces that he will now turn to those colours "acordeth to the werk of peynture, and som therof breadth in veynes of erthe, as *sinopis, rubrica, melium, auripigmentum,* and othere suche, and som bemade by crafte" (p.1293, ll.15-17). There follow thirteen very brief chapters on terms referring to colour dyes and pigments using descriptions lifted from Isidore's *Etymologies*. Interestingly, black was the also the thirteenth colour mentioned before this point (i.e., including "pale" plus the four dark yellows (*croceo* twice, *mineo* and

punicio) and three dark green/blues (*liuido* twice and then blue), which may suggest why Bartholomaeus added to his reporting of "peynture" and craft colours a longer final chapter on *purpura*. The system given by Grosseteste in *De colore*, copied by Bartholomaeus in chapter eight, allowed fourteen colours. It is feasible that a desire for numerical agreement, his inclusion of purple into the colour scale, and previous scanty treatment of *purpura* in chapter eighteen (as a deviation from *punicio*) lead Bartholomaeus to include this thirty-seventh chapter before moving onto the topic of odour. This chapter is longer than the others on artificial colours, but in keeping with them draws first on Isidore's *Etymologies* (XIX.28.1-4) to define *purpura* as "purenesse of light", and, gendered in countries that receive the most sun, is derived from "certeyn schelle fische" (p.1296, ll.5-8). Thereafter he directs the reader to Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia*, XXXV.14-33) for information on "many other colours bothe simple and compouned that bothe peyntours and dyers vseth" (p.1296, ll.10-13). The chapter continues with a brief description of the nature and history of dyeing and painting and its dynamic relationship with dyes and pigments, culminating in the Isidorian observation: "...that craft encressed and fonde light and distyngued dyuers colours, and fonde the manere of peyntyng of schadewes of men. And now peyntours draweth first lynes and liknesses of the ymage that schal be peynted, and peynteth with dyuers colours, and holdeth the ordre of the crafte" (p.1296, ll.27-32). It is an interesting point with which to end his treatment of the subject, for it shows clearly once again Bartholomaeus' concern for extramissive, systematic thinking. The final stage of his journey of colour—the daughter of light—is its use in acts of secondary creation by painters. Diverse colours are indeed needed to make true the likenesses of "shadows" of men.

Of medieval colour values, associations and symbolism

To conclude this overview of medieval conceptualisation of the operations of vision

and the nature of visual experience and perception (including concepts of light and

colour) it is important to address those responses and approaches that added specific

meanings to chromatic perception. We have seen that the theological significance of

light dominated medieval approaches to visuality and perception, a situation which

entailed a secondary order of values for colour. As Gage has stated, "the relationship

of colour to light was a matter of some debate in these centuries but there was a

general agreement that colour was at best a secondary attribute of light, its most

material aspect, accident rather than substance."[149] Nevertheless, the importance of

colour for medieval thought and imagination, in terms of perception and its place in

the material culture of the period, should not be surrendered to its inferiority in

relation to light. On the Aristotelian model of elementally mixed colours (mixtures of

white and black) comprising physical bodies, and the intromissive perception of

embodied colours via *species* of the object entering the eye, colours were liable to be

highly prized or else deeply reviled – certainly not neglected. Colour, was regarded as

a primary (if accidental) property of matter, and different hues generated through

transformations or corruptions of the elemental compositions of matter could show

the essential character of a divinely created body (in the first instance) and that of a

person by association (transformative or corrupting) thereafter. Moreover, on one

Neo-Platonic Christian understanding of the material grounds for visuality, the nature

of colour contrasted very badly with the extramissive (theologically loaded)

formulation of vision and Augustinian understanding of light such that colours

(except for non-chromatic colours—the grey scale—being associated with light and

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[149] Gage 70.

therefore sanctity and humility) were regarded as worldly, sinful phenomena. This was the position of the great Cistercian reformer, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), who memorably declared "Caecitas colorum!" ("We are blinded by colours!").[150] Many of Bernard's sermons and writings reveal a suspicious and hostile attitude towards colour; he argued that its use was evidence of the overweening pride indicative of the fallen nature of the humanity and the natural world, a by-product of Adam's original sin.[151] St Bernard was particularly exercised by bright and multi- or parti-coloured visual displays of wealth, since they were clearly made for the purpose of decoration and beautification of the self – thereby indicating a sinful desire for self glory and/or sexual provocation. In essence, St Bernard's understanding of the visually perceived world combined the theological construction of light with a new order of Aristotelian natural philosophy to construe colour as a fallen aspect of the material, natural world. The suspicious worldly value of colour was to be seen to contrast to the chromatically bare, undecorated value of humility and holiness. St Bernard's description in *De laude novae militae* (*c.* 1130) of the temple at Jerusalem in which the knights Templar were quartered brings this out by comparing its colourful past with a simpler, duller present as a place of worship:

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[150] Also cited in Michel Pastoureau, *L'Eglise et la couleur, des origines à la Réforme*, Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes 147.147-1 (1989): 203-230, 207-8; and Herman Pleij, *Colors Demonic and Divine: Shades of Meaning in the Middle Ages and After*, trans. Diane Webb (New York: Columbia UP, 2002, 2004) 3; Cistercian attitudes towards colour and ornamentation are discussed in G. Duby, *Saint Bernard et l'art Cistercien*, Arts et Métiers Graphiques (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

[151] See especially Sermons XXVII, XXVIII and LXXIV; Cols. 0915B, 0922A, 0928C, 1139A, 1141B and 1178B in *Sancti Bernardi Abbatis Clarae-Vallensis Operum Tomus Quartus Complectens Sermones in Cantica Numero LXXXVI, PL* Vol. 183, ed. J.P. Migne, 1854.

Est vero templum Jerosolymis, in quo pariter habitant, antiquo et famosissimo illi Salomonis impar quidem structura, sed non inferius gloria. Siquidem universa illius magnificentia in corruptibilibus auro et argento, in quadratura lapidum et varietate lignorum continebatur: hujus autem omnis decor, et gratae venustatis ornatus, pia est habitantium religiositas, et ordinatissima conversatio. Illud variis exstitit spectandum coloribus: hoc diversis virtutibus et sanctis actibus venerandum. Domum quippe Dei decet sanctitudo, qui non tam politis marmoribus, quam ornatis moribus delectatur, et puras diligit mentes super auratos parietes.[152]

[It is not as splendid as the ancient and highly celebrated temple of Solomon, yet no less glorious. What is more, all the magnificence of the first temple lay in perishable gold and silver, in polished stones and precious woods; whereas all the beauty and gracious, charming adornment of its present counterpart is the religious fervour of its occupants and their well-disciplined behaviour. In the former, one could contemplate all sorts of beautiful colours, while in the latter, one is able to venerate all sorts of virtues and good works. Holiness indeed suits the house God; it delights, not in burnished marble, but in polished manners, and loves pure minds far more than gilt panelling.]

Bernard's intention in this passage was to proclaim a scripturally supported (Ps 92.5, 2 Cor 10.7) mistrust of false appearances and recognition of pride as underlying ostentatious displays of wealth to contrast this with the "truer" value of humility revealed by simple, functional, non-chromatic appearance values. Colour, by its association with pride and self glorification, was to be despised. This mode of religious perception persisted for generations and was employed by Chaucer in The

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[152] S. Bernardi Abbatis, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi Liber*, ed. J.P. Migne (*PL* 182, 1854) Col.0927C-D. English translation from *Bernard of Clairvaux: In Praise of the New Knighthood, A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem*, trans. M. Conrad Greenia, Cistercian Fathers Series: 19B (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977, 2000) 49.

Parson's Tale several hundred years later (*c*.1396-1400). Chaucer's Parson includes a

devastating attack on the sin of superfluity, the self-indulgent use of wealth, with

regard to the contemporary fashion (particularly male) for wearing parti-coloured

clothing. He considers such costume to be sexually provocative and wasteful of

resources that should go to the poor. In an impassioned section of his sermon the

Parson declares:

> And mooreover, the wrecched swollen membres that they shewe thurgh
> disgisynge, in departynge of hire hoses in whit and reed, semeth that half hir
> shameful privee membres weren flayne./ And if so be that they departen hire
> hoses in othere colours, as is whit and blak, or whit and blew, or blak and reed,
> and so forth,/ thanne semeth it, as by variaunce of colour, that half the partie of
> hire privee membres were corrupt by the fir of Seint Antony, or by cancre, or by
> oother swich meschaunce.[153]

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[153] Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* X (I) ll. 424-27. For a detailed consideration of Chaucer's use of

contemporary "costume rhetoric" and the Parson's condemnation of superfluity in dress see Laura F.

Hodges, *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to the

Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Studies 34 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer,

2005) 258-265. Hodges (6-8) defines seven useful categories of costume rhetoric used by Chaucer (and

other medieval writers), some of which utilize or make play with the Parson's concerns: Spiritual

Mirror (a garment symbolically represents the wearer's spiritual condition); False Vestment (a garment

intentinally mispresents a character's inner nature or state and is thus a disguise; Omitted Clothing (the

author leaves a blank for the reader to fill in; a signal therefore that the character may judged by his or

her actions which truly "clothe" him or her); Emblematic Dress (a garment functions as a sign or badge

of a class or group. Heraldic flattery would come into this category); Actual Garment or Accessory (a

realistic or literal description of an item of dress); Social Mirror (a garment that accuratekly reflects the

weraer's social and/or ecomonic status); Generalized Costume (a vague or stereotyped description of

dress).

The Parson is venting reactionary criticism that went back at least to the Cistercian view of colour – bright, parti-coloured clothing being as indicative of a proud and sinful nature. His castigation argues that colourful material was especially chosen for revealing and sexually provocative styles of clothing (for men) so producing a natural association between visually attractive colours and sinful behaviour. The particular reference to white, red, and parti-coloured hose and the way they seem (to the Parson) to symbolize lust and corruption by the "fire of St. Anthony" (a venereal disease) may also have been a barbed criticism of certain other characters in the *CT*, perhaps the Merchant and the Squire. The passage as a whole also draws rhetorical power from a more recent political aspect of the time, the use of sumptuary laws to maintain the social hierarchy at a material, and therefore visible, level. Sumptuary laws adjudged society in terms of wealth and described and proscribed costume materials which would have effectively colour-coded the populace (in terms of hue, brightness and saturation) according to their income, which determined their access to types of dyes and pigments and their products.[154] (Or at least they would have done so had such laws not been disobeyed in obedience to a stronger social force, that of aspiration.) In England, the 1363 Sumptuary law included the imperative: "Also, that carters, ploughmen, drivers of the plough, oxherds, cowherds, shepherds, swineherds (...) and other people that have not forty shillings of goods nor of chattels, shall not take nor wear any manner of cloth but blanket and russet, of wool, worth not more than 12*d*,

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[154] See Frédérique Lauchard, "Dress and Social Status in England before the Sumptuary Laws," *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: The Boydell P; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1992) 105-123.

and shall wear girdles of linen according to their estate..." on pain of forfeit.[155]

Insistence on "blanket and russet" would have determined a range of dull browns and

greys for the poorest classes, and the stipulation of "not more than 12*d*" in value

implied that expensive (i.e., faster and brighter) dyes and decoration were out of the

question. The relationship between chromatic visual display and privilege was thus

encoded "top-down" even at the level of law, and served as an obvious hierarchy of

values for criticism in terms of moral discrepancy and indulgence.

However, the relationship between bright and colourful display and values

was not limited to the Cistercian formulation. In seemingly direct contrast we have the

evaluative mode of perception articulated by Theophilus the monk in his handbook

for artisans and compendium of techniques *De diversis artibus*, written at around the

same time that St Bernard was articulating his views (*c.*1110-1140). Theophilus set

out the skills, crafts and tools needed for artisans engaged in the arts of decorating

churches, which, in the Prologue to his third book (on the arts of the metalworker),

included an inspiring discourse regarding the craftsman's seven supporting virtues

(wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, godliness and fear of the

Lord[156]) and ultimately pious inspiration:

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[155] A. R. Myers, *English Historical Documents 1327-1485*, Volume IV (London: Routledge, 1994) 1153-55.

[156] Theophilus, *De Diversis Artibus: The Various Arts*, trans. and notes C. R. Dodwell (London: Thomas Nelson, 1961) 62-3. Theophilus' book is an essential guide for our understanding of the practicalities involved in the medieval artisan's creation of decorative and sacred objects and artworks – from the ingredients of dyes and pigments and mixing required for specific representational painting tasks (e.g. "for the hair of boys, youths and young men", book I, p. 8), manufacturing of stained glass for vessels and windows (book II, pp. 36-60), to making chalices via casting and soldering silver (book III, pp. 74-84), to mention but a few examples.

His uirtutum astipulationibus animatus, karissime fili, domum Dei fiducialiter aggressus tanto lepore decorasti; et laquearia seu parietes diuerso opera diuersisque coloribus distinguens paradysi Dei speciem floribus uariis uernantem, gramine foliisque uirentem, et sanctorum animas diuersi meriti coronis fouentem quodammodo aspicientibus ostendisti; quodque Creatorem Deum in creatura laudant et mirabilem in operibus suis praedicant, effecisti.[157]

[Animated, dearest son, by these supporting virtues, you have approached the House of God with confidence, and have adorned it with so much beauty; you have embellished the ceilings or walls with varied work in different colours and have, in some measure shown to the beholders the paradise of God, glowing with varied flowers, verdant with herbs and foliage, and cherishing with crowns of varying merit the souls of the saints. You have given them cause to praise the Creator in the creature and proclaim Him wonderful in His works.]

The contrast with Bernard of Clairvaux is clear, and yet Theophilus could be said to have been drawing on the same conceptual scheme as his near contemporary. Inside a church the perceptual focus was the worship of God, and as such all decorations and uses of colour were displayed for that task – specifically, in Theophilus' view, as a means of showing observers representations of the glory and beauty of the divine and thereby causing them to praise their creator. Colour, therefore, could be regarded as having different signification according to the intentions, either spiritual or secular (as in "pertaining to the world"), of the employer of colour, and its spatio-temporal location (either inside or outside a place of Christian worship). The power and significance of visual perception in terms of its object within the context of an act of worship was also clearly apparent to Theophilus. The subsequent lines of his prologue read:

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[157] Theophilus, *De Diversis Artibus* 63.

Nec enim perpendere ualet humanus oculus, cui operi primum aciem infigat: si respicit laquearia, uernant quasi pallia; si consideret parietes, est paradysi species; si luminis abundantiam ex fenestris intuetur, inestimabilem uitri decorum et operis pretiosissimi uarietatem miratur. Quod si forte Dominicae passionis effigiem liniamentis expressam conspicatur fidelis anima, compungitur...[158]

[A human eye cannot decide on which work it should first fix its attention: if it looks at the ceiling panels they bloom like tapestries; if it surveys the walls, the likeness of paradise is there; if it gazes at the abundance of light from the windows, it marvels at the inestimable beauty of the glass and the variety of this most precious workmanship. But if a faithful soul should see the representation of the Lord's Crucifixion expressed in strokes of an artist, it is itself pierced.] [159]

The lines offer an extramissive model for visuality combined with an evaluative awareness of the perception of light and colour to express an understanding of faith and devotion that is at the heart of much orthodox medieval Christian doctrine. The pious soul is said to be "pierced" (L. compung-) by representations of divine suffering; the same formula by which Chrétien de Troyes was able to describe a lover bound to a beloved and "betrayed" as an independent self (see above). As such, the means by which affective piety is enabled is the extramission of divine light that reveals colours, and subsequent intromission of the same by the penitent observer. The inherent value of colour in medieval society was clearly concerned with more than prestige rubbing up against moral evaluation. Whilst the Church was rich and

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[158] Theophilus 63-4.

[159] In order to emphasize the meaning of *compungitur* the translation of this section is taken from Theophilus, *On Divers Arts: The Foremost Medieval Treatise On Painting, Glassmaking and Metalwork*, trans. and int. John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (New York: Dover, 1979) 79.

powerful, "a vast multinational corporate institution",[160] its florid colours involved more than a blatant display of wealth and power and did more than simply codify the calendar and aid moral instruction. Theophilus articulates the fact that for him and his contemporaries the chromatic world had a spiritual and eternal underwriting, associated with divinity and perfection in a way that evoked an aesthetic sense of such theological entities as the Garden of Eden and the rainbow. Theophilus exults in the overwhelming aesthetic of visual religious experience provided by a church filled with colour and light and gives a rich sense of the myriad sensations of colour to be experienced in a medieval church "stuffed with crucifixes, cult images and statues"[161] – which would have been decorated and painted, and further illuminated through the refracting rainbow-hues of the stained glass. The apparatus for the visual sense was to produce an effect on the "faithful soul." On such a model, religious experience was fundamentally invested in a visual experience: illumination from on high percolated down to the penitent believer who reached out for it in an act of visually triggered, affective piety. For the faithful, in a state of aesthetically and spiritually vitalized piety, sight operated as a mode of reverential touch, caressing its sacred object and thereby re-enacting religious truths.[162]

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[160] Derek Pearsall, "The Cultural and Social Setting", *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain: Vol. 2 Medieval Britain*, ed. Boris Ford (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 19.

[161] Pearsall, "The Cultural and Social Setting" 20.

[162] See Georgia Frank, "The Pilgrim's Gaze in the Age Before Icons", *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 98-115, for discussion of the shift in emphasis from sight to touch in the pilgrim's experience. I would suggest extending her central point (the rise in popularity of relics in the later Middle Ages evidences the increasing value of actual touch over visual touch) to see the same phenomenon as a symptom of the wider shift in popularity from extramissive to intromissive understandings of perception.

The association between intense spiritual experiences and visual perception established a link between the experience of light and colour access to revealed truth that went beyond the representational or functional nature of religious art. The colouring and illumination of experience lent its significance to the specific narratives involved in the iconography or stained glass. From such a position one can also approach Chaucer's portrayal of illumined holy spaces in, for example, *The House of Fame* and The Knight's Tale, as settings for the revelation of truth. In the former, "a temple ymad of glas"[163] (Venus' temple), full of brilliant light and painted colours, is visited at the outset of a dream vision through which the narrator questions the overall authority and individual authorities of the classical past. By beginning in such a manner, the poet grounds his search for revelation of the "truth" of authority in a pseudo-revelatory environment. In the latter, Theseus' stadium (representing the medieval universe in its form through its temples to Venus, Mars and Diane – all richly decked in emblematic colours) also signals to the medieval reader that "truth" is to be revealed upon these grounds. On this occasion, it is the "truth" of each character's psychological make-up that will be made clear.[164] The revelatory aspect of medieval colour value also allows us to re-see a crucial episode in Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale – the martyrdom of St. Cecilia. In this case the perception of "truth" is not dependent upon an illuminated environment providing visual apparatus for true seeing, but is rendered (and measured) entirely by a specific chromatic and

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[163]*The House of Fame* l. 120. Lydgate uses this revelatory aspect even more explicitly for his own *Temple of Glass*, suggesting that the Temple's reflection of light precludes inspection of the interior from the exterior, a classic metaphor for the separation of the divine and the secular.

[164] The use of the temples and their astrological signification to flesh out the characters is examined in for example Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "Chaucer and Science", *Writers and their Background: Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Derek Brewer (London: Bell, 1974) 245-8.

emblematic experience. This is a fascinating example because it shows a gap opening up between colour symbolism and emblem symbolism that shows a purely chromatic sense of a spiritual "value". Valerian returns home to find Cecilia with her angel, whom he can now see. Moreover,

> This angel hadde of roses and of lilie
>
> Corones two, the which he bar in honde;
>
> And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
>
> He yaf that oon, and after gan he take
>
> That oother to Valerian, hir make. [165]

Fig. 2 – Cecilia and Valerian receive their coronets. Ms. 49, f.268: Keble College, Oxford. The artist has used gold rather than red and white to represent their spiritual value.
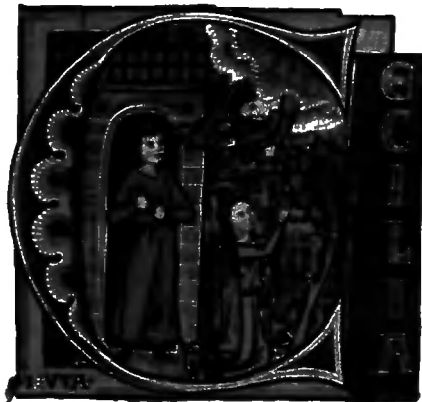
The rose, a courtly emblem of love, and by extension to the spiritual realm, of martyrdom, is given to Cecilia, whilst the lily, an emblem of purity, is Valerian's reward for restraining his passion and allowing himself to be Christened. Valerian has gained "true vision", i.e., the light of Christian understanding, as a result of which he can see Cecilia's angel and the floral emblems of a more specific revelation. However, the chromatic perception of red and white for the rose and the lily is then explicitly used to betoken the gaining of true vision by Valerian's brother Tiburce, when he is presented with a similar Damascene challenge:

Valerian seyde: two corones han we,

Snow white and rose reed, that shynen cleere,

Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see;

And as thou smellest hem thurgh my preyere,

So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,

If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,

Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe, [166]

Valerian invites his brother to see what he cannot: the "snow white and rose reed, that shynen cleere", now putting emphasis on the flowers' colours as opposed to their type. For a brief moment we are presented with a spiritually charged world of pure colour transcending that of the emblems (rose and lily) and even their matching values in the theological colour vocabulary (red and white) to evoke a world radiating a directly sensible, spiritually aesthetic value. If Tiburce believes aright, he will know and see as "colour" what he has hitherto only been able to smell – the "truth".[167] The

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[165] *The Canterbury Tales* [VIII (G) 220-4]

[166] *The Canterbury Tales* [VIII (G) 253-9].

[167] Interestingly, Tiburce smells the fragrance of the flower coronets before he sees them. The explanatory note to the "soote savour" given in *The Riverside Chaucer* (p.945) reads, "The repeated references to smell convey the sweetness of sanctity and contrast with rankness in The Canon's Yeoman's Tale VIII.885-90." Smell, in Plato's *Timaeus*, is the "half-breed" sense. Therefore, it provided an appropriate means of giving an 'in-between' perception before a significant perception; in this case a religious awakening. (Plato, *Timaeus*, 66d: "As for the power belonging to the nostrils, there are no types within it. This is because a smell is always a 'half-breed'." The idea was that the elements of fire, water, air, earth, could not be sensed by smell, only their *transitions* from one to another. This is an interesting model to put in conjunction with a situation involving a religious conversion. There is debate regarding Chaucer's access to the *Timaeus*, a work that was available to medieval scholars through Calcidius' translation (up to 53b) made in the fourth century. If Chaucer had not read the work, he certainly gained much from it via Boethius and other Platonic sources (*cf.* The General Prologue,

tale uses a biblical and Neo-Platonic parallel between vision and true seeing throughout its portrayal of religious awakening and understanding, notably in Cecilia's forthright mockery of and challenge to Almachius during her inquisition:

> Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outer yen
> That thou n' art blynd; for thyng that we seen alle
> That it is stoon, -- that men may wel espyen, --
> That ilke stoon a God tho wolt it calle.
> I rede thee, lat thyn hand upon it falle,
> And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,
> Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde. [168]

Cecilia accuses Almachius of being spiritually blind for worshipping idols, and that he may as well be physically blind for all the use his eyes are to him whilst in this state. Note that whilst vision is the means of accessing truth, the content of that "truth" has been defined chromatically, through the red and white of the coronets earned by faith by Cecilia and Valerian. Ultimately we see the pure spiritual value of red and white embodied in the flames which will burn her flesh ("Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede")[169] and the blood which runs forth to be stanched by sheets brought by the faithful ("The Cristen folk, which that aboute hire were, / With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent").[170] The story of Cecilia's martyrdom in Chaucer's treatment provides, as it were, a living embodiment of a religious metaphor, and distils its essence into and through the colours red and white. Chaucer's use of colour

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741-2, "Eek Plato seith, whoso that kan hym rede, / The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede." - referring to *Timaeus* 29b and Boethius' *Consolation*, III, 206-7.)

[168] *The Canterbury Tales* [VIII (G) 498-504].

[169] Ibid, ll.515.

[170] Ibid, ll. 535-6.

concepts in The Second Nun's Tale draws upon their medieval values at their most sophisticated, bringing his narrative to a much finer point of spiritual momentum than might otherwise have been achieved.[171]

It would seem, therefore, that the line of thought from light and colour towards "positive" values is just as relevant for understanding its normative perception in the Middle Ages as that which led it towards negative evaluation: colour, in certain contexts and frames of reference, would command profound respect of one variety or another. The diversity of this situation can only here be suggested. Through its positive and negative connotations, colour was in a strong position to signify in medieval visual perception, so much so that the range and possibility for its use as a language or code was more marked than it has been for later societies. The "vocabulary" of this symbolic language or languages (for it is possible to consider a phenomenally complex system such as in heraldry and its linguistic form—*blazon*—as encapsulating a specific language of colour signs operating within the wider terrain of chromatic and emblematic meanings) needs to be re-incorporated into a modern reader of medieval literature's awareness. This is all the more so because the symbolic colour "vocabulary" was so complex and interwoven.

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[171] Brewer has remarked Chaucer's "occasional pleasant freshness and prettiness of detail" in translating from the Latin of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (1275) for his Second Nun's Tale. Derek Brewer, *An Introduction to Chaucer* (London: Longman, 1984) 78. I have interpreted Chaucer's detail of colour as an intentional development of his sources. The shift of emphasis onto the colours of the emblems in Chaucer's version is not in *The Golden Legend*. The specific lines in Caxton's 1483 printing of *The Golden Legend* (corresponding with 253-4 in The Second Nun's Tale) read, "Then Valerian said, "We have crowns which thine eyes may not see and like as by my prayers thou hast felt the odor of them. So if thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the crowns of roses and lilies that we have." The emphasis is upon the emblems.

The primary area of significance for the medieval cultural taxonomy of colours was that of natural colours and the seasonal cycle. Immediately however we must address complexity of the overlap and discontinuity between the cycle of the year and the perception of and understanding of seasonal colours as influenced by classical theory; Germanic and Celtic pre-Christian associations; and those made by the Christian Church in its yearly observances and use of liturgical dress based upon the interpretation of Scripture. Medieval festival culture maintained an uneasy compromise between the pagan elements subsumed by the Church (synthesizing their associations and significance) and those that were ignored. Seven periods of festivity made up the medieval calendar: the twelve days of Christmas (in which pagan Yule and Saturnalia revels were absorbed); Shrovetide (the last fling before Ash Wednesday involving feasting, obscenity and mockery of ecclesiastical authority); Holy Week (including "Easter", according to Bede deriving from the festival of Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring[172]); May Day (marking the coming in of summer, return to life in nature seen in its vibrant greenery and choosing of sexual partners, which proved resistant to syncretistic re-consecration); the Midsummer cycle (involving the celebration of the Solstice, and merged with the liturgical motifs of Pentecost and Baptism); Harvest (a celebration that was not condemned by the Church, perhaps due to the scarcity of Christian feasts at the same point in the calendar for it to challenge before the Assumption on August 15th); and Winter (including the Church feasts of All Hallows and All Saints, Martinmas, Advent and St. Nicolas, along with the Celtic *Samhain* or New Year, all of which had something

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[172] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 15.

to do with the theme of death and the dead).[173] Liturgical colours were determined by theological, scriptural associations and worn according to the church calendar – as standardized across the Church according to the directives from *Roman Missals*.[174]

Added into these seasonal opportunities for colour associations were scholarly associations and symbols derived from classical philosophy and mythology, and interpreted in terms of the zodiac and astrology, and linked to the Aristotelian disciplines of alchemy and the lore of metals, gemstones (lapidary), and medicine (influenced by Hippocrates via Galen and his Arabic commentators), all of which involved the perception of natural and physiological colours in terms of the various underlying natural "squares of opposites": the four elements (fire, water, air, earth); and their intermediately corresponding qualities (hot, dry, cold, wet); the four humours of the body (blood, black bile, yellow bile, phlegm) and corresponding temperaments (sanguine, melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic). The physiognomy and psychology of a person could also be analysed according to associations derived from the animal kingdom and thereby involving animal colours as defining qualities; also the complex worlds of chivalry and heraldry offered chromatic values with a specifically martial frame of reference (albeit spiritualised from the twelfth century). Clearly, any graphic or literary artist could draw upon a wide array of colour associations and meanings from within this Christian and pagan matrix. Apart from the fixed associations afforded by standard uses of colours there were more adaptable and general uses of individual hues available and, of course, the freedom to engage in

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[173] Boris Ford, *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain Volume 2: Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 144-153.

[174] See Roger E. Reynolds, "Clerical Vestments and Liturgical Colours" in *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages: Hierarchy and Image* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

idiosyncratic mixing and playing with symbols and composite colours or combinations of colours.

Colour	Liturgical Uses	Armorial Use	Classical Associations
Black	(Grief) Good Friday, funeral rites	(*sable*) Primary, prudence, wisdom, constancy	Saturn, lead, diamond
Blue	(Hope, sincerity, piety) with green, used for ordinary Sundays	(*azure*) Mediary, chastity, loyalty, fidelity	Jupiter, tin, sapphire
Green	(God's bounty, mirth, and resurrection) used after Trinity	(*vert*) Submediary, love, joy abundance	Venus, copper, emerald
Purple	(God's royalty and justice) Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday	(*purpure*) Mediary, temperance	Mercury, quicksilver, amethyst
Red	(Martydom for faith, charity and divine love) martyrs and Whit Sunday	(*gules/sanguine*) Mediary, magnanimity/ fortitude	Mars, iron, ruby
Violet	(Penitence) with brown and grey (tribulation) used for Advent or Lent	N/a	Modesty (a flower, sprung from Ajax's blood)
Yellow	Trinity through to Advent/Confessors	(*or*) Primary/mediary, faith, constancy, wisdom, glory	Apollo (sun), wisdom, gold, topaz
White	(Hope, Purity) Saint's days except martyrs and Maundy Thursday	(*argent*) Primary, purity, truth, innocence	Diana, silver, pearl

Fig. 1 – Table of Colour Values compiled using: G. Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy*; Roger E. Reynolds, "Clerical Vestments and Liturgical Colours" in *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages*; Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, and *A Middle English Lapidary*, ed. Arne Zettersten.

The above table gestures towards the myriad medieval associations of colour and the opportunities for it to play a part in symbolic descriptions, allegories, and characterizations.

To summarize the position so far, the medieval world was a chromatically diverse and symbolically charged environment for its human populations. In essence, the shared perceptual world of the period encompassed three broad and intertwining areas of colour: (i) the natural range of hues of the flora and fauna of a vast and untamed countryside (ii) pockets of vivid, man-made colours or man-enhanced or enabled colours occasioned by private flower gardens, spectacularly illuminated church interiors, and costume, decoration and the arts, and (iii) a drab world of made up from the browns and greys of extreme poverty. A "phenomenological reduction" of medieval colour into three zones evinces another important feature of its place for such societies: it was meaningful via symbolic associations giving specific values to specific colours in particular contexts, and meaningful in terms of a theoretical understanding by which it could be a more significant and defining quality than it is for modern perception. In addition to this, as we have seen, the socio-economic model that must be borne in mind was that colour itself (the more saturated or vivid the better) denoted meaning as value. The precise nature or type of that value was subject to variation and interpretation, but a commonplace connection between the two was always in place. By the late fourteenth century in England – a time of prosperity reigned over by Edward III and then Richard II, the trend of Court, and so aspiration of the rest of society, was towards ever more brilliant displays of colour in dress and decoration. Harris dates the change in attitudes and rising interest in sartorial fashion and its excess to the twelfth century – a period marked also by the emergence of

interest in Aristotelian natural philosophy.[175] In terms of financial value however, vivid and long-lasting colour was a luxury item and so an expression of wealth and power. Chaucer's Merchant declares of the protagonist in his Tale:

> Somme clerkes holden that felicitee
> Stant in delit, and therfore certeyn he,
> This noble Januarie, with al his myght,
> In honest wyse, as longeth to a knyght,
> Shoop hym to lyve ful deliciously.
> His housynge, his array, as honestly
> To his degree was maked as a kynges. [176]

The belief that "Felicitee stant in delit" – happiness derives from pleasure – meant for Chaucer's knight January that he live "deliciously," and "array" himself according to his status. A contrast to this view of life and value of appropriate array is found in Chaucer's portrait of the Clerk of Oxenford:

> Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
> For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
> Ne was so worldly for to have office.
> For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
> Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
> Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
> Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.[177]

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[175] Jennifer Harris, "Estroit vestu et menu cosu': Evidence for the Construction of Twelfth-century Dress," Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham, eds, *Medieval Art: Recent Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998) 89-103.

[176] *The Canterbury Tales* [IV (E) 2021-27].

[177] *The Canterbury Tales* [I (A) 290-6].

The clerk's values challenge the norm for costume appearance values. Whilst other men may see value in "robes riche" and playing music, he sees it in "bookes, clad in blak or reed." His clothes may be threadbare and poor, but the implication for his love for knowledge – expressly Aristotelian – is favourable. His true colours reflected perhaps the placing of too high a value on learning: "Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede", so that his prayers for his patrons' souls might be a little suspect ("And bisily gan for the soules preye / Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye"), but ultimately Chaucer seems to have looked kindly upon his creation ("Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche, / And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche").

Understanding colour (strong/bright) to be prestigious, we recognize its importance throughout the social hierarchy and role in perception for the aspirations of the majority of people.[178] Similarly, colour could be prestigious and a measure of social standing at the level of metaphor. This aspect of the classical notion of the "colours of rhetoric" is apparent when Chaucer's Franklin delivers a species of layman's *sprezzatura* in his prologue for the tale that is to follow:

> Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,
> But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
> Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte.

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[178] Of this phenomenon Brewer writes, "Moralists, however, of all kinds, have always disapproved of the lower classes aping their betters" Derek Brewer, *Chaucer in his Time* (London: Longman, 1973) 107. Baldwin expands this explanation for sumptuary laws citing three motives: (1) the desire to preserve class distinctions, (2) the desire to check deleterious practices of which luxury, in and of itself, was an example, (3) the desire to encourage home industry and the saving of money (to aid the sovereign in time of need): Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England*, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series 44, no.1. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1926).

> Colours of rethoryk been to me queynte;
>
> My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.
>
> But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.[179]

Chaucer's Franklin claims to know of the natural hues growing in the "mede" and those of an artisan's trade "as men dye or peynte", but of the highest grade of significance for colour, the learned and ingenious painting of ideas through words, he employs a modesty trope and states that "my spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere".

In effect, whilst there were considerable differences between rich and poor with regard to access to and use of colours (in terms of the clothes worn, decoration of environments within which work and leisure took place, and metaphorically, through access to education) there existed a shared or common apperception for evaluating colour. The law supported (but was unable to enforce) visual aspects of socio-economic differences and their underlying perceptual conformity. The ultimate expression of the hierarchical system within the visual perceptual realm was, as we have seen, the institution of sumptuary laws that sought to demarcate socio-economic distinctions in terms of the expenditure allowed by different levels of the society. All classes might share basic appetites, including an aspiration for colourful apparel and decoration, but the indulgence of these necessitated either the right income or criminal behaviour. Thus sartorial colour bore an aura of exclusivity and temptation similar to any other object put under prohibition or restriction by a society.[180] Chaucer's portrait

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[179] *The Canterbury Tales* [V (F) 723-28].

[180] Chaucer's youthful Squire is another contender for over-indulgence in costume, but his status would have entitled him to wear vivid and expensive clothes: "But that esquires... may take and wear cloths of the price of 5 marks the whole cloth, and cloth of silk and silver, ribbon, girdle, and other apparel reasonably garnished of silver", A. R. Myers, *English Historical Documents 1327-1485*, Volume IV, gen. ed., David C. Douglas (London; New York: Routledge, 2002) 1154). Chaucer may have intended

of the Merchant—an archetype of the medieval Middle Aged Man—suggests that he was both colourfully clad, "In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat;" and a little obsessive in his interest in money, "Sownynge alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng." The link between wealth and colourful costume is clear ("In mottelee, and hye on horse..."), but one might suggest that Chaucer goes further to rely upon the evaluative colour perception of his readers to imply that the merchant's colourful and rich apparel is overdone; that he is dressing above his station as determined by his wealth:[181] "This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette / Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette". The suggestion is perhaps that the Merchant is a man of different personae, playing a colourfully prestigious part to conceal his true condition, such that an expression of his "wit" was his "mottelee".

It is fitting that this part should conclude with the complexity of one of Chaucer's characters reverberating in the mind's eye – the Merchant's multi-faceted existence and appearance as a created being encapsulates the dilemma for reading colour in medieval literature. The associations, meanings and values attached to chroma for the period should be born in mind, but not sought out religiously, for they are all ultimately human productions – liable to be mistakenly or deliberately misused

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his Squire's colourful apparel to have a rebellious value in moral terms and so to be a foil for the Parson. The Miller and the Reeve also wear colours above their station but for particular reasons.

[181] Hodges remarks on the fact that social status equated to the right to dress lavishly - the sumptuary law of 1363, "establishes sartorial categories in accordance with levels of income in preference to birth status when the two are not in agreement." This was revoked the following year. It is an interesting confirmation that money would tell over birth, but that in any event, the law was unenforceable. Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Costume: The Secular Pilgrims in the General Prologue*, Chaucer Studies XXVI (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2000) 19.

for artistic and theological effect by writers, and to some extent, unintentionally or not, misunderstood by generations of culturally diverse readers.

PART II

Armorial Colour and Perception in Medieval Literature

Introduction

Colours acquire meaning and values according to socio-cultural usage. The following chapters examine the perception of colour and its phenomenological meaningfulness in medieval texts concerned with armory. The subject of the final part of the study will then be the significance and meanings of armorial colours in works of fiction; however, in order to respond to how the visual phenomenon was employed by creative writers it is necessary to establish the literary and conceptual relationships between armory, heraldry and chivalry. From this basis one can consider the extent to which the medieval imagination (an abstraction) could have been informed by its colourful armorial environment, and how individual poets and writers might have been influenced by armorially informed literature.

The first goal of this section, therefore, is to reconstruct the perceptual terrain and history of ideas embedded within medieval armory; information that was presented in a wide variety of literary genres including books of chivalry, books of arms, chronicles, theological tracts, and heraldic writings. As with all aspects of the historical phenomenon of colour, the development of armorial displays during the medieval period needs deliberate re-viewing in order to understand how displays were seen *as* something: armory offered a visual mode of discourse through which complex matters of belief, not to mention public and private identity, were represented, interpreted, and re-imagined.

Historical and literary contexts for medieval armory

The armorial sign and symbol system that arose in twelfth-century Europe out of

previously *ad hoc* practices of warrior identification involved colours, or "tinctures"[1]

(to use the early modern heraldic term for the standard colours and metals used in

armorial displays) in ways that went far beyond their mundane function on a

battlefield.[2] Rather, what emerged through the development and interpretation of

these displays, encapsulated by the rise of the "herald"[3] and "blazon",[4] and paralleled

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[1] "Tincture." (Etymology). See OED sense 2b: from the Latin *tinctura* used in relation to colour dyeing. The use was prevalent in the fourteenth century; however, its specific use in heraldry and heraldic texts is recorded only from the early seventeenth century.

[2] See Adrian Ailes, "The Knight, Heraldry and Armour: The Role of Recognition and the Origins of Heraldry," *Medieval Knighthood IV*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge: The Boydell P; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1992) 1-21.

[3] The developing role of the herald and the term are discussed using primary sources later in this part of the study. The sense suggested here applies to one of various jobs – that of a specialist supporter of a knight whose duties gradually came to include the recognition and recording of armorial designs in tournament rolls via illustrations and the restricted linguistic descriptions known as *blazon* (see below).

[4] "Blazon." (Etymology). See OED senses 1, 2 and 3: the linguistic code by which an armorial design is translated into a precise linguistic description (a comparable modern code would be html (Hyper-Text Mark-up Language) used to instruct browser software on how to present information in a document). The word derives from the Old French *blason* meaning shield. The OED's examples of its use for the heraldic code language only appear from the end of the sixteenth century (See OED sense 3.). In the fourteenth century the word *blazon* was primarily used to refer to war shields and their armorial displays (see OED senses 1 and 2). However, John Vade's *Tretis on Armes* (*c.* 1400) gives the advice "And in blasyng of armes ye must beware for reprevyng fir ther be IIII thynges in armes that a man shal not name bot onys..." suggesting that the word was also used in the fourteenth century to refer to the use of verbal and linguistic descriptions of visual signs (see *Tretis on Armes*, E. J. Jones, *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth Century Heraldic Works* (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1943) 216).

by courtly interest (by the fourteenth century) in scholarly armorial theories that underpinned significances, provides us with a microcosm of the wider development of colour perception for the period. Medieval armory supplies, as it were, an identity "badge"[5] for a particular mode of thinking and its embedded way of seeing; it encapsulates the inter-subjective world of colour significances at work within increasingly formalised and formalizing hierarchies of medieval society. Ideas expressed by medieval poets and writers incorporated responses to, and in turn influenced, perceptual meanings which were given their existence via the encoded information of armorial displays. Essentially, armorial colours offered the medieval imagination a tool able to reconstruct and transmit complex ideas about identity (even personality) which could be further adapted and explored in fictional contexts. Whilst the phenomenon shares a great deal of its essential functionality with seals (as co-authoritative signifiers of identity), armorial displays offered a chromatic, foreground

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The oldest Roll of Arms in England, the Glover's Roll (compiled about 1254 but known to us only through the copy made by Robert Glover, Somerset Herald in 1586), mentions three colours: *goules* (red), *azur* (blue) and *sable* (black) and two furs: *veree* (squirrel) and *ermyn* (stoat) [see Anthony Richard Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages: An Inquiry into the Growth of the Armorial Function of Heralds*. 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1960) 18]. The fourteenth-century Latin *Tractatus de Armis* of Johannis de Bado cites four colours and two metals: black, blue, red, green, silver, and gold, chosen according to the four elements and four colours of the rainbow (Jones 144-5). In the early fifteenth century the colour *purpill* is mentioned as a fifth, and *tawny* is discussed as a French phenomenon (see *Tretis on Armes*, Jones 215) by a writer also calling himself John but not thought to be the same man as De Bado.

[5] "Badge." (Etymology). See OED senses 1 &2 drawing on fourteenth century sources: "A distinctive device, emblem, or mark, used originally to identify a knight or distinguish his followers (= *cognizance* in *Her.*), and now worn as a sign of office or licensed employment, as a token of membership in some society."

system for publicising identity to society at large, and as such were much more creatively dynamic.[6] The emergence of the herald, a type of "specialized perceiver" of armorial colours and their significance, testifies to the momentum of the cultural phenomenon and society's engagement with it.

It is important to note that nothing seems to have been created *ex nihilo* in medieval armory – history is replete with cultures and civilisations that have visually encoded their warriors (and still do) for the purposes of battlefield recognition, decoration, intimidation of the enemy, and even genealogical identification.[7] References to national and tribal banners, family emblems and individualised military tokens abound in world literature, testimony to the great significance such items hold. This significance, linked as it is to public identification, has provided a species of identity-motif used to great effect by generations of creative writers and poets, and, further, has received profound, symbolic import by sacred writings and their theological interpreters.From the classical poets we have the single greatest instance of armory in literature: Homer's depiction of Achilles' shield, forged by Hephaestus the Smith, upon which is displayed, in extensive and intricate detail, two cities, a

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[6] For a history and exploration of medieval seals and sigillography see Alphonse Chassant, and Pierre Jean Delbarre, *Dictionnaire de sigillographie pratique: Contenant Toutes les notions propres à faciliter l'étude et l'interprétation des sceaux du moyen âge* (Paris: J.-B. Dumoulin, 1860; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978; rpt. Saint-Wandrille: Éditions de Fontenelle, 1991).

[7] Exceptions might include the non-militarized people of the ancient Indus valley civilisation of the third to second millennium BC, from whom very few bronze weapons have been discovered although fortified settlements indicate a defensive capability. See Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization* (Oxford: OUP; American Institute of Pakistan Studies, 1998). Recent "uncivilised" yet practically weaponless civilisations claimed by anthropologists exist in Samoa and the Trobriand islands. See Annette B. Weiner, *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1988).

field, an estate, a vineyard, a herd of longhorn cattle, a meadow and a river; in fact, a

world in itself (*Iliad*: xviii. 558–710). Homer also gave us Patroclus' fatal borrowing

of Achilles' armour and therefore, temporarily, his identity (*Iliad*: xvi. 40ff.) (perhaps

the greatest instance of the "borrowed armour" motif rehearsed in many ways and to

different effect in many classics of world literature). Virgil depicts Aventinus' shield

device of the hydra, a family token commemorating a famous victory: "Proud of his

steeds, he smokes along the field; / His father's hydra fills his ample shield; / A

hundred serpents hiss about the brims; / The son of Hercules he justly seems,"

(*Aeneid*, vii. 657ff.). Hebrew scripture describes the tribal standards of the people of

Israel for instance in Numbers 2.2: "'Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by

his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house.'" The potential for armorial

conceptualization and significance is developed further with Moses' healing brass

serpent (Numbers 21: 9) and his raised arms during the Israelites' battle with the

Amalekites (Exodus 17: 8-18) from which incident one of the Hebrew names for God

is derived: *Jehovah Nis'si* ("Jehovah is my banner").[8] The story of David's victory

over Goliath (1 Sam. 17.3-54) is preceded by the scene where the shepherd boy is first

dressed in King Saul's armour, which he takes off because he has not been "proved"

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[8] From the Hebrew נֵס (nês) [Strong H5251] and נָסַס (nasas) H5264 used for a "flag"; also a "sail"; by implication a "flagstaff"; generally a "signal"; figuratively a "token," hence a banner, pole, sail, (en-) sign, and standard. See for example, Zech 9:16: "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign [נָסַס - nasas] upon his land." Other notable instances of banners relating to divine values in Hebrew sacred writings include Psalm 20: 5, 60: 4; Song of Solomon 2: 4, 6: 4, 6:10; and Isaiah 13: 2.

wearing it (1 Sam.17.39);[9] the victory is marked by Jonathan's gift of his own sword, bow and armour to David (1 Sam. 18.4). In New Testament theology Moses' serpent banner is re-interpreted as a type-motif of the Christ by Jesus in dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3:14); in Luke's Gospel Jesus teaches that when a strong man is overcome, the stronger man "taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoiles." (Luke 11.22); and perhaps most significantly for medieval chivalry, there are St Paul's exhortations to the Christian to "put on the whole armour of God..." (Eph. 6:11-17); put on "the armour of light" (Rom. 13.12); or the "armour of righteousness" (2 Cor.6.7). Such metaphors present a parallel between spiritual and actual warfare that was to fire imaginations and influence military activity throughout the Christian world during the crusading Middle Ages and beyond. The Revelation of St John of Patmos contains even more significant moments for the history of armory as a spiritual metaphor: the four different coloured horsemen (Rev. 6.1-8), drawing upon the visionary imagery of Zechariah (Zech. 6.1-8), and the White Rider who leads the heavenly host against the forces of the Beast at the end of time (Rev. 19.11). Ultimately the chief symbol in Christian iconography—the cross—owes its central place within the Roman Church to its adoption as a martial standard. In AD 312 Emperor Constantine, the first Roman emperor to embrace the new religion, reputedly dreamt of a cross above the sun and the words "εν τούτωι νίκα" ("By this conquer"): the cross became the banner which he believed led his heavily outnumbered forces to

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[9] The Hebrew word is נסה or nasah meaning "'test", "assay", "prove" or "try" (H5254 in Strong's numbers). Translated "...si armatus posset incedere non enim habebat consuetudinem..." in Jerome's Vulgate and "...for he hadde not custom..." in the Wycliffite translation.

victory against his enemy Maxentius at Saxa Rubra.[10] Thereafter his men bore crosses on their shields and followed the cross as a military banner: after the Roman Church had achieved its dominance in the West, this "victorious banner" aspect of the symbol was to be incorporated into religious ceremony and reflected by the procession of church officers (according to precedence) following the cross.

The story of medieval cultural and imaginative engagement with armory and armorial significance is one of a gradual development and increase, followed by rapid acceleration and eventual saturation. Indeed, the first distinction that should be drawn regarding armorial identity concerns the origin of the focal point of its meaning: the shield or "blazon". The shield has become since the Middle Ages the definitive canvas for (male) armorial displays. However, in the Old English elegiac epic *Beowulf* (*c*.800), whilst there are thirty-nine references to shields, their descriptions are motivated by other interests than providing a one-to-one (or one-to-faction) demarcation of identity. The various descriptions of shields include: "beorhte randas" – "bright-bossed" (1.231); "side" – "wide" (1. 325); "linden" – "made of linden wood" (1. 2366); "fætte" – "plated" or "ornamented" with gold (1. 333). Anderson notes that the *Beowulf*-poet lexicalizes shields in terms of two distinct parts, "as a wooden "bord" (the wide body of the shield), and a "rond~rand" (the metal rim, or possibly the round boss, around the shield's perimeter)".[11] Hence it would seem he viewed shields primarily as serviceable military items, only occasionally hinting towards the

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[10] See Eusebius' accounts of Constantine's vision and victory in his *Vita Constantini*, book I, 28.1 and 37-41. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall*, Clarendon Ancient History Series (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1999) 80-86.

[11] Earl R. Anderson, *Folk-Taxonomies in Early English* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson U P- London: Associated U P, 2003) 157.

warrior's sense of delight in their martial nature – "bright-bossed" and so forth, perhaps suggesting the warrior's glory and pride transferred to his war equipment.

Indicators of a more significant sense for armorial identity are found in the poem, but in relation to pieces of armory other than shields, and they operate as exemplars of heroic age apperception. The *Beowulf*-poet was evidently a Christian and yet wrote of a recent and well-remembered heathen age in which a warrior's identity was defined by loyalty to his lord.[12] In such a heroic context, armory (operating as a type of object-servant) could be celebrated for its intrinsic usefulness and presentation of honourable value, and thus might have its own identity rather than defining that of its bearer. (Unless this were done indirectly, in which case armory could be a means of re-establishing or re-inforcing the worth of an already-identified warrior through his owning or being entrusted with a particularly valuable, intrinsically identifiable item.) A hero might thus possess, or be granted by a great lord or "'ring-giver" (or be fated to find or win) a special, independently meaningful weapon or piece of armour which would become a token or sub-element of a hero's identity. Indeed, Beowulf has, and further acquires, various pieces of (frequently useless) military equipment during the course of his heroic career. He fights the "unarmed" monster Grendel with his bare hands, casting aside his sword and shield (Bk. X) – thus a clear contrast is effected between Beowulf's as near-supernatural hero and other more vulnerable men who "brandished ancestral blades"[13] in loyal defence of their lords. He also owns the blade "Naegling" (translatable as "kinsman of the nail"), which ultimately fails him against the dragon. Moreover, in addition to

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[12] Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburgh*, 3rd edition (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950) l, civ.

[13] "ealde lāfe" (*Beowulf* l. 795).

finding the giant's sword in Grendel's cave, Beowulf is granted (amongst other items)

a golden banner ("segn" or sign) by Hrothgar:

> Forgeaf þa Beowulfe   bearn Healfdenes
> segen gyldenne   sigores to leane;
> hroden hildecumbor,   helm ond byrnan,
> mære maðþumsweord   manige gesawon
> beforan beorn beran...

[To Beowulf gave the bairn of Healfdene a gold-wove banner, guerdon of triumph, broidered battle-flag, breastplate and helmet; and a splendid sword was seen of many borne to the brave one.][14]

These gifts imply that Beowulf would have had no personal, individuated battle-banner of his own, so was happy to receive a seemingly generic gold one befitting his honour as a great warrior. Wiglaf (the only one of Beowulf's companions brave enough not to flee the dragon) finds another golden battle-banner in the dragon's lair (l. 2767) which he brings out with the rest of the hoard to fulfil his dying lord's final request. In this instance the discovered golden banner emphasizes and signifies the defeat of the dragon: it is a victory-trophy and represents the value of the treasure won.[15] The only common distinguishing feature of these fictional Germanic banners is

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[14] *Beowulf* ll. 1020-24.

[15] There are six references to "segn" or "cumbol" (signs, banners or standards) in *Beowulf*: Scyld's golden standard which was hoisted over his funeral ship (l.47); the gold battle banner Hrothgar gives to Beowulf (amongst other gifts) (l. 1021); Hygelac's banner (l. 1204); the beautiful gold-woven banner which sits atop the dragon's treasure trove and illuminates the hoard (ll. 2767ff.) which Wiglaf takes to show Beowulf (l.2776 ff.); and Hygelac's banner or banners, again which symbolize an approaching conflict (l.2958). Also, the term "cumbles hyrde", "standard bearer", is used of Daeghrefn, a defeated enemy of Beowulf (l.2505).

the material descriptor—"gyldenne"—which implies costliness and authority, qualities which are bestowed through association with particular individuals. Indeed, the opening scene of the poem (the funeral of Scyld) presents a dead king's body set adrift upon a funeral ship, his "segen g(yl)denne" (golden banner) "hēah ofer hēofod" (high over head) (ll.46-47). Whilst the "greatness" of the identity of this passing king could be said to be bound up with or entailed by his armory, it is an armorial world which conveys very little beyond the obvious – a "gold-like" person who deserves to bear a golden banner has died (just as all other "gold-like" persons deserve).

By the time of the Norman invasion of the British Isles in 1066, the shield had begun to enter into its prominence as the focal point for the military display of European tribal and dynastic devices, but was still not being exploited for the display of individual identity motifs. In a recent article John France has argued that the chief value of the Bayeux Tapestry for the military historian is what it tells us about war and military equipment.[16] However, France also notes that whilst the Bayeux Tapestry allows us to see the depiction of individuals, the persons depicted within the Tapestry are not identifiable via their armorial devices but only through their actions portrayed in the illustrations and described in the accompanying text. At the time of the tapestry's creation (probably sometime in the 1070s, having been commissioned by William's half-brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux[17]) armorial identification lacked either

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[16] See John France, "The Importance of the Bayeux Tapestry for the History of War," *The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidering the Facts of History: Proceedings of the Cerisy Colloquium (1999)*, ed. Pierre Bouet, Brian Levy and Francois Neveux (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2004) 289-299.

[17] Pierre Bouet argues that the Tapestry presented a neutral attitude towards both Normans and English, thus suggesting that a political motive of post-conquest conciliation was behind its creation. This would also support an early date for its commissioning since the Norman barons had rather a different attitude from that of William himself and his entourage (including his half brother Odo). See Pierre Bouet, "Is

fully individuated or systematic application. This was a different state of affairs from that found in later medieval writing, and reflects the shift in use and understanding of armory by medieval culture at a wider level. An important development in the use and perception of armory occurred gradually as a result of the later acquisition of identity-symbols by elites, which, whilst continuing to incorporate ancient motifs and examples, came to be systematically used in a far more articulate way than before. The tokens become part of a visual and systematic projection of individual identity, for the elite as a class. How and why this may have happened needs examination, since it may be argued that it was a phenomenon influentially connected to a wider shift towards a deepening sense of self-consciousness within medieval culture, which in turn fuelled the literary emphasis on discovery or rediscovery of the individual.[18] The rise of armory and heraldry from the twelfth century onwards corresponds with the transmission of a monotheistic, theologically-structured and encoded understanding of social power, both religious and secular, in which a constant process of redefinition produced ever more systematic hierarchies of power and cultural prestige.

Publishing individual identity within an established hierarchy can of course be found to be a motivating element at work in any society. The emergence of heraldry

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the Bayeux Tapestry Pro-English?" *The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidering the Facts of History: Proceedings of the Cerisy Colloquium (1999)*, ed. Pierre Bouet, Brian Levy and Francois Neveux (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2004) 198-215.

[18] See Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200* (London, 1972) for extended discussion of the nature of (and evidence for) individuality during the period. His identification of an increase in discourse featuring "...an assessment of people by their inner interests rather than by their external acts" (p.158) seems particularly pertinent for the present study. Armory provides an established means of contrasting "external acts" with the "inner" nature of the bearer.

during the medieval period served a social function of human nature in a new, and eventually highly articulate, way. This necessitated a bringing together of armorial identity markers into a regular and regulated system which went beyond the previous use of tribal and dynastic emblems (such as the Roman eagle or the English dragon) and personal and familial devices and marks (long utilized in seals in ancient cultures from Sumerian to Roman and beyond) to produce, in effect, a pan-European visual code or rudimentary language capable of communicating information about both an individual and his dynasty via symbols and visual metaphors. By the end of the fourteenth century the phenomenon had come to be underwritten in terms of the prevailing theological world view and its hierarchical cosmology (see below). The influence of classical and scriptural authorities is essential for understanding this shift towards significance in later medieval perception and treatment of armorial displays, their symbolism, and emerging social roles, from which the precise "science" of heraldry has developed and crystallized.

Armory or heraldry?

The phenomenon of heraldry vividly encapsulates how colour could be "seen as"[19] something; how visual perception can require knowledge of special significances and

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[19] A phrase used with Wittgenstein's notion of "seeing as" in mind (see above p.7n9). In this context, the position has two consequences: (a) seeing involves cognition even when the perceived object is continuously before the eye and does not need an act of memory to be experienced; (b) seeing is subject to development – complex visual meanings are learned and subject to change irrespective of the stable nature of perceptual objects. An image can be "seen as", or given two or more separate meanings at the same time, by different people, or by the same person at different times via a "gestalt-shift" in perception. Seeing colour meanings across cultures and historical contexts is akin to seeing different aspects of meaning in an image; colours are also "seen as" meaningful in different ways at different

symbolic values. The word "heraldry" has become rather an imprecise term for all things armorial – from descriptions of displays and their officials to actual ceremonies and roles therein. However, this is not a semantic confusion to which modern heraldic experts subscribe. To quote the great heraldic writer Arthur Charles Fox-Davies:

> Armory is that science of which the rules and the laws govern the use, display, meaning, and knowledge of the pictured signs and emblems appertaining to shield, helmet, or banner. Heraldry has a wider meaning, for it comprises everything within the duties of a herald; and whilst Armory undoubtedly is Heraldry, the regulation of ceremonials and matters of pedigree, which are really also within the scope of Heraldry, most decidedly are not Armory.[20]

If the definition of "meaning" involves our uses of words, the most detailed, technical usage in this case (such as Fox-Davies' above) provides a fixed meaning compared to which others seem woefully imprecise. However, we need to be wary of such strict definitions when discussing the early days of armory and persons concerned with displays. The rise of heraldry (or armory) proper, and the establishment of the role of the herald were developing throughout the medieval period. This era in the history of armorial displays is notoriously problematic for later heralds and heraldic writers who have come to regard their subject as a verifiable science of visual genealogical identification marks – one administered by specialists. At their outset, heraldry and armory comprised an uncertain and disorganised assembly of practices involving a proto-language of visual signs which only in hindsight can we say developed into a precise symbolic vocabulary and a fixed system. It was at first more a rough art of visual communication seeking acceptance through opportunity, as opposed to Fox-

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times, and according to the visual and cognitive abilities and contextual exposure of different perceivers.

[20] Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack, 1929) 1.

Davies's objectively verifiable "science". The fixed line drawn between concepts of armory and heraldry lends an air of certainty capable of distorting the medieval situation.

The literature of the medieval period demonstrates that within courtly culture at least, armorial displays came to be enthusiastically utilized, imagined, described and explained in terms of their symbolic values and meanings, far beyond their role as battlefield identity tokens and factional markers which identified genealogies of power and loyalty to that power. By the late fourteenth century writers from Johannis De Bado (author of the *Tractatus de Armis*, a work dedicated to the memory of Queen Anne, deceased wife of Richard II in 1394) to Geoffrey Chaucer (*c.*1340-1400) were using armory as a means of exploring complex relationships between external appearances and questions of human identity and social significance in highly sophisticated ways – by creating works intended to explain (in fact prescribing and proscribing) armorial symbolism to a courtly audience, and in fictions told for the entertainment of the court. It may even be possible to argue (see below) that the mysterious "grene gome" of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, whose hue has been discussed and re-interpreted periodically since the poem's first discovery,[21] owes something of his chromatic identity to an appreciation of fourteenth-century armorial colour theory.

First we need to establish that medieval armorial writers were just as, if not more, interested in the "semantics" of the visual code of armorial displays as in its "syntax," the hallmark of later attitudes. Emphasis on the syntactical approach is

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[21] See Derek Brewer, "The Colour Green", *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, Arthurian Studies 38 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1999) 181-190.

rooted in the Enlightenment legacy of standardization for fixed referents.[22] In order to reconnect with the semantics of medieval armory and display as it was used in medieval literature it is necessary to identify its basic concepts through a historical and linguistic analysis.

The rise of the herald

Contemporary heraldry, despite its scolding attitude towards the chaotic medieval situation, assists us by providing the broad categories of "armory", "herald", and "heraldry". We shall consider first the emergence of a specialized kind of visual sign perceiver—the herald—and his role in relation to the perception of arms and their colour values.

The English etymology of the word "herald" is a matter of some debate. The OED notes that modern English "herald", whilst of Old French extraction ("heraud", "herault"), and found in Middle English and Medieval Latin forms ("heraldus") is probably Teutonic in origin, perhaps rooted in Old German through such terms as "hariwald" or "heriwald", meaning a wielder or commander of an army. The proper names "Chariovaldus", Old Saxon "Harriolt" and Old Norse "Haraldr" are cited as

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[22] Later heraldic attitudes atre exemplified by Oswald Barron's remark - "At the beginning they go astray seeking symbolism and an inward significance in every sign upon the painted shield." Evan Jones, *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth Century Heraldic Works*, forward by A. Wagner (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1943) xii. Barron was incensed that a writer on heraldry could discuss armorial devices that had not been used in practice but were purely hypothetical (p. xv): a telling difference showing how signs that were once meaningful works of the imagination became primarily operators within a system of factual referents for others. A modern perceiver of medieval heraldry and armorial significance would, however, be well advised to consider "...inward significance in every sign upon the painted shield".

examples of its Germanic ancestry.[23] However, if emphasis is placed on the status of these names, they do not seem to support the service aspect of the word during the Middle English period. A term such as Old English "ār", meaning "servant" or "messenger" would seem a more appropriate candidate for the later usage. Another etymological possibility for "herald" mentioned by the OED is derivation from the Old High German verb "haren" or "heren", "to cry, call". The sense links up more effectively with the public aspect of the later concept, but was unlikely to have been borrowed directly into Middle English. Fox-Davies argued that "herald" is a compound noun produced from Anglo-Saxon "here", an "army", and "wald", "strength" or "sway".[24] The idea of swaying an army or representing its strength captures a herald's vocal role at the front of an armed company, but not the later link with armory and its identification that is so much a part of our contemporary concept, which developed from the twelfth century. An equally applicable lexical candidate for a servant who proclaimed news and bore messages was "bedel" (from OE *beodan*, to "command", "decree", "summon", "proclaim", "call out" [an army]).[25] The word covers similar semantic terrain but picked up different shades of meaning, most notably an ecclesiastical connotation, on its journey towards the contemporary form, "beadle", and use for a church officer. For example, Wycliff and his followers used "bedele" to translate the Vulgate's "praeco" in Daniel 3.4: King Nebuchadnezzar's servant proclaims that all shall bow down to the idol: "...and a bedele criede myytili...", a phrase translated using "herald" in later English translations including

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[23] "Herald." (Etymology). *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989; CD-ROM v. 3.1, 2004. The OED takes examples from Markel, *German. elem. in französisch* (1887) 62.

[24] Fox-Davies 27.

[25] "Bēodan." *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. 4th ed., ed., J. R. Clark Hall, Medieval Acadaemy Reprints for Teaching (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1894, 1960, 2004) 41.

the *Bishops' Bible* (1568) and *King James Authorised Version* (1611)[26] through to recent English translations such as the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989).

However, the "herald" and persons in authority have always been linked, and the question of the precise authority of heralds was repeatedly raised and discussed during the medieval period.[27] Perhaps it is through the notion of "speaking with an authoritative voice"—whether directly as an authority or in place of an authority—that we can make the best of the contradictory early etymology and medieval semantic territory of the term "herald".

The OED takes its first references to heralds in English from fourteenth-century texts: *Guy of Warwick* and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*,[28] to which many other examples could be added.[29] The heralds depicted in these lines perform long established tasks

[26] Dan 3:4: "Then an herauld cryed aloud..." from the Vulgate, "et praeco clamabat valenter..." "Praeco" occurs in only one other place in the Vulgate and was translated "criere" in the Wycliffe Bible. ("...et praeco personuit in universo exercitu..." "...and a criere sownede in al the oost..." (1 Kings 22:36).

[27] This debate culminated in the fifteenth century with the discussion of whether heralds themselves have the authority to grant arms, as well as responsibility for the regulation of the armorial system. (See Nicholas Upton, *De Studio Militari* 142.)

[28] *Guy of Warwick* (A.) 1.3323 "At an herhaud þan asked he, 'This armed folk, what may [þis] be?"; c.1386 Chaucer, The Knight's Tale, 1.2533 "An herowd [v. rr. heraud(e), herald] on a skaffold made a hoo...And when he sawh þe pepul of noyse al stille / Thus schewid he þe mighty dukes wille." Other references to heralds and heraldry in the The Knight's Tale are at 1.2599: "The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun; / Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun."; and 1.2672, "The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie, / Been in hire wele for joye of daun Arcite."

[29] For instance, *The Sege of Melayne* (1. 1466) or *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* (1. 3013, 3029, etc). A particularly informative example of "heralds" is found in Chaucer's dream vision poem, *The House of Fame* (ll. 1320-1340). "Heraudes" (1.1321) and "pursevantes" (pursuivants) are described fulfilling all their roles, and the idea expressed of a book of arms twenty foot thick to record all the coats of arms in

and point to a definite role within court circles: a "herowd" silences the crowd prior to Duke Theseus' speech (1.2533), and then, with other heralds, retreats before trumpets are blown to mark the start of the battle between Arcite and Palamons' knights (1. 2599); the same "heraudes" are mentioned shouting Arcite's praises after his victory (1.2672). The example from *Guy of Warwick* is chosen to show a herald fulfilling another role: as a source of information for identifying knights or "armed folk" (1.3323). Such instances show how by the fourteenth century three distinct functions of the herald were in evidence in England: they played a part in organising martial events and publicising the participants; they delivered voiced instructions from nobles to massed audiences; and, they were a source of information for the identification of knights. This last aspect of the herald's role ties the concept into the development and regulation of an armorial identification system that would eventually be known as "heraldry".

However, the earliest appearances of heralds occurred some two hundred years before in French romances of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. References to proto-heralds appeared on the continent shortly after the reign of Edward I and bore witness to a new breed of courtier that emerged in relation to changing aristocratic activities and interests. Chrétien de Troyes portrays the essence of this new breed of follower in his romance of *Yvain* (*c.*1177). Sir Kay discusses the difference between cowards and heroes and concludes that it is reasonable for the coward to boast about his own deeds because:

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the House: "That they thus on her cotes beren, / For hyt to me were impossible; / Men myghte make of hem a bible / Twenty foot thykke, as y trowe. / For certyn, whoso koude iknowe / Myghte ther alle the armesseen / Of famous folk that han ybeen / In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye, / Syth first began the chevalrie" (ll. 1331-1340).

> S'il ne le dit, qui le dira?
>
> Tant se teisent d'ax li hira
>
> Qui des vaillanz crïent le ban,
>
> Et les malvés gietent au van...

[If he doesn't speak of it, who will? Everybody keeps quiet on the subject, even the herald, who calls the names of the valiant but ignores cowards".][30]

The supporter or hanger-on ("li hira") made his presence felt at tournaments by proclaiming the names and achievements of participating nobles. Further, according to Chrétien's Sir Kay, these figures reserved their efforts for the benefit of the "vaillanz" ones. For the brave man to praise himself would be unbearable, but the coward must praise himself because no one else will do it for him – hence the herald is, or at least should be, a speaker of "true worth". This offers an insight into the authority heralds would eventually hold in armorial and chivalric matters.

The herald's role as a go-between or communicator related to this public boasting, and similarly arose in response to popular public spectacles such as tournaments. Tournaments, according to one uncertain tradition, were invented or instigated by an Angevin knight, Geoffrey de Preuilly, killed in 1066 (apparently during one such event).[31] The name derives from the French term "torneiement", which referred to companies of cavalry turning to face each other prior to a charge.[32] Before the twelfth century, as Keen and others have pointed out, there is no mention

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[30] *Yvain* lines 2204-2207. Wagner (127-135) gives further sources for early heralds and heraldic activities including Jakemes' *Le Romain du Castelain de Couci et de la dame de Fayel*, and Meyer's *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*.

[31] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (London; New Haven: Yale U P, 1984) 83. Chapter five gives a valuable historical overview of the rise of tournaments and tournament culture.

[32] "Tournament." (Etymology). See OED sense 1a.

of tournaments in surviving literature. Geoffrey of Monmouth's inclusion of a description of a variety of public fighting game in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*c*.1136) has encouraged the assumption that Church antipathy towards this violent pastime had lessened enough by this time for references to be made to it in a prestigious work, implying that tournaments were a common event. Geoffrey, as we noted earlier (p.20), described the event as follows:

> Mox milites simulachrum prelii sciendo equestrem ludum component. Mulieres in edito murorum aspicientes in furiales amoris flammas ioci irritant...[33]

[Soon the soldiers composed a kind of diversion in imitation of a fight on horseback; and the ladies, placed on the top of the walls as spectators, in a sportive manner darted their amorous glances at the courtiers, the more to encourage them.]

However, before Geoffrey referred to the "imitation of a fight", he had described the knights' display system of armorial colours, one which was mirrored by the ladies of the court. This system, however, did not seem to require the presence of any official heralds or herald-like individuals:

> Quicumque uero famosus probitate miles in eadem erat. Unius coloris uestibus atque armis utebatur. Facete etiam mulieres consimilia indumenta habentes...

[Every knight in the country who was in any way famed for his bravery wore livery and armour showing his own distinctive colour; and women of fashion often displayed the same colours.][34]

The system needed no administration from perceivers "coloris armis", or if specialized servants were involved, they failed to attract Geoffrey's interest enough for him to put them into his story. The logic of the system is, however, functionally

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[33] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* ix: 14.

[34] *Historia Regum Britanniae* ix: 14; f. 98 rec.

clear. A knight needed his own particular colour to distinguish him from his peers so that his personal achievements in a tournament could be recognised, remembered, and more personal renown generated. Association with this colour was thereafter a matter of transferred prestige for others, an obvious means by which an aspiring or sympathetic lady or courtier might communicate interest in a publicly identifiable individual. The lines do not suggest, however, the establishment of a one-to-one correspondence between a knight and a particular lady – the possibility seems open for more than one lady to have worn the colour of a particular knight; nor is there any suggestion that these displays reflected a dynastic or familial aspect to a knight's identity,

Chrétien's late-twelfth-century romances are full of armorial bearings and tournaments, and, it is generally accepted, contain the earliest use of the term "herald" to describe a person who had an ability to recognise knighthood, though not by armory. In *Le Chevalier de la Charette* (*c.*1176), Lancelot is spotted by a "…fellow in his shirt-sleeves, a herald-at-arms, who had left his coat and shoes as a pledge at the tavern and come rushing in, barefoot and in a general state of undress" (ll. 5545ff.).[35] Chrétien's treatment of the new phenomenon does not give us an armorial expert. The scruffy "hyraut d'armes" is unable to discern Lancelot's identity from his shield, "…unable to recognise it or tell who owned it or who was to bear it" (ll. 5546-95),[36]

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[35] "La ou il jut si povremant, / A tant ez vos un garnemant, / Un hyraut d'armes, an chemise, Qui an la taverne avoit mise / Sa cote avoec sa chauceüre, / Et vint nuz piez grant aleüre, / Desafublez contre le vant..." (*Le Chevalier de la Charette* (LCC) ll. 5545-5551). This memorable scene is given a contemporary airing in the film *A Knight's Tale* (2001), which conflates history to present the naked herald as Geoffrey Chaucer before his writing career.

[36] "L'escu trova a l'uis devant, / Si l'esgarda; mes ne pot ester / Qu'il coneüst lui ne son mestre, / Ne set qui porter le devoit" LCC ll. 5552-5555).

and yet he does recognise Lancelot when he sees him in person (Lancelot having been wearing borrowed arms in order to obscure his identity), so much so that the herald rushes off to announce that "Now the one who will take their measure has arrived!"[37] Chrétien's herald was thus primarily a vocal supporter and communicator, but also one particularly concerned with the "true" identity of a knight at a time when the means of evaluating identity was through prowess in combat in the tournament system – establishing a hierarchy of knights whose chivalric values were evidenced by both their conduct and ability in combat against each other. Chrétien reveals the popular understanding of knightly identity based upon placing in a competition of skill and strength. His narrator comments, "That, in fact, was the first use of the expression ['one who will take their measure,'] ... It was from that herald, who taught us to say it, that we learnt it."[38] The evaluative aspect of the phrase also shows a potential correlation between secular and spiritual ideals of chivalry: each required a clearly-defined hierarchy based upon conduct.

A further source of information for the emerging public role of the herald at tournaments is found in the poems of rivalry between the newer type of servant and an older breed of official supporter – the minstrels or jongleurs.[39] One such case of

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[37] *LCC*, "Or est venuz qui l'aunera! / Or est venuz qui l'aunera!" (ll. 5573-74).

[38] *LCC*, "Nostre mestre an fu li hyra / Qui a dire le nos aprist, / Car il premierement le dist" (ll. 5582-84).

[39] "Minstrel," [Etymology]. The semantic range of the term "minstrel" in medieval forms of English includes "entertainer", "general supporter" and even "purveyor of foodstuffs". The first two senses correspond to senses 1 & 2a in the OED. The latter sense is not mentioned by the OED but is used by Langland of Haukin in *Piers Plowman* ('B' text, Passus XIII) who is incapable of performing but sells "wafers".

rivalry is exploited in Henri de Laon's satirical poem *Dit des Hyraus*,[40] written by a minstrel against the new world order of heralds taking their jobs. (Though of course the boundary line between what comprised the remits of a minstrel and a herald was unclear; their close association allowed for the terms to be occasionally used interchangeably.)[41] One "Henri de Laon" is mentioned in complimentary terms by Jacques Bretel, who had little complimentary to say about heralds in his *Le Tournoi de Chauvency* written sometime after 1285 (the date of the event from which the title derives). Wagner conjectures that he is the same "Henri de Laon, menestrel" mentioned in Paris taxation returns between 1292 and 1297. Of the tournaments of the day Henri wrote:

> ...
>
> Car tournoi ne furent pas fait
> Premiers pour gainier chevaus,
> Mais pour savoir qui ert vasaus
> Du cors pour un grant fais souffrir.

[The tournament is no longer a fighting game / Knights think first of winning prizes, / But not of proving their prowess and capacity / For the responsibilities of war.] [42]

Henri continues to compare tournaments to parliaments, because advocates are now needed so that combatants can appeal against the sun in their eyes or illegal weapons, as they do for hired champions or judicial combats ("Il leur convenra avocas / Pour le

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[40] Published in Wagner, Appendix B (19) 132. From *Le Dit des Hyraus*, ed. Arthur Långfors, *Romania*, 43 (1914), pp. 216-23, ll. 48-51.

[41] Wagner notes an example of this naming uncertainty in an Issue Roll (Michaelmas, 22 E.III) from as late as 1348, in which payment is made to one Andrew Roy Norreys (King of Heralds), Lybekin the piper and Hanekin his son, and six other "minstrels of the king".

[42] Quoted from Wagner, Appendix B (19) 132. *Le Dit des Hyraus*, pp. 216-23, ll. 48-51.

solail, pour les bastons / Partir ausi c'as champions.")[43] Ultimately, in his opinion,

tournaments were getting to be such long-drawn-out affairs that poorer knights could

not afford to compete at all, and, worst of all, that every knight had to employ several

"heralds" and could not be rid of them, so that the author himself (sardonically)

wishes that he were a herald for there is no better profession for an idle, greedy man,

in which one may talk so much and do so little - "(Et) je ne truis en mon conseil / Nul

milleur que d'estre hiraus."[44]

> ...
>
> Cuis qui n'ose riens entreprende
> Puet peu savoir et peu aprendre,
> Mais cil qui qui par raison emprent
> Il pue (t em)penre et si aprent.
> Pour çou ne me puis plus tenir,
> I(l) m'estuet hyraus devenir,
> Car paresce avec couvoitise
> Me semont souvant et atise
> Et me dist que j'ai grant mestier
> D'entrependre un legier mestier
> Ou il ait pou painne et travail...

The poem "Li Contes des Hiraus of Baudouin de Condé" from the same period (the

end of the thirteenth century) also castigates upstart heralds in an entertaining way.

Baudouin's charge against heralds is one of arrogance (overreaching their status), in

particular that of dressing above their station. The poet (a minstrel) visits the house of

a knight who has been in the past a noted patron of minstrels. The knight's servant

tells him how difficult it is nowadays to find true minstrels—there are so many

impostors going about by the name of "heralds" ("Estoit bien pares uns hiraus"). Such

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[43] Wagner 30 and Appendix B (19) 132-133. *Le Dit des Hyraus*, ll. 39-42.

[44] Wagner, Appendix B (20) 133. *Le Dit des Hyraus*, ll. 1-13.

a one is staying with the knight at the same time and resents the favourable treatment shown to Baudouin the minstrel. Baudouin remarks how heraldic clothing has changed from the early days when they used to roam the country going to tournaments ("S'on tourniast en Danemarche / Ou en Escoche ou en Yslande,") wherever they might be held (Denmark, Scotland, Ireland) and argues that now "Il ont mis jus les hiraudies / Et viestent les cotes hardies / Et les robes as chevaliers"—they put aside their rags, their "hiraudie" (coats of arms), and dress as well as knights. Meanwhile, however, to prove the point, the arrogant herald abuses him because of his preferential treatment in the knight's house and finally, after an exchange that involves the herald making a memorable statement of professional pride and loyalty to the new order, a fight ensues ("Je li demandai: 'Quels hom ieste?' / 'Quels hom je sui? Respond cil beste. / K'en tient à toi? Je sui hiraus." – "I demanded of him: 'Who are you?' / 'Who am I?' Responded that beast, 'What is that to you? I am a herald.'")[45]

These moments of polarization support Wagner's opinion that the changing situation led to the increasing importance of the herald:

> The growing elaboration of tournaments was evidently bringing the heralds, who specialised in their conduct, into increasing request and prominence at the expense of their more old-fashioned rivals the minstrels.[46]

The evidence of rivalry between heralds and minstrels may also suggest that the appearance of the herald catalysed the development of a more complex armorial system. The new supporter needed a bigger role to distinguish himself from the other

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[45] Wagner, Appendix B (21) and (22) 133-4. *Dits et Contes de Baudouin de Condé et de son fils Jean de Condé publicé*...par Aug. Scheler, Bruxelles, 1866, pp. 168-170, ll. 459-543.

[46] Wagner 30.

classes of servant; armory was such an opportunity for expertise. The form of service heralds offered was one that cast them in a completely different role from their rivals, men who were more experienced and better established in a vocal role.

The armorial function of heralds

Wagner wrote that the chief function of heraldry lay in the establishment of bloodlines between bearers of armorial devices. "True heraldry", he wrote, "I would define as the systematic use of hereditary devices centred on the shield."[47] The beginning of the revolution in armorial displays was a phenomenon of the twelfth century, a century of such classically-influenced transitions that it has been described as a period of "renaissance".[48] Significance in armorial display was an existing and developing phenomenon to which heralds became attached and accelerated, not a phenomenon originated by them. At this time there is evidence of persons other than heralds recognizing and interpreting arms, suggesting a specific role was not essential. In *Le Chevalier de la Charette* (*c*.1177), Chrétien de Troyes's narrator describes how at a tournament there were "...numerous knights [...] who interpreted for them [the ladies] the armorial bearings of their favourite knights" (ll. 5783ff).[49] However, a more exclusive connection between heralds and armorial identification eventually came about through incorporation of genealogical information into armorial displays.

The key element in the development of a system of armorial significance complicated enough to require specialist officials and perceivers was the hereditary

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[47] Wagner 12.

[48] See for example R. N. Swanson, *The Twelfth–Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999).

[49] "Et cil lor armes lor devisent / Des chevaliers que il plus present" (*Le Chevalier de la Charette* ll. 5783-4.).

use of devices and the establishment of rules of "differencing" to show familial

relationships. Early evidence of this presented by Wagner includes John of

Marmoutier's life of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, written about 1170, in

which he describes his ceremonial knighting by Henry I of England in 1127. Geoffrey

is given a shield which bears "golden lioncels". Wagner demonstrates that,

"Geoffrey's bastard grandson, William Longespee, Earl of Salisbury, later bore these

same arms, while his own son, William Fitz Empress, the younger brother of Henry

II, who died in 1163, bore a single lion."[50] By the time of the English Glover Roll (of

Arms), compiled about 1254 and containing two hundred and eighteen Coats of Arms

of lords and knights from all over the country, it is plain that blood-line connections

informed the majority of armorial displays.[51] By the end of the fourteenth century

English heralds had taken official responsibility for the armorial identity system and

its administration. Prior to this armorial matters had been the responsibility of two

military officers—the Constable and Marshall—and facilitated through their courts,

which together became known as the Court of Chivalry. Case histories of disputes and

claims to arms as "property" judged by these officers reveal that matters relating to

armorials were their exclusive preserve until the first half of the fourteenth century.[52]

The Court of Chivalry over which these officers presided (the Court of the Constable

and the Marshal) was the forerunner of the decision-making process administered by

the heralds. From 1420 Royal heralds used a common seal and in 1484 were granted a

charter of incorporation by Richard III, and given a house in Coldharbour in Upper

Thames Street, London in which to keep their records (the prototype for the College

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[50] Wagner 16.

[51] For evidence pertaining to the intervening years see Wagner 25-40.

of Arms which operates today under a charter dating from 1555 granted by Queen Mary). A key point in this transition of authority by which the heraldic office took up its adjudicative responsibility is found in the proceedings of the case of Lovel v. Morley in 1395, which refers to two Kings of Arms (the senior heralds in charge of a region), "Le Roy Vaillant heraud" and "Le Roy Aquitaigne heraud", who are called upon to give expert evidence regarding a disputed coat of arms.[53]

The development of the herald's role to include expertise with armorial displays and hence knightly identification is made evident by such expertise being called for in court. Wagner has argued persuasively that the emergence of heraldic authority in armorial disputes can be inferred from comparing different issues of a document called "The Order of the Battel in the Court of Chivalry". This provides details of administrative fees and shows that whilst from 1376-1397 the broken armour of

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[52] See G. D. Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry: a Study of Civil Law in England*, with a foreword by A.R. Wagner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959).

[53] The case was complicated – the two parties claimed the arms "dargent ove un leon rampant de sable corone et enarme dore", and both tried to use a judgement given by the Constable and Marshal which settled a similar dispute between their ancestors during the 1345-48 siege of Calais (the arms were then awarded to Robert de Morley in the light of his performance in battle, but seemingly only for his own lifetime). The original judgement reveals an early heraldic presence: one witness at the time—a certain John Broys—noted that the king himself, "to avoid the combat and other evils which might arise therefrom, took the case into his own hands, and soon after the said Constable and Marshal gave judgement according to the king's will and command. He added that owing to the number of people present in the church he himself could not hear the judgement distinctly, but immediately afterwards, he saw and heard a herald named Lancaster, at the command of the Constable and the Marshal, make public proclamation that the arms had been adjudged as stated above" (Wagner 22).

combatants was assigned to the Constable as his fee, by the fifteenth century it was given to the heralds.[54]

Thus heralds, both as messengers and emerging authorities on armory (trusted special perceivers of armorial colours) had achieved a reputable status, responsibility and a clear role in court by the late fourteenth century. Having attained this position, they also partook in the recurring lament for the decline of chivalry prevalent in the literature of the later Middle Ages. A heraldic document contained in Rawlinson MS. C. 399, fols. 76-80 (written c.1400 and mentioned above) provides an authentic glimpse of this popular sentiment in relation to heralds. The work is a letter from the King of Arms of the March of Anjou and Touraine, who we know from his own comments took up of office in May 1389.[55] The writer replies to his "seigneur" to answer seven questions that he has been asked regarding heralds. The King of Arms recounts the ceremonial creation of pursuivants (the lowest degree of officers of arms), heralds and Kings of Arms; ceremonies he has witnessed; changes in ceremonies and customs going back to the days of Julius Caesar and Alexander (two of the three Pagan Worthies); and the origins of the heralds as knights called upon by early Christian princes—akin to the calling of the twelve Apostles (heralds of the gospel of Christ)—and determines from these origins the grounds for a standard of conduct to which all such servants should aspire.

Speaking from the auspices of this noble and ancient platform Nicolas is dismayed because:

> ...it had become sadly common for pursuivants to spy out military plans for their masters whilst on embassies to the enemy—a thing contrary to faith,

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[54] Wagner 24.

[55] Wagner persuasively identifies him as Nicolas Villart, dit Calabre, roy d'Anjou (see Wagner 41).

> honour, reason and the law of the Office of Arms; that the ancient high estate of
> the office was so fallen that now every little captain of a fortress had his own
> pursuivant who wore his arms even in the king's court...[56]

Anjou King of Arms's letter outlines the duties and status of the herald at the end of the fourteenth century: he had the management of tournaments; he carried out embassies; and he had to show expertise in matters of chivalry – both spiritual and secular. Kings of Arms were favoured servants of the Kings of Europe, and Anjou's letter shows that they had become as fearful as the Church for the spiritual decline of their order and of chivalry. Interestingly however, the heraldic task of identifying arms is not mentioned by Anjou. It is possible that he subsumed the matter within the broader topic of the herald's expertise in tournaments and "chivalry", or that knowledge of the details of armorial identification was of less importance to a King of Arms than to other heralds.

Anjou's letter also shows how the spiritual aspirations of chivalry rendered it a new and important branch of learning: it could no longer be served only by servants functioning simply as supporters and mouthpieces for warriors. The later breed of socially adept heralds took on new roles in the ethico-spiritual world of warfare and even produced literary works. Sir John Chandos Herald's rhyming chronicle of the life of the Black Prince recounts how his master was one of a group of lords assigned to negotiate a treaty with the French just before the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. Sir John Chandos and the other lords failed to reach an agreement despite listening to the great Sir Geoffroi de Charny's suggestion of holding a combat between forces of one

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[56] Wagner 42.

hundred knights per side.[57] The situation shows that senior heralds lived alongside men of great influence, and perhaps explains their need to underwrite heraldry in terms of a significant past. With classical and biblical predecessors such as the Apostles and Worthies lending spiritual prestige, heralds could hold their heads high and rejoice in the value of their service to God and society's elite.

Armory and chivalry

The meanings of colours used in medieval armorial displays were established through the relationship of armory and chivalry. The complex concept of chivalry, "...the abstraction from chevalier" as Keen succinctly notes, "...is not so easily pinned down."[58] By the later Middle Ages knights could be defined in terms of certain practical criteria: having access to a warhorse and arms; having been through a knighting (dubbing) ritual of some sort; and perhaps, but not necessarily, being of aristocratic birth. "Chivalry", on the other hand, seen in terms of the range of the term's uses in the Middle Ages, came to relate to something more: to have a spiritual aspect to its meaning, and signify certain values, beliefs and attitudes. The OED takes its samples of the word's use from the thirteenth century onwards: they range from practical military applications (including for a mounted knight; a body of men-at-arms; the main strength of an army; the skills and practices of a knight) to those of an evaluative nature (including for a feat of valour; prowess in war; the highest honour of knightly prowess; and crucially, for the character of a knight).[59] The semantic terrain

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[57] See Richard Barber, ed. and trans., *The Life and Campaigns of the Black Prince from Contemporary Letters, Diaries and Chronicles, including Chandos Herald's Life of the Black Prince* (Woodbridge: The Boydell P, 1979, rpt. 2002) 96.

[58] Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (London; New Haven: Yale UP, 1984) 2.

[59] "Chivalry," [Etymology]. OED senses 1-4.

(and its crossing-over from facts to values) helps us access medieval armorial symbolism and the place of colour within it. Catalan theologian Ramon Llull, a Franciscan monk and theologian born on the island of Majorica (c.1232-1316), for example, decided the definition in terms of the hierarchy of animal kinds that were fit to serve the elite members of the highest order of mortal creation (mankind):

> And after was enquired and serched / what beest was moost couenable moost fayre / most couragyous and moost stronge to susteyne trauaylle / and moost able to serue the man / ¶ And thenne was founden / that the Hors was the moost noble / and the moost couenable to serue man / And by cause that emŏg alle the beestes the man chaas the hors / & gaf hym to this same man that was soo chosen amonge a thowsand men / For after the hors whiche is called Chyual in Frensshe is that man named Chyualler whiche is a knight in Englyssh / Thus the moost noble man was gyuen the moost noble beest.[60]

According to Llull, knights rode horses because horses, like knights, were intrinsically "noble" creatures.[61] He later describes the horse's symbolic meaning "to sygnefye noblesse of courage" and that a knight should be "wel horsed and hyhe / is by cause he may be sene fro ferre" (p. 84). Llull saw chivalry as both a social rank and set of responsibilities, reflected by its theologically endorsed position within the divinely ordered cosmology.

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[60] Alfred T. P. Byles, ed. *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*: Translated and printed by William Caxton from a French version of Ramon Lull's "*Le Libre Del Ordre De Cauayleria*", Together with Adam Loutfut's Scottish Transcript (Harleian MS. 6149), Early English Text Society, Original Series 168 (London: OUP-Humphrey Milford, 1926) 15-16.

[61] "Noble," [Etymology]. OED senses 1, 2 & 6. Via OF. *noble*, from L. *nōbilis*, f. the stem (g) *no-* "to know". Whilst earliest uses relate to high birth and illustriousness, the root of the term lies in a distinction between those with knowledge and understanding and those without such luxury.

Llull influentially encapsulated the beliefs and attitudes comprising a spiritual understanding of knighthood in his *Libre de l'orde de cavalleria* (*c*.1280).[62] Llull constructed a didactic account of virtues and behaviour to be emulated by the Christian knightly class. He wrote numerous other religious works (at least three hundred) including subject encyclopaedias and tracts in Latin, Arabic and Catalan, but it was his theological views on chivalry that were to have the most impact.[63] The central narrative device of the work employs an "old bird teaching a young bird to fly" motif. A squire, whilst on his way to seek to be granted knighthood at court, happens upon a hermit living in a forest. The hermit, once a wise knight himself who maintained the order of chivalry with honour, had sought solitude after his strength left him in old age. The hermit undertakes the instruction of the squire in the order and meaning of knighthood believing, "For noo knight maye not loue the ordre / ne that whiche apperteyneth to his ordre / but yf he can knowe the deffaultes that he dothe ageynst the ordre of chyualrye."[64] The hermit instructs the squire in practical and moral wisdom regarding a knight's responsibilities to others and to God. Llull incorporates into this an account of the symbolic significances of a knight's weapons and equipment, and their relations to the overall chivalric model of behaviour and attitudes. The central metaphor for the sixth chapter of Llull's treatment of

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[62] The text was translated and copied throughout medieval Europe and became one of the first books to be printed in English by Caxton in 1484, along with an epilogue appealing for a return to the values and understanding of knighthood which Llull had espoused (already fearing their neglect) some two hundred years earlier.

[63] For biographical details and an overview of scholarship on Llull see Anthony Bonner, trans., *Selected Works of Ramon Llull 1232-1316* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985).

[64] Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 10.

knighthood, which treats a knight's armory, derived from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 6:11-18:

> (11) Clothe you with the armere of God, that ye moun stonde ayens aspiynges of the deuel. (12) For whi stryuyng is not to vs ayens fleisch and blood, but ayens princis and potestatis, ayens gouernours of the world of these derknessis, ayens spiritual thingis of wickidnesse, in heuenli thingis. (13) Therfor take ye the armere of God, that ye moun ayenstonde in the yuel dai; and in alle thingis stonde perfit. (14) Therfor stonde ye, and be gird aboute youre leendis in sothefastnesse, and clothid with the haburioun of riytwisnesse, (15) and youre feet schood in making redi of the gospel of pees. (16) In alle thingis take ye the scheld of feith, in which ye moun quenche alle the firy dartis of `the worste. (17) And take ye the helm of helthe, and the swerd of the Goost, that is, the word of God. (18) Bi al preier and bisechyng preie ye al tyme in spirit, and in hym wakinge in al bisynesse, and bisechyng for alle hooli men, and for me...
>
> Ephesians 6.11-18, Wycliffite Bible (c.1385)

Llull extended Paul's metaphors to find theological associations for more items in a twelfth-century knight's armory, also applying more detailed significances to them. He reasoned in doing so that the offices of the knight and the priest were directly comparable:

> Thenne that whiche the preest reuestythh hym whan he syngeth the masse / hath somme sygnefyaunce / whiche concordeth to his office / And the office of preesthode & of chyualry haue grete concordaunce / Therfor thordre of chyualry requyreth that al that whiche is needful to a knight / as touchynge the vse of his office haue somme sygnefyaunce / By the whiche is sygnefyed the noblesse of Chyualrye and of his ordre / [65]

On this basis Llull discusses the significance of the sword (p.76); the spear or lance (p.77); helmet (p.77); hauberk (p.78); "chauces" or leg harnesses (p.79); spurs (p.77);

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[65]Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 76.

gorget (p.80); mace (p.80); the "mysericorde" or knife (p.81); shield (p.81); gauntlets (p.82); saddle (p.83); horse (p.71); reigns (p.72); bardings (p.73); surcoat (p.74); insignia of arms (p.74) and banner (p.75). He employs a combination of secular and spiritual chivalric reasons to present each item. For example,

> Vn to a knight is gyuen a Swerd / whiche is made in semblaunce of the crosse for to sygnefye hou our lord god vaynquysshed in the Crosse the dethe of humayn lygnage / to the whiche he was luged for the synne of oure fyrste fader Adam / Al in lyke wyse a knyght oweth to vaynquysshe and destroye the enemyes of the crosse / by the swerde / For chyualrye is to mayntene Iustyce / And therfore is the swerd made cuttynge on bothe sydes / to sygnefye that the knyght ought with the swerd mayntene chyualrye and Iustyce.[66]

Llull saw and combined two aspects of the "swerd of the Goost, that is, the word of God" (Eph 6.17): its physical status as a weapon in a knight's hand with sharp edges designed for cutting flesh-and-blood enemies, and its symbolic status as a type of the Cross with twin edges representing the ideals of justice and chivalry. Putting the two together, the knight is to fight the enemies of the Cross, qua a weapon of the Cross. He applied this dual aspectual view to the knight's shield and saw in it the symbolic embodiment of the knight himself:

> The shelde is gyuen to the knyght to sygnefye the offyce of a knyght / For in lyke wyse as the knyght putteth his sheld bytwene a hym and his enemy / Ryght soo the knyght is the moyen bytwene the prynce and the peple / And lyke as the stroke falleth vpon the shelde and saueth the knyght Ryght so the knyght ought to apparaylle hym / & presente his body to fore his lord / whan he is in peryl hurte or taken /[67]

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[66] Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 76-77.

[67] Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 82.

Llull summed up knightly identity by the shield, representative of the knight's protective role in society. The knight shielded his prince and his subjects from enemies with his own body, and just as a prince or lord was his superior in the earthly hierarchy, so a knight should "present his body" in submission to God – the pinnacle of the spiritual hierarchy. For Llull a knight was, in fact, a living shield and the ultimate embodiment of the biblical symbol of faith (Eph. 6.16).

Immediately after the establishment of the shield as a "type" identifier, the individual's "token" identity as a specific instance of the "type" is treated. Llull defines the coat of arms as the knight's identity badge, ascribing his individual place within chivalry and providing the means of accountability for his knightly conduct:

A cote is gyuen to a knyght / in sygnefyauce of the grete trauayalles that a knyght must suffre for to honoure chyualrye / For lyke as the Cote is aboue the other garnementes of yron / and is in the rayne and receyueth the strokes to fore the hawberke and the other armures / Ryght so is a kny3t chosen to susteyne gretter trauailles than another man / And alle the men that ben vnder the noblesse of hym / and in his garde ought whan they haue nede to haue recours to hym / And the knyght ought to deffende them after his power / and the kny3tes ought rather to be taken / hurte or dede / than the men that ben in their garde / Thenne as it is so ryght grete & large chyualrye for to kepe theyr londes and their (p.88) peple / A token or esseygnal of armes is gyuen to a knyghte in his shelde and in his cote / by cause that he be knowen in the bataylle / And that he be allowed yf he be hardy / & yf he do grete & fayr feates of armes / and yf he be coward faulty / or recreaunt / the enseygnal is gyuen to hym by cause that he be blamed / vytupered and repreuuyd / Thessesygnal is also gyuen to a knyght / to thende that he be knowen yf he be a frende or enemy of chyualrye / wherfor euery knyght ought to honoure his esseygnal / þat he be kepte fro blame / the whiche blame casteth the knyght & putteth hym out of chyualry / The baner is gyuen to a kyng a pince baron & to a kni3t Banerere / whiche hath vnder hym many knyghtes / to sygnefye that a knyght ou3t to mayntene thonour of his lord / and of his londe. For a knyght is loued / (p.89) preysed and honoured of the

folke of worship of the Royamme of his lord / And yf they doo dishonour of the londe wherein they be / and of their lord / Such kny3tes ben more blamed and shamed than other men / For lyke as for honoure they ought to be more preysed / by cause that in them ought to be the honoure of a prynce and of the knyght and of the lord / In lyke wyse in their dishonour / they ought to be more blamed / And bycause that for their latchesse falshede ot treason ben kynges and pryncess more disheryted than by ony ather men.[68]

Llull's readers were to regard the knight's "cote", bearing an individual knight's device, as imbued with deep significance: it signified a knight's special role as operating within a system of public honour. This publicly identifiable coat was both the reward for a knight's "grete trauayalles" in honouring chivalric values, and the embodiment of them. In effect, the armorial device is here conceived as representing the knight's "true" identity both as a knight (type) and an individual within knighthood (a token of the type). On the knight's shield is a "token or signal" of arms so that he can be known in battle – a practical measure required so that his deeds may be recognised as either honourable or not, placing him as "a frende or enemy of chyualrye". The logical result was that the knight's "esseygnal" was his mark of adherence to the chivalric code and hence should be honoured as if it embodied the values itself: "wherfor euery knyght ought to honoure his esseygnal." The marks bore an additional token/type identity for the token (an individual knight) of the type (knighthood): armorial devices were tokens of individual members of chivalry, but together formed another type-identity phenomenon. The species of tokens for a "token of a type" were a new "type". Llull transferred the system up the social scale to encompass banners signifying the honour of a prince or lord or greater knight, and connected them with the honour of a whole land.

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[68] Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 87-89.

For Llull armorial identification was intimately connected to a knight's conduct within chivalry, rendering knightly honour subject to public scrutiny. Armorial typology imbued the knight's identification with personal honour. A coat of arms "is" but also increasingly "becomes" the honour of a knight, a lord, and a land or dynasty. In short, Llull's treatment of armory encapsulated a desire to give outward, extrinsic signs intrinsic values and significance – and so make the hidden "spiritual" identities of knights into measurable phenomena.

While Llull's work was extremely influential—it was among those works chosen by Caxton to be printed in English, testifying to its popularity over a period of nearly three hundred years—it was by no means the only work of its kind. A slightly earlier work, also important for understanding literary approaches to chivalry was Raoul de Hodenc's *Le Roman des Eles* ("The Romance of the Wings") written around 1210.[69] This short poem (502 lines) survives in six extant MSS. written in various French dialects including Franco-Picard, Walloon and Anglo-Norman. The poet, like Llull, like Anjou King of Arms, Sir Thomas Malory, and numerous other lamenters of chivalric standards for the next three centuries, decries the poor quality of the knighthood he has witnessed, and offers his romance as a model for the qualities a knight should have (ll. 1-143). Raoul imagined that the state of lofty esteem to which a knight should rise is only possible through his possession of two wings: "Larguesce doit ester la destre / Et la senestre cortoisie" ("The right one should be liberality and the left one courtesy" [l.144]),[70] consisting of seven feathers each. The poet recounts what each feather symbolizes as an aspect of these two central virtues of knighthood.

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[69] See Keith Busby, trans., and ed., *Le Roman des Eles by Raoul De Hodenc and L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, Utrecht Publications in General and Comparative Literature Volume 17 (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1983) 15.

However, what is primarily significant for the present study is the poet's comments on the means of identification of knighthood (as type and token identities). He asserts:

> Si est que de chevalerie
>
> Li plusor ne s'entendent mie,
>
> Ne ne sevent, si est forfais,
>
> De chevalier por qu'il fu fais,
>
> Ne qu'a lor non apartendroit
>
> A fere, quar lor non par droit
>
> Est propres nons de gentillece.
>
> Tant est li nons par sa hautece
>
> Seur toz autres hauz nons qui soient,
>
> Que se il bien reconnoissoient
>
> Com li nons est de haut afere
>
> N'oseroient. – Por qoi? – Por honte.

[Many (knights) have no understanding of knighthood, nor do they know, culpable as it is, why the knight was created, nor what it is incumbent on their own name to do, for their name rightly speaking is the true name of nobility. Because of its very loftiness, it stands far above all other lofty names, that if they were to recognise its lofty nature, they would not dare do some things they do now. Why? – For shame.][71]

This dilemma – that knights did not know or understand "what" or "who" they really were (the same condition that concerned Llull) led Raoul de Hodenc to make a case for the real measurers of knighthood not to be knights themselves. The best measurers were those servants who knew the knights best through their close working experience. By their proximity to knights, heralds, minstrels and storytellers are deemed to be in a much better position to recognise knighthood authoritatively, in both a mundane sense of identifying persons by armorial displays, and a quasi-

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[70] Busby 162.

[71] Raoul de Hodenc, *Roman des Eles*, lines 33-45; Busby's translation p. 161.

mystical sense of being able to see "true" knighthood in terms of chivalrous behaviour:

> Li chevalier, a droit esgart,
>
> Cil que n'ont de lor non regart,
>
> Ne connoissent, si est granz deus,
>
> Eus ne lor non, ne lor non eus.
>
> – Ques connoist donc? – Li conteor,
>
> Li hiraut, li viëleor;
>
> De ceus dist Raouls de Houdanc
>
> Qu'il sont apelé marestanc
>
> De chevalerie esprover.

[Those knights who have no regard to their name [or "type" identity] sadly do not understand it, nor does it acknowledge them. — Who can recognise them, then? — The tellers of tales, heralds, players of vielles; Raul de Hodenc says of them that they are called touchstones for testing knighthood.][72]

The poet advocates that "true" knighthood, or that to which the name with full honour should be attached, can only be discerned by people outside knighthood, in particular those who really "knew" knights from long experience (e.g. the poet) and could "measure" them according to an ideal. The nature of what "true" knighthood should entail involved, therefore, a harmony of external signs and internal values. Trained witnesses of knighthood functioned as authorities who could read the behavioural signs as another kind of armorial display, as significant. Audiences who listened to perceptually privileged individuals (e.g. in Raul's poems) could learn how to discern "true" knighthood for themselves from them, so that the poems also operated as another kind of armorial display.

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[72] Raoul de Hodenc, *Roman des Eles*, ll. 51-59.

Armorial colours in spiritual chivalry

Armorial colours and associations were linked to "true knighthood" along ideological lines, the most prevalent of which was the Christian model of spiritual knighthood. Two texts in particular help show how a religiously rooted, chromatic aspect to armorial perception was in operation from the twelfth century. The first is a text already briefly noted in the first part of this study – the Cistercian St Bernard of Clairvaux's polemical tract *De laude novae militiae* (*In Praise of the New Knighthood*) from c.1130, which presented an entirely achromatic, "anti-display" ideal for the newly instituted Temple knights in Jerusalem. Bernard reduces the colourful armorial displays of "worldly" knights to the vainglorious boastings of a sinful nature, and perceives in their costly brightness and visual impact only evidence of (damnable) effeminacy and spiritual weakness:

> Quis ergo, o milites, hic tam stupendus error, quis furor hic tam non ferendus, tantis sumptibus ac laboribus militare, stipendiis vero nullis, nisi aut mortis, aut criminis? Operitis equos sericis, et pendulos nescio quos panniculos loricis superinduitis; depingitis hastas, clypeos et sellas; frena et calcaria auro et argento, gemmisque circumornatis: et cum tanta pompa pudendo furore et [Col.0923C] impudenti stupore ad mortem properatis. Militaria sunt haec insignia, an muliebria potius ornamenta? Numquid forte hostilis mucro reverebitur aurum, gemmis parcet, serica penetrare non poterit?[73]

[What then, O knights, is this stupendous misapprehension and what this unbearable impulse which bids you fight with such pomp and pains, and all to no purpose save death and sin? You drape your horses in silk, and plume your armour with I know not what sort of rags; you paint your shields and your saddles; you adorn your bits and spurs with gold and silver and precious stones, and then in all this pomp, with shameful wrath and fearless folly, you charge to your death. Are these the trappings of

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[73] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi Liber*, *Patrologia Latina* 182, ed. J. P. Migne 1854 (Alexandria, VA, 1996) Col.0923B-C.

a warrior or are they not the trinkets of a woman? Do you think the swords of your foes will be deflected by your gold, spare your jewels or fail to pierce your silks?][74]

Bernard, in the strongest possible terms, splices practical criticism of the functional weakness of pompous garb (apparently unable to protect a knight from physical danger) into more serious spiritual criticism, presenting such dress as indicative of a knight's sinful nature destining him to death on the battlefield, perhaps an allusion to the "wages of sin" (Rom 6.23). In the fourth chapter of the tract Bernard introduces a contrasting portrait of a gaily dressed yet demonically corrupt knighthood with its spiritually approvable opposite as exemplum:

> Sed jam ad imitationem seu ad confusionem nostrorum militum, non plane Deo, sed diabolo [Col.0926A] res et vitam; qualiter in bello domive conversentur: quo palam fiat, quantum ab invicem differant Dei saeculique militia...[75]

[And now as an exemplar, or at least an embarrassment, for those of our knights who are apparently fighting not for God, but for the devil, we will briefly set forth the life and virtues of these knights of Christ...][76]

Bernard described his divinely sanctioned warriors as disciplined and obedient to authority: they shunned excess in raiment and rations, were cheerful and sober, led monk-like lives without wives or children, owned no property but worked hard for their bread, lacked distinction of rank between persons, and rejected secular knightly pastimes such as games of dice, chess, hunting, falconry, jesters, wizards, bards,

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[74] *Bernard of Clairvaux, In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem*, trans. M. Conrad Greenia, Cistercian Fathers Series, 19B (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977, 2000) 37.

[75] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi Liber*, Col. 0925D-0926A.

[76] Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood* 45.

minstrels, and jousts as vain and deceitful follies.[77] Bernard approves of the way the new knights wear their hair short (in deference to Paul's stipulation in 1 Cor 11:14), unadorned and unwashed. Furthermore and directly contrasting with secular knights, in battle the Temple knights' values were demonstrated by their transformed behaviour and appearance:

> Porro imminente bello, intus fide, foris ferro, non auro se muniunt: quatenus armati, et non ornati, hostibus metum incutiant, non provocent [Col.0926D] avaritiam. Equos habere cupiunt fortes et veloces, non tamen coloratos aut phaleratos: pugnam quippe, non pompam, victoriam, sed non gloriam cogitantes, et studentes magis esse formidini quam admirationi. Deinde non turbulenti aut impetuosi, et quasi ex levitate praecipites, sed consulte atque cum omni cautela et providentia se ipsos ordinantes, et disponentes in aciem, juxta quod de patribus scriptum est. Veri profecto Israelitae procedunt ad bella pacifici.[78]

[When a battle is at hand, they arm themselves interiorly with faith and exteriorly with steel rather than with gold. Thus armed and not embellished, they strike fear rather than greed in the enemy. They seek out strong, swift horses, rather than those which are dappled ("coloratos") and well-plumed. They set their minds on fighting to win rather than on parading for show. They take no thought for glory but seek to be formidable rather than flamboyant. Then, too, they are not quarrelsome, reckless, or impulsively foolhardy, but they draw up their ranks deliberately, prudently, and providently, arraying themselves in the line of battle as we read about in the Fathers. Indeed the true Israelites march into battle as men of peace.][79]

The ultimate expression of knightly identity, horsed combat, is reappraised by Bernard explicitly to deny the secular practice of seeking renown and glory in battle.

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[77] Bernard of Clairvaux , *In Praise of the New Knighthood* 45-7.

[78] Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi Liber*, Col. 0926C-0926D.

[79] Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood* 47.

Steel replaces gold as the central motif of this reversal – hence the new knights of faith do not present themselves as rich targets for capture and ransom, and a key point of the tournament system is eradicated at a stroke. The knights' horses—the noblest animals to serve man and grounds for the existence of chevaliers in the first place— are selected for their effectiveness rather than beauty, reinforcing the importance placed on spiritually approved practical values over appearances. (The rejection in particular of "equos coloratos" echoes Bernard's general campaign against colour and perhaps hints towards a reading of Zec 6.2-3 – see below.) At the moment before battle, the ranks of Bernard's Temple knights are depicted as quiet, deliberate and prudent in their lines before their enemies; a picture of calm composure testifying to their fundamentally peaceful nature as opposed to secular knights. The imagery reflects the prophet Joel describing an avenging army of the Lord sent to punish the faithlessness of his people: "They shall run like mighty men, they shall clime the wall like men of war, and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. (8) Neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded" (Joel 2.7, KJAV). Bernard's knights were to be thought of as God's new chosen people of Israel – fighting for their convictions and Holy Land, but doing so in an orderly manner like the forces of heaven (see also 1 Mac 4.41; 2 Mac 8.23 & 12.20; Jn 1.47; Gen 42.31; Mat 5.9).[80] Bernard also clearly confronts the values of chivalric appearance in this passage; his stance puts him into conflict with the practices of secular knighthood and in particular their armorial displays. Colour, at root the very appearance of sin, was to be despised – leaving black, white, and the red of martyrdom as the only options for a faithful knight.

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[80] See Bernard of Clairvaux, In *Praise of the New Knighthood* 47n24, n25, & n26.

Also useful for understanding the colour values of spiritual armory in twelfth century Europe is *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, a text anonymously written at about the same time as Hodenc's *Roman des Eles* and showing how certain colours held a symbolic value and importance for spiritually-rooted chivalry.[81] The text survives in ten medieval MSS from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (six in England, four on the continent); its subject was an incident that occurred (possibly historical, but this has not been proven) in 1178 or 1179: the capture and release of a French knight named Hue de Tabarie by Saladin during a skirmish on the banks of the Liani River near Beaufort Castle. An early tradition that might have inspired the poet presents one Homfroy de Toron (Constable of Jerusalem) as knighting Saladin, who had been inspired by his valour during the battle and requested instruction in the order of knighthood.[82] After a few lines that endorse the wisdom of learning from the example of worthy men, the poet introduces his main subject by asserting:

> Des or mes voudrai paine metre
> A rimoier et a conter

[81] Busby writes, "As far as I am able to tell, these two texts [*Le Roman des Eles*, by Raoul De Hodenc and the anonymous *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*] are of roughly the same date (the first quarter of the thirteenth century), and are the two earliest poems on the theory of knighthood in Old French." See Keith Busby, ed, *Le Roman des Eles by Raoul De Hodenc and L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, v. Busby argues that the theory of knighthood in the poem can be discerned from elements scattered throughout texts in Old French, particularly the chanson de geste and romances, but that, "The usefulness of *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* for the literary historian is that it presents in a convenient and compact form the essence of these disparate passages whilst simultaneously demonstrating a new mystico-symbolic tendency in the treatment of knighthood."

[82] For more details on these persons and the various versions of the dubbing of Saladin see *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, ed., Roy Temple House. Diss. Chicago, 1918; rpt. in *Bulletin of the University of Oklahoma*, NS 162 (Feb. 1919), Extension Series, 48, pp. 1-6.

Un conte qu'ai oï conter,

D'un roi qu'en terre paienie

Fu jadis de grant seignorie,

Et fu molt Sarrasins:

Il ot a non Salhadins.

A icel tens de celui roi

Firent aus genz de nostre loi

Sarrasin sovent grant domage,

Par lor orgueil, par lor outrage,

Et tant que une foiz avint

Qu'a la bataille uns princes vint.

Hues ot non de Tabarie,

S'avoit o lui grant compaignie

Des chevaliers de Galilee,

Quar sire estoit de la contree.

Assez firent d'armes le jor,

Mes il ne plot au Creator,

C'on apele le Roi de Gloire,

Que li nostre eüssent victoire,

Que la fu pris li princes Hues,

S'en fu menez parmi les rues

Tout droit devant Salahadin.

(ll. 12-35)

[Henceforth I wish to put my effort into rhyming and relating a tale I have heard told, of a king who was of great lordship in pagan lands, and who was a very loyal Saracen: his name was Saladin. In the time of this king, the Saracens inflicted much damage on the people of our faith, by their pride and by their outrage, until on one occasion a prince came to the battle. His name was Hue of Tabarie, and he had with him a great company of the knights of Galilee, for he was lord of that country. They did great deeds of arms that day, but it did not please the creator, Him who is called the King of

Glory, for our men to have the victory, for Prince Hue was taken there, and led through the streets straight before Saladin.][83]

The poet describes Saladin's offer to release Prince Hue in return for a ransom of one hundred thousand bezants (ll. 44-48). Prince Hue agrees and accepts the conditions that he will return with the money within two years or else return to prison (ll. 59-69). Before allowing him to leave, however, Saladin takes the Prince aside and beseeches him:

> "Hues", fet il, "par cele foi
> Que tu doiz au Dieu de ta loi,
> Fai moi sage, quar j'ai talent
> De savoir trestout l'errement
> (Je savroie molt volentiers)
> Comment l'en fet les chevaliers."
>
> (ll. 75-80)

["Hue, he said, by the faith you owe to the god of your religion, apprise me, for I desire to know fully the manner (I would willingly know) in which knights are made."]

At first Hue responds negatively because:

> Sainte ordre de chevalerie
> Seroit en vous mal emploïe,
> Quar vous estes vieus en la loi
> De bien, de baptesme, et de foi;
> Et grant folie entreprendroie
> Se un fumier de dras de soie
> Voloie vestir et couvri
> Qu'il ne peüst jamés puïr.
>
> (ll. 83-90)

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[83] This and subsequent translations of *L 'Ordene de Chevalerie* are from Busby's edition, pp. 170-5.

[The holy order of knighthood would be ill employed in you, for you are vile as regards the religion of goodness, baptism and faith; and I would be undertaking great folly if I were to wish to bedeck and cover a dunghill with silken sheets so that it could never stink.]

Having established a culturally necessary gulf of absolute inequality and antipathy between the Christian world and the damnable world of followers of Mohammed, the poet gets on with the real purpose of his story: instructing a model heathen in the values and meanings of the Christian martial world. It is hoped that this "best of" infidels might be impressed and seek to identify (or judge) himself by the Christian Church's righteous standards. This event, for a twelfth-century audience radical yet enthralling, is authorised through Saladin's power over Hue: "There is no wrong in this, for I hold you in my prison, and you must do my will, even if it displeases you."[84] Hue relents: "Sire, since I must do it, and since no counsel is of any avail, I will do it quite without resistance."[85] Hue proceeds to instruct Saladin in the rituals and symbolism of Christian knighthood, a process which highlights certain elements of costume rhetoric encoding chivalric colour values. The description of symbolic elements, which takes up the majority of the poem, is summarised below:

(1) He [Saladin] had his hair and beard and face well prepared (proper for a new knight); (ll. 104-105).

(2) He [Hue] made him [Saladin] enter a bath. (...) "...just as the child leaves the font free from sin when he is brought from baptism, Sire, so you should leave this bath without any wickedness, for knighthood should bathe in honesty, in courtesy, and in goodness, and be beloved of all the people" (ll. 104-125).

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[84]"Il n'i a point de mesprison, / Quar je vous tieng en ma prison, / Si vous covient mon voloir fere, / Mes qu'il vous doie bien desplere" (ll. 97-100).

[85] "Sire, puis que fere l'estuet, / Ne nus consaus valoir n'I puet, / Je le ferai tout sanz dangier" (ll. 101-103).

(3) Hue took him out of the bath and laid him in a fair bed. (...) "Sire, this bed tells you that by one's chivalry one should win a bed in Paradise, the kind that God grants to his friends, for this is the bed of rest; he who will not lie in it is indeed foolish" (ll. 126-136).

(4) When Saladin had lain a little while on the bed, Hue raised him up and clad him in white ("blans") sheets made from of linen. (...) "Sire...these white sheets that are close to your flesh give you to understand that a knight should always strive to maintain the cleanliness of his flesh if he wishes to come to God" (ll. 137-147).

(5) Afterwards he clad him in a red ("vermeille") robe. (...) "Sire, this robe gives you to understand, quite simply, that you should spill your blood in order to defend God and his holy law. This is meant by the red." (ll. 147-157).

(6) Afterwards, he put on him fine hose of black ("noire") silk. "Sire...I surely give you all this as a reminder by way of these black overshoes that you always have in mind death, and the ground where you will lie, whence you came, and whither you will go. Your eyes should look to this, so that you do not fall into pride, for pride should not reign or reside in a knight; he should always strive for candour" (ll. 160-173).

(7) Then Hue arose and girded on him a small white ("blanche") belt. "Sire this belt signifies that you should preserve in holiness your pure flesh, your loins, and your whole body, and keep your body pure, as in a state of virginity. You should not practise lechery, for a knight should cherish his body and keep it pure so that he does not incur shame thereby, for God much hates suchlike filth" (174-188).

(8) Afterwards, Hue attached to his feet a pair of spurs (...) "...as you would want your horse to be inclined to run when you spur him on, to go everywhere at your will...so these spurs, gilded ("doré") all about, mean that you should always be of a mind to love God all your life, for thus do all knights who love him deeply from the heart they always serve him with a tender heart" (ll. 189-204).

(9) Then Hue girded the sword on him. (...) "...this is safeguard against the attack of the enemy. Just as you see two edges that tell you that a knight should always possess justice and loyalty together, so this means, it seems to me, that he should protect the poor man so that the rich man cannot harm him, and support the weak man so the stronger man cannot bring him to shame. This is a deed of charity (ll. 205-221).

(10) Then Hue placed on his head a cap which was all white ("blanche"), and told him the meaning of it: "Sire... just as you see this cap which is placed on your head to be without filth, and fair and white and clean and pure, so at the day of judgement you should promptly give back the soul to God, free from the sins of the body, pure and untainted by the follies unceasingly committed by the body in order to be deserving of Paradise, rich in delight; for no tongue can relate, nor ear hear, nor heart imagine the great beauties of Paradise that God grants to his friends" (ll. 222-240).

A last element is also mentioned—the official accolade given after a knight is dubbed, a reminder of "him who dubbed him and ordained him" (ll. 248-250)[86], but which Hue dares not give Saladin because he is his prisoner. Instead, Hue teaches the four principles a new knight should possess and maintain all his life if he would reach God ("S'il a Dieu veut ja parvenir" l. 262): that he should not witness false judgement or be near treason, and if he cannot prevent such evil he must turn away (ll. 265-268); he should on no account deprive a lady (dame) or damsel (damoisele) of his protection (ll. 269-274); he should be abstemious and fast on Fridays in memory of Jesus who was struck by the lance for our redemption, and who pardoned Longinus (ll. 277-284); finally, he should hear mass everyday (ll. 285-300).

This seemingly extreme religious significance for knighthood in *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* followed twelfth-century cultural sensibilities by requiring a ritual (the equivalent of priestly ordination) to recognise the spiritual nature of the office. The knight is portrayed as a type of "military Christ" who seeks to imitate the incarnate

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[86] "...c'est remembrance / De celui qui l'a adoubé / A chevalier et ordené, / Mes mien e la vous donron, / Quar je sui ci en vo prison... (ll. 248-52).

deity by undertaking a life of holy warfare against the devil.[87] The importance and need for such a ceremony perhaps arose as a micro-representation of the spiritual and physical struggle needed to maintain the faith at a time when, on the macro level, it was perceived as under constant threat from ungodly forces. The "holy" aspect of chivalry originated from the same period as, and became entrenched because of, the Crusades.

Of more interest to this study than the flagrant political propaganda of the text is its colour symbolism relating to a spiritual aspect for medieval armory. According to Prince Hue's account of dubbing in *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, which became a template followed for centuries, "blanche", "noire", "vermeille", and "doré" are significant descriptors for the various pieces of clothing and accoutrements provided for a prospective knight undergoing the ceremony. The starting point for these significant colours cannot have been Ephesians 6, which we have previously seen employed for armorial allegories, because the passage contains no colour references. Two other scriptural passages from the genre of Apocalyptic writing probably helped the author encode symbolic colours in *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*. In the sixth chapter of the minor prophet Zechariah's account of his apocalyptic vision, various divine messengers are described going out on two missions – the first to acquire news, the second to bring about divine judgement:

(1) et conversus sum et levavi oculos meos et vidi et ecce quattuor quadrigae

egredientes de medio duorum montium et montes montes aerie (2) in quadriga

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[87] The "Christ-knight" motif recurs to great effect in much medieval literature e.g. in the fourteenth-century Middle English works *Piers Plowman* (esp. Passus XVIII and XIX) and *The Ancrene Wisse* (part VII, see *The Ancrene Wisse*, trans. M. B. Salu (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1990), p. 173.

prima equi rufi et in quadriga secunda equi nigri (3) et in quadriga tertia equi

albi et in quadriga quarta equi varii fortes.

(Zec 6.1-3, Jerome's Vulgate, c. 384)

(1) And Y was conuertid, and reiside myn iyen, and siy, and lo! foure horsid

cartis goynge out of the myddil of tweyne hillis, and the hillis weren hillis of

bras. (2) In the firste foure horsid carte weren reed horsis, and in the secounde

foure horsid carte weren blac horsis; (3) and in the thridde foure horsid carte

weren white horsis, and in the fourthe foure horsid carte weren dyuerse horsis,

and stronge.

(Zec 6.1-3, Wycliffite Bible, c. 1385)

(1) And I turned, and lift up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came four

chariots out from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of

brass. (2) In the first chariot were red[88] horses, and in the second chariot, black[89]

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[88] The Hebrew term אדם (ādōm) takes its meaning from the rushing of blood to the face, i.e., the blush

causing a rosy colour (see Strong's H119 and H122). It is found in five other places in the Old

Testament (OT): Gen 24:30 describing Jacob's potage; Numbers 19:2 describing an unblemished heifer

for sacrifice; 2 Kings 3:22 in comparison with blood; Isaiah 63:2 for a garment coloured like who

treads wine, and Song of Solomon 5:12 to describe a beloved who is white and red/ruddy. The Vulgate

translates this with "rufi" (from ruber) which can also be used for facial blushing (rubor) as well as

relating to rubus – a blackberry; Wyclif (1382) translates this "reed"; the Bishops' Bible [BB] (1568),

the Geneva Bible [GB] (1587) and King James Authorised Version [KJAV] (1611) all use "red", which

in early OE (réad) has associations with fire, dawn, blood and certain flowers and ripe fruits (e.g., rose,

poppy, apple).

[89] The Hebrew שחור שחור (H7838) derives from שחר (shāchar) "dusk" or "dimness", and indicates

blackness via absence of light. It occurs with four other uses in the OT: Leviticus 13:31 and 13:37

where it describes hair, and the Song of Solomon 1:5 where it used by the lover to describe herself and

is contrasted with her beauty נאוה (nā'veh), and 5:11 where it again describes hair with the simile "as a

raven". The Vulgate has "nigri" (from niger) an adjective with a semantic range encompassing "dark",

horses. (3) And in the third chariot white[90] horses, and in the fourth chariot grizzled and bay[91] horses.

(Zec 6. 1-3, KJAV, 1611).

An interpretation of the vision follows:

(4) et respondi et dixi ad angelum qui loquebatur in me quid sunt haec domine mi (5) et respondit angelus et ait ad me isti sunt quattuor venti caeli qui

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"discoloured", "ill-omened", "sombre"; Wyclif translates with "blac"; BB, GB and KJAV all have "blacke", which has its earliest recorded OE (blæk) use in relation to night, soot, coal, ink and ash.

[90] The Hebrew לבן (laban) (H3836) derives from לבנה (lebenah) meaning a "brick", gaining its quality of whiteness from the clay used for their fabrication. Jerome's Vulgate translates this "albi" (from "albus"), pertaining to "white", "pale", "bright", "hoary", "clear", "favourable" and "fortunate" phenomena, and "album", which can allude to a "white tablet" and so could be used for a register; Wyclif, BB, GB and KJAV use "white", which has OE (hwit) uses in relation to "bread", "snow", "milk", "eggs" and "swans", etc.

[91] The Hebrew ברד (barod) (H1261) derives from ברד (barad) meaning "hail" and so suggests "spotted as if with hail". It is found four times in the OT, twice to describe the horses in Zechariah and twice describing rams in Genesis 31:10 and 12; the Vulgate employs the phrase "varii fortes" ("fortes" perhaps punning on "forte" – "by chance", to reflect the effects of hail implied by the original) to suggest diverse and random markings; Wyclif translates "dyuerse horsis and stronge", similarly the BB has "diuers colours, and strong"; GB corrects this with "diuers colours, and reddish"; KJAV has "grisled and bay horses", which in colour terms suggest "grey haired" (grizzled) and dappled, but may also imply something uncanny or horrible about the grisled horse – both of which meanings were current during the period. "Bay" derives from French "bai" (probably from "badius") for a reddish brown colour particularly of a horse (there is also a possible connection with Old Irish "buide" meaning yellow). The KJAV translation "grisled and bay horses" follows this reddish use and so might be glossed as "grey and auburn" horses, showing the idea of variation by examples of different instances of colour rather than naming the concept "varied". The latest edition of *The New Revised Standard Version* [NRSV] (2007) has "dappled grey" horses.

egrediuntur ut stent coram Dominatore omnis terrae (6) in quo erant equi nigri egrediebantur in terra aquilonis et albi egressi sunt post eos et varii egressi sunt ad terram austri (7) qui autem erant robustissimi exierunt et quaerebant ire et discurrere per omnem terram et dixit ite perambulate terram et perambulaverunt terram (8) et vocavit me et locutus est ad me dicens ecce qui egrediuntur in terram aquilonis requiescere fecerunt spiritum meum in terra aquilonis.

<div align="right">(Zec 6.4-8, Jerome's Vulgate, c. 384)</div>

(4) And Y answeride, and seide to the aungel that spak in me, What ben these thingis, my lord? (5) And the aungel aunsweride, and seide to me, These ben foure wyndis of heuene, whiche goen out, that thei stonde bifor the lordschipere of al erthe. (6) In which weren blake horsis, wenten out in to the lond of the north; and the white wenten out aftir hem; and the dyuerse wenten out to the lond of the south. (7) Forsothe thei that weren strengeste wenten out, and souyten for to go, and renne aboute bi al erthe. And he seide, Go ye, and walke ye thorouy the erthe. And thei walkiden thorouy erthe. (8) And he clepide me, and spak to me, and seide, Lo! thei that goon out in to lond of north, maden my spirit for to reste in the lond of north.

<div align="right">(Zec 6.4-8, Wycliffite Bible, c. 1385)</div>

(4) Then I answered, and said vnto the Angel that talked with mee, What are these, my Lord ? (5) And the Angel answered and said vnto me, These are the foure spirits of the heauens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. (6) The blacke horses which are therin, goe forth into the North countrey, and the white goe forth after them, and the grisled goe forth toward the South countrey. (7) And the baye went foorth, and sought to goe, that they might walke to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get ye hence, walke to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. (8) Then cried he vpon me, and spake vnto me, saying, Behold, these that goe toward the North countrey, haue quieted my spirit, in the North countrey.

<div align="right">(Zec. 6. 4-8, KJAV, 1611).</div>

Notably, the KJAV describes some of the horses as "grisled and bay" as opposed to those "dyuerse horsis, and stronge" found in the Wycliffite text. The vision found in

chapter six picks up the description of various coloured horsemen sent out by the Lord

mentioned in Zech 1.8-11:

> vidi per noctem et ecce vir ascendens super equum rufum et ipse stabat inter
> myrteta quae erant in profundo et post eum equi rufi varii et albi.
>
> (Zec 1.8, Jerome's Vulgate, *c.* 384)

> Y saiy bi niyt, and lo! a man stiynge on a reed hors; and he stood bitwixe places
> where mirtis wexen, that weren in the depthe, and aftir hym weren horsis reede,
> dyuerse, and white.
>
> (Zec 1.8, Wycliffite Bible, *c.* 1380)

> I saw by night, and behold a man riding vpon a red horse, and he stood among
> the mirtle trees that were in the bottome, and behinde him were there red horses,
> speckled and white.
>
> (Zec 1.8, KJAV, 1611)

> In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the
> myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.
>
> (Zec 1.8, NRSV, 1989)

The man and horses are usually held to constitute the same divine messengers who

recur in chapter six. The Vulgate describes them as "equum rufum" and "equi rufi

varii et albi", so yielding two types of red horses, but which become four—a "reed

hors" and "horsis reede, dyuerse, and white"—in the Wycliffite translation. Modern

translations such as the NRSV and ESV use "sorrel" or "bay", also implying four

types of red horse. The latter terms are (arguably) better translations for the horse's

colourings from the Hebrew word שָׂרֻק (śārûq), and mark a clear correspondence

between them and the four types of chariot horses in chapter six. However, as we have

seen, "rufi varii et albi" can also be read as one type of horse, which, if added to the

"rufum" horse, makes for two types in total, each involving red; not the four types found in the fourteenth and twentieth-century translations. The ambiguity only becomes acute if the horses' hues are meant to be significant (a reasonable assumption for the genre): the problem which reappears in the translations of chapter six. The KJAV (perhaps following the GB)[92] translates Zech 6.7 as a "baye" horse going forth seeking "to walk to and fro." However, Jerome in the Vulgate had used a superlative "robustissimi" here for the Hebrew אמץ ('âmats)[93] ("strengest" in the Wycliffite translation), offering a reading which need not imply the strongest hue, but that they were the best horses for the task. The KJAV (following the Wycliffite translation) adds to the problem by reading "varii et fortes" in Zech. 6.3 as "varied and strong," so assuming that these are the "strong" (perhaps strongly coloured) horses mentioned in verse seven, which it also calls "baye", and associates them with those that "walk to and fro" (apart from those "varii" ones that travel south). However, the "varii et fortes" horses and their chariot surely go south together, being one and the same set of horses. The confusion over the numbers of horses and their direction of travel (caused by translation of Rev 6.7) in the KJAV is in subsequent editions, but was replaced in the Modern King James (from 1962) with an unseparable phrase: "the strong coloured ones".

Bearing these confusing factors in mind, the four "spirits of the heavens", drawn by chariots pulled by horses associated with particular colour terms, divide into those

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[92] Zech 6.7 in the Geneva Bible uses "reddish": "And the reddish went out, and required to go, and passe through the world, and he sayde, Goe passe through the worlde. So they went thorowout the world."

[93] Strong's H553: A primitive root; "to be alert", physically (on foot) or mentally (in courage): - confirm, be courageous (of good courage, steadfastly minded, strong, stronger), establish, fortify, harden, increase, prevail, strengthen (self), make strong (obstinate, speed).

going north (the white and black horses), and at least one going south (at least one

with "varii" horses), while the chariot pulled by the "strongest" walk to and fro. One

reading, evidenced by the KJAV, is that the "strongest" colour is red, so "strongest"

refers to the red-horsed chariot mentioned in 6.2. Even without this interpretation, the

horses omitted up to this point are the red ones, so by elimination they could be the

"strongest." If the "red" horsed chariot is the "strongest" and goes "to and fro," then

the one with dappled horses that goes south is in some sense weaker, a conclusion that

perhaps accidentally corresponds with classical material colour theory.[94] Those spirits

traveling north and which "have quieted my spirit" (Zech 6.8) are the white and the

black horsed chariots, but since it goes "to and fro" (i.e. in all directions) the red (or

the "strongest") also perhaps goes north at some point, a wider range of movement

perhaps evidencing that it is the most powerful spirit of all.[95] If so, the "strongest"

messenger, along with the white and black, but not the dappled, actively helps

appease the Lord's spirit (or anger) in the "north country" – a phrase traditionally

assumed to refer to Babylon, the seat of God's enemies on earth.[96] This interpretation

sets up a model in which the colours black, white, and even more the "strongest" (red)

could be associated with divine favour and victory in a holy war against spiritual

enemies from a symbolic "north country", whilst more diverse colours enter the

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[94] See e.g., Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato* discussed in part I.

[95] The Hebrew term, translated as "spiritum" in the Vulgate, "spirit" in the later English translations, is

רוח (rúach) (H7306), which can mean wind, or breath, and figuratively, life or anger.

[96] See also the footnote to Zechariah 6.1-8 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Augmented Third Edition with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, edited by Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 1361.

"south country" (Zec 6.6), i.e., they move away from the battle and are not associated with the same divine approval.[97]

Medieval theologians made diverse evaluations of the horse's colours. Bede, for example, in his *Expositio Apocalypsis* cast the red horses of Zechariah in a highly positive light, offering a meaning that contrasted with the red horse of the second rider in St John's vision of the Apocalypse:

> Against the Church victorious and conquering there went out a red horse, that is, a malignant people, bloody from its rider, the devil. Yet we have read in Zechariah of the red horse of the Lord. But the former one is red with his own blood, this with the blood of others.[98]

Hence for Bede and many others, the redness is typological – the "Lord's horse" in Zechariah prefigured the sacrificial blood of Christ—"red with his own blood"—whilst the second horse of the Apocalypse was to be stained "with the blood of others". Indeed, the identification resonates well with the Apocalypse's coloured horsemen, perhaps themselves inspired by Zechariah, and provides the other chief scriptural source for interpreting chivalric colour codes in works such as *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*. St John's horses, perhaps not coincidentally, appeared in the sixth chapter of the text:

> (1) And Y sai, that the lomb hadde openyd oon of the seuene seelis. And Y herde oon of the foure beestis seiynge, as a vois of thundur, Come, and se. (2)

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[97] The negative symbolic value of the north stemmed from traditional fear of the power of Egypt going back to the time of the Exodus. E.g., the prophet Joel foretold that the Lord would "...remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the East sea, and his hinder part towards the utmost Sea" (Joel 2.20).

[98] Rev. Edward Marshall, trans., *The Explanation of the Apocalypse by Venerable Beda* (Oxford: James Parker, 1878).

And Y sai, and lo! a white[99] hors; and he that sat on hym hadde a bouwe, and a coroun was youun to hym. And he wente out ouercomynge, that he schulde ouercome. (3) And whanne he hadde openyd the secounde seel, I herde the secounde beest seiynge, Come 'thou, and se. (4) And another reed[100] hors wente out; and it was youun to hym that sat on hym, that he schulde take pees fro the erthe, and that thei sle to gidere hem silf; and a greet swerd was youun to hym. (5) And whanne he hadde openyd the thridde seel, Y herde the thridde beest seiynge, Come thou, and se. And lo! a blak[101] hors; and he that sat on hym hadde a balaunce in his hond. (6) And Y herde 'as a vois in the myddil of the foure beestis, seiynge, A bilibre of wheete for a peny, and thre bilibris of barli for a peny; and hirte thou not wyn, ne oile. (7) And whanne he hadde openyd the fourthe seel, Y herde a vois of the 'foure beestis, seiynge, Come thou, and se. (8) And lo! a pale[102] hors; and the name was Deth to hym that sat on hym,

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[99] The Greek is λευκός (leukos) from λύκη (lukē) "light" [Strong's G3022]. It is found twenty-three times in the New Testament (NT); fourteen in Revelation (describing "snow" and "wool" (1:14) and a "cloud" (14:14). The sense of brilliant whiteness is used to convey the presence of transcendental holiness: Matthew and Mark use "leukos" to describe the Transfiguration (Mat 17:2, Mark 9:3); Luke to describe an effect of Jesus praying (9:29), and in John and the Book of Acts it is used to describe the raiment of angels (20:15 and 1:10). The Vulgate translates "leukos" as "albus"; Wycliffe, BB, GB and KJAV as "whyte" or "white."

[100] The Greek term is πυρρός (purrhos) from πῦρ (pur) meaning "fire" or "lightening" hence, "flame coloured" or "fire-like" [G4442 & G4450]. It occurs twice in the NT, both occurrences in Revelations (6:4 and 12:3) - the latter describing the seven-headed red dragon; the Vulgate uses "rufus", Wycliffe, BB, GB and KJAV have "reed", "redde" and "red".

[101] The Greek term is μέλας (melas) which Strong gives as a primary word for black (G3189). It is used three times in the NT, twice in Revelations (6:5 and 6:12) and once in Matthew's Gospel (5:36) each with reference to black hair. The Vulgate translates with "niger"; Wycliffe, BB, GB and KJ with "blak," and "blacke".

[102] The Greek term is χλωρός (chlōros) (G5515) from Χλόη (Chloē) which is the feminine of a primary word (Strong G5514). It is found four times in the NT, three times in Revelations (6:8, 8:7 and 9:4) and once in Mark (6:39). Except for its use in Rev 6:8, it is only used to describe grass, and so can convey

and helle suede hym. And power was youun to hym on foure partis of the erthe, for to sle with swerd, and with hungur, and with deth, and with beestis of the erthe.

(Rev 6:1-8, Wycliffite Bible, *c.*1380)

The four horsemen of St John's Apocalyptic vision clearly establish theological associations between the colours of the riders (or spiritual envoys) and their roles at the predestined end of time. The White Rider who goes forth to conquer links his colour with the triumph of divine authority; the Red Rider brings war, but with no positive final cause (victory), associating the colour purely with violence and destruction; the Black Rider more ambiguously carries measuring scales symbolizing judgment and is traditionally associated with the coming of famine (the voice's concern is with the price of food and other commodities); the Pale Rider brings death, perhaps embodying the wages of sin.[103] Medieval theological interpretations of the riders' significances reflected these apparent distinctions, which may be found in

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different meanings: "green," "verdant", and in the other extreme, "dun-coloured" and "pale" (grass in Palestine typically being drier than in other cooler climes. This would explain why the Vulgate translates this "pallidus" ("pale", "faded", or "blanched"), so excluding any association with verdancy and greenness. This is the only use of the term in the Vulgate. In those other places where the Greek uses χλωρός, the Vulgate translates "viridis". Wycliffe, BB, GB and KJAV use "pale". The root, "Chloe", is found once – the name of a Christian woman in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11).

[103] While it is reasonable to suppose that a northern European reader of Greek might imagine the fourth rider of Revelation 6 to be green ("chloros")—a real possibility for a term only used in the New Testament to describe grass, not bleached "pale" by the sun in the northern hemisphere—the scarcity of Greek readers and absence of references to a "green rider" of the Apocalypse suggests that "chloros" was indeed imagined to be "pale" by those able to read Greek.

many forms in biblical commentary tradition for the period.[104] One particularly

ingenious interpretation offered in Bede's early work, the *Expositio Apocalypsis*,

interprets the passage to imply that three of the riders (the black, red and pale) are

evil, and one (white) is good, i.e., of God. Bede associated the three evil riders (sent

by the devil) with the heresies he had set himself against throughout his lifetime, and

associating the good rider with the Church:

> Behold the madness of Arius, which arose from Alexandria, and reached as far
> as the Gallic ocean, and pursued the godly, not only with a famine of the word
> of God, but also as wild beasts, with a material sword. Another version
> [unknown] has translated it, "the fourth part," because the three evil horses,
> confident in their rider, the devil, attack the fourth, the horsemen of the
> Church.[105]

Ultimately, perhaps the most significant biblical reference for medieval chivalric

armorial colour symbolism is found in St John's vision of the Apocalypse,

corresponding once more to the positive associations of the crowned White Rider of

Revelation 6.2:

> (11) And Y say heuene openyd, and lo! a whit[106] hors, and he that sat on hym
> was clepid Feithful and sothefast; and with riytwisnesse he demeth, and fiytith.
> (12) And `the iyen of hym weren as flawme of fier,[107] and in his heed many

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[104] See the discussion in Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1983).

[105] Rev. Edward Marshall, trans., *The Explanation of the Apocalypse by Venerable Beda* (Oxford: James Parker and co., 1878).

[106] G3032: λευκός (leukos); Vulgate "albus", Wycliff "whit", BB, GB and KJAV "white".

[107] Strong's G3788, G5613, G5395, G4442: ὀφθαλμός (ophthalmos), ὡς (hōs), φλόξ (phlox), and πῦρ (pur) – suggesting an extramissive act of seeing connecting the innate "fieriness" of the divine white rider. Vulgate "oculi autem eius sicut flamma ignis"; KJAV "His eyes were as a flame of fire."

diademys; and he hadde a name writun, which no man knew, but he. (13) And

he was clothid in a cloth spreynt with blood;[108] and the name of hym was clepid

The sone of God. (14) And the oostis that ben in heuene, sueden hym on white

horsis, clothid with bissyn, white and clene.[109] (15) And a swerd scharp on ech

side cam forth of his mouth, that with it he smyte folkis; and he shal reule hem

with an yren yerde. And he tredith the pressour of wyn of stronge veniaunce of

the wraththe of almyyti God. (16) And he hath writun in his cloth, and in the

hemme, Kyng of kyngis and Lord of lordis.

(Rev 19.11-16, Wycliffite Bible, c.1385)

The chromatic symbols are the whiteness of the rider, his horse, and the robe dipped

in blood. The rider is variously called "faithful and true" (11), the "Word of God" (13)

and "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (16), and typically thought to represent the

resurrected Christ leading the forces of heaven—a cavalry of white-clad riders—

against the forces of the beast and the kings of the earth at the end of time (19). For all

books of chivalry in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the military nature of the

supporters of the White Rider offered a basic visual explanation of how knighthood

was spiritually significant, and informed the importance of "whiteness" as a signifier

of purity and divine approval; "redness" as the holy blood of a pure sacrifice (not the

qua the evil red horses of Zechariah) also embodied inspirational value for medieval

chivalry.

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[108] Strong's G129: αἷμα (aima) literally "blood"; Vulgate "vestem aspersam sanguine"; KJAV "a

vesture dipt in blood."

[109] Strong's G3022: λευκός (leukos); Vulgate "albis", English translations "white". The Greek also

refers to G1039 βύσσινος (bussinos) for the vestments (expensive linen), which is translated in the

Vulgate as "vestiti byssinum" and by Wycliff as "clothid with bissyn, white and clene"; BB "...whyte

and pure raynes"; GB: "...fine linen white and pure"; KJAV "...fine linnen, white and cleane."

Returning to *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, we see that its author made straightforward use of these theologically significant colours and their positive associations. White (blans) is employed three times (for the linen sheets, belt and cap), identifying the importance of bodily and spiritual purity and innocence from sin, and representing the "holiness" afforded by Christ's redemptive sacrifice, concepts visualised by the absence of stains or tarnishing. The white items themselves demonstrate the range of the intended application: the need for a clean mind (cap) and body (belt, sheets). The red ("vermeille") robe worn after the white pertained to a knight's willingness to shed his own blood and become a martyr; he showed he was ready to lay down his life for the Church and emulate the sacrifice made by Christ for the faithful, and share the hope of resurrection. In this context, it was obviously the bloodiness or likeness to blood of the robe that was the source of its significance. In such contexts for medieval thought, the concept of blood was bound to redness in such an intimate way as to involve no abstract leap from a secondary quality or "basic colour term". Thus, while St John's *Apocalypse* used "redness" in two negative contexts, this was irrelevant for chivalric writers. For example, in Revelation 6:4 the second horseman brings war in order to destroy. However, in the original Greek the horse's redness (πυρρός)[110] denotes fire – a purely destructive force. Again, a fiery red connotation is intended in Revelation 12:3, which in the Wycliffite Bible reads, "…and lo! a greet reede dragoun, that hadde seuene heedis, and ten hornes, and in the heedis of hym seuene diademes." The red dragon symbolized the devil, who having been cast out of heaven (12:9), reappeared on the earth and was overcome by the blood of the Lamb (12:11), and made war upon the remnant of the faithful (12:17). The Vulgate and Wycliffite translations employed "rufus" (from "ruber") and

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[110] From Strong's G4450: πυρρός (purrhos) "fire-like" or "flame-coloured".

"reed/red" for such instances of redness deriving from Greek "purrhos", terms, however, which did not have a strong destructive connotation. A medieval reader, presumably like any other, would discern by the context, not by the etymological root, the author's intention to symbolize the spiritual value of "bloody redness" as opposed to the negative value of "fiery redness". Thus a word like "vermeille" (1.147) could be used to describe an expensive, symbolic robe by the writer of *L 'Ordene de Chevalerie* without confusion.[111] It combined two symbolic aspects of meaning – "redness as bloodiness" and "redness as expensive" both of which were appropriate for the sacred meaning of the object described.

Black is also a significant colour for chivalry employed in *L 'Ordene de Chevalerie*. Hue dressed Saladin in a hose of black ("noire") silk, "…that you always have in mind death, and the ground where you will lie, whence you came, and whither you will go" (ll.164-166).[112] "Blackness" perceived as the absence of light, connoted mortality and death in Judeo-Christian theology: an inversion of the divine light which entails the existence of death and entry of mourning into the world after the Fall of Adam and Eve. In Hebrew scripture a materially based (ashen) concept of black symbolizes death and separation from God; thus when Jeremiah prophesies the downfall of Jerusalem, he declares the words of the Lord: "For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it,

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[111] Old French "vermeille" (from which derives the English term "vermilion") probably came from Latin "vermiculus" ("little worm"). It was the name of a valuable red dye or ink made using cinnabar (mercury sulphate). Theophilus gives an account of how to make it from sulphur (*De Diversis Artibus* 31).

[112] "Que toz jors aiez en memoire / La mort, la terre ou vous girrez, / Dont venistes et ou irez" (ll.164-166).

and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it" (Jer 4:28).[113] The negative

connotation of the Hebrew colour concept is carried over into the symbolism of the

black rider of Revelation 6:5-6: "And lo! a blak[114] hors; and he that sat on hym hadde

a balaunce in his hond. (6) And Y herde `as a vois in the myddil of the foure beestis,

seiynge, A bilibre of wheete for a peny, and thre bilibris of barli for a peny; and hirte

thou not wyn, ne oile."(Wycliffite Bible). However, the association between the

funereal black figure and the knightly ideal intended by the author of *L'Ordene de

Chevalerie* is not clear cut. On the one hand the Christian knight is to remember his

own mortality and therefore his responsibilities in life, but could the writer also have

associated his ideal knights with the black rider qua bringers of death and judgment

through warfare? The measuring scales and voice insisting upon fair dealings can be

read to imply (as well as the traditional interpretation of a shortage of foodstuffs

during wartime famine) that the black rider shows a need for and means of returning

society to order and justice through good (aristocratic) judgement. The writer of

L'Ordene de Chevalerie was perhaps doing something interesting with his "black

hose": synthesizing the two biblical concepts of black to signify both a "good" death

and the importance of justice. In death (and subsequent eschatological judgement)

human destinies share equal status; they are freed from previous social circumstances.

The just "Christ-knight" should embody and exemplify this, seek to bring justice and

order into the world, and uphold and protect justice wherever it is to be found.

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[113] The Hebrew word used here קדר (H6937, qāḏar) meant a materially dark colour such as "ashy". The

term is used seventeen times in the OT to describe something that causes mourning. The Vulgate

translates *lugebit* ("he will mourn") for the earth and *maerebunt* ("they will grieve") for the heavens,

which is translated in Wycliffe's Bible (1382) as "make sorewe"; BB (1568) "be sorie"; (1587) GB "be

darkened," and (1611) KJAV "be blacke."

[114] Greek μέλας (Strong's G3189 "melas" neuter of "melan" - "ink"); Vulgate "niger"; KJAV "blacke".

Interestingly, the ambiguous status of black as an armorial colour continued in later centuries as armorial theorists wrestled with its possible significance through the lens of Aristotelian colour theory.

Last, but not least in significance, *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* made symbolic use of gold in its dubbing ceremony. The knight's spurs, representing the will, are gilded ("doré"), and "…mean that you should always be of a mind to love God all your life, for thus do all knights who love God deeply from the heart they always serve him with a tender heart" (ll. 189-204).[115] The association between holiness and gold may also have stemmed from the *Apocalypse*, but not in relation to any of the horsemen so far mentioned. There are twenty occurrences of "gold" and the adjective "golden" in the *Apocalypse*. Gold is used in many different contexts, which while clearly having positive and negative meanings, are all associated to some extent with power and majesty, whether benign or corrupt. Thus, while twenty-four elders wearing white robes and gold crowns sit around the throne of the most High God surrounded by a rainbow (Rev 4.4), and the Son of Man sits on a white cloud wearing a gold crown (Rev 14.14), so too is the Whore of Babylon portrayed wearing royal garb, "gilded" and holding a golden cup (Rev 17.4). The plague of locusts with bodies like horses, faces like men, and teeth like lions, which appear after the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, also wear gold crowns (Rev 9.7). (These forces of darkness, from the point of spiritual chivalry, might be read as the symbolic antithesis of its ideals.) It is of course easier to associate the golden spurs worn by the Christian knight with the glorious and heavenly aspects of the gold motif exemplified by the seven candlesticks

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[115] "Qui sont doré tout environ, / Que vous aiiez bien en corage / De Dieu server tout vostre eage, / Quar tuit li chevalier le font / Qui Dieu aiment de cuer parfont; / Adés le servent de cuer fin." (ll.198-203).

of the seven churches (Rev 1.13, 1.20, 2.1), the golden vials full of the saints' prayers (Rev 5.8), the holy altar and censer (Rev 8.3), the reed that was held by the narrator's angelic guide and used for measuring the city and its gates and wall (Rev 21.15), and ultimately the Holy city of Zion itself (Rev 18.16, 21.18, 21.21). The positive spiritual significance of gold, in conjunction with the purity of white, is encapsulated in the warning the writer is commanded to give to the "lukewarm" church of Laodicia:

> Y counsele thee to bie of me brent gold, and preued, that thou be maad riche, and be clothid with whijt clothis, that the confusioun of thi nakidnesse be not seen; and anoynte thin iyen with a collerie, that thou se.
>
> (Rev 3.18, Wycliffite Bible, *c.*1385)

> I counsell thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest bee rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakednesse doe not appeare, and anoint thine eyes with eye salue, that thou mayest see.
>
> (Rev 3.18, KJAV, 1611)

Only if spiritually gilded could the knight's will be considered "truly" rich, that is, orientated towards God.

As we have seen, the poet of *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, rather than rejecting colour outright, presented Christian knighthood surrounded by chromatically significant items, the colours of which were historically realised in the armorial displays of various religious orders of chivalry including the Temple knights (a red cross on a white field) and the Hospital knights (a white cross on a red field). As a militarized form of priesthood, Christian knights were in effect to utilise a stripped-down version of liturgical colours for their armorial displays, constructing their appearance in a similar way to priests whose vestments symbolized biblical events in the Church calendar. In the wider sphere of secular knighthood the popularity of the

colours red, white, black and gold in armorial displays (not to mention crosses and other religious symbols) suggests that a spiritual motive may often have been involved in their use. G. R. Samson's survey, "Historical Trends in the Deployment of Tinctures", has shown a frequency pattern of *gules* (red) being the most used colour, closely followed by "argent" (silver/white), "or" (gold/yellow), "azure" (blue) and "sable" (black).[116] The least used colour in medieval armory in the survey, and by a considerable margin, was "vert" (green), an interesting fact that will be commented upon later. By contrast, the continual corruption, or perceived corruption, of the moral and spiritual dimension of knighthood would have had ramifications for the perception of symbolic armorial colours by elites and commoners alike. The supposed pollution of chivalry could be as much of a wellspring from which writers might draw chromatic inspiration as its positively perceived aspects; the representation of armorial colours and their interactions in fictional works could be used critically, as discussed below.

A useful conclusion to this overview of literary treatments of chivalry is provided by a fourteenth century book of chivalry that updated the twelfth century's spiritual ideology to reflect the concerns of a more sophisticated class of secular yet religious warriors, showing how armorial colours could be interpreted separately from spiritual values, and paving the way towards more complex symbolic meanings.

Hierarchy and colour in Geoffroi de Charny's Livre de Chevalrie
Written at the time of the establishment of the Company of the Star, an august order of chivalry instigated by John the Good in 1351 to rival Edward III's Order of the

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[116] G. R. Samson, "Historical Trends in the Deployment of Tinctures", *The Coat of Arms* n.s. vol. XIII, 2000, pp. 271–7.

Garter, Geoffroi de Charny's *Le Livre de Chevalrie*[117] follows the influential

L'Ordene de Chevalrie in stipulating how the ceremonial ordination of a knight was

to be performed, and the symbolic meanings of its emblems.[118] Charny,[119] however,

applied his own wide experience to the concept of chivalry and produced a much

longer, more contemporary set of instructions that deals with numerous practical

concerns of conduct for all classes of military man during times of war and peace.[120]

His "ethico-spiritual" descriptions, evaluations and instructions are constructed

according to an idiosyncratic yet systematically refined theistic ideology. Ultimately,

Charny's triadic hierarchical approach to chivalry refashions the role of armorial

display and its colour in a parallel way to that of secular armorial theorists of the same

period (treated subsequently).

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[117] *Le Livre de Chevalrie* exists in two manuscripts: 'B' (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique: 1124-26), dated to the late fourteenth century, and 'P' (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, 4736), a fifteenth century version which contains omissions and breaks off before the end of the text. All translations, page and line numbers are from Kaeuper and Kennedy's edition of the 'B' MS, which includes facing-page translations of the original French and a comprehensive introduction examining the life of Geoffroi de Charny and his contribution to chivalric reform. See Richard W. Kaeuper and Elspeth Kennedy, eds., *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context and Translation*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, U. of Pennsylvania P, 1996) 74-75.

[118] The prescription for knighting ceremonies is found in Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie*, ed. Kaeuper and Kennedy pp. 169-71, para. 36, ll.1-77. It is closely modelled on that found in *L'Ordene de Chevalrie*.

[119] I am following Kaeuper and Kennedy's short-form of the name.

[120] For an overview of the life of Charny, "le plus preudomme et plus valiant de tous les autres" ("the most worthy and most valiant of them all" according to Froissart, see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* 12 (and below).

First, it is noticeable that Charny did not employ a fictional narrative frame for his material (unlike his twelfth-century sources). Instead his account of the martial world is voiced directly to the reader, offering an accumulated body of knowledge and wisdom in what is a proto-textbook or topical encyclopaedia. Charny's style reflects the fourteenth-century aristocratic mindset which after two centuries of scholasticism was able to borrow its methods and seek to establish grounds for his definitions and content. Thus at the start of the book we have an attempt to demonstrate the topic in terms of a set of first principles: Charny's stated goal is "...to examine the various conditions of men-at-arms, both of the past and present," because, "...it is right to do so for all such matters are honourable, although some are honourable enough, others more honourable on an ascending scale up to the most honourable of all."[121] Charny's understanding of the relative merits of martial life—intrinsically honourable yet existing within a scale of honour—allows him to analyse the topic on fundamentally "ethico-spiritual" grounds, at the same time advocating application of specific behaviours and practices in order to ascend the scale. Various aspects of martial conduct come under Charny's detailed scrutiny including jousts (pp. 85-87), tournaments (pp. 87-88) and warfare (p. 89), and the behaviour of men of arms engaged in travel (p. 91), leisure pursuits (p. 113), deeds done for reward (p. 93) or love (p. 95). In each case he applies a measure or scale of worth by which such men should be judged both as members of a type and as individuals or tokens within the type. Charny applies one of two phrases at the end of each of his initial paragraphs on

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[121] "Pour ce qu'il m'est venu en memoire de parler de plusieurs estas de gens d'armes qui ont esté pieça et encores sont, en voei je un petit retraire et faire aucune mencion briefment. Et bien en peut on parler, car toutes telz choses sont assez honorables, combine que les unes le soient assez, et les autres plus, et adés en plus, jusques au meilleur." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie*, trans. and ed., Kaeuper and Kennedy pp. 84-5, ll.1-5.

martial behaviour: "qui plus fait, miex vault"[122] ("he who does more is of greater worth"), and "qui miex fait, miex vault" ("he who does best is most worthy").[123]

In essence therefore, Charny outlines a strict hierarchy of "good" or "worthy" conduct for men-at-arms (a scale presided over by knights), which, in terms of a set of qualities all men of worth should aspire to follow ("intelligence", "worth" and "prowess"), stipulates that a true man of worth should live his life according to a combination of the highest forms of these qualities. The supreme achievement of worth is thus a transcending combination of each of his three forms or categories of positive quality:

> Ce sont et doivent estre unes genz qui sont appellez villanz homes, et ycelles villans genz qui sont li plus honorez, plus amez et plus prisiez que nulles autres genz d'armes qui soient. Et pour ce que l'en puisse miex avoir la cognoissance des villans homes est il assavoir comment ne pourquoy l'en les doit et devroit tenir a telx. Si devez savoir que se uns homs avoit sens assez et il ne fust preudoms, cilz deus[t] se convertir du tout en mal. Et se uns homs estoit preudoms et ne fust mie assess saiges, tele preudommie est bonne mais non mie tant vallable ne de si grant merite comme li saige de droit sens naturel qui sont vrai preudomme. Et quant a avoir le nom de proesce, et l'on ne soit preudoms ne sages, en tele prouesce n'attendez ja a la fin nulle grant perfection. Et pour ce est il que se vous avez cognoissance que sur aucune personne ait tele grace de avoir et de user de tel sens comme le meilleur de trios manieres de sens dessus devisiez, et vous aiez cognoisance que en celui mesmes ait toutes condicions de preudommie dont il est fait mencion ci dessur, et en celi meismes vous aiez cognoissance qu'il a en li droite loyal prouesce et tele comme la (f.116r) meilleur des trios manieres et de preuesce dont dessus est dit, yceli ou ceulz en

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[122] See e.g., Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* p. 86, para. 3, ll. 15-17 ; para. 4, ll. 12-13 ; p.92, para. 9, ll. 30-31; p. 108, para. 18, ll. 21-25, etc.

[123] See e.g., Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* p. 92, para. 10, l. 23; p. 94, para. 11, l.9; p.94, para. 12, ll.20-21, etc.

qui touz les trios souverains biens sont enz et sont et demeurent et perseverent jusques au mourir...[124]

[These are men who are said to be of high merit and are more honoured, better loved and prized than any other men-at-arms. And in order better to learn about the men of high merit, one needs to know how and why they should be held in such esteem. You should know that if a man were sufficiently intelligent but not a man of worth, his intelligence would be turned wholly to evil. And if a man were of worth and had not enough wisdom, he would still be of merit, but not of such value and of such merit as the wise men of natural good sense who are true men of worth. And as for having a reputation for prowess without being a man of worth or wise, do not expect in the end any great perfection in such prowess. For this reason, if you know some one who is endowed with the gift of the kind of intelligence presented as the best of the three kinds of intelligence described above, and you know that in this person is also to be found all the qualities of a man of worth, the very best of the three kinds of worth, as mentioned above, and you know that in addition there is in this man true and loyal prowess, of the best of the three kinds described above, so that this man and others like him combine within themselves throughout their lives these three supreme qualities, if you find such a man or men, consider them to be most assuredly of high merit.]

Charny constructed his criteria for martial esteem (like Llull before him) as a system that could be expressed through measurable works of honour, but did so using a tri-partite, hierarchical methodology reminscent (in structure not style) of the Neo-Platonist writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. Charny establishes the highest level of honour or value of a concept, phenomenon, group or person by discerning three categories of performance within a stated criterion (in the example above "worthy" qualities or states of being), which are synthesized to discern a unique, supreme standard. This tri-partite perspective (with its clear theological overtones) informs many of his evaluations in the book. In another instance, Charny considers two military types in

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[124] Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* p.154-5, para. 35, ll.3-22.

relation to the ordinary man-at-arms: "rulers", including Emperors, Kings, and Princes (pp. 139-147), and "knights" (pp. 167-191). Charny analyzes the relative esteem of the three from the premise that the more honour a man has to start with (assigned to him through his rank in society), the more esteem and praise he can obtain by behaving honourably and demonstrating his honour by engaging in activities such as jousts, tournaments and warfare. Charny insists, therefore, that the efforts of great lords should have more account taken of them because they are under no expectations to engage in honourable activities. The lower ranked and impoverished knights or men-at-arms who earn (deserved) esteem for their courageous acts are less worthy, for it is "in their own interest" and "more necessary" for them to have "...performed these above-mentioned noble deeds than it is for great lords who have no need to go anywhere to become known, as their rank ensures that they are well known..."[125] Thus the great lords ("li grant seigneur") are the "truer" individuals of the system. On Charny's conservative yet, given its assumptions, logical, construction, the more honour one starts with (as granted by God), the more *dishonourable* it is to do nothing with it. Great lords must not fail to seek out opportunities to demonstrate and publish personal honour abroad, because they have no constraints preventing them from engaging constantly in honourable activities. The position is clearly a secularized, honour-orientated version of the Parable of the Talents (Mat 25.15-30) and its moral:

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[125] "Dont doit en souverainement plus grant compte faire des emprises du travail et du peril de corps ou li grant seigneur se veulent metre et se mettent de leur bonne volenté sanz aucune neccessité mais sanz plus pour avoir honnour de corps sanz autre loyer attendre pour leur grant mise et travail qu'il font et sueffrent en faisant les biens et faiz d'armes dessus diz, que l'en ne doit de ceulx qui en attendant aucuns proffiz ou avancemens et essaucemens de leurs estas pour les desertes et guerdon de l'onneur qu'il ont pourchacie ou pourchacent." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 106-7, para. 17, ll. 69-72.

"For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Mat 25.29). Furthermore, Charny argues that the hierarchical nature of honour and wealth operates so that good reputation spreads from the top down more effectively and rapidly than from the bottom up: "…one hundred men skilled in deeds of arms make themselves a name all the sooner through one great and worthy lord than would ten by two poor men of great worth (…) And not so much account is taken of being honoured by a valiant poor man as of a valiant great lord".[126] Charny was at pains to show respect for the honour available to the valiant poor, but wished to enshrine the authority of the elite as a special few able to access the higher and highest categories of honour – these being set apart as the achievement and responsibility only of great men.

While being a member of an elite group himself, Charny saw his status existing within a hierarchy that continued far above him, the ultimate level of greatness and honour from which sprang the greatest renown being divine. It was, therefore, to the divine that he appealed as the final measure of greatness and its evidence in human beings. He presents as examples of this a trio of historic anti-heroes – powerful men whose lives expressed failure inasmuch as they neglected to honour God.[127] Charny

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[126] "Et ainsi pouez vous veoir que plus tost se font et sont fait cent hommes bons ou fait d'armes par un bon grant seigneur que ne seroient dis par dues bons povres hommes (…) [p.108] Et sin e tient on pas si grant compte d'estre honorez d'un bon povre come d'un bon grant seigneur." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 106-9, para. 18, ll. 11-13; 20-21.

[127] Charny's use of historical personages is distinctive but comparable to the familiar chivalric formula of the Nine Worthies (three Pagans - Hector, Alexander, Julius Caesar; three Jews - Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus; three Christians - Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon) first assembled in Jacques des Longuyon's *Voeux du Paon* (c.1310).

picks Samson, who "greatly misused his strength";[128] Absalom, who died because his hair got caught in a tree (showing he took too much delight in his beauty); and Solomon, who "made...ill use of his intelligence" by worshipping idols;[129] each exemplifying the belief that "...no one should be confident concerning any good within him, that it can be put to any good use unless it be acknowledged that it comes from the Lord and depends upon Him..."[130] Charny then presented one example of a less than ideal military hero (Julius Caesar), who failed to reach the highest honour because he had too much regard for himself; and one truly splendid example (or synthesis) of positive values (Judas Maccabeus): "...of whom it can be said that in him alone were to be found all the good qualities set out above",[131] because, "...in all his deeds and throughout his life this good knight conducted himself according to the true belief, trust and hope in Our Lord, thanking Him devoutly for all the benefits and honours that came to him."[132]

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[128] "...et par ainsi mesusa il de sa force moult durement." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 158-59, para. 35, ll. 75-6.

[129] "...il mesusa de son sens par tele maniere que pour l'amonestement de sa fame il se mist a aourer les ydoles..." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 158-59, para. 35, ll. 81-3.

[130] "Et pour ce que que vous aiez cognoissance certaine et ferme es choses dessus dites, que nul ne se doit tenir fermes ne seurs de bien qu'il ait en soy qu'il en puisse bien user se par Nostre Seigneur ne l'a et de li li demeure..." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 158-59, para. 35, ll. 69-72.

[131] "...de qui l'en peut bien dire et raconteur que en li seul furent comprises toutes les bonnes condicions cy dessus escriptes, que il fu saiges en touz ses faiz..." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 162-3, para. 35, ll. 149-50.

[132] "Et ainsi est voir, car en touz ses faiz et en tout son temps se gouverna cilz bons chevaliers en la bonne creance, fiancé et esperance de Nostre Seigneur et en li regraciant et merciant devotement de touz les biens et honnours qui li avenoient." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 162-3, para. 35, ll. 155-8.

Charny implies moreover that military service, topped by the orders of chivalry, was in a sense deserving of more esteem than any other form of human endeavour: "it might well be considered that they [good knights or men-at-arms] should be of as great or even greater integrity than might be required of a priest, for they are in danger every day..."[133] His comparison of the orders of knighthood and priesthood (the "worthiest order of all"[134]) makes the former pre-eminent, because of their active, dangerous services performed in the field, a more demanding Christian lifestyle:

> ...que nulls autres genz qui soient ordenez a server Nostre Seigneur en Sainte Eglise n'ont a faire; car il ont et doivent avoir leur regle et ordenance de leur estaz et de leurs vies et de leurs services faire, ainsi comme il doivent et il sont tenus et securement faire. Et ycelles bonnes genz d'armes ne peuent tenir nulle regle ne ordenance, ne de leurs vies ne de leurs estaz, fors que de touzjours amer et doubter Dieu et garder de lui courroucier [...] Et pour ce pourroit l'en bien dire et par verité que entre toutes les genz qui en ce monde peuent estre et de quelque estat qu'il soient, ne religieux ne autres, n'ont tant de besoing d'estre bon crestien entierement, ne de si tres bonne devocion en leurs cuers et de tres honeste vie de leurs corps et de touz leurs ouvraiges faire loyaument et raisonablement, comme ont celle bonne gent d'armes qui ce mestier veulent faire et mener, ainsi comme dessus est dit, raisonnablement et selon Dieu.[135]

[...than those required of any of the men who are ordained to serve Our Lord in the Holy Church, for they have and ought to have their rule and ordinance and position for the conduct of both their lives and the service it is their duty to perform; but these good men-at-arms have no rule and ordinance to observe in relation to their way of

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[133] "...bien pourroit l'en tenir que leurs vies souverainement devroient estre honestes arrant ou plus comme il pourroit appartenir a nul prestre;" Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 182-3, para. 42, ll. 36-8.

[134] "...la plus digne ordre qui soit: c'est ordre de prestre." Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 172-3, para. 39, ll. 1-2.

[135] Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 182-3, para. 42, ll. 60-73.

life and their position except to love and fear God always and to take care not to anger Him [...] Hence one could well say truly that of all the men in the world, of whatever estate, whether religious or lay, none have as great a need to be a good Christian to the highest degree nor to have such true devoutness in their hearts nor to lead a life of such integrity and to carry out all their undertakings loyally and with good judgment as do those good men-at-arms who have the will to pursue this calling, as has been set out above, wisely and according to God's will.]

Perhaps intending his readership of fellow-knights to be greatly inspired and greatly humbled, Charny assumes the model he used earlier to show why great lords were capable of greater esteem than ordinary men-at-arms: it is suggested now that men-at-arms (topped by knights) could be worthy of greater esteem than those in religious orders because they have no ordained requirement to seek religious or "ethico-spiritual" honour. By taking up arms such men showed they were capable of transcending even the monastic orders and the priesthood in virtue and esteem.

The systematic and hierarchical nature of Charny's thinking is not applied in detail to the world of armorial displays, but fits into this model of martial hierarchy. His treatment of the symbolic motifs used in the knightly ordination ceremony was borrowed and adapted from his twelfth-century source, *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* and emphasizes the spiritual values that made the military order an active parallel to the monastic and priestly orders.[136] Similar coloured costume and ritual elements are present: the bed with "clean white sheets" ("les draps blans et nez", ll. 12) providing rest for "...those who have emerged from a great struggle with sin and from the great peril of the devil's torment", while the bed itself signifies "repose, stemming from virtue, from a clear conscience"; "red tunics" ("de cotes vermeilles", l.21) signify that

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[136] This and subsequent brief references to the knighting ceremony are from Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 167-171, para. 36, ll. 1-77.

"they [knights] are pledged to shed their blood to defend and maintain the faith of Our Lord and the rights of the Holy Church"; "black hose" ("chauces noires", ll.24-5) that "they should remember that from the earth they have come and to the earth they must return for the death that awaits them"; "white belts" ("une courroie toute blanche", ll. 29-30) so "that they should surround their bodies with chastity and purity of the flesh". After the mass, the new knight is given a pair of "gilded spurs" ("deux esperons dorez", l.43) to wear because "gold is the most coveted of all metals and is placed on the feet a sign that they should remove from their hearts all unworthy covetousness of riches." The only significant addition to the account in *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* is that of a "red cloak" ("un manteu vermeil", l.31), which is placed on their shoulders after the belt – "as a sign of great humility, for cloaks of this form were made in ancient times in all humility" ("en signe de tres grant humilité, que mantiaus ainsi faiz furent faiz anciennment par droite humblesce").[137] There is something defensive about the explanation, as if Charny felt guilty that the red cloaks were not in his original source and might seem over-indulgent and merely evidence of an aristocratic love for expensively dyed material. If red cloaks were common by this time, perhaps Charny took it upon himself to justify their use via an inverted hierarchy.

The real significance of Charny's treatment of the symbols of the ordination ceremony is not in what it suggests about how piously armorial colours could still be perceived in the fourteenth century, but rather what it suggests about the increased polarisation of spiritual and secular chivalry. On one hand, towards the end of the book Charny's tone recalls that of Bernard of Clairvaux when he condemns the excesses and self-glorification of appearance of some materially-minded men (women

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[137] Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 167-171, para. 36, ll. 32-3.

are excused their ornamentation, because they are unable to compete for recognition in the hierarchy in more honourable ways):

> Mais ainsi comme il mettent Dieu en oublie pour teles chetivetez, et Dieux les y met autresi, si en perdent a venir et parfornir es grans biens et honnours qu'il ont euz et ont encomenciez de faire, que touz ces riches aournemens qu'il mettent sur leurs chetiz corps qui n'ont heure ne terme de durer et n'est fors que de leur remirer en eulz ce qui tantost s'en peut aler, mesmes en pesant que d'eulz doient un chascun tenir grant compte.[138]

[But just as they forget God for the sake of such paltry trifles, so God too will forget them. And because of this they will no longer win the great benefits and honours they won at the outset, for they deck out with rich adornments their wretched bodies, destined to endure for so short a time, and all that is left to contemplate in these men is that which at any time may vanish away, even while they think everyone should hold them to be of great account.]

On the other hand, Charny advised knights to seek armorial displays that were splendid to view not because they were bedecked with pearls and precious stones but ones that reflected the bearer's honourable achievements in battle:

> Et se vous voulez estre armez cointeinent et joliement et que voz armes soient bien ramenteues, recogneues et aournees entre les autres, si querez les faiz d'armes souvent et diligenment. Et quant Dieu vous donra si bon eur de les trouver, si faites bien vostre devoir sagement et hardiement, sanz rien redoubter fors que honte, en besoignant de la main et du travail de vostre corps tant et si avant comme la puissance s'i pourra estendre au domage de ceulz a qui vous avrez a faire et touzjours des premiers. Si avront plus cognoissance voz amis et voz anemis de vostre bienfait, et ainsi seront voz armes belles a regarder partout, et en serez trop plus cointement et joliement armez que se elles estoient (f.134r) toutes semees de perles et de pierres precieuses, ne n'est brodeure qui a

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[138] Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 188-9, para. 42, ll. 159-65.

ceste beauté se prengne. Si devez cointir voz armeures de tel ouvrage, et qui plus en fait, plus en est muez et parez.[139]

[And if you want to be armed elegantly and stylishly and desire that your arms be remembered, recognized, and adorned above others, seek constantly and diligently opportunities to perform deeds of arms. And when God grants you the good fortune to find them, do your duty wisely and boldly, fearing nothing except shame, striving with the skill of your hand and the effort of your body to as great a degree as your powers can extend in order to inflict damage on your opponents, always being among the first in battle. By so doing you will receive greater recognition for your achievements from your friends and enemies, and your arms will be splendid to beholds and you will through this appear more elegant and stylish under arms than you would if your equipment were strewn with pearls anti precious stones, nor is there any embroidery which can be compared to this beauty. You should make your armour more elegant with such work; and whoever achieves the most is the most transformed and adorned.]

Despite Charny's previous condemnations of the material, his position is a long way away from rejecting secular chivalric displays. Charny's worldview presents the possibility that armorial displays serve two criteria simultaneously: to reflect the appropriately wealthy possessions of a great lord (someone obliged to do more honourable things than his impoverished contemporaries), and to express honour or disgrace established by chivalric achievement or failure. Glamour could co-exist with honour because the identity of an individual was linked to his "worth," calculated by formulae incorporating social rank. The use of spiritually significant colours did not, therefore, indicate information about a "token" bearer, only general information about a "type". Individuals qua knights bore a range of certain colours. "Token" information had to be perceived independently of meanings held by colours or devices as religious symbols in a display. The way was clear for armorial displays to be interpreted in

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[139] Geoffroi de Charny, *Le Livre de Chevalrie* pp. 192-5, para. 43, ll. 44-56.

terms of "particular" rather than "universal" symbols: to have a form that communicated individual achievements of honour. This more individuated approach to the symbolism of armorial displays is found in numerous books of arms written in throughout Europe from about the same time as Charny's *Livre de Chevalrie*. It continued long into the fifteenth century before being abandoned as an unworkable, even embarrassing idea, and forgotten.

The hierarchy of colours in fourteenth-century books of arms

By the end of the fourteenth century in Italy, France, England, and even Wales, books of arms were in circulation that testified to a different tradition of armorial writing, one in which the colours, metals, furs, and devices of armorial displays were described and interpreted in complex symbolic ways. The family of texts goes back, so far as is known, to an anonymous late thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman work, *De Heraudie*, which discussed practical heraldic questions and looked to settle technical issues of blazoning arms by use of examples.[140] Later heraldic writers employed taxonomies of meaning borrowed from various discourses of medieval cultural wisdom, including lapidary lore, beast lore and astrology, to provide complex and learned significances for the arms they described. University or privately-educated exponents of the approach, including Bartolo di Sasso Ferrato, Honoré Bonet,

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[140] *De Heraudie* was copied into the "St Alban's Formulary" (Cambridge University Library MS. E.e.iv.20.) sometime after 1382. Gerard Brault dates its composition to between 1341-5, despite also noting the writer's use of the 1270-80s Herald's Roll as opposed to more contemporary coats of arms: see Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975) p.60. This fact, along with other internal evidence persuaded Dennys to date the text from the end of the thirteenth century. For an edition see Ruth J. Dean, "An Early Treatise on Heraldry in Anglo-Norman", *Romance Studies in Memory of Edward Billings Ham*, ed. U. T. Holmes (Hayward: California State College Publications No.2, 1967) 21-29; see Dennys, pp.55-62 for an overview of its contents.

Christine de Pisan, Franciscus de Foveis, Johannes de Bado, and Bishop John Trevor

(the last two perhaps one and the same man) also mobilised heavyweights of scholarly

authority such as Aristotle to advance their ideas.[141] Such writers saw armorial colours

(as well as the devices and materials) as symbolic, their approach requiring wide-

ranging research in order to perceive the hidden meanings and values involved in

displays. While the practical purpose was simply to define the colour interactions and

topology of the design of displays, the method could also be used to infer aspects of

the bearer through his association with a dominant colour or device. The use of this

method and its final causes varied between writers: whilst some were clearly learned,

others were relatively naïve. In these works we see the link between the imagination

and visual perception at its most emphatic outside fiction; the approach compares well

to that evidenced by poets employing armory in fictional contexts.

The next heraldic treatise to appear after *De Heraudie*, and by far the most

influential, was Bartolo de Sasso Ferrato's *De Insigniis et Armis*.[142] Bartolo, educated

at Perugia before practising law and eventually becoming a judge in Bologna, was

renowned in the Middle Ages for his legal works as well as this short armorial text,

produced in around 1354 and published posthumously by his son-in-law in 1358.[143]

The text consists of thirty-three short chapters covering numerous aspects of official

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[141] Honoré Bonet's *Arbre des Batailles*, or *Tree of Battles* (c.1387) and Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie* (c.1409) are not discussed in this chapter. The former relies on Bartolo di Sasso Ferrato for its material on colours; the latter draws heavily on the former.

[142] Subsequent quotations are from Jones's edition of *De Insigniis et Armis* in *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth Century Heraldic Works* (Cardiff: William Lewis, 1943), which was based on Arundel MS.489, Addit. MS. 29901 and Bysshe's edited text in Nicholas Upton, *De Studio Militari* (1654).

[143] For biographical details of Bartolo de Sasso Ferrato see Jones 221-4; Dennys 62-4.

insignia and their meanings from a legal point of view – constructions which were extensively copied and referred to by subsequent heraldic writers. Vital to Bartolo's perspective are the first six chapters which describe how insignia and arms attest to a special office or grant and so may be borne by another person only if the original bearer is not harmed or injured thereby. Moreover, he argues that since arms constituted personal property, the bearing of arms had to be strictly controlled. Bartolo set down various influential arguments concerning the right to bear arms and their inheritance before turning to matters relating to devices. His comments in this area are general and directed towards establishing rules for correctly displaying charges. For example, in chapter fifteen we learn: "Animals, whenever represented must be depicted in their most noble act, and furthermore, must exhibit their greatest vigour."[144] In the twenty-third to twenty-seventh chapters of *De Insigniis et Armis* Bartolo provides the earliest-known hierarchical arrangement of the heraldic colours. He began by asking:

> Insignia consistentia in varietate diversorum colorum quomodo depingantur? Locus prior et superior nobilior est posteriore et inferiore. Color nobilior debet prope hastam.[145]

[How should insignia consisting of a variety of different colours be depicted? The first and higher place is nobler than the following and lower. The noble colour should be placed next to the banner.]

The idea that the colours could be ranked like other phenomena of the medieval world was initiated by examination of armorial location: the higher and lower positions of

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[144] "Animalia quando designantur, debent designari in nobiliori actu eorum, etiam quo magis vigorem ostendunt." Jones, ed., *De Insigniis et Armis* 225, 241 para. 15.

[145] Jones, ed., *De Insigniis et Armis* 225.

the colours in an insignia indicated more and less nobility. It was only a small step from this to seeing a hierarchy operating between the colours themselves. Bartolo ranked the colours according to nobility as follows in his précis of chapters:

> (Ch. 24) Aureus color nobilior est ceteris et per eum figuratur Sol. Nil nobilius luce.
>
> (Ch. 25) Color rubeus seu purpureus representat ignem, et est nobilis.
>
> (Ch. 26) Azoreus color est tertius et representat aerem.
>
> (Ch. 27) Color albus est nobilior nigro, et color niger est infimus.[146]

> [(Ch. 24) Gold is a nobler colour than the others and represents the sun. Nothing is nobler than light.
>
> (Ch. 25) Red, otherwise purple, represents fire and is noble.
>
> (Ch. 26) Blue comes third and represents the sky.
>
> (Ch. 27) The colour white is nobler than black, and black is the lowest.]

Bartolo based his natural hierarchy for armorial colours on the underlying philosophical and theological views of the day. Gold represented light – symbol of the divine – and so had to be at the top; red preceded blue which "est tertius" (perhaps because for Bartolo red was interchangeable with "purple", which had an imperial and Papal association). The status of white and black was more ambiguous. Relative to each other, the matter is clear – "white is nobler than black". Bartolo did not, however, necessarily think white and black less noble than the hues previously mentioned. In chapter twenty-seven Bartolo describes white and black as the opposite ends of an Aristotelian colour spectrum, toward which the middle colours tend:

> Colores autem medii sunt nobiliores vel minus nobiles secundum quod plus vel minus appropinquant albedini vel nigredini. Istud videtur dictum Aristotelis in libro suo, *De Senso et Sensato*.[147]

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[146] Jones, ed., *De Insigniis et Armis* 226.

[The middle colours however are more noble or less noble according to whether they more or less approach white or black. As such the matter appears in the words of Aristotle in his book, *Of Sense and Sensation*.]

Bartolo's application of Aristotelian colour theory saw "mediary" colours take on different symbolic levels of nobility according to their proximity to the white and black (high and low) extremes of the colour scale. Gold and red were closer to the perfection of white (associated with light[148]) than blue and so held greater nobility. Whether this also meant Bartolo saw white as higher or nobler than gold, or vice versa, or regarded them as co-equal at the pinnacle of the scale is not clearly established.

Once established, the hierarchical approach to armorial colours is found repeatedly in fourteenth-century heraldic texts. Treating the subject of colours in his *Tractatus de Armis*, the English writer Johannes de Bado Aureo, after briefly dedicating his work to Anne (the description of whom as "former" Queen of England, dates the work to soon after her death in 1394), then mentioning his main source and teacher Fransciscus de Foveiis (an unknown heraldic authority), and finally invoking God's blessing, expressed the intention: "First, I will put forward the different colours, so that the more worthy or more noble of them may be discovered."[149] The

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[147] Jones, ed., *De Insigniis et Armis* 247, para. 27.

[148] "...color albus est nobilior quia magis appropinquat luci; color niger est infimus quia magis appropinquat tenebris." ("...the colour white is nobler because it greatly approaches light; the colour black is least because it greatly approaches darkness." Jones 247, para. 27

[149] "Quoniam de armies multociens in clipeis depictis singula discernere et describere inveniatur difficile, ad instantiam quarundam personarum et specialiter ad instantiam Dominae Annae quondam Reginae Angliae hunc libellum compilavi, sequens in parte dogmata ac traditiones excellentissimi Doctoris et Praeceptoris mei magistri Francisci de Foveis, omnipotentis Dei nomine primitus invocato

topic had clearly leapt up the agenda since Bartolo's treatment to become a primary

subject of interest. Johannes de Bado's writing was influenced both by the mysterious

Fransciscus de Foveiis (either in person or through a lost text called *De Picturis*

Armorum mentioned in another English book of arms[150]) and Bartolo di Sasso Ferrato

whom he mentions by name.[151] In addition, in what is a more encyclopaedic text than

Bartolo's legal treatise, Johannis de Bado drew repeatedly on Ovid, Pliny, Aristotle,

Isidore of Seville, Averroes, Alan of Lille, Batholomaeus Anglicus (use of whose

encyclopaedia could account of some of his other references), and others. Armorial

colour meanings were his priority, followed by their devices, which underwent the

same scrutiny to determine an underlying scale of honour in terms of what they

represented. The author's wide-ranging literary interests enabled him to posit a

learned explanation for the primary significance of armorial colours in terms of their

postdiluvian origin and debt to the rainbow: "Arms were first borne after the time of

the Flood, when the first heavenly arc of diverse colours appeared, which is called the

rainbow. By such colours were determined those of arms..."[152] In Bishop Trevor's

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sub hac forma procedam. Primo differentias colorum ponam, et quis eorum dignior vel nobilior

inveniatur." Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 95. Jones's edition has two variants of De

Bado's tract, one based on similar copies: British Museum Additional MS. 37526 and MS. 29901, and

a slightly different version from British Museum MS. 28791. All three belong to the fifteenth century.

[150] See John Vadis, *Tretis on Armes*, ed. Jones p. 213; also Dennys 67.

[151] Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 96, 97, 145.

[152] "Usus armorum erat post diluvium, cum tunc primo apparuit arcus celestis, id est, iris, diversi

coloris. Per colores eius decernuntur arma. Ille arcus proprie est via ipsius dee, id est, Junonis, id est

aieris. Dicitur autem Iris ab er, quod est lis, quia raro mittitur nisi ad litem et discordiam concitandam.

Ille arcus quadri-color ex sole adversus nubibus formatur. Et secundum maiorem densitatem nubis

acceditur ad colores affines nigredini, et secundum maiorem raritatem ad colores acceditur affines

Llyfr Arfau, an extended Welsh translation of the *Tractatus de Armis*,[153] the story is continued to include the legend of Troy:

> Ac er bot dechreuad arveu yn yr amser hwnnw, ni vawr ymarverwyt ohonynt hyd pann ddoeth gwyr Groec i ymladd a Chaer Droea i ddyal kribddeiliad Elen vannog: ac yna i kymyrth gwyr y dinas o'r gwaet brenhinol amravaelion liwie amdanunt, megys y gellid oddiar y kaere I hadnabot hwynt a gweled eu digoniant a'u gwrhydri yn y rryvel. A lle yr oedd y lliwie yn pallu am nad oedd ddigon ohonunt y rroesant yn amravel yn y lliwie llun aniveiliet pysgod, adar a phethe eraill.[154]

[And although the origin of arms may be traced to this time yet they were not much used until the time when the Greeks came to fight against Troy, to avenge the rape of Helen of the spot. It was then that the Trojans of royal blood adopted distinctive colours so that they might be recognise from the walls, and their deeds and prowess in combat noticed. And where colours failed because there was not enough of them, they introduced into the colours the forms of animals, fishes, birds and other things.]

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albedini. A quatuor elementis quadripertitum contrahit colorem, ab igne rubeum, ab aiere ceruleum vel lividum vel purpureum, ab aqua viridem, a terra nigrum." *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 144-5.

[153] Jones identifies Bishop John Trevor, (a limited biography of whom he has established, see Jones xxxI-xxxvii) with Johannes de Bado (about whom very little is known, see Jones xxxi-xlii). His case, although possible, rests on the interpretation of a symbolic rebus or pictorial signature and so cannot be considered finally proven (see Jones xl-xlii). Bishop Trevor clearly stated his purpose in translating the work: "Wherefore it was both proper and necessary that every gentleman of noble birth of Welsh stock should know the charges which he could rightly bear without hurt to anyone, and be able to classify them and describe them in Welsh as in other languages" (Jones 5).

[154] Bishop John Trevor, *Llyfr Arfau*, ed. Jones 6-9.

The writer was not, of course, postulating anything particularly new.[155] The anachronistic portrayal of ancient Greek aristocracy decked in medieval costume and armory was a standard of romance treatments of the ancient period such as Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (*c.*1160) and its greatest literary descendant, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (*c.*1382-5). With the context for debate established in a suitably grandiose fashion, Johannis de Bado set out to discover "Which colour is the most honourable?"[156] In answer to the question he proposes a sequence of armorial colours based on the Aristotelian theory used Bartolo, but arrives at a different order:

> Praemitto notata domini Bartholi in tractatu suo *De Armis Pingendis* circa medium, et illa quae notantur per Philosophum in libro suo *De Sensu et Sensato*, per totum, ubi dicitur, omnis color mundi dicitur nobilior vel inferior duobus modis; aut color dicitur nobilior secundum se, aut secundum quod magis participat de albedine vel minus.[157]

[As it was noted before by master Bartolo about the middle of his book *Of Painted Arms*, and which was noted by the Philosopher in his book *Of Sense and Sensation*, in total, where it is said, every colour surpasses another in one of two ways. Either it is intrinsically nobler, or else it is so because it contains in a greater or less degree the white colour.]

For Johannis de Bado, the idea of "color nobilior" clearly distinguished white and black from the other colours. He regarded black as one of the two colours from which

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[155] The reference to using distinctive colours in order to be recognised from the walls is reminiscent of Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of a tournament in *The History of the Kings of Britain* (see above).

[156] The direct question itself only appears in Bishop Trevor's Welsh translation: "Pa liw ysydd anrrydeddusaf?" Jones 8.

[157] Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 96.

all the others derived, and therefore as in a higher category with white. From this premise a new order emerged: white and black are "primary" colours; gold, red and blue descend directly from these and are "mediary" colours, from which are obtained "sub-mediary" colours such as green. White and black are also put in order, the most noble deemed to be white. Bishop Trevor put the case in *Llyfr Arfau*:

> Ac er bod Bartholws yn taeru mae ysgeilussaf lliw yw du, qweddus yw kynnal yn ol y philosoffer, a ddywaid pann yw dau liw pennaf yw gwyn a du; canys o'r ddau hynny y gwnair drwy gelvyddyt bob lliw kanolic. Ac o'r ddau hynn pennaf ac urddassaf yw'r gwynn o blegyt tri achos… [158]

[…and although Bartholus maintains that black is the most inferior colour, it is seemly to accept the view of the Philosopher who says that the two chief colours are white and black because all mediary colours are formed artificially from these two, and of these two colours the nobler is the white, and this for three reasons…]

Of the three reasons given, two are theoretical and one practical (all three clearly erroneous): white is the foundation of all colours and can be converted into any mediary or sub-mediary colour; it is the only colour with a direct counterpart, and no other colour can be seen as far away or as clearly. After the primary colours, the order of mediary colours is blue, gold and red, followed by the sub-mediary colour green:

> Colores principales secundum se sunt color albus et niger; colores vero medii sunt azoreus, aureus, et rubeus; colores autem submedii sunt color viridis et alii similes si inveniantur. Et ratio mea est quare dico illum colorem submedium, quia non potest aliquo modo fieri ex duobus coloribus principalibus, scilicet, albo et nigro sed sit dumtaxat ex duobus coloribus mediis, scilicet ex colore azoreo et colore aureo adinvicem mixtis. [159]

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[158] Bishop John Trevor, *Llyfr Arfau*, ed. Jones 8-9.

[159] Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 99-100.

[After the principal colours which are white and black; the truly mediary colours are blue, gold and red; on the other hand, the sub-mediary colours are green and any others if obtained similarly. And the reason why I say this is that the sub-mediary colours are not composed from the two principal colours, which are of course white and black, but as far as it applies from admixtures of two mediary colours, which are of course the colour blue and the colour gold.]

Having set out terms of reference for ranking the colours according to intrinsic nobility, Johannis de Bado (and his translator and elaborator Bishop Trevor) proceeded to take each individual colour in turn, in a manner comparable to that of Bartholomaeus Anglicus in *De proprietatibus rerum*, and discuss the meanings and the place of each in the scale via a synthesis of authoritative sources. The following example is from the entry for blue, which in this system comes higher in the armorial scale than Bartolo's gold:

> De colore azoreo. Color autem azoreus, qui medius est, proximam in dignitate sedem obtinet post colores supradictos, et est color ab albedine incipiens in nigredinem degenerans. Est etiam color caelestis propter dominium aeritatis in superficie perspicui materiae purae; et assimilatur sapphiro secundum quosdam. Assimilatur etiam lapidi adamanti secundum magistrum meum Franciscum, quia lapis ille habet colorem azoreum. Et ratio sua est quare Ovidius assimilat colorem illum lapidi adamanti, quia lapis ille secundum Dioscoridem est lapis reconciliationis et amoris. Et concordant cum eo Bartholomeus, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, libro XVI, capitulo viii, et de sui natura. Hic color est maxime indicativus amoris, ut plenarie patet per Ovidium, *De Arte Amandi*, libro tertio, ubi dicitur, "Palleat omnis amans; hic est color aptus amanti."[160]

[Of the colour blue. Blue is the chief mediary colour next in dignity to the colours above mentioned, and is the colour beginning from white which degenerates into black. It is also the colour of the heavens as seen through the pure material of the air; and likewise sapphire. Similarly, the stone adamant [diamond?] according to my

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[160] Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 101-2.

Master Franciscum, because that stone also has the colour azure. And for this reason Ovid likens the stone adamant to the colour, because the stone itself, according to Dioscorides is the stone of love and reconciliation. And this accords with what Bartholomaeus says in *On the Properties of Things*, book XVI, chapter viii, and is its nature. This colour is the maximum indicator of love, in which manner it was fully exposed by Ovid, in *The Art of Love*, book three, where it is said, "Let every lover become pale, for this colour best becomes lovers."][161]

Johannis de Bado's encyclopaedic approach to heraldic matters, including the hierarchy of colours, was an attempt to reconcile astrological and classical associations, lapidary lore, medical and alchemical evaluations of substance properties into a smooth system of visual precedence. However, other books of arms were less committed to the holistic approach. One such text is John Vade's short *Tretis on Armes*,[162] a Middle English translation of an unknown heraldic work, clearly paraphrased and simplified given its economic style and absence of references in

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[161] Johannis refers to the classical author Pedanius Dioscorides whose treatise *De Materia Medica* was a standard medical work during the Middle Ages; to Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum* XVI, viii, which states "Diascorides seith that it is ycleped a precious stoon of reconciliation and of loue, for if a woman is away fro hir housbond or agiltith ayeins him, by virtue of this stoon adamas sche is the sonner reconciled to haue grace of hir housbond..." (DPR, trans. Trevisa, ed. Seymour, p. 833); and to Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*: the line "Palleat omnis amans; hic est color aptus amanti" is in fact found in the first book, l. 729, suggesting Johannes took the reference from a secondary source.

[162] The *Tretis on Armes* exists in three copies dating from the fifteenth century: British Museum Add. MS.34648 and Harl. MS.6097, and Bodlein Library, Land. Misc. 733. Despite the similarity of the author's name to Johannes de Bado, the contents of the text suggest a very different mind (see Jones xlv n2 for a report of F. P. Barnard's argument that "Bado" could have been "Vado"). Subsequent quotations are from Jones' edition based on the two British Museum MSs: see John Vade, *Tretis on Armes*, in *Medieval Heraldry: Some Fourteenth Century Works*, ed. E. J. Jones (Cardiff: Lewis, 1943) 213-20.

favour of vague constructions such as "herodes recorden" or "Herodes say."[163] Given

the style of writing – didactic and using reportage – the writer was probably not a

professional herald.[164] Vade introduced himself and his project in this manner:

> Forasmoch as I, John, haue late in this Worldes ende perceyued in saule many
> Gentilmen in armes blasyng slomerously to slepe and dreme, them from their
> sompnolency that besemes no gentill blode to the which Armes belongen to
> wakyn, and their oppynions to socour and counceill, al curiositee sette opart,
> haue existimate myself that me foloyng may haue the more waker
> conyngsaunce in that partie of ciuylians conclusions, this litill tretis oute of
> latyn into englissh, suying the fote steppes of the- right nobill predecessour
> Ffraunces de Ffoueys in his boke intitled *De Picturis Armorum*, haue putte my
> vigilant penne. And forasmoch as Omne principium difficile, therefore, where
> armes originally began I propose to precede. [165]

Points of interest in this passage include his motive for writing: a desire to see those

"Gentilmen" around him have meaningful opinions about the armory all about them,

which they are currently failing to comprehend – a fact that "besemes no gentill

blode". Competency in the speculative hermeneutics of heraldry was evidently

something an honourable man needed to acquire. Secondly, it seems that while Vade

praised his exemplar, Francis de Foveis, as one who had translated a Latin book on

armory, this did not mean he was translating Foveis.

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[163] John Vade, *Tretis in Armes*, ed. Jones 213, 216.

[164] Dennys speculates that Vade may have been a lecturer in law at the Inns of Court and his text
lecture notes, in particular because of the reference to "ciuylions conclusions". If this were the case,
Vade's apparent lack of awareness of other armorial texts such as *De Insigniis et Armis* is rather
surprising (see Dennys 84).

[165] John Vade, *Tretis in Armes*, ed. Jones 213.

To answer "where armes originally began" Vade adapts the story of the origin of arms and hereditary armorial devices at the Siege of Troy by including the coming of Brutus to Britain. Vade concludes this account with the revelation, "And the markes of the manly peple that come with hym lasten yit in Englond, and succeden forth to their successours".[166] Having established the historical value of contemporary armory, he comes to practical heraldic matters. The reader is informed that the basic elements in armorial displays are two metals and five colours:

> And ye shall undirstonde that in armes ar II metals and V colours. Of the II metals one is golde, and that other is siluer. And as for the V colours one is sabill, the second is goules, the III is asour, the fourt vert, the V purpill. Sabill is likened to the Dyamound, Goules to the Ruby, Asour to the Safire, Vert to the Emeraude, and the purpull to the Amatice.[167]

Vade adds to this list a colour used "in the Empyre and in Ffraunce" called "Tawny", which he likens to the Calcidony stone. Vade evidently did not use the Aristotelian overview for considering armorial displays: his basis was rudimentary lapidary and alchemical lore. The relative merits of silver ("argent" being white in early blazon) and black ("sable") as "the richest thynges in armes"" he explains in terms of royal and legislative associations:

> Some men seye that siluer and sabill been the richest thynges in armes: and this is the cause. Euery kynge (p.216) in Cristendome, and many in hethenesse, breken their lawes and maken their lawes in siluer and sabill; and when they take their othe and shal be crouned kynges, thei siten in siluer and sabill, that is to sey, in armyn. Wherefore Herodes sey that the Dukes armes of Bretayn be the richest armes in the worlde; for he beres armyn withoutyn any other thynge.

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[166] John Vade, *Tretis in Armes*, ed. Jones 214-15; "markes" being the forerunners of individuated arms.

[167] John Vade, *Tretis in Armes*, ed. Jones 215.

> Notwithstanding the most part of the kynges of Cristendome and many of heathenesse beren gold in their armes, because it is a tokyn of grete rialte of richesse and of stedfastnesse and of gret nobley. To siluer a man may sette Perles, to sabill Diamondes, to goules Rubies, to asour Safires, to vert Emeraudes, to purpill Amatices. And therefore golde is called the metal of worshippe, of Rialte and of godenesse.[168]

It seems apparent that despite associating white and black with royal power, Vade was not particularly concerned with establishing or judging a strict hierarchy of armorial qualities: rather than trying to prise their values apart, he describes gold in superlative terms and associations similar to silver. Vade was more interested, by contrast, in setting out clear parallels between armorial colours and precious stones. This particular focus puts the *Tretis in Armes* into a category similar to fifteenth-century texts such as Sicily Herald Jean Coutois's *Les blason des coleurs en armes* (*c.*1414) and Prinsault's *Treatise* (*c.*1439), which, in the tradition of Honoré Bonet's *Arbre des Batailles*, were more concerned with making heraldic equivalences between planets, precious stones, and days of the week than with underpinning the subject matter using Aristotle's colour theory.

The inferiority of "vert" in fourteenth-century books of arms

The ascription of different values of nobility to the colours in armorial displays eventually became an unpopular practice and was abandoned by later heraldry. The work of Nicholas Upton provides something of a dividing line. Upton has come to be regarded as the English father of heraldic writing for his popular *De studio de militari*,[169] and was for many years was assumed to have also written the *Tractatus de*

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[168] John Vade, *Tretis in Armes*, ed. Jones 215-16.

[169] Upton's *De studio de militari* is believed to have been written before 1446, since it is dedicated to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who died on 28 February of that year. For a partial edition and

Armis – the earliest extant heraldic text by an Englishman. The theory has been long

discredited; Upton had yet to be born at the latter's time of writing. The role of

Upton's text as a heraldic watershed is rooted in his remark that he has changed his

youthful opinions regarding *vert*. Upton writes:

> Olim, in annis meis juvenilibus, scripti in hac materiale nimium sompniando: in
> qua quidem scriptura sateor me multipliciter erase, ut in dampnando colorem
> viridem, ac multa alia posuisse que sunt veritati contraria: que jam ex certa mea
> scientia revoco.[170]

[Formerly, in my youth I wrote on this matter in too dreamy a manner, and in my

writing I must confess to have made many errors, as in condemning the colour green,

and I have stated many other matters which are contrary to the truth: which now I

revoke from my knowledge.]

Upton goes on to say he would like to burn these early mistakes and now proposes to

correct them. To explain his change of heart, Dennys points out that "disparaging

remarks about the colour green in arms would not have been well received by his

master, the Earl of Salisbury, the second quartering in whose arms was that for

Monthermer, *Gold an Eagle displayed vert*."[171] By condemning green Upton had been

following the practice of writers such as Johannis de Bado and Bishop Trevor, whose

views derived from the Aristotelian arrangement of armorial colours used by Bartolo

di Sasso Ferrato in *De Insignis et Armis*. The division of the colours into primary,

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biographical material, see Francis Pierrepont Barnard ed, *The Essential Portion's of Nicholas Upton's De Studio Militari: Before 1446*, trans John Blount c.1500 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1931); also Dennys's lengthy treatment in *The Heraldic Imagination*, pp. 76-82, which also lists numerous MS copies of the text.

[170] Upton, *De studio militari*, ed. Barnard ix.

[171] Dennys 78.

mediary and sub-mediary categories determined a relatively ignoble position for green. The authority for judging was obtained from Bartolo's tract *De Dignitatibus*. Johannis de Bado described green as follows:

> De colore viridi. Quidam tamen addunt alium colorem, scilicet viridem colorem, qui color, ut ego credo, initium habuit ab aliquo milite histrione vel gaudente, ut dicit Bartholus, C. *De Dignitatibus*, l.i, circa medium tractatus sui. Sed quia in quorundam dominorum armis in Anglia color ille invenitur, portantem reprehendo in nostrum librum ipsum colorem admisimus. Et pudor causam praestat, ne vereamur cum colorem ipsum in armis videremus, ipsum discernere non valentes. Et ratio est quare antiqui ipsum colorem inter colores armorum non admiserunt, quia videbatur illis absurdum et inconveniens dicere quod quis deberet dare differentiam triplicem colorum, sic dicendo, colorum quidam sunt principales secundum se, quidam medii sunt colores, et quidam submedii. Colores principales secundum se sunt color albus et niger; colores (p.100) vero medii sunt azoreus, aureus, et rubeus; colores autem submedii sunt color viridis et alii similes si inveniantur. [172]

[Of the colour green. Some would add another colour to those noted, namely the colour green, which colour, I believe, was borne first of all by some play-acting soldier ("milite histrione") or pleasure seeker ("gaudente"), or so says Bartholus in *On the Dignities*, l.i., around the middle of the book. But because we see lords in England carrying arms of this colour, we must admit the colour to our book and not reprehend it. And the sense of shame showed that this colour in arms was not seen to be strong enough to stand apart. And the reason why some colours in the past were rejected and not admitted as armorial colours is because it was thought strange and inconvenient to include three varieties of colours, so they said some colours are principal in themselves, some colours are mediary, and some sub-mediary. The colours primary in themselves are the colours white and black; the colours truly mediary are blue, gold, and red; the sub-mediary colours are green and any similar if there are any.]

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[172] Johannis de Bado, *Tractatus de Armis*, ed. Jones 99-100.

It is clear from this passage that the heraldic attitude towards green was negative but tolerant. An examination of the coats of arms borne by the Knights of the Garter from Edward III's founding in 1348 shows green was seldom used.[173] Whether this was a "theory-led" state of affairs, or merely practical is impossible to conclude. It seems feasible that green arms could have been mocked and thought unworthy of a knight in the same manner that pink might be derided as a poor choice for a football uniform in recent times. Attitudes in fifteenth-century books of arms are not so critical, although green remains a lesser armorial colour and still treated only after the "primary" and mediary" colours. Jean Courtois used only positive associations and values to describe vert in his *Les blazon des couleurs* but still called it "la dernièe couleur en armoire".[174]

Since Upton wrote, heraldic treatises have been stripped of their colour dissertations on the grounds that such matters were, "unimportant, irrelevant, or out of date ... of no utility or interest."[175] The reasoning behind this point of view is well expressed by Oswald Barron, quoted by Anthony Wagner (Richmond Herald) in his foreword to Jones's collection of medieval heraldic texts:

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[173] See W. H. St John Hope, *The Stall Plates of the Knights of the Order of the Garter, 1348-1485* (London: Archibald Constable, 1901). An example of *vert* used as main colour is Sir Thomas Erpygham's (d. 1428) arms: *vert an inescutcheon and an orle of martlets silver* (plate XLII).

[174] Jean Courtois, *Le blason de Couleurs en Armes, Livrees et Devises par Sicille*, ed. Hippolyte Cocheris (Paris: Auguste Aubrey, 1860) 46. For Courtois, green ("verd" or "sinople") is associated with the verdancy of nature - plants and trees; its precious gem is emerald (p. 57); age in life Youth; virtue "Lyesse" (p.56); quality Beauty (p.57); planet Venus (p.64); day Thursday (p.65); and season Spring (p.66).

[175] Barnard ed, Upton's *De studio militaris*, xiv.

At the beginning they go astray seeking symbolism and an inward significance in every sign upon the painted shield. (...) In his [de Bado's] first chapter you are in a mazy argument over the significance of colours and what the philosophers say of their generation and why certain colours are nobler than others. You go on to the chapters of crosses and bars and bends, of lions and leopards and hounds and at the last you see the truth about Nicholas Upton. He did not sit down to describe to you the practice of that armory which was any day's common spectacle in the jousting yard. That was no task for a scholar's pen. He was there among his books of philosophy and natural history to give you that more precious heraldry which should arise out of a scholar's meditations. The men in the street could blazon bars and bends, but Nicholas Upton and his fellows can tell them the un-guessed meanings of colour and charge, find strange bearings that were never on banner or shield and beautiful words for them all. [176]

Barron brings to his reading of early heraldic writers the expectations of later ages and so perhaps misses out on what is on offer: the complex world of medieval perception and apperception. Medieval heraldic writers did not employ the empirical assumptions demanded by later generations working from within a differently operating world of significances. This does not mean they lacked clarity or understanding in what they were doing or were inventing genuinely "unguessed meanings" for their audience. The meanings they expressed for the colours and charges were in fact evidence of the range of learned perceptual interpretations of the times. Heraldic writers were articulating popular understanding in a particular area of shared visual experience. Indeed, Upton's retraction only really makes sense on the basis that his perceptual world and understanding were shared, and that the elites within society as a whole readily understood and were prepared to participate in the system of evaluative interpretations of coloured phenomena.

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[176] Jones xii-xiii.

PART III

Colour, Seeing, and Seeing Colour in Medieval Romance

Introduction

The final part of this study begins with a discussion of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's *Le Roman de la Rose* and its creative engagement with medieval theories of colour and visual perception. Thereafter, following an overview of armorial and heraldic influences on medieval romance, I address the colouring of armorial identity, transformations, interactions, and hierarchies in four Middle English metrical romances: *Sir Gowther, Sir Amadace, Sir Launfal* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The dominant ethos of medieval romance was chivalry and knights its most prevalent protagonists. In the light of this my aspectual approach to colour descriptions, symbolism and metaphors in individual works is in relation to chivalry. However, as is often rightly noted medieval romance is too vast a canvas, and individual works too complex, to be limited by a single approach. The literary influence of the ancient world and Celtic traditions on colour meanings and perception are frequently found inextricably combined with the courtly ideology of the noble Christian warrior. My central concern therefore has been to establish some patterns of colour use in the basic construction of character and narrative, and offer explanations for how colour interactions and location assist the development of atmosphere or mood. My conclusion is general: medieval colour values, perception, and imagination were employed in popular romances in a variety of ways to aid enjoyment and instruction in matters of religion and morality. The myriad colour associations and meanings of the period provided an infinite resource for poets creatively to exploit and enhance the audience's apperception.

Visuality and colour in <u>Le Roman de la Rose</u>

Le Roman de la Rose,[1] recognised by English scholarship to be one of the most important literary creations of the Middle Ages (primarily since C. S. Lewis's seminal study *The Allegory of Love*),[2] demonstrates through its complex allegorical characters, sophisticated composition and artistic intelligence the influence and importance of medieval thinking on visual perception. More than one hundred years after the first part was written by Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose* was still exerting its influence upon countless writers of dream visions, and it is particularly notable for its influence on Geoffrey Chaucer. The text of *Le Roman de la Rose* is the combined product of two very different writers, Guillaume de Lorris and his continuator Jean de Meun, and was composed in France over a period spanning some fifty years in two separate phases: *c.*1225-1230 and *c.*1269-78. Each writer recognised and used in different ways the psychological and social implications underlying the basic models of visual perception in classical philosophy and poetry. An attractive but over-simplistic way of approaching the text is to see the two parts of *Le Roman de la Rose* as presenting the two halves of medieval thought on perception in the period:

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[1] Subsequent line references refer to Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, présentation, traduction et notes par Armand Strubel, Lettres gothiques (Livre de Poche: Librairie Générale Française, 1992); Middle English translations are from *The Romaunt of the Rose* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Oxford: OUP, 1987) 686-797; Modern English translations of Old French are from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, translated and annotated by Frances Horgan, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford:, Oxford University Press, 1999).

[2] C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 1936); for information on textual transmission, reception and the history of the text's interpretation see Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

Guillaume (the courtly poet) employing an extravagantly extramissive Platonist mode; Jean de Meun (the scholar), introducing a drier, more "modern" intromissive Aristotelian agenda. The matter is not quite as straightforward as this binary formula suggests however. A better starting point is the thought that whilst Guillaume de Lorris is subtle in his poetic dealings with visual theory and matters of perception (of both varieties) weaving them into the plot of his allegory, Jean de Meun, exercising a constant desire to display classical and scholastic knowledge culled from the University of Paris, is pedagogical and direct on this as on other subjects.

Colouring perception in Guillaume de Lorris' "religion of love"

Guillaume de Lorris' inspiration was evidently the comparatively recent tradition of courtly romance writings which looked back to Chrétien de Troyes, and before him, the lyrical Troubadours and poets of eleventh century Languedoc.[3] It is also generally accepted that Guillaume's original project was to produce a work in a popular didactic tradition far removed from the scholarship of Ovid's cynically witty *Ars Amatoria* and its medieval transformations into a genre of guide books for courtly love, described by Lewis as "Ovid misunderstood."[4] The most famous of these, Andreas Capellanus' *De arte honeste amandi* (*c*.1174-1186),[5] is believed to have been the most important

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[3] Other influences might include books of chivalry such as the anonymously authored *L'Ordene de Chevalerie* (*c.* 1220). In *Le Roman de la Rose* the Lover enters into the service of God, bound by honour in the manner of a medieval knight serving his lord. This feudal structure came to parallel the hierarchical structure of religious duties deriving from God to the extent that by the time of the *L'OC* chivalry had taken on an important spiritual dimension (see Busby 91).

[4] Lewis, *Allegory of Love* 7.

[5] Ovid's work is an ironic and humorous (styled as deeply learned) treatment of the art of love viewed as a matter of seduction; Andreas' essential message, however, is that love ennobles both the lover and the beloved so long as certain codes of behaviour are respected. For editions see Ovid, *The Art of Love,*

source and inspiration for Guillaume de Lorris. It should come as no surprise, therefore, to find that Guillaume's section of *Le Roman de la Rose* is steeped in the extramissive metaphors and imagery of classically inspired romance, and opens using a scholarly frame that refers the work to a respectable, more serious authority: Macrobius's commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (ll. 7-10). Thereafter it is a relatively rudimentary task to establish Guillaume's credentials as a purveyor of extramissive imagery. His writing (approximately the first four thousand lines of the poem) is packed with symbolically significant visual events and actions, many of which could be said to operate as poetic expressions of an underlying structure of Neo-Platonist (*Timaean* and Empedoclean) extramissive, tactile visual perception.

The experiences of the Dreamer (henceforth called "the Lover") at the Garden of Pleasure—moving from outside to inside its painted walls—are visual in initiation: he gazes intently upon the images of allegorical figures around him ("Ces images bien avisé", l. 463) and the figures seen inside the Garden itself receive portrait descriptions of their appearances, lavish or otherwise, deliberately recounted for the benefit of the reader (ll. 795-99). The poet presents through his narrator and protagonist a species of "visio-graphical" service for his reader, which offers the primary means of engaging with the unfolding allegory. Moreover, the early focus on the Lover's visual perception, and, within the context of the dream vision, the ontological power of that perception, serve as a logical precursor to the fundamental event of Guillaume's part of the poem – the Lover falling in love. Guillaume first shows how his imagination was fundamentally engaged in a creative discourse with

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and other Poems, with an English translation by J.H. Mozley, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939) and Andreas Capellanus: *The Art of Courtly Love*, trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1941.

an extramissive model of perception by his symbolic use of the Spring of Narcissus as the background and means by which the Lover initially finds and selects his rose (ll. 1350-1596). Guillaume describes how the sensually sumptuous Garden of Pleasure conceals a spot wherein the Lover finds a spring gushing up from a marble stone beneath a pine tree. On the stone is an inscription declaring that Narcissus, having tormented Echo with unrequited love because of his arrogant self-regard, was punished by being made to fall in love with his own reflection in the water, and suffer a similar fate of desperate, unattainable desire until death. The material means by which this legendary example of erotic self-devotion is achieved was the reflective property of the pool or well into which Narcissus gazed in self-admiration. Guillaume's description of this phenomenon, however, is complex and lavish compared to the limpid pool of his source,[6] and crucially he adds mention of two crystals lying at the bottom of the pool (l. 1534), considered by many critics to be indicative of a pair of eyes—possibly reflections of the eyes of the Lover's beloved or his own—and to be understood as the final cause of the Spring's reflective power. The Lover is arguably looking at his beloved or back at himself, and in doing so receiving perfect images of the Garden.[7] The spring and its pool are described as a "perilous mirror" ("li mireors perilleus" l. 1568): a mirror because of its ability to reflect things perfectly, perilous because whatever the reflection reveals will become the object of the viewer's total devotion. The underlying means by which this happens is extramissive perception, inasmuch as the crystals (or viewer's eyes) directly

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[6] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III. ll. 343-513, 417.

[7] For exposition of this structure and other literary sources see Marta Powell Harley, "Narcissus, Hermaphroditus, and Attis: Ovidian Lovers at the Fontaine d'Amors in Guillaume de Lorris's *Roman de la rose*," *PMLA* 101, No. 3 (May, 1986) 324-337.

connect the soul of the viewing subject to the object (also potentially the viewer) both inwardly and outwardly. However, in terms of a possible Christological and spiritual transformation for the tableau, Guillaume might also have had in mind the darkening mirror of mortality and uncertainty of St Paul's metaphor: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor.13.12).

The passage shows a sophisticated awareness of and interest in optical theory, and also reveals that Guillaume de Lorris was not prepared to disrupt the elegant and evocative atmosphere of his allegorical descriptions by engaging in abstract scientific or scholastic discourse. Rather, he privileges the poetic and formal qualities of his poem above the opportunities it afforded for learned lectures such as those found in Jean de Meun's continuation. As a result, the episode engages the reader in a manner that is not achieved even by the more evocative parts of Jean de Meun's continuation, for instance the stories of Adonis (ll. 15663-768) and Pygmalion (ll. 20821ff) related prior to the account of the taking of the rose, and the extramissive metaphor for the initiation of this event (ll. 20787-820 & 21255-62). The extent to which Guillaume's Lover should be likened to Narcissus (i.e. falling in love with himself and following a self-serving path whilst desperately trying to attain an unattainable, paradoxically "self-satisfying" love) or thought of as enduring a genuinely self-denying devotion, is endlessly debatable. It is a question well served by consideration in terms of perception theory: Guillaume's Lover clearly chooses (via a combination of extramissive and intromissive perception) the object of his devotion, and yet at the same time is obliged by or is chosen by the God of Love to fall in love via a model of an externalised extramissive perception.

The hunting and wounding of the Lover follows the episode with the mirror: the God of Love uses one of his symbolic pair of Turkish bows and ten arrows (ll. 903-82), each of which has an individual allegorical meaning and is kept by "douz regarz" - Pleasant Looks (l. 903). These arrows, released from the care of Pleasant Looks, serve as the key metaphor and abstract realisation of Neo-Platonic affective extramissive visuality that is at the root of Guillaume's allegorical structure. Of these, the five with positively defined points (Beauty, Simplicity, Courtesy, Company and Fair Seeming) are used to wound and implant the Lover with his essential passion for the rosebud, thereby defining the metaphor of the power of love and his purpose of courtly instruction in the art, rituals and responsibilities of courtly love:

Il a tantost pris une flesche;	He tok an arowe full sharply whet,
Et quant la corde fu en coche	And in his bowe whanne it was set,
Il entesa jusqu'a l'oreille	He straight up to his ere drough
L'arc qui estoit forz a merveille	The stronge bowe that was so tough,
Et trait a moi par tel devise	And shet att me so wonder smerte
Que parmi l'ueil m'a ou cuer mise	That thorough myn ye unto myn herte
La saiete par grant redor;	The takel smot, and depe it wente.
(ll. 1686-92)	(ll. 1723-29)

[...he (i.e., the God of Love) at once took an arrow. When the string was in the nock, he drew the bow, which was wonderfully strong, back to his ear, and loosed his arrow at me in such a way and with such force that the point entered my eye and penetrated my heart.]

At one level, for this Ovidian episode Guillaume merely dramatises the psychology of falling in love into a two-part or two-stage perceptual process: the selection of the object for love in terms of its visual beauty, followed by the connection of the soul to

the object via the visual penetration of its image into the heart.[8] At another level, however, it ingeniously synthesizes an extramissive understanding of sight as a form of contact at a distance (enacted by the God of Love) with an intromissive model of perception. It is a touch of real brilliance that the rose chosen by the Lover prior to his wounding by the God of Love's arrows is selected with reference to its chromatic appearance: its beauty is in fact perceived and defined in terms of its colour:

D'antre les botons en eslui	Among the knoppes I ches oon
Un si tres bel; envers celui	So fair that of the remenaunt noon
Nus des autres riens ne prisié,	Ne preise I half so well as it,
Puis que je l'oi bien avisié,	Whanne I avise it in my wit.
Car une colors l'enlumine	For it so well was enlumyned
Qui est si merveilleuse*et fine	With colour reed* [and] as well fyned
Com nature la pot plus faire.	As nature couthe it make faire.
(ll. 1656-8)	(ll. 1691-97)

[From among these buds I chose one so beautiful that when I had observed it carefully, all the others seemed worthless in comparison. It shone with colour, the purest vermilion* that Nature could provide...]

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[8] See e.g. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I. 450-80 (Cupid shoots Apollo) and V. 367-417 (Cupid shoots Pluto). Ovid describes Cupid as having thousands of arrows of differing quality and shooting them directly into his targets' hearts. The ocular targeting of the God of Love's arrows in *Le Roman de la Rose* clearly invites Platonist extramissive interpretation.

In other words, the Lover chooses a particular rose-bud, the one which stands out to his perception because of its beauty – a quality or essence that he defines in terms of its superlative colour in the first instance, and thereafter its other sensory effects: its perfume (l. 1665), and the thistles which protect it from touch (ll. 1674-9). This is all highly suggestive of an Aristotelian understanding of colour as "the proper object of sight" experienced by intromission, for the rose's colour is presented as directly relevant in establishing the Lover's pre-erotic perception. It is that which leads on to his full-blown condition of desire—either self-neglecting or self-indulging devotion— effected by the extramission of the God of Love's ocularly targeted arrows. It must be said, however, that colour is an obvious aspect of any object (particularly a flower) described according to visual appearance. What makes possible a fascinating, philosophically deeper, subtext is the fact that the superlative beauty of the rose is implied to adduce its inherent colour and transmit this to the perceiver. The model corresponds to the essential basis of Aristotelian visual perception of an object, i.e., that perception derives from the object and hence a "true" perception of it must be one which coincides with its "real" nature – the essential teleological construction of objective reality being revealed in perception by the acquisition of a *species* of the object (an object itself having a natural, elemental and chemical grounding that is evidenced and observable by its colour: see the discussions of the *Parva naturalia* and *De anima* above.)

Two other portions of Guillaume's part of the poem directly engage with the complex relationship between visual perception and love; both occur in the context of the God of Love's instructions to the Lover after he has been shot. The God of Love receives the Lover into his service and promises him that although this will be painful and burdensome he will honour him for it (ll. 1938-41). Thereafter he offers advice to

the Lover and issues specific commands that he must follow in order to render good service, such as the requirements to dress well, stay clean and tidy without taking pride in his appearance and not wear make-up (ll. 2123–72), stipulations reminiscent of St Paul's message to the Corinthians (1Cor 11.15-16; 13.4-13). The issue of visual perception is raided in relation to the God of Love's advice concerning what to expect from the experience of love itself, and the physical and emotional fluctuations caused by being near and far from the loved one. The Lover, it is said, will seek to see his beloved in order to pacify his heart, but in doing so it will become even more inflamed:

Et saches que dou resgarder	The more thou seest in sothfastnesse,
Feras ton cuer frire et larder,	The more thou coveytest of that swetnesse;
Et tout ades en resgardant,	The more thin herte brenneth in fir,
Aviveras le feu ardant,	The moore thin herte is in desir.
Que cil qui aime plus regarde,	For who considreth everydeell,
Plus alume son cuer et l'arde;	It may be likned wonder well,
Cist larz alume et fet larder	The peyne of love, unto a fer;
Le feu qui fet la gent amer.	For evermore thou neighest ner,
Chascun amant suit par costume	Thou, or whooso that it bee,
Le feu qui l'art et qui l'alume;	For verray soothe I tell it thee,
Quant il se tient de li plus pres	The hatter evere shall thou brenne,
Et il plus est d'amer engres.	As experience shall thee kenne:
Ce sevent tuit, fol et musart:	Whereso [thou] comest in ony coost,
Qui plus est pres dou feu, plus art.	Who is next fyr, he brenneth moost.
(ll. 2329-56)	(ll. 2453-78)

[The more a man gazes on what he loves, the more he sets fire to his heart and bastes it with bacon fat; this basting kindles and fans the fire that makes men love. It is every lover's habit to pursue the fire that burns and inflames him, and when he feels the fire close by, he approaches even closer. The fire is his contemplation of his sweetheart, who causes him to be consumed by the flames: the closer he is to her, the more eager

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he is to love. Everyone knows this, both wise men and fools: the nearer a man is to the fire, the more he burns.]

The lines exploit the explanatory power of extramissive visual theory to describe the Lover's complaint: his fiery gaze is connected to his heart, which becomes consumed by the influence of the object of sight – the beloved. The effect increases with proximity: the Lover's desire increases the longer he stares and the nearer he is to her. In theoretical terms, the closer he is, the greater is the effect of her objective form upon his eye beams and their translation of her form to his heart. The God of Love describes how lovers in this state become physically weak, withdrawn and without colour (a mark of a true lover as opposed to a "jangleor," ll. 2541-54) as a result of their internalised passion, a condition likened to an unbearable fiery hell (ll. 2590-2), which can only be endured through the balancing provision of the God of Love's gifts.

Guillaume de Lorris' final metaphorical use of explicit extramissive perception occurs in the God of Love's description of the third gift that he will bestow upon the Lover, which is that of the pleasure of seeing the beloved, allegorically realised as a visit from Pleasant Looks ("douz resgarz"). This operates as a subsequent aspect of derivation from the same phenomenon of secularized affective visual piety that caused a burning heart, the desire for proximity to the beloved and descent into ill health. In this formulation, however, the extramissive power of sight is transformed so that it has a purely enjoyable and health-giving effect and experiential value:

Li tierz biens est de resgarer:

C'est douz resgarz qui siaut tarder

A ceus qui ont amors lointienes.

[...]

Et quant li oeil sont en deduit,

Il sont si apris et si duit,

Que seul ne sevent avoir joie,

Ainz vuelent que li cuers s'esjoie

Et font les maus asouagier,

Car li oeil con droit mesagier,

Tout maintenant au cuer envoient

Novele de ce que il voient,

Et por la joie covient lors

Que li cuers oblist ses dolors

Et les tenebres ou il iere.

Aussint certes con la lumiere,

Les tenebres devant soi chace,

Tout aussint douz regarz efface

Les tenebres ou li cuers gist

Qui nuit et jor d'amors languist,

Que li cuers de riens ne se diaut

Quant li oeil voient ce qu'il viaut.

(ll. 2715-17 & 2731-49)

The thridde good of gret comfort,

That yeveth to lovers most disport,

Comyth of sight and of biholdyng,

That clepid is Swete-Lokyng,

The whiche may noon ese do

Whanne thou art fer thy lady fro;

[...]

For whanne thyne eyen were thus in blis,

Yit of hir curtesie, ywys,

Alloone they can not have her joye,

But to the herte they [it] convoye;

Part of her blisse to hym they sende,

Of all this harm to make an ende.

The eye is a good messanger,

Which can to the herte in such maner

Tidyngis sende that [he] hath sen,

To voide hym of his peynes clen.

Wherof the herte rejoiseth soo,

That a gret party of his woo

Is voided and put awey to flight.

Right as the derknesse of the nyght

Is chased with clernesse of the mone,

Right so is al his woo full soone

Devoided clene, whanne that the sight

Biholden may that fresche wight

That the herte desireth soo,

That al his derknesse is agoo.

For thane the herte is all at ese,

Whanne the eyen sen that may hem plese.

(ll. 2893-8 & 2913-34)

["The third gift comes from looking; it is Pleasant Looks, who often comes late to those who love from afar. [...] Moreover, when the eyes rejoice, they are so well bred and have been so well brought up that they wish to share their happiness and want the heart to be happy too, and so relieve its pain. For the eyes, being excellent messengers, send the heart immediate reports of what they have seen, and the heart is then so happy that it must needs forget its earlier pain and gloom. Just as a light drives away darkness, so the gloom surrounding the heart that pines away night and day for love is dispersed by Pleasant Looks, for the heart no longer suffers when the eyes behold the object of its desire."]

This passage is particularly redolent of the sympathy between Neo-Platonist extramissive thinking and Christian theology. The delight of the eyes in seeing the loved one is envisaged literally: a state of happiness is internalised via the eyes because of their external connection to the object of desire and internal connection to the soul. The effect is like light driving away darkness – the archetypal orthodox Christian theological model of divine extramissive love.[9]

Through the artistry of these moments and their allegorical settings (the Spring of Narcissus' "perilous mirror" and the God of Love's bow and arrows) we see the poet's highly sophisticated engagement with the matter of perception and his visually sensitive disposition. Furthermore, the project and purpose of Guillaume's allegorical poem begins to emerge. Arguably it was a creative means to engage and delight a sophisticated and literate courtly audience for whose members there existed a Christological, metaphysical interpretation of love involving an unattainable object of infinite desire and duty of infinite devotion. The beloved is powerfully described as "a

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[9] Biblical passages regarding light, darkness and vision to which these lines may refer include: Gen 1.4 (light and darkness divided at God's command) and the Gospel descriptions of the eye as the "lamp of the body" which has the power to fill the body with light or darkness according to the object of vision (Mt 6.23 and Lk 11.34).

precious sanctuary" shown to the eyes by God (ll. 2724-6). The creative impulse may have derived from a profound respect for the pattern of intense passion and devotion (initiated by supernatural design) suffered willingly by a perfect subject perceived in the Passion of Christ. This was, as it were, the normative representation of supreme love "in action" for the period, and had been conceptualised by the Church (under Neo-Platonic influence) to operate along extramissive lines. To an extent therefore, it is reasonable to agree with Lewis that Guillaume romanticizes and secularizes a profound theological concept and reinvented it as a religion of "courtly love" – *agape* as *eros*, which the poet transmuted into sumptuous poetic form. The religious dimension is of course most explicit in the instruction, advice, gifts and penance for true service given to the Lover by the God of Love (ll. 1923-2762). Guillaume de Lorris was so successful in artistic terms that his albeit unfinished poem had the power both in its own age and for subsequent eras to foster a similar sense of unattainable desire as experienced by the Lover in its readership, and which must also be suffered, willingly and exquisitely.

Perceiving colour in Jean de Meun's "mirror of love"

The same cannot be said for the contribution of Guillaume de Lorris's continuator Jean de Meun – a poet who cannot be accused of seeking to convert a model of Christological passion into a pattern for secular love, so much as of wanting to complete the story in an erotic way that endorsed his realistic and learned world-view and tempering the process with wry humour. This meant having the Lover pluck his red rose from its green and leafy branch ("Jusqu'a tant qu'il avra cueillie / Sor la branche vert et fueillie, / La tres belle rose vermeillie" ll. 10603-6), which, stripped of its allegory, meant having the Lover take the virginity of the beautiful object of his

desire. The author tells the story in the form of a *miroer aus amoureus* or "Mirror of Lovers" (l. 10655).[10]

The opposing styles of the two poets can perhaps be characterised as spiritual and psychological delicacy versus a taste for realism and learned disquisition. The most noticeable aspect of Jean de Meun's overtly learned contribution is its size – at over seventeen thousand lines his is a far more copious production than Guillaume appears to have envisaged for the poem. Guillaume's part is conjectured by many critics to have been nearer completion than Jean de Meun's lengthy continuation would suggest. Moreover, the latter's copiousness comes at a price. Jean de Meun's brand of knowledgeable realism has been criticised by early and more recent readers of the work for its apparent air of self-satisfaction, and he has been deemed less artistically accomplished than his source. This is reasonable if one accepts Lewis's claims that Jean de Meun shows himself incapable of appreciating the full sophistication of Guillaume's allegories and complex personified abstractions. For instance, *Bel acueill* (Fair Welcome) in Guillaume's allegory is a male figure who manifests one of the Lady's psychological dispositions—a positive state of openness and receptivity towards the Lover—but who becomes identified with her by Jean de Meun to such an extent that he is given feminine traits, for instance trying on a chaplet and considering it to look very fair on his hair and admiring it constantly in a mirror (ll. 12731ff), thereby breaking the surface tension of the allegory.[11]

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[10] That is, to emulate the form of work of encyclopaedists such as Vincent of Beauvais (1190-1264) whose great encyclopaedia was called the *Speculum* ("mirror") *Maius*.

[11] Lewis, *Allegory of Love* 140. In Jean de Meun's defence on this point, he does not break the allegory here; rather it is severely tested for some readers. It is perfectly possible to imagine an effeminate male in the rôle.

It is the final phase of Jean de Meun's book—the taking of the Castle and plucking of the rose—that many critics have found unpalatable. It is hard not to read the thinly veiled pornographic imagery used to bring about the literal climax of the Lover's quest as a tongue-in-cheek exploitation of Guillaume's original sensitivity. The result reads as a male wish-fulfilment fantasy.[12] This can seem a slightly coarse ending to what began as an intricate and sensitive poetic construction – revealing and unravelling the elegant mysteries of love. The end transforms Guillaume's exquisite tapestry into an explicitly detailed (if still allegorical) description of sexual intercourse. In terms of the nuanced use of ideas of perception, the difference of styles is also evident in the contrast between Guillaume's subtle exploitation of extramissive imagery for psychological and spiritual purposes and Jean de Meun's poetically blunter version of extramission as a model for physical copulation (ll. 20787-820 & 21255-62).

We should expect no more than this, however. Jean Chopinel de Meun sur Loire, when referring to himself and his task in the middle of the poem proclaimed that he wished to "Puis voudra si la chose espondre / Que riens ne s'I porra repondre (ll. 10607-8) ["explain the story in such a way that nothing remains hidden"] after he had told it, and whilst a separate explanation is never actually given, it is never really needed because of the transparency of his allegories. The phrase is more telling in its demonstration that his was the mind of a scholar and lecturer, and his goal primarily

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[12] Benson notes Christine de Pisan's view in her *Epistle of Cupid* (translated by Hoccleve) of the work as a handbook for lechers: "So long a process, so sly a cautele / For to deceive a sely damiosele". Benson also notes the *Pearl*-poet's reference to Clopyngnel's "clene Rose" (*Cleanness* 1056-64) and redirection of his wooing advice to the spiritual dimension suggesting the *Pearl*-poet regarded Jean de Meun as a "clene" writer. This does not entirely follow: the *Pearl*-poet may have assumed Guillaume's spirit ruled the whole. See Larry Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer* 686.

educational – leaving decency (in terms of orthodox Christian morality), delicacy, decorum and the complex psychology of *eros* (which approached a theology for Guillaume) subservient to his particular mixture of thinly wrought allegory and overtly "factualized" fiction. Jean de Meun's continuation is characterized by its numerous scholarly references and use of a diversity of philosophical writings and authorities, so much so that some critics have suggested he was an academic at the University of Paris.[13] What is more certain is that his poetry had a clear method, perhaps best described in his own words (given before one of his digressions):

> Et pour faire entendre la chose
> Bien en puet on, en lieu de glose,
> A brief mot .i. example metre
> Pour mieus faire esclaircir la letre.
>
> (ll. 16855-58)

[In order to explain this, we could give a brief example instead of a gloss, the better to clarify the text...]

Clearly Jean de Meun was not in the business of artistically reinventing what "everyone knows...both wise men and fools" as was his predecessor Guillaume de Lorris. The exercise of his learning is manifest most emphatically in ten digressions on various topics of lore and natural philosophy,[14] which include comments upon

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[13] Cf. Lewis, *Allegory of Love* pp. 137-8 for his views on stylistic differences; for transmission, reception, and context and the history of interpretation see Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

[14] The ten digressions categorised by Lewis are: (1) the Lover or Dreamer's conversation with Reason; (2) his advice from Friend; (3) Falsssemblant's description of himself; (4) Largesse's lecture to *Bi alacoil* on love; (5) the author's apology for his work; (6) the story of Adonis; (7) Nature's dialogue

optical theory as a part of the presentations of the allegorical figures of Nature and Genius (ll. 15895-16732) and Nature's subsequent confession (ll. 16733-19422). The former section is based upon an Aristotelian model of the transformative processes of generation and corruption (ll. 16009-16016), characterized by the competing efforts of Nature at her forge (ll. 15897- 902) and Death with her black stained face ("Mors, qui de noir le vis a taint"; l. 15949). This leads into a detailed summary of alchemical theory and practice (a "true art"; ll. 16088-16152), a topic raised by the poet to illustrate the relationship of Art to Nature. Art struggles to copy the works of Nature and give her works life, so that whilst she is able to colour every metal (l. 16070), she cannot transmute the species "unless she first reduced them to their elemental matter" ("A leur matire premeraine", l.16074). Nature's confession to Genius also incorporates an Aristotelian overview of the cosmological nature of the universe (ll. 16805ff.), about which she makes no complaint, in contrast to the nature of Love, the final cause of her confession. Nature's account of the cosmos includes exposition of the reflected and inconsistent nature of moon-light discussed in terms of the nature of the property of transparency that some parts of the moon share with glass (ll. 16840-54) – a concept possibly deriving from Aristotle's *De sensu et sensato* (440a). This is exemplified by a description of how a mirror works in relation to light, visual rays and the eye:

> Si com li vairres transparanz
> Ou li rai s'en passent par anz,
> Qui par devant ne par darriere
> N'a rien espes qui les refiere,
> Ne puet les figures montrer,

with Genius; (8) Genius's sermon; (9) the story of Pygmalion, and (10) the Lover's contemplation on his journey and its final rest just before taking the Rose (Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 138-41).

Quant riens n'I pueent encontrer

Li rai des ieulz qui les retiegne,

Par coi la forme as ieulz reviegne;

– Mais plonc ou quelque chose espesse

Qui les rais trespasser ne lesse,

Qui d'autre part metre vorroit,

Tantost la forme retorroit;

Ou s'aucuns cors poliz i ere

Qui peüst referir lumiere

Et fust espes d'autre ou de sai,

Retorroit ele, bien le sai –

(ll. 16859-73)

[Transparent glass allows the rays to pass through it, having nothing dense inside or behind it which might reflect them. It cannot show shapes, because the rays of the eyes do not encounter anything to stop them and send the image back to the eyes. But if someone were to back it with lead or some opaque substance impermeable to the rays, the image would be reflected at once; it would be reflected, 1 know, from any polished object which was able to reflect light because of its own opacity or that of another material.]

The passage shows that Jean de Meun understood vision to operate extramissively, but may also suggest a theory of extramission of a more recent variety drawn from the model of composite intromission and extramission described by Alhazen, who is later mentioned by name (1.18038). Alhazen, in response to Aristotle, had conceived of extramissive rays emanating from the sun, reflected and multiplied by objects of perception, with differing quantities of reflected rays entering the eyes according the aspect of view of the perceiver.[15] Jean de Meun's passage seems to reflect back on Guillaume de Lorris' description of the "perilous mirror" found by the Lover at the Spring of Narcissus – and delivers it from, or denies it its "perilous-ness". Jean de

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[15] See Lindberg, *Theories of Vision* 58-86.

Meun seems to have taken a certain delight unweaving Guillaume's "rainbow" here, by removing all sense of mystery through scientific description. He thus follows a paradigm for the polarization of objective and subjective perceptual worlds that has lasted, increasing in ferocity from the Enlightenment to the Industrial Revolution, until the present day and our own twenty-first century purveyors of "either/or" approaches to language, truth and knowledge.

Nature's confession moves from discussing the reflective nature of the moon to portray the sun and planets and their influences (ll. 16899-994). The sun is the source of all light and has his house in the middle of the planets at exactly the right level ordained by God to ensure the correct temperature for survival (ll. 16915-27). The light of the sun is dispensed amongst the stars and moon to make them beautiful and illuminate the Night – creating harmonies and celestial music as ordained by God the Father (ll. 16927-58). The planets influence the accidents and substances of things by causing their constituent elements to grow more or less dense or clear, thereby causing more heat and cold, dryness and dampness and binding everything together into the best combinations for the best possible forms (ll. 16959-78). Following discussion of human nature and free-will (ll.16978ff), Jean de Meun mentions Alhazen's *Book of Optics* as an authority for understanding the nature of rainbows.[16]

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[16] Presumably the reference is to Alhazen's "Treatise on Light" (*Risala fi l-Daw'*), a supplementary work to the *Book of Optics* (*Kitab al*-Manazi). Alhazen (Alhacen) was known to the Latin West as the author of the *Perspectiva* (also known as *De aspectibus*), a late twelfth or early thirteenth century translation of his work on optics. See A. I. Sabra, trans., *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham. Books I-II-III: On Direct Vision. English Translation and Commentary* (2 vols.). Alhazen's discussion of rainbows and criticism of Aristotle's *Metereologica* was to influence Roger Bacon, amongst many western natural philosophers (see part one).

He seeks to bring out a contrast between natural descriptions and explanations and mythological explanations for meteorological phenomena:

> Et pour le mone soulacier
> Ausi com pour aler chacier
> .I. arc en lor poing prendre selent,
> Ou .ij. ou iij. Quant eles veulent,
> Qui sont apelez arz celestres,
> Dont nus ne set, s'il n'est bons mestres
> Pour tenir des regarz escole,
> Comment li solaus les piole,
> Quantes coleurs il ont et queles,
> Ne por coi tant ne por coi teles,
> Ne la cause de leur figure.
> Il leur couviedroit prendre cure
> D'estre disciples aristote
> Qui mieus mist natures en note
> Que nus hons puis le tans chain.
> Alhaçan, li niez uchaïn
> Qui ne refu ne fols ne garz,
> Cil fist le livre de regarz:
> De ce doit il sciance avoir
> Qui vault de l'arc en ciel savoir.
>
> (ll. 18023-43)

[In order to give pleasure to the world, as well as to go hunting, the clouds are wont to carry a bow in their hands, or two or three, if they like. These bows are called rainbows, and no one knows, unless he is a good enough master to teach optics, how the sun produces their different colours, or how many colours there are, or which ones, or why so many, or why these, or what determines their shape. Such a man would take the trouble to become a disciple of Aristotle, who made better observations of nature than any man since the time of Cain. For his part, Alhazen, the nephew of Huchain, was neither a fool nor a simpleton: he wrote the *Book of Optics*, and anyone who wants to know about rainbows should study this book.]

Again Jean de Meun's main purpose seems to be to unpack the mythological dimension of Guillaume's work in a very direct way: the God of Love with his two bows is transformed back into the optical effects of light. The section is immediately followed by another discussion of mirrors (ll. 18048ff.) in which their practical properties are recommended for foiling Vulcan's plot to catch Mars and Venus. The author indirectly appeals to his reader to discover their principles and properties by reading Alhazen so that such matters would "not be a matter of belief, since he would know about it" ("Si ne seroit ce pas creance / Puis qu'il en avroit la science", ll.18063-4).

This presentation and use of scholarly material, like Jean de Meun's other digressions, is not made primarily to contribute background or to provide components for his allegorical plot; it is delivered to educate the reader by furnishing the mouths of relevant allegorical figures with observations from the world of current scholarship. Hence Nature speaking *qua* nature is presented as a scholarly authority via self-knowledge: Genius comforts Nature's grief with the line "Scripture itself affirms that God has given you such a good brain that you are infinitely wise" ("L'escripture neïs afferme, / Tant vous a dieus donné sens fin / Que vous estes sage sanz fin", ll. 16708-10). The digressions which relate to the plot most directly are those in which Jean de Meun recounts classical stories: a technique clearly borrowing from Guillaume's work as a structural template. Jean de Meun tells at length and with accuracy most of the stories of Adonis (ll. 15663-768) and Pygmalion (ll. 20821-21219) from Ovid's comedy the *Metamorphoses*, and by doing so seeks both to inform his reader and offer a parallel meaning for the allegorical event into which the story is embedded. Adonis is introduced in order that he may be held up as a model of one who should have believed his loved one against all reason (ll. 15755-68). The moral is applied to

the question of erotic desire in an obvious manner: the Lover should simply obey Venus' dictates to pursue love whatever else he may think about the wider implications of the matter (ll. 15755-69). The Adonis section merges the two portions of the story as found in the *Metamorphoses*: Venus falls in love with Adonis, but her warning to him and the consequences of its neglect is separated in the original by Venus' telling of the story of Atlanta.[17] However, the medieval poet leaves out Ovid's conclusion to the affair. In the *Metamorphoses,* Venus changes Adonis' bloody corpse into a red anemone (the "wind flower", which blows its name).[18] Ovid's use of symbolism suggests a natural return to beauty for a person after death, which is enacted in perception and memory through the beneficial influences of love. The absence of the motif in Jean's treatment, which might have served as a complementary metaphor to the Lover's rose, confirms his approach to the story was primarily geared towards sexual symbolism.

Jean de Meun's treatment of the story of Pygmalion (ll. 20821ff) is also strategically placed in order to inform his wider allegory. In psychological terms the story explores how a perceiving subject may invent for himself an object of desire and subsequently practise loving behaviour towards it (him/her), irrespective of such a perceptual object's potential for subjectivity. The dilemma requires an "external" power to bring life to the object so it can be a co-equal subject and no longer the perceiver's objectification of love. The psychological pattern has clear implications for the Lover's relationship in *Le Roman de la Rose.* Jean de Meun's treatment of the story of Pygmalion simplifies the moral for his main allegory. He places his version at a crucial point towards the end of his continuation, the instant before Venus fires her

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[17] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X. ll. 516-59 & 675-739.

[18] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X. ll. 727-39.

fiery arrow at the loophole in the tower (an act of extramission symbolizing copulation), which heralds the beginning of the Lover's final conquest of the rose (ll.20787-820). Jean uses the story to emphasize the beauty of the silver image supported by two pillars (symbolising the legs and body of the Lady): thus the image is compared to that made by Pygmalion as "like a lion to a mouse" ("A l'ymage pygmalyon / Comme de soriz a lyon" l. 20820). When Jean de Meun returns to his main narrative of the assault on the tower he restates the same reason for the digression: the image in the middle of the tower is lovelier than the image sculpted by Pygmalion which came to life (ll. 21219-46). He implies that the silver image will now come to life even more gloriously; a boast which may seem anticlimactic when the reality is the Lover's allegorical act of penetrative sex upon a passive object .

Jean's notoriously sexist and humorous finale sees the Lover enter the tower and use the staff and scrip given him by Nature to force an entry to its inner passageway (an event compared to a Herculean joust, ll. 21587ff.), there to find the rose bush's inner sanctuary and pluck the rose. Unlike the comprehensive animation and quasi-humanity of Pygmalion's statue, however, Jean's allegory portrays an event involving passive sexual organs divorced from the rest of an allegorical woman (the supporting pillars and silver image). Thus Jean de Meun's allegorical finale is ultimately confused and confusing. The delicacies of extramissive and intromissive perception, so appropriate a model for allegorical formulation, are replaced by a coarse representation of an act of physical extramission upon a passive object.

Jean de Meun perhaps paraded learning at the expense of fully developing the allegorical construction of his continuation. His work is unable to achieve the same impact as Ovid or Guillaume partly because his treatments of mythology do not fully engage or exploit the complex notions of perception relating to the psychology of love

towards which his learned sources could have led him. Alhazen's *Book of Optics*, for example, might have shown him a more sophisticated synthesis of extramission and intromission with which to modify his abrupt sexual allegory. The red anemone at the conclusion of the story of Adonis and the complex psychology of self-induced desire in that of Pygmalion are also arguably cases of missed opportunities. One cannot but speculate how Guillaume de Lorris might have worked with and developed the same stories, and indeed what he would have made of Jean's efforts.

Heraldry or pseudo-heraldry in medieval fiction?

The armorial function of heraldry, as discussed in part two, emerged during the twelfth century and centered upon the identification of knights by the colours and devices displayed on surcoats and shields. Romance writers quickly seized upon the "type" and "token" identity formulae this offered, and heraldic and armorial practices became commonplace in popular romances, used for a wide variety of effects. At the most basic level, the identification of knights by colours and devices allowed for easy differentiation and memory-tagging of protagonists by the audience, so making it more practicable for authors to describe multiple characters and interactions in a few words and with potentially symbolic implications.

The differentiation between characters through heraldic description is a particularly interesting topic in romance cycles because of the recurrence of individual characters. Different poets and authors from different countries, using different languages, over many years employed the same characters – sometimes following conventions and so obeying a version of the hereditary principle, sometimes not, and thus setting up new traditions of armorial association. For instance, in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* or *The Knight of the Cart* (*c*.1177), Lancelot bears the plain red arms of his enemy, Meleagant, which are given to him by his

captor's wife.[19] His disguise involves two aspects of subsequent armorial use in romance: the opposition of internal and external identities, and the symbolic absorption or consumption of a defeated opponent by taking over his arms. In "true" heraldry the practice of bearing another knight's arms—beyond simply winning armour at a tournament—is deeply problematic because of the hereditary principle and attachment of personal chivalric honour to a device.[20] Sir Lancelot bears *argent, three bends gules* in later French romances, presumably evolving from Chrétien's ascription of plain red arms. The further details of the blazon are established in an early episode of the Vulgate Cycle (*c.*1210-30) in which Lancelot is offered three magic shields by a damsel – all silver/white (*argent*) but "differenced" (an heraldic term) by either one, two, or three red (*gules*) *bends* (diagonal lines). The number of *bends* signified the magical property each shield could give to the bearer: the strength of one, two, or three men. Lancelot, perhaps forgetting his chivalric values for a moment, seizes the advantage on offer.[21] However, these arms were not always used.

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[19] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, ll. 5515ff. Brault points out that plain arms were a favourite device in Arthurian literature for characters who wished to remain incognito (Brault 30). Logically speaking, in these cases plain arms reduced the amount of memorable information presented to an observer.

[20] The famous dispute of Scrope versus Grosvenor in 1386, at which Chaucer among many others gave testimony, showed the lengths to which nobles might go to keep their personal arms. See the account of the case in George Squibb, *The Law of Arms in England* (London: The Heraldry Society, 1967). On the other hand, Coss has shown that families might adapt their coats-of-arms in response to social criteria: Peter Coss, "Knighthood, Heraldry, and Social Exclusion in Edwardian England," *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: The Boydell P; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1992) 39-68.

[21] See Norris J. Lacy, ed. *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, Volume 3 of 5 (New York: Garland, 1995) iii. 147-151; and cited in Gerard J. Brault,

In the later Middle English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* (*c.*1400), armorial particulars are not offered for Arthur's famous knights. In an early episode, Lancelot's shield and armour, while in the possession of an enamoured damsel (given to her as a keepsake while Lancelot wears her brother's armour), is recognised by Sir Gawain:

> "But damesel, I beseech thee,
> His shelde that ye wolde me shew;
> Launcelotes yif that it be
> By the coloures I it knew."
> The maiden was both hende and free,
> And led him to a chamber new;
> Launcelotes sheld she let him see,
> And all his armour forth she drew.
>
> Hendely then Sir Gawain
> To the maiden there he spake:
> "Lady," he said, "withouten laine,
> This is Launcelotes sheld du Lake.
> Damesel," he said, "I am full fain
> That he thee wolde to leman take
> And I with all my might and main
> Will be thy knight for his sake."[22]

The shield is clearly observed ("Launcelotes sheld she let him see") but its colour and device conspicuously left out of the description – allowing the audience to fill in the space from their own knowledge or imagination. Malory uses the same content-free

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Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries with Special Reference to Arthurian Literature (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 46-7.

[22] *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, ed. Larry D. Benson in *King Arthur's Death* (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1986) ll. 592-607.

armigerous episode in *Le Morte Darthur* (1469-70),[23] but elsewhere does not shy away from following his sources' use of heraldic details for his characters. Later in the *Stanzaic Morte*, before facing the army of Sir Mador, and in stark contrast to his previous concealment of identity, Lancelot is described: "Steed and armour all was blake;[24] / His name is nought to hele and hide: / He hight Sir Launcelot du Lake!" (ll.1472-4). It is a vague description by heraldic standards, and does more to associate Lancelot with a spiritual ideal of achromatic perfection than to signify hereditary armorial identity. In the Vulgate Cycle and subsequent versions, Lancelot's son Galahad bears the Templar-style red cross on a white field: presented to him by a white knight and which originally came from Joseph of Arimathea.[25] The symbolic value of the shield relates to the inherent spiritual examination of the quest for the Grail, but its visual similarity to Lancelot's traditional red and white colours also resonates with secular heraldic significance.

The phenomena of "heraldic flattery" and "alluding arms" can relate to the use of legendary arms, that is, the duplication of or subtle reference to fictional arms in real displays or to real displays in fictions, and also to "canting arms" or devices

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[23] "So when the shield was come Sir Gawain took off the case, and when he beheld that shield he knew anon that it was Sir Lancelot's shield and his own arms" (Malory, *Morte Dartur*, XVIII:14).

[24] Possibly meaning "white" if "blake" is from OE "blác" meaning "pale," as opposed to "blæc" for "black". The common root of these seemingly contradictory terms indicates a primary sense of absence of colour.

[25] See *The Vulgate Version of The Arthurian Romances*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer, Vol. VI: *Les Aventures ou la Queste del Saint Graal* (New York, NY: Ams Press, 1969) 25; *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, trans. P. M. Matarasso (London: Penguin, 1969) 60; Malory, *Morte Dartur*, XIII: 9-11.

involving a pun on the name or occupation of the bearer.[26] Two interesting and

notoriously ambiguous examples of heraldic flattery, one much disputed, are found in

the Middle English dream debate poem *Wynnere and Wastoure* (*c.* 1353), a work

packed with contemporary heraldic allusion.[27] The poet's dream-narrator encounters a

group of men whose appearance suggests they are members of the Order of the Garter

(ll.61-63); he then sees a banner bearing the motto of the Order written in English (ll.

64-8); and hears a royal toast shouted in unison by the two opposing armies of the

debate (l.69). A man comes forward described as "wroghte als a wodwyse" or

"wrought like a wild man of the woods," and who has "wrethyn lokkes" or "writhing

hair" (l. 71). On his "lambrequin" or neck mantle he displays the Plantagenet coat of

arms, the English three lions quartered with the French lily (the latter a result of

Edward III's claim to the French throne in 1340):

> Bot that that hillede the helme byhynde in the nekke
> Was casten full clenly in quarters foure:
> Two with flowres of Fraunce before and behynde,
> And two out of Ynglonde with sex grym bestes,
> Thre leberdes one lofte and thre on lowe undir;[28]

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[26] Brault details numerous literary instances of heraldic flattery, allusive, canting and symbolic arms in

Arthurian literature. See Brault, *Early Blazon* 19-28 and Brault, "Literary Uses of Heraldry in the

Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries" in *The Court Reconvenes: Courtly Literature Across the Disciplines*,

ed. Barbara K. Altmann and Carleton W. Carroll (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell

and Brewer, 2003) 15-26, at 16-19.

[27] See *Winner and Waster*, ed. John W. Conlee in *Middle English Debate Poems* (Woodbridge: Boydell

and Brewer, 1991) 63-98. The poem includes reference to the armorial displays of trade and

manufacturing guilds and religious orders as well as individuals.

[28] *Winner and Waster*, ll. 76-80.

The armorial bearings imply that the King, who had been loudly toasted by all sides and later plays the role of adjudicator between the debating characters, is Edward III, or a close member of his family. But why is the man displaying the king's arms so wild in appearance? Conlee has suggested he is a "Garter Herald",[29] but this could not mean a "Garter King of Arms" because the position was not instituted until 1415. It is also peculiar that someone who would have been a relatively privileged individual should appear so wild looking at a time when heralds had become more respectable than in the twelfth century. The man may be described metaphorically, his appearance perhaps embodying the temporary absence of peace in the land. Moreover, later in the poem there is another allusion to arms, the identity of which has been the subject of great debate since Sir Israel Gollancz's strong assertion that it alludes to the "peace" arms of the Black Prince, used for jousting and tournaments (*sable three ostrich feathers quilled and passing through scrolls argent bearing the words 'Ich Dien').*[30] The passage reads:

> With a jupown full juste joynede by the sydes,
> A brod chechun at the bakke; the breste had another,
> Thre wynges inwith wroghte in the kynde,
> Umbygon with a gold wyre. When I that gome knewe,
> What! he was yongeste of yeris and yapeste of witt
> That any wy in this werlde wiste of his age.[31]

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[29] Conlee, *Middle English Debate Poetry* 71.

[30] For Gollancz's argument, which involves invasive editing of the text to include the Black Prince's motto "Ich dein", see Sir Israel Gollancz, *A Good Short Debate between Winner and Waster: An Alliterative Poem on Social and Economic Problems in England in the Year 1352* (London, 1921). The Black Prince's blazon taken from Wagner, *Historic Heraldry* 48.

[31] *Winner and Waster*, ll. 115-118.

If the lines denote the Black Prince's "peace" arms, then an interesting contrast is created if the previous arms are read as "war" arms. The allusion to each aspect of the royal heraldry could help underline the poem's thematic shift from a state of war to one of peace via royal mediation. However, opponents to the peace arms view of the second coat of arms point out that the line "Thre wynges inwith wroghte in the kynde" refers to wings not feathers, a separate device and blazoned differently. In a brilliant article on the topic Salter points out that Sir John Wingate's device was wings, and he was closely connected to the Black Prince from 1351-61; perhaps making the description in *Wynnere and Wastour* an accurate heraldic reference to canting arms.[32] Again, however, while it is true that "wings" are not necessarily the same thing as "feathers", the Wingate reading does not fully explain the context of flattery. Having accurately presented the King's (or Royal family's) arms in lines 76-80 in conjunction with a display of praise and loyalty, a similar thing happens after the description in lines 115-118: the bearer of the three wings is described as "...yongeste of yeris and yapeste of witt / That any wy in this werlde wiste of his age", a commendation which suggests the arms deserved flattery for the same reason as the bearer of the previous arms. Whether Sir John Wingate would have merited such praise is unknowable. It is easier to imagine that the King and then his son are armorially identified and then praised.

At least we may have more confidence in our lack of certainty in cases in which the relationship between external and internal or hidden identities is explored via armory and its recognition (or not) in romance narratives and explications. The simple

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[32] Elizabeth Salter, "The Timeliness of Wynnere and Wastour" in *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England* ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) 180-98, 192.

plot-device of a knight wearing another knight's coat of arms and deceiving other characters, upsetting expectations, and causing exciting revelations is a recurring motif upon which authors could structure episodes and whole stories. To give but one famous example, Sir Lancelot and Sir Kay wear each others' arms and thereby exchange their (perceived) identities and abilities so that Kay can escape violent attention from other knights.[33] The motif has deep roots and is perhaps most memorably employed by Homer in the *Iliad*, when Patroclus wears Achilles' armour to deceive the Trojans, with tragic results.[34] It has flourished into modern narrative forms and media: for instance, the science-fiction film *Judge Dredd* (1995).[35] Chrétien de Troyes's (or his narrator's) opinion of such exchanges in *Cligés* (1176) is particularly illuminating. After describing Alexander's use of deceptive armory to infiltrate a besieged city, Chrétien writes:

> Mes autresi con cil qui songe,
> Qui por verité croit mançonge,
> Les boisent li escu boclé,
> Car la mançonge font verté.
> Par les escuz sont deçeü.[36]

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[33] See e.g., Malory's account in *Morte Darthur* VI:12.

[34] Homer, *Iliad* XVI. ll. 155ff.

[35] In *Judge Dredd*, a science-fiction action/romance film set in a post Apocalyptic future world, the public armorial identity of the protagonist (Dredd) is stolen by another (Rico – his evil twin), who has an opposite but hidden personality; his dastardly purpose for wearing his brother's armour/identity is to commit crimes and incriminate his nemesis. "Judges" resembles "knights" inasmuch as they, unlike police officers, have authority to judge and punish criminals on the spot.

[36] *Cligés*, ed. Philippe Walter in Chrétien de Troyes, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) ll. 2091-5.

["...but like the dreamer who takes an illusion (or illusory song) for the truth, so they were persuaded by the shields that this illusion was true: by the shields they have been deceived."][37]

Chrétien makes clear that the deeper appeal of such identity exchanges lay in an effect comparable to that of momentarily entering a dream-vision.

There are many instances of fictitious blazon (the restricted language developed by heralds to record coats of arms) in romance settings. In Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec and Enide* (*c.*1170) we have an early example of what the literary historian Gerard Brault would consider "quasi" rather than "true" heraldry. Brault uses Wagner's definition of "true" heraldry, i.e., "the systematic use of hereditary devices centered on the shield",[38] to analyze romance uses. He finds three elements in the definition: (a) the use of rules to make a consistent system (b) the transmission of devices/colours by bloodline (c) the location of devices (on the shield – other heraldic badges could be worn simultaneously but only that on the shield defined the coat of arms).[39] Part (b) of "true" heraldry is rarely found in romances. Arms are often granted in unique and imaginative ways, which seldom refer back to a protagonist's armorial heritage or lack thereof. "Token" identifications by arms are widespread however, and operate without any scrutiny of bloodline. The situation being such, it seems a further distinction needs to be drawn between the uses of heraldry in romances – to separate out those which fail the strict "Braultian" standards for "true" heraldry. In the

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[37] *Cligés*, trans. D.D.R. Owen in Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances* (London: Dent-Everyman, rpt. 2001) ll. 2106-7.

[38] Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry* 12.

[39] Brault, "Literary Uses of Heraldry" 16.

following example Erec has been insulted by an unknown knight and his dwarf, so

seeks his name by referring to his coat of arms:

> "Biax ostes, ne vos enuit mie,
>
> Mes dites moi, se vos savez,
>
> Qui est uns chevaliers armez
>
> D'unes armes d'azur et d'or
>
> Qui par ci devant passa or,
>
> Lez lui une pucele cointe
>
> Qui mout pres de lui s'estoit jointe,
>
> Et devant ax un nain boçu?"[40]

["My good host, if you don't mind, tell me, if you know, the identity of a knight wearing arms blazoned with azure and gold who passed by here a little while ago with an elegant maiden very close by his side and a hunchbacked dwarf ahead of them."][41]

The unknown knight's identity was encoded by his arms, which were then memorised by Erec. The detailed report of the arms is an accurate "token" identification, which Erec uses to pursue the knight and eventually satisfy his honour in combat. The use of the shield identification puts the incident into a category of "realistic" armorial meanings that does not match well with the other criteria of the full "quasi" heraldic definition. Brault defines "quasi" heraldic arms as those that are "...either plain, fanciful, stylized or lack elements that true heraldry deems essential."[42] This includes descriptions of knights involving only a single colour but also charges (e.g., lions) that are so frequently repeated that they might be used to provide stylized rather than

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[40] *Erec and Enide*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski, Chrétien de Troyes, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) ll. 582-89.

[41] *Erec and Enide*, trans. D.D.R. Owen. ll. 581ff.

[42] Brault, "Literary Uses of Heraldry" 16-17.

accurate armorial description. Plain arms were sometimes used in romances and legendary histories such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*c*.1136) to suggest purity and the lack of pretentiousness of a character. Connected with this sense is Brault's observation that plain arms were ascribed to unproven knights. He cites Chrétien's portrayal of plain arms at the Tournament of Noauz in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* as a case in point;[43] a similar idea is explicitly stated by the narrator in the Middle English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*:

> In that time was the manner so,
> When yonge knightes sholde sheldes shew,
> Til the first yere were ago
> To bere armes of one hew,
> Red or white, yellow or blo;
> There-by men yonge knightes knew.[44]

Plain arms could operate as a "sub-type" identifier – i.e., for a group of knights within the "type" of knighthood. However, while the poet informs us that plain arms indicated younger, inexperienced knights, in other places he uses plain arms to identify knights who are clearly neither (e.g. Lancelot in ll.1472-4). By contrast, if we return to the example of arms "d'azur et d'or" in *Erec et Enide*, we find that they are not "plain, fanciful or stylized", and although Chrétien does not provide a fictional account of the armorial heritage of the mysterious knight (making the arms "lack elements that true heraldry deems essential"), overall his use of realistic blazon suggests he could have done so, or would have at least understood the request had it been made. This is a very different armorial context from truly "quasi" heraldic descriptions. Indeed, in a later episode of the same work the difference is made

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[43] Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la Charrette* ll. 5505ff.

[44] *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, ll.147-52.

obvious. Erec encounters a red knight in a garden, "Then suddenly here comes a knight wearing crimson armour,"[45] who we later learn is protecting a girl lying on a silver bed. The knight's description and context contrast with the realism of accurate "blazon" used earlier. We are perhaps encouraged by the location of the knight and his lady to think the situation might require a more metaphorical interpretation in which the knight's colour plays a part. Indeed, one can easily construct such a reading: the episode is a microcosm of the courtly question that Chrétien explores in the poem as a whole, concerning the priorities a knight should have in relation to his honourable duties of errantry and love (after love's domestication). The red knight's situation is a variation of Erec's own. He made a *don contraignant* to his lady only to discover that she wants him to remain by her side in the garden at the expense of his honour until he has been defeated by another knight. This duty to love, and its imprisoning effect, temporarily costs the red knight the object of his love. Erec, by defeating the crimson knight, releases him from dishonourable servitude. The redness of the red knight strongly suggests, therefore, both passion and martyrdom. It might further indicate the sense of public shame or embarrassment felt by the knight at his usurped honour and denied errantry.

The difference between the "vermoilles" knight that Erec meets in this episode and the previous knight bearing "d'azur et d'or" raises a difficult question: how are we to interpret, and distinguish from mundane uses, the colour symbolism and associations that may be present in the spectrum of red, blue, green, yellow, black and

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[45] *Erec and Enide*, trans. D.D.R. Owen, ll. 5898. "A tant ez vos un chevalier, / Sor les arbres, par le vergier, / Armé d'unes armes vermoilles", *Erec and Enide*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski, ll. 5893-5.

white knights that litter medieval romances?[46] Is there a unifying approach to their

interpretation? Or are such colours, as with instances of realistically blazoned arms or

"sub-type" descriptions of plain arms, ultimately "simply chosen at random"?[47] Brault

is vociferous on this subject, arguing in his early work:

> Modern scholars are very prone to reading symbolism into any use of colour in
> literature, but such is certainly not the case in the vast majority of instances of
> plain arms in Old French literature. Since we know that shields of a single
> tincture were a rarity in actual practice from the beginning of heraldry, the
> literary use of plain arms merely served in most cases to create an atmosphere
> suggesting a time long since past and the opulence and splendour of the
> universe of epic and romance.[48]

Brault makes an important point regarding the use of plain arms for heightening the

atmosphere of a fictional milieu, but was perhaps too quick to cut off the chromatic

link between arms and signification. The tone is reminiscent of Oswald Barron

attacking late medieval heralds for their predilection for reading arms symbolically

(see above). The irony is that fourteenth century heralds certainly did use chromatic

and other symbolisms to read arms, hence Barron's criticism; they were in fact rather

like Brault's "modern scholars." If we exclude the possibility of seeing symbolic

colours operating in complex metaphors within romance contexts, we risk taking an

impoverished view of the medieval imagination. In his later essay, "Literary Uses of

Heraldry" (2003), Brault wrote more persuasively and with less surety: "The precise

symbolic meaning of each one of these tinctures is not always apparent, although it is

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[46] Brault has assembled a useful mini-catalogue of coloured romance knights; see Brault, *Early Blazon*
31-5.

[47] Brault, *Early Blazon* 31.

[48] Brault, *Early Blazon* 29.

generally easy to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys."[49] Acceptable as this generalisation sounds, it is worth remembering just how difficult it is at times to ascertain the "good guys" and "bad guys" in more sophisticated romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as we shall see below. Ultimately, the phrase "pseudo-heraldry" needs to be carefully delineated to include more of the diversity of armorial and heraldic episodes found in medieval fiction.

One case that defies the classifications so far mentioned, but that clearly involves some species of "pseudo-heraldry," is the heraldic episode in the Middle English romance *The Sege of Melayne*.[50] The heroic Bishop Turpin, single-handedly charges a host of what he believes to be Saracens, but is so covered in blood from his previous efforts that he is not recognised by what is, in fact, an approaching army of Bretons come to assist the French:

> So blody was that bischoppis wede,
> His conysaunce ne yit his stede

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[49] Brault, "Literary Uses of Heraldry" 16.

[50] *The Sege of Melayne* was written by an unknown poet in the Northumbrian dialect of the late fourteenth century, and survives in fragments in only one manuscript (MS Additional 31042 – the "London Thornton Manuscript") in the British Library, which has been dated to 1450. The poem has many distant sources and analogues, and is sometimes considered part of the Otinel (or *Otuel*) group of thirteen Middle English "Charlemagne romances". Otinel was a Saracen knight who was converted after a fierce battle with one of Charlemagne's Peers, in this case Roland. The combat itself is described in the Middle English poems *Otuel* and *Otuel and Roland*. However, neither the combat nor even the character of Otuel appear in *The Sege of Melayne* as it has come down to us. It is classified with the Otinel romances because only in these is Garcy the ruler of Lombardy. There is at this time no known direct source for the romance. See Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) 152-6.

The Bretons ne couthe noghte knawe.[51]

However, a herald in the Breton army discerns his identity by his shield:

> Bot als an harawde hym byhelde
> He luckede up into his schelde
> And sayde to alle one rawe
> 'If Bischoppe Turpyn appon lyve be,
> In faythe, lordynges, yone es he
> That ye se hedirwarde drawe.'[52]

It is a moment of double-misperception caused on the one hand by a false expectation, on the other by the obscuring effects of blood. By depicting the scene in this way the poet blends together the heraldic tradition connected with knighthood with a much older motif of heroic honour. It is a poem often noted for looking to a Germanic heroic mode and later "chanson de gestes" (songs of action) from the late eleventh century, whose subjects included the reign of Charlemagne, Christian martyrdom and fighting Saracens in holy warfare. The poem has also been praised for its powerful characterization of Bishop Turpin, a man who is presented by turns as brave and superhumanly inspiring, rash and dangerously single-minded.[53] In this episode, it seems clear that the heroic mode informs the poet's presentation of a lone, undaunted warrior grabbing a lance and setting forth to assail an overwhelming foe:

> "And in his hande he caughte a launce –
> `Have gud day, Charls, and grete wele Fraunce!'
> And agayne that hoste he yede." (ll. 1456ff)

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[51] *The Sege of Melayne*, ed. Maldwyn Mills in *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent-Everyman, 1972, rpt. 1992) p. 41, ll. 1463-5.

[52] *The Sege of Melayne*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, p.41, ll. 1466-71.

[53] See Mills ix-xiv.

The ethos of *Beowulf* is evoked – the hero is portrayed as human but at the same time semi-monstrous, as he fearlessly approaches his enemies as if empowered to defeat them:

> Aras ða bi ronde   rof oretta,
> heard under helme,   hiorosercean bær
> under stancleofu,   strengo getruwode anes mannes.
> Ne bið swylc earges sið! [54]

> [Arose then with shield, the brave warrior
> Helmeted and iron-minded, went with his battle-mail
> Under the hanging rocks; his strength was in the strength of one man alone:
> Not thus the undertaking of a coward!]

When Beowulf is left alone to face the dragon the audience is divorced from the protagonist:

> Nealles him on heape   handgesteallan,
> æðelinga beam   ymbe gestodon
> hildecystum,   ac hy on holt bugon,
> ealdre burgan. [55]

> [Nor yet about him his band of comrades,
> Sons of athelings, armed stood
> With valor: to the woods they bent them,
> Their lives to protect.]

In the *Sege of Melayne*, the "hero" sets off to do holy violence against heathen men rather than a pagan dragon, and hence while physically alone is not to be imagined as spiritually alone. His shield signifies his faith, and his spear, assuming the poet knew

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[54] *Beowulf*, ll. 2538-41.

[55] *Beowulf*, ll. 2596-9.

Ramon Llull's *Book of Chivalry*, "truth". The dilemma is that Turpin's sight fails him: he is about to attack Christian friends not heathen foes, friends who cannot warn him because they cannot see him for his coating in blood. The poet heightens the suspense of the scene and causes the audience to speculate as to whether Turpin's misperception matters, whether God will be with him in the fight even if he kills his Christian brothers, or whether his mistake will cost him his spiritual honour and life in the subsequent fight. The poet resolves the situation via a miracle of heraldry. The role of the herald and his identification of the Bishop's coat of arms employs realistic heraldry (the shield unambiguously declares Turpin's "token" identity within the "type" of bishops) in order to orchestrate the meaning of the heroic action. The recognition of Bishop Turpin by his shield, despite the blood, brings a symbolic weight to bear on the event and underlines the dominance of the theme of "defending the faith". Blood, of course, had great symbolic value in terms of the Christian theology of redemption and sacrifice, and it is during the moments blood when separates Turpin from recognition that he is revealed in his full spiritual identity as "passion for Christ" personified. Moreover, his unrecognisable identity while covered in blood also hints towards his "otherness" as a hero cast in a heroic, *Beowulf*-mould. He is superhuman, and in a sense alien – momentarily closer to the heathen "monsters" than the people needing to be saved. At earlier points in the story Turpin performs such "monstrous" acts as abusing Mary and blaming her for the loss of French lives (ll.548-65), later even excommunicating King Charles for not showing enough zeal and staying at home leaving Turpin to do all the fighting. In his anger Turpin threatens to destroy Paris (ll.650-769). In a sense, it is the herald's perception of the bishop's shield – traditional symbol of faith and social identity – that returns

Turpin to his public identity as a Christian bishop. The juxtaposition and attempted synthesis of two ideals in this crucial scene—the heroic and the chivalric—is the poet's creative contribution. He depicts a lone spiritual hero mistakenly charging to face terrible odds in what he believed was a divinely sanctioned conflict, only to have his public identity lost to view because of his blood-spattered appearance, a crisis resolved by the recognition of his shield and its significance, carried, in Ramon Llull's words, "so that he be known in the battle", and "so that it be known if he be a friend or enemy of chivalry." Ultimately one could say that Bishop Turpin's blood-soaked identity crisis underlines his characterization as a man capable of excluding all other concerns, good or ill, in the interests of his faith, so much so that the modern reader is left uneasy and must speculate as to whether Turpin can ever be humanly "identified" or known.

In overview, armorial colour offered to romance poets and authors a highly adaptable system for denoting significance. A description of plain or single-coloured arms might indicate (but not necessarily) an inexperienced knight, while at another level a particular hue could carry meta-associations according to the context of an episode, the genre of the story, and the teller's attitude towards it. Individual writers operated using different theological, philosophical and folk understandings of colours and their perception, a great diversity of ideas of which permeated the period. In the case of the "vermoilles" knight in *Erec et Enide* the combination may have been easy to see – he was young and inexperienced, and yet the writer's choice of hue adds an extra dimension of meaning to an otherwise mundane "sub-type" association. Other cases such as that of Bishop Turpin seem extraordinary compared to typical uses of heraldic practice and armorial significance in medieval romance, but are no less relevant in illuminating the characteristics of medieval perception and imagination.

"Of all Cryston knyghttus tho flowre": <u>Sir Gowther</u> *and the spiritual hierarchy of chivalric colours*

Sir Gowther is a late fourteenth-century tail-rhyme Middle English romance by an unknown poet, categorized variously as a "penitential", "homiletic" or "edifying" example of the genre.[56] The aspect of the story I wish to consider is the central event of three divine grants of armour to the protagonist. Gowther receives black, red, and finally white armour (and horses), suggesting a hierarchy of "quasi" heraldic colours that symbolize the radical transformation of his identity and the progress of his penance.

Sir Gowther, it has been noted, is "obscure" in that it does not appear in contemporary lists and is not mentioned by name in other medieval literature.[57] Nonetheless, as Hopkins has pointed out it, "...is a highly developed version of the story of the penitent sinner,"[58] and also shows a highly developed grasp of chivalric ideology, symbolism and ceremony. *Sir Gowther* did not come into being *ex nihilo*. Its main source was *Robert le Diable*, and other possible direct or indirect sources

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[56] The poem is found in two late fifteenth-century manuscripts: the National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.3.1. (known as 'A') and British Library Royal MS 17.B.43 (known as 'B') between which there are considerable differences. For an edition of 'A' corrected with 'B' see Karl Breul, ed. *Sir Gowther: Eine englische Romanze aus dem XV. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Verlag von Wilhelm Gronau, 1886); see also *Sir Gowther*, ed. Maldwyn Mills in *Six Middle English Romances* (London: Dent-Everyman, 1972, rpt. 1992) pp. 148-68; for 'B' with omissions filled from 'A' see Thomas C. Rumble, ed. *The Breton Lays in Middle English* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1965) pp. 179-204. See Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 144n3 for details of other editions. Quotations and line references are from Mills' edition. Hopkins uses the term "penitential", Mills "edifying", Mehl "homiletic".

[57] See Hopkins 144.

[58] Hopkins 144.

include the romance *Gregorius* and the Breton lay *Tydorel*, although Hopkins disputes

how much influence these had in shaping the poem's central ideas of atonement,

repentance and divine justice.[59] The three poems clearly share themes and episodes

but differ in emphases and technique.

The story of *Sir Gowther*, like numerous folk-tales, parables and legends, can

be summarised quite easily: the protagonist, like Merlin, is a knight born as a result of

his mother's deception and impregnation by a "fiend" (ll. 14)[60] and dominated by a

demonic disposition. In his youth he commits terrible crimes against man and God.

Eventually, by a process of personal conviction and difficult penance, he is

transformed into a "flower of chivalry" and dies a saint. Typically, and with good

reason, *Sir Gowther* has been read as an exemplum influenced by a clerical tradition

of writings concerned with matters of salvation, conversion, and, with particular

relevance to this case, protection from devils and their propensity to father demonic

offspring.[61] By contrast, the influence of chivalric ideology and its literary sources on

Sir Gowther has been largely ignored. From the point of view of colourful armory and

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[59] Hopkins 147. For detailed treatment of sources and analogues see Breul, Introduction, pp.45-132; Hopkins 146-9.

[60] This terrible phenomenon—the spiritual opposite to the divine incarnation of Christ—by which Antichrist could be conceived was variously employed as a motif in medieval literature. For sources and discussion of demonic rape, incubi and succubi see Hopkins 166-71; Neil Cartlidge, "'Therof seyus clerkus': Slander, Rape and Sir Gowther", in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, Studies in Medieval Romance, ed. Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2005) 135-147; Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England*.

[61] See J.A.W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986) 134; Cartlidge 135-6; Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001) 218-33.

its perception, *Sir Gowther* is a rich resource, its centrepiece the sequence of three sets of divinely coloured arms. The sets of armour cannot be thought to offer anything in the way of "true" heraldry in the Braultian sense because they break a basic rule that a knight cannot be identified by more than one "token" identifier or coat of arms. The trio of colours, however, evokes the deeper symbolism of spiritual chivalry and thereby encapsulates the redemption and conversion themes of the poem. Gowther is a knight stamped from birth with an evil nature and identity, a situation metaphorically similar to bearing a particular set of hereditary arms. Thus in the same way that he is able to change his armorial identity by wearing different displays granted by God, so too he is to transform his spiritual identity and bloodline. The hereditary basis of later medieval heraldry assists the poet in portraying and teaching a message of redemption and spiritual "inner" transformation, a process by which "blood identity" – even the demon – might be undone and spiritual re-birth take place.

The divine granting of arms in *Sir Gowther* has been rightly connected with the romance motif of the "Three Day Tournament", a phenomenon rooted in Chrétien's romances (although he also uses a four day model in *Cligés*) and a commonplace through to Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1469-70).[62] The motif sees the protagonist attend a tournament and compete on each of its three days wearing a different coloured coat of arms. He does increasingly well against increasingly tough opposition, and eventually wins the tournament and its prize (often the hand of a princess). Malory's later use of the motif is a "hyper-version" of this. In "The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney" Malory describes a tournament in which the hero wears a magic ring that causes his armorial colour to change repeatedly during the fighting, so with the effect in one episode that is usually achieved over three days. As in such

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[62] See Hopkins 155n27.

cases, King Arthur and the other knights do not have "ready cognizance of him" (VII:28). The popular form may also have a metaphorical association with the three days between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection during which it was believed that he harrowed Hell, and was thus a motif well-attuned for spiritual rather than secular chivalric concerns.

In *Sir Gowther* we see realistic and "quasi" heraldic ideas in their proper places. The use of symbolic "quasi" heraldry codifies the protagonist's spiritual journey: the colours of his divinely-granted arms symbolize expiation of sin (from black to white via red), with the success of Gowther's penance underwritten by the redeeming blood of Christ. Hence Gowther's combat against the heathen Saracens takes on the full theological significance of the three-day motif: spiritual death; combat with spiritual enemies (including the release of a prisoner on the third day), and subsequent spiritual resurrection. Moreover, the sequence of colours also mirrors the discussion of colour symbolism (white and black being "primary", red "mediary" colours), using an Aristotelian colour hierarchy of honour played out in fourteenth-century books of arms such as Bartolo di Saxo Ferrato's *De Insigniis et Armis* and Johannis de Bado's *Tractatus de Armis*, but converts a secular concern for public honour into a personalized spiritual register. The poet is careful to avoid tarnishing his spiritual hero with the secularizing influence of displays used in establishing public honour, and emphasizes that Gowther went out to fight unrecognised except by God and the Emperor's daughter, who cannot speak and reveal his identity: "No mon hit knew bot God. / For he fard nodur with brag ne bost / Bot prystely pryckys aftur tho ost, / And foloud on hor trowd" (ll.561-4).

The poet may well have had direct or indirect access to the symbolic description of knighthood ceremonies found in books of chivalry written by authors

including Geoffroi de Charny, Ramon Llull and the unknown writer of the *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*. Here, as we saw in part two, spiritual writers explained the armory of a knight (Ramon Llull) and its ritual of dubbing (*L'Ordene de Chevalrie*) in symbolic terms. The dubbing ceremony was a ritualised recreation of Revelation 19:11-16, a passage in which a Christological White Rider named "Faithful" and "True", clothed in a "robe dipped in blood," leads the armies of heaven "dressed in pure white linen" against the forces of the Beast and the false prophet. Black, white and red were key colours in the ceremony and were understood to encode the values of mortality, purity and self-sacrifice. In *Sir Gowther* the poet is clearly interested in this symbolic aspect of chivalry. The significance of Gowther's sword or "fachon" that he forges for himself at the age of fifteen is a case in point. It has been remarked that the poet focuses on this weapon more frequently than did his sources, mentioning it ten times all told, and that it "epitomises his [Gowther's] potential to do good or evil".[63] The fact that it is invariably called a "fachon" – i.e., a curved scimitar or heathen weapon – is also significant.[64] Gowther forges it himself and does great evil with it to his family and the Church; he insists on taking it to Rome with him after he has learned of his demonic origins and wishes to change his ways (l.256). Even when he is before the Pope and has claimed that he will do as he is told, Gowther insists on keeping his sword for protection after being asked to lay it down:

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[63] The frequent use of the "fachon" plays makes it an essential part of Gowther's character and a key symbol of his life, perhaps comparable to Sir Orfeo's harp (see Mills 215n139). See also Hopkins 151 for a comparison with *Robert le Diable* and Hopkins 159-60 for discussion of the instances when Gowther uses his "fachon".

[64] Defined in the *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. F. H. Stratman (Oxford: OUP, 1940) as "a large, broad sword with a curved blade": see Hopkins 160n37.

"Lye down thi fachon then the fro;

Thou schallt be screvon or Y goo-

And asoyly[d] or Y blyn."

"Nay, holy fadur," seyd Gowther,

"This bous me dues with mee beyr:

My frendys ar full thyn."[65]

Gowther uses his "fachon" in his battles against the Saracens, where it is the only part

of his armory not granted to him by God: horses, shields, armour and spears are all

mentioned in this capacity (e.g. ll.406-17) but not swords. It seems highly feasible

that the poet had the spiritual symbolism of the knight's sword in mind: Ramon Llull

declared in his *Book of the Order of Chivalry* that "a sword…is made in the

semblance of a cross to signify that our Lord God vanquished in the cross the death of

human lineage, to which he was judged for the sins of our first father Adam."[66] This

allows a logical conundrum: Gowther cannot fight as a true knight and defend the

cross using the symbol of the cross until he has received absolution for his terrible

sins *against* the cross. Thus the poet provides him with a heathen weapon throughout;

at first it is used of his own choice, then of thematic necessity during his period of

penance. The death of the "heritage of his blood" – the devil rather than Adam –

having been achieved, the poet may have allowed him to use a Christian sword.

Moreover, the divinely granted armory coloured with the significant hues of the

spiritual dubbing ceremony can be viewed as Gowther's (sword-less) re-dubbing or

spiritual dubbing: over the three days of battle he is re-born as a Christian knight –

only having been dubbed previously as a secular knight by his weak mortal father's

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[65] *Sir Gowther*, ll. 286-91.

[66] Llull, *Order of Chivalry*, ed. Byles 76.

desperate action: "He was so wekyd in all kyn wyse / Tho duke hym myghte not chastise, / Bot made hym knyght that tyde, / With cold brade bronde" (ll.145-8).

The spiritual motif of the three-day tournament in *Sir Gowther* fuses romantic motifs, theological doctrine, and details of realism in such a way that some critics have found the overall effect unsuccessful.[67] I contend that the poet achieves a sophisticated balance between the differing concerns of spiritual and secular chivalry in the descriptions of combat. Initially the poet shows he was well acquainted with the secular model of jousting and tournaments as a form of diversion. He relates a "turment" in honour of Gowther's mother to celebrate her marriage at which "Knyghtes of honowr tho furst dey / Justyd gently hom to pley, / For that lady sake" (ll.40-2) and at which the duke wins ten horses (l.43). The secular model is then transformed into a spiritual one for entry by the penitent Gowther. On the second day of his combat with the Saracens and armed in red, Gowther's actions raise a significant chromatic contrast between a Christian pursuit of righteousness and its heathen opposition. Gowther hews helms and shields, and: "He feld tho baner in tho feld / That schon so bright and schene. / He leyd apon tho Sarsyns blake / And gard hor basenettus in too crake: / He kyd that he was kene" (ll. 470-4). The Sultan's "type" identifier, his banner, shines brightly but is still felled by Gowther. In terms of secular chivalry the visual effect is powerful but ordinary: a noble enemy has been crushed by a superior power. The description following, of "Sarsyns blake" suffering

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[67] E.g., Dieter Mehl writes, "It is not quite clear how he [Gowther] has really deserved to be forgiven all his sins unless his knightly exploits and his spectacular (127) victories in the tournament are counted as part of his penance. Thus the combination of legend and romance is not very successful here and we may ask whether he just retold the story without any clear idea of its religious meaning," *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1968) 126-7.

terrible violence from the caresses of a terribly "keen" Gowther, has a more spiritual

connotation: they are now cast as enemies of spiritual chivalry and defeated as such.

On the third day the Sultan and his forces are described arrayed for battle in realistic

heraldic terms:

> Tho sawdyn bare in sabull blacke,
>
> Three lyons rampand, withowt lacke,
>
> That all of silver [shene];
>
> Won was corvon with golys redde,
>
> Anodur with gold in that steyd,
>
> Tho thryde with aser, Y wene;
>
> And his helmyt full rychely frett,
>
> With charbuckolus stonus suryly sett
>
> And dyamondus betwene;
>
> And his batell wele areyd,
>
> And his baner brodly dyspleyd –
>
> Sone aftur tyde hom tene.[68]

By contrast Gowther is kitted out in his divinely granted milk-white armour and

horse, so resembling a biblical White Rider – the fount of spiritual chivalry – rather

than a secular example of chivalry bedecked in jewels. The poet remarks:

> Tho gud knyght, syr Gowtheyr
>
> He styrd hym styfly in his geyr,
>
> Ther levyd non doghttear, Y wene;[69]

This opinion of the peerless protagonist, a typical romance trope, harnesses the

spiritual dimension of his appearance to his role in the coming combat, and is later

born out by Gowther's victories over all comers and rescuing the Emperor from the

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[68] *Sir Gowther*, ll. 571-82.

[69] *Sir Gowther*, ll. 583-85.

clutches of the Sultan (ll.620-5). The depiction of the Saracen's secular heraldic colours——sable, gules, azure, and gold——contrasts with Gowther's spiritually enhanced "quasi-heraldry" to emphasize his transition from ideals of secular to spiritual chivalry. (On a purely secular level his armorial "whiteness" trumps the Saracens' "mediary" colours and the Sultan's lesser "primary" colour.) Secular armory clouds the issue by appearing similarly when used by both Christian and heathen troops. Gowther's divinely sanctioned armory singles him out for those who can "truly see" (only the Emperor's daughter) as one who fights for the host of heaven and not for the devil.[70] The parallel allows the poet to set up a distinction between Gowther's demonic physical prowess of which he took terrible advantage in his youth to persecute the Church, and his later divinely-sanctioned abilities, which are no longer fuelled by his demonically polluted blood.

The description of Gowther pierced by a Saracen spear – a probable allusion to Longinus's piercing of Christ's side – further continues the poet's use of spiritual significance and visually encoded doctrine. Gowther's experience of physical suffering, akin to that of his Lord and the original White Rider, is the material cause of the recovery of the Emperor's daughter's voice and the final stage of his journey towards forgiveness. Up to this point the poet has placed Gowther and the mute Emperor's daughter in a spiritual rather than romantic relation through their shared exclusion from public discourse. It is only the expectations of the genre that causes the reader to anticipate their being united. The couple's intimacy is delicately constructed: she, like a spiritual herald is uniquely able to perceive what others cannot, the real identity of the mysterious knight bearing black, red, and white

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[70] For definitions of "primary" and "mediary" colours in the heraldic context see the discussion of books of arms in part two.

armour. With this knowledge she becomes an instrument of divine forgiveness, demonstrated by her washing dogs' mouths with wine and providing them with choice food that Gowther can extract, so obeying the rules of his penance (ll. 442-5). The poet's depiction of the Emperor's daughter also reveals a complex further use of chromatic symbolism. Following a typical romance formula for feminine beauty qua purity, she is described as "whyte as flowre" (l.371), but immediately afterwards, "Was too soo dompe as hee" (l.372). Thus her white beauty is bound up with her mute condition from the outset. The poet, needing some way to reveal her spiritual dimension which corresponds with and fulfils Gowther's quest for redemption, does not over-endow his story with other white objects of feminine perfection. Gowther's mother, an obvious candidate for a similar description during her youth, is portrayed in terms of "hur rod reyde as blosomes on brere" (l. 35) and as "schene" (l.37), never white. The interaction, therefore, between the red and white modes of beauty can be viewed a minor refraction of the central theme.[71] Ultimately, a transcendental visionary aspect of the Emperor's daughter's "whiteness" is brought to the fore

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[71] The contrast of white and red is a common romance motif for feminine beauty. Biblical uses of red interacting with white vary; in Isaiah 1.18 red (blood) on white (wool) is indicative of the corrupt sacrifices of Israel; in Rev 19.13 blood on white linen indicates a pure sacrifice. Overlap between the romance type of feminine beauty and the deeply theological and religious uses can perhaps be discerned in romance, for instance in Perceval's reverie as he gazes at three drops of goose blood fallen on snow in Chrétien's *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*, which remind him of his beloved (perhaps a spiritual as well as secular beloved); and in *The Romance of Tristran*, when Tristran jumps across to Iseut's bed dripping blood onto the floor covered with the flour sprinkled by King Mark's dwarf in order to provide evidence of their adultery. (Beroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, Vol. 1, ed. A. Ewert (Southampton: Camelot Press-Basil Blackwell & Mott) ll.748ff. Possibly Tristran's blood on the flour is indicative of an impure sacrifice. Chaucer gently mocked the romance obsession with red and white in his parody *Sir Thopas* (*CT*, VII: ll. 724-9).

through her repeated acts of "true" recognition. These fulfil a spiritual rather than romantic role in the story, and culminate in her, not the Pope's revelation of Gowther's identity and words of divine forgiveness after her recovery from her sympathetic wounding:

> Ho seyd, "My lord of heyvon gretys the well,
> And forgyffeus the thi syn yche a dell,
> And grantys the tho blys;
> And byddus the speyke on hardely,
> Eyte and drynke and make mery;
> Thu schallt be won of his."
> Scho seyd to hur fadur, "This is he,
> That faght for yow deys thre,
> In strong batell, ywys."[72]

Other chromatic refractions include the "whyte" loaves of bread that the greyhounds feed Gowther during his three days in the wilderness (ll.310-13), which provide a foretaste of the three-day tournament and utilise a motif alluding to the wilderness experience of prophets.[73] Canine symbolism has dual aspects in *Sir Gowther*, which also parallel the poem's movement from secular to spiritual values: dogs are divine helpers when serving Gowther as he undergoes his penance, but otherwise share his place as the lowest of the low in the Emperor's hall ("hownde" is a term of abuse for the heathen Saracens – l.389). Gowther's changing identity during this process informs the duality. He progresses from a lowly condition to be the flower of chivalry,

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[72] *Sir Gowther*, ll. 655-663.

[73] Hopkins cites Elijah's time in the wilderness fed by ravens (1 Kings 17.6), Hopkins 154. Other biblical precedents for wilderness experiences of divine sustenance include the provision of (white) manna from heaven (Exodus 16.31), and the devil's testing Jesus to use his power to turn stones into bread (Mat 4.3).

moving from "last to first" via humility, which is a key theme of the story endorsed by scripture (Mat 20.16). Gowther's penitential mode of diet is clearly intended to create a physical manifestation of his humbled or insignificant status as a desperate sinner, as does the requirement that he become a mute.[74] Gowther's subsequent achievement of an inverted "first position" is manifested by his veneration as a saint. He attempts to un-work the evil of his former life by building a new abbey to replace the one he had burned, "And putte therin monkus blake" (l.694) to replace those he had killed. The fact that he cannot bring those who have suffered because of him back to life, or reverse the corruption that he has led others into (e.g. those men who participated in rape and murder with him – l.185) has caused critics to be sceptical of the ease by which Gowther obtains his forgiveness.[75] Hopkins persuasively presents the situation as a topical dilemma for medieval preaching and its theology.[76] The poet, it seems, was unafraid that his poem might cause complacency on the part of its audience.

Gowther becomes Emperor after the death of his wife's father and is recognised by all as "Of all Cryston knyghttus tho flowre, / And with tho Sarsyns dredde" (ll.707-8): the poet thus shows his public face as completely reversed from that of the past. He has become an arch-enemy, like the White Rider, of the Church's enemies

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[74] Gowther's strange diet contrasts with religious observance of a fast by which a devout believer might ascend to a closer relationship with God or make a petition for a special favour through self-denial (comparable to a secular hunger-strike). An example of the fasting mechanic is found in *The Sege of Melayne* when Bishop Turpin states: "I sall never ette ne drynke / Ne with myn eghe slepe a wynke, / Whate bale als ever I byde, / To yone cité yolden bee / Or ells therfore in batelle dye / The sothe is noghte to hyde.' (ll. 1349-54).

[75] Hopkins (p.175) cites Mehl (pp.126-7) as an example.

[76] See Hopkins 176-8.

and arch-enemy the devil. Moreover, at his death Gowther's memorial is colour co-ordinated in line with the chivalric symbolism of his divinely granted armour:

> And when he dyed, tho sothe to sey,
> Was beryd at tho same abbey
> That hymselfe gart make;
> And he is a varré corsent parfett,
> And with Cryston pepull wele belovyd;
> God hase done for his sake
> Myrrakull, for he has hym hold;
> Ther he lyse in schryne of gold
> That suffurd for Goddus sake.[77]

The shrine of gold encapsulates the pinnacle of his worth as a literal "devil-turned-saint". If the poet was influenced by books of arms then this description prefers Bartolo di Sasso Ferrato's *De Insigniis et Armis* and its ordering of armorial colours so that black is least honourable, followed by red, white, and gold at the top of the scale. The golden shrine may also suggest an alchemical metaphor and Gowther's Christological experience an alchemical process: he becomes gold derived from a base metal; Gowther the devil's son is reborn the child of God, or in the Pope's words, "Now art thu Goddus child" (1.673).

Sir Gowther is a typical romance inasmuch as it tells the tale (advertised as a Breton lay in ll. 28 & 753) of a knight's quest and winning of the hand of a beautiful maiden. It is more than this, however. It is a work created in a tradition that encompassed didactic religious instruction, doctrine and inspiration as part of entertainment. The poet's use of chivalric colour symbolism sets up a template that is as memorable for a sympathetic reader able to unlock its meaning as the so-called

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[77] *Sir Gowther*, ll. 718-26.

"Wordless Book" Charles Haddon Spurgeon used as a preaching aid in 1866.[78] Gowther's path of penitence and his expiation of sin through divine intervention makes him an Everyman figure for the Middle Ages (as Hopkins comments, 170): his story a means by which an audience might see themselves and find hope of freedom from religious guilt. Of course they might not have seen themselves exactly reflected in Gowther's acts of total depravity or his ultimate achievement of saintliness, yet in recognising his condition as a perfect fictional representation of "original sin" they would have been profoundly moved.

'Ryghte as he an angell were,/ Cladde he was in quite': Sir Amadace *and the true cost of secular knighthood*

In a different way from *Sir Gowther*, the plot of the tail-rhyme romance *Sir Amadace* also hinges on the part played by a mysterious yet significantly coloured White Knight.[79] The story is constructed from two motifs: "The Grateful Dead" element in which a ghost returns to help a man who, like a funeral director's version of the Good

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[78] See C. H. Spurgeon, *The Wordless Book: A Sermon*, No. 3278, Published Thursday, November 30th, 1911, Preached at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington (January, 11th, 1866). Spurgeon's topic was a book of coloured pages with no words that his old preacher reputedly referred to, each page of which the impetus for a preaching point. "The old minister used to gaze upon the black leaf to remind himself of his sinful state by nature, upon the red leaf to call to his remembrance the precious blood of Christ, and upon the white leaf to picture to him the perfect righteousness which God has given to believers through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ his Son." See online at *The Spurgeon Archive*, <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/3278.htm.>. June 2nd 2008.

[79] Subsequent quotations are from Mills's edition of the Ireland MS version in *Six Middle English Romances* pp. 169-192. *Sir Amadace* survives in acephalous condition in two MSs: the Ireland MS and, named *Sir Amadas*, in Advocates Library MS 19.3.1. See also *Sir Amadace and the Avowing of Arthur:*

Samaritan, has shown him the kindness of burying his corpse; and a "Divided

Winnings" element in which two characters agree to share the profits of a venture.[80]

This section will offer a reading of the poem that reconciles a possible ideal of

spiritual chivalry embedded in the motif of the White Knight along with his core

identity as the ghost of a merchant who tests the secular quality of Sir Amadace's

knighthood.

Sir Amadace is usually considered a romance concerned with secular chivalry

rather than its rarefied spiritual model.[81] The protagonist is guilty of the secular vice

of profligacy and is reduced to penury, despite being simultaneously portrayed as

generous to the poor and exhibiting the virtue of liberality. The moral tension of this

contradiction reaches its climax when Amadace is tested by the White Knight over the

possession of his wife and child. It can be argued that the presence of the White

Knight in the story takes the romance beyond its primary secular focus to introduce

important nuances from an "ethico-spiritual" world of chivalric ideology.

The primary theme of *Sir Amadace* is the morality of material possessions,

and the poem is filled with references to gold, silver, money, the cost of goods and

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Two Romances from the Ireland MS, ed. Christopher Brookhouse, *Anglistica*, vol. XV (Copenhagen:

Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1968).

[80] Williams treats "The Grateful Dead" motif in detail and argues that other seemingly inexplicable or

out of keeping elements of *Sir Amadace*, including the shipwreck that provides Amadace with his

fortune, are derived from roots in folktale. See Elizabeth Williams, "Sir Amadace and the

Undisenchanted Bride: the Relation of the Middle English Romance to the Folktale Tradition of 'The

Grateful Dead'", *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance* ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge:

D.S. Brewer, 1999) 57-70. A classic study of the motif is Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Grateful Dead: A

History of a Folk Story*, The Folk-Lore Society No.60 (London: 1908; rpt. University of Illinois P,

2000).

[81] See, e.g., Mills xix.

services, displays of wealth, and, except perhaps in the very last case (Amadace's crown "Wyth gold so clure schinand" l. 837), these references are clearly understood to be material goods and not metaphors for higher values or divine qualities.[82] The basic problem the poet sets up is a worldly one: how can the secular virtues of courtesy and liberality be reconciled? Both generosity and economy are exalted – the former requiring a knight to assist the poor, the latter that he repay his debts,[83] but what happens when the two are brought into conflict?

The poet begins by establishing Amadace's character and the morally complex reasons behind his poverty and desire to leave the country (ll.34-6), before describing his squire's discovery of a chapel in which a widow stands watch over the unburied body of her husband (ll.65-120). Amadace goes to the chapel himself, listens to her story (ll.121-204), and learns how her husband died in debt, crucially seeing himself in the dead man's plight ("He myghte full wele be of my kynne, / For ryghte so have I wroghte" ll.209-10). However, when later presented with the opportunity to pay the man's debts (l.274) and for his burial (l.280), Amadace does so, thereby increasing his own financial problems. The event foreshadows the crisis of secular virtues that is eventually resolved through the presence of the White Knight. In effect Amadace has used up in an act of charity the last of the money he raised by mortgaging his lands, a choice that will bring about his renewal but also teach him a profound lesson. During the funeral he helps serve the poor, "thay lay his hert nere" (ll.320-1), but also earns ill-deserved criticism for leaving early, "Sum sayd 'This gud full lighteli he wan, / That thusgate spendutte hit on this man'" (ll.340-8). The penniless Amadace takes his

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[82] See, e.g., l.35, l.60, l.261, l.311, l.359, l.511, l.515, ll.702-3, l.783, l.825, l.837.

[83] See Raoul de Hodenc, *Le Roman de Eles* for a concise presentation of the fourteen virtues of knighthood divided into the two wings of courtesy and liberality by which a knight could "fly".

leave of the most senior guest and leaves town. The poet clearly approves of this course of action, stating: "Thenne sir Amadace kidde he was gentilman borne; / He come the grattust maystur beforne, / Toke leve, and wente his way" (ll.334-6).

Having lost all his material possessions, Amadace retreats into complete solitude and dismisses his last three men (ll.349-60); he goes into the wilds and forests beyond the city limits (a typical romance motif) and lives a life excluded from society. For a medieval audience the wilderness would also suggest an environment in which knights travelled to pursue quests or face trials, thereby undergoing processes of self-discovery and spiritual re-awakening.[84] Amadace's wilderness sojourn both encapsulates his sense of social disgrace and causes him to feel it all the more keenly. He comes to the conclusion that he has been foolish to squander his wealth and lose his place in society (ll.386-96), and his thoughts become taken up with regrets, appeals and prayers. He wishes to remain hidden from the judgmental gaze of society: "Thou lette me nevyr come in that syghte / Ther I have bene knauen for a knyghte" (ll.400-1); he appeals for either a return to grace or death: "And gif me grace to somun all tho / That wilsumly ar wente me fro / And all that me gode ons hase done. / Or ellus, Lord, I aske the rede, / Hastely that I were dede" (ll.406-7). Finally his prayers and laments culminate in an appeal to Jesus for help, through which the poet introduces an important hint of a division of wealth that will become significant later at the crux of the story:

> He sayd, "Jesu, as thou deut on tre,
> Summe of thi sokur send thou me,
> Spedely in this place,

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[84] For a focused exposition of this romance motif see Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993).

> For summe of thi sokur and thou me send,
>
> And yette I schuld ful gladely spende
>
> On all that mestur hase."[85]

A mysterious milk-white stranger arrives just after this spiritually significant moment. The timing appears highly significant, as if he is a direct answer to Amadace's prayer. If the White Knight's arrival is to be read as a response to Amadace's prayer, then perhaps the prayer's content ("And yette I schuld ful gladely spende / On all that mestur hase") is also significant in relation to the subsequent "deal" Amadace makes to share his future fortune: "That evyn to part between us toe / The godus thou hase wonun and spedde" (ll.491-2). This might suggest, moreover, that the White Knight is a manifestation of the chivalric ideal of the White Rider (Rev 19.11-16) and is to be directly associated with Jesus, to whom Amadace's prayers are directed. This reading allows the subsequent dividing of monies and goods to be interpreted as a metaphor for Christian charity enacted on the terms advocated in Mat 25.35-40: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me". However, the description of the White Knight does little to confirm or deny his spiritually significant role:

> Milke quyte was his stede,
>
> And so was all his othir wede –
>
> Hade contiens of a knyghte.[86]

Attention is given to his complete whiteness and likeness to a knight ("Hade contiens of a knyghte"), but in a doubtful phrase: as the ghost of a "marchand" (l.140) he may resemble but cannot be a knight in a strictly logical sense. All that is necessary for the

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[85] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 415-20.

[86] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 427-9.

plot at this juncture is that Amadace not recognise him as the dead man he saw rotting in the chapel.

The description of the White Knight on his second appearance, however, is more evocative of spiritual chivalry. Here he is likened to an angel:

> He come in als gay gere,
> Ryghte as he an angell were,
> Cladde he was in quite.[87]

The porter who meets him at this point is instructed to report his appearance primarily as white ("Say him my sute is quite" 1.645), which he proceeds to do using similar words to those employed for the knight's original entry, only adding a superlative opinion:

> Sayd, "Lord, here is comun the fayrist knyghte
> That evyr yette I see with syghte,
> Sethen I was market mon.
> Milke quite is his stede,
> And so is all his other wede,
> That he hase opon."[88]

The poet magnifies the White Knight's appearance on this second occasion so that now he is "the fayrist knyghte / That evyr yette I see with syghte", suggesting that initially he appeared in a muted fashion to conceal his true identity. Moreover, the drama is increased in preparation for the resolution of the story, creating the sense that the White Knight's identity conceals great spiritual authority. The final revelation of his identity as the ghost of the dead merchant is almost anti-climactic after the release

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[87] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 637-9.

[88] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 652-7.

of Amadace from the demand that he literally share his wife by cutting her in two. Critics have noted that the White Knight appears divinely authoritative here, recalling God's release of Abraham from his command to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22.12).[89] The problem the scene generates for the reader is how to reconcile the "grateful dead," ghostly identity of the White Knight with his extraordinary demands and apparent divine authority.

While the White Knight has a secular claim on Amadace in terms of the agreement to divide his fortune, by renouncing Amadace's claim the White Knight seems to reveal a spiritual rather than moral basis for authority. In constructing the episode in this way the poet combines a secular supernatural or ghostly identity with a "higher" spiritual meaning for the White Knight. I suggest that his "extra" transcendental meaning is necessary for the moral argument of the poem, ensuring that the White Knight does not appear monstrous.

As the ghost of a bankrupt merchant deeply in Amadace's debt, the White Knight would have had little moral authority to propose a judgment on the limits of charity. He could have offered advice or a warning, but not engaged in profound "instructional testing". Operating within the guise of a spiritually empowered angelic being from a scripturally endorsed divine order of chivalry, however, he can exhibit the authority and judgment of a Solomon.[90] The White Knight claims half the wealth Amadace acquired from the shipwreck and his marriage, the inanimate part of which he then abandons "For hit may stoned me in no stidde" (l. 704). The line may have

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[89] Bennet 166.

[90] Another possible biblical echo in the testing episode is 1 Kings 3.16-28, the story in which Solomon settles the ownership of a child by ordering it to be cut in half. The real mother of the child reveals herself by being prepared to relinquish her claim to save its life. Amadace, by contrast, is willing to slay his wife.

dual meaning: material possessions are worthless to him as a ghost, and as a representative of knightly perfection they are spiritually devoid in value. Instead he claims half Amadace's wife and son—the objects of a husband's and father's love—in a scene that some critics find despicable and that casts the White Knight negatively whatever ulterior motives he may have (ll.707-8).[91] A sympathetic way of reading the demand is to view him as a representative of just and perfect knighthood, not merely as the ghost of a merchant. In this light the White Knight's ruthless claim is a means to rigorous chivalric instruction designed to help a well-intentioned but flawed knight take full responsibility for his actions. Underlying the lesson is the idea that the victims of both the merchant's and Amadace's liberality are their wives: the former is left with his crippling debts and the emotional trauma of having to protect his stinking corpse from the creditor's dogs (ll.190-1); the latter willingly accepts the prospect of her death in order to pay her husband's debts (ll. 730-2). The limit of knightly largesse defined through the White Knight's action is the point at which it directly causes someone for whom a knight is totally responsible to suffer. Amadace's willingness to kill his own wife in order to pay a debt starkly highlights the terrible weight of patriarchal responsibility, and hence the moral importance of achieving a balance between courtesy and liberality. In effect the White Knight forces Amadace to recognise the true cost of his generosity.

The White Knight's lesson can thus be reconciled with his former close companionship with Amadace and his action judged memorable and well-intentioned rather than vicious. The companionship is established at the moment Amadace recognises himself in the plight of the dead merchant (l.209-10), and refined by the

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[91] See e.g., George Kane, *Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romances, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman* (London: Methuen, 1951) 19; also quoted in Mills xxi.

White Knight's authority to judge Amadace's behaviour. However, when Amadace first meets the White Knight he receives little sympathy for his impoverished condition and is offered a theological diagnosis of his dire circumstances: "For God may bothe mon falle and rise, / For his helpe is evyrmore nere. / For gud his butte a lante lone, / Sumtyme men [have] hit, sumtyme none: / Thou hast full mony a pere." (ll. 440-4). The Boethian imagery of men rising and falling on Fortune's Wheel leads to the conclusion "gud is butte a lante lone". Moreover, the comment that Amadace is not really alone but has many companions in his poverty may allude to the White Knight's identity and their shared background. The White Knight follows his relatively unpitying response with the statement that Amadace's acts of charity should not be regretted. This moral opinion again requires a basis in divine authority:

> "Now thenke on Him, that deut on Rode.
> That for us sched His precius blode,
> For the and monkynd alle.
> For a mon that geves him to gode thewis,
> Authir to gentilmen or to schrewis,
> On summe side wille hit falle.
> A mon that hase all way byne kynde,
> Sum curtas mon yette may he fynde,
> That mekille may stonde in stalle;
> Repente the noghte that thou hase done,
> For He that schope bothe sunne and mone,
> Full wele may pay for alle."[92]

The White Knight, on the basis of Christ's exemplary sacrifice, recognises the spiritual value of Amadace's acts of charity and in a semi-prophetic tone remarks that they may be the cause of the payment of his debts ("Sum curtas mon yette may he

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[92] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 445-56.

fynde"). The companionship of Amadace and the White Knight seems o be presented viewed as an ethic and spiritual connection, and only after this has been established can the White Knight outline his plan for the reestablishment of Amadace's secular wealth. A visual nuance of their spiritual similarity may have been intended by the use of "quite" in line 542: the king's messengers "toke sir Amadace bi the quite honed."

The spiritual depth of their companionship is acknowledged when the White Knight returns. Amadace exclaims: "'Is he comun, myn owun true fere? To me is he bothe lefe and dere" (ll. 661-2). Amadace wishes to retain their closeness even after hearing the White Knight's demands, offering to live with him and share ownership of everything without dividing it: "Butte lette us leng together here, / Righte as we brethir were, / As all thin one hit ware" (ll. 691-3). The personal affront that Amadace feels at the White Knight's demand for what is owed to him (ll.704-8) clearly suggests he had hoped for a resumption of camaraderie. When he is asked for an equal share in his wife and son Amadace seems a man whose deepest values have been questioned. His sense of the betrayal of camaraderie perhaps equates with his fear for their lives. Amadace regrets all ownership of secular possessions and responsibilities and desperately tries to bargain for their lives, invoking Christ's sacrifice to remind the White Knight of their original bond:

> "Alas!" sayd Sir Amadace than,
> "That evyr I this woman wan,
> Or any wordes gode.
> For His life, that deet on tre,
> Quatsever ye will, do with me,
> For Him that deet on Rode.
> Ye, take all that evyr I have

Wythe thi, that ye hur life save."[93]

The White Knight's most heartily unpleasant demand follows, when he requires Amadace to choose between his most loved possessions, his son and wife, and then demands his half of the favourite. The White Knight cannot but seem monstrous unless we can read into him a version of Amadace himself (ll.751-6). If so the scene becomes a metaphorical culmination of their companionship and spiritual identification, the White Knight's actions designed to lead to Amadace's self-recognition. Amadace is forced to confront himself through the actions of the White Knight (who operates as a perfectly just model of secular knighthood) and to see the limits of his secular virtues of liberality and courtesy. The White Knight releases Amadace from the dilemma at the moment that he has learned the lesson: when he recognises through personal experience the true sacrificial cost of his ethical imperfection. Their companionship is restored at once when the White Knight says, "Now is tyme of pees!" (l.780) and praises the bravery of Amadace's wife. His words bring his own long-suffering widow to mind, and enhances the sense of their shared experience:

> He sayd, "I con notte wite the gif thou were woe,
> Suche a ladi forto slo,
> Thi wurschip thus wold save.
> Yette I was largely as gladde,
> Quen thu gafe all that evyr thou hade,
> My bones for to grave.[94]

In urging Amadace to divide his wife, the White Knight makes a ghastly parallel to his own colour using the words "...parte hur evyn before, / Hur quite sidus in sere"

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[93] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 709-16.
[94] *Sir Amadace*, ll. 781-6.

(ll. 755-6); once the test is over this chromatic association takes on a more positive meaning, reflecting instead her willingness to die. The colour of her secular beauty is enhanced by the purity of her sacrificial love, and matches that of the ideal of knighthood.

Bennett writes, "The closing invocation of divine blessing on the listening company sets the Christian seal on the story. All hangs on acceptance of God's will and his beneficent purpose."[95] It is an important point notwithstanding the prevalence of religious invocations in many romances. In *Sir Amadace* the blessing (ll.838-40) reminds the reader that whilst the romance explores a particular dilemma of secular knighthood and its virtues, it operates within an arena dominated by wider spiritual concerns and sophisticated theological concepts. The White Knight seems a curiously over-emphatic model for a ghost unless he is linked up conceptually to the central motif of spiritual chivalry, the White Rider. Whilst such an approach creates problems of its own, for instance, in determining the exact relationship between plain white knights, White Riders, Angels and Ghosts (especially of people who were never knights), it does allow for meaningful harmonisation of the ghost's secular origins with his seemingly chivalric Christological authority.

"Hys armur that was whyt as flour, / Hyt becom of blak colour": Chromatic *transformation and interaction in* Sir Launfal

The Arthurian romance *Sir Launfal* is by far the most colourful work so far encountered in this study, both in terms of its use of colour language and descriptions and metaphorically in its marvellous episodes.[96] *Sir Launfal* shares a central narrative

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[95] Bennett 167.

[96] *Sir Launfal* is found in one early fifteenth-century manuscript, MS Cotton Caligula Aii in the British Museum; the story is generally considered to have been written in the late fourteenth century in the

motif with *Sir Amadace,* in telling the story of a knight who suffers because of his largesse, the similarities do not stretch much beyond this and the fact that both are in tail-rhyme. Particularly unusual for a medieval romance is the fact that the surviving manuscript of *Sir Launfal* names its author: line 1039 states "Thomas Chestre made thys tale", although it is a moot point whether the use of "made" indicates the poet or a scribe, and the lack of biographical information regarding Thomas Chestre leaves the point unanswerable. What is more certain, however, is that the poet made a creative contribution to his sources, of which there were at least three: Marie de France's Breton lay, *Lanval* (*c.*1189); a Middle English translation of this, *Sir Landevale,* and the non-Arthurian Breton lay *Graelent,* composed by an unknown poet, which may pre-date Marie's story and so in turn have been one of her sources.

Also unlike the romances considered up until now, *Sir Launfal* is considered a good example of a Breton lay, whereas *Sir Gowther,* which despite twice claiming Breton ancestry, is overtly religious in theme and didactic in treatment. *Sir Launfal* on the other hand is full of motifs drawn from traditional Celtic story materials, and while not devoid of later Christian references (e.g. when Launfal "rewardede relygyons" l.427) operates with the "modern" Christian world somewhat backstage.

Sir Launfal narrates the fall of a handsome, courteous and generous knight of Arthur's court into poverty as a result of his largesse, and then the love shown him by a mysterious and beautiful lady, Dame Tryamour, daughter of the King of Faery. The vast majority of the poem's colour references relate to the faery folk of Dame Tryamour and her world. The other references, including "holtes hore" (ll.171, 230)

Kentish dialect. Subsequent quotations and line numbers are from the editions of *Sir Launfal* and *Sir Landevale* in *Middle English Romances* ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd, Norton Critical Edition (London; New York: Norton, 1995) 190-218; 352-64.

and "rustus" arms (ll. 527, 1027), serve to emphasise the brilliance and vividness of

the faery world compared to the mundane world. The visual impressiveness of the

magical otherworld is established at Launfal's first encounter in the forest with two of

Dame Tryamour's maidens:

> As he sat yn sorow and sore,
> He sawe come out of holtes hore
> Gentyll maydenes two:
> Har kerteles wer of inde-sandel,
> Y-lased smalle, jolyf, 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 coronal
> 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 – [97]

The description is lavish and tantalising, and, moreover the claim that "Ther myghte

noon gayer go" juxtaposes the worlds of human and faery to anticipate a major theme

of the plot. The costumes of the maidens are both colourfully exuberant and extremely

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[97] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 229-49.

costly in secular terms: they are made with indigo silk,[98] green velvet,[99] gold, furs, and precious. Their personal beauty is also of the highest order: they have white faces and red complexions according to the standard romance template of female beauty. Perhaps the only wrong note is their "browne" eyes. According to Aristotle's theory of relative perceptual strengths and related character traits, deemed to be caused by varying amounts of ocular water (*Historia Animalium* 492a), green eyes were preferable. Bartholomaeus Anglicus was not so specific but seems to have regarded "dyuers" or "yolow" as optimum, thus following the Aristotelian model of seeing a medium amount of water as best (DPR 1283, ll.26ff.). Dark eyes were valued less in medieval natural philosophy (blue being least valued); grey eyes were preferable and, perhaps only by coincidence, the most valued in romance tradition − as demonstrated in *Sir Launfal* by references to Queen Guinevere and Dame Tryamour's eyes (ll. 810, 935).

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[98] The indigo, or *indicum* (from the *Indigofera tinctoria* plant) used for dyeing textiles was imported from the East during the Middle Ages. A record of 1228 notes that Marseilles imported one of the most renowned Levantine indigos from Baghdad: see François Delamare and Bernard Guineau, *Colour: Making and Using Dyes and Pigments* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000) 47. Medieval scholars such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus, following Pliny's erroneous lead in the *Natural History*, believed it was produced from silt that formed in frothy water and attached to reeds. He describes it as "fayre and ayry, with wonder medlyng of purpure and of blew" (DPR, p.1295).

[99] Green textiles could be made using a "prassin" dye or by using copper carbonate (Malachite), although this was not stable (see Delamare and Guineau 58; DPR 1294). The greenness of the maidens' dresses might simply be following Celtic folklore, the colour (arguably) symbolizing the supernatural and so operating as an indicator of faery origins. See Derek Brewer's discussion in "The Colour Green", *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, Arthurian Studies XXXVIII (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1999) 181-190, at 183.

The two extravagantly beautiful maidens lead Launfal through the forest to Dame Tryamour's pavilion where the brilliant visual display of the faery world increases a notch, reaching its height with the description of the Dame herself. The pavilion is made from exotic materials (the "werk of Sarsynys" l.266), decked in costly "pomelles of crystal" l.267) and sports a golden statue of an eagle on top, with eyes formed of jewels that emit a moon-like luminosity "That spreteth out ovyr all" (l.273). The atmospheric effect of the jewel's extramissive light is transcendental and other-worldly; a quality reinforced by the remark that even two of the greatest men in history, Alexander the Great and King Arthur, "Ne hadde noon swych juell" (l.276). *Lanval* mentions Queen Semiramis and Emperor Octavian as impoverished besides such faery wealth; *Sir Landevale* uses Alexander, Solomon and Charlemagne as examples. The gems and their powers are beyond price and ordinary human possession. In retrospect, the eagle's jewelled extramissive visual perception may also gesture towards the blinding of Queen Guinevere, and symbolise the heightened significances of the faery perceptual world where appearances and "true" ways of seeing coincide.

Inside the pavilion is Dame Tryamour lying on a "bed of prys / Y-heled with purpur bys" (ll.283-4). The setting evokes opulence and ancient power, "purpur" having an obvious association with imperial Rome and the wealth of Emperors.[100]

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[100] Purple dye derived from "murex", the Roman name for the whelks from which it was extracted. Thousands of shells were needed for one gramme of dye. Access to murex dried up during the Middle Ages, and thus the popes began to wear red robes. Purple dyes from whelks were also made and used from ancient times in northern Europe. See C. P. Biggam, "Knowledge of whelk dyes and pigments in Anglo-Saxon England", *Anglo-Saxon England* 35 ed. Malcolm R. Godden and Simon Keynes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 23-55. Bartholomaeus Anglicus defines *purpura* as "purenesse of

The mesmeric references to the riches of Faery and Dame Tryamour serve to heighten

sensitivity towards Launfal's relative poverty and secular disgrace, so making his

fortunate predicament all the more marvellous. Having tantalised his audience to the

maximum, the poet at last describes Dame Tryamour herself:

> For hete her clothes down sche dede
>
> Almest to her gerdylstede
>
> Than lay sche uncovert.
>
> Sche was as whyt as lylye yn May,
>
> Or snow that sneweth yn wynterys day –
>
> He seygh never non so pert.
>
> The rede rose, whan sche ys newe,
>
> Agens her rode nes naught of hewe,
>
> I dar well say, yn sert.
>
> Her here schon as gold wyre;
>
> May no man rede here atyre,
>
> Ne naught wel thenke yn hert.[101]

Two chromatic points are immediately evident. First, the poet does not attempt to

describe Tryamour's clothing, deeming this an impossible task because they are

beyond the limit of man's imagination (ll.299-300). Secondly, the descriptions of her

natural beauty tend towards transcendence of the natural world: her whiteness is like a

May lily or winter snow, and her hair "schon as gold wyre" (l.298), but her redness

makes that of roses seem "naught of hewe" (l.295). This transcendence allows her to

appear more beautiful than any ordinarily beautiful women and also devastatingly

beautiful on the scale of the faery world where beauty is unexceptional. An erotic

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light," and engendered in countries that receive the most sun. It is derived from "certeyn schelle fische"

(DPR 1296).

[101] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 289-300.

element is also apparent in the description (faithfully derived from *Lanval*): she is first

introduced seductively half-dressed "for hete" (ll. 289-92); a condition that allows the

poet to focus on her physical, unadorned beauty, which momentarily transcends that

of her unimaginably wonderful costume. Chestre's reluctance to describe her clothing

innovatively rewrites the detail of both *Lanval* and *Sir Landevale* where she is

described wearing "a mauntell of hermyn, / Coverid was with alexanderyn" (ll. 101-

2).

The wondrous colours and visual splendours of faery-land are introduced into

the wider world of the romance through the gifts Launfal that receives from his lover.

In *Lanval* the lady, who is mysterious but not necessarily magical, presents gifts that

are not specified beyond their function of enriching Lanval. Thus there can be no

mention later in the story of the loss of the particular items; *Sir Landevale* also

follows this pattern. In the lay of *Graelent* there are closer parallels for Launfal's

gifts, including a servant and a horse, and also mention of a purse used by the servant

to pay Graelent's bills.[102] The protagonist is not given armour in either of the French

versions of the tale. It is therefore in respect to the details of Dame Tryamour's gifts

that Thomas Chestre's story is at its most creative and chivalric. The purse is

described as follows:

> I wyll the yeve an alner
> Ymad of sylk and of gold cler,
> Wyth fayre ymages thre.
> As oft thou puttest the hond therinne,
> A mark of gold thou schalt wynne

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[102] E. Margaret Grimes, ed., *The Lays of Desiré, Graelent and Melion* (New York: Institute of French Studies, 1928) 76-101.

In wat place that thou be.[103]

The fair images seem to be a reference to the lady herself and perhaps can be likened

to a heraldic badge. They could correspond therefore with the three ermyns mentioned

later as painted on the arms and pennon of the lady (ll.328-9):

> "Also," sche seyde, "Syr Launfal,
>
> 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."

Launfal is to ride Dame Tryamour's white horse, bear her device, command her

knave, and wear magic armour that cannot be damaged. The heraldic details of the

"thre ermyns ypeynted well" is not clear. In heraldic terms "ermines" is an inversion

of "ermine", black fur with white spots (the symbol for the stoat's tail) as opposed to

white fur with black spots. Its official use is, however, usually dated from Nicholas

Upton's *De Studio Militarii* (*c*.1440), composed long after the poem.[104] "Ermyns"

therefore could mean "white with black spots," with the plural form used simply to

agree with the number of ermine spots or tail symbols.

The gifts are brought by male faery servants who, like the maidens, are

clothed in rich, visually arresting materials (ll.376-86). Their arrival infuses Launfal

with a new vitality, visually embodied by his "ryche clothes and armure bright"

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[103] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 289-300.

[104] See Wagner, *Historic Heraldry* 107; Brault, *Early Blazon* 186; Dennys, *Heraldic Imagination* 48.

(l.382). The contrast between the new Launfal and his former impoverished self is emphasized by the device of the snobbish Mayor who had previously spurned him. Launfal puts the Mayor to shame with an honest appraisal of his true values (ll.409-15) and is then described: "Launfal yn purpure gan hym schrede, / Y-pelured with whyt ermine" (ll.416-7). In essence he has become magnificent in the role of his Lady's knight, perhaps even appearing as splendid as she, a status emphasized by his armorial identification with her. Moreover, Launfal's faery splendour and wealth allows him to distribute fortune and visual glory to others (e.g., "He yaf the messenger for that tydyng / A noble courser and a ring, / And a robe of ray" ll.544-6). He thus continues his previous practice of liberality and largesse but with infinite magical resources at his command.[105] Launfal's period of exuberance includes the successful tournament (ll. 433-89) and the episode of "Syr Valentyne" (ll.505-612) in which his victory in single combat shows off his gifts to their best advantage (Gyfré makes himself useful by returning Launfal's shield when it is knocked from his hands – ll.589-94).

His magical world, however, goes as swiftly as it comes: Launfal's fall from grace occurs almost immediately after Guinevere's taunting causes him to break his silence about Dame Tryamour (l.694). Launfal's loss of his magical prosperity is visualised in various ways, each relating to the retraction of the gifts. Thomas Chestre alone presents this aspect of the story, the result of his original adaptation of the gifts in *Graelent*:

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[105] I find Launfal's magically-enhanced enactment of his original liberal nature difficult to reconcile with Freudian "wish-fulfillment" readings of Chestre's transformation of the poem. While I agree that Chestre's story can be interpreted as a fantastic construction of the author's sexual and social desires, this reading needs to persuasively connected with the protagonist's well-established generosity that is merely affirmed by the influence of Dame Tryamour.

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.[106]

Chestre's means of reversing Dame Tryamour's gifts is logical: Gyfré rides away on

Blaunchard, and the purse loses its magical power to generate gold. Launfal's armour

changes from white to black, a visually arresting image. The armorial colour change

may be read as an actual magical event, not just a metaphor comparable to the melting

snow that encapsulates Launfal's overall plight. Perhaps, if so, the idea is that the

armour loses its magical power like the purse, and in order to demonstrate this

without resorting to a more humiliating "defeat in combat" episode, Thomas invents a

magical colour change. The choices of colour may also help create an undertone of

lost honour. If so, the event has a fascinating conceptual by-product: magic has fully

penetrated the realm of heraldic identities. Had the poet consulted books of arms of

the period (and his use of a heraldic term in l. 329 may suggest he did) he could have

taken from them the idea of using armorial colours to portray loss of honour. The

white armour becomes black; it is not substituted for new in an overtly Christian

metaphor as in *Sir Gowther*, but rather undergoes transformation. If connected to

Launfal's honour in this way, the description in particular reflects the emphasis of a

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[106] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 289-300.

symbolic heraldic writer such as Bartholus di Sasso Ferrato in his *De Insigniis et Armis*: the least noble colour, black, replaces the most noble, white.

The final episode of the romance is visually engaging and loaded with chromatic value. Dame Tryamour returns to vouch for her lover, who is under a sentence of death as a result of Queen Guinevere's wounded pride. Launfal's claim to love a woman fairer than the Queen can only be verified by the King's specially-appointed knights if the faery princess appears in public. The thematic resolution is therefore brought about by a one-sided competition between the visual splendours of the supernatural faery world and the mundane appearances of the world. The stages of Dame Tryamour's triumph over the Queen create suspense and a sense of hierarchy. First are seen "Ten maydenes, brgyte of ble - / Ham [the barouns commanded to judge the beauty contest] thoghte they wer so bright and schere / That the lothlokest, without wene, / Har queen than myghte be!" (ll. 849-52). The competition is over before it has really started: the judges quickly regard the "lothlokest" of the faery women as fairer than their notoriously unfaithful queen. This rapid dissipation of tension might be regarded as a flaw in the narrative. However, suspense is focused in the arrival of Dame Tryamour and her extraordinary beauty rather than in the result of the competition. In the subsequent exchange between Launfal and the barons, the tension created by his response "Non of ham my lemman hys" (l. 857), is increased on the second occasion when ten more, "Fayryr than the other ten of sight" (l. 884), arrive. The second contingent of maidens is clad "yn samyt tyre" and the poet remarks, "Ech man hadde greet desire / To se har clothynge" (ll. 889-91), an echo of the poet's earlier passionate response to Dame Tryamour's clothing. The excitement thus mounts as her arrival draws nearer, an effect heightened by the contrast with Launfal's "drery thoght" (l.895) that he does not know the women. Launfal's

melancholy may be interpreted as a response to his wounded honour and failure in chivalry (coupled with his loss of his beloved) rather than mere fear for his life. It also succeeds in creating an emotional contrast with the brightness and splendour of the gathering faery forces. The prelude to Dame Tryamour's arrival is her maidens' command that King Arthur's palace be prepared for her arrival: "'Thine halle agrayde, and hele the walles / Wyth clothes and with ryche palles, / Agens my lady Tryamour'" (ll.904-6). The faery world begins to transform and beautify the mundane world through contact, just as it transforms Launfal.

The description of Dame Tryamour's arrival begins modestly, reminiscent of the Gospel accounts of Christ's procession into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mat 21.1-11), but as she comes closer her beauty, splendour and wealth are dazzling:

> The barouns seygh come rydynge
> A damesele alone
> Upoon a whyt comely palfrey.
> They saw never non so gay
> Upon the grounde gone:
> Gentyll, jolyf as bryd on bowe,
> In all manere fayr ynowe
> To wonye yn wordly wone.
> The lady was bryght as blosme on brere;
> Wyth eyen gray, wyth lovelych chere,
> Her leyre lyght schoone.[107]

Dame Tryamour's superlative public appearance is both natural and supernatural: she is compared with the natural phenomena of a bird and blossom, while at the same time her face shines, her appearance is unsurpassed, and "In all manere fayre ynowe / To wonye yn wordly wone," suggesting that her fairness transcends this world and is

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[107] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 289-300.

a match for the fairness of any other. Her grey eyes are also noted, a detail that grimly reminds the audience of the Queen's declaration, "Yyf he bringeth a fayre thynge – / Put out my eeyn grey" (ll.810). The description of the lady continues for thirty-six lines and leaves the audience exhausted by its riot of colourful energy and wealth.[108] The impact of this magnificent display makes the final judgment inevitable and universal. The contrast between the different worlds of beauty is likened to the difference between sun and moon, darkness and light. The hierarchy is maintained from the natural world, where even the Queen rises, to the faery world where Dame Tryamour's beauty dims that of lesser maidens:

> Up stod the Quene and ladyes stoute,
> Her for to beholde all aboute,
> How evene sche stod upryght;
> Than wer they wyth her also donne
> As ys the mone ayen the sonne
> Aday whan hyt ys lyght.[109]

King Arthur's view of the relative merits of his own wife's appearance is incontestable: "Ech man may ysé that ys sothe, / Bryghtere that ye be" (ll. 1004-5). Lady Tryamour herself administers Guinevere's punishment, blinding her with a

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[108] The procession of visual elements includes a rehearsal of the physical beauties described at the pavilion (ll.937-9): her golden, gem-encrusted crown (ll.940-1); her clothing, "No rychere be ne might," purple with a mantle of white ermine (ll.944-8); her green velvet saddle painted with images (similar to the Green Knight's in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) and with gold bells on its fringe (ll.950-4); her saddlebows containing two precious stones from India (ll.955-7); her horse's breast-strap said to be "worth an erldome" (l.959). She has a falcon on her arm and two white greyhounds with gold collars run about at her feet (ll.961-6).

[109] *Sir Launfal*, ll. 985-90.

breath "That never eft might sche se" (1.1008), showing she is powerful as well as dazzling and capable of taking terrible revenge. The blinding resolves the hierarchy of appearances and symbolises differing modes of visual perception. Dame Tryamour has seen only Launfal's courtesy and liberality, not the trappings of wealth or secular power; Guinevere, who could see nothing but these aspects, is left physically blind, a reflection of her ethical blindness. Thomas Chestre follows *Lanval*'s happy ending where the knight and his beloved faery queen disappear together to a blessed isle (Olyroun as opposed to Avalon), rather than the near-tragic conclusion of *Graelent*, in which the knight drowns trying to return to his beloved but is brought back to life.

Thomas Chestre produced in *Sir Launfal* a transformation rather than a translation of a romance, one in which visual descriptions and contrasting perceptions of appearance are essential. The poem draws its key descriptive elements from a cultural milieu infused with ancient motifs as well as by the relatively recent phenomenon of courtly chivalry. Chestre's additions to the poem, especially his treatment of Dame Tryamour's gifts, have left us with a fascinating moment of armorial transformation, one which raises an interesting question as to whether, and how far the poet was influenced by books of arms employing a symbolic approach to heraldry.

"Ande al graybed in grene þis gome and his wedes": hierarchical pseudo-heraldic colour values in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight?[110]

In Bennett's words, with the alliterative *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK)* medieval romance "reaches its peak".[111] It is by far the most sophisticated (and longest) of the romances discussed in this study, and contains the single greatest colour-related enigma, the Green Knight. My focus in this section is on the *Gawain*-poet's choice (or not) of green for his mysterious stranger in the poem, and the resonance this may have with ideas of armorial colour symbolism found in fourteenth-century books of arms.

The meaning of the "greenness" of the Green Knight has been an enduring question for romance scholars, critics, and historians alike. Theories that do not employ assumptions based on extra-textual evidence are difficult to put forward. The poem is notoriously ambiguous on the topic and seems to have been designed that way. Perhaps the most judicious summary of the possibilities and their ramifications is given by Brewer in his essay "The Colour Green" (1997). Brewer comes to the conclusion that the "greenness" of the Green Knight does not have, or cannot be conclusively shown to have a particular significance beyond its role as the best colour available to generate complete astonishment in Arthur's court and in the medieval audience. While Gawain's pentangle is symbolic because the poet tells us it is, the colour green is not, and so must remain shrouded in mystery:

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[110] *SGGK* survives in one illustrated MS: British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x. The illustrations depict no armorial colours. Subsequent quotations and line references are from *SGGK*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 1996) 207-300.

[111] Bennett 202. Bennett goes on to clarify he did not mean that medieval romance gradually developed towards perfection.

Its significance lies in the wide range of possible meanings of 'green', both good and bad, its very commonness as a colour in the world, and by contrast its uniqueness as a colour of skin, its bizarreness, and the very openness, or perhaps non-existence, of its implications in this case.[112]

Yet there is room for the quasi-heraldic aspect of the knight's "greenness" to be reconsidered and allowed to be ascribed more significance than previously. Anderson, writing on heraldic colours in his book on linguistic folk-taxonomies in English, remarks similarly:

A green knight is a youthful, audacious stranger, ambiguously either good or bad, whose appearance creates disorder. The appearance of the Green Knight in *SGGK* thus emerges from a heraldic context that has been overlooked in the criticism of that poem.[113]

I would agree with Anderson's comment in principle, if not with his caricature of quasi-heraldic greenness. In this he follows Brewer, who, despite having reservations about reading heraldic significance into the Green Knight's appearance, treated the topic with equanimity. He notes:

The effort to moralise heraldry attributed many significances to the colour green. A useful summary is provided in *Le Blason des couleurs en armes, livrees et devises*, written about 1450 by one known as the Sicilian, or Sicily, Herald to Alphonse V, king of Aragon (Cocheris 1860).[114]

Brewer lists heraldic associations with green from Sicily Herald's work, including joy, beauty, youth, Thursday, etc. However, the choice of this text to demonstrate

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[112] Derek Brewer, "The Colour Green" 190.

[113] Earl A. Anderson, *Folk-Taxonomies in Early English* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London: Associated UP, 2003) 185.

medieval heraldic colour values is unfortunate, since *Le blason des couleurs* significantly postdates both *SGGK* and the tradition of armorial texts based on Aristotelian colour theory.[115] As we saw in part two, these books of arms by authors including Bartolo di Sasso Ferrato, Johannis de Bado and Bishop Trevor treated armorial colours hierarchically, each in terms of its intrinsic honour, and placed green firmly at the bottom of the scale. The proximity of this armorial approach and group of texts to the composition of *SGGK* has been left tantalizingly unexplored in interpretations of the poem.

Brewer's helpful essay surveys the territory in question:

> In *SGGK grene* is used forty-four times of the *gome* or *kny3t* in green and his appurtenances (it alliterates both with *gome*, and with the *gold* with which he is liberally sprinkled). 'Green' is used five times of the lady's girdle, twice of grass, once of spring, once of the green holly. (One instance, 157, is doubtful.) By contrast it is used only four times in *Cleanness* (twice of vegetation), twice in *Patience* of vegetation only, twice in *Pearl* of precious stones only. The predominance in *SGGK*, and in that poem the emphasis on the Green Knight, amply justifies critical interest.[116]

There are many ways in which the "greenness" of the Green Knight can be seen as significant to the poem as a whole, primarily depending on how the initial episode of his arrival at Arthur's court and the subsequent description are interpreted. The description introduces various avenues of possibility. The first phase calls the Green Knight "an aghlich mayster" or "fearsome lord" (1.136), supposes he is "half-etayn"

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[114] Brewer, "The Colour Green" 186.

[115] Bartolo's *De Insigniis et Armis* dates from *c.*1355, De Bado's *Tractatus de Armis* from *c.*1395, Bishop Trevor's Welsh version of the latter, *Llyfr Arfau*, from *c.* 1405. See also Dennys, *Heraldic Imagination* 212-13 and the introduction in Jones, *Fourteenth Century Books of Arms*.

[116] Brewer, "The Colour Green" 181.

(l.140) or "half-giant," and focuses on the wonders of his potentially monstrous physical greatness (ll.137-46), before capping this by revealing his remarkable all-over body colour:

> For wonder of his hwe men hade,
> Set in his semblaunt sene;
> He ferde as freke were fade,
> And oueral enker-grene.[117]

The second phase of the description focuses on the Green Knight's costume and adornments, establishing their comprehensive green colouring. It is important to note that the descriptions of his clothes, along with those of his green horse, saddle and axe, and eventually his wife's girdle, also include reference to golden embroidery or decoration.[118] The overall result of the Green Knight's dramatic entry is a bewildering medley of apparent opposites and cultural incompatibilities. The greenness of the clothes and trappings, coupled with their opulence and the display of intricate designs and pictures (on the saddle and axe handle) compare with otherworldly figures, for instance Dame Tryamour in *Sir Launfal* (see above). It also may also evoke the Aristotelian greenness of youth seen in "The Parliament of the Three Ages" (see part one). The blending of gold and green may also evoke the green and yellow knight in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* in *The Mabingion*.[119] The Celtic influence is felt all the more via the Beheading Game motif itself, of which the earliest examples are found in the Middle Irish story of *The Feast of Bricriu* and *The Story of Carados*, part of the

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[117] *SGGK*, ll. 147-50.

[118] *SGGK*, l.159, l.167, l.190, l.211, l.1832 & 2395.

[119] A colourful and exaggerated comedic tale reviewing the heroic age of Britain. See *The Dream of Rhonabwy* in *The Mabinogion*, trans. G. Jones and T. Jones, Everyman's Library 97 (London: Dent, 1949, rpt. 1966) 137-52.

first continuation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval.*[120] The contradictory symbols of war and peace – the axe and holly branch – combine ancient symbolism with more recent elements of chivalric ideology (axes being unchivalrous), perhaps to question the morality of "good" versus "bad" violence.

The complex nature of any relationship between the Green Knight and chivalry is thus difficult from the start, and sets one of the deepest problems for interpretation of the poem as a whole. If the Green Knight is deemed supernatural, a "Green Man" or other personified folk-myth, then his relationship with Gawain as Bertilak, which is essentially courtly and chivalric, is neglected.[121] Moreover, the Green Knight, once revealed as Bertilak, describes Morgan le Fay's part in his creation and presents this as a temporary trick to challenge Arthur's court and scare Guinevere, a motive so incongruous as to suggest it may even have been humorously meant (ll. 2446ff.). On the other hand, if the Green Knight's character is accepted as purely a performance, an illusion of the faery world and its marvels created by magic, then he is a desperately paradoxical figure. Can Bertilak be regarded as a just authority to test Gawain, having played such a cruel trick and been involved in a sinister magical plot?

A possible route through these conundrums is to work from the assumption that an aspect part of the intentionally wondrous ambiguity of the Green Knight takes advantage of heraldic symbolism. If it were generally thought that green were the least honourable colour in chivalry, then the arrival of the Green Knight would have been shocking because it also created the bizarre spectacle of a man clad in the least

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[120] See Elisabeth Brewer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*, 2nd Edition, Arthurian Studies (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1999) 18-32.

honourable colour challenging the highest order of chivalry in the land. This immediate impression, however, is also confusing because it combines green with gold, which according to some armorial theories is the highest heraldic colour. Gawain's acceptance of the challenge in Arthur's stead pits the most courteous knight (whose armorial colour is a highly respectable red) against one who, judging by appearances alone, is likely to turn out the least courteous. The intention that the Green Knight should appear discourteous is further suggested by the fact that he does not seem to be a knight at all. He seems partly monstrous, a bearded giant, and partly an ornately-decorated faery prince; he certainly does not bear the armour or weaponry of a knight:

> 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.[122]

From this confusing starting-point, a complex game of associations and appearance-based judgments is played out throughout the plot, which culminates in Gawain's failure to live up to the standards of perfect knighthood and exhibition of "untrouthe." The illusion of the Green Knight's lack of courtesy is revealed to have been the opposite, just as the life-preserving green girdle (laced with gold) won from Bertilak's wife is revealed to have been a snare. Underlying these dualities of appearance is a theological theme present in many of the *Gawain*-poet's other works, namely the

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[121] For an overview of this approach to *SGGK* see Fran and Geoff Doel, *The Green Man in Britain* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001, rpt. 2004) 65-83.

[122] *SGGK*, ll. 203-5.

inversion of secular hierarchies in the light of spiritual values:[123] "For whoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14.11). The heraldic "greenness" of the Green Knight can therefore be seen to operate as an identity-motif through which an appearance of secular inferiority prevails over an appearance of superiority.

A case in point is the "Grene Chapel", the location for Gawain's humiliating discovery of his lack of humility and imperfect chivalric worth, which can also be linked to an inversion of hierarchies. The association between green and the trickster devil of medieval folklore has been thought to give the chapel a demonic connection.[124] Its greenness may also operate as a dual-aspect motif combining spiritual chivalry (and humble Christian service) with the supernatural marvels of the faery world. Since each transcends the order of the natural world, the latter, albeit fanciful as opposed to the theologically-endorsed world of miracles and revealed "visionary truth", shares with the former a clearer perception of the value of appearances.

The last and perhaps most potentially significant green item in *SGGK* is Lady Bertilak's *faux*-magic girdle. In keeping with the inverted colour value approach I have been suggesting, it is perhaps possible to find in the *Gawain*-poet's description of the girdle a response to Brewer's initial conclusion: "the pentangle is symbolic because the poet tells us so. As for green, who knows?" Perhaps the poet does tell us about the meaning of "greenness" in relation to the girdle (not qua a girdle but qua its

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[123] *Pearl* makes an inverted hierarchy manifest in the maiden's presence among the highest in heaven despite her death in infancy and the Parable of the Vineyard Workers (Matt 20.1-16) is central; *Cleanness* also retells scriptural stories of hierarchical inversion, such as the wedding feast (Luke 14.8-14).

[124] Cf. Chaucer's *Friar's Tale* ll.1380-3; also cited in Brewer 184.

colour) during the explication scene. The poet establishes that the girdle is a token identifier (like a heraldic badge) for the Green Knight himself, "'For hit is my wede þat þou werez, þat ilke wouen girdel'" (l.2358). When Gawain arms himself (a typical romance motif) before setting out for the Green Chapel, he puts on the girdle to protect himself, not because it looked splendid:

> Swyþe sweþled vmbe his swange swetely þat kny3t
> Þe gordel of þe grene silke, þat gay wel bisemed,
> Vpon þat ryol red cloþe þat ryche watz to schewe.
> Bot wered not þis ilk wy3e for wele þis gordel,
> For pryde of þe pendauntez, þa3 polyst þay were,
> And þa3 þe glyterande golde glent vpon endez,
> Bot for to sauen hymself, when suffer hym byhoued,
> To byde bale withoute dabate of bronde hym to were
> oþer knyffe. [125]

An inversion occurs between the apparent beauty of the girdle and its true worth. On one level Gawain's mistake is clear. He has put his faith in a magical object rather than in his love for the Virgin Mary (symbolised by her image on the inside of his shield) and his five knightly virtues (symbolised by his Pentangle shield device). However, in terms of chromatic hierarchy another inversion may be considered. The green beauty of the girdle, "þat gay wel bisemed, / Vpon þat ryol red cloþe þat ryche watz to schewe," is spurned in favour of its anticipated value as protection. An interaction occurs between green and red appearances that places green equal if not superior to "royal red". Gawain foolishly will not wear green for its own sake (as having a lower appearance value) but for its perceived value of promoting the self, and ensuring his survival.

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[125] *SGGK*, ll. 2034-42.

The green girdle becomes a symbol of failure in Gawain's self-perception, and after his adventure at the Green Chapel he claims again not to want to keep it or to value it for its intrinsic worth, but only because it reminds him of his sin and will stop his pride in arms from flourishing: "Þe loke to þis luf-lace schal leþe my hert" (l.2438). The seemingly active concept behind the "loke" here is striking. Moreover, it shows that Gawain has still not reconciled his failure with its fundamental meaning. His inability to see the green girdle for its true worth continues, and hence he is wracked with guilt and self-accusation rather than being open to accept forgiveness for his minor failing. Finally the girdle is taken up by Arthur's court as a symbol of their shared imperfection: as an order of chivalry, all of Arthur's knights are bound by the impossibility of sinful men maintaining the ideal of chivalry. They become united by a heraldic symbol that denotes a spiritual truth, rather than using a mundane secular symbol with a high appearance value, the honour of which could be falsely construed in terms of the illusory appearance of virtue.[126]

> Þe kyng comfortez þe kny3t, and alle þe court als
> La3en loude þerat, and luflyly acorden
> Þat lordes and ladis þat longed to þe Table,
> Vche burne of þe broþerhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
> A bende abelef hym aboute of a bry3t grene,
> And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were.
> For þat watz acorded þe renoun of þe Rounde Table,
> And he honoured þat hit hade euermore after,

SGGK ends on a high note, reminding the audience that it is a romance not a theological tract, and one in which honour (albeit derived from humility) is ultimately

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[126] The use of the green garter as a symbol for an order of chivalry may also have been intended to comment upon and interrogate the values motivating Edward III's Order of the Garter.

idealized. The new garter symbol cannot itself guarantee the perfection of its bearers, nor that its bearers will receive morally deserved honour. However, by proposing the use of an inverted badge of honour, even in a romance setting, the poet shows a keen sensitivity towards the ethical and social concerns of the fourteenth century, and in particular towards increasing systematization of human identity according to materially based values.

In conclusion, according to this reading the green girdle can be seen to link the symbols of the Green Knight and the Green Chapel with the theme of inverted secular hierarchies in the poem. The link operates via the colour green, as opposed to the bearers of the colour. The Green Knight makes this explicit, and may summarize for us the quasi-heraldic meaning of the innate "testing power" of the greenness of all three, as he remarks:

> And I gif þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed,
> For hit is grene as my goune. Sir Gawayn, 3e maye
> Þenk vpon þis ilke þrepe, þer þou forth þryngez
> Among prynces of prys, and þis a pure token
> Of þe chaunce of þe grene chapel at cheualrous kny3tez.[127]

[And I give you, sir, the girdle than is gold-hemmed, for it is green as my gown. Sir Gawain, you may think upon this same contest, when you go forth among princes of worth, and this a pure token of the exploits of the green chapel with chivalrous knights.]

The Green Knight identifies the greenness of his appearance with the testing of Gawain (and knighthood itself perhaps) at the Green Chapel, and asserts that this comprises the meaning of the green girdle as a heraldic identity token, to be remembered when amongst "prynces of prys."

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[127] *SGGK*, ll. 2395-9.

My brief reading of *SGGK* is experimental and offers an interesting possibility for viewing the poem through one aspect of the *Gawain*-poet's wider literary environment. Ultimately, there can be no authoritative meaning for the use of green imposed on what is a remarkably complex poem. Yet, in accordance with the question of particular colour significance, an important achievement of the poem is its ability to adduce an audience's culturally-engaged perceptual values.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has approached the literature of the Middle Ages from a single phenomenological viewpoint—its investment in colour language and chromatic perception—and discovered its subject treated within a multiplicity of discourses. The single most significant conclusion that can be drawn is that the field of colour studies is vast and relatively unexplored in relation to medieval literary studies. This is understandable: "colour" is a philosophically complex subject and engagement with it entails incorporation of numerous strands of research from linguistics and the history of art, to archaeology and perceptual psychology. There is always a danger for a researcher to see "trees" but not a "wood" (i.e., colours without a meaningful contextual frame), or, as Bernard of Clairvaux might have insisted, become "blinded by colour" (e.g., to see a systematic contextual frame where in fact there is none, and so interpret a text's colourings from false assumptions). Whilst it may have been more often used as such than it is in our own times, medieval colour language was not always used to convey metaphorical or symbolical meanings, and, indeed, not all its colour lexemes are what they may first appear to be (terms we read as relating to chroma may have had a predominantly material sense, as in the case of *scarlet*, etc.) Ultimately, the semantic function or functions of a colour referent in any given text and context may resist all present-day attempts at a "phenomenological reduction" because of an 'x' factor to which we have no sensitivity, nor even awareness of the deficit.

In response to a perceived deficiency in medieval studies therefore, I have in this thesis charted some of the conceptual terrain of a vast country by foregrounding the key philosophical and theological conceptualizations ("intromission" and "extramission") that inform the visual aspect of the linguistic and literary

developments of the medieval period, and noted how the material aspect of the phenomenon of colour can be seen to relate to complex ideas of sensation, perception and values. In particular I have commented upon how for the composite cases of medieval chivalry, heraldry, and armory, their literatures demonstrate a particular set of socio-cultural practices and ideology interconnected and structured in line with movements in visual perception theory.

Ultimately the study has sought to show that our understanding of the intellectual and cultural context of medieval visual perception and colour is assisted by, and in turn assists, our engagement with the literary works of the period, and has advanced a few ways forward for reading this aspect within particular texts. To sum up (and employ a last Wittgensteinian term) the study "gestures" towards a few of the intriguing questions that the medieval matter of colour and its perception raise.

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