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Wearing Identity:
Colour and Costume in *Meliador* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

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The contents of this thesis are my own original work, research, and composition, and have not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Elysse Taillon Meredith
23 May 2012

Abstract

Worn items are a crucial part of non-verbal social interaction that simultaneously exhibits communal, cultural, and political structures and individual preferences. This thesis examines the role of fictional costume and colour in constructing identities within two fourteenth-century Arthurian verse narratives: Froissart's Middle French *Meliador* and the anonymous Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. To emphasise the imaginative value of material cultures and discuss the potential reception of fictional objects, the argument draws on illuminations from nine manuscripts of prose Arthurian stories.

Particularly stressing the role of colour in garments, the first chapter examines the issues of analysing literary costume, reviews the provenances of the texts and illuminations, and establishes the relevant historical background concerning fashion, symbolism, and materials of construction (such as fabric, dyes, and decorations). This is followed by two chapters on men's items. First, the use of courtly clothes and colour-related epithets in manipulating perception and deceiving internal and external audiences is explored. Second, the symbolic value of arms and armour in tournament society is evaluated alongside the tensions between war and armed games that such tools reveal. Chapter four expands on the preceding chapters by discussing the application of heraldry as a malleable identifier. Chapter five considers how ladies' garments, bodies, and character are coalesced and separated through adoption or rejection of literary techniques, thereby creating conflict between noblewomen as social commodities and as persons with narrative agency. The final chapter analyses the employment of wearable items as gifts and commodities and how such objects can alter interpersonal relationships.

Colour and costume are a means by which narratives can explore, accept, or reject literary topoi. Their myriad functions allow the active manipulation of identity, relationships, and internal and external audiences. By focusing on the pluralities and ambiguities of meaning connected to colour and costume, this thesis explores how these materials mediate between conflicting connotations to create new meanings within the narratives.

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Introduction: Beyond Records and Remnants

> And they that haue jostyd wyth hym in-to thys day haue ben as rychely beseyn, and hym-selue also, as clothe of gold and sylk and syluyr and goldsmythys werk myght mak hem; for of syche ger, and gold and perle and stonys, they of the Dwkys coort, neyther gentylmen nor gentylwomen, they want non, for wyth-owt þat they haue it by wyshys, by my trowthe I herd neuyr of so gret plenté as her is. ... I herd neuer of non lyek to it saue Kyng Artourys cort.[1]

Writing to his mother in 1468 from Bruges, John Paston III was so overcome by the grandeur of the Burgundian court's clothes that he could only relate it to the mythical world of Camelot. For Paston, it was barely comprehensible that such splendour could exist outside romances; it certainly could not be contained in a letter, and thus he promised to relate it fully to his mother Margaret on his return. This is our loss, for had the account of the Burgundian society continued we may also have seen how he conceived of Arthur's court. Instead, our knowledge of the medieval conception of Arthurian society is constructed by the authors and illuminators who professionally interpreted and recreated this peerless court.

This thesis examines the fictionalisation of costume in late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century Arthurian literature and illuminations from England, France, and the Low Countries. In particular, it questions how the cultural significance of garments and their colours is applied to literature in order to generate relationships, alter narrative progression, and create, conceal, and/or reveal identity. As Paston's letter demonstrates, Arthuriana is well-suited for such a study, for King Arthur's court was conceived as being without equal. As such, it would have worn what was thought of and desired as 'best'. In order to restrict this expansive topic, this discussion is limited to two literary narratives, Froissart's *Meliador* and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which are then supported by illuminations drawn from eight prose Arthurian manuscripts.

Meliador and *Gawain* are united by their vernacular composition, their situation in nascent Arthurian worlds, and their comprehension of courtly society. Written in Middle French, *Meliador*'s sweeping descriptions and international focus present an ideal world where all occurs according to *ordenance*, the proper, idealised

[1] John Paston III, 'Letter 330 to Margaret Paston, 8 July 1468', in *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, ed. by Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 538-40 (p. 539).

arrangement of political hierarchy and progression of courtly life.[2] Revolving around the pageantry of tournament society, the 30,771 lines of *Meliador* depict a culture that understands the importance of how one dresses and displays oneself. Knights are defined by colour-based epithets inspired by their heraldry, ladies use heraldry and worn accessories to affect the plot, and the narrative itself subverts common literary portrayals of ladies and Arthurian knights. In contrast, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a highly compressed and detailed Middle English narrative that demands a multitude of interpretations that must mediate between idealised life and perceived reality. Complexly interweaving colour, luxurious clothes, worn accessories, and heraldic symbolism, the narrative exploits these relationships to create misleading signifiers, manipulate literary techniques, and subvert expected outcomes. Together, these texts' diverse scopes demonstrate the breadth of costume's literary use.

The narratives in question are primarily supported throughout the thesis by eight illuminated manuscripts of prose Arthurian romances. The manuscripts' narratives are primarily the *Lancelot-Graal* and *Tristan de Léonois*, with one instance of *Guiron le Courtois*, and their use emphasises the role of pictorial texts in a fourteenth- and fifteenth-century imaginative context as a different kind of 'text' to be 'read'. By reinforcing examinations of garments with illuminated examples in relation with their own narrative, wider correlations between text, image, and fictionalised object are revealed. With textual and illuminated facets established in addition to historical context, three levels of narrated costume become accessible: what was worn, what was told, and what was shown. In this way my intention is to illuminate the labyrinthine sartorial symbols of *Meliador* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

However, more than pure sartorial symbolism must be associated with garments. As a sum of clothing-parts and accessories applied consciously to a person's body, the wearing of costume is a performative act, a (sub)conscious

[2] Peter F. Dembowski, *Jean Froissart and His 'Meliador': Context, Craft and Sense* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1983), pp. 107-9. According to Jacqueline Picoche, *Le Vocabulaire psychologique dans les Chroniques de Froissart*, vol. 1 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976), pp. 25-6 and 97, Froissart also used *ordenance* in his *Chroniques* but without the sense of predestination, as is appropriate for a nominally non-fictional narrative. Rather, in the *Chroniques* he occasionally employed *ordenance* to indicate meaningful behaviour.

instrumentation of an object-based 'language' that all in the culture fluently 'speak'.[3] This language is multifaceted, its significations plural, and the relationship of a piece to items within the wider corpus is of utmost importance.[4] Although an object's importance is based on economic, social, political, *and* symbolic significance, within any narrative this object is initially interpreted by the creators of the narrative (author, scribe, illuminator). While the makers suggest its meaning through meditation on or repetition of the wearable item, the object also modifies and is modified by other garments in the story.[5] This relational plurality creates its own meaning. If a direct correlation existed between garment and person, change in one should cause a change in the other,[6] but the complexities that are usually involved necessitate subtler interpretations. Thus, when an item is worn these factors intermingle with the wearer's actions, and the adoption of a new appearance changes our perception of the wearer and their identity.[7] The interaction between body, act, and clothes becomes an (un)conscious performance vital to overall meaning.

If costume is a language, then colours are the adjectives. Often disregarded in costume studies, colour is integral to the signification of a worn item: to remove colour from costume would be to remove part of the sign.[8] Colour is affected by the same social facets and layers of narrative interpretation as garments. Defined by their relational position to other colours (be they similar or opposite), colours' meanings are plural and socio-historically specific.[9] Colour is as complex as costume; together they are rich symbols.

However, this thesis is not concerned with real clothes but with items which were conceived, created, and mediated by illuminations and the written word. As the intersection of object, art, and text, fictional costume is not physically *real*; it is

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[3] Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. M. Word and D. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), p. xi.
[4] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 26; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 41.
[5] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 26; Roland Barthes, 'The Imagination of Signs', in *Critical Essays* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 205-11 (p. 206); Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects in Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, trans. by James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), p. 4.
[6] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 20.
[7] Barthes, *Fashion*, pp. 20-1 and 255; Baudrillard, p. 4.
[8] Barthes, 'Imagination', pp. 207-8.
[9] Barthes, 'Imagination', pp. 205-6; Baudrillard, p. 30; John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 79; Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color*, trans. by Markus I. Cruse (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 7.

intangible. Although literary and illustrated costume points towards physical objects, cultural items, and social acts, they are extant solely in the mind of the creator and interpreter. They are thus only relative to the physical object, signifying something dissimilar.[10] Were the object to have shape and texture, it would be fully unlike the shapes on a page that represent it. While in effect they are the equivalent, in function a two-dimensional figuration in an illumination or significatory pen strokes are far removed from a three-dimensional construction of cloth and thread. The tactile nature of the garment is limited to that of the page and pigment; at the most extreme, the item is only a heard word. Costume signified by these divergent representations only exists fully in the mind's eye, and physical experience is removed.[11]

Thus, while socio-historical background is vital in interpreting conceptions of costume, 'real' costume is not discussed here. Rather, the argument focuses upon how different gazes construct non-existent objects and how makers and audiences interpret these to signify, reveal, or conceal information and manipulate or champion certain analyses. In both texts, the consistency or changes in self-representation through costume will be of greatest interest. In *Meliador*, do characters employ worn items to conceal and reveal identity, influence others, and express allegiance in order to create an outcome that accords with *ordenance*? How transparent is the role of *ordenance* in relation to costume, and do different narrative strands and characters elucidate or confuse connections? In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, how does costume illuminate or obfuscate the deceptions, relationships, and social tensions that underlie the main action? Are worn items and their social implications used to enrich these narrative threads, and do they suggest a plurality of interpretations that, together, expand our comprehension of the text? Furthermore, how do the selected illuminations relate to different objects and explicate the use of costume in our narratives? In concentrating on the role of display in constructing a character/persona, the discussion will consider the juncture of gesture and speech with worn items, as well as with courtly and chivalric contexts, for individual identity is shaped by one's communal role. Through these two narratives and the

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[10] Barthes, *Fashion*, pp. 4-5 and 41, notes that clothing cannot ever be 'real' in language, for 'language is not a tracing of the real' (p. 41). Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, adds that language itself is outwith reality; it 'speaks *of* being and *of* the world' (p. 96) in a manner that alters our perception from that which is already there: we perceive not the object in sight but in the language (p. 125).

[11] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, pp. 7-9.

supporting illuminations, this thesis will deliberate how intangible costume is used to produce information that changes comprehension of identity and narrative.

Chapter 1: Framing Fictional Costume

What is 'costume'? To say it is part of material culture is an over-generalisation; to say it is one's garments, clothes, attire, or apparel disregards wearable accessories. 'Wearable items', though exact, is sterile and inelegant, and may unintentionally exclude items of personal display connected to the body that are not necessarily conceived as 'worn', such as heraldic shields and hairstyles. 'Adornment' implies conscious adoption of beautiful articles, which excludes poor items or unintentionally worn items and their associated connotations. Therefore, when concerning items that are part of bodily personal display this discussion uses 'costume', its suitability suggested by the focus on performing garments and accessories and their role in creating identity and mediating interpersonal relationships. Implying one's 'customs' or 'habits' (and thus revelatory potential),[1] 'costume' functions equally well in French and English, and though this argument uses the majority of the suggested terms as appropriate, they should all be considered as part of 'costume'.

For this discussion to progress, it must be accepted that costume is a complex social language, with colour as an integral part.[2] However, both aspects fulfil socially-mandated roles that differ from modern conceptions, and their meaning is undoubtedly plural, (re)created and manipulated by makers working within a network of text, illumination, narrative tradition, and social use. This network collapses when one aspect is analytically isolated; therefore, significant groundwork must be done before specific instances are studied.

Costume is a crucial part of social non-verbal interaction that simultaneously displays individual preference and social, cultural, and political structures.[3] As such,

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[1] Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance: The Verse Tradition from Chrétien to Froissart*, trans. M. Middleton and R. Middleton (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), p. 88.
[2] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. xi; Barthes, 'Imagination', pp. 205-6; Baudrillard, p. 30; Gage, *Colour and Culture,* p. 79; Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 7; Pastoureau, *The Devil's Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric*, trans. by Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. xiv and 3; Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 2.
[3] E. Jane Burns, 'Why Textiles Make a Difference', in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. by E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1-18 (p. 1); Laura F. Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs in Troilus and Criseyde', *The Chaucer Review*, 35 (2001), 223-59 (pp. 223-4 and 247); R. A. Schwarz, 'Uncovering the Secret Vice: Toward an

its study is a distinct sub-section of material culture that relies heavily upon archaeology, art history, history, and linguistics.[4] Raising questions concerning personal display and the body, it involves (for example) gender portrayal and performance, individuality, and the borders between body, item, and society.[5] Its boundaries are continuously transgressed and expanded as it naturally leads into studies on jewellery, hairstyles, tattoos, and other aspects of grooming and body modifications.

In essence, costume is a tangible commodity worn bodily, apparently primarily to provide protection from the elements. If this was costume's sole utilisation it would still be of great interest, for it is something that is continuously perceived: touched, worn, seen, smelt.[6] While Merleau-Ponty argued that this perception is not an intentional act, to medieval Europeans this perception was active, not passive, and interacting with an object was not simply a physical process.[7] Even visually perceiving an object was considered to be active and reciprocal, involving both the seer and the seen.[8] The medieval gaze was powerful: medieval philosophy, influenced by Cicero's *De natura deorum* and Aristotle's *De anima* and *De sensu et sensato*, privileged sight as the premier sense.[9] In the 'extramission

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Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment', *The Fabrics of Culture*, ed. by J.M. Cordwell and R.A. Schwarz (New York: Mouton, 1979), 23-45 (p. 40).

[4] H.M. Zijlstra-Zweens, *Of His Array Telle I No Lenger Tale: Aspects of Costume, Arms and Armour in Western Europe, 1200-1400* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), p. 125, notes archaeology, art history, and philology; I add history in consideration of the importance of sumptuary laws, wardrobe records, wills, and other documentary evidence to the field of costume studies.

[5] E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 12; Burns, 'Why Textiles', p. 3.

[6] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 45.

[7] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, p. xi; C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 2-3. This is particularly relevant concerning clothing fibres such as wool; the amount of processing received (thus removing the naturally occurring lanolin) will alter its texture and aroma. Though one grows accustomed to wearing garments, even the digital age cannot separate one from costume's physicality: texture and scent change if an item is line- or machine-dried, and modern scented detergents may make us *more* aware of clothes (and cleanliness).

[8] Michael Camille, 'Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 197-223 (p. 211); Dallas G. Denery II, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 95-6; Cynthia Hahn, 'Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson, 169-96 (p. 175); Robert S. Nelson, 'To Say and To See: Ekphrasis and Visions in Byzantium', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. by Robert S. Nelson, 143-68 (pp. 155 and 158-9); Woolgar, p. 2-3.

[9] Woolgar, pp. 23 and 178.

theory' developed by Augustine, Grosseteste, and Bacon (and derived from Aristotelian, Euclidian, and Neo-Platonic philosophy), the eye was believed to emit rays that encompass the object and then return to the eye with the understanding of that object's physical form.[10] How one chose to interact with the object created an exchange of intangible information with the object as mediator.[11]

Beyond visual perception, these objects are also worn, covering flesh, and except in the most intimate situations joined with the body. Continuously experienced and displayed, costume unites with the wearer's actions to create an overall image of that person. This image changes when items are given social or economic worth. Made of rare or labour-intensive materials or superfluous to comfort, this transforms garments into objects meant to be consumed and displayed. Luxurious construction demonstrates interpretable social information outwith that of an item meant merely to cover and protect flesh.[12]

Dyestuffs, and consequently colour, were particularly vital concerning the cost of fabrics. Distinguishing especially expensive or quality items, certain dyes visually emphasised those with the finances or rank to afford them.[13] However, discussions of costume's relationship with colour are rare, despite the fact that colours' interpretations are also created by the society and culture that pays for and employs them. [14] On both economic and symbolic levels, to exclude colour from costume is to examine an incomplete object, and the interpretation of the object's complete information is vital to understand costume's social roles and fictional functions.[15] Thus present in and part of the majority of interpersonal interactions, coloured costume serves a practical purpose modified by social implications specific to the item's time and place of origin that is only interpretable by understanding the

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[10] Camille, 'Before the Gaze', pp. 203-5; Hahn, p. 174; Nelson, 'To Say and To See', p. 150
[11] Woolgar, pp. 2 and 13.
[12] Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 38; Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), p. 13.
[13] Woolgar, p. 169.
[14] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 7.
[15] Burns, 'Why Textiles', p. 6; Désirée G. Koslin and Janet Snyder, 'Introduction', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 1-3 (p. 1).

origin.[16] The social role of costume is particularly apparent when it is framed not as protection from nature but as covering (obscuring, hiding, drawing attention to) physical bodies.

Defining Fashion and Experiencing Literary Costume

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are an especially relevant period in which to examine the role of costume, as many consider this time to be when 'fashion' and 'style' became social concerns.[17] This argument privileges clothes' construction, as it is based on the fourteenth century's drastic changes in garments' shapes and links fashion closely to tailoring innovations that moved attire away from the squares-and-triangles construction of previous centuries.[18] While construction is an important factor in fashion, it is not the sole requirement.[19] Rather, what is necessary is a conceptual linking of worn items in a prestige system where an item's conspicuous consumption awards its wearer greater social significance.[20] This importance can be economic or aesthetic, based on type, quality, and scarcity of cloth; quality, depth, and rarity of pigment; form, style, and worth of decorations; inclusion of jewels and precious metals; and use of other novel or inaccessible techniques and materials. Yet because the majority of costume information stems from art, rare records, and a few remnants, knowledge of this variety of materials is limited, making it difficult to trace fashionable items in the eras before fine tailoring.[21] Because of the traceable introduction of extreme tailoring in the

[16] Barbara Baert, 'Dressing', in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and Their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert, Medieval Church Studies, 12 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 241-3 (p. 241).

[17] Odile Blanc, 'From Battlefield to Court: The Invention of Fashion in the Fourteenth Century', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress*, ed. by Desiree G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 157-72; Stella Mary Newton, Foreword to *Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince: A Study of the Years 1340-1365* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1999); Margaret Scott, *Medieval Dress & Fashion* (London: British Library, 2007), p. 8.

[18] Newton, p. 3.

[19] In *Fashion in Medieval France* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), Sarah-Grace Heller suggests that the roots of 'fashion' as a concept stretch into the thirteenth century, as evidenced in costumes' role in romances (p. 4).

[20] Heller, p. 7.

[21] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 79, states that there is enough evidence to argue for fashion's conceptual birth as early as the twelfth century, while Anne Van Buren with Roger S. Wieck, in *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands, 1325-1515* (New York: The Morgan Library and Museum, 2011), argues that fashion as a concept goes back to 'the Romans and before' (p. 3).

fourteenth century, it is therefore understandable that the fourteenth century has been considered the beginning of fashion.

The existence of fashion as a concept in the fourteenth century has also been questioned by scholars due to the limited accessibility of 'fashionable' garments, generally the province of the elite.[22] Yet this misunderstands the historic role of fashion: it is only with recent industrialisation and mass production that 'fashion' has become available to a wider range of classes in the Western world. These fashions today are less focused on quality (rarity and lushness of items) and more on changeability, quantity, and disposability. Yet even with fashion's democratisation some items are still restricted to upper classes (e.g., tuxedoes and ball gowns) because they are only *required* at certain social levels. Furthermore, the clothing industry has developed *haute couture*, meant to be viewed instead of worn, appreciated for its restricted tactility: it is literally out of reach. This echoes medieval fashion, where a person's garments were expected to reflect their social standing, profession, morals, and identity.[23] Thus, it is only appropriate for the loveliest clothes to be the domain of the highest classes; when this was violated, it was viewed as a threat to the overall structure of society.[24] To criticise fashion for being classist is to misunderstand the role of attire in fashion and history. If economic restrictions and social prestige did not exist, neither would fashion.

However, this discussion is primarily concerned with literary and illuminated Arthurian costume. This raises issues in relation to real items, for fictional garments also acted much like modern *haute couture*: distant, untouchable, extravagant, and desirable. As a worn signifier real costume functions as a tangible non-verbal social language, but illuminated costume is intangible while literary costume is unseen;

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[22] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 8, notes this social limitation as simple fact, while Joseph F. Eagan, in 'The Importance of Color Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Saint Louis University Studies*, Series A, Humanities, 1.2 (1949), 11-86, suggests 'only the nobility were *permitted* to dress gaily' (p. 28, my emphasis), adding that the lower classes only 'wore somber colors'. Eagan's interpretation ignores the wide variety of bright (albeit impermanent) dyes available to even the poorest person.

[23] Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1926), p. 23; Juliet Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and Its Context, 1270-1350* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1982) p. 81; Van Buren, p. 1; Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (London: London Record Society, 2003), pp. 3-4.

[24] This is further addressed within this chapter in 'Costume in the Fourteenth Century'.

both are incomplete objects.[25] Nonetheless, as the written word and illumination construct a relationship between garment and concept, the responding mental conception is formulated by experience with extant items, for sartorial semantics remain understandable only insomuch as the audience speaks its language.[26]

Even as the physical garment is removed, the experience of reading/listening is itself physical, and the imaginative experience re-forms that which has been experienced in life.[27] As the two continuously interact and re-shape the perception of each other, does a 'dependable' reality matter when concerned with fictional costume? All interpretation is fallible, and medieval audiences were not as concerned as modern ones with the difference between history and fiction.[28] Yet modern contexts are dissimilar from medieval ones, and external medieval context solidifies interpretations of now ambiguous items. At the same time, language is a cognitive filter that alters our experience of an object; the named object bears meaning constructed from all dissimilar objects that share the classifying name.[29] The goal, then, is not to discover the exact object but to suggest the multiple interpretations that maker and audience may have considered, based on the exchanges between artistic insinuation and personal experience.

When does this conversation between creative portrayal, extant object and individual understanding progress from interpreting the garments' necessity (and narrative inclusion due to practicality) to a wider social meaning or even symbolism? To determine this, it is best to begin interpretation with consideration of the item's necessity and economic worth, both which influence its social reception and evaluation. Objects' base use (or lack thereof) is intrinsically related to their meaning within society: this is their 'social life'.[30] We may know everything physical about a garment—its cut, drape, colour, weave, cost—but if we do not know how it was received, we know nothing.[31] Certain objects (heraldic shields, veils, crowns) are easily linked to social positions, individuals, or classes (knights, ladies, royalty) and

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[25] Harvey Eagleson, 'Costume in the Middle English Metrical Romances', *PMLA*, 47 (1932), 339-45 (p. 339); Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 96.
[26] Barthes, *Fashion*, pp. xi and 41; Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 22.
[27] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, pp. 30 and 77.
[28] Maurice Keen, *Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), p. 65; Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 77.
[29] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 125, and *Phenomenology*, pp. 5, 204 and 213.
[30]Appadurai; Crane, *Performance*, p. 7.
[31] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, pp. 7-8.

their related cultural ideologies (as a simplified example, chivalry, *fin'amor*, fealty), but the intricacies of complex connections (such as familial or political affiliation, modesty or pretentions towards such, hostilities between lord and vassal) are alien to modern understanding.[32] We must 'learn to see' medieval objects in their full spectrum of interpretable qualities.[33] This breadth of cultural context is vitally important, as Arthurian illuminations and romances invariably react to preceding works as well as the culture of its time of production.[34] Furthermore, while household accounts demonstrate that the textiles used in romances were opulent and uncommon,[35] romances eschewed reality in favour of this opulence and object-based escapism. In Arthur's court, the pinnacle of nobility, objects were not presented as they were but as they should have been, as they were thought of, as they were discussed. Historic accuracy should not be expected; instead, we discover the implications of garments as they are imaginatively portrayed and interpreted as social signs.[36]

The greatest dangers in interpreting costume are reductivity and the temptations of monosymbolism.[37] An item will have several inherent meanings informed by intertextual, intratextual, and extratextual trends and attitudes towards similar objects.[38] Moreover, no item exists in a vacuum, but is linked to the other objects that surround it, each with their own meaning.[39] As a garment joins others to create an outfit, it joins its companions to create new and diverse meanings. These implications are fluid. Characters, narrator, and audience may interpret objects differently, and the object's nature may appear ambiguous and ambivalent due to

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[32] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 11.
[33] Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 4.
[34] Richard Barber, 'King Arthur and the Public: Popular Reaction to the Arthurian Legend', public lecture, Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 26 July 2011.
[35] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 35.
[36] Baudrillard, p. 4.
[37] Particularly treacherous are moralistic interpretations created by prescriptivists that ignore wider contexts, polarise interpretations, and expel ambiguities. For example, Robert James Blanch, in 'Games Poets Play: The Ambiguous Use of Color Symbolism in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 20 (1976), 64-85, discusses Pierre Bersuire's division of symbols into 'the dual value ("in bono" and "in malo")' in Bersuire's *Reductorium Morale*, a religious work from the mid-fourteenth-century (p. 66).
[38] Barthes, 'Imagination', p. 205; Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994), p. LV; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, p. xxi.
[39] Barthes, 'Imagination', pp. 207-8; Merleau-Ponty, *Visible*, p. 57.

these subjective pluralities.[40] Embracing the complicated nature of semiotic interpretation leads to a rich analysis instead of reductive one-to-one correlations. Mediated by context, the essential evaluative tool, the fictional object abounds with meaning.[41]

Manuscripts: Literature and Illuminations

The objects discussed in this argument are drawn from two narratives (*Meliador* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), their manuscripts, and illuminations from nine further manuscripts used in support.[42] All from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, these documents depict courtly Arthurian narratives, a 'prestige genre' written for those who could afford and were allowed the elaborate dyed costumes previously noted.[43] These garments were depicted in narrative and illumination, and the interaction between text and image was strengthened by the rise of the private chamber and individual reading in the fourteenth century.[44] However, such private reading did not replace recitals held in halls; indeed, Froissart's prelection of *Meliador* in the court of Gaston Fébus is 'the single best-known and most often-cited instance of medieval public reading'.[45] Recital was not reserved for illiterates. Rather, comprehension was polymodal: heard, read, and (with the inclusion of illuminations) seen.[46] Books were luxuries to be shared aloud amongst educated and fashionable intimates, social experiences that invited discussion.[47]

Superficially, there seems to be little reason to study *Meliador* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* together: the former is a little-studied, 30,771-line,

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[40] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 26 and 'Imagination', p. 206; Blanch, 'Games Poets Play', p. 64; Bernard S. Levy, 'Gawain's Spiritual Journey: *Imitatio Christi* in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Annuale Mediaevale*, 6 (1965), 65-106 (p. 66). Merleau-Ponty, in *Visible*, p. 41, suggests that subjectivity and plural interpretation is the state of all experience, stating that 'each perception is mutable and only probable – it is, if one likes, only an *opinion*'.

[41] Barthes, 'Imagination', p. 207; Mellinkoff, p. LV.

[42] A thorough discussion of manuscripts' provenances, codicological details, and individual folios referenced in the thesis may be found in Appendix B.

[43] Sarah Kay, *The* Chansons de Geste *in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 3.

[44] Although Barber, in 'King Arthur and the Public', stated that public reading faded with the public hall, Coleman argues that aurality and literacy are not mutually exclusive in *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See particularly Coleman, p. 132.

[45] Coleman, pp. 110-1.

[46] Camille, 'Before the Gaze', p. 216; Coleman, pp. 81 and 228.

[47] Coleman, pp. xii-xiv, 2, 31, and 132.

Middle French poem with a famous author; the latter a celebrated, anonymous, Middle English poem a twelfth of *Meliador*'s length. Yet there are multiple similarities beyond their periods of composition and unknown popularity. Both use archaic poetic forms and other conscious archaisms, but combine them with an Arthurian court that reflects contemporary concerns.[48] Additionally, their Camelots are nominally nascent.[49] In many ways, these texts present the Arthurian world as a social Platonic ideal, a representation of the luxury at the pinnacle of existence: the greatest conceivable medieval court. Yet to some extent the narratives also exist in the real world: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* explores the 'wilds' of the Wirral, while *Meliador* explores wider insular geography. Moreover, both give prominent roles to women and are thematically concerned with the role of identity in chivalric relationships. Finally, in the fourteenth century there was a growing awareness of the multilingual nature of international literary society.[50] In conjunction with their other similarities, the vernacular nature of *Meliador* and *Gawain* allow them to work well together.

Meliador is a narrative with contemporary concerns (the role of international knights as equals in tournaments) in a nostalgic form (octosyllabic couplets interspersed with Wenceslas of Brabant's lyric poetry).[51] *Meliador*'s archaic style is certainly a conscious choice, for Froissart was a deliberate writer sensitive to his authority; indeed, the style may have been initiated as an experiment to combine Arthurian romance with the fourteenth-century lyric-narrative *dit* form.[52] Froissart was proud enough of *Meliador* that he mentioned it in his 'Dit dou Florin', calling it

[48] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 96, highlights that *Meliador* is the last French poetic romance; its most recent predecessor was written a hundred years previous.
[49] For a further discussion of the nascent world in *Meliador*, see Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 106. Johnson suggests that the Camelot of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* predates Lancelot and Guinevere's adulterous relationship (p. 48), while Eagan argues that Guinevere's adultery instigated Morgan le Fay's plots (p. 51). Johnson's suggestion seems more likely, as Lancelot is mentioned only in passing (*Gawain*, l. 553). At minimum the court's behaviour at the opening is youthful in spirit.
[50] Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, in *The Color of Melancholy: The Uses of Books in the Fourteenth Century*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 11-2, observes that *Meliador* underlines this awareness by stating that Meliador will sing 'en breton, non pas en françois' (l. 7741).
[51] For a synopsis of *Meliador*, see Appendix C. Much of the discussion formed around *Meliador* would not have been possible without the seminal work by Peter F. Dembowski. Dembowski's delineation of the convoluted plot and analysis of its composition in relation to Froissart's life has had acute effect on the arguments presented here. In particular, the following background information has strongly drawn on pages 16, 18-24, 28, 43-7, 54-8, 60-87, and 96.
[52] Though much could be said about the potentially experimental form of *Meliador*, it is beyond this discussion's scope.

'un livre de Melyador, | le chevalier au soleil d'or' as well as 'l'istoire | dou chevalier au soleil d'or | que je nomme Melyador'.[53] Froissart's creative anachronism appears intentional, inspired by the previous century to use a nostalgic form as a background for contemporary concerns.[54]

Despite this, *Meliador* has been dismissed as 'archaïsante', 'highly artificial, consciously imitative, overtly derivative', and 'anachronistic'.[55] Chivalric culture has been similarly described: it is '"simplified", "shallow", [and] "perhaps rather adolescent"'.[56] This suggests that disregard towards *Meliador* is a response to the tournament-centred narrative, which superficially seems convoluted, unstructured, and with a surfeit of characters. This *fata morgana* appears due to the narrative's lengthy segments; though they progress logically, some are over 6000 lines long. In many ways, *Meliador*'s structure resembles that of late medieval prose romances, typified by

> (1) the use of multiple heroes who generate a multiplicity of plot lines, the thickness that eventually reconnects individual adventures to the chronology and complexity of Arthurian history, and (2) the technique of interlacing (*entrelacement*) that weaves together all the strands of the story.[57]

This accurately describes *Meliador*'s structure. *Meliador* is more than an intentionally idiosyncratic exception to anonymous poetic and popular prose French romances at the end of the Middle Ages.[58] It is a prose romance in verse.

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[53] Jean Froissart, 'Le Dit dou Florin', in *Jean Froissart: 'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. by Anthime Fourrier (Geneva: Droz, 1979), pp. 175-90 (ll. 284ff., qtd. 295-6 and 378-80).

[54] Schmolke-Hasselmann, p. 276; Patricia Victorin, 'Processus de recyclage dans trois "romans arthuriens" tardifs: *le Conte du Papegau*, *Ysaïe le triste* et le *Méliador* de Froissart', Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 26 July 2011.

[55] Respectively, a criticism by Thierry Delcourt, 'Histoire, textes, mythes', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France / Seuil, 2009), 11-7 (p. 15); Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 21, discussing such criticisms, elaborates on specific dismissals in pp. 22-4; and Keith Busby, 'Diverging Traditions of Gauvain in Some of the Later Old French Verse Romances', in *The Legacy of Chrétien De Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 93-109 (p. 94).

[56] Keen, *Nobles*, p. 79, responds to such criticisms of chivalric society.

[57] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, 'Reconstructing Arthurian History: Lancelot and the Vulgate Cycle', in *Memory and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Nancy Netzer and Virginia Reinburg (Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts: Boston College Museum of Art, 1995), 57-77 (p. 59).

[58] Christine Ferlampin-Acher, 'La Matière arthurienne à la fin du Moyen Âge: Épuisement ou renouveau?', Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 26 July 2011; Jane H. M. Taylor, 'The Fourteenth Century: Context, Text, and Intertext', in *The Legacy of Chrétien De Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby, vol. 1, 267-332 (p. 332), and *The Making of Poetry: Late-Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), pp. 1-3, 37-8, and 50.

Written between 1365 and 1390, *Meliador*'s composition is closely related to events in Froissart's life (c. 1337-1400).[59] In 1361 Froissart was hired by Philippa of Hainault's English court to serve as clerk, primarily for prelecting.[60] This position allowed Froissart to travel for several months in Scotland in 1365, spend time with Jean le Bon's court during his London imprisonment, and journey to Italy in 1368. Philippa died in 1369 while Froissart was still abroad, which probably prompted his return home to Hainault. A prototype of *Meliador* was composed before 1373, possibly during his English association;[61] at minimum, his experiences there certainly inspired the text.

During this time, Froissart was also supported by Wenceslas of Brabant, from 1366 to 1382. A (second?) version of *Meliador* was completed by 1383, the same year Wenceslas died; if a first draft existed, this 1383 version presumably reduced obvious influences from Philippa's court.[62] Wenceslas's sponsorship tangibly affected *Meliador*, for the extant manuscript integrates seventy-nine songs written by Wenceslas.[63] If these were incorporated before Wenceslas's death, they suggest that his patronage strongly affected the formation of *Meliador*, which then served as a potential memorial to Froissart's patron; if added after his death, the songs suggest an intentional memorialisation on Froissart's part.

In the winter of 1388-1389, Froissart read *Meliador* for Gaston Fébus, Count of Foix, at the rate of seven pages per night for ten weeks.[64] The extent to which *Meliador* changed between 1383 and 1388 is arguable, though Dembowski has suggested any modifications were minimal.[65] However, it is curious that the extant *Meliador* begins with a lovelorn, somnambulic antagonist hunting deer. If this

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[59] For Froissart's timeline, see Peter F. Ainsworth, 'Jean Froissart: A Sexcentenary Reappraisal', *French Studies*, 59 (2005), 364-72 (p. 364); Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 28; and Armel H. Diverres, 'Froissart's Travels in England and Wales', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 15 (1989), 107-22 (p. 107). Concerning *Meliador*'s dates, Thierry Delcourt, 'La Prose arthurienne', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt, 109-23 (p. 108), states that it was written between 1365 and 1380, while Dembowski suggested between 1375 and 1385 (p. 7).
[60] Juliet Vale, p. 46.
[61] Schmolke-Hasselmann, p. 273.
[62] Schmolke-Hasselmann, p. 273.
[63] Jean Froissart, *Méliador*, ed. by Auguste Longnon, 3 vols., (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1895), pp. 359-361. In this discussion I shall not consider Wenceslas's poetry, for its narrative role is worthy of a thesis unto itself.
[64] Coleman, p. 111; 'Dit dou Florin', ll. 349-350. Coleman notes that this arrangement suited the texts' 'episodic nature', dubbing *Meliador* 'the medieval equivalent of a soap opera' (p. 112).
[65] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 54 and 56-8.

opening belongs to the version read in 1388 this would have resonated uncomfortably with the court of the hunt-loving Fébus, whose brother was separated from his wife and children due to a tendency to sleep-fight.[66]

The manuscript that *Meliador* survives in, Paris, Bibiliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12557, is usually dated to circa 1400, later than *Meliador*'s reading for Fébus, and may appear in the 1415, 1427, and 1440 inventories of Charles, duc d'Orléans.[67] Containing one illumination of the narrative's opening [fig. 1], the manuscript misses two folios that may have contained illuminations. The number of folios in the extant manuscript roughly corresponds to the number read to Gaston Fébus, allowing for the handful of known missing folios as well as twenty further folios. If the composition read to Fébus corresponds to that in the extant manuscript, these twenty additional folios could be the ending missing from the manuscript. Four fragments also exist, contained in BnF, Nouvelle Acquisition Latine 2374, folios 36-39.[68] The edition used in this discussion, cited simply as *Meliador*, is by Auguste Longnon. Published in 1895, it was based on MS fr. 12557 with consideration of the fragments.[69]

Unlike *Meliador*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* exists in only one manuscript: BL Cotton Nero A.x.[70] Written in a northwest Midlands Middle English dialect probably between 1375 and 1400, *Gawain* shares its authorship, manuscript, and language with *Pearl, Cleanness*, and *Patience*, which precede it in the same manuscript.[71] Linked further by religious concerns of the laity, these texts are

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[66] Froissart, 'Troisième Livre', § 14, *Chroniques: Livres III et IV,* ed. by Peter Ainsworth and Alberto Varvaro (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2004), 189-95; Pastoureau, *L'Ours: Histoire d'un roi déchu* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), pp. 251-2; Michel Zink, 'Froissart et la nuit du chasseur', *Poétique*, 11 (1980), 60-77. In *Froissart et le temps* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), Michel Zink also states that reading *Meliador* to Gaston was 'le plus grand succès' (p. 28), but as our knowledge of Gaston's response comes from Froissart's other works, the success of *Meliador* may have been distorted.

[67] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 18-19; Longnon, pp. xlvi and xlviii. Folios 1 and 46 of MS fr. 12557 are available from *Mandragore: Base de manuscrit enluminés de la Bibliothèque nationale de France* <http://mandragore.bnf.fr> as of 22 August 2011.

[68] Longnon, pp. xliv-xlv.

[69] Longnon's edition of *Meliador* is available as three PDFs from *Gallica: Bibliothèque numerique* <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>. This is the only edition of *Meliador* currently available, and I eagerly await Droz's publication of Nathalie Bragantini-Maillard's edition.

[70] Cotton Nero A.x is now housed in the British Library. Although the full text has been digitised, as of August 2011 only some of the folios have been made available remotely. A CD-ROM of these images is available for study within the British Library's manuscript reading room.

[71] Andrew and Waldron,*The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), pp. 1-3. Although a date as early as the 1350s has been proposed for *Gawain*, general consensus is that it belongs to the last quarter of the

anonymous.[72] Possibly due to this anonymity, attempts to discover *Gawain*'s 'sources' dominated its early study, focused around its beheading game and the bedroom scenes (often called temptations or seductions). It has been connected to several Irish texts, including *Yellow and Terror* (which involves beheading tests) and *Bricriu's Feast* (which contains two beheading tests and an encounter between the hero Cuchulainn and a married woman); some have suggested that *Gawain* merely conflates several early insular sources.[73] This is faulty, for Chrétien de Troyes' *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* and Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* demonstrate that both early and late Arthurian literature contained 'seductions' and beheading tests.[74] These are common literary Arthurian themes.

Gawain is fortunate to exist in a multitude of editions. In this discussion I have primarily used the 2007 (fifth) edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron. This is referenced as *Gawain* except when referring to Andrew and Waldron's commentaries, for which the editors are cited.[75] Additionally, I have also referenced the editions by Sir Israel Gollancz and by J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon.[76]

Despite the numerous editions of *Gawain*, few discuss the manuscript's twelve illuminations. A rarity for verse at this time, four of these illuminations belong to *Gawain* and 'sandwich' the text, with one preceding the narrative and three

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century. J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon, eds., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, rev. by Norman Davis, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), state that the items that date it in particular to this period are the costume, armour, and architecture (p. xx), which the following argument supports as an accurate assessment. The manuscript itself dates to 1400.

[72] Andrew Breeze, in 'Sir Johan Stanley (c. 1350-1414) and the *Gawain*-Poet', *Arthuriana*, 14 (2004), 15-30, makes a tenuous but conceivable argument for Stanley's authorship of these texts (building on Edward Wilson, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Stanley Family of Stanley, Storeton, and Hooton', *Review of English Studies*, 30 (1979), 308-16). Based on the polyglot nature of English aristocracy during this period, Breeze analyses Stanley's use of French and French influences in the *Gawain*-Poet's vocabulary. Francis Ingledew, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight *and the Order of the Garter* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), argues for the alternate dates 1330-1360 for *Gawain* (p. 8-11) proposed by W.G. Cooke in '*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: A Restored Dating', *Medium Aevum*, 58 (1989), 34-48. However, Cooke's rebuttal of the earlier dates acknowledges that linguistic and manuscript evidence is inconclusive, and his interpretation of the garments as supporting these dates do not strictly correspond with the advances in knowledge of costume history made since then.

[73] Alice Buchanan, 'The Irish Framework of Gawain and the Green Knight', *PMLA,* 47 (1932), 315-38 (pp. 315-7); J.R. Hulbert, 'Syr Gawain and the Grene Knyȝt', *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915), 933-62 (pp. 433 and 703).

[74] Buchanan, p. 336.

[75] 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 207-300.

[76] Israel Gollancz, ed., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Early English Text Society, 1950).

following [figs. 2, 3, 4, and 5].[77] Generally dated to around 1400, these illuminations may have been created after the manuscript's text.[78] Criticized as 'crude', 'weak', 'inept', 'prudish', 'the nadir of English illustrative art', and 'infantile daubs', these illuminations are not as aesthetically pleasing or refined as contemporaneous French illuminations and have been criticised for taking liberties with the text (judged as incompetence or ignorance).[79] It is possible that much of this criticism stems from the poor copies of the illuminations available to scholars.[80] The illuminations' style corresponds with the insular nature of the narrative's alliterative verse, and close attention to the illuminations suggests intriguing alternate interpretations and commentary upon the narrative.[81]

Illuminated manuscripts are also common sources for costume history, though effigies are often preferred for their supposed 'realism'.[82] Like literature, illuminations are not reproductions of reality but reality reinterpreted. Illuminations

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[77] Janet Backhouse, 'Manuscript Sources for the History of Mediaeval Costume', *Costume*, (1968), 9-14 (p. 9). Another four illuminations belong to *Pearl*, while *Cleanness* and *Patience* each have two. For greater discussion of the foliation of Cotton Nero A.x, see Appendix B.

[78] Andrew and Waldron, p. 3; Roger S. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1966), p. 138. Andrew and Waldron, p. 1, and Gollancz, p ix, note that the folios containing illuminations of *Pearl* may have been inserted as they are on a separate bifolium. Other discussions do not clarify whether this is true for the other illuminations. However, the sequence of illuminations suggests that the other illuminations' folios were not added to Cotton Nero A.x.

[79] Andrew and Waldron, pp. 4-5; Maidie Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), p. 158. The first three quotations are from Andrew and Waldron, pp. 4-5; the fourth from Hilmo, p. 158; and the last two from Loomis, *Arthurian Legends*, p. 138. These are only a sample of such criticisms. Remarkably, such comments are usually from scholars who enjoy *Gawain*. Hilmo, p. 10, adds that Cotton Nero A.x was produced as a new style of art arose, and suggests that these illuminations have been criticized because they are conservative. However, the manuscripts used in this thesis demonstrate that such change happened over several decades; though these illuminations are certainly not *avant-garde*, neither are they outmoded. This criticism seems to be a solely modern one.

[80] Until recently, all the illuminations were primarily available via the sepia-toned facsimile *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique MS. Cotton Nero A.x in the British Museum*, Early English Texts Society, 162 (London: Oxford University Press, 1923). While the other illuminations of *Gawain* are now available for free digitally, figure 4 is only available through special order from the British Library or at the British Library on a digitised CD-ROM. In sepia, this folio is muddied and appears damaged. In colour it is rich, with almost every inch covered in yellows, greens, and blue-greens that distinctly create a figurative wilderness. Gawain's red lance cuts through the green background, and his pink-red surcoat draws the eye. Though there is a crease in the folio's centre, the page remains comprehensible when in colour. The analytical issues involving the illuminations of Cotton Nero A.x are primarily created by its dissemination: when reduced to monochrome, the rich, same-value colours are reduced to the similar shades which distort the image.

[81] Hilmo, p. 10, notes the insularity of both text and image.

[82] Backhouse, p. 9; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', *Costume*, 14 (1980), 7-23 (p. 8). The view of effigies as more reliable is arguable.

suggest costume, emphasizing different details and playing with artistic trends. While knowledge of dye practices, available textiles, current techniques, and fashion trends are useful, garments are best comprehended when seen. Thus, illuminations serve well as an intermediary between text and reader in interpreting literary costume: art teaches us to 'see' literature.

The majority of illuminations used in this discussion are sourced from nine manuscripts created between approximately 1380 and 1425.[83] As Paris's production overshadowed that of England and the Low Countries, the manuscripts used here are primarily from France.[84] Because secular verse narratives were rarely illuminated during this period, these manuscripts are primarily prose texts.[85] Specifically, their narratives all fall within the wider Arthurian tradition (including the related *Tristan* narratives), and were chosen for the breadth of visual experiences that the illuminations bring to the genre. The role of these images in reading cannot be overestimated. Illuminations simultaneously facilitated textual comprehension and altered it.[86] They influenced not simply the reader's experience of the text but the experience and memory of similar texts.[87] Illuminators moulded this experience by their work, serving as both initial recipients and interpreters of the text.[88]

Although illuminations are immensely helpful tools in discussing literary costume (and a fascinating source individually), they are not perfect. Their interpretations of costume were not necessarily historically accurate, for manuscripts may portray both fashionable and outmoded garments, and innovative items may be worn before they were depicted visually.[89] Further, an illuminator can manipulate rapidly changing fashions or certain visual cues to create a sense of historicity, which

[83] Details of these manuscripts' provenances, artistic trends, and relationships with the text can be found in Appendix B, as well as a visual timeline.
[84] Alison Stones, 'Fabrication et illustration des manuscrits arthuriens', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt, 19-29 (p. 26); Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 123.
[85] Loomis, *Arthurian Legends*, p. 103, notes that in four inventories of the French royal libraries between 1373 and 1424 the majority of the thirty-eight Arthurian volumes were prose. Poetry was not illuminated.
[86] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Introduction: The English Illustrated Book and Medieval Ways of Reading: An Archaeology of Images at Work', in *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer*, by Maidie Hilmo, xix-xxv (pp. xxi and xxiii).
[87] Woolgar, pp. 186-7, discusses this process in relationship to meditation in ecclesiastic settings; however, it is certainly possible that such approaches were employed subconsciously in secular society as well.
[88] Hilmo, p. 7.
[89] Van Buren, pp. 28-9.

became increasing common by the middle of the fifteenth century.[90] At the same time, as luxury items illuminations called attention to their audiences' sumptuous dress, idealising such attire in the model world of the Arthurian court to such a point that occasionally even the peasants were garbed in atypical splendour.[91] As imitations of real items these representations create a visual language that may illustrate a person's status, occupation, or even name within a literary context. Though two-dimensional depictions can never fully represent actual cloth, they expose people's viewing desires.[92] How the illuminator chose to render such items altered the reader's relationship with the text.

Their relationship with their text is also important. Illuminations can be initially planned or later additions, and the illuminator may be unfamiliar with the narrative.[93] Further issues are found in their formation: pigments can degrade over time or inaccurately represent textile dyes, and illuminations may be overpainted.[94] Several manuscripts used here have examples of the latter, changing characters' colours and replacing patterned backgrounds with blue sky [e.g., fig. 6]. There are also several images that must be excluded from close discussion, such as Lancelot crossing the sword bridge [fig. 7]. As these are iconic Arthurian moments so specific to individual narratives, they distract from the narratives discussed here.[95]

Finally, there are also issues with modes of access. This thesis takes full advantage of the recent digitisation projects of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, and the British Library (BL). While such work is invaluable, exposing minor illuminated details that would be nearly invisible to the naked eye, digitisation de-contextualises images from their physical size, shape, and place within folio and manuscript. Further, scanning processes and output devices may skew colours, misrepresenting what would have originally been seen by natural light or flame. However, in an era of limited physical access, digitised manuscripts are an unparalleled second choice.

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[90] Van Buren, pp. 17 and 26.

[91] Margaret Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages* (Los Angeles, California: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), p. 10; Van Buren, p. 10.

[92] Crane, *Performance*, p. 12; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 131.

[93] John Fleming, in 'Text & Image', *Acta*, 10 (1983): 1-25, amusingly and accurately states that some texts 'are, as it were, "born" with their illustrations, others achieve illustrations, and still others have illustrations thrust upon them' (qtd. in Kerby-Fulton, 'Introduction', p. xix).

[94] Woolgar, p. 161, notes several ways in which illuminations may be changed at a later date.

[95] Bruckner, p. 12.

Four of the manuscripts used in this discussion contain material from the Arthurianised *Tristan* corpus, including the earliest manuscript employed: BnF, MS fr. 338. Created between 1380 and 1390, it contains *Guiron le Courtois*, a prequel to the Prose *Tristan*, and 72 illuminations.[96] The other *Tristan* manuscripts, BnF, MS fr. 97 and the two-manuscript set BnF, MSs fr. 100 and 101, contain the entire Prose *Tristan* (*Tristan de Léonois*) and were created between 1400 and 1425.[97] MSs fr. 100 and 101 were owned by Margaret d'Écosse and are similar to Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliotek, MS 2537, which is a *Tristan* made in 1410 for Jean, Duc de Berry.[98]

The remaining manuscripts contain the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle. The first collection is divided into four manuscripts: BnF, MSs fr. 117, 118, 119, and 120.[99] This set was completed no later than 1404, as they were purchased in January 1405 by Jean, Duc de Berry.[100] The majority of the 130 illuminations were painted by or in the workshop of the Maître des *Cleres Femmes*; however, many were altered by overpainting around 1460 under the ownership of Jacques d'Armagnac.[101] Of the second collection of the *Lancelot-Graal*, only the first half is used in this discussion: Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3479.[102] Created before 1407, it appears in the 1420 inventory of Jean sans Peur, duke of Burgundy.[103] Like MSs fr. 117-120, MS Arsenal 3479 originated in the workshop of the Maître des *Cleres Femmes* and follows the same illumination programme, though the illuminations are not direct copies.[104] This difference is possibly because MS Arsenal 3479 is the result of a collaboration between the Maître des *Cleres Femmes* and (the workshop of) the Maître de la *Cité des Dames.* Additionally, a third artist (Maître du second

[96] Delcourt, 'Histoire', p. 15; Ferlampin-Acher, 'L'Aventure chevaleresque', p. 151.
[97] *Mandragore*; Philippe Ménard, 'La Fortune de Tristan', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt, 172-82 (p. 176).
[98] Stones, p. 26, is presumably referring to the daughter of James I of Scotland, born in 1424. The person who commissioned the manuscript is unknown.
[99] Stones, p. 26, states that these manuscripts contain the full cycle; Thierry Delcourt, 'La Légende du roi Arthur', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt, 62-79 (p. 66), adds that the text contains an interpolation of *Perlesvaus*. The *Mandragore* database does not include *Perlesvaus* in its list of the narrative parts.
[100] Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries* (New York: Pierpont Morgan, 1974), pp. 373-4.
[101] Delcourt, 'La Légende', pp. 66 and 72; Meiss, pp. 373-4.
[102] Its sibling MS Arsenal 3480 is in the process of digitisation for *Mandragore* as of 2011-2012, and thus was not available for this study.
[103] Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 70.
[104] Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 70; Meiss, pp. 373, 378, and 380.

Roman de la Rose du Duc de Berry) has been identified from the illuminations.[105] Margaret d'Écosse also owned a manuscript similar to MS Arsenal 3479 and its sibling.[106]

These interwoven relationships of owners, narratives, collections, and illuminators' workshops demonstrate the popularity of these texts and their material. Moreover, it reveals that patrons such as Margaret of Scotland and Jean de Berry appreciated such elaborate illuminated works. These narratives were disseminated throughout the noble reading public, ready to be appreciated and affecting wider literary experiences.

Costume in the Fourteenth Century

The garments discussed in this thesis are limited to a wider frame than the manuscripts, being between approximately 1350 and 1425. This period represents a lifetime that includes the narratives' creations, their initial periods of reception, and changes in costume preceding both. This is particularly necessary due to the delayed appearance of changing fashions in illuminated examples.[107] This period also encompasses the majority of the lives of Froissart and his patrons and allows for known activity concerning the illuminated manuscripts. I offer here an overview of secular aristocratic clothing trends drawn from works by costume historians that synthesise sumptuary laws, English great wardrobe records, wills, illuminations, effigies, and occasional literary and archaeological sources.[108] The variety of sources limits the potential for misinterpretation of items.[109] Still, as this period's last decade saw many artistic and costume innovations, any objects from this time are treated cautiously.

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[105] Delcourt, 'La Légende', p.70, notes that François Avril suggested the minor painter.

[106] Stones, p. 26.

[107] Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 8.

[108] Great wardrobe records documented fabric-related expenditures, goods, and usage, and monitored tailors, tent-makers, and armourers, under whom embroiderers worked (Newton, pp. 14-5). Although archaeological finds are useful in discussing construction techniques, the quick deterioration of fabric items means that archaeological finds are unfortunately less useful to discussions of full garments (Van Buren, p. 13). However, the series *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London* now under Boydell and Brewer provides several interesting discussion of current finds. In particular, the fourth volume *Textiles and Clothing, c. 1150-c.1450* by Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard, and Kay Staniland (London: HMSO, 1992) and the fifth volume *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment*, ed. by John Clark, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2004) have been useful to this discussion. Finally, though costume studies generally also examine religious and ceremonial garments, these are excluded here as such are not present in the narratives.

[109] Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', pp. 7-8.

It is first important to understand the materials used to construct clothes. The fabric's quality and type affected a garment's worth and significance. Linen, silk and wool were common, the last particularly popular and highly prized in its finest forms which by the 1370s were primarily an English product.[110] Sumptuous silks were also esteemed, named as often for their non-European origin (for example, sarcenets, tarteryns, and *panni de Tarsen*)[111] as for their varieties: taffeta, samite (a form of damask), cendal (a light silk often used for linings) and velvet (which provided excellent backgrounds for embroidery).[112] Woven and embroidered patterns were prized, though preferences changed periodically between solids and patterns, often within a few decades.[113]

Furs were incorporated into clothing for both warmth and beauty, and even summer garments bore fur linings.[114] Fur linings were extravagant: one item could take 360 squirrel pelts while a full outfit of nine layers might take nearly 12,000.[115] Though the fifteenth century favoured fox, marten, and sable, the fourteenth preferred red squirrel's winter coat, called 'vair'.[116] Sourced in the winter from cold regions such as the Baltic, vair was named according to its purity; trimmed of grey

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[110] Scott, *Medieval Dress,* pp. 79 and 125; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 8, and 'Clothing and Textiles at the Court of Edward III, 1342-1352', in *Collectanea Londiniensia: Studies in London Archaeology and History Presented to Ralph Merrifield*, ed. by Joanna Bird, Hugh Chapman, and John Clark (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1978), 223-34 (pp. 224-5).

[111] E. Jane Burns, 'Saracen Silk and the Virgin's Chemise: Cultural Crossings in Cloth', *Speculum,* 81 (2006), 365-97 (p. 376); Lisa Monnas, 'Textiles for the Coronation of Edward III', *Textile History*, 32 (2001), 2-35 (p. 4); Scott, *Medieval Dress,* p. 80. Though these fabrics retain names of a foreign origin, by the 1300s production of such materials was based in Italy (Monnas, p. 9). While most rare materials were from the fringes of the European world, be it Mediterranean dyes, Oriental silks, precious gems, or Baltic furs, all wended through Italy to arrive in the hands of western Europe's ruling classes.

[112] Newton, p. 25; Scott, *Medieval Dress,* p. 80; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 10, and 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 231. Though these terms and their associated fabrics are generally accepted, determining the exact type of silk meant by a recorded name is difficult (Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 9).

[113] Newton, p. 64; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 84. Monica L. Wright has suggested that samite is a heavily embroidered Byzantine silk with crisscrossing designs ('Enide's Revealing Refusals, or How to Prove a Royal Identity', Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 27 July 2011), not unlike some illuminated backgrounds [for example, figs. 6 and 8]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds two fine examples of fourteenth-century embroidered silk: a square with embroidered birds sitting in roundels (object 2002.494.483) and sleeve-shaped piece with birds flying amongst foliage (object 46.156.43, The Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/>).

[114] Scott, *Fashion*, p. 13; Veale, p. 3.

[115] Veale, pp. 19-20.

[116] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 82; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 1. The red squirrel's red-and-white autumnal coat was called 'strandling' (Scott, *Fashion*, p. 26).

the white bellies were 'pured miniver', while the grey backs were 'gris'.[117] Vair's popularity was eclipsed only by expensive ermine.[118] Even now, ermine is associated with wealth and royalty in its 'powdered' form, where the ermine's black tails are sewn into the otherwise white fur to striking effect.[119]

These materials were used to highlight the great tailoring innovations in the 1340s, when long and flowing garments made of triangles and rectangles were suddenly replaced by fitted apparel.[120] With the additional labour required and fabric wasted, tailored clothes were only available to the wealthy, and one could tell someone's social status by how inconvenienced they were by their dress.[121] As clothiers cut new curved lines, shaping garments to bodies, torsos and sleeves tightened, with men's tunic skirts following in the 1350s.[122] Sensually-placed belts highlighted hips on both genders, and points on men's shoes (called pikes or poulaines) grew to elaborate length.[123] By the 1360s, men's tight torsos had swelled above pinched waists as padding rounded out chests into the shape known as the 'pourpoint'; below their waists, their skirts loosened.[124] At the same time, the low-belted, loose, and gathered houpeland was introduced, employing shaping techniques with an abundance of cloth.[125] In the 1370s, the skirts of the pourpoint began to

[117] Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 10; Veale, pp. 22-4; Monica L. Wright, 'Dress for Success: Béroul's *Tristan* and the Restoration of Status through Clothes', *Arthuriana*, 18 (2008), 3-16 (p. 5).
[118] Newton, p. 11.
[119] Veale, p. 30. On occasion, powdered ermine was imitated by slitting the white fur and inserting fake tails made from black lamb legs (p. 32).
[120] Newton, p. 3; Sponsler, pp. 2-3. It is unclear as to how much the loose, long shirt-like underclothes (*chemise* or shift) changed to accommodate these new, tight clothes. Greater detail of these changes can be found in Blanc; Andrea Denny-Brown, 'Rips and Slits: The Torn Garment and the Medieval Self' in *Clothing Culture, 1350-1650*, ed. by Catherine Richardson (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), 223-37 (pp. 224-6); Newton; Margaret Scott, *A Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth & Fifteenth Centuries* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1986), p. 16; Woolgar, p. 232; and Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 28.
[121] Scott, *Visual History*, p. 16.
[122] Denny-Brown, pp. 224-6; Newton, pp. 9 and 105; Sponsler, pp. 2-3.
[123] Denny-Brown, p. 224; Newton, p. 119; Sponsler, p. 3.
[124] Suzanne Craymer, 'Signifying Chivalric Identities: Armor and Clothing in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Medieval Perspectives*, 14 (1999), 50-60 (p. 55); Newton, pp. 48 and 54; Van Buren, p. 62.
[125] While houpelands are generally perceived as fifteenth-century garments, Newton, pp. 57-8 and 62, suggests that they were the same as the English 'goune': voluminous overgarments introduced in the 1360s. The term 'houpelande' first appears at this time, used by Froissart in a pastourelle dated between 1360 and 1364 (Newton, pp. 127-8). However, the earliest houpeland in a wardrobe record seems to be those in the *Argenterie* of Charles VI, which records payment for long and short houpelands in 1390 and 1394 (Paris, Archives nationale, KK 21, fols. 16v and 45v, and KK 24, fol. 32v), which Van Buren uses to support the popularity of the houpeland in the last two decades of the

lengthen, while by the 1380s tunics' sleeves and torso loosened.[126] As the fourteenth century neared its close, sleeves widened to fall open or be gathered at the wrist, poulaines lengthened again, and the houpeland gained a popularity that persisted through the first quarter of the fifteenth century.[127]

Women's clothes changed in similar ways over this period with tightening torsos and low-slung belts. Long detachable streamers falling from the upper arm highlighted constricting sleeves, and skirts could be loose and flared or so tight that fox-tails must be worn underneath 'to hide their arses', presumably squished between the buttocks.[128] Into the 1380s collars grew ever upwards, and the distinct *surcot ouvert*, an overdress with large open side that framed the tight sleeves and bodices of underdresses popular in the 1330s, slowly went out of style as sleeves and skirts widened and waists rose to beneath the bust to become the female houpelande.[129] Yet the *surcot ouvert* remained a ceremonial prestige garment even as women's houpelandes continued to evolve, their collars flattening in the 1410s. Despite this, the changes in women's attire were not as drastic as in men's, and tended to vary more by region than by date.[130]

Though some differences are determinable, it is difficult to distinguish regional variants overall.[131] Fashion innovations were exchanged widely amongst the ruling classes, and France in particular strongly influenced international costume.[132] Roland Barthes describes variants in garments as 'vestemes', like the linguistic phoneme or morpheme, but in medieval clothes these variants are more akin to mild regional accents.[133] An example is dagging, the cutting of hems into elaborate shapes in a conspicuous waste of fabric, reintroduced to fashion in the mid-fourteenth century.[134] As an internationally-developed and instantly recognisable motif of this

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fourteenth century (pp. 29 and 306-7). Scott, *Visual History*, p. 17, agrees with both interpretations, and suggests that the houpeland was first introduced in the late 1350s but did not become popular until the 1390s.

[126] Van Buren, pp. 68 and 80.

[127] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 136; Van Buren, pp. 88 and 90.

[128] Newton, pp. 9 (qtd.) and 109; Scott, *Visual History*, p. 17.

[129] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, pp. 101 and 117, and *Visual History*, p. 17.

[130] Newton, *Fashion*, p. 109; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 117.

[131] Newton, p. 86; Scott, *Visual History*, p. 18. For closer study of Catalonian, Aragonese, Italian, and Hungarian regional differences, see Newton, pp. 86-101.

[132] Newton, p. 86; Van Buren, pp. 2 and 28.

[133] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 66; Newton, p. 2.

[134] Newton, p. 108; Sponsler, *Drama,* p. 3.

and the following centuries, regional design preferences may have existed;[135] however, considering current evidence this is unknown.

This overview considers only the most popular and common named garments in order to gauge the consistently drastic costume changes during this time. Therefore, it necessarily excludes items which despite being named in records are of unknown shape. Yet it is obvious that the advent of tailoring provoked elaboration in garments and extravagant display of consumption.[136] As extreme tailoring lost its novelty, voluminous apparel (generally in the new form of the houpeland) returned to fashion. At the same time, both the amount of cloth used and how it was shaped and used remained as a display of wealth.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the consensus was that people should dress according to their status. In Aristotelian theory, the outside should reflect the inside: thus the clothes should speak of the person in signs easily discerned by the medieval viewer.[137] Yet the fourteenth century's reshaping of garments fragmented the body. As pieces were cut individually, body parts were disunited even as they reshaped and recreated the body, emphasizing or suppressing parts as fancy and fashion suggested.[138] Unsurprisingly, such drastic changes inspired reproach.[139] Criticism came from many sources, including chroniclers, ecclesiastics, and secular moralists. Clothes were derided for unseemly excess, displays of pride, or simply moral depravity.[140] Houpelands, whose silhouettes were similar to dresses, could be considered inappropriately feminine, emasculating, and confused the social order, while flared skirts were blamed for the French loss in 1346 at Crecy.[141] In England, Queen Philippa and her Hainaulter entourage earned much of the moral ire; in Florence, Giovanni Villani condemned youthful men's foolishness to dress so extravagantly and irreverently; in France, Geoffroi de Charny criticised restrictive short tunics that exposed the crotch (though he allowed youths to indulge in such),

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[135] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, pp. 108 and 117.
[136] Newton, p. 3.
[137] Pastoureau, *Devil's Cloth*, pp. xiii and 3; Sponsler, pp. xii, 3, and 20.
[138] Denny-Brown, p. 226.
[139] Mellinkoff, p. 39.
[140] Mellinkoff, p. 20; Sponsler, p. 15.
[141] Newton, p. 10; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 105, and *Visual History*, p. 17; *Grandes Chroniques de France*, vol. ix, ed. Jules Viard (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 1937), p. 285.

and French chronicler Jean de Venette thought they distorted the natural form.[142] These criticisms, generally framed moralistically, reveal anxieties concerning gender, foreign influence, economy, and youth.

However, the noble classes also criticised these fashions when worn by social inferiors, for such appeared to challenge their social position. Thus sumptuary laws were conceived to control consumption, restricting certain items (such as silks and jewels) to people of a certain class.[143] These laws existed in antiquity, but were uncommon in the medieval period until the thirteenth century.[144] These laws tacitly acknowledged that class structures were related to economic power: costly opulence exemplified nobility's social and symbolic power.[145] Society could not be separated from the marketplace, and the new buying power of the fourteenth century's middle classes challenged the nobles' authority.[146]

These laws reveal an international desire to restrict richer wearable items to nobility.[147] The potential availability of luxury to subordinates blurred class distinctions and violated the paradigm of dress reflecting one's status and nature.[148] By fixing dress, sumptuary laws intended to secure class differentiation.[149] In the process, they produced and solidified specific social markers that, within the legislation, were always discussed on an economic level.[150]

As the latest sumptuary laws in Europe, English acts were not introduced and recorded until 1337.[151] Three statutes were passed in the fourteenth century, and two

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[142] Blanc, p. 161; Geoffroi de Charny, 'Book of Chivalry', in *The* Book of Chivalry *of Geoffroi de Charny: Text, Context, and Translation*, ed. by Richard W. Kaueper and Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 84-200 (§§42 and 43); *Cronica di Giovanni Villani*, vol. 7 (Florence: Magheri, 1823), p. 16; Newton, pp. 6, 8-10, and 54; Scott, *Visual History*, p. 14; Van Buren, p. 11; *The Chronicle of Jean de Venette*, ed. by Richard A. Newhall, trans. by Jean Birdsall (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), pp. 34 and 62-3; Woolgar, p. 232.

[143] Kim M. Phillips, 'Masculinities and the Medieval English Sumptuary Laws', *Gender & history*, 19 (2007), 22-42 (p. 23). Food and wearable items were the most common focuses in sumptuary laws. For types of sumptuary laws, see Baldwin, p. 10.

[144] Phillips, p. 23.

[145] For further discussion of social reactions to changing economic power, see also Frédérique Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status in England before the Sumptuary Laws', in *Heraldry, Pageantry, and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 105-23 (p. 106).

[146] Veale, p. 9.

[147] Baldwin, p. 53.

[148] Baldwin, p. 23.

[149] Sponsler, pp. 4, 12, and 20.

[150] Sponsler, p. 13.

[151] Baldwin, p. 12; Denny-Brown, p. 224; Phillips, p. 23.

more were attempted in the early fifteenth century.[152] The first was a protectionist document restricting imported cloth and fur for the sake of English wool, but the first detailing costume was enacted in 1363 (and promptly repealed in 1364).[153] Under this law, servants and yeoman handicraftsmen were not allowed to wear gold, silver, silk, or embroidered material in an attempt to restrict 'transgressive' dress considered inappropriate to their social position. [154] A similar, unsuccessful law, proposed in the 1378-1379 Parliament, requested that only those of knightly rank be allowed gold or silk clothes, jewels, and fur.[155] Furs were even arranged on a social spectrum: the lowest were allowed native furs such as lamb and fox, while royalty was allowed ermine and miniver.[156] However, the majority of these laws divided men not only by social rank but by income. First, knights were divided between those of less than £200 a year and those of greater than £200, while a non-noble of £500 to £1000 a year was allowed the same garments as the lesser knights.[157] By creating a relationship between income and class, this equated squires and gentlemen of certain means with knights of lesser means.[158]

French laws were introduced in the first half of the thirteenth century for similar purposes: to restrict expensive goods.[159] By 1294, clothing was included in these restrictions.[160] These limitations did not focus on purchases or individuals' wealth, but rather upon downward distribution of cast-offs. By limiting the amount of clothes a knight might give to companions in a year, the law attempted to check the visual equalisation of classes.[161] Notably, sumptuary laws were significantly absent from France in the fourteenth century, though in 1366 the manufacture of poulaines and stockings were banned in an attempt to stop a critiqued fashion at the source.[162]

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[152] Baldwin, pp. 35, 55, 69-70, and 79-82; Phillips, p. 29. By 1510 six national statutes had been published, with four more attempted (Baldwin, p. 10; Phillips, p. 23)
[153] Baldwin, pp. 31 and 35; Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status', p. 106; Phillips, p. 29.
[154] Baldwin, p. 47; Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status', p. 106.
[155] Baldwin, p. 60.
[156] Veale, p. 5.
[157] Baldwin, p. 49.
[158] Baldwin, pp. 47-50; Phillips, pp. 24 and 26.
[159] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 31. However, Heller states that French sumptuary law was introduced in the last quarter of the thirteenth century (p. 6).
[160] Heller, p. 6; Van Buren, p. 3.
[161] Heller, p. 65.
[162] Scott, *Fashion*, p.33; Van Buren, p. 3.

Moral panic over tight garments died as they became passé, but sumptuary laws continued to be introduced. Yet the implementation of English and French laws is not recorded and their effectiveness at controlling luxury goods is questionable as wills evidence that the gentry over-indulged in restricted velvets.[163] Still, the existence of these laws reveals that new fashions created or attracted social, moral, and economic anxieties. Fear of the devaluation of prestige items' intrinsic and symbolic significance through popular use was mixed with dread of social destabilisation through greater wealth and 'inappropriate' personal display.[164] At the same time, these restrictions may have spurred the continuing innovations of the fashionably-minded.[165]

The Medieval Spectrum

Sumptuary laws ignored colour, yet they controlled it indirectly by restricting fine fabric, as only these were dyed with the richest, most colourfast dyes.[166] This section outlines the medieval changes in colour production and perception and links these facets to their interpretative worth.[167] Establishing the meaning of colours is difficult, as medieval associations can differ drastically from modern interpretation.[168] Historically, colours' connotations vary. Like costume, the perception and interpretation of colours are contextually driven, with varying symbolism of different depths, yet colour is often the first information perceived.[169] Simultaneously, developing a colour symbolism system is dangerous, as colours' meanings are highly relative.[170] Modern theorists, particularly Barthes and Baudrillard, are aware of the difficulty of discussing colours.[171] Colour names may

[163] Phillips discusses the issues with determining whether garments recorded in wills complied with sumptuary laws, particularly as these laws 'regulate what one could *wear*, not what one could *own*' (p. 30).
[164] Baldwin, p. 55; Crane, *Performance*, p. 15; Phillips, p. 30.
[165] Newton, p. 2.
[166] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80.
[167] Being dye- and art-based, this overview revolves around colour as pigment and only tangentially discusses colour and light. This summary also excludes patterns and heraldic tinctures; for these, see Chapter 4.
[168] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 7.
[169] John Gage, *Colour and Meaning: Art, Science and Symbolism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), p. 43; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, p. xii.
[170] Sabina Beckman, 'Color Symbolism in "Troilus and Criseyde"', *College Language Association Journal*, 20 (1976), 68-74 (p. 74).
[171] See, for example, Barthes' *Fashion* or 'Imagination' and Baudrillard's *The System of Objects.* Because of such difficulties, modern industries generally assign numbers to colours instead of names. These may be pigment-based, light-based, or a mixture of the two. While pigment-based systems

be simple or conceptual (pink, yellow, cyan), specific/referential (fuchsia, mustard, TARDIS blue), or descriptive of value (Barthes lists 'gay, bright, neutral, shocking').[172] Individual colour associations may be intellectual, emotional, personal, relational, social, gendered, or from other cultural conditions.[173] Furthermore, interpreters must consider a colour's relationship to and role in the spectrum.[174] Colour analysis must be comprehensive.

Medieval thinkers and theorists knew that colour had significance, but meanings were not always clear. Colour could provoke outrage or obsession or help divine internal qualities (such as a horse's temperament), but artists also deviated from reality without worry, as with the red or multicoloured 'sky' in certain illuminations [for example, figs. 1 and 6].[175] Colours were associated with everything: seasons, elements, the humours, the Seven Deadly Sins, even the liturgical year and vestments.[176] More general symbolic interpretations ascribed broader overlapping divisions: positive and negative, masculine and feminine, dark and light.[177] At the same time, colour interpretation was varied and often contradictory. Many authors stated their colours' importances outright, but these explicit structures differed from author to author, combining colours and virtues in one-to-one correlations in such distinct ways that, viewed across literature, they are nearly meaningless.[178] Reductive colour symbolism was impossible to agree upon even among contemporaries, and such direct ascriptions are not culturally sustainable.

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usually assign individual numbers for each colour to the amount of ink required in CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) pigments, light-based systems such as computer monitors assign numbers to RGB (red, green, and blue) values.

[172] Barthes, *Fashion*, p. 106.

[173] Baudrillard, p. 30, argues that colour associations are only 'metaphors for fixed cultural meanings' that at worst become a 'mere psychological response: red is passionate and aggressive, blue a sign of calm, yellow optimistic, and so on'. However, these are still culturally-informed connotations. For further discussion, see cited works by Gage and Pastoureau, particularly Pastoureau's *Blue*, p. 7.

[174] Barthes, in 'Imagination', pp. 205-6, states that 'red signifies prohibition only insofar as it is *systematically* opposed to green and yellow (of course, if there were no other colour but red, red would still be opposed to the absence of colour)'.

[175] Wilfrid Bonser, 'The Significance of Colour in Ancient and Mediaeval Magic: With Some Modern Comparisons', *Man*, 25 (1925), 194-8 (p. 194); Herman Pleij, *Colors Demonic and Divine: Shades of Meaning in the Middle Ages and After*, trans. by Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 2; Woolgar, pp. 158-9 and 167.

[176] Michel Pastoureau, *Noir: Histoire d'une couleur* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), p. 50; Pleij, pp. 14-5.

[177] C. P. Biggam, 'Aspects of Chaucer's Adjectives of Hue', *The Chaucer Review,* 28 (1993), 41-53.

[178] Pleij, pp. 28-9, discusses several of these reductive texts more fully than warranted here, as this discussion is intended to circumvent simplistic interpretations.

The complexities of medieval colours were perceptible to everyone, only requiring attentive social observation. Predating Newtonian optics, these observations were based on a spectrum descended from Aristotelian theory, where red, white, and black formed a triad within which red/yellow/white and black/blue/green were two starkly separate spheres.[179] Medieval theorists modified this. For example, Robert Grosseteste, his student Roger Bacon, and Bartholomew the Englishman all differed on the number of extant 'essential' colours.[180] Some attempts were made to rearrange the Aristotelian triads, but while black and white were always the termini, the location of other hues varied.[181] Innocent III suggested that green was a median between black, white, and red, which would require a planar spectrum not unlike those found in computer illustration programs. Even establishing opposite pairs (as with modern complementary colours red/green and purple/yellow) is linguistically difficult. For example, Old French *bloi* meant both blonde and pale blue and *sinople* was both red and green, implying that such colours were considered comparable instead of contrasting, while English *pink* meant *yellow* until the seventeenth century.[182] Dye pigments introduce further difficulties: the term 'scarlet', for example, could mean 'red', the colourfast red dye obtained from the expensive *kermes* insect, or the fine woollen cloth that was usually dyed with *kermes* (but was also available in various other colours or even undyed).[183] By the fourteenth century 'scarlet' generally meant 'red', but this conflation of colour, cloth, and dye was not

[179] Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 74 and 81.
[180] Woolgar, p. 156. Woolgar describes an argument that the seven basic colours are always red, yellow, green, blue, black, white, and brown (p. 158), but notes that twelfth- and thirteenth-century France regularly used only six colours: yellow, red, green, blue, brown-black, and white (p. 157). A recent study by Daniel L. Everett, 'Cultural Constrains on Grammar and Cognition in Pirahã: Another Look at the Design Features of Human Language', in *Current Anthropology*, 46 (2005), 621-646, argues that the Pirahã language, indigenous to the Brazilian Amazon, lacks colour terms beyond 'light' and 'dark'. This challenges concepts of a 'natural' spectrum of colours, a notion also confronted by Pastoureau's discussion of colours in antiquity (*Blue*, p. 81). However, Everett's claims have not been well received by the linguistic community.
[181] Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 71; Pleij, pp. 6 and 85.
[182] Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 30; Alan Hindley, Frederick W. Langley, and Brian J. Levy, *Old French-English Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 81-82 and 556; Laura Wright, 'On Some Middle English Colour Terms, Including Pink', in *Studies in Middle English Forms and Meanings*, ed. by Gabriella Mazzon (New York: Lang, 2007), 57-72 (p. 62).
[183] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder, 'Glossary', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder, 251-7 (p. 255); Scott, *Medieval Dress,* p. 85; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', pp. 8-9; Monica L. Wright, 'Dress for Success', p. 8.

uncommon, indicative of medieval colour ambiguity.[184] It is only with Newtonian optics informing modern colour theory that complementary colours developed, with red, yellow, and blue becoming the 'primary' triad and black and white demoted to 'shades'. Such distinctions were alien to medieval minds.

Hue was not the only aspect important to medieval colour interpretations. Equally significant were brightness, saturation, purity, and lustre.[185] A colour's shininess was particularly significant due to the Aristotelian belief that objects emitted light.[186] Philosophers, scientists, and theologians even argued whether colour could be separated from light, which foreshadows modern conceptions; however, modern colour theory also draws a distinction between pigment-based and light-based colours.[187] Further, since light was divine, the shinier the object the better. When the colours faded, so did its divinity.[188]

This divinity was related directly to wealth due to the expense of colourfast dyes.[189] In the fourteenth century new dyeing ingredients and processes stabilised and fastened blue and black dyes. [190] Red was already available cheaply in madder and colourfast in expensive scarlet, but with the introduction of indigo a colourfast blue became usable in illuminations and costume.[191] Colourfastness required imported, expensive, or large amounts of dye, [192] and there is a consistent belief that

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[184] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 90. Monica L. Wright notes that *porpre* (purple) experienced a similar linguistic journey ('Dress for Success', p. 15).

[185] Désirée G. Koslin, 'Value-Added Stuffs and Shifts in Meaning: An Overview and Case Study of Medieval Textile Paradigms', in *Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress*, ed. by Désirée G. Koslin and Janet E. Snyder, 233-49 (p. 235); Woolgar, p. 157

[186] Pastoureau, *Noir*, pp. 28-29; Woolgar, pp. 1, 150, 157, and 159.

[187] Woolgar, pp. 150 and 155. This modern distinction is excluded from this study by the focus on textile colours.

[188] Pleij, p. 72; Woolgar, p. 150. Though liturgical colours are widely irrelevant to the Arthurian stories examined in this thesis, ecclesiastical discussions emphasise colour's importance. In the twelfth century Bernard de Clairvaux and Pierre le Vénérable, abbot of Cluny, argued whether black or white was more appropriate for monks. Pierre believed wearing white (the colour of the resurrection) was prideful; Bernard replied that white was pure, virtuous, and innocent, and black the colour of death and the Devil (Pastoureau, *Noir*, p. 66). Notably, only the spectrum's terminals (black and white) were considered appropriate for clerical orders: their philosophy was 'if colorfulness [in clothing] had been God's intention, he would have created sheep in a range of fashionable hues' (Pleij, p. 68).

[189] Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 8.

[190] Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 62 and 85-6;

[191] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Koslin and Snyder, 'Glossary', p. 255.

[192] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; John H. Munro, 'The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendour', in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson*, ed. by N.B. Harte and K.G. Ponting (London: Heinemann, 1983), 13-70 (p. 13); Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour,' p. 8; Monica L. Wright, 'Dress for Success', p. 15.

this cost kept medieval lower classes dressing dully.[193] Yet many plant-based medieval dyes were readily available, such as madder (red), weld (yellow), and woad (blue).[194] When fixed properly these plants yielded bright lasting colours,[195] but faded faster than expensive scarlet and indigo. Cloth's colourfastness—and thus its divinity and prestige—was simply a matter of cost.

As part of the main Aristotelian triad and a luxury dye, red was used in clothes by popes, kings, and in the imperial mantle, which added further prestige to the already high cost of *kermes*.[196] In the thirteenth century its popularity was challenged by blue, possibly because red and blue dyers, only allowed to specialise in one colour, were bitter rivals.[197] The thirteenth century also saw many antagonistic red knights in literature, which may have arisen from vague associations of red with blood or erotic (improper, uncourtly, brutish) love. [198] Red literary knights fell out of favour by the fourteenth century, possibly due to stronger associations of red with positive Arthurian knights such as Gawain and Perceval.[199] At the same time, due to its historical use literary red remained a morally indefinite colour.

Yellow and orange were less confusing. Easily attainable from cheap weld, with no expensive dye cognate like madder/scarlet and woad/indigo, yellow was a bright colour suitable for the lowest servants and the poor; when combined with green or red it could signify a fool or social undesirable.[200] Orange, the result of mixing red and yellow, invited even worse negative responses as blending colours was avoided due to alchemical similarities; such negative associations may have informed stereotypes involving red hair (for example, Judas Iscariot was commonly

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[193] Supported by Eagan, p. 28, and Pleij, p. 20.

[194] Referenced in Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Former Age', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 650-1 (l. 17).

[195] Pleij, p. 20, argues that cheaper dyes 'wash out' in rain-showers. This ignores the availability of free mordants in the form of urine as well as the fact that impermanent dyes would not be worth the labour required.

[196] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 57. In 1340, Parisian doctors of canon law were allowed red clothes, presumably scarlet, as an honour (see Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 110).

[197] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 64, and *Noir*, p. 90.

[198] Beckman, p. 79; Bonser, p. 195; Pastoureau, *Blue,* p. 59, and *Noir*, p. 73.

[199] Gerard J. Brault, *Early Blazon: Heraldic Terminology in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries with Specific Reference to Arthurian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 33; Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 59-60.

[200] Mellinkoff, p. 55; Pleij, p. 78. Mellinkoff's work is almost entirely concerned with the use of red and yellow as social markers in late-medieval art.

depicted with red hair).[201] Conversely, as an item of wealth gold was viewed positively, regardless of whether it was red- or yellow-gold. It was only in heraldry, where yellow may represent gold, that yellow could feign prestige.

Blue was uncommon until the twelfth century due to difficulties in producing a permanent vibrant tone.[202] However, at the end of the twelfth century technological innovations made blue usable in illuminations and stained glass. Illuminators abandoned the red/green duality of earlier miniatures and embraced red and blue, a standard which lasted into the fifteenth century. By the thirteenth century, new dyeing processes introduced a colourfast blue made from expensive indigo. Already prized on the page, blue entered into worn culture.

Previously ignored even in theology, blue shifted the meanings of all colours within the medieval spectrum. Blue was everywhere, associated with significant figures of religion, politics, and culture (including Saint Louis, the Virgin Mary, the king of France, and King Arthur), and its rivalry with red was cemented as blue became the colour of lay royalty, opposing imperial and papal reds. By the mid-fourteenth century, blue was appearing in literature: Machaut considered it the purest colour, and Froissart composed a 'Dit dou Bleu Chevalier' and called a blue crown 'la couronne de loyauté' in his 'Cour de May'.[203] Symbolically, though some argued that blue stood for chastity due to its associations with the Virgin Mary,[204] overall the colour is merely positive, in literary knights representative of positive masculine socio-political or religious virtues. Always faithful, loyal, and brave, they were perfect knights.

Unlike blue, green was only common, never popular.[205] Like orange, its mixed nature (blue and yellow) made its pigment questionable; though green was used in manuscripts, the pigments used were usually from naturally green sources.[206] Even so, once blue pigments were introduced green fell into disuse; furthermore,

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[201] Pleij, p. 81; Woolgar, *Senses*, p. 160.

[202] This section on blue and green is indebted to the work *Blue* by Pastoureau, particularly pages 13, 32, 37, 41, 49, 52, 59-72, and 80.

[203] Jean Froissart, 'Cour de May', in *Oeuvres de Froissart: Poésies*, vol. 3, ed. by Auguste Scheler (Brussels: Victor Devaux, 1872), 1-51 (ll. 464-5), and 'Dit dou Bleu Chevalier', in *Jean Froissart: 'Dit' et 'Débats',* ed. by Anthime Fourrier, 155-70; Guillaume de Machaut, *La Prise d'Alexandrie*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer (New York: Routledge, 2002), ll. 361-2; Newton, p. 46.

[204] Beckman, p. 71.

[205] Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, p. 71; Pleij, p. 85; Woolgar, pp. 156-7.

[206] Woolgar, p. 160.

divisions and rivalries amongst dyers made greens less common in cloth. Green appeared in all of nature, but by the fourteenth century it was not popular in civilisation.

Green received some attention in theological debates on nature's goodness (as God's creation) or immorality (corrupted by sin).[207] Nature's mutability was an element of fortune, its unpredictability exempt from the good/evil binary and affecting every aspect of pre-industrial life. Thus green was often used symbolically for those external to society, as foreign to civilisation as untamed nature: a fairy colour that, combined with yellow, could suggest madness.[208] Nonetheless, green had advocates. In the eleventh and twelfth century, members of the Schola Medica Salernitana placed green at the spectrum's centre for the sake of its beauty (influencing Chrétien de Troyes' *Érec et Énide*), while in the fourteenth century a sermon concerning heaven's gates invoked green positively, for these gates' green jasper was for comfort and delight.[209] Moreover, as a traditional hunter's colour, green was also appropriate for civilised people when interacting with nature.[210] Yet green remained ambivalent: literary green knights of the twelfth and thirteenth century were often youths whose impudence or amorousness upset courtly (civilised) order.[211] Good, evil, or ambivalent, Arthurian versions of the literary green knight included Tristan and Sagremor.[212] In the fourteenth century, green remained ambiguous. Neither positive nor negative, it was as changeable as nature.

Two-thirds of the Aristotelian primaries, white and black were divided into 'shining' (positive) and 'matte' (negative) in Classical Latin.[213] In the Middle Ages, ecclesiastics amplified the colours' contrasts via Genesis, with white as light and black as dark. Shining white took precedence with a lacklustre black in opposition, a worldly negative against a heavenly positive. This white was worthy to be the paramount colour: saints and heavens' citizens were depicted as white in body and

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[207] Pleij, p. 84.
[208] Hulbert, p. 440; Mellinkoff, p. 55; Pleij, p. 80.
[209] Woolgar, pp. 156-7 and 170.
[210] Crane, *Performance*, p. 172.
[211] Pleij, p. 84.
[212] Pleij, p. 80.
[213] Woolgar, p. 162. The following discussion of black, white, and brown is strongly informed by Pastoureau's *Blue*, particularly pages 36, 85-6 and 96-7; *Noir*, particularly pages 24, 28-9, 39, 65-6, and 90; and *L'Ours*, particularly pages 172-3.

dress, and it represented silver in heraldry.[214] In secular romance, white suggested a holy love purer than physical attraction, and as a supernatural shade it was associated with the fairy Otherworld.[215] Overall, white was interpreted positively.

Black was negatively viewed, possibly due to primal responses to darkness. Further, it was often elided with brown, a mixture that combined the negatives red and black. [216] However, in both French and English 'brun' (brown; more loosely, dark coloured) was tempered by its alternate use to describe shining metals. As sombre colours, black and brown were also readily adopted by ecclesiastical orders;[217] their colours were presumably drawn not from expensive pigments but from undyed, naturally-dark wool. Black was otherwise disliked in clothing for its tendency to fade until the fourteenth century, when the dying innovations that popularised blue also created rich, lasting blacks. Black as well as red opposed blue, a rivalry that supported black's rising popularity. This deep, lasting black was divorced from brown, and the fifteenth century transformed black into the colour of princes and kings, whether in cloth or in the deep black of sable fur.

Yet before this lasting black, neither white nor black were necessarily 'pure' in textiles. White was often synonymous with undyed or waiting to be dyed, and undyed cloth ranged from pure white and cream to greys, light brown, and pale yellows.[218] Black, also, could be drawn from wool; however, these wools generally are a brown-black mixture, affirming the colours' elisions. The existence of these undyed garments may suggest further interpretations of the colours: those wearing dyeless white or black may be ascetic, incomplete, unsullied, or unrefined, like their cloth.

These many qualities associated with colours demonstrate that medieval minds perceived colours conceptually and categorically with certain meanings based on both hue and quality. Divided initially by Aristotelian theory, colours developed context-specific secular and religious qualities, and were viewed positively and

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[214] Woolgar, p. 162.
[215] Beckman, p. 72; Hulbert, p. 458.
[216] Woolgar, p. 160.
[217] *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* (*DMF*), Nancy-Université <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>, 'brun, adj.'; *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*), University of Michigan <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/ m/med/>, 'brŏun (adj.)'. These apparently conflicting definitions also exist in Latin, as noted by Domino du Cange, 'Brunus', in *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Niort: L. Favre, 1883-1887) <http://ducange. enc.sorbonne.fr/BRUNUS>.
[218] Newton, p. 17; Woolgar, p. 163.

negatively. Shininess was desired; mixing avoided. With changing dye processes, colours were repositioned across the spectrum, developing new rivals. Yet medieval colours invite comparisons where modern theory sees contrasts. The interpretations of colour in our narratives must appreciate the range of medieval colour qualities, and acknowledge that their ambiguous nature can confuse or obscure a garment's interpretation.

Conclusion: The Framework

By establishing and explicating theoretical backgrounds and social histories of our narratives, illuminated manuscripts, and focal points of costume and colour, this chapter creates a foundation that acts as reference and guideline to support the rest of the thesis. The continuing discussion examines five different aspects of costume within the narratives and illuminations. First, I inspect how men's courtly clothes may be used to distinguish, coalesce, or disguise characters, and how such ambiguity alters the narrative. Building on intentional disguises, this is followed by examining the use of practical arms and armour in tournaments' theatricality to raise awareness of tensions between 'war' and 'game'. Following this is an assessment of heraldry, which differentiates, combines, or even erases characters' identities, demolishes distinctions between war and game, and politicizes portrayal through its intrinsic symbolism. Analyses of court and tournament are then further developed by investigating ladies' role in costume and display. Finally, the exchange of wearable gifts between knights and ladies unites the previous discussions by exposing the relationship of economics, bond-building, romance, and symbolism that may be invoked by items of costume.

To conclude, this chapter established the social, historical, literary, artistic, and theoretical backgrounds necessary for the rest of thesis, which focuses on imaginary recreations of physical objects within two Arthurian narratives and related illuminations. Through exploring 'intangible' items in the specific, limited contexts of these written and illustrated narratives, this thesis intends to determine the multiple ways in which costume can change identity and affect interpersonal relations, while also yielding a greater understanding of the narratives discussed.

Chapter 2: Colouring the Costumed Courtier

Because costume is comprised of worn objects and ever-present on the body, it helps form and becomes part of gestures. Its cut and colour can emphasise certain traits, recontextualise or modify behaviour by supporting or conflicting with an action's intent, and alter perceptions of its wearer's character.[1] This chapter considers how the garments and colours of knights in our narratives and their behaviour unite to transform the audience's understanding of the characters and plot. Specifically, the objects studied in this chapter are those worn or discussed outwith combative situations, such as items for daily life and specialised courtly needs. This is a somewhat artificial distinction, since items such as surcoats were similar or even identical to everyday items like cotes and doublets.[2] Though surcoats were worn over armour, they are suitable to address in this chapter in conjunction with cotes as cloth-based items that transition between the interior and exterior spheres of life.

Such transitional areas are predominant when discussing literary colour and costume. The intersection of characters' behaviour and worn display is particularly gnarly. These intricacies are more easily comprehended if the author gives the characters a sense of agency in their modes of dress, but without such cues it is questionable whether characters are consciously complicating matters by choosing (in)appropriate dress. In *Meliador*, for example, the adoption of Meliador's colours and his implementation of a mercantile disguise are depicted as actions taken by Meliador for explicit reasons. However, in *Gawain* the titular knight makes specific choices with uncertain intent. In both cases, these depictions are interpretable as deceptions. Though not overt, such readings are validated by characters' actions and narrators' attention to changes in and responses to fourteenth-century fashion. Thus, in examining knights' courtly garments, this chapter shall primarily focus on how colour in *Meliador* and ambiguous fashion in *Gawain* are used in potential deceptions that further the *ordenance* of *Meliador* and mediate the social tensions of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*

Although general trends in fashion in the period covered by this study were discussed in Chapter 1, a closer examination of men's apparel is warranted before

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[1] Schwarz, p. 40.
[2] Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Caroline Beamish (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 67.

approaching the images and narratives. Only with a solid foundation in the wider trends is it possible to discuss the manipulation of these. While the shape of noblemen's clothes changed drastically between 1350 and 1400, the layers remained the same, consisting of an undershirt that shielded richer outer pieces from sweat; a primary garment (such as a tunic, cote, or doublet); an overgarment (surcoat, supertunic, houpeland); and on colder days a cloak, mantle, or cape; hose, shoes, hoods and hats finished the outfit.[3] Together, these clothes were considered a 'robe' (a complete outfit), and more layers could signify greater status.[4] Though the exact differences between, for example, a loose surcoat and a supertunic are no longer clear, the many terms used (often within the same record) demonstrate the wealth of apparel available.

In particular, cotes and surcoats varied in shape and name throughout the fourteenth century. In the middle of the century the everyday cote was indistinguishable from its military twin: tight and tailored with a defined waist, fitted sleeves, and short hem, decorated with a low-slung belt that often suspended a suggestively-placed dagger from the hip.[5] Sometimes called a *jupon* or *jaquet*, this style was connected with young nobility; as this group aged their once-transgressive clothes became associated with knightly valour and dignity.[6] In the 1360s chests

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[3] Blanc, pp. 161-2; Newton, p. 28; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', pp. 224-5; Veale, p. 2. Staniland elaborates on the most likely fabrics for these, with linen often for closer layers and wool for outer layers, while Newton notes that these layers were particularly indicative of the 1340s in England, France, and Italy.

[4] Blanc, p. 162; Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 248; Newton, p. 4; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 136; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 226. The different parts of such robes are listed in the 1387 *Argenterie* of Charles VI (Paris, Archives nationale, KK 18, fols. 30-30v). The term shifted in the mid-fifteenth century, when the houpeland was replaced with a close-fitting, dagless item that was designated 'robe' (Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 136). Throughout this discussion, I will not be using 'robe' in either historic sense; instead, it shall refer to a long, loose garment in the modern sense of the word.

[5] Blanc, pp. 163-5; Denny-Brown, p. 224. Blanc also notes an extant fourteenth-century cote originally owned by Charles de Blois, described by Newton as a 'padded doublet' (p. 108), now held at the Musée des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs de Lyon and visible on the museum's website (Pascale Le Cacheux and Véronique Rouanet with Vincent Cros, *Musée des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs* (2007) <http://www.musee.des.tissus.com>). Possibly intended to fit over a quilted, plate-reinforced *pourpoint* (a military garment), this cote was made from thirty-two separate pieces of white and gold silk brocade and fastened with thirty-two buttons (p. 165). Craymer, p. 55, argues that such clothes were an invention of the late fourteenth century but is hindered by her sources. Though she cites Newton, Newton's work is specifically limited to the years 1340 to 1365, which explicates that this period was the heyday of such tight cotes.

[6] Andrew Ayton, 'Arms, Armour, and Horses', in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. by Maurice Keen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 186-208 (p. 200); Blanc, p. 161; Craymer, p. 50; Van Buren, p. 11.

swelled sensationally with padding, but towards the end of the century garments loosened. Short clothes became the wear of the gallant, long ones the preserve of the elderly, wise, and kingly.[7] However, with the growing popularity of the loose, gathered houpeland and the introduction of the bag sleeve around 1400,[8] fashion no longer divided forward-looking and conventional into 'tight and short' versus 'long and loose'.

In the fourteenth century conservative outrage centred on new form-fitting shapes. Although increasing use of plate armour may have encouraged shorter cotes,[9] this potential relationship was not considered by contemporary critics. Instead, they decried these minimal garments' excesses, as discussed in Chapter 1. Even as the cote loosened as the century progressed, their shaped parts invited further censure, for they fragmented the body in a new, disruptive manner, isolating a body into parts that had once been unified by clothes.[10] Fears of fragmentation found hold in the concurrent innovations in colour and decorative cuts. While *mi-parti* (particolour), stripes, and checks disrupted and divided bodies, such transgressive patterns were abandoned by the 1360s, relegated to household liveries, entertainers' clothes, and heraldic attire as they acquired negative social connotations.[11] The lasting fourteenth-century decorative innovation was not in colour but in how garments may be cut. For example, dagging split hems into repeating designs that varied from simple triangles to elaborate foliations.[12] These last were the epitome of fine design, skilled tailoring, and conspicuous consumption, but all dagging blurred bodies' borders and challenged physical unity.

These garments were further embellished with decorations introduced in earlier centuries, such as elaborate weaving, embroidery, and attached ornaments. Similar terms are used for woven and embroidered decorations, but the fabric base often reveals the probable decorative technique: while velvet was a particularly plush background for embroidery, slicker silks and damasks were more likely to be

[7] Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 28.
[8] Blanc, p. 167.
[9] Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 28.
[10] Denny-Brown, p. 226.
[11] Mellinkoff, pp. 11-2 and 18; Pastoureau, *Devil's Cloth*, pp. 1-35.
[12] Denny-Brown, p. 227; Mellinkoff, p. 10; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, pp. 108 and 117.

decorated through woven designs.[13] Both stitched and appliquéd, embroidery survives primarily in ecclesiastical attire, but records demonstrate that it was employed secularly for both genders.[14] Designs were often augmented by strategically-placed pearls and stamped precious-metal pendants (*bezanets*), jewels in ornamental settings, and other objects.[15] Limited only by imagination and ability, recorded embroidery and woven motifs include roses, quatrefoils, and other flowers, fruit and various foliage, knots, heraldic designs, mottos, beasts and birds, and rondels, often with another motif inside the rondel's circle.[16] Requiring lengthy and arduous labour, decorated fabrics were often used for important social and political events such as royal churchings, betrothals, weddings, coronations, and tournaments.[17] Motifs could also be humorous, as with a purple velvet outfit for Philippa of Hainaut's churching in 1330: lined with sumptuous miniver, it was also embroidered with gold squirrels.[18] However, embroidery was not limited to clothing, and on occasions that required extravagant display it was to be found even on equestrian armaments and saddles.[19]

In the fourteenth century, a garment's cost and prestige expanded beyond how much cloth was involved in construction to include how much cloth was wasted in elaborate fitting and extraneous cuts.[20] The tight, revolutionary apparel and *mi-parti* of the 1350s were considered outdated by the 1360s, when cotes started to puff and then loosen. Dagging, decorations, and fragmented construction survived, and by the end of the century these were co-opted by the newly-popular houpeland. By 1400, fashion embraced both the loose attire of the previous centuries and the changes of the 1350s by wasting and consuming cloth in voluminous pieced constructions.

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[13] Monnas, p. 4; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 10.
[14] Iris Brooke, *English Costume of the Later Middle Ages: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (London: A. and C. Black, 1935), p. 49; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', pp. 232-3.
[15] Newton, pp. 25 and 27; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', pp. 15-18.
[16] Brooke, p. 43; Crane, *Performance*, p. 10; Koslin, pp. 239-40; Monnas, p. 10; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 228; Juliet Vale, p. 64.
[17] Brooke 51; Monnas, p. 10; Juliet Vale, p. 64.
[18] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 97.
[19] Juliet Barker, *The Tournament in England: 1100-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), p. 175; Brooke, p. 47.
[20] Lachaud, 'Dress and Social Status', p. 106, discusses the relationship between cloth, economics, and social status.

Illuminating Courtly Display

Despite being composed in the 1380s, MS fr. 338 clearly displays the fashions that gained popularity between 1350 and 1370. With knights in tight, short tunics with cinched waists and puffed chests, there is little difference in the shape of their surcoats over armour and the everyday cote [fig. 9]. Their hose are also tight (their calves shaded by the illuminator) and their toes have long pikes. There is little variance in these garments amongst the knights, whether they are armed or dressed for court. The uniformity of MS fr. 338 makes the array found in MS fr. 118, from around 1400, all the more remarkable. While knights still have rounded chests, their skirts are longer and looser, and gentlemen also wear houpelands [fig. 10]. Unlike earlier tight fashions, houpelands seem to be appropriate for all ages; however, the shortness of the leftmost courtier's *hainselin* (the short houpeland) in figure 11 suggests either youth or extravagance. In comparison with this courtier, the kneeling knight's highly-dagged surcoat seems subdued. As the kneeling knight is advocating that the lady behind him (a false Guinevere) is the true queen, the courtiers' garments may be commentary on Arthur's foolish naiveté and the kneeling knight's apparent earnestness.

Other manuscripts from around 1400 depict similarly disparate styles coexisting, while some demonstrate the ways in which clothes could be modified. A surcoat defined by a distinct waist and rounded chest could have different skirts, sleeves, and decorations [fig. 12]. Although illuminations have difficulty in portraying different fabrics, embroidery, and weaves, a number of garments were still portrayed.

These manuscripts do not depict contemporary apparel for kings. The majority of kings have crowns, long gowns, and occasionally cloaks, a stylistic choice that gained prominence in the fourteenth century.[21] These cloaks may be front-clasped or draped, though the vast majority are side-opening which allowed access to a sword [figs. 13 and 14].[22] Many of these have explicit fur linings or ermine shoulder-capes (camails) that emphasise the richness of the garment [figs. 13

[21] Van Buren, p. 17.
[22] Newton, p. 49.

and 15]. Though length of hair varies, each king has a forked beard.[23] Overall, the closer the illumination is to 1425, the longer the beard. This contrasts with contemporaneous fashion. While long beards were popular amongst courtly ranks in the 1340s, by 1400 beards were close-cut if not completely absent.[24] As beards became increasingly outdated, illuminated kings' beards grew impressively longer. Hair length was less varied and usually short; however, by the late 1300s cropped hair was derided for associations with peasantry.[25] Instead, the fashionable courtier wore his hair either puffed below the ears or shoulder-length and wavy [figs. 10 and 13].[26]

Hair was enhanced by hats and hoods. Hats entered into popularity in the late 1340s, while hoods were impractically small in the 1350s.[27] By the late 1360s, hoods were exaggerated by long thin liripipes [worn in fig. 16 by a harpist in particolour hose].[28] By the 1400s, hoods had transformed into a type of hat called a 'chaperon'. In these, the face-opening was rolled and placed around the head, allowing the gorget to hang; the liripipe either hung or was wound about the head [figs. 17, 18, and 19; note particularly Gauvain's fallen hood in fig. 17].[29]

These manuscripts demonstrate palpable changes in costume from 1380 to 1400. The mixture evidenced around 1400 suggests that changes happened progressively and overlapped with older styles, with attempts to portray *avant-garde* clothes [fig. 11] as well as a sense of archaism and historicisation [fig. 14]. Because of this, it is difficult to determine when certain garments were introduced, especially as they may have appeared socially before entering an illuminator's repertoire. At the same time, attention was still given to the different varieties of garments available, and suggests a range of items that would have been familiar to the audience of the illuminations and narratives.

[23] While the majority of figures cited have kings with short hair, figures 10 and 14 have long hair; these may have been overpainted (see Appendix B).
[24] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 98.
[25] Mellinkoff, p. 190.
[26] Van Buren, p. 94.
[27] Newton, pp. 35 and 38.
[28] Newton, p. 53.
[29] As the fifteenth century progressed, the rolled opening of the chaperon transformed into a padded ring meant only to be worn as a hat. The gorget and liripipe were sewn on.

Perceptions of Colour in *Meliador*

The focus on colour in *Meliador* emphasises its identificatory importance; as these colours are generally worn, their significance increases the consequence of the few garments that are also mentioned. Indeed, the role of display is invoked by the second rule of the tournament series, given when the series is announced. While the first rule is that participating knights may have only one squire attending them during the quest, the second commands that they cannot reveal their identity.[30] Without familial heraldry and with face-covering helms, anonymity is not a difficult task for a knight;[31] anonymous, they may prove their natural worth. Anonymous knights were already an Arthurian topos in the twelfth century, and such disguises filtered into fourteenth-century tournaments.[32] Yet true anonymity is impractical, for knights' deeds need to be narrated, discussed and recorded, and competitors and winners must somehow be distinguished; this was the point of the coat of arms and the literary tradition of knights introducing themselves to enemies (which coexisted with anonymous knights).[33] While *Meliador* nominally rejects such identification, the narrative replaces it with the 'anonymous appellations' adopted by the two primary knights, Meliador and Agamanor: they are identified by 'colournyms', not eponyms.

These colours are employed by the narrator, the ladies, and other knights to identify Meliador and Agamanor through a 'déguisement publicitaire'.[34] As the Blue and Red Knights respectively, Meliador and Agamanor create their knightly reputations anonymously, their public identities revolving around their colours for lack of known personal names. As the narrator calls them by both name and coloured epithet, the audience is suspended between the tournament's observers, who refer to

[30] *Meliador*, ll. 2897-8. Barker relates thirteenth-century tournament statutes where competitors' armed assistants were limited to three maximum (p. 57).
[31] Bruckner, p. 71; Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.7; Woolgar, p. 181.
[32] Pastoureau, *Noir*, p. 73; Twycross and Carpenter, p. 112; Jessie L. Weston, 'The Three Days' Tournament', *Modern Language Notes*, 18 (1903), 257-8 (p. 257). For further discussion of performance in tournaments, see Chapters 3 and 4.
[33] Ramón Llull, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, trans. by William Caxton, ed. by Alfred T. P. Byles (London: Early English Text Society, 1926), p. 88. Byles' edition of Llull has been used because his introduction compares the original work with Caxton's English and Gilbert de la Haye's Scots translations.
[34] Florence Bouchet, 'Rhétorique de l'héraldique dans le roman arthurien tardif: Le *Meliador* de Froissart et le *Livre de Cuer d'Amours espris* de René d'Anjou', *Romania*, 116 (1998), 239-55 (p. 241). For example, Agamanor and Meliador are discussed via colour by Florée and Hermondine (*Meliador*, ll. 16030-2) and Phenonée (ll. 19225-32); King Hermont discusses these knights by colour and shields (ll. 16236-51).

the knights by colour, and the knights' squires and intimates, who know them by name. This dual usage focuses the narrative on Meliador and Agamanor, distinguishing them from the multitude of knights.[35]

Meliador and Agamanor's colours are so emphasised by the narrative that their attire seems to disappear beneath their tints. 'Parures' (finery or adornments) are essential to a knight's outfit and Meliador never competes without his, but in *Meliador* knights' cloth items are generally absorbed into this term.[36] However, the narrator is often descriptively vague, and this lack of precision serves to emphasise the garments that are more closely discussed. Such emphasis is most obvious when Meliador has won the tournament-series. Lansonnés, his squire, states that the ensuing feast will exalt Meliador more than if he wore a solid gold cloak.[37] Presenting the feast as both reward for and celebration of Meliador's triumph, this public display of glorification trumps even the richest garment conceivable: he is more honoured than if he were literally draped head-to-toe in gold. While Meliador's reward is not material, it is framed sartorially. Even the most elaborate personal garment cannot trump this social situation. There is little doubt that Froissart understood the power and limits of costume and display.

It is Meliador's introduction that establishes the role of colours and costume in the narrative, for he instructs Lansonnés to order:

> Un bleu harnois sans riens oster,
> Hyaume et targe, espée et lance,
> Feras tu faire a me samblance.
> Mais tu metteras en me targe
> Un soleil d'or, de tant te carge.
> Pour l'amour de la blewe dame
> Serai li bleus errans, par m'ame.[38]

This blue lady is Hermondine, dubbed such in the tournament-quest announcement.[39] Meliador's future marriage to Hermondine and Scottish kingship has already been foreshadowed in his introduction, where the only item described is the gold circlet

[35] Bruckner, pp. 60-1.
[36] *DMF*, 'parure, subst. fém.'; *Meliador*, l. 14596.
[37] *Meliador*, ll. 29753-5, states 'on fera plus grant feste | que dont que vous euissiés mis | un mantiel qui fust d'or massis'.
[38] Ll. 3289-95. 'A blue set of equipment with nothing missing | helmet and shield, sword and lance | you will make them to suit me. | But you will put on my shield | a golden sun, that is what I charge you with. | For the love of the blue lady | I will be the blue knight errant, by my soul.'
[39] L. 2916.

upon his bare head.[40] This sign of *ordenance* is emphasised by Meliador's new colours, chosen for the love that leads him to adopt the knight-errant status demanded by the quest. Throughout the rest of the narrative, he is defined by this choice, known as the 'li bleus chevaliers' and 'chevalier au soleil d'or'.[41]

Blue knights were a fourteenth-century literary phenomenon associated with the rise of blue as a pigment and prestige colour. Becoming the colour of French royalty and the Virgin Mary, blue was worn by loyal, brave, and devoted literary knights.[42] These connections were employed consciously by Froissart, who around 1360 wrote into his 'Cour de May' a 'couronne bleue, | la couronne de loyauté'.[43] Adopting blue is portrayed as a conscious decision for Meliador, and in his orders to Lansonnés he acknowledges that by changing his colours he adopts a new purpose: to win Hermondine and the tournament-series.[44] His orders act as a declaration to the audience and a personal mandate. Meliador must fulfil his purpose and his colours by demonstrating loyalty to Hermondine and honouring her with his actions. Therefore, his adopted identity as the Blue Knight is formulated around his (potential) relationship with Hermondine: he would not be the Blue Knight without her. Indeed, he is so fully absorbed by this identity that ladies at tournaments observe that his garments in no way betray his rank, character, or physical appearance.[45] Meliador is severed from his origin as the son of the Duke of Cornwall and his associated privileges. Without his name and title, Meliador can prove his inherent worth through armed action as the Blue Knight. By proving his right to wear blue through his prowess, Meliador will become—or be revealed as—the worthiest knight for Hermondine. He will have shown his true colours.

Earned as the Blue Knight, Meliador's merit becomes so important that his name does not matter. When Hermondine discovers his identity, he is revealed as the Blue Knight, defeater of her unwanted suitor Camel de Camois, not as Meliador.[46]

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[40] *Meliador*, ll. 2728-30.
[41] This is emphasised once when Meliador's colours are described as 'ossi bleus qu'une violette' (l. 11123).
[42] Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 59-60.
[43] 'Cour de May', ll. 464-5; Newton, p. 46.
[44] *Meliador*, ll. 464-5. Barthes, in *Fashion*, suggests that costume changes require reciprocity, whereby 'a variation in clothing...produces a variation in character; conversely, the variation in character necessitates a variation in clothing' (p. 20).
[45] *Meliador*, ll. 7585-7.
[46] Ll. 14452-72.

As his blue display was chosen in order to honour Hermondine, this is thematically appropriate. His name and social status do not actually matter within the narrative, and the audience would not be concerned about impropriety for they already know that Meliador is of noble stock. Anxieties concerning unseemly relationships are already known to be irrelevant. Therefore, it is acceptable for Meliador's new identity to supersede his noble origins, for it is his deeds within the tournament-series that are important.

Meliador's colours, chosen for anonymity, thus become Meliador's identity in the narrative. In a reversal of the original quest-declaration which framed Hermondine as the Blue Lady, at the end Meliador is declared by name as the Blue Knight triumphant, son of the Duke of Cornwall and winner of the tournaments and Hermondine.[47] His name, origins, and colour are publicly united into one complete identity, and this declaration signals that Meliador has proven his worth in prowess, courtliness, and chivalry without his natal privileges. With no more to prove and his identity unified and publicly acknowledged, Meliador may retire from his bachelor status into a role like that of Kings Arthur and Hermont.

Conversely, Agamanor is not depicted choosing his anonymous colours for the tournament quest. Instead, Agamanor is 'le chevalier rouge' nine lines before he is even named.[48] Further, while Meliador's colours are part of his purpose, the delineation between Agamanor and his coloured clothes is far more distinct. He is described as wearing a 'rouge gonne' as well as a 'cote vermeille', both indicating his surcoat.[49] The use of 'gonne' suggests that it is not a tight cote of the 1350s, as in figure 9, but looser garments, be they earlier or later [fig. 12]. At the same time, Agamanor's colour is continuously emphasised. For example, though Agamanor wears a 'singlaton' when disarmed, he is welcomed as the 'chevaliers as armes vermeilles'.[50] Named for the silk brocade from which it was made, the *singlaton* is a rich garment that fits Agamanor's social status.[51] However, by being greeted as the Red Knight his lady-hosts assert that Agamanor must act within the confines of the

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[47] *Meliador*, ll. 29819-21.
[48] Ll. 4473 and 4482-3.
[49] Ll. 15980 and 21200. It is notable that the term *scarlet* is never used in *Meliador*, which prefers the less-ambiguous colour terms *rouge* and *vermeil*.
[50] Ll. 22378 and 22392. 'The knight who has red armaments'.
[51] Hindley, Langley, and Levy, p. 124.

tournament series. The focus remains upon his 'anonymous' identity of the Red Knight even when he is unarmed. Though Agamanor wears rich silk as 'li chevaliers parés de rouge' which confirms his nobility, like Meliador his personal identity is obscured by anonymous dress.[52]

Again like Meliador, Agamanor is examined by characters under the title of the Red Knight. These discussions highlight the importance of the relationship between his colours and identity, such as when Phenonée responds to Agamanor's request for her love. Stating that 'vous ... portés rouge gonne | et je ne sçai pas qui vous estes', Phenonée asserts that his colours carry insufficient meaning.[53] Though she knows from his deeds that the Red Knight is a handy swordsman, she does not know his name or country of origin, and thus does not know whether it is suitable for her to love him.[54] This was not the case with Meliador, whose anonymous colours, required by the tournament-quest, are acceptable because he pursues the tournament-prize Hermondine. In contrast, Phenonée is allowed to know the identity of her suitor, but this is not liberating: she *must* know his identity to determine whether she may love him. In this case, Agamanor's unexplained colours combine with Phenonée's lack of knowledge to obscure his identity harmfully.

It is tempting to align Phenonée's hesitation with literary ambivalence towards red knights. In twelfth- and thirteenth-century Arthurian romances red knights were often Otherworldly, evil, or demonic, and those wearing *vermeil* may be menacing despite their nobility.[55] However, in the fourteenth century's reshuffled colour hierarchy, black knights became the more common antagonists. Agamanor's red is not disgraceful or frightening, but instead creates a clear contrast to Meliador's blue. This contrast is artistic and found in multiple Arthurian illuminations, such as with Lancelot (blue) against Perceval (red) [fig. 20]; other images such as Hector des Marés (in blue) defeating Persidés (red) [fig. 21] use red and blue to contrast not simply the knights with one another but the knights with their own heraldry.[56] These illuminations depict chivalric equals in combat, not a social superior against an

[52] *Meliador*, l. 22130. 'The knight adorned richly in red.'
[53] Ll. 22465-6. 'You ... wear a red surcoat | and I do not know who you are.'
[54] Ll. 22461-2 and 24469-70.
[55] Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 59 and 188.
[56] Persidés' red cote is mildly ironic, as his name contains *pers* (blue); intriguingly, the inside of his surcoat appears to be lined in blue, which was common in garments (Van Buren, p. 5) and perhaps intentional by the illuminator.

antagonist. Agamanor's red serves to position him similarly against Meliador, emphasizing the social and literary novelty of Meliador's blue garments. Agamanor is his equal opposite, and Phenonée's concern that Agamanor is an unsuitable social match seems to be disproven by his noble colour and attire.

Phenonée's reticence exists for three reasons which developed from Agamanor's appearance at the second tournament. First, there is a blatant fear of incest, for while admiring the Red Knight's prowess at the second tournament Phenonée expressed concern that he was her brother Meliador. Secondly, even if he is not her brother, she must consider whether loving Agamanor is socially inappropriate. Finally, there is a constant concern that Agamanor may win the tournament-quest and therefore marry Hermondine. Phenonée's worries are whether the match is intrinsically appropriate. If she agrees to love the Red Knight, he must be a social equal. If this social equal is her brother, she is engaging in incest. If he is not her brother, she may still give her love fruitlessly should he win the tournament-quest. In response, Phenonée takes the initiative, deciding to 'enquerir la verité | dou rouge chevalier armé'; upon discovering that he is not her brother, she creates a variant of Agamanor's shield and sends it to him.[57] Through this alteration of Agamanor's heraldic identity, Phenonée may learn his 'true' identity and the plot can progress.

This predicament causes anxiety in Phenonée, but Agamanor and the narrative treat it more lightly. In the scene where Agamanor's suitability is finally revealed, he tells Phenonée that he assumes anonymity to respect the tournament series' demands; however, he is primarily engaging in the tournaments for enjoyment, only 'armés de vermeilles parures' for seeking 'aventures', and would be pleased if he achieved second or even fourth place in the quest.[58] Yet as Agamanor understands that their match is socially appropriate, he seems obtuse as to why Phenonée would require his identity. For the audience this dilemma bears humorous overtones. We do not share Phenonée's concerns because we are already privy to Agamanor's name and origins. Furthermore, we know that everything will turn out as it should, because the narrator has stated

[57] *Meliador*, ll. 19820-1. 'To discover the truth of the [identity of the] red knight under arms'. For further on the shield, see Chapter 4.
[58] Ll. 22565-645, qtd. 22614-5 and paraphrased 22625-6.

Comment sa dame vraiement
La fille au duch de Cornuaille
S'enamoura premiers, sans faille,
Dou chevalier as rouges armes.[59]

While Meliador's plot is straightforward, Agamanor's is amusingly convoluted, but the narrator is explicit that both plots shall eventually resolve according to *ordenance*. Together, these knights demonstrate two different approaches towards predictable outcomes and cultural colour associations. Although they are positive opposites, Agamanor acts as a worthy second of Meliador, Agamanor's colour taking second place to the novel blue, the colour of kings, love, and loyalty.[60]

The artificial anonymity of Meliador and Agamanor's colours are manipulated in two narrative strands that depict Meliador and Agamanor respectively impersonating craftsmen in order to speak with their lady-loves. Both disguises take advantage of the anonymity given by their helms, which obscures their faces when they act in tournaments as the Blue Knight and Red Knight: they do not need masks in their disguises, for their faces are already unknown.[61] By masquerading as craftsmen, these knights' already-complicated identities are altered in potentially uncomfortable ways. Subterfuge outside of socially-acceptable events (maskings, mummings, tournaments) was questionable. Even when customary, disguises could threaten social order if it led a person to reject their social role.[62] For Agamanor's and Meliador's disguises to be acceptable, they must also eventually be discarded. Simultaneously, their disguises may invoke the common and acceptable links between lover, poet, and craftsman.[63]

The potential irregularity of Meliador's disguise is highlighted by a reversal of command. While secondary characters such as Florée manipulate much of *Meliador*'s narrative subtly and discreetly, in this passage Lansonnés is forthright and authoritative as he devises the manner in which Meliador shall access Hermondine:

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[59] *Meliador*, ll. 19799-800. 'How truly his [Lyone's] lady, the duke of Cornwall's daughter, first fell in love without fail with the knight who has red armaments.' For a discussion of Lyone, Phenonée's vassal-knight, see Chapter 4.
[60] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 63.
[61] Twycross and Carpenter, p. 105.
[62] Sponsler, p. 12; Twycross and Carpenter, p. 10.
[63] In turn, this may connect to the use of Wenceslas of Brabant's poetry within the narrative; unfortunately, this line of inquiry is outwith the current study's scope.

...premierement
Il nous fault cangier voirement
Nostre abit, il n'est mies doubte,
Et prendre une ordenance toute
Et l'estat de deux marcheans,
Cotes a plois larges et grans.[64]

Lansonnés' speech demonstrates comfort with economic situations and an understanding of guising that contrasts with Meliador's uncertainty.[65] Meliador needs Lansonnés to teach him how to adopt new habits, imitate a different social estate, and act according to an *ordenance* not his own. Indeed, Lansonnés must help Meliador wear the outfit, fixing the shoulders and tell him to blouse the torso over the belt to produce a puff in the back suitable to a merchant.[66]

By focusing upon new apparel instead of affected mannerisms, their disguise stresses appearance over behaviour. Lansonnés closely details the appropriate attire for a merchant: grand pleated cotes. These 'larges' pleats may be long, wide, or both, a feature not seen in fourteenth-century cotes or earlier garments. However, long and wide pleats were attributes of houpelands [figs. 10, 18, and 22], a style which Froissart had previously discussed in a pastourelle.[67] Yet houpelands seem to be uncommon during the composition of *Meliador*. As Meliador and Lansonnés' clothes are also 'desgisés et noirs', they differ from the prevalent short cotes as well as Meliador's knightly surcoat.[68] As these pleated items are depicted as merchants' apparel, a sort of proto-houpeland may have first gained popularity with mercantile classes before being adopted by the nobility in the last decades of the fourteenth century.

Black clothes were also leading late-fourteenth-century fashion, a point seemingly accented by how Meliador's and Lansonnés' garments contrast with the white wooden coffer of merchandise.[69] This suggests some foresight on Froissart's part, for though black and blue rose to prominence in fashion together, in the fifteenth century black surpassed blue in popularity. Yet black was already kingly in

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[64] *Meliador*, ll. 11932-7. 'First, we must change our dress fully, without a doubt, and assume a manner and condition of two merchants with grand, large, pleated cotes.'
[65] *Meliador,* l. 11944; Heller discusses Lansonnés' economic familiarity (p. 153).
[66] *Meliador*, ll. 12032-8.
[67] Newton, pp. 57-8, 62, and 127-8.
[68] *Meliador*, l. 12024 (qtd.), 'disguising/unusual and dark/black'; *DMF*, 'désguiser, verbe'.
[69] Pastoureau, *Noir*, p. 78.

the mid-fourteenth century; amongst the clothes made for Edward III at the 1344 Round Table tournament was an 'unlined black tunic'.[70] Black disguises were also popular in Arthurian literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where well-known protagonists disguised themselves as black knights.[71] Meliador's and Lansonnés' outfits are not simply disguises: their costumes connect them to Arthurian antecedents, contemporary kings, and mercantile garments, as well as potentially foreshadowing the *avant-garde* fashion of the turn of the fifteenth century.

Their clothes alone are insufficient disguises. Though they now dress as merchants, Lansonnés notes that their hands are too pale and they must darken their skin to 'faire le villain'.[72] Although brown skin was acceptable for warriors, in noble spheres pale skin was highly valued.[73] Lansonnés' insistence that they colour themselves asserts a physical difference between nobility and all others based upon skin-tone, with pale skin the domain of the nobility, and darker skin belonging to social inferiors (who presumably labour more often out-of-doors). Unsurprisingly, dark skin in images is often a negative sign.[74] By insinuating that the rising mercantile class has darker skin, Lansonnés suggests that they are fundamentally inferior to nobility. By aligning merchants with lower classes ('le villain'), Lansonnés dismisses them as a rising power. At the same time, their rich garments reinforce the fears, palpable in sumptuary laws, that social distinctions were being challenged; by aligning these classes with the peasantry, they are coalesced with the labourers that actually challenged the social order during popular uprisings.

For this disguise to remain acceptable for one of Meliador's class, the threat must be neutralised. This is successfully done by the narrator, who describes Meliador as 'noircis | d'abit ossi noir c'une aronde'.[75] Meliador is not black like a *villain* or a merchant; instead, he is like a swallow. Avian references are appropriate for love-adventures, and such a simile rejects negative associations and social

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[70] Newton, *Fashion*, p. 20.
[71] Pastoureau, *Noir*, p.73, notes that Lancelot, Gawain, and Tristan all take black disguises at some point.
[72] *Meliador*, ll. 12035-41 and 12052-7, qtd. 12057.
[73] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 124; Pleij, p. 55. For further on valuation of complexions, see Chapter 5.
[74] Mellinkoff, p. 157.
[75] *Meliador*, ll. 12165-6. '...black of clothes, all black like a swallow.'

commentary. Rather, it reasserts the fiction of the narrative and reminds the audience that the world of *Meliador* proceeds according to *ordenance*. Meliador is disguised to court Hermondine as a merchant only because it gains him access, while his colour suggests his true role as lover. The temporary disguise and Lansonnés' orders are socially acceptable because they lead to the proper *ordenance*: the best knight winning the love of the best lady.

Meliador's disguise grants purer anonymity than his knightly colours, for the latter are associated with his prowess. Such secrecy is a necessity to depict Meliador as the perfect courtly knight on a path ordained by destiny (which itself is dictated by literary convention and social idealisation). If Hermondine were to love the Blue Knight based only on his reputation, Meliador would not be able to prove himself in courting and thus succeed in all chivalric spheres. For the narrative to proceed properly, Meliador must temporarily reject his noble and knightly reputations. To prove his innate excellence, he must work with a clean, black slate.[76]

As the equal opposite of Meliador, Agamanor also engages in romantic deception, gaining entrance to Phenonée by posing as a painter.[77] Like Meliador, he asks his squire Bertoulés how he may meet Phenonée, but they are at a loss until Agamanor remembers his talent for painting. His disguise determined, he decides to paint his victory at the second tourney for Phenonée, wherein Phenonée awarded him a falcon as a prize.[78] However, Agamanor's plan goes awry. Though he is promised to be treated according to his *ordenance*,[79] he is perceived fully as a painter, and thus receives treatment appropriate for servants and painters. Agamanor returns to Bertoulés and laments the mistake, but resolves to correct it by returning to Phenonée.[80] This time, he shall paint figurations of Phenonée and himself onto a small canvas; on his figure's fist he shall place the falcon-prize, but in the other hand he shall hold a scroll with a love song.[81] Unlike Meliador, Agamanor does not change his dress, mannerisms, or appearance for this episode. Yet even without new garments Agamanor is viewed fully as a painter, for he is not recognisable as the Red

[76] For discussion of the events during Meliador's subterfuge, see Chapter 6.
[77] Zink, in *Froissart et le temps*, noted that Froissart also showed an interest in painting in *L'Espinette Amoureuse* and *Joli Buisson de Jeunesse* (p. 6).
[78] *Meliador*, ll. 20145-68.
[79] L. 20262.
[80] Ll. 20711-6.
[81] Ll. 20769-75.

Knight and not known as Agamanor of Normandy. This seems sufficient. He gains access with the presentation of his wares and quality painting, and the ladies who admit him call him a painter. [82] Rather, it is the paintings that Agamanor chooses to paint (a public scene to an intimate one) that transition Agamanor from being perceived as a painter to a lover in disguise.

Although Phenonée recognises herself and the falcon in the painting, she does not recognise Agamanor as the Red Knight. The portrait is an identifiable but nameless body, bearing only a colournym. Still, Phenonée realises that the painter must know the details of her interactions with the Red Knight, for the image inverts the shield that she sent to the Knight, which depicts a woman bearing a falcon.[83] Therefore, from the painter she may discover the Red Knight's identity. When Phenonée asks Agamanor whether he knows the knight's name, origin, and rank, Agamanor replies, 'Oïl, ma dame, pour certain. | Otretant que mon corps je l'aim', subtly suggesting that the body portrayed is his own.[84] Phenonée does not understand and repeats her question, adding whether the knight is her brother Meliador. To this, Agamanor replies twice 'je ne l'ose nommer'.[85] The reason for Agamanor's reticence is not described, but there are two potential explanations. First, though he no longer desires to win the tournaments (and thus Hermondine) due to his interest in Phenonée, by divulging his name he would break the tournament-quest's rules: a disgraceful act. Secondly, like Meliador's disguise Agamanor's courtship hinges on his anonymity. If he is to be a well-rounded gentleman, suitable for Phenonée's love, his reputation for prowess must not influence the reception of his courtship. Finally, if he exposes himself within his deception, he would appear fraudulent.

This is at humorous cross-purposes with Phenonée's needs: she must identify the Red Knight to know whether he is a suitable suitor, but he cannot identify himself without seeming deceitful. While the situation is fraught with uncertainty for Phenonée and Agamanor, the disguises are transparent to the audience. Viewed externally, this miscommunication gently underscores and pokes fun at literary constructs that demand such indirect methods. Nonetheless, internally this is a

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[82] *Meliador*, ll. 20858ff.
[83] For further on this shield, see Chapter 4.
[84] *Meliador*, ll. 20909-14, qtd. 20913-4. 'Yes, my lady, certainly. I love him like my very self.'
[85] Ll 20950 and 20988. 'I don't dare to name him' or 'I don't have the power to name him'.

serious conundrum. If Agamanor names himself, he is dishonourable, but if he cannot be recognised through his amorous speech and courtesy, he is unworthy.

Agamanor succeeds in revealing the suitability of their relationship while in the disguise by kneeling and stating 'ci me tenés | ensi c'un oiselet en gage'.[86] The avian love-imagery here recalls that in Meliador's plot, acting again to reinforce the fiction and redirect the narrative towards *ordenance*. This act and request are sufficiently blatant; Phenonée recognises Agamanor as the Red Knight. His appropriateness is ascertained as he tells her everything about himself except his name. As he keeps his story in the third person, he has not technically exposed himself as a liar.[87] Instead, he has included Phenonée in the secret of his disguise by guiding her to the correct conclusions.

Though Agamanor and Meliador share similar romantic journeys, their exploits differ. Meliador is the Blue Knight of loyalty, selecting his colour to portray his qualities and interest in Hermondine; conversely, Agamanor's colour bears insufficient information. Agamanor wears a popular colour yielded by a rich dye, but Phenonée cannot judge his suitability. Indeed, the Red Knight's richness and prowess lead Phenonée to consider that he may be her brother. While the anonymous tournaments distinguish Agamanor from the Blue Knight in colour and ability, but they do not distinguish Agamanor as a person from Meliador. Their colours are distinct, but their identities unknown. Conversely, anonymity is acceptable for Hermondine's interests. She does not need to know the Blue Knight's name, for the tournament-quest decrees that she will marry the best anonymous knight; Hermondine is freed from burdens of propriety by these rules. Simultaneously, the narrative's emphasis on *ordenance* assures the audience that the resulting match will be appropriate. However, Phenonée does not have this freedom. Knowing the Red Knight's prowess is insufficient; she must determine if he is socially suitable.

These different requirements appear clearly in their disguising episodes. As expected, Meliador receives good advice, dresses accurately, plays the part well, and speaks with Hermondine. In opposition, Agamanor fails his first time, yet he is saved

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[86] *Meliador*, ll. 21009-43, qtd. 21034-5. 'At present, keep me like a little bird in exchange'. As Longnon, p. 300, suggests that 'gage' is an error for 'cage', this line could also read as 'keep me like a little bird in a cage.' Froissart may have intentionally combined the concept of a caged bird with pledging an item as collateral.

[87] *Meliador*, ll. 21249-350.

by modifying his paintings into an intimate love-token and by his good speech, which assuages Phenonée's doubts. This indirect route is humorous, for in a narrative that functions *par ordenance* Agamanor shall certainly win Phenonée, regardless of temporary uncertainty. While colour is a useful identifier for both of the characters to the audience, the narrative uses Meliador's plot to highlight its positives and Agamanor's to emphasise its constraints. Similarly, a deception used to further *ordenance* works only if it is more widely acceptable to remain anonymous. In the end, clothes and colours are a useful aid, but it is Meliador's required anonymity and Agamanor's (un)subtle speech that cement their narrative paths.

Clothing Deception in *Gawain*

While *Meliador* places greater importance on the knights' colours, *Gawain* underscores costume's shape as well as colour. Discussion of *Gawain* has often centred around the Green Knight's greenness and the Lady's girdle; however, the text also spends much time describing Gawain's armour, his clothes at the Hostel, the Lady's costumes, and various mantles with great detail.[88] Because of this, these items appear to be deliberately included for reasons beyond displaying the beauty of Arthurian courts. Rather, these items suggest symbolic interpretations in a narrative that highlights its own symbolism[89] and manipulates tradition through passages such as the description of Gawain's shield, and uses them to explicate both the plot and Gawain's internal changes.

The importance of personal display is indicated at the beginning of the narrative in the introduction of the Green Knight.[90] Although mounted intruders into court are common occurrences within the Arthurian corpus, the Green Knight is an unusual one: not dressed for war, he is apparently immortal. Though he appears throughout the majority of the text, neither we nor Gawain know exactly who he is.[91] His identity is mutable, and his changeability has attracted diverse and incongruent scholarly interpretations. To some, the Green Knight is a wild man, Death, the Devil,

[88] For Gawain's armour, see Chapter 3; for the Lady's costumes, see Chapter 5; for the girdle, see Chapters 4 and 6.
[89] See Chapter 4 for discussion of Gawain's shield.
[90] Eagan, p. 63. The *Gawain*-Poet's interest in symbolism is most apparent in the discussion of Gawain's pentangle (see Chapter 4).
[91] Craymer, p. 50.

a monster, or an ancient nature god.[92] To others, he is both nature-figure and courtier, downgraded from a supernatural creature to 'an enchanted man' despite his apparent immortality.[93] While historical analogues have been sought, the Green Knight has also been viewed as the opposite of reality. [94] These 'reductive and mutually exclusive interpretations' have further complicated studies of an already ambiguous character, and questions remain about the Green Knight's relationship with nature and the court, his enchanted status, and his supernatural ability.[95]

Insufficient attention has been given to the Green Knight's multiple roles. Generally, he has been divided into the Green Knight (at Camelot, at the Green Chapel), and Bertilak the Host (at the manor or Hostel). Yet 'Bertilak de Hautdesert' is a name only used by the adversary at the Green Chapel (in his green form).[96] Referring to the Host and his house as Bertilak and Hautdesert respectively tends to lead to assumptions that the Host is his 'true' form. Instead, it may be more fruitful to discuss this adversary in *three* forms: as intruder to Camelot (the Green Knight), as the Host in the Wirral, and as the challenger-judge Bertilak at the Green Chapel. By carefully separating the three, this framework hopes to prevent viewing the Green Knight and the Host as merely facets of Bertilak by giving the adversary's *incognito* incarnations equal weight in examination.

Scholarly discussion has revolved unevenly around the Green Knight's greenness. Though it is nature's colour, green was not a popular courtly colour. Further, as green seems to have been viewed as inherently indefinite in meaning, it calls into question interpretations that demand that the Knight be either a nature figure or unnatural.[97] Moreover, the Green Knight is not fully green: his eyes are red and his clothes are covered in embroidery and gold works.[98] Green, red, and gold are

[92] Lawrence Besserman, 'The Idea of the Green Knight', *ELH*, 53 (1986), 219-39 (p. 220); Joseph A. Longo, '"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight": The Christian Quest for Perfection', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 11 (1967), 57-85 (pp. 61-2); Carl Grey Martin, 'The Cipher of Chivalry: Violence as Courtly Play in the World of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 43 (2009), 311-29 (p. 311); John Speirs, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Scrutiny*, 16 (1949), 274-300.
[93] S.R.T.O. d'Ardenne, '"The Green Count" and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Review of English Studies*, 10 (1959), 113-26 (p. 120); William Goldhurst, 'The Green and the Gold: The Major Theme of *Gawain and the Green Knight*', *College English*, 20 (1958), 61-5 (p. 62).
[94] Breeze; d'Ardenne; Martin, p. 313; Wilson.
[95] Besserman, p. 220.
[96] *Gawain*, l. 2445.
[97] Craymer, p. 56, argues for the Green Knight's deviancy.
[98] *Gawain*, ll. 161-72 and 304.

arguably Christmas colours, but red eyes were often a feature of devils and monsters.[99] As several ecclesiastical texts considered giants to be demons, the Green Knight's size adds to suggestions towards a diabolical origin.[100] However, red and green were not always negative. In 1342, the betrothal of Lionel, second son of Edward III, saw his bed of state decorated with red and green embroidery, and the same colours were used in 1348 for Queen Philippa's churching.[101] In the Green Knight, any negative overtones of his colours are counteracted by the holly bob he carries.[102] A sign of peace, the holly is a positive red-and-green; at the same time, the evergreen foreshadows the Knight's immortality and Otherworldly properties.[103] The Knight's colours are unsettling yet ambiguous.

Neither holly bob nor red eyes appear on the Green Knight in the illumination of his entrance to Camelot [fig. 2]. Indeed, he is not even fully green; his eyes and face are uncoloured and only his garments are green. Yet this green is also not pure, as it is made from a blue-green pigment layered over a goldenrod yellow that achieves simple shading.[104] While this reduces the Knight's shocking appearance, it is a useful artistic choice for the narrative: because the illumination appears before the narrative, the reduction of the Green Knight's illuminated appearance increases the eventual shock of his narrated appearance. Though the image hints towards the coming plot, the illumination's changes allow the Green Knight's entry to still surprise the reader.

But there is more to the Knight than greenness. Both he and the narrator draw attention to his choice of courtly clothes over the armaments he has at home.[105] Despite the character's ambiguity, he speaks with remarkable frankness about his choice: 'bot for I wolde no were, my wedez ar softer'.[106] This invites the audience to recall the Knight's complete appearance, typified by his 'strayt cote ful streʒt þat stek on his sides';[107] the emphasis on tailoring recalls the restrictive cotes of the 1340s.

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[99] Blanch, pp. 70-71 and 85; Mellinkoff, p. 124. Pastoureau, *Noir*, states that medieval devils were often multicoloured (p. 47), potentially related to the negative view taken on mixing colours.
[100] Levy, p. 85.
[101] Juliet Vale, p. 64.
[102] *Gawain*, l. 206.
[103] Andrew and Waldron, p. 215; Blanch, p. 73.
[104] For further on the pigments in Cotton Nero A.x, see Appendix B.
[105] *Gawain*, ll. 268-70.
[106] L. 271. 'Because I would not make war, my dress is gentler.'
[107] L. 152. 'A tight cote, fully fitted, that clung to his sides.'

While this is partially reflected in the illumination where the Knight's cote is tight around the hips and waist [fig. 2], in conjunction with its puffed torso it resembles garments from the 1360s. This contrasts with Gawain and the rightmost man, whose looser tunics evoke later fashions.[108] Although a mixture of garments from different periods is not uncommon in illumination, these combinations generally provided additional information about certain characters, as in figure 11 (the rightmost man is certainly intended to be young and stylish) and figure 18 (whose archaised king contrasts with his more contemporary courtiers). Therefore, the contrast in figure 2 suggests that the Knight should be viewed as older or outdated, and implies that the Knight's textual garments might be perceived similarly.

Unlike the rest of the Knight's clothes, his 'meré mantile' is unremarkable beyond its fur lining.[109] Though linings were common for overgarments,[110] these furs are 'blaunner', a problematic term usually used in the B-alliterating lines. Hypothetically descending from Anglo-French *blaunc-et-ner, *blaunner* is arguably analogous with ermine.[111] However, some of the *blaunner* in *Gawain* is 'pured', a term generally used for vair, which suggests that *blaunner* refers to the contrasting grey and white of vair. With either type of fur, the mantle's white lining, suitable for nobility, would sharply contrast with the overall greenness.

The mantle is not depicted in the illumination, but its matching hood may be [fig. 2].[112] Textually, the hood lies upon the Knight's shoulders and could be many styles, from a voluminous cowl to a stylish accessory too small to be worn.[113] In the illumination, the Knight's severed neck is surrounded by a cloth with an oblong opening smaller than the Knight's head. This is a unique object in this manuscript's illuminations and its minimal detail makes it difficult to interpret. At minimum, it suggests that the illuminator knew the narrative. If it is an overly-small hood, such was only stylish before the 1360s, and thus fits with the Green Knight's older clothes and contrasts with the rightmost figure's modish late-century hat.

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108 The illuminator portrays Arthur as a clichéd king. The rightmost man may be Agravain, whose proximity to Guinevere in both image and text (*Gawain*, ll. 109-110) suggests that the illuminator was passing familiar with the narrative.
109 *Gawain*, ll. 153-4. Nothing indicates that the mantle is short as Craymer argues (p. 56).
110 Veale, p. 3.
111 *MED*, 'blaun-nēr (adj. as n.)'.
112 *Gawain*, ll. 155-6.
113 Blanc, p. 161; Scott, *Visual History*, p. 41.

A similar issue occurs with the Green Knight's well-tailored hose.[114] In the text, the description only states that the hose are visible below the Knight's cote, indicating that the cote is short and that the hose has built-in soles (as he is otherwise shoeless). Despite damage in the illumination, an outline from the Knight's leg coalesces with his horse's foremost hoof, suggestive of extremely long, drooping pikes (again, a mid-century fashion). This outline is directed towards Gawain's smaller points, creating a connection in contrast. Overall, the illuminator depicts the Knight's garments as noble, but potentially old-fashioned, suggesting that the Green Knight has either attempted to dress appropriately for the stylish society but missed his mark or that he is of greater age than Arthur's court. This latter concept is supported by the description of the Green Knight being 'of hyghe eldee'; his address of the company as 'berdlez chylder' used to highlight an age difference between an older Green Knight and the younger court.[115]

While it is quite possible that both illuminator and narrative intended to depict the Knight's tailoring as old-fashioned or venerable, the narrative obscures either interpretation by adding opulent embroidery. The Knight's clothes, belt, spurs straps, and horse's equipment are covered with ornaments, silken work, embroidery of birds and flying insects, and green beads with gold-flecked centres.[116] In many ways, the garments are reminiscent of the green cloak worn by Edward III for the 1361 feast of the Purification, which was decorated with embroidered foliage and plate gold leaves.[117] However, it is intriguing that the Knight's embroidery is not of vegetation (as would be expected from a green nature-figure) but of birds and insects. Birds were common embroidered and woven motifs.[118] As birds and insects are also transient and changeable, their inclusion on the Knight's enigmatic colours suggests that the Knight's purpose at Camelot is deliberately ambiguous. Nonetheless, the noble decorations of the Knight's garments are appropriate for the festivities at Camelot, for courtly celebrations were times for conspicuous consumption.

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[114] *Gawain*, ll. 157-60.
[115] J.J. Anderson, 'The Three Judgements and the Ethos of Chivalry in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 24 (1990), 337-55 (p. 344); *Gawain*, ll. 844 and 280.
[116] *Gawain*, ll. 159-67.
[117] Newton, p. 57.
[118] Burns, 'Saracen Silk', p. 369; Monnas, p. 4; Newton, p. 43; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 228, and 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', pp. 17-8.

Yet this attire's suitability is violated by the Knight's green hair and beard.[119] Hair is an organic, variable part of personal display that straddles the boundary between body and garment, and different modes of grooming can alter one's reception.[120] Long hair and beards were discarded socially by the last quarter of the fourteenth century in favour of ear-length hair and short forked beards, with long beards relegated to kings and sages in fiction.[121] In contrast, the Knight's hair fans to his elbows; his beard is bushy. Such a fierce display is unusual and obscuring, defying tailoring and fashion, reminiscent of a mummer's mask.[122] Flowing across the Knight's shoulders, his locks become a literal veneer of wildness over the courtly clothes, a mixture that (like the ambiguous colour) astounds internal and external audiences.

The Knight's 'fannand fax' is significantly omitted from his illuminated appearance [fig. 2].[123] Instead, his yellow hair and beard are later than his garments, reminiscent of 1380 to 1400.[124] As the images' relationship with the text indicates some familiarity by the illuminator, the artist's substitution of a desirable colour (supported by a liberal reading of '*fayre* fannand fax') and stylish shape suggests a calculated change, perhaps because the feral hair was insufficiently courtly or even disturbingly wild.[125] In either case, the result is that the Green Knight's hair is tamed.

The Knight as written is alarming, but his red eyes, odd colour, and overgrown hair are excluded from the illuminations. While his embroidery and colour connect him to nature, his clothes and their decorations also connect him to the court. Simultaneously, his greenness, hair, and decorations are continuously compared and coalesced with his horse's, reducing his humanity. However, this sense of nature is deceptive. He is not a wildman or a nature god; neither demon nor Death; he is a supernatural courtier.[126] His actions are reminders that chaos and duplicity can exist in society as well as nature. His once-fashionable clothes are a

[119] *Gawain*, ll. 179-85.
[120] Robert Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1994), 43-60 (pp. 43-4).
[121] Scott, *Visual History*, p. 17.
[122] Bartlett, p. 43; Twycross and Carpenter, p. 154.
[123] *Gawain*, l. 180.
[124] Bartlett, p. 44; Scott, *Visual History*, p. 17.
[125] *Gawain*, l. 180, my emphasis.
[126] The Green Knight's lack of connection to wildmen is emphasised in Gawain's travels through the Wirral, when he encounters wodewoses with little comment (l. 721). Were these somehow affiliated to the Knight, they would have warranted more than a passing mention.

visible display of wealth, the greenness broken by gold decorations and rich fur. His embroideries and hair are tangible reminders of changeability, recalling the organic qualities of humanity that courtly society attempts to tame. His cote evokes the constrictions of the court, forcing his body into a fashionable form. The Green Knight's wildness is restrained: he is cultivated.

Interpretations of the adversary's other iterations, the Host and Bertilak, develop from this basis. The only physical similarities shared by the Knight and the Host are their size and beards.[127] As the Host's defining feature, the colour of his 'beuer-hwed' beard may serve as a forewarning. While most beards are brown, the preferred colour of hair for fictional nobles was blond; as a deviation, the Host's beard suggests the negative associations of brown. As 'beuer-hwed' implies a red tinge, this deepens the potentially malevolent implications, for orange hair and beards traditionally indicated treachery, being customarily linked to traitors such as Judas Iscariot.[128] Such foreboding is amplified by the Host's 'felle face as þe fyre'.[129] Like dark skin, reddish skin was undesirable, a sign of indulgence in wine and food, sun and sport; as the Host's fast-day tables are well-supplied and the holidays marked by hunts, both may contribute to his colouration. The Host's camaraderie and intertextual connections also confuse these malevolent signs. His redness recalls the Knight's red eyes, his holly bob, and Gawain's red shield, a negative, neutral, and positive.[130] Upon his introduction, the Host's physicality implies an extravagant figure, unlikely intending any good, but though the Host's hunting hints at violence this is unlike the Knight's beheading: hunting was a common courtly activity, while the beheadings are abnormally brutal. However, the Host is not hostile, typified instead by his joviality and hospitality. Beyond size and beard, the Host and the Knight seem to have little obviously in common, the Host appearing as an ambiguous but neutral figure. His red and brown colourations may only be included as hints towards his role as Gawain's adversary. Such subtle connections can also be

[127] *Gawain*, ll. 140, 182-6, and 844-5.
[128] Eagan, p. 72; Mellinkoff, pp. 148-9; Pastoureau, *Devil's Cloth*, p. 16, and *L'Ours*, pp. 172-3; Pleij, p. 81.
[129] *Gawain*, l. 847.
[130] For more on Gawain's shield, see Chapter 4.

found in the Host's hunting, for the common colour of hunters in the fourteenth-century was green.[131]

It is only in his final appearance that the adversary names himself as 'Bertilak de Hautdesert', his guise the same as his first appearance as the Green Knight.[132] 'Bertilak' is commonly interpreted as the name of the Host, a mere human whose appearance is Morgan's enchantment.[133] Yet his explanation that Morgan le Fay 'wayned [him] vpon þis wyse' is vague.[134] Though it is usually read as 'sent me in this guise' (that Morgan made him green), it may also be read as 'sent me for this purpose' (Morgan ordered him to frighten Guinevere at Camelot). Paul Battles further complicates this by suggesting that the full stop generally placed between lines 2445 and 2446 should be removed, to read 'Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe | þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye'.[135] This reading implies that Bertilak either is Morgan's vassal, holding his lands through her (Battles' interpretation) or that Bertilak's identity has been fully constructed by Morgan. Is Bertilak's disguise the Knight or the Host, or is he entirely disguise?

The illumination of the Green Chapel offers an additional interpretation [fig. 4]. Although the text states that Bertilak is 'gered as fyrst', his illuminated clothes are not the 1360s fashion worn as the Green Knight but a mixture of Gawain's previous garments [fig. 2]: his loose skirt, fitted hose, and minimal pikes come from the standing Gawain, while his baggy sleeves are from the seated one (though Bertilak lacks visible undersleeves).[136] Whereas his hair and beard are the same shape as in figure 2, his beard lacks colour and the green background merges with his hair. While Bertilak's hose are coloured with layers of yellow and blue-green, his cote is dominated by the blue-green. Though this figure is obviously intended to be the same person as the Green Knight, the portrayal is altered; if intentional, this indicates that Bertilak is somehow different in this scene.

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[131] Ingledew, p. 211; Scott, *Fashion*, 82.
[132] *Gawain*, ll. 2227-8 and 2445.
[133] Besserman, p. 226; Craymer, p. 51; d'Ardenne, p. 120.
[134] *Gawain*, ll. 2446-62, qtd. 2456.
[135] Paul Battles, 'Amended Texts, Emended Ladies: Female Agency and the Textual Editing of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 44 (2010), 323-43 (pp. 332 and 335).
[136] *Gawain*, l. 2227 (qtd.). Hilmo, p. 158, states that the Green Knight in figure 4 is dressed like Gawain in figure 2, but does not mention the combination of Gawains.

This may relate to Bertilak's role in his final appearance, where he is not a challenger but a merciful judge, retaining the generosity and cheer that characterised the Host. This summative identity is prefigured in the Green Knight, for though his colour, size, and hair are unusual, they are superficial details on an otherwise courtly individual. In many ways Bertilak is anticipated by the wilds of the Wirral in which Gawain finds the Hostel and the Green Chapel. Once a managed royal park, the Wirral was decommissioned in 1376. With an unsavoury reputation and untamed overgrowth overlaying a manufactured land, it was a feral place.[137] As the sum of the Green Knight and the Host, Bertilak is an amalgamation of questionable aggression, green colour, polite speech, and hospitality. His surroundings manifest on his body.

With an identity based on changeable nature and artificial attempts to control it, the tensions of Bertilak's tripartite self are unnerving to both internal and external audiences.[138] Though he appears human, he seems 'more human, more alive than Arthur and even Gawain',[139] the definition of supernatural. His actions are characterised by subterfuge, unreliability, and an alien morality, shifting qualities that are the essence of green and the Otherworld, but he is also a hospitable Host and a merciful judge. Disconcertingly, it is not the human adversary (the Host) that forgives Gawain but green Bertilak. Overlaying the kind personality of the 'human' Host with the physicality of the Otherworldly Knight, this adjudicator intertwines his preceding parts so fully that their separation feels artificial. Each new face of the adversary does not clarify the preceding parts; they only complicate further. Yet at the finale, it seems that Bertilak is most whole when he is green.

While Bertilak's path is one of integration, Gawain's is one of fragmentation. Beginning his journey in a knight-errant's armaments, Gawain wears two different outfits at the Hostel which indicate how his surroundings affect him. These changes are emphasised by an elaborated re-description of his travelling costume the morning he leaves the Hostel. Together, these garments imply Gawain's internal journey and explicate his relationships with Arthur and Bertilak.

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[137] Michael Twomey, 'Sir Gawain and the Green World', and Gillian Rudd, '"The Wilderness of Wirral" in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', both presented at the Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 25 July 2011; Henry L. Savage, 'A Note on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 700-2', *Modern Language Notes*, 46 (1931), 455-7.
[138] Craymer moves towards this argument, but falters by dichotomising 'changeable' and 'natural' (p. 55).
[139] d'Ardenne, p. 120.

Though Gawain's garb at Camelot is not described in the narrative, where he is portrayed simply 'as part of the court',[140] the illuminator depicts Gawain twice individually in the illumination preceding the text [fig. 2]. While Gawain's garments resemble items from the late 1300s, they differ in these two appearances: the upper-left Gawain (A) has cuffed bag sleeves and long undersleeves, and the lower Gawain (B) has a looser-fitting cote with rectangular sleeves. This change is unwarranted by the narrative, but it accentuates Gawain's actions and suggests that the painter made alterations for effect beyond expressing character. Gawain A's bag sleeve emphasises his raised hand and gaze towards Arthur as he accepts the Knight's challenge, while the second Gawain's straight sleeves form angles with the axe-handle, making a barrier in front of the Knight. These poses physically disconnect Gawain from the rest of the image. The rightmost male, Guinevere, and Arthur all touch, and the Green Knight's head, painted without depth, appears to rest in front of Arthur and touch his garment.[141] Conversely, Gawain is either crammed into a corner or repelling the Green Knight in a way that isolates him. At the same time, his colours echo the other male figures. Although both cotes are the same crimson-red, Gawain A's undersleeves are the distinct rose-red of the unknown male's cote and Gawain B's hose are the same blue as Arthur's robe. This separation and correlation via placement and colouration prepares the reader for the subtle divisions and connections within the narrative.

Such connections appear in the garments worn for Gawain's journey through the Wirral, starting with the first cloth item.[142] This is Gawain's fur-lined *capados*, a warm winter hood that recalls the Knight's hair, which was depicted as a 'kyngez capados'.[143] However, Gawain's *capados* is 'real' in that it is actually that item of

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[140] Anderson, 'Three Judgements', p. 348.
[141] The rightmost male is potentially Agravain, who in the narrative also sits at the head table (l. 110); Tolkien and Gordon's notes clarify that Agravain sits to Arthur's left (p. 83), as in the illumination.
[142] For further on the armour and arming sequence, see Chapter 3.
[143] *Gawain*, ll. 185 and 572-3. Earlier glossers considered a 'capados' to be a tunic made of Cappadocian leather (Eagan, p. 69; Tolkien and Gordon, p. 86). The related term 'cappe de huse' appears in London, British Library, Harley 4011, where it is glossed as 'hed cloke'; a similar spelling 'capedehustes' appears in the 1349 wardrobe accounts of Edward III (*MED*, 'capadōs (n. (1))'). Supporting this, Gollancz suggests that the *capados* is like a chaperon (p. 100), while Andrew and Waldron suggest that it 'was a short leather cape with a hood' (p. 214). The interpretation of the *capados* as a type of hood is the most convincing, for Gawain already wears a 'dublet' (l. 571) and does not need a second tunic beneath his mail shirt (l. 581). As the *capados* is also part of Gawain's armaments, it may be a hood-like arming cap.

clothing while the Knight's hair is an insubstantial imitation. At the same time, the dead fur lining of Gawain's hood contrasts with the Green Knight's *capados*-shape, made of his own living hair. Gawain's *capados* is a dead thing made for winter, but the Knight's green locks recall nature and life. Gawain dwells in winter, awaiting his death, but the immortal Knight is evergreen.

This begins the physical echoes that develop between the two characters that continue with their cotes and embroidery. Unlike the Knight's well-described cote, Gawain wears a 'ryche cote-armure' placed over his armour, apparently decorated only with a pentangle.[144] Little comparison is possible between the cotes, because Gawain's is not otherwise described here. The rest of his embroidery appears on his *vrysoun,* a light fabric that lays over his helm's aventail with an unclear shape.[145] Suggestions that the *vrysoun* is a crest are debatable, for crests were made of *cuir-bouilli* (boiled, moulded leather), but the *vrysoun* could be mantling (cloths that flowed from the tops of helms down the back).[146] It could also resemble Lancelot's red item in figure 23, but this figure is problematic, for similar items are not found in other manuscripts and this illuminator portrays armour in a fanciful manner. Most likely, the *vrysoun* is a wide strip connected to the edge of the helmet that covers the divots where the aventail attaches [fig. 23].[147] The small, detailed decoration required would be too delicate for illuminations, but such a band would highlight Gawain's jewel-encrusted circlet when placed on a conical late-fourteenth century helm [like that in fig. 24].[148] Unlike Gawain, the Green Knight has neither circlet nor gems, only wild hair and green beads, but both knights bear birds on their embroideries. Gawain's are specified as 'papjayez paynted peruyng bitwene, | tortors and

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[144] *Gawain*, ll. 586 and 636-7. For further on the pentangle, see Chapter 4.
[145] *Gawain*, ll. 608-14. For further on aventails and helms, see Chapter 3.
[146] Barker, p. 181; Claude Blair, *European Armour: Circa 1066 to Circa 1700* (London: Batsford, 1958), p. 48; René d'Anjou, *Traité de la forme et devis d'un tournoi*, ed. by Edmond Pognon (Paris: Éditions de la Verve, 1946), p. 33. Staniland, *Medieval Courtly Splendour*, p. 20, suggests that the *vrysoun* is a crest.
[147] Blair, pp. 67-8. Andrew and Waldron claim that this band attaches the aventail to the helm (p. 230), but this would put undue stress on the silk. Noriko Matsui, in 'The Realism of the Gawain-Poet: The Description of Sir Gawain's Headgear in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*' presented at the Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 29 July 2011, argued that Blair's dating of such items indicates that *Gawain* was composed post-1370.
[148] Figure 24 is a line-drawing of a 1380s effigy of John Marmion, from Blair, p. 67. The Royal Armouries in Leeds holds a similarly-shaped helm (with a visor) from the late 1300s (object number IV.470, Royal Armouries Online Collections <http://collections.royalarmouries.org/>) [fig. 25]. For further information, see Chapter 3.

trulofez'.[149] Although these are common decorative motifs, turtledoves were also associated with lovers.[150] While the Green Knight's embroidery emphasises his ambiguous nature, Gawain's embroidery portrays him as an excellent and amorous knight. Combining with the pious nature of Gawain's new shield, this embroidery suggests different facets of Gawain's identity that shall be challenged and put in opposition at the Hostel.[151] Moreover, the attention paid to the *vrysoun*'s embroidery serves to remind the audience of Gawain's future beheading due to its placement on Gawain's head.

At the Hostel, the inhabitants' first action is to relieve Gawain of these garments and offer him clothes better suited for indoors. While this accords with fourteenth-century hospitality conventions, it also removes Gawain's last physical connections to Camelot.[152] By removing these knightly accoutrements, the court also signals that the Hostel is not a place for physical combat. Instead, while receiving the Hostel's hospitality Gawain must act in its best interest as a courtier. Gawain dresses as such, selecting from amongst 'ryche robes' belonging to the Hostel an item with 'saylande skyrteȝ'.[153] Distinguished by a flowing or pleated lower half (extant no earlier than the 1360s) and 'ver by his uisage', this garment could be a loose cote or a houpeland [compare figs. 2, 10, and 22]. Its 'ver' has been translated as making Gawain appear 'spring-like', but it may also read as vair.[154] The latter is more sensible for loose-skirted clothes, which often had high furred collars [figs. 2, 10, 13, 17, and 22]. If read as a pun on fur and spring, vair/*ver* highlights the richness of Gawain's garment even as it connects him to the evergreen Knight. This connection is accentuated by an ermine-lined mantle and hood that is placed on Gawain by the

[149] *Gawain*, ll. 611-2. Andrew and Waldron, p. 230, state that 'peruyng' may be 'flitting' or a mistranscription of 'pernyng' (preening), but believe that 'peruyng' is more likely used collectively for 'periwinkles'. Tolkien and Gordon and Gollancz are silent on this issue. The sentence is more sensible when Andrew and Waldron's comma is removed, rendering the lines either 'parrots painted preening between turtledoves and true-love knots' or 'parrots painted between periwinkles, turtledoves, and true-love knots'.
[150] Michel Pastoureau, *Heraldry: An Introduction to a Noble Tradition* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), p. 61.
[151] Busby, 'Diverging Traditions', p. 97; *Gawain*, ll. 753-62 and 773-4. For Gawain's shield, see Chapter 4.
[152] Laura F. Hodges, 'Costume Rhetoric in the Knight's Portrait: Chaucer's Every-Knight and His Bismotered Gypon', *The Chaucer Review,* 29 (1995), 274-302 (p. 266); Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 224.
[153] *Gawain*, ll. 862-866.
[154] Andrew and Waldron, p. 240; Eagan, p. 73; Goldhurst, p. 63; R.J. Menner, 'Notes on *Sir Gawain and the Green* Knight', *Modern Language Review*, 19 (1924), 204-8 (pp. 205-6).

inhabitants, and may recall concepts such as 'the mantle of friendship'.[155] Made of brown *bleeaunt* (a costly silk), the colour echoes the Host's beard.[156] This object suggests that by accepting their hospitality the court has obliged Gawain to change allegiance from Camelot to the Hostel. Mixing hospitality with potential duplicity, by putting the mantle upon Gawain the residents functionally remove Gawain's autonomy.[157] Gawain is under the power of the Hostel's society.

This power is palpable in the deliberate use of colours in the illumination of a bedroom scene [fig. 3]. Gawain, his naked body wrapped in a coverlet, lays on a bed the same red as his earlier cote [fig. 2].[158] The curtains surrounding the bed use the same blue and shading as Arthur's earlier attire, but while Gawain is surrounded by colours of Camelot, he is enclosed in a shroud-like blanket that is shaded with the same blue-green and yellow layers as the Green Knight. Gawain is progressively distanced from Camelot, separated from Arthur's blue by the red he had earlier worn; he is then separated from this red by the green of his blanket. The illuminator portrays Gawain as naked, restrained, and contained by his adversary's influence; at his most susceptible, the Lady breaks the barriers the first illumination placed around Gawain to touch Gawain's chin [figs. 2 and 3]. It is this vulnerable Gawain who accepts her girdle.[159]

Gawain reclaims his agency in the narrative by independently selecting a floor-length 'bleaunt of blwe', a fur-lined surcoat, and a *blaunner*-trimmed hood to wear to conclude the Host's exchange game.[160] Terminologically this garment is archaic: originally named for its silken cloth (the same used for the brown mantle),

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[155] Gawain, ll. 878-81; Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 229; Koslin and Snyder, 'Glossary', p. 251. Douglas M. Moon argues that this mantle is extraneous because fireside is 'the last place where a fur-lined mantle would be necessary' in his 'Clothing Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 66 (1965), 334-46 (p. 336), but furs 'were worn both indoors and out, for alternative methods of keeping warm were few and inefficient' (Veale, p. 1-2).

[156] Blanch suggests that the 'bryȝt and broun' gems on Gawain's circlet (ll. 615-8, qtd. 618) anticipate this mantle (pp.74-5), but in conjunction with metal 'broun' means 'shining', not 'brown' (*MED*, 'brŏun (adj.)').

[157] Woolgar, *Senses*, p. 173.

[158] *Gawain*, l. 1181.

[159] For discussion of the girdle, see Chapters 4 and 6.

[160] *Gawain*, ll. 1928-51. Ingledew, p. 154, incorrectly states that Gawain's blue outfit is like the 'formal costume of the Garter' (p. 154). However, D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton in *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe 1325-1520* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), states that the formal dress of the Order of the Garter is a blue mantle (p. 161). Occasionally a surcoat and hood were added to the mantle; the colour of these were not regulated, but the earliest known versions were white (p. 162). These contrast with Gawain's hood, surcoat, and blue *bleaunt*, that latter of which is quite a different garment from a mantle.

the *bleaunt* or *bliaut* was a non-gendered item that was most common in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and rare thereafter.[161] As Gawain's outfit is 'araye noble', this archaism could reference formulaic illuminated kings, or it could be connecting Gawain to earlier Arthurian tradition and highlighting his reputation as one of the best knights of Camelot. However, the *bleaunt*'s blueness is a fourteenth-century novelty. A striking change from Gawain's illuminated red and ambiguous brown mantle, blue was associated with chastity, loyalty, love, faithfulness, and the Virgin Mary (Gawain's patroness in this adventure).[162] These associations were already being undermined in late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century literature, where blue indicated duplicity and these virtues' opposites, as with a brooch bestowed in *Troilus and Criseyde* and a dress worn by la Dame des Belles-Cousines in *Jean de Saintré*.[163] Unlike Meliador, who fulfils the positive virtues, it seems likely that Gawain's garments are meant to be read in the subversive tradition, particularly as he wears it for a scene where he lies by omission to his Host. The fact that the potentially prestigious *bleaunt*'s blueness is partially concealed by Gawain's surcoat hints that this is a subterfuge, portraying Gawain as the honest superior to the Host when he is anything but. At the same time, the garments belong to the Hostel: Gawain may choose how he is portrayed, but he cannot escape his surroundings' influence.

The strength of this influence is perceptible in Gawain's re-arming on New Year. In his initial arming sequence, the colour of Gawain's cote is unmentioned and it is only decorated with his pentangle.[164] At the Hostel, the cote is red velvet (a lush albeit sensible winter fabric) with suitably elaborate embroidery, talismanic stones, and costly fur lining.[165] While the initial description hinted at such works to emphasise Gawain's noble dress (as even the most elaborate vrysoun would not take

[161] Joan Evans, *Dress in Mediaeval France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 5 and 78.
[162] Eagan, pp. 78 and 82; Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 50-1. For further on the connection between Gawain's blue and the Virgin Mary, see Chapter 5.
[163] Beckman, p. 71; Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Troilus and Criseyde', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson, 471-585 (Book 3, ll. 1370-2); Michelle Szkilnik, 'From Sword to Dress: The Ideal Knight in Late Medieval French Romance', in *Knight and Samurai. Actions and Images of Elite Warriors in Europe and East Asia*, ed. by Rosemarie Deist (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2003), p. 101. Woolgar, p. 170, notes that colour-changes also signified shifting moralities in miracle collections.
[164] For Gawain's arming, see Chapter 3; for his pentangle, see Chapter 4.
[165] *Gawain*, ll. 603, 619, 636-7, and 2025-36; Staniland, 'Medieval Courtly Splendour', p. 10.

many ladies seven winters to finish),[166] the blatant descriptions in this arming scene of such decorations suggest prideful opulence. A similar change is felt in the illumination of Gawain at the Green Chapel, though here it is one in his cote's shape, not decoration [fig. 4]. In this figure, Gawain's surcoat is close-fitting, plain, potentially quilted, and with sleeves rolled up to the elbows.[167] Furthermore, instead of being red the cote is rose, contrasting with his crimson garments in figure 2 as well as the crimson lance. This lance angles across the page to separate Gawain's and Gringolet's heads from their bodies as if in a symbolic beheading. Understandably, Gawain's head is also accentuated in the narrative, as when Bertilak tells Gawain to 'halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt'.[168] This 'hode' may pun on both Gawain's *capados* and his Arthurian knighthood,[169] and Bertilak's reference refigures the 'hode' to represent the affiliation between Gawain and Arthur. The hood is a physical intermediary between Gawain's head (his individual self and the nephew of Arthur) and his helm (his knighthood). Were Gawain to lose his hooded head in the beheading game, he would symbolically lose his knighthood and his relationship with Arthur. Just as Gawain is a pale imitation of himself in the illumination, the narrative suggests that Gawain's knighthood and familial relations have been compromised by his deception at the Hostel. However, the hood's presence implies that such changes are temporary, which is supported by his response to Bertilak, 'Wy, þresch on, þou þro mon! Þou þretez to longe. | I hope þat þi hert arȝe wyth þyn awen seluen'.[170] Gawain is no longer fearful, but demands his fate. At his end, he returns to the nobility and courage of his (knight)hood.

This reassumed nobility figures into the illumination of the penitent Gawain's return to Camelot [fig. 5]. Though he retains the rose-coloured surcoat from the facing illumination of the Green Chapel [fig. 4], Gawain's previously all-grey armour now has golden accents. Furthermore, he is also physically connected to the

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[166] *Gawain*, ll. 613-4.
[167] Hilmo, p. 158, argues that Gawain and Gringolet in figure 4 resemble the Green Knight and his horse in figure 2. Despite their similar stances, the knights' garments are somewhat different.
[168] *Gawain*, l. 2297.
[169] Andrew and Waldron consider the 'hode' a reference to Gawain's knighthood (p. 291), while Moon argues that it refers to the *capados* (p. 346). Though Moon's conclusion on this point is sensible, the majority of his argument is unstable. For example, he suggests that the *Gawain*-Poet created the term 'capados', styling it after 'Carados' (the winner of a chastity test); conversely, the *MED* states that it is related to *cappe-de-hustes* (entry 'capadōs (n. (1))'), first attested to in 1349.
[170] *Gawain*, ll. 2300-1. 'Why, thresh on, you fierce man! You threaten for too long. | I believe that your heart grows timid within you.'

court: Gawain takes Arthur's hand as he kneels in front of Guinevere.[171] This unity is emphasised by the notable omission of the green girdle. Gawain's failure is unimportant to both the illuminator and the inhabitants of Camelot, who receive Gawain with gentle teasing laughter. Gawain's failure is inconsequential: he has returned home.

This reunification is not comprehensive. Though Gawain is certainly representative of Arthurian knighthood, he is not treated as Camelot's scapegoat or proxy by Bertilak.[172] Rather, Bertilak's treatment of Gawain is personal, recalling Gawain's reputation at the Hostel and discussing his familial affiliation to Arthur and Morgan at the Green Chapel. The latter is a focal shift caused by Bertilak as he discusses Morgan's role and proposes that Gawain returns to the Hostel to reconcile with his aunt Morgan. Instead of reintegration with Camelot, Bertilak suggests that Gawain reunite a different part of his family. This reconciliation is prefigured in the illuminations, where Gawain begins separated from Arthur's court [fig. 2], with his first physical connection being a touch from the Lady [fig. 3]. In this bedroom scene, the arrangement of the textiles' colours (blue curtains like Arthur's dress, red bed like Gawain's surcoat, green blanket like the Knight's colour) suggest Gawain's position between Arthur and the Knight, Morgan's servant. Though Gawain acts as emissary from Arthur to the Knight, Bertilak proposes reunion between Gawain and Morgan (and, potentially, between Arthur and Morgan). However, Gawain refuses to act as an intermediary upon discovering Morgan's role, rejecting reconciliation for his own reintegration to Camelot.

In colour and shape, narrative and image, Gawain's garments explicate his relationships and track changing morality, authority, and purpose as Gawain moves from personal fragmentation to social integration. This fracturing is echoed in the first illumination, where Gawain is represented two times in arguably different clothes [fig. 2]. Within the Hostel, garments function inversely to how they are expected: Gawain is unresponsive to the Lady's amorousness despite his nudity and disloyal despite his blue attire. His rich arming cote indicates first nobility, but after his Hostel stay the cote's newly-described opulence suggests an inappropriate

[171] Hilmo notes similarities between Arthur and Gawain's portrayal and Christ raising Adam in depictions of the harrowing of Hell (p. 159).
[172] As argued by Eagan, p. 48, and Levy, p. 91.

emphasis on appearance over substance. In a way, the brown mantle predicts these disjunctions as an ambiguous garment presented in restrictive surroundings. Though Gawain's perjury and retention of the girdle are his own actions, they are the result of his stay at the Hostel, just as his fractured form in the initial illumination results from the Knight's entrance into Camelot.

Like Gawain, Bertilak is marked by a fragmentation of identity and interaction that delineates his multiple influences. In the fourteenth century, personal fragmentation was a present concern as new clothes reformed the body. These garments were literally pieced together to form skirts, sleeves, bodies. The spectrum of shapes available by the end of the century—from plain, flowing, conservative cuts to tight exposure and voluminous, dagged extravagances—divulged considerable information about a person physically, morally, and socially.[173] In *Gawain*, this physical fragmentation exposes the internal disruption developed by the narrative. Bertilak is naturally fragmented by his triplicate identity and Gawain is fractured by his relationships.

Although both characters dress as nominal courtly equals, in the narrative the Green Knight dresses in a tight cote (1340s) while Gawain wears tunics with sailing skirts (1360s). This disparity is followed in the illuminations: the Knight has a puffed torso (1360s) while Gawain's garments are more relaxed (1370s onward). Conversely, in the narrative Gawain also wears a *bleaunt* (thirteenth and early fourteenth century, potentially archaicising), and his cote in the illuminations of the Green Chapels is quite similar in shape to the Knight's puffed torso [figs. 2 and 4].[174] Overall, Gawain's clothes belong to longer-lasting styles, while the Knight is outmoded and out of step with society; this is appropriately Otherworldly. At the same time, Gawain's *bleaunt* moves him from the outdated fashion potentially worn by the Knight into a style so archaic that it suggests airs of royalty; conversely, the illumination seems to reject the characters' disparities by giving them similarly-shaped cotes when mounted. Although this implies Gawain's similarity to the Green Knight, it also serves to remind the reader that though the Knight appears wild at first, he is dressed in a courtly manner. This is suitable, for Gawain and Bertilak serve siblings.

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[173] Craymer, p. 50; Denny-Brown, p. 53.
[174] Hilmo, p. 158.

This equivalency is seen in their four shared colours: red, white, and gold, with green added to this with Gawain's acceptance of the girdle.[175] Only Gawain's blue is individual. Both white and gold are simply markers of expense, appearing on their rich garments due to furs, embroidery, and decorations. Yet while Gawain's red cote is representative of his reputation, in the Knight's eyes it is demonic; the red of the Host's beard is duplicitous, foreshadowing his true identity, and calls attention to the brown mantle that incorporates Gawain into the Hostel. These colours highlight a sort of reciprocal re-suiting drawn between Gawain and Bertilak by their colours, clothes, and embroidery, which Gawain's blue deviates from. However, what appears to be a rejection of their congruencies is in fact an affirmation, for Gawain wears the blue to conceal his acceptance of the green girdle. His attempted deception is not unlike Bertilak's successful ones, but as he places the girdle over his cote, Gawain appears ignorant that like the Knight he shall wear green to his beheading.

This connection is all the more blatant because Bertilak is typified by greenness, a literal nature-challenger in that he has challenged Gawain's nature.[176] In return, Gawain refuses to accept his fate passively (rejecting his knighthood and autonomy) or engage in a last amorous affair (thus rejecting his courtesy, fidelity, and patroness the Virgin Mary). Instead, he mediates between the two by accepting and concealing the girdle.[177] This is a defensive measure that only breaks the exchange game; it does not completely rebuff the Host's hospitality. Therefore, Bertilak excuses Gawain's deception because it stemmed from Gawain's fear rather than anything intrinsically false in his temperament. As this scheme's director, Bertilak is also best suited to judge Gawain's response, and embraces a flexible morality that supports Gawain's love of life.[178] At the same time, Gawain's mediating choices and the two descriptions of his arming cote demonstrate that Gawain is as enigmatic as his adversary. Finally, while Bertilak's reply is sensible from an Otherworldly character covered in the colour of natural life, the similar response from the Arthurian court at the end suggests that one purpose of the

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[175] Blanch, p. 75, notes the sharing of red, white, and gold, but omits green.
[176] Johnson, pp. 50 and 74, notes that Gawain's adventures generally lead him to self-knowledge.
[177] For further on Gawain's acceptance of the girdle, see Chapter 6.
[178] Crane, *Performance*, p. 171; *Gawain*, l. 2358.

narrative was to indicate how choices in chivalric life could be far more ambiguous than generally portrayed in romances.

The close alignment of Gawain and Bertilak's garments echoes the relationship of their sibling superiors. Indeed, Bertilak and Gawain served as their champions (Morgan sent willing Bertilak in her stead; in taking the axe from Arthur, Gawain becomes his uncle's substitute), and their affiliation is worn on their body in a manner less blatant than heraldry.[179] Their clothes' disparities are superficial, their similarities ubiquitous. Both are ambiguous. Together, they cannot be dichotomised or polarised; their roles are not that of either/or, but both/and. Gawain is winner and failure, Bertilak is adversary and righteous judge, and their superiors are rivals and relatives. Thus it is right that at the finale Bertilak invites Gawain home as a former opponent, not an enemy: they have finished their roles in this relational ambiguity, and may act as friendly peers.

Conclusion: Perception and Deception

Both *Gawain* and *Meliador* use fourteenth-century colour and clothing trends to illuminate specific narrative points, though they employ these items differently. This is especially apparent in the texts' uses of blue and red. *Meliador* uses blue's value as a prestige colour to create an 'anonymous' identity for the eponymous hero that is representative of his worth. Conversely, *Gawain* subverts the colour of loyalty into a subterfuge while concurrently acknowledging the deception by covering the blue *bleaunt* with a surcoat. Red functions similarly: while in *Meliador* it positions Agamanor as the equal opposite of Meliador, in *Gawain* it serves to contrast and align Gawain and Bertilak through exploiting ambiguous colour associations.

Moreover, costume supports subterfuge in both texts, and specific garments such as Gawain's long blue *bleaunt* and Meliador and Lansonnés' pleated black disguises indicate attempts to manipulate perception. Meliador's plot in particular explores how a knight can achieve love and prowess suitably without the aid of his social background. Meliador's mercantile attire rejects his blue colournym, for its use might achieve his ends (Hermondine's love) without any personal effort, which would be inappropriate and unchivalric; at the same time, these disguises invoke

[179] Johnson, p. xii, notes the *Gawain*-Poet's understanding of social hierarchy; Besserman, p. 255, argues that Bertilak was 'enchanted into subservience by Morgan', but nothing in the text indicates that Bertilak was a reluctant servant.

social expectations and stereotypes of *villain*s and merchants. Using proper costume, props, and help from Lansonnés, Meliador is made neither suspiciously excellent nor classless; striking a happy medium, he is able to fulfil his hereditary nobility without resting upon it, a requirement of the tournament and of winning Hermondine. This is starkly different from Agamanor, whose narrative strand examines the literary tropes extant in Meliador's plot through Agamanor's initial reception as a painter and the difficulties introduced to his romance with Phenonée by the tournament's requirement for anonymity. While Meliador's disguise is transparent, its outcome preordained by the narrative as well as literary tradition, Agamanor's subterfuge is messier and more realistic, and he must work around his multiple invoked anonymities (as a painter and the Red Knight) for the correct outcome. However, though these subterfuges have different degrees of success, both lead to the proper outcome (*ordenance*).

Conversely, the Arthurian world of *Gawain* rejects any sense of *ordenance*. Most obvious in Gawain's usage of the blue *bleaunt* for an act of disloyalty, the clothes and colours in this narrative upend expectations. Both Gawain and Bertilak change as their garments do, their shifting subterfuges fragmenting their identities in the same manner as their clothes disrupt their bodies. Deception becomes a relative term, for Bertilak seems to be disguised regardless of his role (indeed, he speaks the most frankly when he is the most inhuman) and Gawain is constantly influenced by Bertilak (through the Hostel and its inhabitants) despite his apparent autonomy in choosing garments. Though Bertilak's attire demonstrates the ambiguity of his forms and Gawain's items track his progressive return to an incomplete cohesion, they also emphasise the characters' roles in a sibling rivalry.

Though the authors of both narratives were undoubtedly influenced by contemporary trends, their sartorial use is not arbitrary. Both employ apparel in processes that conceal identities and intentions; in neither narrative can costume fully reveal identity and intent. Instead, these garments manipulate characters within the narrative to obscure purpose (Meliador and Bertilak) as well as confuse characters and audience (Agamanor and Gawain). In some cases the audience may comprehend while the characters are confused (Meliador), but in other cases clarity is nonexistent (Bertilak). Prowess and courtesy, boldness and gentility may be assisted by garb

(Meliador) or used with clothes to bolster a deception (Gawain). Multiple levels suggest a plurality of interpretations, from character to narrator to author to illuminators to audience(s), and worn items manipulate the level of transparency allowed to these interpretations. Costume can conceal intent even as it reveals identity.

Chapter 3: Acting the Knight: Arms and Armour

> [Il a] donné hÿaume, espée, escu,
> Lance, cheval et tel harnois,
> Que doit avoir chevaliers drois,
> Qui se voelt faire renommer
> Et par nom des dames amer.[1]

This admonition, given by the Irish knight Dagor to a young love-sick Sagremor on his need to behave as a knight should, lists a knight's proper equipment. These are garments and worn accessories made of metal, leather, and wood instead of cloth. As specialised and practical as everyday clothes, these were worn in peace and war for a spectrum of combative situations.[2] Yet despite their practical function a knight's armour and weaponry were also part of his personal display. Arms and armour have the same informative qualities as cloth garments, and writers of books of chivalry wrote extensively on the moral and spiritual properties that different armaments suggested.[3] As the outside of a man should reflect the inside, a knight's armour should reflect chivalric ideals.[4] *Meliador* frames these ideals in the proclamation of the tournament-quest when King Hermont's herald announces that the quest is for those who are 'preus, hardis, et chevalereus | et sus les armes curieus';[5] that is, for the best knights, diligent in matters concerning feats of arms and desiring to pursue the knowledge that comes from greater experience in those arms. Knighthood is not static. Rather, it requires activity and dedication in both the courtly and combative realms.

To the intersection of knightly deeds, arms, and armour, Dagor's advice adds that by winning renown Sagremor shall win a lady's love. By implying that a lady's love is roused by honour gained in righteous wars and tourneys (spilling blood, defeating rivals), Dagor suggests that knighthood rewards violent acts with peaceful prizes: for a knight to advance in armed and social realms, he must excel in arms. This cultural paradigm raises arms and armour beyond practical objects. Instead, they

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[1] *Meliador*, ll. 25965-70. '[He has] given you helm, sword, shield, | lance, horse and such armour | as a proper knight must have | who seeks to win renown | and by that name the love of ladies'.
[2] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 1; Juliet Vale, p. 65.
[3] See Charny, particularly §§36, 40, 42, and 43; Antoine de la Sale, 'Traité des anciens et des nouveaux tournois', in *Antoine de la Sale: La Fabrique de l'œuvre et de l'écrivain*, ed. by Sylvie LeFèvre (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 299-324; and Llull, pp. xli-xlii and 76-89.
[4] Baldwin, p. 23.
[5] *Meliador*, ll. 2846-7. 'Valiant, courageous, and chivalrous | and dedicated to deeds of arms.'

are integral to an individual's advancement. One cannot be a knight without armour. Consequently, this chapter examines how arms and armour in *Meliador* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are used for personal, individualised display that alters perception of characters and mediates between the amorous and violent requirements of chivalry.

Tournament Society

Before discussing the objects involved, their context (combat culture of the fourteenth century) should be considered. Both armed games and battle were closely linked to 'the cult of chivalry' that conflated the acts and concepts of the crusades (loosely, violence justified through religious devotion) with the ideals of the nobility (courage, loyalty, devotion, and honour).[6] Armed games grew out of unit training for cavalry, omitting the lower echelons of military forces in favour of horse-bound warriors; because of this, a strong relationship remained between military participation (and the ability to engage in such) and achievements in armed games.[7] As armed games developed greater pageantry, they concurrently became more international and exclusive, limited to those who could afford the spectacle. Within this restricted sector, such games offered opportunities for individual advancement while simultaneously distinguishing the nobility as exceptional.[8] In these games a knight may surmount his circumstances through prowess, supporting the principle that rank should be secondary to chivalric merit, but the equipment and training required for such games meant that contestants needed a privileged, generally noble background with access to considerable resources.

It is artificial to distinguish clearly between armed games and battles, for combative experiences existed on a spectrum where warfare was most esteemed.[9] However, certain distinctions were made between types of encounters and their

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[6] Malcolm Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 1 and 27.
[7] Andrew Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses: Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), pp. 33-4; Barker, pp. 13, 22-3, and 120; Crane, *Performance*, p. 7; Maurice Keen and Juliet Barker, 'The Medieval Kings and the Tournament', in *Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages*, by Maurice Keen, 83-101 (p. 97).
[8] Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 143; Byles, p. xxxviii; Keen, *Nobles*, p. 80; Juliet Vale, p. 58; Malcolm Vale, pp. 20-1. Byles notes that two translators of Ramón Llull's *Libra del Orde de Cauayleria,* Gilbert de la Haye and William Caxton, respectively disagreed on whether knighthood should be restricted to nobility or 'democratic' (p. xxxix).
[9] Charny, §§3 and 7.

dangerousness. To widen a distinction made between jousting encounters by Malcolm Vale to encounters overall, there were games of peace (*à plaisance*, with blunts) and games of violence (*à outrance*, with edged weapons).[10] Beginning in the thirteenth century, games *à plaisance* began to be typified less by combative events (that included mounted and unmounted trials) and more by trappings, which included pageantry, ceremonies, and celebrations that emphasised the spectators' roles.[11] Combat *à plaisance* was friendly and peaceable, tempered war-games enacted by the military fraternity which the whole of noble society could attend and appreciate.

The most highly regarded game was the mêlée tournament or *tournoi,* a miniature battle with hundreds of knights, armed with their war gear, divided into two teams.[12] The *tournoi* was violent military training, more prestigious because it used the sword instead of the lance (the weapon of the two-contestant joust).[13] While both English and French voices (including Christine de Pizan and William Caxton) called for compulsory national tournaments in the fifteenth century, the last English mêlée was held in 1342.[14] As the fourteenth century closed, group combats were superseded in popularity by single combats such as the joust. Jousts *à plaisance* were only moderately safer than combat *à outrance*, and collisions and literally sideways tactics were not uncommon until the dividing barrier was introduced in the 1420s.[15]

Games *à outrance* and *à plaisance* occurred often during border squabbles and sieges. Knights jousted during war when artificial errantry generated random encounters, their wanderings undoubtedly inspired by romance. In the fourteenth century, such jousts were particularly common during English campaigns in France and in the Scottish borders. However, in 1348 Scottish knights were ambushed at Berwick after being lured there under pretences of a tournament. This surprise broke

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[10] Malcolm Vale, p. 70, continues that these terms functioned as actual distinctions for the joust by the middle of the fourteenth century.
[11] Ayton, *Knights,* p. 36; de la Sale, §55; Maurice Keen, *Nobles*, p. 51; Juliet Vale, p. 59.
[12] Barker, p. 13; Blair, p. 156.
[13] Ayton, *Knights*, pp. 33-4; Malcolm Vale, p. 68.
[14] Barker, p. 18; Keen and Barker, p. 96; Juliet Vale, p. 94. The prestige which René d'Anjou and his contemporaries ascribed to the *tournoi* may reflect the prevalence of jousts: as jousts became the combat *de rigeur* in the fourteenth century, the rarity of the *tournoi* solidified its prestige.
[15] Sidney Anglo, in 'How to Win at Tournaments: The Techniques of Chivalric Combat', *Antiquaries Journal*, 67 (1988), 248-64, noted that jousting with a barrier is called 'tilting' (p. 255).

tournament conventions, and tourneys were not held in the Scottish borders again until the 1380s. Concurrently, tourneys in France increased.[16]

Distinctions between games *à plaisance* and combat *à outrance* were significantly blurred by their shared combatants and correspondence with military campaigns (an ambiguity that shall be explored in *Gawain*). Notably, it is the intention and trappings around these acts that indicate they served starkly different social functions. Games *à plaisance* were a cultural event in which men and women of a certain social class may attend and interact, while games *à outrance* occurred in a male-dominated sphere in which acts of war also occurred. Yet because fourteenth-century warfare tactics increasingly used archers, infantry, and cannon, war differed drastically from games' combat techniques.[17] Games *à outrance* were in many ways as artificial as games *à plaisance*.

This artificiality was supported by royal patronage of armed games, which increased the financial cost to participants and transformed the games into ceremonial occasions in which participants engaged in combative theatre.[18] While in previous centuries francophone society allowed and enjoyed armed games and the English royalty disliked them, the attitudes reversed somewhat in the fourteenth century: royal sponsorship and regulatory attempts were more common in England, contrasting with French royal disapproval. Events were still dominated by 'French terminology and French fashions' until the fifteenth century, when such was supplanted by Burgundian influences.[19] Games were international in attendance and their theatrical portrayals and conscious artificiality reinforced the similarities and relationships of this international armigerous class.

Games found inspiration in romances, and in many events combatants impersonated literary knights or competed *incognito* (as in *Meliador*).[20] In the fourteenth century, this conscious theatricality was aided by visored and closed-faced helms, allowing a knight to assume anonymity or a fictional identity (through

[16] Barker, pp. 30-8 and 101.
[17] Ayton, *Knights*, p. 36.
[18] Keen and Barker, p. 97.
[19] Barker, pp. 4 (qtd.), 45, and 56.
[20] Twycross and Carpenter, p. 112; Juliet Vale, p. 38

adopting a literary knight's heraldry).[21] Such attempts to embody chivalric ideals were most explicit in Round Table tournaments, armed games *à plaisance* with Arthurian themes that emphasised the social trappings.[22] Round Table events flourished in the thirteenth century and continued into the fourteenth, with the first recorded in Cyprus in 1223. This was followed by events in Flanders (1235), Saffron Walden (1256), Le Hem (1278), Warwick (1279), and Haarlem (1333). Several were staged at Kenilworth (1252, 1279, and 1282) and multiple Tables were hosted by Edward I (1284 and 1290), while in 1242 Henry III banned a Round Table because he was not able to attend. Other armed games took Arthurian themes and impersonations outwith the Round Table, such as the challenges of Ulrich von Lichtenstein in 1240 and a tournament at Tournai in 1331. However, the pinnacle of these events was the 1344 Round Table hosted by Edward III at Windsor, which invited people from the Low Countries, Burgundy, Scotland, and Germany, and was attended by 'two kings, two queens, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cornwall, ten earls, nine countesses, and many other people of importance'.[23]

Armed games invoked political elements (enlistment on one side could be interpreted as allegiance), and Round Table events were especially propagandic for Edward I and Edward III, who also celebrated the close of armed campaigns with tournaments.[24] While Round Tables were ascribed an almost supernatural ability to create 'fraternal love' between international peers, Edward I used his 1284 tournament (in celebration of conquering Wales) to solidify his rule: at the tournament, he received the allegedly newly-rediscovered crown of King Arthur.[25] His grandson pushed this propaganda further at the 1344 Round Table in which he

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[21] Bruckner, p. 71; Twycross and Carpenter, pp. 7 and 106-7. For further on Arthurian heraldry, see Chapter 4.

[22] Richard Barber, 'Why Did Edward III Hold the Round Table? The Chivalric Background', in *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor*, ed. by Julian Munby, Richard Barber and Richard Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 84-99 (p. 97); Barker, pp. 66 and 154-5; Ruth Cline, 'The Influence of Romances on the Tournaments of the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 20 (1945), 204-11(p. 204); Sylvia Huot, *Madness in Medieval French Literature: Identities Found and Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 29.

[23] Information on the various Round Table tournaments are from Barber, 'Chivalric Background', pp. 86-90, 95, and 99; Barker, pp. 67 and 88-9; Cline, pp. 204-7, qtd. 207; and Keen and Barker, p. 95.

[24] Richard Barber**,** 'Why Did Edward III Hold the Round Table? The Political Background', in *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor*, ed. by Julian Munby, Richard Barber, and Richard Brown, 77-83 (p. 78); Barker, pp. 50 and 66.

[25] Richard Barber, 'What was a Round Table?', in *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor*, ed. by Julian Munby, Richard Barber, and Richard Brown, 69-76 (p. 72, qtd.); Cline, p. 207.

assumed the role of Arthur.[26] Instead of masking his social status, Edward III used the tournament to reinforce it, declaring his privilege and right to rule the participants by physically embodying the legendary leader. Potentially a response to the French use of Charlemagne, Edward III's event was opposed by concurrent festivities held by Philippe VI, requiring international invitees to choose between two kings.

The influence of romances on tournament society is palpable. While there are few Round Tables after 1344, and these are generally confined to bourgeois guilds in the Low Countries,[27] they exemplify the role of games in performing chivalry. Although a knight should view attaining prowess as a life-long pursuit,[28] these tournaments expose a sense that deeds were insufficient. Rather, one must excel at feast as well as on the field. By assuming a fictional persona, a knight may assume the character's merits in place of his own. This counteracts the concept of anonymity in proving one's worth, particularly as the highest ranking competitor was presumably given the most prestigious literary persona. Instead of rejecting social status such role-playing reaffirmed it (as with Edward III). Through theatricality, knights could assert and assume fictional chivalric worth.

Object, Image, and Emblem

The equipment used in tournament society blurred the line between war and peace and invoked the secular chivalric values and religious principles associated with such events.[29] Individual armaments need explication and contextualisation as objects before being discussed in the narratives, for like fabric clothing they are subject to inexplicit and confusing terminology. Using examples from books of chivalry (social symbolism) and illuminations (fictional conceptions), this section considers the fictionalisation of actual armaments. In such a case, these items should be considered the 'top of the line', prestigious pieces preferred in literature and desired for tournaments. Conversely, illuminations shall be treated cautiously, as manuscripts can be more imaginative than accurate with armour.[30]

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[26] Barber, 'What was a Round Table?', p. 43; Barker, p. 13; Newton, p. 19.
[27] Barber, 'Chivalric Background', p. 99.
[28] Charny, §17
[29] This section is indebted to Barker, particularly pp. 162-87, and Blair, particularly pp. 37-78 and 170-83.
[30] See, for example, the leftmost knight's panelled armour in figure 26, which Orientalises the depictions of the other figures, and the scale-armour 'hat' on the falling knight in figure 27. Orientalisation occurs throughout the manuscripts; e.g., figure 28.

As a period of technological experiments and advances in the equipment for war and game, the fourteenth century transitioned the mounted warrior from the mail-based armour of the thirteenth century towards the plate-based armour of the late fifteenth century.[31] While the possession of new plate armour was prestigious, even basic armaments were pricey, and as armour changed over the course of the fourteenth century these costs rose.[32] For example, while a fourteenth-century English knight was considered able to maintain his social position, lifestyle, and holdings with an annual income of £40, engaging in combat (war or games) may be outwith his reach, for outfitting a knight with arms, armour, horse, and other equipment for war cost between £40 and £50.[33] This suggests that 'knighthood' was shifting from an occupation involving mounted combat into a social class, of which only a subset (that with sufficient financial means) was combative.

Before the 1330s, a knight's primary protection was a mail shirt known as a hauberk or haubergeon (depending on length) which was placed over a padded garment known alternately as a gambeson or aketon (depending on the cloth used and its closeness to the skin).[34] The aketon served as the only armour for foot soldiers and poorer warriors, while beneath armour it cushioned the body from blows and protected the armour from bodily secretions. With the rising popularity of plate, all-mail armour became rare after the 1330s; instead, plate pieces were placed over hauberks in a hybrid system.[35] Because plates covered hauberks, it is difficult to say when mail shirts stopped being used.

Plate was more common by the late 1300s. In addition to metal, plate could be made of '*cuir-bouilli* [hard-boiled leather], whalebone or horn'; *cuir-bouilli* limbs were recorded as late as 1388.[36] Initially, the most common plate defence was a coat with sewn-in plates worn over the hauberk, with only rivet-heads on the encasing

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[31] Barker, p. 168.
[32] Parallels are easily drawn with modern technology.
[33] Ayton, 'Arms, Armour, and Horses', p. 188.
[34] Barker, p. 166; Blair, pp. 33 and 46; Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 24. The Royal Armouries has two full shirts of mail in their collections, object numbers VI.655 (late fourteenth-century Italian torso, with sleeves and lining from the nineteenth century) and III.5 (fifteenth-century).
[35] Blair, pp. 37, 41, and 53; Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 23. Zijlstra-Zweens argues that 'the development of solid armour may have favoured the adoption of shorter and closer-fitting clothes' (p. 28), but this is more likely to be a correspondence, not a causation.
[36] Blair, pp. 19.

fabric showing that it was a ‘coat of plates’.[37] By the last quarter of the fourteenth century this was almost fully replaced by solid breastplates (introduced in the 1340s).[38]

Plate pieces for knees and lower legs were already in use around 1300, with overlapping plates for feet appearing a decade later. Plate for arms appeared slightly later than that for legs, but was more advanced than leg armour by the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Foot armour and gauntlets used fewer plates as the century progressed, and the hourglass cuff predominated on gauntlets after 1380.[39] Tubular leg plate can be found around 1335, but was not common until the 1370s, and even after this point mail occurred at openings in plate, particularly at joints [fig. 6].[40] Fully- and partially-open limb armour existed simultaneously as in figure 29, which contrasts the standing knight’s closed leg plates with the unworn piece, its open-backed thigh closed only with a strap.

Helms did not escape fourteenth-century innovations. Though their plate construction was not novel, helms’ shapes and use of mail changed, with the flat-topped cylindrical great helm (worn over a mail coif or hood) replaced by the bascinet (worn over a padded cloth arming cap). A close-fitting helm with a mail aventail to protect the neck and throat, the bascinet had a (re)moveable visor in a variety of shapes and a pointed top; by the early 1400s, this point had moved so far backwards that the back of the helm was nearly straight [fig. 30].[41] Divisions

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[37] Barker, pp. 169-171; Blair, pp. 40-1; Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 23.

[38] Ayton, ‘Arms, Armour, and Horses’, p. 200, suggests that the pair of plates lasted until ‘the mid- to late-fourteenth century’; Blair states that they were popular until 1350 to 1375 (pp. 55-6 and 60); Barker argues that they lasted until 1396 (p. 169). A pair of plates are recorded in 1358 as belonging to William III of Hainault in *Cartulaire des comtes de Hainaut: De l’avènement de Guillaume II à la mort de Jacqueline de Bavière*, vol. 1, ed. by Léopold Devillers (Brussels: Hayez, 1881), p. 559.

[39] The Royal Armouries and the Metropolitan Museum of Art hold similar hourglass gauntlets, respectively objects III.1713 (late fourteenth century, northern Italian) and 29.150.108 (1380s, German); both are shaped around the knuckles to protect a hand when gripping a weapon. The Royal Armouries also hold a vambrace (object III.1714), from the same period and location as the gauntlet. This vambrace is made of three plates, including one cupping the elbow with an attached *couter*, or leaf-shaped projection over the joint (Blair, p. 44).

[40] Blair, pp. 42-4, 63-6, and 74.

[41] Ayton, ‘Arms, Armour, and Horses’, p. 200; Barker, pp. 164-5; Blair, pp. 67-9. In addition to these two helms there was also the kettle-hat (Blair, p. 54), but these do not seem to have been worn often by knights. The Expenses of Strivelyn Castle for 1379-80 record an order of twelve hauberks, twelve bascinets with aventails, and various kettle hats [George Burnett and John Stewart, eds., *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland = Rotuli scaccarii regum Scotorum*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: H.M. General Register House, 1880), p. 654], while the 1389 Inventory of Richard Picque records a bascinet with a gilded aventail [Prosper Tarbé, *Inventaire après le décès de Richard Picque, archevêque de Reims, 1389* (Reims: Société des bibliophiles de Reims, 1842), p. 35]. The Royal Armouries holds figure 25,

between helms for war and games were not clear until the fifteenth century, when the frog-mouthed jousting helm introduced at the end of the fourteenth century gained significant popularity [fig. 31].[42] Though some scholars suggest that fourteenth-century great helms were worn for games *à plaisance* while bascinets were war gear,[43] this is not supported by illuminations, such as figure 21, which mixes the bascinet with the frogmouth helm in a violent situation.[44] Indeed, René d'Anjou's fifteenth-century treaty on tournaments stated that tournament helms should either be bascinets or the contemporaneous 'capeline'.[45]

Described in chivalric manuals, the symbolic value of armaments began with a knight's investiture.[46] Requiring a symbolic re-clothing (preferably in black, white, and red for mortality, purity, and Christ's blood) and the presentation of spurs (as with Lancelot dubbing Galahad in figure 32), this quasi-religious ritual contrasts with a knight's combative exploits.[47] The inclusion of religious elements may have been inspired by the Biblical armorial symbolism from Ephesians 6:10-17, and though the epistle was written in a starkly different armament context, the items listed (belt, breastplate, limbs, shield, helm, and sword) were only partially archaised by technological changes.[48] However, books of chivalry did not use the Biblical symbolism. Focusing instead on the armaments of the mounted warrior, these texts fused chivalric ideals with contemporaneous interpretations of piety.[49] Biblically, the

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a northern Italian late-fourteenth-century bascinet, as well as a 'skull' (object IV.1677), a fourteenth-century helm which looks like a bascinet without mail or visor (though it has holes for such).

[42] Barker, p. 165; Blair, p. 73. An English frogmouth helm from the early fifteenth century, labelled as one for jousting, is object IV.1841 in the Royal Armouries; it contains rectangular tabs to which it could be attached to torso pieces.

[43] Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 25.

[44] Kelly DeVries, in 'What Armour was Worn by Second Crusaders?: Evidence from the Baptismal Font of the Church of San Frediano, Lucca', presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 13 July 2011, suggested that though a style of helm may be more typically be worn for certain activities, actual use depended on personal preference.

[45] René d'Anjou, *Traité*, p. 33.

[46] The chivalric manuals focused upon in this chapter are that of Geoffroi de Charny, the anonymous 'Ordene' in *Raoul de Hodenc:* Le roman des eles *and the Anonymous* Ordene de chevalerie, ed. by Keith Busby (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1983), and the translation of Ramón Llull's book by William Caxton, as well as comparisons made by Byles (editor of Caxton's version) between Llull's original, Caxton's translation, and the translation by Gilbert de la Haye.

[47] Charny, §36; Crane, *Performance*, p. 59; Stewart Gordon, 'A World of Investiture', in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. by Stewart Gordon (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 1-22 (p. 1); 'Ordene', ll. 139, 147, 156, 159-60, 165, and 197-200.

[48] *Biblia Sacra Vulgata,* 4th edition (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1990).

[49] The union of piety and chivalry is especially tangible in Geoffroi de Charny (Kaueper and Kennedy, p. 47), particularly in §§23, 41, 42, and 44.

breastplate was for justice and feet trappings for the peace of the gospel, but for Ramón Llull and his translators the breastplate was considered a 'fortress against vice' and the leg accoutrements symbolic of a knight's duty to mete out justice.[50] This is the general contrast between the two texts: while the epistle uses the armour emblematically, Llull focuses upon aligning the item's use (breastplate protecting vital organs, leg armour protecting active limbs) with a symbolic meaning. Thus, for Llull the gauntlets are symbolic of the actions of a knight's hands: he should use them to praise God and refrain from false oaths, dishonesty, and evil acts.[51] Similarly, though Ephesians describes the helm as representative of eternal life, for Llull and Caxton it stood for 'shamefastnes' or modesty, for its position on the head placed it on the centre of thought and pride.[52]

A knight's gold-decorated spurs have the most intriguing symbolic value. Usually presented at investiture, after the 1330s these were primarily rowel spurs whose wheels resembled little golden suns or stars [figs. 11, 17, 30, and 31].[53] Symbolic of the knightly class, spurs stood for diligence and swiftness, related to how a knight should handle his horse, his most precious knightly accoutrement.[54] Geoffroi de Charny noted that the spurs' gold was a symbolic order to the knight to defeat any innate avarice.[55] This odd act, presenting a knight with a rich object in order to quell greed, served as a sort of inoculation against the sin. It suggests that both investiture and chivalric manuals' armament symbolism serve similarly, for they primarily invoke restraint against evil and dishonourable acts, a relevant concern for those embarking on careers where ransack and ruin were common.

At the same time, the decoration found on armour could contradict spurs' symbolism. Plate could be painted, blued with heat, or covered with expensive fabric and embroidery, and it was common to change fabric on pairs of plates 'to match the

[50] Byles, pp. xli-xlii; Llull, pp. 78-9.
[51] Llull, pp. 82-3.
[52] Ephesians 6:10-17, *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*; Llull, pp. 77-8.
[53] Charny, §36; Blanche M.A. Ellis with Geoff Egan, 'Spurs and Spur Fittings', in *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment*, ed. by John Clark, 124-9 (p. 128).
[54] Peter Coss, 'Knighthood, Heraldry and Social Exclusion in Edwardian England', in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen, 39-68 (p. 47); Llull, p. 79. Such was the social value of these objects that unknighted mercenaries who wore spurs were reviled in the late 1400s (Ellis with Egan, p. 124)
[55] Charny, §36.

colour theme of the new tourneyer's outfit'.[56] It is not coincidental that the embroiderers recorded in the English Great Wardrobe worked under the armourers.[57] Additionally, rivet-heads were often stamped, and after 1325 the edges of plate were frequently decorated, engraved, gilded, silvered, and/or enamelled.[58] These already-expensive objects were viewed as prime for display.

Such display may be related to the differences and modifications that arose in the fourteenth century between armour for game and for war. In games, knights wore painted *cuir-bouilli* crests, cloth mantling, and *aillettes* (flimsy heraldic decorations placed over the shoulder, visible in figure 33), which would have been inappropriately extravagant for war.[59] Additionally, specific jousting saddles with leg protection were introduced in the 1350s, and lance-rests on breastplates and chest-buffers for horses appeared in the last two decades of the fourteenth century [leg protection and chest buffers are visible in fig. 31].[60] However, as indicated by the concurrent use of the bascinet and frogmouth helms, such equipment was not fully differentiated until well into the fifteenth century.

While not technically an armament, the horse was the defining symbol of the mounted warrior. A good war-horse could easily cost £25 (equivalent to a hauberk), and some knights also kept different horses for games.[61] Horses were often decorated as elaborately as their riders, frequently with a trapper, a light garment that reached almost to the ground that served to keep them clean as well as acting as a heraldic garment [figs. 17, 31, and 33].[62] As the horse's importance was supplanted by new fourteenth-century warfare tactics, romantically-inspired mounted games allowed warriors to refocus their talents and funds.[63] Instead of expressing military might in campaigns, knights performed in a venue that reaffirmed their social role. This

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[56] Barker, p. 169 (qtd.); Blair, pp. 54, 170 and 172; Newton, p. 63; Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 23.
[57] Newton, p. 15.
[58] Blair, pp. 170-1 and 173-4.
[59] Barker, p. 181; Blair, p. 45-6 and 48. *Aillettes* appear in the 1313 final inventory of Piers Gaveston [Thomas Rymer, ed., *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliae et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates...*, vol. 2 of 17 (London, 1704-17), p. 204].
[60] Barker, pp. 14, 170 and 175-6; Blair, p. 61; Ralph Moffat, '"Armour pur les Ioustes": The Development of Specialised Armour for Jousting', presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 12 July 2011.
[61] Ayton, 'Arms, Armour, and Horses', p. 188, and *Knights*, p. 36.
[62] Barker, p. 176.
[63] Ayton, *Knights*, pp. 22 (qtd.) and 26.

literary, idealistic context increased the events' specialisation, further distancing knights from actual military action.

This distancing is most apparent in the use of weaponry.[64] Instead of the sword, the 'knightly weapon *par excellence*' used in the *tournoi*, armed games turned to the lance, with the sword being placed on the same level as axes and daggers.[65] This is most explicit in the fifteenth-century axe-fighting manual *Le Jeu de la Hache*, where the (presumably biased) anonymous author placed the axe first in a list of appropriate knightly weapons, followed by the lance; the list concludes with swords.[66] However, the sword retained a symbolic significance in manuals due to its traditional role and cruciform shape, but rather than representing 'gladium Spiritus quod est verbum Dei', its edges stood for reason, chivalry, justice, and Christian fidelity.[67] The swords of Charny, Llull, Caxton, Hay, and the *Ordene* forgo spiritual truth in favour of reinforcing positive masculine virtues with a touch of piety. The sword is a weapon of knights, not a symbol of faith.

Unlike swords, for which a blunt or mock version was used in games *à plaisance*, the same lances were used for both games *à plaisance* and acts *à outrance* in the fourteenth century. The tip of the shaft was removable, allowing a blunt crown of three prongs to be exchanged for a blade [fig. 31].[68] This difference did not always appear in manuscripts. In MS fr. 97 lances are sharp regardless of the situation [fig. 19], and in MS fr. 338 lances are often represented by a single straight, unadorned line [fig. 30]. Conversely, MS fr. 100 draws a distinction between blunted coronal lances and sharps [contrast figs. 31 and 34].

Also intriguing are the inclusion of axes in Llull and the existence of *Le Jeu de la Hache* (the only known axe-fighting manual).[69] Though axes were used by knights in combat as well as symbolically (as with Wolfram von Eschenbach's heraldry, two stylised axes addorsed), the axe was not a distinctively chivalric

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[64] This chapter addresses offensive arms; for shields, see Chapter 4.
[65] Barker, p. 15; Malcolm Vale, *War*, p. 68 (qtd.).
[66] Sidney Anglo, '*Le Jeu de la Hache*: A Fifteenth-Century Treatise on the Technique of Chivalric Axe Combat', *Archaeologia*, 109 (1991), 113-28 (p. 113 and §1).
[67] Byles, pp. xli-xlii; Charny, §36; Ephesians 6:17 (qtd.), *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, 'the sword of the Holy Spirit, which is the Word of God'; Llull, pp. 76-7; 'Ordene', ll. 209-13.
[68] Barker, pp. 177-8.
[69] Anglo, '*Jeu*', p. 113, states that there only two fighting manuals in addition that include axe fighting in their instructions.

weapon.[70] In our manuscripts, it occurs only in MS Arsenal 3479 in a highly-Orientalised context [used by the centre figure in fig. 27] and in MS fr. 97. In the latter manuscript there are six occurrences of battle axes, with the first particularly gruesome [fig. 35]. These battle axes are all long-handled, similar to those depicted in the *Beauchamp Pageants* and carried by the Heart in René d'Anjou's *Le Livre du Coeur d'amour éspris*;[71] *Le Jeu de la Hache* and Caxton's translation of Llull also indicate that knightly axes were pole-arms. Symbolising 'strengthe of courage' necessary to defeat vices, axes were associated with force and the need for restraint from brutality.[72] Although the axe was acceptable for a knight's arsenal, it was a weapon of ferocity, not elegance.

Overall, the fourteenth century was a time of change for armed combat and its accoutrements. Armour transitioned from mail to plate, the mounted warrior was slowly displaced from the battlefield, the *tournoi* and games *à outrance* were superseded by the joust and games *à plaisance*, and there was a corresponding specialisation of gaming armour and shift in the primacy of weaponry. Arms and armour were symbolically representative of chivalric cultural ideals, but the decorative qualities of armour and the performative elements of games denote that such objects were also a significant part of display. This symbolism distanced both participants and spectators from the violent calling of the mounted warrior, their aspects of display aligning them with the spectacle, performance, and relative safety of armed games. By invoking fiction in these highly-specialised and socially-restricted games, noble society was able to affirm its values. Proper armour helped glorify knightly status.

Prowess and Depiction in *Meliador*

The tourneying world of *Meliador* reflects that of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, creating a landscape that resonates with the games held in the Scottish borders during English campaigns.[73] However, while non-Scottish participants in these border altercations often competed with second-rate equipment

[70] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 51.
[71] René d'Anjou, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, ed. and trans. by Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewska (New York: Routledge, 2001), §148; Alexandra Sinclair, ed., *The Beauchamp Pageant* (Donington, Lincolnshire: The Richard III and Yorkist History Trust, 2003).
[72] Llull, pp. 80-1.
[73] Zink, *Froissart et le temps*, p. 128, noted the relation of *Meliador*'s Irish and Scottish settings with Edward III and Richard II's campaigns in those countries.

(unwilling to risk their best *destriers* on the rough Scottish ground), *Meliador* presents items that are the most suitable for fiction: the best.[74] In its trappings and Arthurian subject matter, *Meliador* invokes the fantasy of Round Table games and imitates in fiction reality's inspiration from romance. Art, imitating life, imitates art.

There are two specific facets of arms and armour important to *Meliador*'s fictional portrayal: the language employed and objects' uses.[75] Using a limited vocabulary and a corpus of similar phrases, the narrative primarily presents an impression of arms and armour instead of specific information. Weapons are no more than 'les lances' or 'bonne epée', and armour is often limited to 'hÿaume' and 'escu'. This conceptual approach relies upon inexplicit and repetitive formulation, and was possibly employed for three reasons. First, formulaic devices ease an audience's comprehension;[76] as *Meliador* was read aloud at least once, this would be essential. Second, such vocabulary serves as a rhetorical device that, through its repetition, highlights the surrounding context.[77] Third and final, the narrative does not often require closer description. Knights' accoutrements are mentioned in passing only because knights should have these things.

This summative quality is particularly apparent in the narrative's use of *harnois* and *parures*. Together, these words signify all of a knight's accoutrements for war: *parures* are the cloth items that often serve as identifiers (such as arming coats and horses' trappers), while *harnois* indicates both equestrian equipment and a knight's armour (including items of soft leather, *cuir-bouilli*, and metal).[78] Though these descriptions are figural, such economic elision of a knight's appearance provides the audience with all necessary information. A similar approach is also taken with longer phrases. For example, by using 'armés et montés a cheval' the narrative signals that the character is prepared to act in a combative role.[79] Similar expressions were already 'rigid, stereotyped phrase[s]' in the twelfth century, but

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[74] Ayton, *Knights,* p. 213.
[75] Though this discussion notes the formulaic nature of Froissart's word choice, the focus upon content and intent instead of formalistic uses limits this line of inquiry, and invites future studies of such in *Meliador*.
[76] Coleman, p. 74.
[77] Sarah Kay, 'The Nature of Rhetoric in the *Chanson de Geste*', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 94 (1978), 305-20 (pp. 310-1).
[78] Blair, p. 9; John Clark, 'Introduction: Horses and Horsemen in Medieval London', in *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment*, ed. by John Clark, 1-32 (p. 43).
[79] *Meliador*, l. 12903. Other variations, such as 'c'armés fu' (l. 10520), are found throughout the text.

they remain effective and easily denote a knight's keenness or readiness with statements such as 'le glave ou poing, ou col la targe' and 'hÿaume ou chief, ou poing la lance'.[80]

Though detailed descriptions of arms and armour are uncommon in the narrative, these items are still used metaphorically. In particular, there are two uses of metonymy that bookend the tournament-quest, wherein King Hermont's herald describes the number of 'hÿaumes' that participated.[81] The number of knights swells from 500 to 1500 by the second description, completing the octosyllabic meter and rhyme with its couplet 'le marce des deux royaumes'.[82] However, this metonymic rhyme also emphasises the structure of the tournament quest. By employing the helmet to indicate the number of knights present instead of swords, lances, or 'chevaliers', the herald recalls the tournament's required anonymity, for helms obscured one's face. Further, in covering the centre of reason *hÿaumes* stresses the knights' autonomy in their quest-related actions, most apparent in Meliador's conscious adoption of new anonymous colours. Finally, the rhyming line signals that the tournament-quest takes place primarily in the 'borders' of Scotland and Arthur's lands, invoking the border squabbles between England and Scotland that occurred during Froissart's life.

At the beginning of the tournament-quest, King Hermont's herald also orders knights to take their lances, shields, helms, and swords, and enter these 'aventures | des armes'.[83] Though any proper knight should know what he needs in a tournament and/or quest, such pronouncements were presumably frequently-used formulae, for it is echoed in René d'Anjou's fifteenth-century treatise on properly creating tournaments. In this, the herald announcing the tournament should include that participants must have appropriate harness, tourneying equipment, and heraldic identifiers.[84] As Froissart relied on several professional heralds as sources for his *Chroniques*, he may have been versed in such announcements, the circularity of

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[80] C. W. Aspland, *A Syntactical Study of Epic Formulas and Formulaic Expressions Containing the –ant Forms in Twelfth Century French Verse* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1970), p. 56 (qtd.); *Meliador*, ll. 4866 and 4883. Dembowski notes that Froissart also used formulaic transitions (*Jean Froissart*, pp. 91-2).
[81] *Meliador*, ll. 2930 and 28877.
[82] Ll. 2931 and 28876.
[83] Ll. 2921-4, qtd. 2923-4.
[84] René d'Anjou, *Traité*, p. 28.

chivalric culture drawing inspiration from and giving inspiration to romances.[85] By combining the necessity of weapons with the declaration of the prize (Hermondine), Froissart's fictional herald frames the events as suitable for female attendance (therefore presumably games *à plaisance*). Here, the inclusion of a woman serves the same purpose as investiture and armament symbolism: it distances the quest's compulsory violence by asserting a more noble purpose.

Though references to arms and armour are often collective and generic in *Meliador*, there are a few comments upon individual characters' arms and armour that exploit ambiguity for social observations. For example, when Meliador fights Dagor, he strikes Dagor so strongly upon the head that his blade sticks in the split helm, but he does not pierce the coif.[86] The presence of a (mail) coif would suggest that the Irish knight wears archaic armour, appropriate for the narrative's backwards, uncouth, unchivalric Irish, but peculiar for one who will give Sagremor good advice;[87] for this reason, Dagor may wear an antiquated coif to indicate that he is an older, wiser knight. However, the arming cap worn beneath bascinets in the fourteenth century was also called a coif. [88] Though at a later point Meliador is described as lacing his own coif, both mail and cloth coifs had thongs or laces to secure them.[89] If a cloth coif was expected by the audience, Dagor's preservation from Meliador's blow is impressive. This is a potential rejection of literary convention, wherein the hero's sword cracks his opponent's head, used elsewhere in the narrative. As Dagor is already exceptional as a worthy Irish knight, his survival here could be underlining this fact. By not describing the material of Dagor's coif, the narrative exploits the ambiguity to play with convention while suggesting a multi-layered commentary involving negative views of the Irish, archaic prestige for Dagor, and the almost magical preservation of the worthy Irish knight.

Ambiguity concerning archaic and contemporaneous armour is found throughout the narrative. For example, Balastre's haubergeon (a short mail shirt common to the first part of the fourteenth century) is not able to defend against a

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[85] Juliet Vale, p. 46.
[86] *Meliador*, ll. 24035-45.
[87] Jeanne-Marie Boivin, 'Le mythe irlandais dans la littérature du Moyen Âge', in *Pour une mythologie du Moyen Âge*, ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner and Dominique Boutet (Paris: École normale supérieure, 1988), 137-54 (pp. 144 and 147).
[88] Blair, p. 78.
[89] *Meliador*, ll. 4195.

blow from Meliador. Balastre is wounded so greatly that for three months he feels pain in his shoulder where the lance's steel tip struck; however, Balastre is lucky enough that the lance does not lose its tip in his wound.[90] While this may suggest a subtle bias against older forms of armour such as mail, halfway through the text the narrator asserts that knightly equipment is more expensive 'ores', and that Meliador wears the best armour available at his time.[91] Yet this contrasts with a helm worn by Lucanor which fastens 'derriere et devant'.[92] Helms within the narrative are usually 'lachiet' (a verb that could correspond with nearly every helm), and the odd description of Lucanor's helm suggests that it is attached in the front and back to torso defences. As the frog-mouthed helm is generally thought to have become popular around 1400, Lucanor's helm may be a thirteenth-century great helm, which was still used for jousting in the fourteenth century.[93] Whereas Froissart's use of arms and armour imply an understanding of its use for potential commentary (be it political, literary, or social), the exact intent here is unclear.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the detailed descriptions of Meliador provide a complicated but comprehensible picture of costume's use. Arriving for the first tournament, Meliador is richly outfitted with several horses, including packhorses carrying furred cloths, coffers, coins, and everything as it should be 'en leur ordenance'.[94] Though he is called a knight, this introduction situates Meliador not as a warrior but as the son of the duke of Cornwall, a prestigious individual with economic and political power.[95] Meliador confirms his right to his social status by excelling during the first tournament. His helm takes many blows, demonstrating that he was in thickest parts of the *tournoi*'s fray, and the narrative states that he gives a good show of chivalric worth.[96] As he competes *incognito*, the ladies cannot tell whether he has a brown or clear face, indicating that his helm covers his face.[97] Meliador does not need his hereditary status to be deemed worthy.

[90] *Meliador*, ll. 11238-50.
[91] Ll. 18841-5. 'Now'.
[92] Ll. 25236-7.
[93] Blair, p. 73.
[94] *Meliador*, ll. 2571-4.
[95] Ll. 2586.
[96] Ll. 2666-72.
[97] Ll. 7585-7.

While contemporary historic figures were known to disguise themselves for tournaments (for both practical reasons and because of romantic inspiration),[98] Meliador's purpose is purely the stuff of romance. He creates a new, unproven identity to honour Hermondine, but when ordering new *parures* his description is given to symbolic purposes. Colour and heraldic design take precedence over *harnois*, as does ascertaining that it is '[fait] a me samblance', and Meliador mimics Hermont's herald in his formulaic use of 'hÿaume et targe, espée et lance'.[99] The armour's shape is unimportant to Meliador, for he is more interested in display and symbolism than technology. Though the equipment must be of good quality, its protective purpose is little more than a footnote. However, in practical terms the text's original audience would know that the request for new arms is a great motion towards love, for it requires a significant financial commitment from Meliador. His displayed wealth at his introduction is practical: it indicates that he can afford an expensive symbolic act.

The armour's symbolic purpose is reinforced when Meliador's squire Lansonnés orders the armour pieces, which are

> A tantos fait et carpenté
> Armëures bonnes et belles
> Et vous di que blewes sont celles.[100]

This implies that the armaments are blue as well as the cloth sections, and is reinforced by later statements that Meliador's lance 'fu en bleu tainte'.[101] Though coloured armour figured in poetic narratives from the twelfth century onward, the striking of Dagor's helm demonstrates that Froissart is not interested in simply copying precedent; indeed, the all-over colour here also recalls fourteenth-century trends for either painting metal or covering it in cloth. The latter is most likely, for painted armour was uncommon until the turn of 1400.[102] Cloth-covering is possibly supported when Lyone describes Meliador as the one with 'la brongne perse' (a similar description occurs with Agamanor, who wears 'sa rouge brongne'); while

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[98] Weston, p. 257.
[99] *Meliador*, ll. 3287-95 and 3290, qtd. 3291 and 3290. '[Made] to suit me'; 'helm and shield, sword and lance'
[100] Ll. 3325-7. 'Made and constructed immediately | good and lovely armour | and I tell you that those are blue.'
[101] L. 3909. 'Was painted/dyed blue'.
[102] Blair, p. 172.

usually a coat of mail, a *brongne* may also be a solid breastplate.[103] As Meliador's first battle only briefly notes his new armaments ('en ses nouvelles armeüres') at the same time as noting that he is 'le chevalier au soleil d'or',[104] the emphasis for both *brongnes* is on the armour's display, not its construction.

Practicalities of armour receive more attention when used to demonstrate or conceal a knight's character or identity, such as during the third tourney when the narrative notes that Meliador has spent all day in armour.[105] As in the first tournament, when the ladies cannot determine his status, character, or physical appearance, this statement signifies that Meliador will be identified for the full day by his blue armour as he performs feat after knightly feat, his social identity obscured by helm, armaments, and heraldry.[106] At other times, armour is used to represent a knight's prowess. When fighting Agamar, Meliador's armour serves to highlight his abilities, for it is strongly constructed and his shield turns away many blows.[107] However, as Meliador is the best knight, this suggests that instead of protecting Meliador through its quality, the armour actually derives its strength from its wearer. Meliador's armour is strong because he wears it; his shield turns away blows because he holds it. This is supported by the battle's end, a display of Meliador's strength: he cracks Agamar's helm into two and pierces the coif to wound Agamar's head.[108]

A particularly interesting character to study in relation to armour is Sagremor, depicted in *Meliador* as a young man desperately desiring to achieve knighthood. While lists of arms serve as set phrases elsewhere, these are vitally important to Sagremor's development, for he must be concerned not only with acting the part but with the materials with which he achieves knighthood. Like Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval (though more refined), Sagremor needs to have knightly equipment before he can become a knight.[109] As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the lovelorn Sagremor is reprimanded by Dagor on his need to take appropriate equipment ('hÿaume, espée, escu, | lance, cheval et tel harnois') and behave as a proper

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[103] *DMF*, 'broigne, subst. fém.'; Hindley, Langley, and Levy, 'broigne', p.93; *Meliador*, ll. 18620 and 18675.
[104] *Meliador*, ll. 3418 and 3420.
[105] Ll. 16281.
[106] Ll.7585-7587.
[107] Ll.3969-73.
[108] Ll. 3977-80.
[109] Chrétien de Troyes, 'Le Conte du Graal', ed. by Charles Méla, in *Chrétien de Troyes: Romans*, ed. by Michel Zink (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1994), 942-1211 (ll. 930-1194).

knight.[110] Without such items, one cannot win renown and therefore receive the love of ladies because of that reputation.[111] One cannot be a knight without the correct equipment. Thoroughly chastened, Sagremor takes up his arms for 'le renom'.[112] Though straightforwardly translated as 'renown', 'renom' also puns on the concept of renaming. Like a spiritual rebirth or investiture, Sagremor becomes a new person by resuming his knightly accoutrements and taking on the physical form, chivalric convictions, and socio-political role of a knight.

Taking place near the end of the text, Sagremor's arming also serves to echo Meliador's re-dressing; however, their intentions are opposite. While Meliador needs to remain anonymous in his honouring of Hermondine, Sagremor desires to enter into the Arthurian world as himself. This is evident as Sagremor is welcomed into Guinevere's chambers, like the young 'Gauwain and Yewain'.[113] Gawain and Ywain act as ciphers for Arthurian knights, their names supporting Sagremor's validity as one of them as Guinevere accepts and legitimises Sagremor's re-assumption of knighthood.[114] Furthermore, unlike Meliador, Sagremor describes his new shield and armaments to the lady Sebille.[115] As Sagremor is not part of the tournament-quest, he does not need anonymity; his lady-love is allowed to identify him. Instead, his goal is to win Sebille and reaffirm his right to Arthurian knighthood after his lovesickness. This section culminates with Sagremor taking his shield, placing his helm on his head, and hanging his sword from his saddle-bow.[116] Sagremor enters into a world of *aventure* as an identifiable knight errant.

This triumphant assumption of Arthurian knighthood is confirmed by the main episode of the portion of *Meliador* called the 'Roman de Sagremor', in which Sagremor experiences a traditional Otherworldly episode in the forest of Archenai.[117] Carrying his lance and shield as he enters the forest, Sagremor keeps his weaponry close at hand.[118] This is a caution rightly taken for an Otherworldly place, the most

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[110] *Meliador*, ll. 25966-8, qtd. 25966-7. 'Helm, sword, shield, | lance, horse, and suchlike harness'.
[111] Ll. 25969-70.
[112] Ll. 26168-74, qtd. 26169.
[113] Ll. 26182.
[114] For Guinevere's role, see Chapter 5.
[115] *Meliador*, ll. 26300-2
[116] Ll. 26363-4.
[117] The *roman* is incomplete, as MS fr. 12557 has a lacuna of two folios (equal to 136 verses) in the middle of Sagremor's adventures (Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 19).
[118] *Meliador*, l. 28360, 'portans sa la[n]ce et son escu'.

dangerous location an Arthurian knight could find himself. Notably, this singular fantastical episode in the otherwise realistic setting is reserved for Sagremor, the only traditional Arthurian knight with agency in the narrative. Sagremor is almost meta-theatrically conscious of his role, acting as the audience's avatar, who would likely have been as surprised as Sagremor at the sudden intrusion of the Otherworld into *Meliador*. Yet this Otherworld does not hold the tenor of fear and violence that earlier Otherworldly encounters (or, indeed, *Gawain*) depicted. As Sagremor lays down arms and hangs his shield on a tree, his disengagement creates emotional distance.[119] Intellectually intrigued by the dream-nature of the forest, he momentarily abandons the role of an armed knight, a stark transition from his previous desires. In conjunction with Sagremor's ride upon a white deer and the appearance of three faerie women, this passage leads the audience into a more fantastic romance.[120] Nonetheless, this is not an immersive narrative experience: the portrayal is held at arm's length, like a tapestry or painting.

Stylistically, this passage is a dreamy reflection and inversion of the opening of Meliador. In the opening, Camel de Camois chases deer, depicted in the manuscript's only illumination [fig. 1]. Though Camel is armed for his hunt, the illuminated Camel wears red hose: this is a courtly hunt, prefiguring Sagremor's removal of armaments in his engagement with the white deer. While Sagremor encounters faerie women during his adventure, Camel meets the human Florée and Hermondine (visible peering from the top of the castle in figure 1). Both Sagremor and Camel lose their deer, but Camel's story ends with him losing Hermondine and his life; conversely, Sagremor gains his lady-love Sebille, even though he loses his horse, his armour, and his weaponry.[121] Through his induction into this Otherworld, Sagremor earns the right to his lady-love, exiting this instalment as a prototypical Arthurian knight. Camel, on the other hand, is a somnambulist, as innately unnatural as the Otherworld. Like the forest of Archenai, he must be faced and rejected. Only the knights that respond correctly to these supernatural situations may continue in arms.

[119] *Meliador*, ll. 28400-5. For more on this episode, see Chapter 4.
[120] For further on the faerie women, see Chapter 5.
[121] *Meliador*, ll. 28767-9.

Sagremor's treatment of his armour encompasses the many ways in which these objects are used in *Meliador*. While its description is often formulaic and minimal, it is also realistic, highlighting narrative details and creating comparisons between characters. As with Dagor's helm, armour may be employed to make political, social, and literary commentary; as with Sagremor, it may be used to emphasise character points. Finally, armour may also be representative of a knight's prowess, as with Meliador: good arms belong to good knights.

Weaponry is used similarly within the text, with formulaic approaches and subtle commentary in closer descriptions. Significantly, the only weapons utilised are swords and lances; though two Irish knights have axes on their shields, only the primary weapons of war and game are used.[122] However, a subtle distinction is drawn between lances for encounters outside tournaments and for combat within. While 'lance' is employed during games and errantry, *glaive* (blade) is also used during errant encounters, specifically referring to a tipped, bladed lance. Though Froissart used 'glaive' in his *Chroniques*, it is only a quarter as common as 'lance', and he primarily utilised *glaive* for descriptions of battles, jousts *à outrance*, blades, or in the diminutive *glavelos* (javelin).[123] His use of *glaive* in *Meliador* is more distinct, restricting it to only lances employed in combat *à outrance.* During characters' errantry, emphasis is often placed on the cutting edges of swords or sharp tips of lances, such as 'les pointes agues et froides';[124] a knight will carry 'son escu | et la lance au bon fer agu'.[125] Despite this, in both tournament and errant encounters shields and helms may be split and broken regardless of tipping; only the emphasis on blades differentiates the two. By creating this slight division in the type of lances used for jousts *à outrance* and games *à plaisance*, Froissart treats the two as almost identical acts with only one distinction: the likelihood of death.

Though Froissart does not shy away from severe blows in either form of combat in *Meliador*, he usually depicts them in a rather formulaic manner where wounds are not explicitly described (Balastre's wound is an exception). This was a feature of *chansons de geste*, where object and physical action replaced actual

[122] *Meliador*, ll. 23424-5.
[123] Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen, eds., *The Online Froissart*, version 1.2 (May 2011) <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart> [accessed November 2011].
[124] *Meliador*, l. 10557. 'The sharp and cold points'; figuratively, 'the steely cold blades'.
[125] Ll. 27372-3 and 19134-5. 'His shield and the lance with a good iron point'.

depiction of violence to create emotional distance from violence while increasing the excitement of the act.[126] However, lances are used realistically. In jousting, the position most likely to strike is a horizontal lance aimed at the opponent's chest, the shield becoming a large target.[127] Such is seen when Gobar, ready to joust, carries his lance horizontally and trestled in a support.[128] Apart from high pommels on saddles [figs. 31 and 33], supports such as lance-rests on breastplates and guiding divots in shields were new in the fourteenth century.[129] While Lucanor's helm and Dagor's haubergeon are difficult to place, Gobar's blatantly cutting-edge equipment reflects the growing specialisation of jousting materials suggested by the use of 'glaive'.

Lances also demonstrate prowess. Wooden lances can shatter on impact, and throughout *Meliador* both lances and glaives fracture into 'tronçons'; this moment in the joust appears often in illuminations [as in fig. 34].[130] As with Meliador's armour, his lance reflects his strength; indeed, in one scene his lance is used in more than twelve bouts before it weakens enough to break.[131] Its ability to withstand such usage is almost miraculous, and reveals the quality of Meliador's materials as well as how Meliador himself can handle so many bouts in one day—a superhuman feat.

In contrast, swords are an uninteresting weapon within the narrative, used realistically without commentary. For example, to finish combat against Griffamons Meliador places the pommel of his sword into his left hand to provide extra leverage, a technique that would be usable with single-handed, double-handed, or blunted swords. [132] Only at the tournament at Signandon is the sword's social prestige highlighted, where the herald announces that the prize is 'une blanche espée' (a white-enamelled, silver, or shining sword).[133] This sword is unblemished and pure, as will be the one who wins the tournament. However, no note is made or implied of any greater religious or chivalric significance. Nonetheless, the sword is a necessary element of a knight's equipment. As with all arms and armour in *Meliador*, though the text often uses inexact terms to discuss accoutrements, these items are required

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[126] Kay, 'Nature of Rhetoric', p. 311.
[127] Anglo, 'How to Win', p. 255.
[128] *Meliador*, ll. 3535-7.
[129] Barker, pp. 170; Blair, pp. 61, 177 and 181.
[130] For examples of breaking lances, see *Meliador*, ll. 3924 and 4266.
[131] *Meliador*, ll. 6628-9.
[132] Ll. 10787-91.
[133] Ll. 14730.

equipment and an acknowledged part of display. While plate, mail, and other armour types are not explicitly described, the deviations from formulaic phrases suggest the presence of both archaic and technologically advanced forms of armour. Furthermore, though weaponry is described with similar stock phrases, the subtle distinction between 'glaive' and 'lance' indicates that contemporary distinctions in combat were becoming conceptualised in vocabulary. Froissart was influenced by fourteenth-century armaments even as he denies that his characters use such.[134]

In *Meliador*, arms and armour serve practically on the literary battlefield as well as for social commentary. The narrative's setting recalls contemporary border squabbles while the structure and description of encounters reproduce fourteenth-century combat *à outrance* and *à plaisance*. Moreover, the narrative employs such structures to reinforce a knight's worth. The strength of arms and armour become conflated with a knight's prowess, and in the case of Meliador his expensive armour reflects his internal worth. Combining practicality and narrative purpose, arms and armour support knightly ability. However, Sagremor and Dagor manipulate this through their conscious consideration of the role of equipment. By deliberately assuming and removing armour in search of achieving his personal version of knighthood, Sagremor claims the right to manipulate his identity and his destiny. Through his introduction to the Arthurian world, he creates his own individualised form of the communal identity that proper knights share.

Gawain's Reversals

Superficially, *Gawain* differs drastically from *Meliador* in that *Gawain*'s incidents involving weaponry are exclusively violent. However, these are not necessarily combat; indeed, the Green Knight's beheading is called a *gomen* and commonly discussed as such.[135] Though the first beheading ends violently, the event is framed by characters and narrator as a game to entertain the mixed-gender court. With the involvement of magic, the Knight remains alive; functionally, this becomes an act *à plaisance* that creates a tension between violent and amicable combat. By examining the use of weapons and armour in *Gawain* we may discover how such tensions are portrayed and mediated in the text.

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[134] *Meliador*, ll. 18841-5.

[135] *Gawain*, l. 273. See particularly Besserman; Blanch; and Martin Stevens, 'Laughter and Game in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Speculum,* 47 (1972), 65-78.

Upon entering Camelot, the Green Knight emphasises his peaceful intent, first by calling attention to the holly bob he carries instead of his axe, then by noting his courtly clothes.[136] He is quick to state that had he desired he could have dressed for war, for at home he has a helm, a hauberk, a shield and lance, 'and oþer weppenes to welde',[137] and his non-violent portrayal is stressed in his initial description:

> Wheþer, hade he no helme ne hawbergh nauþer
> Ne no pysan ne no plate þat pented to armes
> Ne no schafte ne no schelde to schwue ne to smyte.[138]

Indeed, excepting his axe he is unarmed, and the axe itself is countered by the peaceable holly. For a text full of duplicitous description and intent, the Knight speaks with remarkable frankness: 'bot for I wolde no were, my wedez ar softer'.[139]

The Knight makes one concession toward his knightly status: his gold spurs.[140] While spurs are an equestrian tool, they were not always worn; indeed, women only wore them when necessary because they could tangle with skirts.[141] Within our illuminated manuscripts, spurs are worn inconsistently, sometimes even when dismounted. Those depicted mounted are often knights and deserving of spurs; when the mounted characters are ladies, their feet are covered. However, in a manuscript of the *Livre de Chasse* of Gaston Fébus (BnF, MS fr. 616), one illumination clearly depicts the nobleman leading the hunting party with golden spurs while the rider behind him wears white (silver or steel) ones.[142] Gold spurs indicate social status, and it may be the adversary's spurs that lead Arthur to acknowledge the 'gome gered in grene' as a Knight.[143]

Additionally, these spurs have silk 'bordes', a term which does not appear outside this text. Due to their silk construction, these *bordes* are probably the Green

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[136] *Gawain*, ll. 265-274.
[137] Ll. 268-270, qtd. 270.
[138] Ll. 203-205. 'However, he had neither helm nor hauberk | neither a mail collar nor plate for his arms | neither lance nor shield to shove or to smite.'
[139] Ll. 271.
[140] Ll. 158-9.
[141] Ellis with Egan, p. 124.
[142] Folio 55. Unfortunately, the digitisation available via *Mandragore* does not show this detail, which can be viewed in Gaston Fébus, *The Hunting Book of Gaston Phébus: Manuscrit Français 616, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale* (London: Harvey Miller, 1998).
[143] *Gawain*, ll. 179 and 276.

Knight's spur straps, which could be woven or made of velvet or leather.[144] As they are 'barred ful ryche', these straps are either woven or decorated with metal ornaments, courtly instead of practical, their decoration making them unsuitable for combat. Yet as a display piece they fulfil a necessary function, for the Knight comes as a courtier, not a warrior, offering a game *à plaisance* rather than a challenge *à outrance*.

Despite this, as the focus for the beheading game the Knight's (in)famous axe causes Camelot considerable anxiety:

> ...a hoge and vnmete,
> A spetos sparþe to expoun in spelle quoso myȝt.
> Þe hede of an elnȝerde þe large lenkþe hade,
> Þe grayn al of grene stele and of golde hewen
> Þe bit burnyst bryȝt, with a brod egge.[145]

This axe is either excessive, unnatural, incomparable, cruel and savage or simply a very large and fierce battle axe.[146] Its shape is somewhat confused by the text, for it is also called 'giserne' and 'denez axe'.[147] Gollancz, Tolkien and Gordon, and Andrew and Waldron privilege the term *giserne*, which from the early fourteenth century through the fifteenth indicated a 'long-shafted battle axe or halberd with a knife-like point rising from the blade', and Andrew and Waldron suggest that the other terms serve alliterations.[148] The illuminator's understanding of the text agrees with this, representing the axe as a pole-arm [fig. 2]. However, the editors differ on interpreting the axe's 'grayn'.[149] While Andrew and Waldron suggest it protrudes from 'the back of the blade', Gollancz believes it to be a 'forked blade branching off from the pike-head'; still, both acknowledge that either interpretation is possible.[150] Tolkien and Gordon imply that either interpretation would be too technologically advanced, advocating that it was instead 'probably the ordinary battle-axe with the shaft ending in a spike';[151] this would have a similar shape as Gollancz's suggestion.

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[144] Ellis with Egan, p. 126.
[145] *Gawain*, ll. 208-11.
[146] *MED*, 'unmēte (adj.)', 'sparth(e (n.)' and 'spītŏus (adj.)'.
[147] *Gawain*, l. 288.
[148] Andrew and Waldron, p. 218; Gollancz, p. 101; *MED*, 'gisarme (n.)' (qtd.); Tolkien and Gordon, p. 87.
[149] *Gawain*, l. 211.
[150] Andrew and Waldron, p. 215; Gollancz, p. 101.
[151] Tolkien and Gordon, p. 87.

This is most similar to the 'halberd'-shape axes depicted in *Le Jeu de la Hache* and MS fr. 97 [fig. 35]

The illuminator of BL Cotton Nero A.x differed from these interpretations. Rather, he portrayed the axe as a wide, long blade with a small spike extending from the blade's back [fig. 2], which matches Andrew and Waldron's interpretation and contrasts with *Le Jeu*'s and figure 35's more elegant versions. In comparison to Gawain's body the illuminated blade appears shorter than an ell. The illuminator's change could stem from a desire to lessen the implausible and strange elements in the narrative (as he seems to do with the Green Knight in the same image), for an enormously-bladed pole-axe would have a much different effect on the viewer than a smaller one. The illuminations are not simply depicting the narrative, but reinterpreting and potentially even counteracting it.

Any pole-axe is an odd choice for a knight to carry, for it was primarily used unmounted and mostly unacknowledged as a knightly weapon in England.[152] While Ramón Llull gave the axe a symbolic purpose, he did not give it primacy like the lance and sword.[153] Though from the late 1300s onwards the pole-axe was used in games *à plaisance*, the axe in figure 2 is an inelegant weapon. Moreover, battle axes (particularly small hand-held ones) were associated with the alien Irish, who fought differently from the international knightly society.[154] Indeed, Michael Rix went so far as to argue that the Knight's axe is 'pre-historic' and 'primeval'.[155] However, though the descriptions of the axe tend towards negatives, they also have an ambiguous shade, and the Knight's garments and holly bob lessens the axe's ferocity. The axe's surroundings transform a potentially Irish war-weapon into a knightly form acceptable for games *à plaisance*, the Knight's distinguishing weapon combining acceptable noble society and the Celtic Others that the English crown suppressed. This is remarkably appropriate for an Otherworldly border-knight from the Wirral.

The axe's colour and decoration reflect its Otherworldly origin, for the *grayn* is made of green steel and either it or the cutting edge is gold (depending on how the

[152] Anglo, '*Jeu*', p. 113.
[153] Llull, pp. 80-1.
[154] Anglo, '*Jeu*', pp. 113 and 115; Barker, p. 39
[155] Michael M. Rix, 'A Re-Examination of the Castleton Garlanding', *Folk-lore*, 64 (1953), 342-4 (p. 344).

lines are read).[156] These colours mirror the Knight's garments, and as a soft metal like gold would not make a good blade or spike these details denote that the axe is a decorative piece. Yet the axe is reinforced as a weapon by the iron which is wound around its staff 'to þe wandez ende'; this adds magical overtones with the term 'wande'.[157] Moreover, the staff is 'al bigrauen with grene in gracios werkes', reflecting the Knight who is greener than even 'gren aumayl [enamel] on golde'.[158]

One significant feature of the axe has so far gone largely unnoticed or, at best, elided by scholars: 'a lace lapped aboute þat louked at þe hede | and so after þe halme halched ful ofte' with 'tryed tasselez' on 'botounz of þe bryȝt grene brayden ful ryche'.[159] As 'botounz' carry an additional meaning at this time of 'buds of a plant, esp., a rosebud, a rose hip', this decoration imitates a vine comprised of enamel and fabric wrapping around the axe with tassels like flowers and buds.[160] Its rich design prefigures the Lady's girdle, also called a 'lace' and made of green silk decorated with polished gold pendants.[161] By entwining about the staff the axe-lace also foreshadows the girdle as it is worn by Gawain at the Green Chapel 'double hym aboute'; in looping about the axe's head it resembles the girdle in the denouement, worn cross-bodied from shoulder/neck to his underarm.[162] However, neither the axe-lace nor the girdle appears in the illuminations. In figure 2, the blade is untouched by gold or green, instead coloured with blue and white layered pigments in both iterations, with the spike left uncoloured. Nonetheless, the staff in both representations is green-blue, strengthening the axe's connection with the Green Knight while serving as a substitute for the narrative's green-and-gold opulence, which may have been beyond the illuminator's skills.

It is the axe's purpose combined with its decorations that makes it fitting to be placed on the wall of Camelot as a trophy.[163] When Gawain beheads the Knight the cutting edge goes through the man's neck so easily that it hits the ground, and this smoothness, along with the axe's sharpness and glistening, makes the blade

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[156] *Gawain*, ll. 211-2.
[157] Ll. 214-5.
[158] Ll. 216 and 234-236, qtd. 216 and 236.
[159] Ll. 217-20. 'A lace looped about that joined at the head | and then wrapped around the shaft many times'; 'fine tassels', 'studs of bright green decorated richly'.
[160] *MED*, 'bŏtŏun (n.)'.
[161] *Gawain*, ll. 1830-3 and 2037-9. For further on the girdle, see Chapter 5.
[162] Ll. 2033 (qtd.) and 2484-7.
[163] Ll. 478-80.

appear supernatural.[164] This violent, transgressive act by Gawain contrasts with the proposed game *à plaisance*, performed for a mixed-gendered crowd, and violates the Knight's peaceful holly. Though this was invited by the Knight, such an 'accident' could easily destroy peace, as with the surprise attack at the tournament in Berwick in 1348.[165] The axe is no longer a beautiful reward; rather, it is reminiscent of England's neighbouring Celtic 'threats'. Yet the game reverts to one *à plaisance* when the Knight picks up his head.[166] Holding his head in hand, the Knight is evocative of a jousting opponent who, post-game, removes his helm and holds it as he speaks to his rival. Though he is alive, his disembodied head, bleeding body, and shocking pose make a dark mockery of the distinction between game and war, *à plaisance* and *à outrance.* The court is frozen by this event, and it is only once the Knight exits that the court exhales and admires the axe.

The Knight presents the axe as a Yule and New Year gift for whoever accepts his challenge to a 'Crystemas gomen', but afterwards the axe is hung upon a 'doser' (an ornamental wall hanging such as a tapestry or altar-cover) for all the court to see.[167] This treatment frames the axe reverentially, as something that 'all men for meruayl myȝt on hit lok | and bi trwe tytel þerof to tell þe wonder'.[168] Rather than an artefact of a violent combat, the axe becomes a story piece. Indeed, by hanging on a *doser* it acts as a soothing relic that calms the anxieties of the court that sprung from the astounding deeds of the axe itself. The axe is its act's antidote.

As this first axe is kept as a trophy-relic, it is not the axe used at the Green Chapel, which differs superficially from the first as

> ....a felle weppen:
> A denez ax, new dyȝt, þe dynt with to ȝelde,
> With a borelych bytte bende by þe halme,
> Fyled in a fylor, fowere fote large –
> Hit watz no lasse, bi þat lace þat lemed ful bryȝt![169]

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[164] *Gawain*, l. 426.
[165] Barker, p. 35.
[166] *Gawain*, ll. 435-59. For more on the axe as a gift, see Chapter 6.
[167] *Gawain*, ll. 283-4 and 478, qtd 283; *MED*, 'dōser (n.)'.
[168] *Gawain*, ll. 479-80. 'All men might look on it to marvel | and by means of the true story of it tell the wonder'.
[169] Ll. 2222-6. 'A cruel weapon: | a Danish axe, newly prepared to give the blow | with an excellent edge curved on the head, | sharpened with a rasp, four foot long – | it was no less, by that lace that gleamed brightly!'

Also called a ‘giserne’, this axe is tall enough for Bertilak to lean upon.[170] Lacking decorations, it is a working weapon meant to deal death-blows, but in the illuminations the axes are barely distinguishable. At the Green Chapel its staff is slightly longer, but otherwise it is the same as the axe at Camelot, including the unpainted spike [figs. 2 and 4], and Bertilak holds it like Camelot’s second Gawain.

Though this axe is similar to the first in narrative and illumination, it is used differently. While the first is a treated as a quasi-relic, the second axe appears to be a dangerous weapon. The axes are formulated to their location: the first fittingly ornate for a court, the second of simple workmanship for the wilds of the Wirral. However, the axes function on a reversal of expectation. The ‘courtly’ axe is a weapon for combat *à outrance*, beheading the Knight, while it is the more ‘brutal’ axe that is functionally harmless: Gawain is only nicked. At this, Gawain springs away and prepares to fight, but Bertilak simply rests on his axe.[171] As far as Bertilak is concerned, the game is over.

These axes invert Bertilak’s ambiguous nature. As the Host and Bertilak enter to complicate the Green Knight’s initial opulence, the axes simplify. This is in opposition to Gawain’s garments, which shift from appropriately to overly luxurious. The magnificent first axe, Gawain’s prize, predicts Gawain’s future dissembling in lavish apparel, while the second axe reflects Bertilak at the Green Chapel: threatening and inhuman but without pretension. Without the entrenched social symbolisms of the sword and the lance, the two axes become blank canvases onto which the characters’ paths are projected, (fore)shadows serving as narrative frames. The axe is both chivalric and Otherworldly, depending only on who wields it.

The importance of the axe is particularly apparent in comparison with Gawain’s arms and armour, for though these are closely detailed, leading the audience to expect violent confrontations, they are minimally used and ineffective in a game that requires a bare neck and a passive bow. Indeed, the anxiety instigated by the Knight’s beheading pervades Gawain’s journey even at his arming. Fine armour and treatment distract from the underlying tension, but only temporarily.[172]

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[170] *Gawain*, ll. 2230 and 2265.
[171] Ll. 2315-31.
[172] Ll. 566- 93. For the culmination of this scene (Gawain’s reception of a new shield), see Chapter 4.

In his arming, Gawain is placed on a ‘tulé tapit’ (an honour usually reserved for royalty). His dressing roughly follows the proper order, first with his ‘dublet’ (aketon) and fur-lined ‘capados’ (arming cap), then from toe to head.[173] With ‘sabatounȝ’ on his feet, ‘greueȝ’ wrapping all the way about his calves, ‘polaynes’ to protect his knees, ‘quyssewes’ (cuisses) for his thighs, ‘brace vpon his boþe arms’, ‘cowters’ for his elbows, and plate gloves, Gawain is outfitted in premiere fourteenth-century limb harness like that in figure 29. In addition to these, Gawain is given a high-sitting helm with an aventail, clearly a late fourteenth-century bascinet [fig. 30].[174] However, he still wears a ‘bryne’ or hauberk ‘of bryȝt stele ryngeȝ’; though there is later mention of a ‘paunce’, this torso armour could be of plate or mail.[175] If this is mail, the only modern armament that Gawain lacks is torso plate.

The illumination of Gawain at the Green Chapel depicts similar armaments as that described in Gawain’s arming [fig. 4], although these items appear to be from a later date than those in the narrative. While Gawain’s narrated cuisses are fastened with straps as with the armour in figure 29 and probably expose the back of Gawain’s thighs, the illuminated plate contains interlocking tongues and fully encloses Gawain’s leg. Such differences occur also with Gawain’s helm; though it is also a bascinet as in the narrative, the illuminated bascinet’s point recedes so greatly that the back of the helm is nearly concave, like the bascinets from the early 1400s.[176] In addition, though a hood-like item of the same blue-grey pigment as the rest of Gawain’s armour is swathed around Gawain’s neck, it does not indicate texture and may be a mail aventail or a *bevor* (a rare throat or neck-encompassing plate defence, visible in figure 33).[177] These differences do not alter the interpretation of the figure, and probably reflect technological advancements made between the narrative’s composition and illumination.

The illuminated armour is not decorated as in the narrative, where ‘þe lest lachet oþer loupe lemed of golde’ and a circle of shining ‘diamaunteȝ’ bounds his helm.[178] Gawain is also given a sword on a silk belt and gold spurs, dressing as a

[173] Blair, p. 53; *Gawain*, ll. 568-73; Monnas, p. 11; Woolgar, p. 250.
[174] *Gawain*, ll. 605-8.
[175] *MED*, ‘paunce (n.)’; *Gawain,* ll. 574-80, 582-3, and 2017.
[176] Blair, pp. 67-9.
[177] Blair, p. 70.
[178] *Gawain*, ll. 591 and 614-7.

proper warrior with rich but restrained decoration.[179] Instead of luxury, the gold decorations, spurs, and silk belt are framed as reflecting Gawain's worth.[180] As the spurs are only employed during moments of haste and the sword is never specifically used, these symbolically knightly objects suggest a parallel between Gawain's arming and investiture.[181] Such parallels are also found in the inclusion of the investiture colours white (his *capados*'s fur) and red (on Gawain's shield). Yet Gawain's arming significantly excludes black hose, the reminder of mortality, which may hint at his eventual survival.[182]

Though the detailed description and almost ritualistic action of the arming scene initially serves to assert Gawain's knightly identity, suggest his prowess, and distance the audience from the fear introduced by the Knight's challenge, the arming ends with the denizens of Camelot mourning Gawain's departure.[183] The arming's distraction is only temporary, and imbued with such sombre ritual it becomes an anti-investiture. Rather than a ceremonial rebirth where the knight is reclothed, Gawain experiences funeral preparations, the *tapit* acting as a shroud as Gawain's body is prepared in chivalric last rites. This morbid undercurrent recasts the kiss that Gawain gives after his arming to his helm: he expresses affection and respect for the piece that would normally protect his neck.[184]

Gawain's arms and armour are not practically employed within the narrative. Though Gawain fights through the wilds of the Wirral, such a minimally-described journey does not warrant this arming scene. Indeed, the narrator emphasises that such armour is uncomfortable and cold in the harsh winter weather, particularly to sleep in.[185] His armaments' uselessness is highlighted at his arrival at the Hostel, where his helm, sword, and shield are removed by servants; while he retains his spurs and armour to greet the Host, he is functionally disarmed.[186] This physical disarming in

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[179] *Gawain*, ll. 583-9.
[180] Gold as a reflection of Gawain's worth is stated forthrightly in the narrator's examination of the pentangle (see Chapter 4).
[181] Karen Cherewatuk, 'Echoes of the Knighting Ceremony in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neophilologus*, 77 (1993), 135-47 (p. 139). For examples of spur usage, see *Gawain*, ll. 777 and 2062-4. Although Gawain's sword is presumably used during his journey through the Wirral, it is never mentioned (ll. 691-762).
[182] Charny, §36; 'Ordene', ll. 162-5.
[183] *Gawain*, ll. 670-83.
[184] L. 605.
[185] Ll. 729-30.
[186] Ll. 825-8.

what appears to be a welcoming place after a bitter journey serves to emotionally disarm Gawain and the audience, leaving both unprepared for the moral/psychological assault that Gawain receives inside.

This figurative use of arms and armour is also employed in a subtle hint given by the Host as to his true identity, when during various Christmastime games he tosses a hood onto a lance.[187] Although apparently playful, this act simulates a pierced head while inverting the axe hanging upon the *doser* in Camelot (cloth upon weapon instead of weapon upon cloth). Rejecting the reverence given to the first axe, this also reverses the results of the first game. With the hood empty and intact, this suggests the outcome of the Green Chapel encounter: no one will be harmed permanently in a Christmas game.

This seems to be refuted by the Host's foreboding hunts.[188] Hunting was a leisure activity suitable for noblemen that was also symbolic of aristocratic power through its combination of sophisticated behaviour and dress, protocol, and violence.[189] The practices for hunting were as specialised as those for knightly combat but required different procedures.[190] The Host follows these accordingly, hunting animals appropriate for winter.[191] Physically challenging, these scenes temporally parallel the bedroom scenes, games *à outrance* as a reflection of the lady's teasing *à plaisance*.[192]

When hunting the deer, the Host and his court primarily use hounds to course the beasts and arrows to fell them, with knives to kill them properly.[193] Coursing deer was considered the best form of hunt, but crossbows, spears, and batons could also be used.[194] The Host's court uses arrows to also hunt the boar, which harass and tire

[187] *Gawain*, ll. 983-4.
[188] While Johnson argues that these three animals also represent certain sins (p. 81), I have found little support for this.
[189] Charny, §19; Susan Crane, 'Ritual Aspects of the Hunt *à Force*', in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 63-84 (pp. 64, 66, and 68-9); Huot, p. 81.
[190] See Gaston Fébus, *Gaston Phébus: Livre de Chasse*, ed. by Gunnar Tilander (Karlshamn: Johanssons, 1971) and William Twiti, *The Art of Hunting*, ed. by Bror Danielsson (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1977).
[191] Anderson, 'Three Judgements', p. 345; Gaston Fébus, especially §§1 and 45; Twiti, p. 54. There is some irony that this hunting takes place in the Wirral, which was disafforested in 1376.
[192] For further on the bedroom scenes, see Chapter 5.
[193] *Gawain*, ll. 1167-73.
[194] Gaston Fébus, particularly §45, as well as the illuminations to MS fr. 616.

the creature as the arrows bounce off his skin and shatter.[195] To kill the boar, the Host thrusts his sword up to its hilt to prick the boar's heart.[196] While this is correct hunting technique, it was strongly cautioned against as dangerous, and was only to be attempted by the bravest and most skilled; as boars were vicious, deadly, and thick-skinned, spears were the preferred weapon.[197] Such an act displays the courage of the Host, increasing the worth of what seems to be a benevolent figure. However, his final quarry of the fox, though acceptable because it gives good chase, is not a great prize.[198] Unlike deer and boar, whose hunts provided opportunities for valour and food, foxes are inedible and easily dispatched by a single dog. Though the pelt is warm, it was not considered overly attractive nor believed to tan consistently. These drawbacks were compounded by strong negative attributes: not only was the fox thought to be malicious and false, but it was believed to have a venomous bite.[199] The fox was only an acceptable target if nothing else was available, as in *Gawain*.

Within these hunts, the deer serve as a baseline, demonstrating that the Hostel's inhabitants can hunt correctly and well. This is increased from correctness to excellence by the Host's bravery in the boar hunt but challenged by the fox-hunt, which blatantly parallels Gawain. Gawain acts falsely, his lies like venomous bites, and he could be easily killed due to the beheading game's structure; he and the fox even share the same colour. While the fox believes himself to have escaped the hounds through guile, the hounds are continuously upon him;[200] Gawain believes himself saved by the girdle, but Bertilak routs him. Similarly, the Host finds and stalks the fox and strikes at it without killing it, an odd mistake (a conscious choice?) for one who the previous day had killed the boar.[201] Like Gawain at the second strike of the axe, the fox flinches away, only to be killed by the waiting hounds. Here the parallels between Gawain and the hunts fail. The fox is dead, stripped of its skin instead of beheaded.[202] Yet though the jointing of the deer and boar suggested the

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[195] *Gawain*, ll. 1454-58 and 1564-5.
[196] Ll. 1581-1600.
[197] Gaston Fébus, §§9 and 53-4.
[198] Crane, 'Ritual Aspects', p. 71; Gaston Fébus, §53-4 and 56
[199] Gaston Fébus, §11.
[200] *Gawain*, l. 1711.
[201] Ll. 1894-1910
[202] L. 1921.

beheading game, such dissection was proper hunting procedure.[203] There is nothing malicious about these actions, for though the hunts are violent, they are not futile. The court has won food and a warm fur, which they prepare for their guest's pleasure.

Indeed, Gawain is served extraordinarily well at the Hostel, the quality of which is exemplified in his re-arming. Bidding the chamberlain to bring him his armour and saddle his horse, Gawain is dressed by servants first in warm winter clothes and then his armour.[204] His plates have been cleaned until shining, and his hauberk has been 'rokked', cleaned of rust in a barrel full of sand, rocked back and forth to scour the metal.[205] This was a labour-intensive task, signifying that Gawain has been cared for above and beyond any requirements of hospitality. In fact, his armour has been so well cared for that it is almost like new.[206] Though this shining re-arming is far more akin to a rebirth than the first arming, with Gawain's corresponding adoption of the girdle he functionally rejects his armour (and thus the Hostel's hospitality and fine care) in favour of the girdle's protective powers. While neither armour nor prowess can save Gawain's bared neck from a stroke from his adversary, the girdle may. By wearing the girdle, Gawain indicates that he has lost his faith in knightly trappings.

Though the Hostel's inhabitants do not echo Camelot's grief at Gawain's departure, Gawain's guide attempts to convince him to turn back; only when Gawain refuses does the guide relinquish Gawain's helm and spear.[207] This response highlights the futility of Gawain's gear, for though he approaches the Green Chapel as an armed knight he must remove his helm to receive Bertilak's blows.[208] Bertilak requests this removal oddly, stating 'haf þy helme of þy hede and haf here þy pay'.[209] Though this could serve as a command (take your helm off and take your payment), it also has overtones of a threat: in repayment for the stroke at Camelot, Bertilak shall also take off Gawain's head and his helm with it. Alternatively, in Llull's

[203] Gaston Fébus, §§40 and 43. Martin, p. 318, directly compares the jointing with the beheading.
[204] *Gawain*, ll. 2011-6.
[205] *Gawain*, ll. 2017-8; Andrew and Waldron, p. 280.
[206] *Gawain,* l. 2019.
[207] Ll. 2091-143.
[208] L. 2197.
[209] L. 2247.

symbolic interpretations of armour, the helm stood for 'shamefastnes',[210] and its removal could point towards Gawain's following shame over the acceptance of the girdle.

The game ends with minimal harm, and though Gawain attempts to engage Bertilak in combat Bertilak rejects this.[211] Instead, Bertilak acknowledges the uselessness of Gawain's armour by disclosing his knowledge of the girdle and Gawain's intentions. Metaphorically stripped naked, Gawain berates himself for his fault and returns to Camelot as a penitent.[212] However, the court laughs at Gawain's self-portrayal as cowardly and covetous—after all, they had last seen Gawain riding to certain death.[213] Rather, the court adopts the girdle as a symbol of brotherhood.[214] Creating a familial identity based on knighthood, this action echoes Bertilak's final invitation to Gawain: having granted him the girdle, he asks Gawain to return to Hautdesert to be reconciled with Bertilak's wife and Gawain's aunt Morgan.[215]

This change from guilt to familial acceptance is reflected in the illumination of Gawain's return to Camelot [fig. 5]. After his experiences at the Green Chapel, Gawain is tangibly changed. While in figure 4 Gawain's armour was steel blue, in the facing illumination his poleyns and the band around the edge of his helm are coloured goldenrod, representative of gold [fig. 5]. Further, his hands were previously uncoloured, but he now wears golden hourglass gauntlets, one of which he extends to Arthur as he kneels before the court. Gawain has been enriched or purified by his experiences, and his hand is accepted. Raising Gawain up as he extends his other hand in absolution, Arthur reconnects Gawain with Camelot.

This armament alteration is not in the narrative, where Gawain's reintegration into Camelot is signified by the girdle. Gawain's armour was fully ineffectual within the narrative, serving as a foil to distract and distance the audience from anxieties concerning Gawain's fate. Such reversal of expectation is also found in the axe(s), where the first beautiful object is used brutally while the simple version is employed

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[210] Llull, p. 77.
[211] Bertilak's multiple strokes with the axe have been interpreted as echoing the accolade of investiture (Cherewatuk, pp. 142-3; Ingledew, p. 205). Though this may push the relation too far (how, then, should the Green Knight's beheading be viewed?), the suggestion is potent. For an intriguing interpretation of the Green Chapel scenes through the lens of investiture, see Cherewatuk.
[212] For Gawain's response to Bertilak, see Chapter 5.
[213] *Gawain*, ll. 2505-15.
[214] *Gawain*, ll. 2516-8. For further analysis of the girdle, see Chapters 4 and 6.
[215] *Gawain*, ll. 2467-9.

mercifully. The tension between violence and games *à plaisance* is resolved in favour of courtliness, with Camelot adopting Gawain's 'prize' as a badge. Altogether, the arms and armour in *Gawain* are used subversively to continuously disarm our expectations.

Conclusion: Violence and Game

Through arms and armour, both *Meliador* and *Gawain* expose the tensions between paradigmatical approaches to armed combat in the late fourteenth century. While all are highly masculinised, there were conceptual and tangible differences between battle, games *à outrance*, and games *à plaisance.* The narratives' portrayals of these different combats help elaborate on armaments' social symbolism and role in creating psychological distance from armed combat. While *Meliador* makes a subtle distinction between games *à plaisance* and *à outrance* through lance-tips, the axes in *Gawain* are employed to purposefully confuse the display aspects of games *à plaisance* and the violence of *à outrance.* However, *Meliador* adds to this by using armour to make additional judgments on the chivalric role. While distinctions between archaic and modern armour are ambiguous, armour is conflated with prowess and used to depict inner worth. When characters consciously employ armour's significatory possibility, they demonstrate that it can be used to 'create' knighthood. In contrast, armour in *Gawain* invokes the extravagance of display to create a presumption that the armour is necessary; the audience expects knightly deeds. Instead, the narrative depicts the difficulty of distinguishing between games: the game *à plaisance* at Camelot generates bloodshed while the encounter *à outrance* at the Green Chapel results in pardon. Although the first beheading is framed as a 'Crystemas gomen',[216] it is a truly bloody beheading (albeit magically survivable). Conversely, the second beheading, approached as an almost inevitable execution, is more trick than combat, and Gawain's armour is ineffective against the moral challenge of the Hostel and the beheading game. By rendering the armour physically unnecessary, the narrative demonstrates that the greater part of Gawain's knighthood is not his deeds but his values, and suggests a critique of armed games. This is particularly present in the blurring between games *à outrance* and *à plaisance*; the distinction between these is only apparent to Gawain and the mortals of Camelot. To

[216] *Gawain*, l. 283.

Bertilak, both games are *à plaisance.* He has no fear for his life, because as an Otherworldly being the beheading is simply a game; despite its violence, like Gawain he is not permanently harmed.

Finally, both texts contain minor apprehensions relating to the Celtic Others, with Bertilak's quasi-Irish weapon from the Wirral and *Meliador*'s uncouth Irish knights. Indeed, Dembowski hypothesised that *Meliador*, which breaks off abruptly at line 30,771, was intended to end with Sagremor mobilising the Arthurian court in a crusade to Christianise Ireland.[217] While the narratives exhibit concern over their Celtic neighbours, Dembowski's hypothesis ignores that the primary goal of *Meliador* is the marriage of Hermondine, with which the current text ends. Instead of validating their violent acts, *Meliador* and *Gawain* paradoxically use arms and armour to distance themselves from their acts. Their chivalry is based on prowess and external rewards such as the love of ladies and social re-integration. *Meliador*'s knights dress and act appropriately for tournament and romance, not war, while *Gawain* explores the difficulties in distinguishing where game ends and battle begins under the arbitration of an external authority. In both texts, there is a difference between ability and brutality, but the former receives focus and the latter is elided. In *Meliador* and *Gawain*, the performance of the game is enough.

[217] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 130-49.

Chapter 4: Identity and Heredity: Heraldry

Heraldry is a significant facet in comprehending fourteenth-century concepts of personal display and identity construction. While armour makes a knight physically unidentifiable, heraldry alters this anonymity by allowing assumption of real, false, new, or historic identities.[1] A knight's chosen blazon is a potentially symbolic representation of himself, but how blazons were interpreted by audiences redefined their meaning. Additionally, inherited blazons were a means of claiming and disseminating social position, authority, familial relationships, alliances, origin, and nationality.[2] Although heraldry could be modified for self-reconstruction, posturing, and social manipulation, the interpretation of individual blazons was also dependent on reception.

Heraldry is an artificial, figurative language that was probably first used to identify knights on the battlefield and in games.[3] Defining itself through colours, shapes, and culturally-specific images, heraldry eventually became a 'social code and a system of signs' with its own grammar, a visual international language that served to unify and classify international chivalric society.[4] Understanding heraldry needed to be second nature, for on the battlefield distinguishing between enemy and friend was a matter of life or death. However, heraldry was also assimilated into the theatre and pageantry of games *à plaisance*,[5] becoming a means by which a knight, audience, or chivalrically-oriented authors and artists may invent, change, obscure, or celebrate identities. This chapter establishes the historic development of heraldry and its social role and language in the fourteenth century before addressing its use in Arthurian tradition and illuminations. By then comparing the use of heraldry in these wider fictional spheres to *Meliador* and *Gawain*, these important identifiers may be seen to interplay with nostalgia and innovation to affect the narrative.

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[1] Bruckner, p. 71; Crane, *Performance*, p. 124.

[2] Maurice Keen, 'Introduction', in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen, 1-16 (pp. 8-9); Meredith Parsons Lillich, 'Early Heraldry: How to Crack the Code', *Gesta,* 30 (1991), 41-7 (p. 41); Michel Pastoureau, *L'Hermine et le sinople: Études d'héraldique médiévale* (Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 1982), p. 16 ; Woolgar, p. 183.

[3] Adrian Ailes, 'Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda', in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Coss and Maurice Keen, 83-104 (pp. 83 and 102); Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, p. 108; Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Woolgar, p. 181.

[4] Bouchet, 'Rhétorique', p. 239; Coss, p. 40; Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 43 (qtd.).

[5] Barker, p. 84.

Fourteenth Century Identification

Though there are arguments that 'true' heraldry must be hereditary,[6] this is an overly-strict division that excludes newly adopted arms, certain literary blazons, and identifying objects such as badges that, inspired by heraldry, became fashionable in the fourteenth century.[7] However, the concept of a heraldic shield as a personal identifier is first evidenced in the second quarter of the twelfth century.[8] Increasing in number between 1250 and 1350, rolls of arms record heraldry, serve as primary sources for individuals' shields, and demonstrate a growing interest in heraldry.[9] By 1300, specific terminology for describing shields was developing and solidifying; simultaneously, blazons' heritability and representative value earned increasing attention.[10]

As both ornamental and political, heraldry inspired particolour clothing and decorated spur sides, mantles, women's dresses, and equestrian harness pendants; furthermore, heraldic embroidery was a common diplomatic gift.[11] Particolour livery was naturally associated with heraldry, used to indicate allegiance, and briefly adopted into popular fashion in the mid-fourteenth century.[12] As another form of livery, English badges developed from heraldry as easily suppliable identifiers for a group.[13] Related to the Italian *impresa* and the *devise* of France and the Low Countries, badges rejected the lineal identification of heraldry for individuality; especially common at games *à plaisance*, they were used there to unite individuals under a team leader.[14]

The primary heraldic item was the shield. Made of wood reinforced with horn or metal, the standard shield was heater-shaped. Though oval, cloth-covered shields

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[6] Anthony Richard Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 12.
[7] Malcolm Vale, p. 97.
[8] N. Denholm-Young, *History and Heraldry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 5; Wagner, p. 17.
[9] Allen M. Barstow, 'The Importance of the Ashmolean Roll of Arms for the Study of Medieval Blazon', *Antiquaries Journal,* 54 (1974), 75-84 (p. 75); Denholm-Young, p. 3.
[10] Johnson, pp. 76-7; Keen, 'Introduction', p. 9; Malcolm Vale, p. 88.
[11] Brooke, pp. 50-1; Ellis with Egan, p. 128; Nick Griffiths, 'Harness Pendants and Associated Fittings', in *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment*, ed. by John Clark, 61-71 (pp. 61-2); Frédérique Lachaud, 'Embroidery for the Court of Edward I, 1272-1307', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, 37 (1993), 33-52 (p. 51); Mellinkoff, p. 18; Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 14.
[12] Ailes, p. 95; Mellinkoff, p. 11.
[13] Ailes, p. 94; Crane, *Performance*, p. 16.
[14] Barker, p. 183; Crane, *Performance*, pp. 20 and 121; Malcolm Vale, p. 97.

were also used for games *à plaisance*, heraldry is commonly depicted in pictorial rolls of arms on heater shapes.[15] Symbolically, Ramón Llull viewed the shield as representative of the knight's role: as the shield stands between the knight and his enemy, so the knight stands between his lord and all others.[16] However, he viewed heraldic devices as specifically identificatory, allowing an audience to give a knight praise or reproach for his deeds.[17] This framing transforms the heraldic shield into an object of multi-layered personal display.

Tournaments teemed with heraldic objects beyond shields. While surcoats were practical to wear over armour, they also displayed heraldic designs.[18] Banners and pennons could bear devices (and were used for such in twelfth-century epics), while starting in 1340 crests worn for tournaments complemented inherited heraldry with a design chosen by the individual knight.[19] *Aillettes*, flimsy pieces worn on the shoulder in tournaments, could also bear heraldic designs, as seen in figure 33, and a horse's trapper functioned similarly to a surcoat.[20] In total, a knight could bear his blazon on his cote, shield, shoulders, and horse, with badges and crests adding elements of allegiance and individuality.

Secular chivalric orders took advantage of these heraldic proclivities through badges, their international membership and ceremonial dress linking pageantry and heraldry to negotiable political loyalty.[21] These orders were an innovation of the fourteenth century, and four in particular originated in the political climate of the late 1340s and 1350s: the Cypriot Order of the Sword (created by 1347); the English Order of the Garter (by 1348); the French Ordre des Chevaliers de Notre Dame de la Maison et de Leur Prince, also called the Ordre de l'Étoile (1351); and the Neapolitan Ordre du Saint Esprit au Droit Désir (1353).[22] The latter was also called the Order of the Knot, for its badge was a Solomon's knot which was to be untied upon performing acts of prowess or piety. If an untied knot was then left in

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[15] Barker, pp. 176-7; Blair, 181. By 1400, both types of shields had notches to guide lances.
[16] Byles, pp. xli-xlii; Llull pp. 81-2.
[17] Llull, p. 88.
[18] Zijlstra-Zweens, p. 24.
[19] Crane, *Performance*, p. 121.
[20] Barker, p. 176; Blair, pp. 45-6; Zijlstra-Zweens, pp. 11 and 48.
[21] Malcolm Vale, pp. 35 and 63.
[22] Ingledew, p. 175; Keen, *Noble*s, p. 73; Newton, p. 41. For further on the foundation, regulations, and accoutrements of these orders, see D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton. Two orders pre-date the 1340s: the Hungarian Fraternal Society of Knighthood of St. George (founded in 1325 or 1326) and the Order of the Band in Castile-Leon (founded 1330) (Boulton, pp. 30 and 52).

Jerusalem at the Holy Sepulchre during a pilgrimage, on return the pilgrim-knight was allowed to reassume a tied Solomon's knot.[23]

Of these orders, the Order of the Garter has lasted longest, and by combining a membership open to foreigners with a twenty-four member restriction it gained instant international prestige.[24] The inspiration for the Garter has often been viewed as Edward III's Round Table tournament of 1344, for he intended to form a chivalric order in the style of the Arthurian brotherhood.[25] This was supported by Froissart, who coalesced the 1344 Round Table games with the 1348 Garter founding in his *Chroniques*.[26] Froissart may have combined the two intentionally, possibly to obscure the failed attempt at a Round Table order, potentially to create a correlation between the Garter and Arthuriana, or even to diminish the parallels between the blue Garter badge and the blue field of French royal heraldry.[27] However, while the Round Table proposition was intentionally secular, the Order of the Garter embraced traditional religious trappings.[28] Despite this, when viewed in light of Edward III's propagandic use of Arthuriana, Froissart's depiction highlights the literary inspirations of fourteenth-century chivalry and its Orders.[29]

Such social and political employment of Arthuriana corresponds with the increased interest in fictional heraldry. The distinctions between real and fantastic heraldry were inherently blurred, as chivalric games like Round Tables purposefully invoked romances through elaborate display and introducing fictional blazons. Indeed, for at least one treatise-writer, Jacques d'Armagnac, there was not a true distinction between romance and reality, and heraldry itself was believed to have

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[23] D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, p. 223; Newton, p. 50.
[24] Barker, pp. 67-8.
[25] See Chapter 3.
[26] Richard Barber, 'The Round Table Feast of 1344', in *Edward III's Round Table at Windsor*, ed. by Julian Munby, Richard Barber, and Richard Brown, 38-43 (p. 41); Jean Froissart, 'Premier Livre', *Chroniques: Livre I et II*, ed. by Peter Ainsworth and George T. Diller (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2001), §203; Newton, p. 43. Froissart combines the two by placing the founding of the Garter in 1344 at the Round Table.
[27] Newton, p. 43. Ingledew, p. 109, supports the concept that Froissart's amalgamation was intentional, as does Juliet Vale, p. 77, who notes that Froissart's account is 'a conscious contradiction' of the chronicles by Jean le Bel.
[28] Barber, 'Political Background', pp. 82-3.
[29] Lisa Jefferson, 'Tournaments, Heraldry, and the Knights of the Round Table: A Fifteenth-Century Armorial with Two Accompanying Texts', *Arthurian Literature*, XIV (1997), 69-157 (p. 87), notes the connection between Orders and contemporaneous Arthuriana.

been invented by 'Adam, Noah, Alexander, Julius Caesar or King Arthur'.[30] Knights' heraldry should show their true self—morally, spiritually, and chivalrically—because the heraldic world of romances used it thus. Romances were how society *should* be; not historic fact but a historic Ideal. This fictionalisation reached its peak in the fifteenth century, producing armorials that included extant arms of real persons, fictional arms given to historical figures, and fictional arms for fictional characters.[31]

The fourteenth century saw increasing interest in the roles of figurative identifiers in social, political, and tournament life, particularly in how these items could be manipulated and fictionalised. Heraldry became a useful political tool, fashionable accessory, and object of display. These attributes inspired badges, livery, and other heraldic decorations, and secular confraternities and political propaganda adopted these items to cultivate social bonds and authority. Finally, the employment of romance in chivalric life combined with heraldry to create a system that could both represent reality and create fictions.

The Language of Heraldic Blazon

Heraldic designs and their descriptions share the term *blazon*. As classifying terminology, blazoning gives a vital ordering structure to what is otherwise an abstract art, but its rules are minimal.[32] In the fourteenth century, heraldry used only six tinctures: *argent*, *azur, gules, or, sable,* and *vert*, with *purpure* (purple) added in the fifteenth century.[33] Further divided into colours (*azur, gules, sable, purpure,* and *vert*) and metals (*or* and *argent*), these terms are classifiers that group multiple shades into monochromatic categories, conceptual colours that may be represented by many hues. Thus *or* may be gold or yellow and *argent* white or silver both functionally and in illuminations. The reverse was also true, with silver being used in heraldry for 'pure' white on religious blazons.[34] Though hue, shine, and purity mattered in relation to other visual mediums, in heraldry shades did not matter. Medieval society thought about heraldic colours conceptually and categorically.

[30] Jefferson, pp. 86-8; Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, pp. 15-6.
[31] Denholm-Young, p. 6; Jefferson, pp. 86-8.
[32] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 80; Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 55-6, and *Devil's Cloth*, p. 26.
[33] For a discussion of the different terms within colour categories between the thirteenth and fifteenth century, see Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, pp. 138-9 and 144-7.
[34] Coss, pp. 51-2.

Primarily the domain of the militarised nobility, blazon demonstrates its origin through tinctures' names, which are primarily derived from prized materials. *Or* and *argent* are 'the two most precious metals'; *ermine*, *vair*, and *sable are* valuable furs; *azur* is related to *lapis lazuli*, an expensive blue pigment.[35] The only exceptions are *vert*, which may account for its unpopularity, and *gules*. Some attempts have been made to link *gules* to the gullet of 'fox-fur collars',[36] but while *gules* certainly is related to the redness of living throats, the mouths of fox pelts are not red. Rather, *gules* may simply be derived from the colour of snarling mouths (animal or human).[37]

During the Middle Ages *gules* was the most common heraldic colour, a status possibly related to its regard in dyestuffs and fabric.[38] This was followed by *sable*; named for the prestigious fur that became particularly popular around 1400, *sable* appeared in roughly a quarter of European arms.[39] By 1400 *azur* was overall slightly more common than *sable*, appearing in 30 percent of the shields (a rise from 25 percent in 1300), but the frequency of *azur* and *sable* depended on location: if blue was popular in an area, black was not.[40] Markedly, *azur* was especially popular in England by 1350, appearing on 30% of the shields; in France, it occurred on 20-30%; and in the Low Countries on less than 20%.[41] *Vert* was the least common colour.[42] Finally, the term *sinople* confused some colour categories, for though it was initially used for *gules* it eventually referred to *vert*.

It should be noted that, while some armorials provide lists of virtues and qualities for each of the tinctures, these are primarily attributes of fifteenth-century and later armorials.[43] The presence of these lists indicates that the values they ascribe were not necessarily considered innate qualities but needed to be taught. As the meanings are overwhelmingly and unnaturally positive, the inclusion of negative signs may have been frowned upon or even consider unwise, for a knight with

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[35] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 82.
[36] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p. 82.
[37] This is supported by *Meliador*, wherein the knight Gratien kills his opponent by striking him 'dedens la goule' (l. 5366).
[38] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, p. 25, and *Noir*, p. 69.
[39] Gage, *Colour and Culture*, p.82; Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 96-7, and *Noir*, p. 69.
[40] Pastoureau, *Blue*, pp. 56-7.
[41] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, pp. 134
[42] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 45, and *Noir*, p. 69.
[43] See, for example, Hippolyte Cocheris, ed., *Le Blason des couleurs en armes, livrées et devises* (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1860), pp. ix-xiii, and Jefferson, pp. 102-4.

inherited heraldry would not appreciate 'discovering' that, according to an armorial's authority, his shield reflected poorly on his family. Thus, in addition to being outside the period of discussion, these armorials are prescriptivist, potentially biased, and largely unhelpful.

The primary rule of heraldry is that like should not touch like: metals should only touch colours and vice-versa. This rule of tincture was applied to lines of partition (dividing lines that separated the shield's field into different tinctures), ordinaries (shapes that followed a line of partition), and charges (emblematic designs), and inspired particolour garments.[44] The rule was modified by 'furs', figurative representations of *vair* and *ermine* as constructed for clothing linings. Comprised of tincture-and-metal patterns, these were treated like a monochromatic tincture. Though the rule of tincture was initially meant to ease comprehending distant shields,[45] it became arbitrary as designs grew to be too complex for this simple rule to distinguish them from a distance.

Shields' charges were the most commonly symbolic part of a blazon. Charges could be canting, referential, or symbolic, but animals dominated, occurring on a third of arms.[46] The most popular animals were lions and dragons, followed by the eagle, boar, and deer.[47] Like *sable* and *azur*, lion and eagle charges vied geographically for prominence, with the eagle associated with areas that had supported the Holy Roman Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries while the lion was preferred by their opposition.[48] In the fourteenth century, as minor alterations (such as tongue and feet colours) began to difference charges, similar charges could appear on unrelated shields.[49] Although such variations could also set apart individual blazons within a family, marks called 'brisures' were introduced specifically to difference between the heraldry of related persons.[50] However, the shape of *brisures* varied regionally.

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[44] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 64.
[45] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, pp. 13 and 48.
[46] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, pp. 24, 53, and 58.
[47] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, p. 107; Prinet, p. 79.
[48] Michel Pastoureau, *Armorial des chevaliers de la Table Ronde: Étude sur l'héraldique imaginaire à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Léopard d'or, 2006), p. 12, and *L'Hermine*, pp. 108-9.
[49] Max Prinet, 'Les Usages héraldiques au XIVe siècle d'après les Chroniques de Froissart', *Annuaire-Bulletin de la societé de l'histoire de France*, 54 (1916), 3-16 (p. 79).
[50] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 76.

Shields could also be 'plain': one tincture without division or charge. While plain arms were rare historically, they were used in literature to signify historical persons (a figural cue for a 'simpler' time), worn by new untested knights (a 'blank slate', inspired by Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval), or given to knights competing incognito (inspired by Chrétien's *Cligés* and *Chevalier de la Charrette*).[51] The ability of heraldry to manipulate identity was particularly explored within *Charrette*, where Lancelot adopts the unrecognised plain red heraldry of his captor and competes anonymously in tournaments, performing alternatively poorly and excellently at Guinevere's request.[52] Though armed games of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw competitors adopt the role of incognito knights, such roles were theatrical façades within the framework of games' pageantry. Both plain arms and the manipulation of identity found in literature remained rare historically.

Arthurian Blazons in Tradition and Illumination

Though Chrétien de Troyes was the first to assign heraldry to Arthurian figures, certain symbols were associated with Arthur and Uther Pendragon in Geoffrey of Monmouth's work.[53] Surprisingly, many characters' blazons were consistent across the Arthurian corpus despite many different authors and illuminators developing it concurrently. Other characters such as Arthur and Tristan changed in minor ways, depending on the time or location of a piece's composition. Starting in the fourteenth century, many characters' blazons began to change, and were shifted completely by the mid-fifteenth century. These changes were disseminated quickly by fictional armorials, but they did not fully replace older traditions.[54] This time of transition aligned fiction with contemporaneous reality: as heraldry became more complex, fantastic arms were complicated to match. In order to establish the cultural traditions for individual Arthurian characters that informed

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[51] Brault, *Early Blazon,*, pp. 29-30 and 120-1; Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 47.

[52] Chrétien de Troyes, 'Le Chevalier de la Charrette', in *Chrétien de Troyes: Romans*, ed. by Michel Zink, 495-704 (ll. 5498-5503 and 5537-6032).

[53] Lillich, p. 45; Pastoureau, *Armorial*, p. 23, and 'L'Héraldique arthurienne', in *La Légende du roi Arthur*, ed. by Thierry Delcourt, 212-19 (p. 212). This section is particularly indebted to Brault's *Early Blazon*, pp. 23-4, 30-33, 40-6, and Pastoureau's *Armorial*, pp. 22-52, 94, 100-102, and 160.

[54] Bruckner, pp. 71-2; Jefferson, p. 76.

Meliador and *Gawain* during these transitioning depictions, this section discusses Arthurian fictional heraldry in relationship to our illuminated manuscripts.[55]

Though the use of heraldry and methods of illustration varies in the illuminations used in this thesis, as the majority of these illuminations are from 1400 onwards their heraldry largely differs from earlier traditions. Moreover, manuscripts such as MS fr. 338 are inconsistent, as with two consecutive illuminations that depict the same characters but change their blazons [figs. 36 and 37]. Alternately, MSs fr. 117-120 has internal consistency, but overpainting has removed some of its moments of accord with tradition, as with Hector des Marés whose familial stripes are repainted *sable* [fig. 38]. However, manuscripts such as MS Arsenal 3479 ascribe to the wider tradition, and the illuminations of MSs fr. 100-101 rely at times on the reader being able to link illuminated character and device with narrative into a cohesive whole.[56]

As manuscripts of the Prose *Tristan*, MSs fr. 100-101 present numerous depictions of both Tristan and Palamedes. While Tristan's shield varied in earlier texts, in the Prose *Tristan* Morgan le Fay gives Tristan a green shield.[57] Accordingly, Tristan bears a plain green shield throughout MSs fr. 100-101 [figs. 39 and 40]. In the same manuscript, Palamedes bears a blazon of *chequy argent and sable*, which had been ascribed to him since the thirteenth century.[58] Significantly, this manuscript uses these characters' blazons to identify them without placing the blazons upon them, such as when Tristan's shield is hung upon a tree above his head [fig. 40]. Such use is particularly striking at Palamedes' baptism, where Palamedes' checked shield is suspended directly above the naked knight [fig. 41]. Two background characters' gazes direct attention towards it while the rest gaze at Palamedes, functioning as a crowd to connect the newly-baptised knight and his shield. Furthermore, this manuscript also places heraldry upon surcoats, giving Palamedes checked clothes instead of a shield [fig. 39]. Within these manuscripts, the

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[55] As a comprehensive examination of Arthurian knights would be outwith this discussion's scope, I have focused upon the characters most relevant to *Meliador* and *Gawain*.

[56] Bruckner, pp. 72-3, discusses these different approaches in manuscripts.

[57] The heraldic shift of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries blazoned this green shield with a gold lion; Pastoureau, *Armorial*, pp. 45-51, examines Tristan's shield more fully than warranted here.

[58] Palamedes' blazon was modified in the fifteenth century by adding two to three red scimitars as charges, which emphasised his pagan origins (Pastoureau, *Armorial*, p. 52, and 'L'Héraldique', p. 213).

illuminators expect us to recognise these knights by their heraldry, but not necessarily by their shields.

The fluidity of Arthurian heraldic tradition is most obvious with Arthur. Arthur's earliest symbols were the Virgin Mary (borne on his shield Priduuen) and a dragon (figured on his helm and inherited from his father).[59] However, by the late thirteenth century Arthur's shield bore three gold crowns; the field could be *azur* (common in France and the Low Countries) or *gules* (predominant in England).[60] This blazon was popularized in the early fourteenth century by the *Voeux du Paon*, which gave Arthur three crowns in its list of the Nine Worthies' blazons and appears in MSs fr. 117-120 and MSs fr. 100-101 [figs. 42 and 43]. While the *azur* field was preferred by the end of the fourteenth century, some artists still painted the blazon *gules*; occasionally, the crowns were amended to thirteen, which Pastoureau suggests is due to scribal misreadings.[61] As Arthurian heraldry settled in the fifteenth century, these numerous crowns upon an *azur* field were retained amongst suggestions that the number of crowns represented the lands which Arthur conquered, while Alexander the Great was ascribed Arthur's earlier three-crown shield.[62] At times, Arthur's reputation became so exaggerated that the field was sown with an indiscriminate number of crowns.

Generally, Arthurian heraldry invoked familial connections in relation to Gawain and his brothers Agravain, Gaheris, Gareth, and Mordred. Early traditions connect Gawain to the colour red, which is possibly connected to the relationship between the sun and his strength, strongest at noon.[63] Yet he was one of many red knights, the earliest of whom was Perceval, his plain *gules* shield given by Chrétien. Gawain's earliest arms share this colour, being *argent*, *a canton gules* or *argent, a*

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[59] Geoffrey of Monmouth, 'Arthurian Passages from *The History of the Kings of Britain'*, ed. and trans. by J.A. Giles, in *The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester*, ed. by Alan Lupack and Barbara Tepa Lupack <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/geofhkb.htm>; Neil Wright, ed., *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth I: Bern, Burgerbibiliothek, MS. 568* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), §147. Note that Arthur's dragon is not a crest; crests did not become common until the fifteenth century.

[60] Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 62; and 'L'Héraldique', p. 213. Brault, *Early Blazon,* p. 44, notes that there is no perceptible textual basis for Arthur's changing blazon. However, it may be connected to East Anglian Saxon kings, who were symbolically connected to three figural crowns (Griffiths, p. 68).

[61] Pastoureau, *Armorial*, p. 28.

[62] Jefferson, pp. 146 and 154; Pastoureau, *Armorial*, pp. 100 and 102.

[63] Buchanan, p. 320; Roger Sherman Loomis, 'More Celtic Elements in *Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Studies in Medieval Literature: A Memorial Collection of Essays,* by Roger Sherman Loomis (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 157-92 (p. 187-8).

franc-quartier gules.[64] This red ordinary possibly serves as a *brisure*, for Gawain's father Lot of Orkney traditionally bore arms of pure *argent*,[65] but the *gules* may also connect Gawain to the red version of Arthur's three-crowned shield. These tinctures were also used by Gawain's brothers; Agravain, for example, often had two or three red lions upon his *argent* shield. Though occasionally the Orkney brothers' charges changed, their colours were fairly consistent. However, near the end of the fourteenth century Gawain's shield began to shift to *purpure, a double-headed eagle or*, occasionally with differently-coloured tongue and feet (*membres*); this shield was also given to his brothers and was differenced through the *membres*.[66] While this charge was not consistently used (the fifteenth-century *Morte Arthure* charged Gawain's shield with a griffin),[67] the double-headed eagle took prominence and is used in several of our manuscripts. Although Gawain and Agravain bear golden eagles in these illuminations, their field seems to remain *gules* [figs. 44 and 45], though this could be a faded *purpure*. Additionally, the illuminator of MS fr. 119 differenced the brothers by giving Agravain a white *label* (a type of brisure) [fig. 46].

Because Sagremor was not as popular as Arthur and the Orkney brothers, blazons attributed to him were naturally less widely disseminated and therefore lacked harmony. In the thirteenth century Sagremor typically carried a shield *gironné d'or et de sinople* [for an example of gironny, see fig. 47, shield 8].[68] *Sinople* was green at this time, and Pastoureau suggests that Sagremor bears green-and-yellow to indicate his youth; this would accord with his traditional nickname 'le Desreez' (the impetuous, the quarrelsome).[69] While Pastoureau found at least one instance of *gironny of argent and gules* in the fifteenth century,[70] during the fourteenth century Sagremor's arms changed to either a *gules* or *sable* field with a quarter *argent* with two gold stars on the field and a black one on the quarter; the *sable* version appeared

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[64] Pastoureau, 'L'Héraldique', p. 213.
[65] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, p. 300.
[66] Bruckner, p. 72; Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, p. 300; Jefferson, 'Tournaments', p. 146. A connection may exist between the Orkney brothers' changing blazons and imperial influences, but such an examination is outwith this study's focus.
[67] Hulbert, p. 727.
[68] Pastoureau, 'Formes et couleurs du désordre: Le Jaune avec le vert', *Médiévales,* 4 (1983), 62-72 (p. 64).
[69] William W. Kibler, 'Sagremor dans le *Méliador* de Froissart', in *'Si a parlé par moult ruiste vertu': Mélanges de litterature medievale offerts à Jean Subrenat*, ed. by Jean Dufournet (Paris: Champion, 2000), 307-11 (pp. 307-8); Pastoureau, 'Formes', p. 66.
[70] Pastoureau, *Armorial*, p. 160.

in seven different armorials between the late 1300s and 1500.[71] Only one of our illuminations may concord with either of these traditions, in this case Sagremor's *gules, a quarter argent* [fig. 48], but it is difficult to tell due to damage and overpainting. However, the red trapper of Sagremor's horse is powdered with gold stars and appears to have a white square upon the neck; the mid-fifteenth-century reviser potentially used Sagremor's fourteenth-century arms.

In total, Arthurian heraldry was not mandated or rigidly structured, but rather generated by concurrence in the works of generations of authors and illuminators. These could be changed or supported by a popular work (as with the *Voeux du Paon*) or ignored wilfully, only becoming consistent with the dissemination of armorials in the fifteenth century. Before this, heraldry was altered as necessity or fancy took the creator but also employed as a 'fonction narrative' to guide the reader and create cohesion in illuminations.[72] As increasingly complex heraldic conventions were solidified, the multitude of past symbols appeared simple and archaic; however, for this reason they remained accessible and usable for historicising texts.

Manipulating Heraldry in *Meliador*

Over thirty distinct shields are blazoned in the course of *Meliador*'s narrative [figs. 47 and 49]. *Meliador* is saturated with heraldry: even briefly-mentioned knights get specific devices, and one passage identifies defeated knights solely through their shields. Heraldry even frames the plot, with King Hermont's herald declaring the tournament-quest while displaying a red shield charged with a blue lady holding a crown (representative of Hermondine) [fig. 49], while the final tournament depicts Phenonée examining Agamanor's shield while Agamanor simultaneously recognises Meliador's.[73]

Though not a herald, Froissart was highly influenced by his contacts with heralds whose roles in disseminating information, organising tourneys, and potentially allocating roles for pageantry (such as at Arthurian tournaments) centred on their understanding of heraldry technically and socially.[74] Heraldry relied upon its

[71] Jefferson, p. 148; *Meliador*, p. 345; Pastoureau, 'L'Héraldique', p. 213; Edouard Sandoz, 'Tourneys in the Arthurian Tradition', *Speculum,* 19 (1944), 389-420 (p. 410). The armorials are Bibliothèque nationale, MSs fr. 1435 to 1438, 5937, 12597, and 23999.
[72] Bouchet, 'Rhétorique', p. 244.
[73] *Meliador*, ll. 2742-6 and 29250-62.
[74] Juliet Vale, pp. 37 and 46.

‘conspicuous distinctiveness’ for ease of identification,[75] but the complication of blazons in the fourteenth century meant that a person could adopt arms only minutely different from a social superior.[76] Thus heralds, when not turning historian themselves,[77] were excellent sources for Froissart’s *Chroniques*. Unsurprisingly, this led to Froissart being well-versed in the beauty, identificatory use, and fictive qualities of heraldry.

In such a heraldry-rich text, the initial question is whether the blazons are drawn from malleable Arthurian tradition, created by Froissart, or derived from patrons or historical influence. Does this affect how the internal and external audiences identify characters? Finally, as several blazons are modified through narrative events, we must examine how changed identifiers alter relationships, personal display, public identity, and the wider narrative use of heraldry.

Froissart’s blazons are difficult to interpret because he widely ignores the language of blazoning, despite using it properly in his *Chroniques*.[78] *Blanch, vermeil, bleu,* and *noir* are preferred over *argent, gules, azur,* and *sable*; only *vert* and *or* remain unchanged. Froissart’s disregard of heraldic terminology is surprising considering that heraldic colour terminology was mostly settled by the time of *Meliador*’s writing, as well as his employment of specialised terms such as ‘brisure’, ‘geronné’, ‘parti’, and ‘semée’.[79] However, he uses *brisure* and the related verb *briser* to refer to charges and charged shields, not to indicate heredity. His choice of colours might be related to the colour-based eponyms of twelfth- and thirteenth-century literary knights, which were defined by common colour words instead of heraldic terminology (as with the description of Chrétien’s Perceval as the ‘chevalier vermoil’).[80] This would also explain Froissart’s common employment of ‘s’armoit’. Though ‘s’armoit’ is used nominally to describe arming oneself, the shield’s blazon is often emphasised in such scenes.[81] In taking arms, one assumes a knightly identity; their shield is not simply a defence but a personal identifier. Heraldry is used

[75] Lillich, quoting Sir Anthony Wagner, ‘Heralds’, p. 41.
[76] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 14. This is particular to continental heraldry, which was not restricted to the nobility (as it was in England).
[77] Keen, *Nobles*, p. 77.
[78] Ainsworth and Croenen, *Online Froissart*.
[79] *Meliador*, ll. 8603, 8626, 9417, and 13483.
[80] Brault, *Early Blazon,* p. 35; Chrétien, *Conte du Graal*, l. 2536; Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 59.
[81] *Meliador*, ll. 9415-9423.

throughout the narrative to identify characters, to compare acts, and to announce tournament winners.[82] For example, at one point a conglomeration of ladies comments on how well the knight 'qui d'or porte ce cler soleil' performs in comparison with 'le chevalier vermeil' (Meliador and Agamanor respectively).[83] Indeed, even after three tournaments knights' successes are still discussed via their heraldry.[84] Their blazon is their *nom de prouesse*, their identity, their true colours. Shield and knightly identity are conflated.

The importance of heraldry as an identifier is demonstrated by a particularly rich passage wherein Meliador requests to view the blazons of the knights that Camel has defeated and/or killed [fig. 47].[85] Fourteen shields are displayed, and Meliador recognises the first four of those whom Camel defeated. Though the knights are unnamed, two blazons are used elsewhere for the minor knights Rolidanas and Fernagu, while the other two are anonymous. Following these are the shields of ten knights who chose to die rather than accepting defeat; understandably, they are not found elsewhere in the text. The description of these blazons are constructed similarly to real heraldry, such as with the first shield's 'vermeille | a unes noires armeüres' or the second's sable field, with a 'bende semée estoit | de mouletes....noires si com li camps'.[86] The fourth shield is even linked to a location, its design supposedly Swedish and belonging to 'cilz de le Hede'.[87] However, these shields have not yet been linked to any real blazons, and the second and eighth shields violate the rule of tincture. The shields keep the audience in the fictional world of *Meliador*, a reminder that their role is not to identify real knights. Rather, these blazons rework the purpose of heraldry and instead identify Camel de Camois as a fearsome opponent.

The most important individual blazon in the narrative is Meliador's, which is 'tous bleus est li escus | a un soleil d'or de brisure' [fig. 49], referenced throughout as

[82] For an example of announcing winners, see *Meliador*, ll. 6870-80.
[83] *Meliador*, ll. 6710-4.
[84] *Meliador*, ll. 16209-14. Though Sarah E. Gordon argues that 'knightly deeds become more important than knights' names or the color of their shields' in 'The Man with No Name: Identity in French Arthurian Verse Romance', *Arthuriana,* 18 (2008), 69-81 (p. 79), this does not hold true in *Meliador*.
[85] *Meliador*, ll. 8533-631.
[86] Ll. 8600-7.
[87] Ll. 8611-4.

an alternative to Meliador's name.[88] Specifically, the colour is referenced 59 times, while the *soleil* is referenced 103 times. Although Meliador adopts his blue field in honour of Hermondine, his device may also be a pun inspired by the herald's description of the labours of the tournament-quest 'desous le soleil', which is the 'devis' of Hermont.[89] However, while literary blue knights are not uncommon, suns are rare charges that are occasionally mistaken for many-rayed stars (which are the most common celestial symbols).[90] The sun's symbolism is obvious: as the most prominent heavenly body, it is appropriate for this superior knight, and the adoption of this shield labels Meliador as the one who will win the quest and Hermondine. Indeed, in ordering his new heraldry Meliador asks that 'il se brise', the reflexive verb and sentence structure suggesting that the sun blazons him instead of his shield.[91] In turn, this is emphasised by substituting 'li bleus chevaliers' and 'chevaliers au soleil d'or' for Meliador's name.

In suggesting the sun's role as an illuminating body, the sun-charge indicates that Meliador's knightly ability is 'illuminating', demonstrating the pinnacle of knighthood. Lansonnés even puns upon this, stating that

> Or couvenra vo soleil d'or
> Faire resclarcir en proece
> Ou morir...[92]

This also serves to align his prowess with his life; Meliador can only exist as a shining example of knighthood. With an additional nuance of enlightenment, this reinforces that Meliador's ability is a privilege to behold and worthy of study. Meliador's sister Phenonée supports this interpretation of his sun, stating that 'cilz qui porte un soleil d'or | de proece le passe encor'.[93] By linking the golden sun with prowess, Phenonée suggests that Meliador conceptually 'fulfils' his blazon.

For Meliador, the shield points towards something 'higher' than prowess. Yet this is not heavenly/religious devotion, for *Meliador* is starkly secular. Rather, he is guided by his lady-love Hermondine. Although Meliador's devotion to his blue lady

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[88] *Meliador*, ll. 18192-3.
[89] Ll. 2857-60 and 2916. In fact, the quest is conceived by Florée.
[90] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p.53. Brault, *Early Blazon,* p. 32, lists blue knights from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, including Erec, Perlesvaus, knights from *Fougue de Candie*, and Froissart's 'Dit dou Bleu Chevalier'.
[91] *Meliador*, ll. 7184.
[92] Ll. 8330-2. 'Now your golden sun will have to make you shine more strongly in prowess or death'.
[93] Ll. 27227-8. 'The one who carries the golden sun surpasses him [Agamanor] in prowess'.

evokes the cultural parallels found between *fin'amor* and the cult of the blue-clad Virgin Mary, within a purely secular sphere this suggests that the female body becomes a mortal substitute for religious devotion.[94] However, while Meliador's adoption of the shield indicates that he views it symbolically of both his prowess and his love, others within the text use it to represent Meliador himself.

Yet the treatment of Meliador's shield in the narrative does not explain why Froissart chose such a rare charge. While one shield identical to Meliador's is known, recorded in a Parliamentary roll from circa 1312 and attributed to one Francis Aldham, this man was unlikely to inspire Froissart, for he was executed by Edward II in 1322, and his obscure family no longer held their lands after 1336.[95] Coming from Cornwall, Meliador is a neutral character within Arthurian convention and contemporary politics, but Froissart's many patrons may have influenced his choice. Froissart began drafting this narrative while working for Philippa of Hainault, and the initial inspiration for Meliador's sun may have been Edward III's sunburst badge.[96] However, if the sun came later in Froissart's composition, it may have been inspired by Richard II (to whom Froissart presented a book of poetry in 1395), for around 1378, Richard II and three compatriots took part in an overtly literary jousting challenge while wearing red costumes 'decorated with golden suns'.[97] The change of colour could be attributed to the popularity of blue at the time.[98] Yet blue and gold are also the colours of France. Although Froissart did not pursue royal patronage, Meliador's golden sun may be a subtle nod towards the Ordre de l'Étoile, whose many-rayed star badge could resemble a miniature sun.[99]

A more likely inspiration is Jean, Duc du Berry, for whom Froissart composed the 'Dit dou Bleu Chevalier' and whose blazon was *azur, semé de fleurs*

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[94] For further exploration of this, see Chapter 5.
[95] Wallace Henry Hills, *The History of East Grinstead: The Rise and Progress of the Town and the History of Its Institutions and People* (East Grinstead: Farncombe, 1906) <http://www.sussexhistory.co.uk/history-east-grinstead/east-grinstead-history.html>, pp. 110-1. Aldham's blazon is discussed and described in Cecil Humphery-Smith, *Anglo-Norman Armory Two: An Ordinary of Thirteenth-Century Armorials* (Canterbury: The Institute of Heraldic & Geneaological Studies, 1984), p. 550. This blason is 261 in the Parliamentary roll.
[96] Barker, pp. 109 and 183. Barker suggests that the rays were intended to be pneuma, punning on the location of the 1344 Round Table (winds-*or*).
[97] Barker, p. 92; Brigitte Buettner, 'Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400', *The Art Bulletin*, 83 (2001), 598-625 (p. 616).
[98] Pastoureau, *L'Hermine*, pp. 134.
[99] D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, p. 201, adds that in the middle of the white star of this Order was an *azur* rondel, inside of which was a small gold sun.

de lys d'or, à la bordure engruelé de gueules. Nonetheless, *Meliador* was read not for Jean or English Royalty, but Gaston Count of Foix, called Fébus – the Sun God. Though Gaston's heraldic tinctures were not blue and gold, he was depicted wearing such in his *Livre de Chasse*, written the year before *Meliador* was read to him.[100] *Meliador* was also a remarkably appropriate choice for Froissart to read, for it opens with a deer hunt (Gaston's favourite activity). However, Fébus was never a major patron of Froissart. *Meliador*'s recitation may have been a failed bid for patronage, combining qualities of Edward III and Jean, Duc de Berry, to imply Gaston Febus's equality to them or suggesting a propagandic connection of Febus's family to the knights of Arthur's early days. Or, it may be lucky happenstance that *Meliador*'s narrative is easily viewed as flattery for Gaston, especially as the extant manuscript stops before naming the 'gentil seigneur' for whom it was written.[101] As the text stands, it implies that as Meliador surpasses all other knights,[102] so does the primary listener.

The heraldry of Meliador's enemy and negative opposite, Camel de Camois, is also intriguing. Excepting his somnambulism and inappropriately zealous love of Hermondine, Camel is characterised positively as '[nul] plus preu, plus fier, ne plus hardi, | fust a la guerre ou au tournoi'.[103] Despite this, his somnambulism turns him into something to be feared, to the point that all the wealth in France would not convince him to sleep alone in a chamber (that is, without aides at hand).[104] Night-time action was untrustworthy, and twilight was described as 'inter canem et lupum', a boundary between cultured and wild.[105] This suggests that the inspiration of Meliador's shield might not be Gaston, for Camel negatively reflects Gaston's bastard half-brother, Pierre de Béarn. After an encounter with a bear while hunting, Pierre began to take his sword and armour while asleep and fight invisible foes. When his armaments were removed from the room, the somnambulist's reaction were so awful (resembling 'les deables d'enfer') that his wife refused to live with

[100] Pastoureau, *L'Ours*, p. 251-2; *Hunting Book of Gaston Phébus*, folio 51v.
[101] *Meliador*, ll. 30769-71
[102] Ll. 6874-84, qtd. 6876-7.
[103] Ll. 324-5. '[No one] worthier, stronger, or bolder | was there in war or tourney'
[104] L. 328.
[105] Woolgar, pp. 149 and 153.

him.[106] That this resulted from a hunt would be particularly shaming to Gaston, who was the authority on hunting. If Pierre de Béarn's sleep-fighting inspired Camel de Camois's, as Michel Zink suggests, then Meliador's golden sun may still have been influenced by Gaston.[107] This proposal would require Froissart to either have read to Gaston a drastically different first third to *Meliador*, or to have read something deliberately inflammatory.

With such associations, it is unsurprising that Camel's shield contains green, for he is an ambiguous character.[108] In total, his shield is 'de rouge a une verde targe' with nothing on it but one gold crown [fig. 49].[109] While the crown echoes the one carried by the lady charging the herald's blazon and could reflect his sworn love for Hermondine, the Scottish princess, it may also be viewed as an overconfident assertion that he shall gain the Scottish throne through Hermondine. Although we are informed elsewhere of Camel's positive qualities, this hints at inappropriate pride and moral deficiency. This is bolstered by the narrative, for as Camel moves closer to his imminent defeat at Meliador's hands he becomes defined simply as 'li chevaliers au vert escu'.[110] This suggests parallels between Camel and traditional portrayals of Tristan, who also loved questionably and, due to that love, acted deceitfully at night. Camel is even compared to Tristan as the narrative's eulogy presents him as a proper lover, emphasising the role of his love for Hermondine in his death.[111] However, though Hermondine mourns Camel, he is also depicted negatively post-mortem, called 'Oultrecuidance' on a ring that Florée gives Meliador in thanks for defeating Camel.[112] Camel's shield prepares us for this reframing of the character himself: as his shield is simplified into a 'vert escu', Camel is also reduced and inferior to Meliador's blue shield and golden sun.

While Meliador and Camel's heraldry hint provocatively about their characters and Froissart's potential influences, Agamanor's arms are actively manipulated within the narrative; both the physical object and Agamanor's public portrayal are altered. Agamanor is already labelled 'le chevalier rouge' before his

[106] Froissart, 'Troisième Livre,' *Chroniques*, § 14.
[107] Zink, *Froissart et le temps*, p. 112.
[108] Bouchet, 'Rhétorique', p. 242.
[109] *Meliador*, ll. 3370-72.
[110] Ll. 5912.
[111] Ll. 9101-31.
[112] L. 9614. For further on this ring, see Chapter 6.

blazon, ‘de rouge a une targe blance’, is described [fig. 49].[113] As per the tournament-quest’s requirements of anonymity, Agamanor adopts ‘armes vermeilles’ which ‘brise une blance dame’.[114] Ladies are popular charges within the narrative; in addition to the lady on the shield of Hermont’s herald, women are also borne by Sagremor and the minor knight Morenois.[115] Though charging a shield with a lady is certainly significant, human charges were the domain of romances and rare in reality [for example, the right-hand knight in fig. 20]. Like Morenois, Agamanor’s lady is white, indicating that though these knights venerate the concept of a courtly woman, they do not specifically invest in Hermondine (the *blue* lady). Furthermore, though Agamanor is referred to by his colour like Meliador, he is never named for his charge. His blazon begins as an empty signifier for an anonymous knight.

The emptiness of this symbol becomes a source of concern for Phenonée. Discovering the anonymous Agamanor’s exploits, Phenonée is attracted to him but concerned: this knight performs as worthily as her brother, and his armaments disguise him so well that he may be Meliador.[116] As the anonymity of the quest insinuates the rejection of hereditary shields, her worry is understandable. However, once Phenonée discovered that Agamanor is not her brother, she rectifies the situation that caused her anxiety (Agamanor’s anonymity) by modifying his shield. As she awarded the second tournament’s prize (a falcon) to Agamanor, with the permission of her father she changes Agamanor’s blazon so that the white lady carries a falcon.[117] She then presents this new shield to her knight Lyone with the express order to seek the Red Knight and present him with the shield. The purpose of this gesture is twofold, simultaneously symbolising Agamanor’s winnings and demonstrating that a relationship between them is not forbidden. Though it is not socially appropriate for Phenonée to be the romantic aggressor, her shield implies that the woman who presented him with the hawk may also be a prize.

By reworking this shield, Phenonée causes a complex reinterpretation of identity (heraldry, after all, was supposed to be representative of a person or family),

[113] *Meliador*, ll. 4473 and 4524.
[114] *Meliador*, ll. 13225 and 13228.
[115] Ll. 26302 and 27505.
[116] Ll. 7583-7 and 7610-4.
[117] *Meliador,* ll. 13235-47 and 13482-5. Froissart’s use of the hawk may intentionally recall the sparrowhawk that Erec wins in Chrétien’s *Érec et Énide*.

but multiple identities are changed here. First, the shield duplicates the only object that has so far connected Phenonée and Agamanor (the falcon). By giving the lady on Agamanor's shield the falcon, Phenonée consciously transforms the empty signifier into a figurative representation of herself, who carried the real falcon. Phenonée is now the white lady. This change creates a situation where Agamanor has been retroactively carrying Phenonée's image and acting as 'her' knight. Moreover, by intentionally altering Agamanor's identifier and identity, in a fashion Phenonée claims a right to transform Agamanor and act in his interest. As blazons were primarily amended by this time to difference between family members (often between a father and son), by reworking the shield Phenonée asserts herself over Agamanor as an authority figure and suggests a personal relationship through this intimate act of identity re-creation.

Before discussing Agamanor's response to this shield, Phenonée's knight Lyone should be noted. Entitled 'le blanch chevalier', Lyone dresses in his lady Phenonée's colours (as she became the white lady upon her recreation of Agamanor's shield) and wears on his surcoat's sleeve an embroidery of the new shield.[118] Though Lyone states that he carries this shield 'pour l'amour de la dame blanche', there is no hint towards romantic love between the two.[119] Lyone is a vassal-knight, not Agamanor's rival. Indeed, Lyone carries a very small well-crafted red shield, which would be extraneous if the lady-charged shield was his to use.[120] Lyone is merely the shield's porter, a tool in unifying Agamanor and Phenonée. This function is emphasised by his garments: in his quest to bring about their romantic union, Lyone symbolically unites Agamanor and Phenonée *on his body* by wearing Phenonée's new colour and bearing an embroidered badge of Agamanor's new shield.

This badge alarms Agamanor when meeting Lyone due to its unknown source; indeed, Lyone could be viewed as impersonating Agamanor.[121] A similar situation happened in 1385, when during an invasion of Scotland Richard Scrope of

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[118] *Meliador*, ll. 13576, 14840, and 14971. Soon after this passage, Froissart capitalises on Lyone's colour by creating a highly artistic scene where Lyone, the white knight, jousts an unnamed black knight (noted specifically at l. 13586).
[119] L. 14970.
[120] Ll. 15105-6.
[121] Ll. 15155ff.

Bolton and Robert Grosvenor of Cheshire discovered that they both bore *azur, a bend or*; this was considered serious enough that their case ended up before Richard II.[122] Alternatively, Agamanor's concern could be because Lyone's badge suggests a political allegiance with Agamanor. Again, this could insinuate that someone impersonates Agamanor and is gathering followers, or it could imply that someone is gathering followers on behalf of Agamanor. The tension is defused when Agamanor discovers that both the badge and new shield are Phenonée's creations. Phenonée is not a threat; instead, her action is flattering. Marvelling at the generosity of this woman, Agamanor accepts her heraldic love-token openly and willingly. However, the narrative purpose of this shield is not disclosed fully until the two meet. Phenonée, calling Agamanor's charge a 'noble damoiselle', asks why he performs under this sign when his deeds were supposedly spurred for love of Hermondine.[123] In return, Agamanor acknowledges that he initially performed feats for Hermondine, whom 'je l'amoie pour son renom', but now he admires Phenonée.[124]

Despite the profusion of heraldic shields in *Meliador*, only three traditional Arthurian characters are blazoned: Arthur, Agravain, and Sagremor. Despite the growing popularity in the fourteenth century for a blue field for Arthur's blazon, Froissart gives him 'vermeilles | a trois couronnes d'or dessus'.[125] Though this may indicate that Arthur's *azur* field was not as popular as it seems, if Froissart intentionally chose red over blue this affects Meliador's shield. Though other shields in the narrative also have blue and red fields [figs 47 and 49], Arthur may specifically bear a red field to distinguish him from Meliador. Yet if Arthur bore blue he and Meliador would be somewhat analogous; rather they are distanced. This is particularly odd because Froissart frames the Blue Knight as the most worthy. However, considering the potential political references in Meliador's shield, Froissart may have furnished Arthur with a colour associated more with English heraldry in order to lessen any bias inferred by giving Meliador the colour associated with France. Finally, as the narrative has already indicated its pseudo-historical status through armour, Arthur's red arms may be a further motion towards historicisation.

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[122] Pastoureau, *Heraldry*, p. 104. Scrope won.
[123] *Meliador*, ll. 22522-32.
[124] Ll. 22540-649, qtd. 22586. 'I loved her for her renown'.
[125] Ll. 28985-6.

This is only valid if Froissart was aware of historical preferences in Arthurian heraldry.

Agravain's blazon is also interesting, for his appearance at the end of *Meliador* is almost incidental. Little more than a name-drop, he is married to Florée as a sort of reward for her instrumentation of the tournament (which resulted in the pairs of Meliador/Hermondine and Agamanor/Phenonée). Despite this minimal appearance, Agravain is still blazoned with a 'blanch escu'.[126] Instead of Agravain's earlier lions on *argent* or his late-fourteenth-century *purpure, a double-headed eagle or*, Agravain bears the plain arms of a young or unknown knight, literally blank. As *Meliador* is set in the nascent Arthurian world, Agravain may be a young knight. However, plain *argent* shields were associated with two other characters in Arthurian literature: the unknown Lancelot of the *Lancelot-Graal* (to which three red stripes are added by Morgan le Fay) and Agravain's father Lot.[127] This latter association suggests that Agravain bears a plain shield specifically for its use as a tool of historicisation. The resemblance to Lot's shield suggests that Agravain has inherited his blazon from his father's generation. Combined with its 'plain' status, Agravain's shield works on two levels to assert that this is an earlier Arthurian age.

The final Arthurian knight blazoned in *Meliador* is young Sagremor; unlike Agravain and Arthur, Sagremor has a secondary storyline devoted to his adventures. Since he is a young, unproven knight, Sagremor might be expected to bear plain heraldry; however, it is his elder Dagor who bears plain arms as 'le chevalier au vert escu'.[128] As Dagor is Irish, his blazon may be meant to recall Tristan's green field. In contrast, Sagremor's blazon is fully outwith any tradition, being 'blance | a une blewe dame en mi' and inspired by his lady-love Sebille [fig. 49].[129] In design, Sagremor's arms recall Agamanor's white lady and Meliador's blue field, combining and inverting their blazons. Because Sagremor's appearance is late in the narrative, these similarities are particularly obvious and position Sagremor as part of the generation of great knights that will follow Meliador and Agamanor. It is this generation that will yield traditional Arthurian characters.

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[126] *Meliador*, l. 30631.

[127] Brault, *Early Blazon,* p. 34, Pastoureau, *Armorial*, pp. 31 and 36-9. Intriguingly, Froissart has also given Florée's father the name 'Lot'.

[128] *Meliador*, ll. 24923

[129] Ll. 26301-3 and 26359-60 (qtd.).

Like Meliador, Sagremor adopts his device for love of Sebille, but he is especially aware of its role as a personal signifier. He focuses concern about behaving chivalrically upon the shield, questioning whether it will represent 'folie ou savoir' before declaring that 'ceste devise porterai | et serai li siens chevaliers'.[130] Sagremor forgoes accepting the shield as his personal signifier in favour of aligning it with Sebille; he intends to earn a good reputation (which shall become linked to his heraldry) to honour his lady. As the world of *Meliador* functions according to *ordenance*, this suggests that Sagremor's dedication to Sebille will lead him into great feats, not folly. However, there is also a sense that he shall be the knight of this specific shield in whatever way its symbolism demands.

This blazon leads Sagremor into trouble when the damsel Margadine accuses him of not wearing his own arms. Drawing parallels to Agamanor's shield as well as the heraldry of her brother Morenois (*sable, a lady argent*), Margadine also invokes 'sainte Marie' in describing Sagremor's arms.[131] Though 'sainte Marie' may simply be an oath here, it could imply a parallel between Sagremor's *blewe dame* with the Virgin Mary; Margadine would be insinuating that Sagremor's shield (and thus his *courtoisie*) results from religious devotion. In turn, this suggests a relation between Sebille (the shield's inspiration) and the Virgin Mary and compares Sagremor's secular love to piety. This aligns Sagremor's shield even more strongly with Meliador's, for it too subtly hinted at the relationship between secular and religious love. The construction of chivalric opposites in the narrative is further emphasised when Margadine challenges Sagremor to joust her brother, for she positions Morenois' black blazon as 'au contraire' to Sagremor's device.[132] This reflects the doubles constructed through the text, such as Meliador/Agamanor and Hermondine/Phenonée.[133]

Despite the use of the *dame* by Morenois, Agamanor, and King Hermont's herald, Sagremor claims the device as his own. First, upon defeating Morenois he orders the knight to travel to Arthur and announce that he was defeated by the

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[130] *Meliador*, ll. 27262-9, qtd. 27266 and 27268-9. 'Folly or wisdom'; 'I will carry this device and I shall be her knight'.
[131] Ll. 27325-56 and 27460-2. qtd. 27325.
[132] Ll. 27356.
[133] For further on these pairs, see Chapters 2 and 5.

‘chevalier a la dame’.[134] Second, since Margadine accompanies her brother, Sagremor has her take a letter to Sebille. Within it, he states that he shall retain his charge even though it leads him into conflict, because he desires for Sebille to use the knowledge of his blazon to follow his adventures.[135] Finally, he connects his encounter with Morenois to his love for Sebille, because as a knight his deeds are inseparable from his *amours*. Therefore, he states that for

> La blewe dame que je port
> Ou nom de vous, ma souveraine
> Me fera endurer la painne.[136]

Sagremor’s assertion of his individuality within the multitude of knights in *Meliador* is supported by Sagremor’s experiences, for while the rest of the narrative is starkly realistic Sagremor is given an Otherworldly adventure. Journeying in the forest of Archenai, Sagremor does not need to drink or eat.[137] Instead, amongst these marvels Sagremor meditates upon ‘vermeilles | armes et pour sa blewe dame’ [fig. 49].[138] Despite the previous episode solidly establishing the importance of Sagremor’s silver-and-blue arms, this phrase apparently refers to his blazon, suddenly transformed. However, Sagremor could also be considering Agamanor’s shield in comparison to his own. Both interpretations serve as a reminder of how Sagremor’s imitative heraldry caused his encounter with Morenois, and suggest that they may have also allowed Sagremor’s entry into this forest. Sagremor considers the implications of this as he places his blazon on a statue-like tree and disarms himself, as if experimenting to see whether he would still be a knight or stay in this Otherworld without his knightly trappings.[139] Though this act may be an attempt by Sagremor to control his surroundings, it echoes illuminations like figure 40.[140] Furthermore, the new colours of his blazon are reminiscent of the common blue-and-red backgrounds of fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century illuminations [figs. 6, 14, 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, and 33]. Notably, only ten lines after hanging his shield a white

[134] *Meliador*, l. 27799.
[135] *Meliador*, ll. 28171-247.
[136] Ll. 28200-2.
[137] Ll. 28380-4.
[138] Ll. 28394-5.
[139] Ll. 28392-411.
[140] Other examples of shields hung on trees are found in MS fr. 100, folios 261 and 350v.

deer appears and carries Sagremor deeper into the forest.[141] Froissart's Otherworld is consciously fictive, artistic, and inescapable.

Sagremor's experiences, though strange, parallel earlier sections of the poem, particularly Camel's opening adventures. Most obvious is the white hart, for the text opens with Camel hunting deer, which leads him to meet Hermondine; Sagremor's white hart eventually leads him to three fairy women. Within the forest, Sagremor experiences a dream of Sebille; this resonates with Camel's nocturnal activities as well as Sagremor's sleeplessness the night after he first saw Sebille.[142] However, unlike Camel's somnambulism, Sagremor's odd experiences are acceptable because they happen in an Otherworldly setting to a traditional Arthurian knight. Odd events should be expected.

Sagremor presumably loses his device in the forest of Archenai, for the shield remains upon the tree and is not mentioned again.[143] In his study on *Meliador*, Dembowski hypothesized that the missing or unwritten ending would focus upon Sagremor.[144] In it, the Arthurian court would invade and convert Ireland to chivalry (a crusade of the secular world), thereby justifying Sagremor's rejection of his barbaric father. If such had existed, Sagremor may have received new arms upon his coronation as the rightful king of Ireland. These may have been his traditional ones. However, as the narrative has a profusion of heraldic harps (a rare charge) on minor characters' shields, these hypothetical new arms may have been specifically Irish.

The number of devices in *Meliador* establishes the importance of identity and identification within the narrative. Through this, Froissart demonstrates interest not in heraldic terminology but rather with the complexity of fourteenth-century blazon. The devices within *Meliador* manipulate Arthurian tradition for historicisation and exhibit heraldry's power to affect society, art, and relationships (be they narrative or political). Moreover, the narrative explores through Agamanor and Sagremor the issues that occur when the heraldry is obfuscated. These shields are not simply for protection or identification in battles and tournaments; they remind us of the wearer's character. Their information extends beyond *gules* and griffons into a realm of past

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[141] *Meliador*, ll. 28412-68. The appearance of the white hart may also strengthen connections between *Meliador* and Richard II, who bore a white hart badge (Ailes, p. 95).
[142] *Meliador*, ll. 25873 and 28605-791.
[143] Ll. 28767-8.
[144] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 130-49.

victories and defeats. Through heraldry, identities are created and explicated, relationships modified and solidified, patrons flattered, and Arthurian heroes (re)created.

Stars, Girdles, and Garters in *Gawain*

Unlike *Meliador*, *Gawain* contains only one blazoned shield ‘of schyr goulez | wyth þe pentangel depaynt of pure golde hwez’.[145] Yet the Lady’s girdle also serves as a sort of badge,[146] and both items have been examined in relation to the Garter motto appended to the end of the manuscript. As the shield is ascribed dense symbolism by the narrator, it has attracted much attention concerning its textual purpose; yet scholarly attention has not been fully satisfactory in considering the pentangle in relation to the girdle. Therefore, this discussion frames these objects through a heraldic lens that invokes religious and political imagery in order to consider their narrative role as signifiers. Overall, this demonstrates the scope of symbolism, heredity, and interpretative possibilities that can be found in heraldic items.

While the colour of Gawain’s shield is modified by ‘schyr’, indicating an intense or bright version of the conceptual tincture, its *gules* recalls Gawain’s traditional pre-fifteenth-century colours. The pentangle (an overlapping, five-pointed star) is not part of Gawain’s tradition, and the text seems to acknowledge this by calling it ‘nwe’.[147] As the shield is presented to Gawain by the same anonymous ‘þay’ that dress him for his quest, this may signify that this is not a departure from literary tradition, but that Gawain is given a new blazon for this adventure.[148] This phrasing also highlights the extended discussion of the shield’s symbolism that follows its description.[149]

The representative nature of heraldry invites symbolic interpretations through representative figures, prescriptive values, and canting arms. While a few German and Swiss families used ‘*gules, a pentalpha or*’ for their blazon, the pentangle was

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[145] *Gawain*, ll. 619-20.
[146] Notably, these items are not included in the manuscript illuminations.
[147] *Gawain,* l. 636.
[148] Andrew and Waldron, p. 231, citing J.A.W. Bennett, *Supplementary Notes on* Gawain, 4 fascicles (Cambridge: privately printed, 1972-6), 1973, p. 7.
[149] *Gawain*, ll. 640-65.

an even less common charge than Meliador's golden sun.[150] Although it replicates an openwork version of the *mullet*, a common charge occasionally used as a *brisure*, mullets were either solid or 'pierced' with a small circle that caused them to resemble a spur-rowel.[151] Conversely, the narrator is clear that Gawain's pentangle is one 'endelez' overlapping line.[152] However, the addition by the narrator that he shall inform us of why the pentangle is fitting for Gawain, 'þof tary hyt me schulde', suggests that the pentangle's symbolism would not be obvious to the audience despite his claim that 'Englych hit callen | oueral, as I here, "þe endeles knot"'.[153] If the pentangle was viewed as an uncommon, slightly fantastical design, it allows the narrator to give this symbol a meaning appropriate for his narrative.

This prescribed symbolism ignores the shield's colour, focusing instead on the pentangle. Outwith heraldry, the pentangle was a potent figure in 'Semitic legend and Greek philosophy', linked to the wise Solomon (who was also viewed as a magician).[154] While there is some 'mystic significance' from its endless construction and resulting composition of five triads centred around one point, the narrative frames it as a 'bytoknyng of trawþe' created by Solomon.[155] Although this acknowledges that the pentangle is viewed as Solomon's sign, it moves the charge from a magical symbol to a representative of human virtues; however, these meanings feel 'artificial, fabricated *ad hoc* for this poem',[156] and suggest that it shall be narratively significant.

A nuanced term, 'trawþe' indicates fidelity, loyalty, and faithfulness as well as honour and integrity;[157] it summarises the pentangle's purpose. The narrator notes that the pentangle 'haldez fyue poyntez', which puns upon the five-pointed list of virtues that follows by coalescing it with the five-pointed star.[158] The narrator connects these 'poyntez' to Gawain, stating that he is 'for ay faythful in fyue and

[150] Hulbert, p. 729.
[151] Hulbert, pp. 726-7.
[152] *Gawain,* ll. 628-30, qtd. 629. 'Endless'.
[153] Ll. 623-4 and 629-30 (qtd.). 'The English call it overall, as I hear, "the endless knot"'. It is unclear whether 'oueral' is intended to mean 'generally' or 'everywhere'. If the latter, it contrasts with his need to explain the symbolism; if the former, it is simply a linguistic observation.
[154] Charny, §35; Cocheris, p. 23; Hulbert, p. 721 (qtd.).
[155] *Gawain*, l. 626; Hulbert, p. 722.
[156] Albert B. Friedman and Richard H. Osberg, 'Gawain's Girdle as Traditional Symbol', *Journal of American Folklore*, 90 (1977), 301-15 (p. 315).
[157] *MED*, 'treuth (n.)'.
[158] *Gawain,* l. 627.

sere fyue syþez';[159] like gold, he is absent of any impurity or 'vylany' but adorned with 'vertuez' (an ambiguous term which implies both moral excellence and physical strength).[160]

After this praise of Gawain the narrator unfolds a deeper analysis of the pentangle and its significance to Gawain. Its virtues are divided into five groups of five: 'wyttez', 'fyngres', Christ's five wounds, the five joys of Mary, and five positive courtly virtues.[161] 'Wyttez' and 'fyngres' are only devoted a line each: Gawain excels physically in his five senses ('wyttez') and his physical deeds ('fyngres'). The latter analogy echoes the chivalric significance of gauntlets, which were to remind knights to refrain from foul deeds.[162] The next two sets of five are developed further; no longer on Gawain's personal virtues, the pentangle examines religious values, starting with the 'fyue woundez' of Christ on the cross (the stigmata) which are potentially echoed in the shield's red field.[163] With the *gules* of Gawain's shield, Christ's blood and the stigmata could have been emphasised, but they are not; the *gules* simply seems to be a nod to Gawain's traditional colours. Though the narrator states that Gawain's full confidence and loyalty is placed on these wounds in continuous meditation, this is their last mention in the narrative.[164] More significant are the 'fyue joyez' of the Virgin Mary which follow. Both the Five Wounds and the Five Joys were common devotional topics in the Middle Ages,[165] but with the multitude of references to the Virgin within the narrative (as well as her painting on the inside of Gawain's shield), the latter have greater weight.[166]

After these devotional values, the narrator then lists the untitled fifth group of *fraunchyse*, *felaȝschyp*, *clannes*, *cortaysye*, and *pité*.[167] These are a mixture of masculine courtly and religious values, emphasised by *pité* which can be read as 'pity' (compassion) as well as 'piety'. The narrator claims that 'þyse pure fyue' are stronger in Gawain than in any other knight, but that all five categories of virtues

[159] *Gawain,* l. 632; Andrew and Waldron translate the quoted line as 'trustworthy in five ways, and five times in each way' (p. 231).
[160] *Gawain,* ll. 633-5.
[161] Ll. 640-655.
[162] Llull, pp. 82-3.
[163] *Gawain,* ll. 642-3.
[164] Ll. 642, 644-5.
[165] Andrew and Waldron, p. 232; Robert W. Ackerman, 'Gawain's Shield: Penitential Doctrine in *Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Anglia*, 76 (1958), 254-65 (p. 256).
[166] For further on the Virgin Mary, see Chapter 5.
[167] *Gawain*, ll. 651-4.

(*wyttez*, *fyngres*, stigmata, joys of Mary, and courtly virtues) exist equally in Gawain.[168] Like the pentangle, this mixture of religious and chivalric virtues overlap one another, tangled into a knot that can only exist with its other parts, without beginning, end, or fragmentation.[169]

Yet the pentangle does not reappear by name after this point. Though some scholars suggests that deciphering the pentangle is vital to comprehending the poem,[170] its abandonment suggests that it is simply a distraction and digression akin to Gawain's armour.[171] That is, though it frames the narrative and the audience's understanding, it is not used for its declared purpose (with Gawain's armour, defence; with the pentangle, devotion). However, one point of the shield is not disregarded by the narrative: the Virgin Mary. In addition to her joys represented in the pentangle, Mary's image is painted on the 'inore half' of the shield.[172] This depiction has been imprecisely interpreted, such as that she is painted next to the pentangle, present only to fortify Gawain in battle, and a potential scribal insertion without effect on the rest of the narrative.[173] In spite of these interpretations, the references to the Virgin throughout the narrative indicate that she is of greater importance than simply an encourager and certainly not a scribal insertion.

Mary's image was first carried on a shield by Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth's works, and remained there in the literary tradition.[174] This historical/literary connection supports that this shield is a new blazon for Gawain, suggesting that Gawain's role is more strongly tied to Arthur as a substitute/emissary than the text explicitly states.[175] Within Geoffrey of Monmouth's work, Mary acts like a charge on the exterior of the shield; this has been inverted in *Gawain*, with Mary painted on the interior. This switch modifies her image into a figure of

[168] *Gawain,* ll. 654-5.
[169] Anderson, 'Three Judgements', pp. 337 and 351; *Gawain,* ll. 656-60.
[170] For example, Richard Hamilton Green, 'Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection', *Journal of English Literary History*, 29 (1962), 121-39 (p. 126), and Ingledew, p. 163.
[171] Cecilia A. Hatt, in 'The Endless Not: The Pressure of the Alternative in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', presented at the Twenty-Third Triennial Congress of the International Arthurian Society, University of Bristol, 27 July 2011, described the pentangle as a false signifier; Hulbert, p. 721, states that the pentangle is 'the only digression in the poem'.
[172] *Gawain*, ll. 647-50, qtd. 649. 'Inside'.
[173] Isaac Jackson, 'Sir Gawain's Coat of Arms', *Modern Language Review,* 15 (1920), 77-9 (p. 77); Anderson, 'Three Judgements', p. 349; and Hulbert, p. 721, respectively.
[174] Ackerman, p. 263; Brault, *Early Blazon*, pp. 23-4; Geoffrey of Monmouth, §147; Pastoureau, *Armorial*, p. 25; Wagner, *Heralds,* p. 13.
[175] Ingledew, p. 81, supports the concept of Gawain as Arthur's substitute, epitomised by the shield.

devotion, meditation, and encouragement instead of heraldic identification, protection and display. Considering this position in relationship to the emphasised pentangle, to discount Mary would be faulty. I suggest that the dualism of the pentangle and the Virgin on the exterior/interior of the shield is intended to create a tension between Gawain's public and private character, explicated best by examining Gawain's actions through the pentangle.

Beginning with the chivalric virtues, Gawain arguably both fulfils and fails in *fraunchyse*. Though he retains the Lady's girdle, neglecting the exchange game played with the Host, he does this out of magnanimity, acquiescing to the Lady's request that he not tell the Host.[176] In doing this, he spares the Lady's reputation, but he also retains the girdle for his own uses. This could also be viewed as a failure of *felaȝschyp*, for Gawain defrauds the Host in the exchange game; he is otherwise a perfect guest, engaging in the Hostel's society as much as allowed by the terms of the exchange game. Concerning Gawain's *clannes*, although Gawain does not respond to the persistent physical advances of the Lady, the retention of the girdle may sully his moral or spiritual purity. So far, whether Gawain has in fact failed his pentangle is unclear. Also known as the epitome of *cortaysye*, Gawain is careful to walk the line between courteousness and over-familiarity during his stay at the Hostel and the bedroom-scenes in particular.[177] However, while Gawain continues to attend mass and take confession, his acceptance of the girdle can be seen as insecurity in his faith in the Five Wounds and the Five Joys, a partial failure of *pité*. Gawain seems to fulfil his virtues only in part.

Anderson suggests that there are three ways in which Gawain may be judged: that he 'failed in part', 'failed completely', or did not fail; while Anderson states that the poet 'gives no sign as to which one we should accept', the general consensus is that Gawain is guilty somehow.[178] This has been interpreted multiple ways, as with Harwood's sensible suggestion that Gawain fails his 'fyngres' by physically taking

[176] *Gawain,* ll. 1860-5.
[177] A.J. Bliss, 'Introduction', in *Sir Launfal*, by Thomas Chestre, ed. by A.J. Bliss (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1960), 1-46 (p. 39); Sarah E. Gordon, p. 73; Schmolke-Hasselmann, p. 112. For further discussion of the bedroom scenes, see Chapter 5 and 6.
[178] Anderson, 'Three Judgements', p. 339.

the girdle.[179] Levy suggested that Gawain's journey is one from pride to discovering humility,[180] yet pride is not a vice emphasised by the narrative. This is also not a test of Gawain's chastity, for Gawain's interactions with the Lady are not inappropriate (though uncomfortably intimate), but it may be a test of loyalty.[181]

If Gawain fails in loyalty, we must question to whom. He does not fail Arthur in any deed, and he does not owe Bertilak loyalty beyond fulfilling the games and acting acceptably at the Hostel. However, it is significant that Gawain is relieved of his 'blasoun' at the Hostel.[182] In the guise of hospitality, the Hostel removes Gawain's reminder of his virtues and his Marian devotion. As Sagremor hung his blazon on a tree in Archenai to see if he would still be a knight without them, the Hostel removes Gawain's symbols to see if he can still fulfil them. Gawain's *wyttez* certainly fail him, as he lacks discernment to perceive the trap of the girdle, and he betrays his *fyngres* by taking it. Yet at the Green Chapel Bertilak does not fault Gawain for foolishness or unknightly action, but for wanting the loyalty to give him the girdle.[183] He ascribes this to Gawain's desire to survive, and frames it only as 'yow lakked a lyttel, sir'.[184] As this failure is treated lightly, though Gawain's actions within the Hostel are of ambiguous morality, it is uncertain whether they violate the pentangle. This is unsatisfactory because the symbolism ascribed to the pentangle creates an atmosphere in which we expect a stark morality: either Gawain will fail or he will succeed. Gawain considers himself to have failed 'larges and lewté', claiming that he was instead cowardly and covetous.[185] Though Bertilak seems to agree with the claim of cowardice, he considers this only to stem from self-preservation. In opposition, Arthur's court seems to dismiss even the concept that Gawain failed. While the pentangle constructed an unambiguous morality, these three disparate

[179] Britton J. Harwood, 'Gawain and the Gift', *PMLA*, 106 (1991), 483-99 (p. 488-9). Harwood also argues that Gawain fully betrayed his host and lost his faith.
[180] Levy first supports this through Gawain's presence on the dais at Camelot, suggesting that it is 'symbolic of the tendency of the nobility to the sin of pride' (p. 73). This seems somewhat overstated, as Gawain's seat is an appropriate position for the king's nephew and closest heir. Battles, pp. 341-2, supports the 'pride' interpretation without comment.
[181] Harvey De Roo, in 'Undressing Lady Bertilak: Guilt and Denial in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 27 (1993), 305-24 (p. 310), argues that Gawain's fault is sexual; Hulbert, p. 694, disagrees with the chastity test but supports the loyalty test, as does Levy (p. 67).
[182] *Gawain,* l. 828.
[183] L. 2366.
[184] Ll. 2366-8
[185] Ll. 2379-83, qtd. 2381.

reactions to Gawain's failure suggest that complete fulfilment of chivalric virtues (and thus the pentangle) is impossible. Gawain may be culpable, but he is also forgivable.

Gawain's response to Bertilak's request to return to the Hostel and reconcile with the Lady, often called a misogynistic rant, demonstrates how his pentangle unexpectedly foreshadowed the action.[186] In this monologue, Gawain mentions how Solomon was beguiled by 'fele sere'.[187] Though Solomon was previously mentioned in the description of the pentangle as a wise figure, Geoffroi de Charny noted that

> comme il est raconté es anciennes ystoires, [Solomon] mesusa de son sens par tele maniere que pour l'amonestement de sa fame il se mist a aourer les ydoles en samblance de soy delaissier de la foy de Dieu, et ainsi failli a son sens tres villainement.[188]

Solomon is thus an 'ambiguous patron' for Gawain,[189] and Gawain's wider literary treatment echoes Solomon's two facets. Gawain did not always easily display chivalric virtues, and within later French verse in particular Gawain receives a 'gently burlesque treatment' that seems to be echoed here.[190] However, Solomon's symbol is countered by the purity of the Virgin on the inside of the shield, both of which are opposed by the Lady's girdle.

After Gawain's stay at the Hostel, the girdle acts as a heraldic badge that usurps the pentangle.[191] Because Mary is mentioned at the beginning of the last bedroom scene in which Gawain accepts the girdle (the narrator notes that Gawain will be in 'gret perile...nif Maré of hir knyȝt mynne'), this scene could be viewed as a transfer of allegiance from the Virgin to the Lady.[192] Wrapped over Gawain's surcoat before leaving the Hostel, the girdle becomes substituted for the pentangle embroidered there.[193] His pentangle is forgotten and the girdle takes primacy. While

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[186] For more on this 'rant', see Chapter 5.
[187] *Gawain*, l. 2417; *MED*, 'sēr(e (n.(2)). 'A variety of evil things', implying 'women'.
[188] Charny, §35. Editors Kaueper and Kennedy translate this as 'as it is told in the ancient accounts, he made such ill use of his intelligence, that because of his wife's admonitions he began to adore idols, and in this way seemed to abandon the worship of God; he therefore failed most shamefully in relation to his wisdom' (p. 159).
[189] Richard Hamilton Green, p. 130.
[190] Bliss, p. 39; Busby, 'Diverging Traditions', p. 95. Bliss argues that this 'late continental view' first appears in English narratives in Malory.
[191] This section shall only address the girdle in its capacity as a heraldic symbol. For its role as an item of female clothing, see Chapter 5; for a discussion of its function as a gift, see Chapter 6.
[192] *Gawain*, l. 1768-9
[193] Ll. 2033-4.

Gawain believes he is wearing a gift from the Lady, Bertilak calls it 'my wede': it is Bertilak's colours and cloth.[194] The girdle is in fact a badge of unconscious allegiance to Bertilak (not unlike the relationship between Phenonée, Lyone's badge, and Agamanor's shield). However, the girdle should have been returned to Bertilak; it was only a temporary badge and was not intended to see use. At the end, Bertilak endows it with new significance by stating 'I give þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed.... þis a pure token | of þe chaunce of þe grene chapel at cheualrous kny3tez'.[195] No longer simply a badge of Bertilak's household, it is now also a symbol of what has passed.

Wearing the girdle as a baldric 'abelef', Gawain interprets this symbolism as 'in tokenyng' of his fault.[196] Again overlaying the pentangle, this crosswise baldric would strike through the pentangle, suggesting that Gawain believes he has no right to wear Solomon's knot. Effectively, the girdle becomes a new blazon: Gawain now wears *gules, a bend vert*. Yet when Gawain arrives at Arthur's court, they laugh at his verbal flagellation and adopt a green baldric as a symbol of their 'broþerhede'. Like Bertilak, the court does not consider Gawain's failing to be severe, but they adopt the girdle for the sake of fellowship. The girdle has become the positive badge of a chivalric society.

Because of the Arthurian court's adoption of the girdle, it is understandable that many scholars have connected it to chivalric orders, particularly the Order of the Garter, as a variant of the Order's motto ('hony soyt qui mal pence') is written on the last page of the manuscript's text. It is unclear whether this was written by the original scribe or a later hand, but indicates that at least one contemporaneous reader drew a connection between the girdle and the Garter.[197] Carruthers states that 'any English poet writing in the Arthurian mode at this date would necessarily perceive, and know that an aristocratic audience would also perceive, a parallel between the Round Table and the Order of the Garter'.[198] While there is certainly a connection between the girdle and badges, one reader's inscription does not necessarily indicate

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[194] L. 2358.
[195] *Gawain*, ll. 2395 and 3298-9.
[196] Ll. 2486-8.
[197] Andrew and Waldron, pp. 3 and 300; Gollancz, p. 132. It is worth noting that the main text has some corrections 'which appear to be in a different, perhaps later, hand' (Andrew and Waldron, p. 1).
[198] Leo Carruthers, 'The Duke of Clarence and the Earls of March: Garter Knights and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Medium Aevum*, 70 (2001), 66-79 (p. 66); Friedman and Osberg, p. 314.

that this association was anything beyond a savvy reader's literary comparison. Parallels do not influence make.

There is some support for a tangible connection between the two, often associated with the concept that both are badges of dubious origin that unify a chivalric society.[199] However, arguments for the Garter connection often rely upon comparisons between the garments that unfortunately fall short. The apparel of the Order of the Garter were a blue buckled leg-garter and robes powdered with garters, while the girdle is described as a green silk with gold pendants and works.[200] Carruthers claims, without noting his source, that the Order of the Garter wore 'a dark blue sash' as well as a garter-ribbon, using this to connect the girdle to the Order, while Ingledew claims that the girdle's shape parallels the buckled garter.[201] Though it is true that in general girdles and garters have similar shapes, this shape is a basic design also found in spur straps, necklaces, dog collars, and other items [figs. 8, 10, 16, and 17]. While Hulbert's suggestion that Gawain's changed method of wearing the girdle indicates a motivation that 'lie[s] outside the poem',[202] this could simply reflect the girdle's changing symbolic value.

Ingledew's focus upon the figuration of the buckled garter is particularly weak because it presumes that the girdle also fastens with a buckle.[203] However, the narrative focuses particularly upon how the girdle is knotted, with Gawain undoing the knot in order to cast the girdle at Bertilak at the Green Chapel, then afterwards fastening it as a baldric with a knot under his left arm.[204] This knot is echoed in the pentangle,[205] but it is also foreshadowed in the belled 'þwarle knot' (an intricate or tight knot) that binds the mane of the Green Knight's horse and in the thong that binds the head of the Green Knight's axe.[206] Furthermore, the pentangle combines

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[199] Ingledew, p. 153.
[200] D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, p. 152; *Gawain*, ll. 1832-4, 2035-9, 2395; Juliet Vale, pp. 76 and 80.
[201] Carruthers, p. 68; Ingledew, p. 152. In examining the Order of the Garter, D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton does not mention a sash, but notes that the typically buckled garter could on certain occasions be replaced with a blue ribbon (pp. 152, 157, and 161).
[202] Hulbert, p. 709. Hulbert argues against the Garter but suggests several other orders as the inspiration.
[203] Ingledew, p. 113.
[204] *Gawain*, ll. 2484-8.
[205] Friedman and Osberg, p. 314.
[206] Andrew and Waldron, p. 214; *Gawain*, l. 194; Gollancz, p. 101. For more on the axe-lace, see Chapters 3 and 6.

the symbol of two contemporaneous chivalric orders, the French Ordre de l'Étoile and the Neapolitan Order of the Knot. If the influence of the Garter is accepted, this could suggest the Garter's superiority to these orders (as the girdle replaces the pentangle) and reflect the Garter's potential Arthurian inspiration. Conversely, the author may have simply been inspired by the wealth of chivalric orders created in the fourteenth century.

The use of the girdle as a badge of brotherhood, in conjunction with the Garter motto ('shame upon him who thinks evil of it'), suggests that whoever inscribed this also viewed Gawain's actions as excusable and that girdle-as-badge may be interpreted positively. However, the motto seems to have been emphasised in scholarship because it appears to be the last words of the manuscript. This is not so, for above the bedroom scene illumination that follows the narrative's end a couplet has been added: 'Mi minde is mukul on ^{on} þat wil me noȝt amende | Sum time was trewe as ston and fro schame couþe hir defende' [fig. 3].[207] Instead of the positive rebuke of the Garter-motto, this couplet is a meditation upon failure.[208] In a way, the tension between these two additions exemplifies the tensions between different scholarly interpretations and the ambiguous narrative.

Throughout the narrative, Gawain struggles with remaining courteous in private and generous in public. His shield embodies this tension, between true devotion (Mary) and ambiguous reputation (Solomon's star). Though he potentially betrays his pentangle values through retaining the girdle, Gawain is only faulted for a minor disloyalty in retaining the girdle. Though the narrative's approach to the pentangle-blazon, Mary's image, and the girdle-badge are complicated, they also reflect a realistic portrayal of heraldic items. Only in romances does heraldry fully represent and reveal a person's qualities. In actuality, these are unclear or even false signifiers, indicating a multitude of information on origin, political alliances, and familial relationships that may well be wrong. A man could denote allegiance by wearing someone's badge without feeling any loyalty or faithfulness. This ambiguity

[207] Andrew and Waldron, pp. 3-4, and Tolkien and Gordon, p. viii, agree that this couplet is in a different hand from the main text. 'My mind is much on one that will not restore/punish me | since a time that [she?] was true as stone and from shame could defend her[self?]'.

[208] Because the subject of this couplet is potentially feminine, it may reflect on women's roles within the narrative. Being written on the page of the bedroom scene, it may specifically recall the Lady's dubious actions. For further on the women in *Gawain*, see Chapter 5.

was present every day in fourteenth-century society, which adored the *incognito* and other romantic armed games, and Gawain's items embrace this.

Conclusion: Adapting Traditional Arthurian Heraldry

Overall, the narratives side-step traditional Arthurian heraldry by introducing new blazons for narrative purposes or depicting blazons of new knights. Further, both allow the creation of their own symbolism for heraldic charges within the narrative by giving rare blazons to their primary characters and invoke a relationship between heraldry, chivalry, and ladies. In the case of *Gawain*, the Virgin Mary takes a forward position as his 'lady', but connections between secular ladies and the Virgin Mary are also found obliquely in the heraldry in *Meliador*. However, through Agamanor *Meliador* explores the issues with potential misidentification, while *Gawain* uses the symbolism of the pentangle to assert the ambiguities of symbolic heraldry. *Meliador* also demonstrates this awareness of the potential manipulation of heraldry, and both narratives embrace the various interpretations that heraldic identifiers could create through prescribed symbolism.

However, both narratives may be connected to historical events through the heraldry employed. Meliador's shield suggests a multitude of patron influences upon the narrative, while the Lady's girdle recalls the badges of several different chivalric orders. Intriguingly, both Meliador and Gawain bear sorts of celestial symbols, which seemed to be more common as badges than as heraldic charges, and highlight potential relationships with historical influences. The texts also play with traditional Arthurian arms. *Meliador* may use such to historicise the tale, but *Gawain* uses it to emphasise the relationship between Gawain and Arthur.

Finally, both narratives seem to be conscious of the artistic and social parallels between heraldic items. This is most obvious in Sagremor's adventures in Archenai, where he invokes the artistry of the place and his blazon to question his surroundings. However, the ways that the girdle is worn differently over the pentangle on Gawain's surcoat in *Gawain* suggests awareness on the narrator's part of the diverse meanings badges and heraldry could assume depending on how they were worn.

By employing, altering, and rejecting Arthurian traditions in heraldry, both narratives manage to couch their treatment of heraldic identifiers within the

classification schema specific to the fourteenth century. This complicated social structure invokes political allegiances, romantic liaisons, familial relationships, artistic topoi, and construction of personal identity through symbolic representation. Remarkably, all these facets are explored in the narratives. Even when the literary heraldry bears a flavour of the fantastic, the cultural paradigms remain palpable.

Chapter 5: Garment, Body, Action: Ladies

In *Meliador* and *Gawain*, women are given significant autonomy, allowed to affect political situations by active engagement in tourneying society (*Meliador*) or through wielding considerable power amongst or even over men (*Gawain*). These portrayals manipulate fourteenth-century views of women. Within noble society, women were used to create alliances between men via their marriage, a social role which blurred the line between an active participant and an object of trade. This chapter addresses how female characters modify their status by serving as both characters (active or passive) and prizes to be achieved through their relationship with their costume. Ladies' apparel may be conflated with the body, displaced by character and deed, and used to support or challenge romantic and social conventions.

Discussing noblewomen's attire in the fourteenth century is difficult, for the changes of women's clothes during this period appear to be less radical than men's. Fourteenth-century women's fashion changed shape similarly to men's, growing tighter and then looser, but the number of female garment types appear limited and are more apparent across space than across time.[1] Generally, dresses skimmed or clung to the body down to the hips, skirts were loose, sleeves were tight to the elbow, and belts were rarely worn [figs. 18 and 30]. Variations were small details or parts, such as sleeve-shapes or necklines. Though this leads women's clothes to appear limited in style, records evidence that this did not correspond to the number of clothes owned; for example, Philippa of Hainault received new garments once or twice a month and accessories every week.[2] However, there are a few obvious changes. While necklines extended to the points of their shoulders in the 1350s, by the last quarter of the century they were either about to slip off [as with the woman in blue in fig. 8] or were square [fig. 50].[3] Furthermore, a female houpelande corresponded with the rise of the men's version [fig. 1, woman in pink; fig. 51, centre woman; fig. 52, woman in blue].

[1] Newton, pp. 40 and 109; Van Buren, p. 56.
[2] Woolgar, pp. 233-4.
[3] Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 231; Van Buren, pp. 56 and 75.

The one obvious addition to the fourteenth-century ladies' wardrobe was the mid-century introduction from France of the *surcot ouvert*.[4] A prototypical version of this open-sided overgarment was introduced in the thirteenth century, where it had large arm-holes.[5] Its shapes were numerous. Often a closely-cut gown with oval openings from shoulder to hip [fig. 53], its armholes could be looser and its body wider [fig. 54], which would provide greater warmth. Alternatively, it could have a wide back, narrow front, plush fur linings, and wide skirts; this construction allows display of the befurred interior and fashionably-snug underdress [fig. 55]. This version in particular became the prestige dress of upper-class women and royalty through this century.[6] In manuscripts, where it is usually depicted on queens, it may serve a similar artistic function as the archaicised kings examined in Chapter 2.

Similar dating difficulties are found in women's hairstyles, especially the rigid, vertical braids called *cornettes* [figs. 16 and 36]. Popular from the 1340s onwards, these were still depicted on queens in the early fifteenth century [figs. 5 and 50].[7] However, by the end of the fourteenth century *cornettes* were more commonly braids coiled around little puffs [figs. 18, 31, 51, 55, and 56].[8] The changing shape of *cornettes* altered the appearance of the frilled veils that became popular in the fourteenth century, first into a square and then, as round *cornettes* travelled up the temples, into an 'M' shape [contrast figs. 57 and 50].[9] When hair was insufficient to create fashionable hairstyles, wigs and hairpieces were employed or hoods were worn.[10] Though women's hoods could resemble men's, women's were often open-throated so they could be put on without affecting hair; the one worn in figure 58 is distinctly fifteenth-century and feminine due to its open neck, thrusting cheekpieces, and pink colouration.[11] Unbound hair was only appropriate for unmarried women and queens (usually only at coronation); generally, hair should be dressed and

[4] Van Buren, pp. 28 and 56.
[5] Scott, *Fashion*, p. 26.
[6] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 101; Van Buren, p. 28.
[7] Newton, pp. 26 and 86; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 108.
[8] Van Buren, p. 92.
[9] Newton, p. 96; Stella Mary Newton and Mary M. Giza, 'Frilled Edges', *Textile History*, 14 (1983), 141-52 (p. 141). These fourteenth-century changes were the progenitors of the myriad of veils, hats, and hairpieces introduced in the fifteenth century.
[10] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 52; Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1992), ll. 13253-83. A tablet-woven braid with an attached false-hair braid, found in the London excavations, is discussed in Crowfoot, Pritchard, and Staniland, p. 132.
[11] Scott, *Fashion*, p. 35; Staniland, 'Clothing and Textiles', p. 225.

veiled.[12] For that reason, in figure 52 Guinevere's loose hair may suggest that her discussion with Lancelot is inappropriately intimate. In the late fourteenth century, older women, widows, nuns, and respectable (archaised?) queens wore softer, unstructured veils [figs. 23, 53, and 57], occasionally along with neck-cloths (a wimple or gorget) [fig. 56].[13] However, veils could reveal as much as they covered, as with the rightmost woman in figure 32, whose gauzy gorget draws attention to her face.[14] Insubstantial veils, such as those worn by Guinevere and her leftmost-lady in figure 50, were only a pretence towards modesty.

The relationship between hair and veil exemplifies the indistinct affiliation between women's bodies and garments, which is also found in contemporaneous commentary on women's clothes. Instead of focusing upon what was inappropriate, these discussions delineated what should be worn by a woman. However, they often emphasised *how* to wear an item over *what* was worn. For example, the Old Woman in the *Roman de la Rose* discussed how a woman should manipulate her dress and mantle to best display her form.[15] This allowed these arguments to move into deportment and include women's hair, and establish that the distorted boundaries between garment and body were culturally intrinsic.

Naturally appearing in sumptuary laws and conduct literature, critiques of women's attire also occur in chivalric manuals, narrative poetry, and chronicles. Every literary mode was used to opine on the female form. The commentaries employed in the following were chosen due to their relation to nobility, fictional romances, and invocation of tournament society. Although there are many female voices in the contemporaneous literature outside this sphere, this area tends to be male-dominated and divorced from women's experiences even when adopting a female voice through characters. This discussion does not intend to argue that these commentaries were followed or acted upon, but rather uses such commentary to frame perspectives that might permeate the idealised world of the courtly romance.

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[12] Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 112.
[13] Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 227; Scott, *Medieval Dress*, p. 132.
[14] Barbara Baert, 'Veiling', in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing*, ed. by Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert, 159-60 (p. 159).
[15] Lorris and Meun, ll. 13549-62.

The relationship between the woman's body and sartorial display is a complex intertwining of the natural with the socially constructed and controlled.[16] While Geoffroi de Charny stated that young noblewomen should wear 'belles couronnes, cercles, chapiaux, perles, aneaulx, bordures, bien vestues' and be well adorned on head and body, he notes that this is necessary because they cannot perform deeds like men (who should focus upon values such as wisdom, loyalty, humility, largesse, and courtesy instead of appearance).[17] As such personal values are supposedly outwith a woman's role, Charny states that only personal display shall secure her a good marriage, keep her in good standing with her husband, and signify that she is of a certain rank. The social necessity of female display was supported by English sumptuary laws, which in 1363 banned pearls and gems upon the clothes of knights' wives, but allowed them if they were restricted to headdresses.[18]

Within literature, worn display was invoked or subverted by four types of women: the fashionable young lady, the destitute lady in rags, the respectably rich older lady, and the loathsome hag, whose ill-shaped body mocked beautiful garments.[19] Advice from the Old Woman in the *Roman de la Rose* focused upon the fashionable young lady and significantly coalesced the body and clothes.[20] She states that a young woman should dress pleasingly in lovely fabrics, rich fur, pearls, and jewels before going anywhere she might be seen. Mantles should be spread out to display her form, and she should raise overlong dresses to sensually expose her feet. If she has a pretty neck, she should wear low-cut necklines to distract from other faults. If she is unattractive, she should wear lovely apparel and dress her hair well to offset this disadvantage. If she has lost her hair, she should wear false hairpieces. While clothes may be used to support or divert attention from a faulty body, a body can be manipulated and highlighted like a garment.

The body itself was a locus of fashion, and in romances followed rigid standards: white skin, rosy cheeks, red lips, fair hair, dark eyebrows, and pale eyes.[21]

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[16] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 73; Sponsler, *Drama*, p. 3.
[17] Charny, §43. 'Beautiful crowns, circlets, hats, pearls, stones, rings, embroidery, lovely garments'.
[18] Phillips, p. 27.
[19] Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 224, notes the first two as commonly expected in costume rhetoric.
[20] Lorris and Meun, ll. 13277-14550, particularly 13285-300, 13317-22, and 13533-85
[21] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 124; Newton, pp. 38-9; Keila E. Tyner and Jennifer Paff Olge, 'Feminist Theory of the Dressed Female Body: A Comparative Analysis and Applications for Textiles and Clothing Scholarship', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 27 (2009), 98-121 (p. 99). See

Objectifying descriptions of women were codified by the sixteenth century, but common and expected in literature long before then.[22] In analogy to heraldry, these descriptions were called a 'blazon'. Such blazon generally progressed downward, from hair, face, and then body.[23] Particular attention was paid to breasts, which should be small, firm, round, white, and separate.[24] These ideals can be seen on the majority of women depicted in the illuminations for this discussion. Even as clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and other aspects of appearance changed, these body ideals remained.[25]

These rigid ideals made it possible to judge a woman's body objectively, rather like a knight's deeds. Simultaneously, women's dress became a mode of behaviour. Though women could not cultivate and display social virtues by performing deeds, they could establish social value through constructing beauty. However, by decorating and shaping the body, the body became something worn, and therefore capable of deception (such as projecting an image of chastity through modest apparel and veils).[26] While a man's costume (clothes, armour, heraldry) made claims concerning his prowess (that is, his actions, and through that his personal qualities and values), a woman's attire made claims concerning her body and its ownership.

Attitudes towards noblewomen's garments and body were related to a woman's social role. The marriage of women could create, assert, and solidify relationships between men, which the woman then embodied in the marriage as half of the marital unit and a member of her natal family.[27] As an 'incarnation' of this relationship, if the woman's body was violated, poorly treated, or inappropriately dressed the relationship between the men may also suffer. Outside marriages that

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also the golden-haired Venus in Chaucer's 'The Parliament of the Fowls', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F.N Robinson, 383-94 (ll. 265-73), and Lady Leisure in René d'Anjou's *Book*, §241, whose hairless chin and plumpness emphasise her role. Lady Leisure contrasts with Lady Hope (§7), who as an older woman receives a description of her rich clothes instead of her body. Newton notes that such depictions were of particular interest to Machaut.

[22] Alison Saunders, *The Sixteenth-Century Blason Poétique* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1981), pp. 13 and 53.

[23] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 78; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, trans. by Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1968), II.B.1.

[24] Saunders, p. 55, is specifically discussing the French tradition.

[25] Indeed, the majority of these ideals remain in twenty-first century media.

[26] Sponsler, p. 11.

[27] Kay, *Chansons*, pp. 40, 42, and 235.

serve as exchanges, a man could still achieve wealth and prestige through his wife if she were a rich widow, an heiress, or sufficiently dowried.[28] Understandably, the ideal noblewoman was often compared to jewels and precious metals,[29] for she was an object of equal value.

Courtly love obscures the economic and social value of women. Yet *fin'amor* was primarily a man's game: it was the knight who performed deeds, wrote poetry, sang songs, wore his lady's favours.[30] In romance, if his devotion was sufficient, he would achieve his lady. The lady remains an object, albeit one of devotion, that framed the knight's life and deeds as a prize to be achieved.[31] A woman's love and personhood become 'désincarné, éthéré, lointain, presque mystique' as a sort of Platonic ideal of the courtly woman.[32] Her agency is limited, as stated in *Meliador*, to acting as a guide towards

> Le chemin et la droite adrece
> D'armes, d'amour, et de proece
> Et de toute bacelerie
> Et l'estat de chevalerie.[33]

Literature describing ideal dress also allowed ladies some autonomy through manipulating her form to inspire love.[34] Love was a lady's commodity, which could be traded for a share in her knight's status, but methods of trade were not consistent.[35] Charny encouraged proactivity, instructing that a lady 'ayme loyalment se tu veulx estre amez'; through her love she may then inspire her knight and receive some of the praise that he earns.[36] However, the Old Woman from the *Roman de la*

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[28] Kay, *Chansons*, p. 162; Phillips, p. 32.
[29] Kay, *Chansons*, p. 38; Marbod of Rennes, 'The Good Woman (De Matrona)', trans. by C.W. Marx, in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 228-32 (p. 229).
[30] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 66; Kaueper and Kennedy, p. 70.
[31] Huot, pp. 116-7.
[32] J.P. Jourdan, 'Le Langage amoureux dans le combat de chevalerie à la fin du Moyen Âge (France, Bourgogne, Anjou)', *Moyen Âge*, 99 (1993), 83-101 (p. 83). 'Disincarnate, ethereal, distant, almost mystical'.
[33] *Meliador*, ll. 2992-5. 'The way and the straight road | of arms, love, and prowess, | and of all bachelourie | and the estate of chivalry.'
[34] Autonomy is not always framed as positive in other literature. For example, Kay, *Chansons*, p. 36, examines how Saracen princesses in *chansons de geste* become reviled as 'whores' despite remaining chaste due to asserting autonomy (by loving Christian knights) in a politically and religiously volatile situation.
[35] For further discussion of commodities and gifts, see Chapter 6.
[36] Charny, §§12 and 20 (qtd.). Kaueper and Kennedy translate the quotation as 'love loyally if you want to be loved'. Charny viewed love as almost supremely important, and followed his discussion of knighthood directly with one on marriage, only then moving on to monasticism and the priesthood.

Rose stated that if a knight's actions are poor or contemptible, his love is worthless.[37] She therefore suggested a situation where a lady's poor choice of knight would not overly affect her negatively: a woman should never confirm or refuse love.

While the discussion of women's roles has thus far focused upon their roles as commodities and objects, the growing popularity of games *à plaisance* in the fourteenth century presented women with an interesting venue for independence and personal gain. Conscious invocation of romances required women's inclusion in these games; simultaneously, their presence indicated that such games were safe and civil.[38] This social integration is most clearly seen in the Arthurian-themed Le Hem games of 1278, where the hosts played Guinevere's court and each attending knight was required to bring a lady. This obligatory integration of the genders was even situated as a reward, for knights had to compete before they could join the predominantly female spectators.[39]

Ladies' attendance at games became common by the mid-fourteenth century. Though there was some gender-segregation, as at the 1344 Round Table tournament where Philippa of Hainault entertained the ladies separately from Edward III and the knights, by the late fourteenth century ladies were considered a vital part of the games.[40] This social inclusion turned armed games into an arena where both men and women could gain prestige. As pageantry such as singing and dancing were added to games, these events allowed greater participation for women, and some tournaments even gave prizes to the lady who danced best.[41] Concurrently, ladies embodied their role as chivalric guides by literally leading knights into the arena, and their economic value was invoked when they served as prize-givers.[42] Furthermore, women were expected to be able to identify knights on the field, as demonstrated in *Meliador*.[43]

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[37] Lorris and Meun, ll. 13667-9.
[38] Barker, p. 101.
[39] Juliet Vale, pp. 13-4.
[40] Barber, 'Round Table Feast', p. 38; Barker, p. 13 and 101-2; Arthur Beatty, 'Notes on the Supposed Dramatic Character of the "Ludi" in the Great Wardrobe Accounts of Edward III', *Modern Language Review*, 4 (1909), 474-7 (p. 477); de la Sale, §50; René d'Anjou, *Traité*, p. 11.
[41] Barber, 'Round Table Feast', p. 38; Barker, p. 110; Alan V. Murray, 'Ulrich von Lichtenstein and the Origins of the Joust', presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 12 July 2011; René d'Anjou, *Traité*, pp. 47 and 58.
[42] Barker, pp. 108-9; de la Sale, §50; René d'Anjou, *Traité,* p. 64; Rachael Whitbread, 'Silent Witness: Non-Participating Attendees at Late Medieval English Tournaments', presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 14 July 2011.
[43] *Meliador*, ll. 28193 and 28200-1.

René d'Anjou's *Traité de la forme et devis d'un tournoi*, though later than our texts, elaborated on this: in an ideal tournament, the heralds would teach the competitors' different heraldic devices to both the judges and the ladies, after which the ladies would each choose a knight to support.[44] René's treatise emphasised the semi-judiciary role of the women.[45] Though ladies were not official judges, their opinions were given weight, and somewhat legitimised knights' deeds and judges' opinions. Tournaments allowed a woman to examine whether a potential husband was suitably chivalric,[46] but the value of a knight's deeds became reliant on her gaze and opinion, invoking a reversal whereby the objects of romantic devotion become not only spectator but arbitrator of worth.

Women's roles in tournaments are applied to all types of combat within narratives and illuminations. They may act as silent observers to violent encounters [figs. 34 and 36] but express alarm if the combat is particularly transgressive [fig. 10]. They are also depicted showing active interest in tournaments [fig. 31]. A woman may also reclaim her autonomy through others' combat, as with figure 59: though Gawain loses the fight he initiates to rescue a maiden, she is able to escape during their encounter and even leaves the image. This last image typifies its manuscript, which occasionally allows women to step outside the boundaries of the illuminations, suggesting that the transgressive nature of a woman's body and garments are permissible to a point.[47]

In *The* Chansons de Geste *in the Age of Romance*, Sarah Kay summarises the social role of women as being both giver and gift, thus simultaneously included and excluded from dominant male society.[48] This ambiguity creates situations whereby this cognizant gift can support and resist social structures, causing and changing her exchange. The discussion thus far has framed these concepts in relation to the female body, women's garments, required social display, prescriptive literature, and

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[44] René d'Anjou, *Traité*, pp. 50-1.
[45] Rachel Whitbread noted a similar semi-judiciary role for women in the Smithfield tournament of 1390.
[46] Barker, p. 105.
[47] The peculiarities of framing within this manuscript (MS fr. 97) warrants further study, for the edges of the illuminations may also be violated by objects, foliage, and architecture. Only twice do men violate the top boundary (once with a man's hat, the other with arms wielding a beheading axe); a man steps outside the edges only once. However, this latter violation is by a soldier helping a lady who is also partially outside the frame. Intriguingly, only women and horses are allowed to move a sufficient space away from the frame's edge.
[48] Kay, *Chansons*, pp. 43-4, 134 and 229.

tournament society. However, how these issues affect and alter women's relationships with one another is rarely addressed. At minimum, relationships would certainly be fostered at armed games between spectators, and evidence of Philippa of Hainault's correspondence with her mother indicates that interpersonal female relationships were valued.[49] Therefore, in addition to the role of the previously examined subjects, the ensuing analysis of our narratives will study how the women's relationships affect their role within otherwise masculine spheres.

Bodies and Values in *Meliador*

As the tournament-quest is the focus of *Meliador*, the presence of ladies is a social necessity; however, these women also take important and active roles beyond that of spectatorship. In the first tournament, Meliador's winning of the prize is 'acordés | par les hiraus bien recordés, | par dames et par damoiselles'.[50] This can be read as the women agreeing upon the winner and the herald recording their agreement, that the herald grants the prize and the women acknowledge it, or that it is a decision made by both the herald and the women. Regardless, the women legitimize the works of men either through their own judgment or through their acknowledgment of/agreement with the judgment of a non-noble male. The latter is particularly intriguing, for it insinuates that a social inferior's opinion supported by a noblewoman is sufficient to judge a nobleman.

This emphasis on women's involvement exemplifies the ladies of *Meliador*, who are rarely physically described. As styles for veils and hair varied nationally, Froissart may have chosen to minimize such details for the sake of his international audience.[51] Yet the majority of fashion in the fourteenth century was as international as Froissart himself, and in the areas where his work was disseminated there were only minor regional differences. However, as discussed in previous chapters such minimal descriptions are a stylistic choice for *Meliador*. Froissart expected his courtly audience to know already the rules and trappings of both romances and society.

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[49] Juliet Vale, p. 45.
[50] *Meliador*, ll. 2674-6.
[51] Newton, pp. 86, 96-7, and 109.

As descriptions of women were a topos of romances, by omitting them the narrative demonstrates that the lens on the ladies requires refocusing.[52] As with arms and armour, Froissart uses repetitive generic descriptions for his ladies, like in the first tournament where the women are indistinguishable from one another by virtue of being 'jones, frisces, gentes, et belles'.[53] Elsewhere, ladies are '*par ordenances*, grans et belles';[54] as the world of *Meliador* functions by *ordenance*, it is only natural that even unnamed ladies are beautiful, gracious, polite, and *amoureuse*, exemplary of what a courtly woman should be. Women may be 'vesties de biaus draps a or', but as long as they evoke proper social traits further description is unnecessary.[55]

In her work on Guinevere, Bethlehem divided women's social characteristics into active ('eloquence, courage, humour, power to instruct') and passive ('kindness, compassion, saintliness').[56] However, in *Meliador* it is Guinevere's role as queen that is continuously asserted; she is always 'la royne'.[57] Her marriage to Arthur is asserted as often as her personal characteristics (good, beautiful, and kind), suggesting an equivalency between the two.[58] This conjunction of marital status with personal traits also occurs with the Duchess of Cornwall, the second-highest ranking woman in the narrative and mother to Meliador and Phenonée.[59] Both the Duchess and Guinevere have little other description, with Guinevere's most significant feature being her retinue of 'dames de france orine'.[60]

Ladies' ability to legitimise knights' tournament deeds is invoked by Sagremor, who approaches Guinevere to express his desire to be a knight of her court (that is, a knight of Arthurian romance).[61] As she is peerless socially (as an ideal beauty) and politically (as Arthur's queen), Guinevere is the greatest female authority. Sagremor acknowledges this by wearing a mantle 'de grainne' (one dyed

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[52] Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 228, discusses how a lack of garment references may say as much as what is described, for both guide the reader's attention.
[53] *Meliador*, l. 3079. 'Young, lively, noble, and lovely'.
[54] L. 16559. My emphasis.
[55] L. 12819. 'Dressed in beautiful cloths of gold'.
[56] Ulrike Bethlehem, *Guinevere, a Medieval Puzzle: Images of Arthur's Queen in the Medieval Literature of England and France* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2005), p. 323. The Guinevere of *Meliador* is notably excluded from Bethlehem's work.
[57] For example, *Meliador*, ll. 2776, 26941 and 29052.
[58] *Meliador*, ll. 26942, 26981, and 29053-4.
[59] Ll. 29987-9.
[60] L. 30538.
[61] Ll. 25758-74.

in expensive *kermes*) to see her.[62] Such a rich garment is appropriate for appearing before the greatest of literary queens, but it also depicts him as fitting for Guinevere's court. In response, Guinevere acknowledges his nobility and agrees to grant him what he seeks when he returns, but this implies that Sagremor must commit deeds before she accepts him into her society. As a knight of her court, he must be attractive *and* chivalric. After receiving this permission and promise of reward, Sagremor leaves civilisation on the journey that includes his Otherworldly adventure. Sagremor's request to Guinevere indicates the necessity of female approval of a knight's deeds. However, though it grants Guinevere the power to assure knighthood, it does not give her the ability to officially award it.

While Bethlehem's division of passive and active characteristics is not clearly seen in this Guinevere, it is apparent in the characters of Hermondine and Florée. Like Guinevere and the Duchess of Cornwall, Hermondine is first framed by her rank (the daughter of the King of Scotland) and her personal qualities: well-dressed, sweet, gracious, and gentle. [63] Yet Hermondine also receives multiple comments concerning her appearance: she is 'au corps frice et biel' and 'gente et gentille'. [64] Though the narrator does not blazon women, Froissart allows Camel de Camois to create such a stereotypical description in a letter to Hermondine, describing her light eyes, little smiling mouth, and comely body and face.[65] As Camel is the closest that *Meliador* has to an antagonist, his use of this literary method suggests that Froissart may not have approved of such rigid poetic requirements.

Resistance to traditional portrayals of women are found elsewhere for Hermondine. For example, though for her wedding to Meliador she is 'cointoÿe et parée', dressed and adorned in new attire, only the existence of these garments is noted.[66] The expected description of their luxury and beauty does not follow; instead, the narrative states that she is accompanied by the Duchess of Cornwall and many

[62] The term was derived from the grain-like appearance of the *kermes* insect and its eggs when dried [Crowfoot, Pritchard, and Staniland, p. 20; Munro, 'The Medieval Scarlet', p. 17, and 'The Anti-Red Shift—To the Dark Side: Colour Changes in Flemish Luxury Woollens, 1300-1550', in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 3., ed. by Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 55-95 (p. 57)].
[63] *Meliador*, ll. 44-56. 'Une fille de frisce arroi, | douce, gracieuse et benigne' (ll. 54-5).
[64] Ll. 14667 and 30055.
[65] Ll. 871-935 for the letter, ll. 877-9 for the description.
[66] Ll. 30056-7.

well-dressed damsels to join Guinevere before her marriage.[67] As an alternative to a list of desirable traits, Hermondine's description emphasises her beauty and her character by comparing it to other women, allowing the audience to conclude independently that she is 'la tres parfaite'.[68] Thus, Hermondine is placed amongst these ladies like a jewel in a gold setting. The ladies are no less rich, but their presence allows her to glitter in comparison.

The declaration of the tournament-quest mediates between presenting Hermondine as a supremely courtly lady and a chivalric object. The herald is blunt: whoever wins the tournament will marry Hermondine, but it is by prowess that they shall gain her.[69] Armed society takes precedence over courtly society: Hermondine is to be earned not through wooing and seduction but through armed exploits. However, though Hermondine is an object of worth due to her title and lands, the herald emphasises her inherent value as a proper lady: she is beautiful, gracious, and wise.[70] While this description highlights Hermondine's humanity, the herald presents an image of her painted upon a red shield [fig. 49].[71] Though this 'bleue dame' is only representative of Hermondine, it still substitutes an object for the real person. Although Hermondine is a perfect lady exemplified by courtly qualities, the herald's presentation of her as the tournament-quest's prize exhibits tension between Hermondine as an object and a person.

Hermondine's figural presentation as a blue, crown-carrying, heraldic figure is strongly reminiscent of Froissart's 'Cour de May' (which also references his 'Dit dou Bleu Chevalier'), wherein the narrator states to his lady that he carries the blue crown, 'la couronne de loyauté'.[72] As 'Cour de May' was written for Philippa of Hainault,[73] Froissart may have intended to draw parallels between Hermondine and his beloved patroness. Yet there is also an inexplicit connection to the blue-clad Virgin Mary, with Hermondine serving as a secular, noble counterpart. Indeed, Hermondine's chastity is highlighted through the night she spends with Meliador,

[67] *Meliador*, ll. 30058-64.
[68] L. 12223.
[69] Ll. 2790-2.
[70] Ll. 2790-1.
[71] Ll. 2742-6.
[72] 'Cour de May', ll. 464-5.
[73] Newton, p. 46.

which is innocently filled with conversation and chaperoned by Florée.[74] Like Mary, Hermondine is praised and adored, her iconographic portrayal on the herald's shield inspiring Meliador to better himself.

Yet Hermondine's depiction as the Blue Lady is not very potent, for though the tournament series is dubbed 'la queste de la bleue dame',[75] Hermondine is rarely called such (unlike Meliador's epithet of the Blue Knight). Indeed, the narrative focuses not on Hermondine's colour but on Meliador's adoption of the colour as his own. As one of the least lively women in the narrative, Hermondine passively follows advice, only responding and reacting. While Hermondine's portrayal and descriptions are sympathetic and humanising, within the context of the tournament-quest she can be viewed as an object purposed for Meliador's elevation. Although women such as Florée and Phenonée take dynamic roles in the narrative, Hermondine is without initiative. However, she does not need to act, for her very existence drives the plot. She is the still centre around which the rest of the narrative revolves.

In contrast, Florée is a dynamic participant in the romance who alters the narrative's course through her actions. This greater freedom does not stem from the fact that she is below Hermondine in rank, for she is also Hermondine's cousin. In comparison, Phenonée is equally as active, while Sebille is somewhat passive. Although Florée's numerous actions within the narrative are certainly worthy of close study, to do so would be overly digressive for this study. Instead, a summary is sufficient to review the extent of Florée's involvement and activity, which makes even the 'active' traits delineated by Bethlehem appear inert.

Though the narrator notes Florée's courtesy and beauty, the adjective 'sage' dominates her descriptions.[76] As she is older and more mature than Hermondine, she understandably serves as Hermondine's advisor and confidante.[77] However, Florée moves beyond this by taking the formation of her cousin's future into her own hands. She actively opposes Camel's unwanted attention towards Hermondine, instructing her cousin on how to write courteously to Camel without accepting or

[74] *Meliador*, ll. 17594-6 and 17654-76.
[75] Ll. 2916 and 2920-2.
[76] For example, ll. 70, 101, 6850, 8309, 8357, and 8708.
[77] Ll. 101-4.

straightforwardly rejecting his advances. Moreover, she organises the tournament-quest in hopes that the winner will literally beat Camel; Kings Arthur and Hermont simply act as the sponsors of these games. When her father is captured by Camel, she arranges his rescue by Meliador, then presents Meliador with a ring in thanks. This ring is in fact secretly inscribed with his deed, and will eventually reveal his identity to Hermondine.[78] When the ring reveals Meliador's identity, Florée arranges for Meliador and Hermondine to meet and speak together. Overall, Florée employs her unique wisdom and cunning to create venues (events, objects) in which the plot may proceed by instigating characters towards the proper *ordenance*. The narrative emphasises this when Florée shows Meliador the heraldry of the knights whom Camel has defeated and/or killed [fig. 47].[79] Instead of acting as a generic guide that simply inspires prowess (like Hermondine), Florée acts as Meliador's guide in chivalric deeds by interfering personally, asking for specific deeds, and giving him specific information.

At the end of the narrative, Florée is married to Agravain, one of the few traditional Arthurian knights mentioned in *Meliador*.[80] While their association is not anticipated by the narrative, it is notable as the only marriage between a traditional character and one of Froissart's original characters. As the majority of Arthurian knights seem to act as ciphers within *Meliador* for the nascent Arthurian world, Agravain serves as a sort of trophy-husband for Florée. She is a righteous courtly woman 'plainne | de sens, et d'onneur et d'arroy' whose actions instigate many of the narrative's events, forming it into a world that proceeds by the *ordenance* of romance.[81] Justly, the narrative rewards her marriage with the most honourable partner available: a nephew of King Arthur.

Though not as extensive as Florée, Phenonée also takes an active role in transforming the narrative. While she organises the tournament in her native Cornwall, the majority of her actions are prompted by her concern that she is romantically interested in her own brother (in fact Agamanor). However, her descriptions reflect Hermondine's more than Florée's, with an emphasis on her

[78] For further on this ring, see Chapter 6.
[79] *Meliador*, ll. 8545-631.
[80] Ll. 30625-34.
[81] Ll. 30625-6.

appearance. Her introduction places her with her mother, the Duchess of Cornwall, and their court's ladies, who are dressed in cloth-of-gold, but Phenonée is singled out from among this crowd as being as beautiful as if she were 'la fille au roy | d'Escoce' or even some greater king.[82] Phenonée's beauty exceeds her rank, and the implied comparison to Hermondine suggests that Phenonée may be more beautiful than the prize of the tournament-quest. Additionally, like Hermondine Phenonée bears a colour-epithet, that of 'la blanche dame'.[83] Yet this works inversely to Hermondine's: Hermondine's colour becomes Meliador's epithet, but Phenonée's is drawn from the white lady blazoning Agamanor's shield. This highlights the slightly disparate ranks of these women: while Hermondine inspires a knight's heraldry, Phenonée appropriates a knight's symbol. Phenonée is particularly conscious of their hierarchical positions because the tournament-quest demands a firm resulting hierarchy wherein Hermondine will marry the best knight. If Agamanor becomes the best knight, she cannot love him.

This mixture of Phenonée as an autonomous yet courtly lady is exemplified during the interlude where Agamanor masquerades as a painter. During this adventure, Phenonée and her cousin Luciienne wear crowns of flowers.[84] The narrative emphasises how these flowers adorn their heads, and Luciienne echoes this by considering Phenonée's face before giving her opinion on whether Phenonée should love Agamanor. Luciienne is Phenonée's Florée, a beautiful, wise, loyal, and constant companion to Phenonée.[85] Her hesitation to speak, coupled with her reflection upon Phenonée's expression, indicates that this as a remarkably intimate moment. However, it also reframes Phenonée's physical portrayal, for multiple passages have referred to her lovely or well-dressed body (Agamanor in particularly admires her 'douce phisonomie').[86] Since Luciienne's consideration of Phenonée's form is one of concern, intended to divine Phenonée's thoughts and feelings before advising her, it reframes the objectifying descriptions and suggests alternate readings. While notations of Phenonée's physical form by the narrator may simply be descriptions, Agamanor's are recast from the admiration of an object to interest in

[82] *Meliador*, ll. 12818-24 and 12836-7 (qtd.).
[83] L. 15372.
[84] Ll. 20573-80.
[85] Ll. 19506, 26920-1, and 26922.
[86] Ll. 13142, 13281, 13464, and 21395 (qtd.).

understanding Phenonée. These treatments, though drawing from the language of the love-object, are altered by Luciienne's acknowledgment of Phenonée as an individual.

Significantly, it is Luciienne who resolves Phenonée's issues with Agamanor (further reflecting the Hermondine/Florée relationship). As Agamanor stated that he would be pleased to come second or even fourth best in the tournament-quest, Luciienne proposes to Phenonée that Agamanor should deliberately achieve second place.[87] Phenonée then suggests this to Agamanor, who agrees. This is a significant manipulation of social hierarchy that subverts romance ideology and could lead to questioning Meliador's right as the winner of the tournament-quest. Notably, such subversion needs to be proposed by a party outside the potential lovers. Though this loophole in the tournament-quest allows Phenonée to assert autonomy over her relationships, it could also be viewed as inappropriate for her to invent such a scheme. As this manipulation comes from Luciienne and leads to the proper *ordenance*, it is acceptable.

Sagremor's lady-love Sebille combines qualities of these preceding ladies. Like Florée, Sebille speaks 'sagement'; like Hermondine and Phenonée, she is gracious, sincere, and delicate in her dress and speech.[88] However, the narrator also partially blazons Sebille's face and mouth.[89] While this seems to embrace the literary technique that was subtly critiqued in Hermondine's portrayal, it matches Sagremor's adventures, which are more in line with traditional Arthurian romances than the rest of the narrative; Sebille's role within Sagremor's narrative is that of inspiration and prize. Her inactivity may also be a result of her age, for Sebille is 'plus jonete', suggested to be the youngest lady in the narrative at twelve and a half (in comparison, Hermondine is thirteen, with Florée positioned as her elder).[90] This is emphasised by the narrator's continuous use of diminutives used for Sebille: she is a 'pucelete', her face is 'vermillete, | blanche et tendre', her 'belle bouchete' later described as 'vermillete et doucete'.[91] She is even often called 'Sebilete'.[92] This

[87] *Meliador*, l. 22625-6 and 22717-9.
[88] Ll. 25838-9, 26247, and 26995-7.
[89] Ll. 26107-8.
[90] L. 104, 534, and 26994.
[91] Ll. 25839, 26107-8 and 26325.
[92] For example, ll. 25863, 26188, and 26245.

elevates her sagacity further, and exemplifies Sebille as a beautiful inspiration and young version of the primary ladies. However, Sebille differs from Phenonée and Hermondine in that she does not have a colour-based epithet. Though Sagremor blazons his shield with 'la blewe dame' in her name, this shield reflects Meliador and Agamanor more than Sebille.[93] The presence of the Blue Lady on Sagremor's shield implies an equivalency between Sagremor/Meliador and Sebille/Hermondine, turning Sagremor and Sebille into a young romantic couple directly equivalent to the elder Meliador and Hermondine.

The narrative departs from both Froissart's preference for personal values and traditional body blazons only in one significant instance: the singular appearance of fairy women in the narrative. These women appear during Sagremor's adventure in the forest of Archenai in Northumbria. While the narrator notes that they are beautiful, worthy of reverence, and a marvel to behold, the focus of their description is uniquely upon their clothes.[94] These three women wear 'cotes' (here, a woman's overgarment) that are 'replois' (pleated) with long sleeves that touch the ground.[95] Although long sleeves existed during the composition of Meliador [figs. 60], pleated garments are more common in late-fourteenth- and early-fifteenth-century illuminations. As it is unclear whether 'replois' indicates intentionally gathered and tailored pleats or natural folds created by voluminous fabric, the ladies' dresses could be several different types. Depicting a conversing Tristan and Iseut, figure 51 portrays three potentially similar garments. Both Iseut (sitting) and her leftmost attendant wear high-waisted, pleated dresses, while her rightmost lady-in-waiting wears a dress with a fitted torso and natural folds in the skirt, her sleeves reminiscent of figure 60. Both she and Iseut have sleeves that obviously touch the ground. Another option is the lady in blue in figure 56, whose sleeves would brush the ground were her arms not raised; unstructured pleats are gathered below her belt, more obvious as the gown lengthens and becomes fuller. Although she has slightly smaller sleeves, another blue lady's gathers are detailed by finely-painted gold designs just below her belt [fig. 52]. As the intentionality of the fairy women's pleats and grandiose sleeves suggest tailoring beyond natural folds, the examples from

[93] *Meliador*, l. 28200.
[94] Ll. 28780-2.
[95] Ll. 28783 and 28787-8.

figures 52 and 56 and the high-waisted dresses in figure 60 are all instances of the female houpelande. While this high-necked garment did not appear in art until the very end of the fourteenth century, it is possible that a prototypical version of the houpelande is intended here, for Froissart wrote a pastourelle in the 1360s that focused upon the houpelande as a new garment.[96] However, as the date of the houpelande's introduction is unclear, this is uncertain; at minimum, the fairy women are nobly dressed.

Significantly, these ladies' clothes are not 'vermeilles | verdes, blewes, ne mi-parties' but rather 'toutes blances'.[97] This is surprising, for other fairy ladies' garments are both rich and bright, as in the English *Sir Launfal*.[98] While white often indicated purity in ecclesiastic sources, it was also associated with the supernatural and the Otherworld; [99] however, its negative framing suggests that its importance here is as the absence of colour and pattern. 'Blanc' did not necessarily indicate a colour, being synonymous with undyed and therefore representing white, cream, grey, and even tans and light yellows.[100] When taken as 'undyed', white may suggest asceticism, incompletion, and a lack of refinement (as with undyed cloth). Such an inference here is remarkable because these are not poor garments. The dresses are luxurious but lack colour.[101] Their clothes' shapes indicate that these women are worthy, but in a narrative that depends on colour-based epithets their whiteness is a 'blank' signifier. They are abnormal, peculiar, and unsettling, their absent colour pointing towards the Otherworld and indicating that they are to be approached with caution.

These fairy-women serve as wood-guardians, challenging Sagremor upon his reason for entering Archenai.[102] Once Sagremor politely explains, the ladies examine 'la damoisiel' that blazons his shield;[103] pleased by this, they entertain him. This is explained by the fact that these fairy women are in fact 'nimphes et pucelles | a

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[96] Newton, pp. 57-8, 62, and 127-8.
[97] *Meliador*, ll. 28783-4 and 28786. 'Red, green, blue, or mi-parti', 'all white'.
[98] Chestre, ll. 232-48 and 926-66.
[99] Beckman, p. 72; Hulbert, p. 458; Pastoureau, *Blue*, p. 36, and *Noir*, p. 29; Woolgar, p. 162
[100] Munro, 'Medieval Scarlet', p. 53; Scott, *Fashion*, p. 17; Woolgar, p. 163.
[101] Note that the white clothes depicted in MSs fr. 100 and 101, as in figure 51, are a stylistic choice.
[102] *Meliador*, ll. 28793-8.
[103] Ll. 28814-6.

Dyane';[104] their relationship to this goddess also clarifies their reason for questioning Sagremor, but the mention of a Greco-Roman deity is peculiar. Archenai is otherwise a traditionally Arthurian Otherworld, filled with white harts, dream-visions, and an Irish knight-protagonist. However, excepting Sagremor and Dagor, the Irish of *Meliador* are portrayed as barbaric (a potentially political commentary), and the Otherworld is displaced from the typical fringes of the Arthurian world to Northumbria. With a somewhat neutral location and presentation of fairy women as the servants of Diana, this Otherworld is divorced from malevolent Celtic associations. Instead, it is profoundly artistic, literary, and educated in its references to statuesque trees, white harts, dream visions, and Roman mythology. Unfortunately, while this peculiar location, its fairy women, and their relationship with the Irish Sagremor may have been more fully explored in the original narrative, the narrative turns to the fifth of the tournaments after the fairy women and the extant manuscript ends before Sagremor and the Otherworld can reappear.

To summarise the role of women within *Meliador*, these characters exist on a spectrum of passive (Hermondine) to active (Florée), with the majority following closer to one end or the other. Some women are granted the ability to actively alter the narrative (Florée and Phenonée), while others have certain powers to discern and ascertain men's functions, as with Guinevere and the fairy women. Amongst these women there is both a social hierarchy and a support system of compatriots drawn primarily from family members. When social positions do not conflict, the narrative draws overt parallels, such as between Hermondine and Sebille or Florée and Luciienne. Furthermore, women like Luciienne can reframe the primarily male gaze within the narrative by examining a female body from a position of concern (as with Phenonée), while Florée can alter the overall narrative's structure through appeal to male powers (as with Kings Arthur and Hermont's sponsorship of the tournament-quest).

Simultaneously, many of these women act as bases for literary commentary. For example, blazoning of the female body is used to invoke literary tradition with Sebille, but it is employed almost mockingly with Hermondine. Furthermore, opportunities for display are generally ignored or elided. Indeed, expectations for the

[104] *Meliador*, ll. 28824-5.

depiction of the female form are fully subverted with the fairy women, where it is their garments that are used to denote that these women are not ordinary. They are neither blazoned nor given personal characteristics. Women are not employed simply to legitimise the deeds of knights; they are used to refashion literary tropes.

Expectations in *Gawain*

Like Froissart, the *Gawain*-Poet demonstrates understanding of women's social value and literary possibilities throughout his works, as with the spiritual authority accorded to the deceased daughter of *Pearl*.[105] The women of *Gawain* display particularly varied roles. While overall the narrative emphasises the ladies' physical appearances, it is the disguised, loathsome Morgan le Fay who receives the most detailed physical description. Furthermore, women are of consequence: the Lady is active, Morgan le Fay supposedly controls the whole plot, and references to the Virgin Mary permeate the narrative. While Morgan's and the Lady's functions have received significant discussion in studies of the narrative, their autonomy is often diminished,[106] and the parts of Guinevere and the Virgin Mary have been ignored. In contrast, the following argument suggests that comprehending these women is vital to understanding the overall plot. Focusing upon how passivity or activity corresponds and contrasts with aspects of display to elucidate their narrative role, this discussion necessarily includes Bertilak's statements of the women's roles and Gawain's 'misogynist' rant, which refocus the interpretative lens.

Guinevere is the first lady introduced by the narrative; physically, only her gray eyes are noted.[107] In light of the subsequent ladies' extensive descriptions, the lack of a longer description is retroactively peculiar. However, her surroundings are described almost as a substitute for a body-blazon. Sitting on a dais, Guinevere is surrounded by 'sendal' (a type of silk) with a canopy of fabric from Toulouse and embroidered and jewelled drapery of Tars (possibly a silk of Eastern origin).[108] She almost wears the royal furnishings of the dais like queenly garments, yet she is

[105] Johnson, p. xii; Sarah Stanbury, 'Feminist Masterplots: The Gaze on the Body of *Pearl*'s Dead Girl', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 96-115 (pp. 105 and 109).
[106] Battles, p. 330.
[107] *Gawain*, l. 82. Eagan, p. 67, argues erroneously that Guinevere's eyes are symbolic.
[108] *Gawain*, ll. 74-84.

simultaneously compared to and outshines them. Like Hermondine, she is a jewel in a setting, placed in the midst of Camelot. In a way, she 'wears' her court.

Guinevere's importance is affirmed upon the departure of the Green Knight, when Arthur speaks first not to the court or Gawain but to his queen, reassuring her that 'dere dame, today demay yow neuer'.[109] In this address he asserts that the Green Knight's beheading was appropriate for Christmas, insinuating that it was only an unimportant entertainment.[110] Though this speech is addressed to Guinevere, it is intended for the whole court. That Arthur directs this assurance to Guinevere is intriguing, for though the court's alarmed reaction is mentioned, Guinevere's response is not. Instead, Guinevere's physical and social positioning within this scene presents her as a figurehead for the court, and by reassuring her Arthur functionally calms his court. At the same time, Guinevere is the focal point of the court; the court takes its cues from her, and is pacified through her. Guinevere is inert and passive, but that is her function.[111] She is not an individual but rather a body through which the relationship of king and subjects is mediated.

Guinevere retains this centrality in the *Gawain* illuminations, appearing in the first and last images [figs. 2 and 5]. The rich furnishings of the dais are not depicted, and Guinevere stands at the table between and just behind Arthur and the unknown man (Agravain?). This positioning differs from the text, which places Guinevere at the table's centre between Arthur and Gawain, with Agravain to Gawain's left and Bishop Baldwin and Ywain to Arthur's right.[112] The illumination preserves the focus upon Guinevere by placing her in the centre of the table's primary grouping. Unlike the narrative where her reaction to the beheading is not described, this Guinevere stretches out her arms behind Arthur as if trying to hide or reaching in distress for her husband or Gawain. Though damage makes it difficult to determine her original expression, her mouth seems twisted, and her gaze appears to be directed at Arthur's shoulder or his hand, which itself seems both to grip his belt and to point towards the

[109] *Gawain*, l. 470.
[110] Ll. 471-3.
[111] For a broader discussion on Guinevere's role in the literary tradition as a 'mirror' for Arthurian society, see Bethlehem, especially p. 325.
[112] *Gawain*, ll. 109-13. Tolkien and Gordon, pp. 82-3, include a diagram and discussion of these seating arrangements.

Green Knight. As the court of Camelot is not depicted, this Guinevere could be viewed as summarising the court's horrified reaction to the beheading.

In the final illumination Guinevere's body language has changed [fig. 5]. Although her presence is not mentioned in the finale of the narrative the illuminator has chosen to include her, possibly again as a court-surrogate. Here, she stands between Arthur and the unnamed man, but she now stands in front of the latter. Her undamaged face gazes directly at the reader, relaxed, possibly with a slight smile. One arm is behind Arthur, but her other hand imitates the belt-gripping/pointing of Arthur in figure 2. Her gesture indicates the gripped hands of Arthur and Gawain, highlighting their reunion.

Guinevere's illuminated costume is particularly intriguing, for it mixes older and newer elements. Her vertical *cornettes* were out of fashion by the time of the illuminations but still used to designate queens [as in fig. 50]. However, her high-collared, high-belted, and wide-sleeved dress is blatantly a woman's houpelande [as in figs. 51, 52, and 56 as well as the women in rose in fig. 8, in red in fig. 50, and in green in fig. 57], its white edges in figure 5 suggesting a houpelande's fur linings [figs. 8 and 52]. Though the mixture of *cornettes* and houpelande is odd, the presence of the houpelande may have been artistic preference, for other illuminations in the manuscript dress women similarly (such as the *Pearl* maiden). Yet it is remarkable that her dress is the same green as the Knight. This may be a result of the illuminator's limited palette, but as Guinevere could have easily been dressed in the rose-colour used on the unknown man, her greenness seems deliberate. If intentional, this creates an inexplicit connection between the Green Knight and Guinevere.

Because of the bedroom scenes, the Lady of the Hostel has received the most attention in scholarly study of the narrative's ladies, but as with her husband interpretations of the Lady have not found agreement. She has been viewed as a fairy mistress, adulterer, seducer, victim, and tempter.[113] She has been called arbitrary,

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[113] W.R.J. Barron, 'Chrétien and the Gawain-Poet: Master and Pupil or Twin Temperaments?', in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. by Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby, 255-84 (p. 262); Richard R. Griffith, 'Bertilak's Lady: The French Background of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Madeleine Pelner Cosman and Bruce Chandler (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1978), 249-66 (p. 258); Hulbert, p. 462; Ingledew, p. 106; Sharon M. Rowley, 'Textual Studies, Feminism, and Performance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Chaucer Review*, 38 (2003), 158-77 (p. 167); Muriel A. Whitaker, 'Otherworld Castles in Middle English Arthurian Romance', in *The Medieval Castle:*

malicious, and Potiphar's wife, but she has also been considered an 'obedient wife', an example of feminine desire, and a manipulator of feminine tropes.[114] At the most extreme, Levy suggests that she is in fact Morgan le Fay, despite Bertilak identifying Morgan as the Lady's elderly companion.[115] This suppression of the Lady's individuality is reflected in scholarship that refers to her as 'Lady Bertilak'.[116] A name never associated with her in the narrative, this defines her by her husband. This is arguably a result of the ambiguity of her role; however, the Lady is no more indefinite than Bertilak. Thus far, *Gawain* scholarship has resisted the Lady's conjoined individuality and ambiguity.[117]

While many previous analyses of the Lady have only addressed her role in the bedroom scenes, this discussion begins with the Lady's first appearance. Not unlike Hermondine and Phenonée, the Lady is introduced as the most beautiful amongst a company of 'mony cler burdez';[118] this echoes Guinevere, who was the focal point of Arthur's court. Yet this Lady is depicted as so fair in form, colouration, and 'costes' (personal qualities) that Gawain thinks her 'wener þen Wenore'.[119] Yet Guinevere is generally considered the most beautiful woman within the Arthurian world, and the suggestion that one could be more beautiful than Arthur's queen invites suspicion. Coming from Gawain, it is additionally dubious. If taken as an impartial judgment, his response to her beauty (desiring to serve her) reflects his deferential loyalty to his uncle's wife and queen.[120] However, Gawain has a reputation as an amorous knight,[121] and his observation may imply an almost incestuous attraction. This enigmatic description is underlined by the term 'costes', which is later used to describe the girdle's attributes and, at Camelot, Gawain's whole adventure.[122] This repetition of 'costes' places the Lady at the centre of Gawain's experience, and while

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Romance and Reality, ed. by Kathryn Reyerson and Faye Powe (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1984), 27-45 (p. 36). While the majority of these citations refer to such arguments, Rowley's article summarises different arguments in order to highlight potential scholarly biases that have affected editions of the narrative.

[114] Anderson, 'Three Judgements', p. 348; Hulbert, p. 693; Rowley, pp. 159-60 and 167 (qtd.).

[115] *Gawain*, ll. 2463; Levy, p. 93.

[116] Two recent examples of this subtle bias are Battles, p. 324, and De Roo, despite the fact that Battles argues for the Lady's agency.

[117] Rowley, p. 167, notes the resistance to dualities in the Lady's nature.

[118] *Gawain*, ll. 942-3.

[119] Ll. 944-5.

[120] Ll. 975-6.

[121] Busby, 'Diverging Traditions', p. 97.

[122] *Gawain*, ll. 1849 and 2495.

her initial description is appropriate for a courtly lady, its phrasing and tone are problematic.

This description is followed by a loosely structured body-blazon of the Lady, which is juxtaposed with the Lady's ancient companion. In contrast to her elder, the Lady is the picture of ruddy-cheeked youth. As is appropriate for a modest married woman, the Lady wears a veil, but the veil is covered with shining pearls and exposes her snow-white breast and throat, similar in coverage to the veils in figure 50.[123] Though the Lady's veil probably does not correspond in shape to the veils in these images (which are early-fifteenth-century in fashion), like these ladies her veil is richly decorative, more alluring than modest. However, its decorations are not decadent, and correspond with the allowances of the 1363 English sumptuary laws.[124] The Lady is beautiful and consciously decorates herself, but she is not dressed outwith her social station.

Despite this initial moderation, the Lady's appearance and actions in the bedroom scenes have been labelled transgressive, called temptations and chastity tests and only rarely games of courtesy.[125] Though these scenes are ambiguous in morality, they do not necessarily comprise 'an extraordinary violation of a social code', especially as the Host had already informed Gawain that his wife would 'comfort yow with companyny til I to cort torne' after the hunts.[126] While her entrance into Gawain's bedchamber is not explicitly prefigured by the Host's statement, it is not an incorrect interpretation. Indeed, though these scenes are often viewed as subtly erotic, particularly with the kisses that Gawain and the Lady share, Gawain kissed the Lady in public upon meeting her and gives the Host kisses in the exchanges that parallel the bedroom scenes.[127] Though kisses could be erotic, they

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[123] *Gawain*, ll. 951-6.
[124] Phillips, p. 27.
[125] Selections of 'temptation' supporters are Besserman, p. 227; Johnson, p. 81; Gordon M. Shedd, 'Knight in Tarnished Armour: The Meaning of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Modern Language Review*, 62 (1967), 3-13 (p. 5); Theodore Silverstein, 'Sir Gawain in a Dilemma, or Keeping Faith with Marcus Tullius Cicero', *Modern Philology*, 75 (1977), 1-17 (p. 10). The rarer opposite viewpoint is more recently supported by Conor McCarthy, 'Luf-talkyng in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008), 155-62 (p. 156), who bases his argument on the suggestion that '*luf-talkyng*' is 'synonymous with *talkyng noble*'.
[126] *Gawain*, l. 1099; Gerald Morgan, 'Medieval Misogyny and Gawain's Outburst against Women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Modern Language Review*, 97 (2002), 265-78 (p. 273, qtd.), argues for this violation.
[127] *Gawain*, ll. 974, 1389, 1639, and 1936. For example of erotic interpretations, see De Roo, p. 320.

were also appropriate to give to friends and guests in moments of joy and reconciliation as well as for greeting and fealty.[128] Though the setting complicates their interactions, as she and Gawain have already exchanged chaste kisses there is nothing inherently suspect about the Lady's entrance or kisses. Intimacy does not necessarily imply sexual impropriety.

Though calling the bedroom scenes 'an extraordinary violation' seems somewhat overstated,[129] it is undeniable that the narrative openly blurs the line between intimacy and impropriety. This is emphasised in the Lady's first entrance into Gawain's chamber. She is still 'loflyest to beholde', and Gawain admires her white-and-red colouring and sweet face.[130] Her loveliness is accentuated by her amusement, 'wyth lyppez smal laȝande', at her quiet infiltration.[131] Though these could simply be viewed as a courtly woman engaging in a humorous game, the scene becomes problematic when the Lady's rhetoric is examined, epitomised by her statement that Gawain is 'welcum to my cors'.[132] While this could be an invitation to partake fully in the Lady's society in the absence of her husband, it could also be sexual. The intentional ambiguity of the Lady's rhetoric has been most recently championed by Battles and Rowley, who separately re-examined the editing of *Gawain* to suggest that ambiguities in the narration concerning the Lady have been suppressed. In this first bedroom scene, these centre on the lines

> Þaȝ I were burde bryȝtest, þe burde i*n* mynde hade,
> Þe lasse luf in his lode for lur þat he soȝt,
> Boute hone—
> Þe dunte þat schulde hym deue,
> And nedez hit most be done.[133]

Emendations have suggested that it is Gawain who considers this foreshadowing of his beheading, without which it may be read as the Lady's thought.[134] Retention of the manuscript's sense implies that the Lady's intentions are uncertain, leading the

[128] Woolgar, p. 39-40.
[129] Morgan, p. 273.
[130] *Gawain*, l. 1187 and 1204-7.
[131] L. 1207.
[132] L. 1237.
[133] *Gawain*, ll. 1283-7. The manuscript reading of line 1283, 'þaȝ I were burde bryȝtest þe burde in mynde hade' (Rowley, p. 174), has been emended to 'þaȝ ho were burde bryȝtest þe burne in mynde hade' in Andrew and Waldron, p. 255, and 'þaȝ [ho] were burde bryȝtest, þe bur[n]e i*n* mynde hade' in Gollancz, p. 47. Tolkien and Gordon, p. 40, have not emended it but place the first half of the line in quotations.
[134] Battles, pp. 328-9; Rowley, pp. 164 and 169.

audience to question whether the Lady has foreknowledge of the beheading game or Gawain has informed the Hostel of his fate. At the same time, the Lady's laughing lips, lovely face, and teasing speech distract both Gawain and the audience from this foreshadowing.

The pleasant portrayal of the Lady continues in the second day. She looks at Gawain 'luflych' and is called 'þe clere' and 'þe meré wyf', which reinforces her beauty, playfulness, and married status.[135] Yet this amiability is undercut by ominous phrases, as when in an echo of the invitation to her *cors*, she insinuates that Gawain is capable of raping her.[136] Also portentous is her desire to 'wonnen hym to woȝe, whatso scho þoȝt elleȝ' for 'woȝe' could indicate both 'woe' and 'woo', but the second half of the line implies that this is also not her sole intent.[137] This is strengthened on the third morning, when 'þe lady, for luf, let not to slepe, | ne þe purpose to payre þat pyȝt in hir hert'.[138] Much has been made of these lines; however, it has mostly been viewed out of context. The surrounding lines are vital, for they discuss the lady's intentional dressing for this morning.

For her final intrusion on Gawain, the Lady dons a floor-length 'mery mantyle' lined with pured furs.[139] This mantle echoes the brown mantle worn by Gawain (but belonging to the Hostel) and that worn by the Green Knight (which presumably belonged to the Hostel as well). Beneath this mantle, her dress is only notable in its absent parts: it exposes her throat, breast, and back.[140] This odd description is not clarified by its later label 'kyrtel', for a kirtle is simply synonymous with 'dress'.[141] Remarkably, the exposure of skin suggests that the dress has been cut low, reminiscent of advice from the *Roman de la Rose*. Because of the emphasis on costume and their colours in *Gawain*, it is particularly surprising that this kirtle is minimally described.

However, in the illumination of a bedroom scene the Lady does not wear a low-cut dress or a mantle but a high-necked houpelande like the illuminated

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[135] *Gawain*, ll. 1480, 1489, and 1494.
[136] *Gawain*, ll. 1496, 'ȝe ar stif innoghe to constrayne wyth strenkþe, ȝif yow lykez'; Ingledew, p. 82.
[137] *Gawain*, ll. 1550.
[138] Ll. 1733-4.
[139] Ll. 1736-7.
[140] Ll. 1740-1.
[141] L. 1831.

Guinevere's [figs. 2 and 3].[142] As the houpelande was an overgarment, this would also explain the absence of the kirtle, mantle, and green girdle: the kirtle and girdle are concealed beneath the houpelande, which replaces the mantle as a top layer. Despite this liberty with the narrative, the illuminator seems to have taken great care with the houpelande's decoration. While it is unclear whether the pattern of dots on the houpelande is intended to represent a type of fabric, close inspection reveals that its colours are the red used on Gawain's cote and the blue-green of the Green Knight in figure 2. Regardless of the intentions, this garment does exactly what the narrative's mantle does: echo Bertilak and Gawain through the Lady's costume. Additionally, her relaxed stance mimics Guinevere's in figure 2, which may support interpretations of the Lady as part of the false-Guinevere tradition.[143]

Within the text, the narrator emphasises the Lady's lack of headwear: she does not have a 'hwef goud', but instead lovely stones 'trased about hir tressour'.[144] Andrew and Waldron gloss 'hwef' as 'coif', following Gollancz's suggestion that the manuscript 'hweȝ' is a 'form of OE hufe (ME howve) "head-covering, coif"'.[145] Though the exact shape of a 'hwef' is unclear, the narrative seems to indicate that though the Lady has styled her hair with stones either in clusters of twenty or twenty in clusters, this is not as modest as a 'hwef'.[146] The stones may signify that her hair has been braided and decorated with gems; however, it is more likely that her hair has been restrained (or 'trussed') with a bejewelled hair-net. Such an item would be specifically a late-fourteenth-century hairnet, which was strong enough to support attached jewels.[147] The illustrator depicts a similar type of headdress, for his Lady wears a golden lattice-work of interconnecting diamonds with small circles at the junctions (two of which, dotted with red, may indicate jewels) [fig. 3]. Though this net seems to be placed over a turban-like structure, this could simply be the illustrator's attempt to show pinned-up hair, for fine details are not this illuminator's strength and hair, always depicted in yellow in this manuscript, would blend with a gold mesh. Yet the illuminated hairnet and textual 'tressour' conflict with the

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[142] Hilmo, p. 158, calls the artist 'prudish' for this choice.
[143] Griffith, p. 261.
[144] *Gawain*, ll. 1738-9 (qtd. 1739).
[145] Andrew and Waldron, p. 271; Gollancz, p. 121; *MED*, in 'hŏuve (n.)', follows this definition.
[146] *Gawain*, ll. 1738-9. Andrew and Waldron suggest that these may be pearls (p. 271), but this is not supported by the text.
[147] Crowfoot, Pritchard, and Staniland, p. 145.

narrator's qualification that the Lady lacks a 'hwef goud'. Though she does not wear a veil or cap, she is not so immodest as to wear nothing, and she certainly does not have scandalous loose hair.[148] However, the emphasis upon the number of stones and her bare chest suggests that her intentional display, though possibly acceptable in certain settings, is inappropriate for waking a visitor.

The presence of this intentionally rich display requires consideration of the Lady's 'luf' and 'purpose'. For whom is the love, what is the purpose, and why is her display deliberately lush? [149] The answer hinges on two facets: the extent to which the Lady is viewed to have autonomy, and which relationships are the most important to the Lady. At first, it appears that the Lady intends to win in her wooing of Gawain in this last scene; after the Green Chapel, her costume seems part of the masquerade to trick Gawain.[150] Three more options are less obvious. First, she may be awake out of self-love, having enjoyed her discussions with Gawain (her 'purpose') and desiring to portray herself in the best possible light on this last morning (perhaps to lessen Gawain's negative response when he discovers the deception). Second, the Lady may dress out of love for Bertilak, following her husband's commands. Finally, though Bertilak may have devised the plot, the Lady may be following it through out of regard for Morgan, her elderly companion and the plot's instigator.[151] Any of these are possible interpretations, but the passage may also be read straightforwardly: the Lady needed to rise early to prepare properly for her morning flirtations.

This preparation serves its purpose, for Gawain is affected by the Lady, 'so glorious and gayly atyred, | so fautles of hir fetures and of so fyne hewes'.[152] This high praise is particularly notable because of Gawain's vulnerability. Lying in bed either nude or virtually naked in underthings, Gawain is awoken from a restless sleep by the greeting of a finely-dressed woman, a welcome respite from nightmares of beheading.[153] However, the Lady cannot be straightforwardly condemned as a

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[148] Bartlett, p. 54.
[149] *Gawain*, ll. 1733-4.
[150] Friedman and Osberg, p. 309, support the latter.
[151] *Gawain*, l. 2361.
[152] Ll. 1760-1.
[153] Burns, 'Why Textiles', p. 11; *Gawain*, l. 1757; Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', pp. 233-4; Woolgar, p. 35.

tempter, for in this garb she wakes Gawain with cheery words.[154] Her rich display is initially moderated by restrained action, which contrasts with her forwardness of the preceding days. In the earlier bedroom scenes, the Lady's cheeky comments and actions were flattened by her unmentioned dress and courtly rhetoric, allowing Gawain and the audience to defuse the danger by viewing her as a courtly (albeit flirtatious) hostess. However, on the third day her appearance combines with Gawain's fears to increase the power of her sweet words. In contrast to her plush mantle, attractive kirtle, and expensive *tressour*, her girdle must seem of less value though its silk and gold construction belies this.[155] The Lady has effectively created a situation wherein Gawain may convince himself that it is acceptable to take the girdle.

The Lady's portrayal of the girdle serves to illustrate her wider methods in these bedroom scenes. Overall, the Lady intentionally offsets ambiguous moments through the invocation of courtly society in rhetoric or in display, reframing potential impropriety as no more than courtly love-games. Like her husband, the Lady is a subtly contradictory figure, physically beautiful but morally questionable, both sweet and conniving. While the Lady's supposed purpose is declared by Bertilak at the Green Chapel, her true purpose will always be shrouded in skilful ambiguity.

According to Bertilak, Morgan le Fay is his superior, the true antagonist, and the narrative's most important character. This is not apparent in the scholarship, which often dismisses Bertilak's statement as arbitrary or insignificant.[156] This is odd, for while readings otherwise generally accept Bertilak's judgment of Gawain as righteous (regardless of its reason), it discounts his veracity concerning Morgan, claiming instead that Bertilak 'changed his own shape' and acted as the plot's director.[157] If Bertilak's ruling of Gawain is trustworthy, should not his definition of Morgan be trusted as well? Though it is unclear whether Morgan initiated anything beyond the beheading game, this alone is significant, and a close examination of Morgan's appearances may elucidate her wider significance.

[154] *Gawain*, ll. 1744-9.
[155] *Gawain*, ll. 1829-33. See also Chapter 6.
[156] Hulbert, p. 454; Levy, p. 68.
[157] De Roo, p. 321; Whitaker, p. 37 (qtd.).

Morgan first appears as the elder companion that leads the Lady of the Hostel 'bi þe lyft honde'.[158] She is (disguised as?) 'an auncian hit semed' whom everyone honours highly.[159] This is the only positive praise that the narrator notes for the companion; as such, this honour seems peculiar, almost ironic, for she is the negative opposite to the Lady's positives in both physical form and dress. At the same time, the narrator forces our attention on the elder companion by comparison to the Lady. She is grotesque: her skin is sallow and unhealthy, her rough cheeks so wrinkled that they sag upon themselves; though her veil hides most of her face, her black eyebrows, sour lips, and rheumy eyes are visible; her chin is 'blake' (likely meaning pallid and ill instead of dark); her body is short and thick; her buttocks bulging and broad.[160] Though Morgan may have been viewed as 'magically transformed or as a witch',[161] these traits are common in negative portrayals of women. For example, Boccaccio wrote of a widow who, after marriage, revealed that her beauty was only from cosmetics. Otherwise, her face was green-yellow, her skin wrinkled and sagged, and there were circles beneath her eyes.[162] Similarly, in the *Livre du Cuer d'Amours espris* by René d'Anjou, Jealousy is a foul female dwarf with a long nose, heavy brows, a gaping mouth, yellow uneven teeth, a dark and wrinkled face, and sagging breasts; Melancholy and Sadness are similarly represented as poorly-dressed older women.[163] A woman did not need to be magical to be foul; old age and a questionable nature are sufficient to render her such. The Lady's parallel description converts this passage into an account of the two poles of female appearance, Morgan's description a *contreblazon* to match the Lady's *blazon*.[164]

As an older woman, Morgan-the-companion wears a modest veil and a 'gorger' to cover her breast and chin.[165] This gorger also encloses her 'swyre' or throat, a description that was previously used for the Green Knight's hair, and

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[158] *Gawain*, l. 947.
[159] *Gawain*, ll. 947-9.
[160] Ll. 951-3, 958, 962-963, and 966-7
[161] As argued by Whitaker, p. 37.
[162] Boccaccio, 'The Corbaccio', in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires, 166-76 (pp. 173-4).
[163] René d'Anjou, *Book*, §§14, 18, 20, 34, and 65.
[164] Jan Ziolkowski, 'Avatars of Ugliness in Medieval Literature', *Modern Language Review*, 79 (1984), 1-20, described this sort of double blazon as 'an emphatic *memento mori* (or, to be more accurate, *memento senescere*)' and uses the Lady and Morgan as an example (p. 5). Such descriptions may also be considered part of the loathly lady tradition.
[165] *Gawain*, ll. 957-8.

Morgan's gorger is probably a separate piece like that worn by the queen in figure 56.[166] Modest veils were usually unstructured, as with those worn by queens in figures 23, 53, 56, and 57. However, Morgan's milk-white veils are made of silk, folded in front, and 'toret and treleted with tryflez'.[167] The definitions of 'toret' and 'treleted' are unclear because they only appear in *Gawain*, but they suggest decorated edges and mesh or interlacing.[168] This could imply that Morgan's veil is frilled, a popular style for respectable women in the fourteenth century (though more common on the Continent).[169] Though she is modestly veiled and age-appropriate with her gorger, her veil may also be quite fashionable.

The description of the companion is not blatantly mocking until its end. Abandoning the comparisons with the Lady, the narrator implies that one who called her companion 'mensk' in shape would be overly kind, for there is nothing praiseworthy or beautiful about the elder's form.[170] What follows is the grotesque body description noted above, finished with a flat statement that the Lady is more pleasing to look upon.[171]

Though Morgan's appearances throughout the rest of the narrative are minimal, she joins Gawain and the Lady's company each morning after the bedroom scenes. Indeed, the first morning the narrator specifies that Gawain sits between these two women and makes merry with them both.[172] In these scenes, the negative disdain present in Morgan's initial description is missing. Instead of being contrasted with the Lady they are conflated, together described as 'dyngne' on the first day, as 'goude' when fetched to see the boar on the second day, and as 'fre' while making merry with Gawain on the third.[173] Because these references include the Lady, it is unlikely they are mocking Morgan. Rather, they suggest that regardless of appearance both ladies are worthy of honourable treatment.

Notably, it is not until Gawain's final confrontation with Bertilak that Morgan's name is mentioned. Bertilak links Morgan to his actions by stating that

[166] *Gawain*, ll. 138 and 186. Boccaccio's widow also wears a throat-cover (Boccaccio, p. 174).
[167] *Gawain,* ll. 959-60.
[168] *MED*, 'toret (adj.)', 'treleted (ppl.)'.
[169] Newton, p. 96; Newton and Giza, p. 141. The former contains several examples from effigies.
[170] *Gawain*, l. 964.
[171] Ll. 968-9.
[172] L. 1313-8.
[173] Ll. 1316, 1625, and 1885.

'Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe | þurȝ myȝt of Morgne la Faye, þat in my hous lenges'.[174] In Battles' suggested editorial emendations, editors' punctuation at the line break should be removed; these lines are thus describing Bertilak as holding his lands as a vassal of Morgan.[175] As her vassal, Bertilak and his own subordinates would be required to work in Morgan's interest, and the almost worshipful tone of Bertilak's description of 'Morgne þe goddes' fits a loyal subject from a magical court.[176]

Bertilak focuses on the 'koyntyse of clergye' she learned from Merlin, with whom she has 'dalt drwry fule dere'.[177] He states that she can tame anyone, regardless of their degree of 'hawtesse'.[178] A nuanced term, 'hawtesse' may refer to pride, haughtiness, nobility of character, and/or old age, and indicates that no one is outwith Morgan's power.[179] This trait of Morgan's relates directly to the beheading game, for Bertilak states that his intrusion into Camelot was Morgan's idea.[180] According to Bertilak, Morgan's intent was to frighten Guinevere to death; whether this is meant literally or figuratively is unclear.[181] Though Eagan argued that Morgan attempts this because of Guinevere's adulterous relationship with Lancelot, 'the stereotypical "guilty Guinevere"' is a rare trope in English Arthuriana, and not sufficiently explicit within this narrative.[182] Conversely, as Guinevere serves as a representative of the Arthurian court, Morgan's intentions may have been to negatively affect the society in the long-term. If this was her purpose, it worked: the beheading frightened the court and sent them into mourning at Gawain's departure. Yet it is significant that when Bertilak informs Gawain that Morgan is the 'auncien lady' of the hostel, he also emphasises that she is Gawain's aunt, Arthur's half-sister, and of noble birth.[183] This alters the conflict from one between courts into a familial one. However, Bertilak does not imply that either Gawain or Arthur is Morgan's

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[174] Ll. 2445-6.
[175] Battles, pp. 331-6. In Andrew and Waldron, p. 296, and Tolkien and Gordon, p. 75, this punctuation is a full stop; Gollancz, p. 91, uses a comma instead.
[176] *Gawain*, l. 2452.
[177] L. 2447-52. 'Knowledge of the spiritual', 'dealt affection dearly'. 'Drwry' may relate to 'bloody', but here is more likely to refer to love-dealings.
[178] Ll. 2454.
[179] *MED*, 'hautes(se (n.)'.
[180] *Gawain*, ll. 2456-60.
[181] L. 2460.
[182] Bethlehem, p. 405 (qtd.); Eagan, p. 51.
[183] *Gawain*, l. 2464-6.

target. Rather, with the appeal of ‘com to þyn aunt’, Bertilak requests familial reconciliation.[184]

While Morgan is repeatedly stated to be powerful, honourable, and praiseworthy by the Hostel inhabitants, Bertilak, and the narrator, her physical presence is minimal. When she appears, she is either loathsome and mocked (contrasted with the Lady) or worthy and pleasant (coalesced with the Lady). As the Hostel inhabitants are her vassals, her power supersedes her loathsomeness. Indeed, the respect given to the ancient woman suggests that the inclusion of Morgan was intentional and integral. However, this is clearer when considered in relation with the other women.

Before this, the role of the Virgin Mary needs to be examined.[185] Unlike *Meliador*, *Gawain* is not a purely secular romance. Rather, it juxtaposes and coalesces piety and amorousness, sometimes uncomfortably.[186] This echoes the pious invocations of courtly love in Marian devotion, which was securely connected to conflicting medieval opinions on the female body.[187] Although Mary was sometimes treated as a deviation from the average woman (as an eternal virgin), she was also used as ‘a trump card’ against misogyny.[188] While Marian devotion often focused on the physicality of the Virgin,[189] her presence in *Gawain* is unbodied and ethereal (despite being represented on the inside of Gawain’s shield). She is a pointed contrast to the fleshy Lady and Morgan.

The Virgin appears to be an inactive presence, but Gawain’s devotion to her surrounds his discovery of the Hostel. First praying to her the night before he discovers the Hostel as he suffers in the cold winter weather, he repeats his prayers

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[184] L. 2467

[185] There is a gap in the study of *Gawain* concerning the role of Marian devotion within the religious references of the narrative. The following discussion contains the beginnings of this argument. As a fully developed reading of Marian devotion within *Gawain* would require further examination of the religious elements, it is outwith the scope of this study.

[186] Johnson, p. xi, argues that *Gawain* is secular, but later considers Mary’s appearance significant. However, he bases this on her role as ‘patroness of chivalry and friend to penitent sinners’ (p. 77), disregarding that Mary is a common patron.

[187] Theresa Coletti, ‘Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary’s Body and the Engendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles’, in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury, 65-95 (p. 87), refers specifically to ‘late medieval reverence’ of the Virgin.

[188] Alcuin Blamires, ‘Introduction’, in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires, 1-15 (pp. 13-4, qtd. 13).

[189] Coletti, pp. 68 and 84-7.

the next morning, focusing upon 'Mary, þat is myldest moder so dere', but adds 'Lorde' to the addressed parties.[190] As he blesses himself three times by Christ's cross, the Hostel appears in front of him as if it had been summoned by his devotion.[191] This 'happenstance' suggests that Gawain's faith is important to what will happen there.

Geoffroi de Charny promoted Marian devotion for encouraging knights in combat and restraining them from evil deeds.[192] Charny especially emphasised this restraint, connecting it to Mary's ability to intercede on a person's behalf. Such an ability is suggested in the first bedroom screen, where Gawain says to the Lady 'Mary yow ȝelde'.[193] 'Ȝelde' is deliberately ambiguous, for it could mean to surrender or to reward;[194] Gawain may be blessing the Lady by Mary or asking that she relent in Mary's name. The Lady turns his words upon him, swearing by Mary that she would prefer to love Gawain over any other. However, she relents when Gawain modifies his statement into 'Kryst yow forȝelde'.[195] Her acquiescence echoes the appearance of the Hostel, which only materialised when Gawain included Christ in his prayers.

The next mention of Mary is during the third bedroom scene, when the narrator notes that 'gret perile' exists between Gawain and the Lady 'nif Maré of her knyȝt mynne'.[196] Mary is otherwise unmentioned that morning, a conspicuous absence when Gawain accepts the girdle. This functionally rejects his holy patroness in favour of the Lady; after this scene, Mary is absent from both Gawain's and the narrator's language. Surprisingly, for the exchange following this morning Gawain adopts the colour blue, commonly linked to the Virgin Mary. While this could be intended to portray him as a faithful follower of the Virgin, by accepting the girdle the blue overgarment becomes a false adoption of Mary's colours, strongly suggesting subtextual rejection of the Virgin. Gawain's blue is worn not out of religious loyalty but as a subterfuge towards faithfulness.

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[190] *Gawain*, ll. 737 and 753-4.
[191] *Gawain*, ll. 761-4.
[192] Charny, §44
[193] *Gawain*, ll. 1263-7, qtd. 1263.
[194] *MED*, 'yēlden (v.)'.
[195] *Gawain*, l. 1279. The intensified verb can mean both 'to reward' and 'to punish' (*MED*, 'foryēlden (v.)'.
[196] Ll. 1768-9.

This mixture between falsehood, faith, and ineffectuality is underlined by the Host's reactions in the third exchange. At Gawain's three kisses, he begins his response with 'bi Kryst', but when he states his displeasure with his own gift (the fox pelt), he begins with 'Mary'.[197] Although both names function as oaths, they align with the earlier usages, where references to Mary are inadequate while invocations of Christ are accompanied by success. Indeed, the last mention of Mary comes from Gawain's guide to the Green Chapel, who cannot persuade Gawain to flee.[198] Though there is a sense that Gawain's intercessor has abandoned him, Gawain significantly resigns himself at this point to God's will.[199]

Initially, Mary's patronage of Gawain seems to moderate the Lady and Morgan, a positive portrayal that counteracts their potentially negative actions. However, Gawain's prayer to Mary is insufficient to find the Hostel, and in the first bedroom scene his invocation of the Virgin is appropriated by the Lady to rebut him. This may be the result of Gawain's wider portrayal as an amorous chivalric exemplar who is not necessarily spiritually focused. The Host's reference to Mary in relation to the fox-pelt (the hunt of which paralleled Gawain's acceptance of the girdle) supports this. Overall, Mary seems to be insufficient as a patron, particularly when contrasted with the references to Christ that generally accompany success.

Any discussion of the ladies of *Gawain* would be incomplete without addressing Gawain's 'misogynistic rant' at the Green Chapel.[200] This 'rant' is part of a longer conversation that begins with Bertilak's explanation of the girdle, which Gawain then gives to Bertilak with a penitential speech.[201] In response, Bertilak forgives Gawain as 'confessed so clene', noting that he has served penance through the nick.[202] Returning the girdle as a souvenir, Bertilak then invites Gawain to return to his home and be reconciled with the Lady. It is this that prompts Gawain's speech.[203]

[197] *Gawain*, ll. 1938 and 1942.
[198] L. 2140.
[199] Ll. 2156-9.
[200] Ll. 2407-28
[201] Ll. 2369-88.
[202] Ll. 2390-4.
[203] De Roo, p. 309, argues specifically that it is the suggestion of reconciliation that elicits Gawain's response.

This monologue has been interpreted as a serious consideration of personal failure, the result of injured pride, inherently contradictory to Gawain's character, or a deliberate abuse.[204] However, the monologue is divided into two parts, in which the first part retains Gawain's courtesy as he wishes well to Bertilak and asks that Bertilak commend him to the 'honoured ladyez' of the Hostel, particularly the Lady who 'bigyled' him.[205] Only then does Gawain move into an argument that draws from misogynistic literary tradition. While anti-women diatribes could take four forms, Gawain's is based on 'the simplest, deriving probably from Ovid (though by no means invented by him)': a list of exemplars.[206] Yet Gawain's list focuses not on women but on four male Biblical figures (Adam, Solomon, Samson, and David) who suffered under women.[207] Only two women are named (Delilah and Bathsheba), while Solomon's multitude of wives and concubines are mentioned ('fele sere') and Eve is only 'one'. Only Delilah is specifically condemned as a dissembler. As Bathsheba is included as part of the 'bale' that followed David's adultery, the line implies that blame could fall upon either party. This opposes much of misogynistic literature, where Bathsheba's biblical bathing was recast as purposefully done within David's sight in order to tempt him.[208] This intent is either ignored or obscured by the *Gawain*-Poet, whose phrasing obfuscates blame. Conversely, both Solomon's 'fele sere' and Eve are framed as temptations instead of tempters. Neither Solomon nor Adam is 'bigyled' *by* the women; rather, they are 'bigyled' *with* them. The focus is upon men's distraction from righteousness by the female form.

Both Solomon and Adam are particularly intriguing. Solomon was already paralleled to Gawain by the knot that graces Gawain's shield, but Solomon was also a popular figure within misogynistic diatribes. This stems from Ecclesiastes 7:29, its sentiments echoed in the *Roman de la Rose* by the character Friend, who states that

> Neïs Salemons nes pot trouver,
> Tant les seüst bien esprouver
> Car il meïsmes bien afferme

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[204] D.H. Green, 'Irony and Medieval Romance', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 6 (1970), 49-64 (p. 61); Hatt; Ingledew, p. 186; Morgan, 'Medieval Misogyny', p. 265.
[205] *Gawain*, ll. 2409-12, qtd. 2411-2.
[206] Blamires, p. 10.
[207] *Gawain*, ll. 2416-9.
[208] Blamires, p. 8.

C'onques ne trouva fame ferme.[209]

Conversely, Adam is intriguing because of the absence of Eve by name. She is only 'one' with whom Adam is 'bigyled', despite the fact that the assonant line would have worked with her name.[210] This is particularly surprising considering that comparisons are often made between the fallen Eve and the Virgin Mary. The result is that the supposed progenitor of the Fall and first example of female falsehood is unnamed, the emphasis falling instead on her husband. The way that Solomon and Adam are used inverts Gawain's shield: while Gawain's shield bears the knot of Solomon's wisdom and the female progenitor of mankind's redemption, his monologue compares the unwise Solomon and the male progenitor of mankind's woe.

From this focus, it seems that this is not a diatribe against women's falseness. Rather, it is a discussion of supposedly historical weakness of men to resist women (regardless of the women's autonomy). Gawain explains that

> ...alle þay were biwyled
> With wymmen þat þay vsed.
> Þaȝ I be now bigyled,
> Me þink me burde be excused.[211]

There is a complex relationship here again concerning blame and agency. Though the men were beguiled, they also 'used' the women who serve as inactive objects in the men's downfall. It is specifically these men's *use* of women that brought them blame, not necessarily the women themselves.

Gawain's monologue has deviated from reconciliation with Bertilak to excusing his actions. As this follows his request to be commended to the ladies, Gawain may desire to be remembered in a better light. Alternatively, by framing a discussion drawn from misogynistic literature through masculine desire and agency, Gawain might be attempting to lessen the control that the Lady held over him: he was defeated by his own weakness, not the Lady's manipulation. Simultaneously, Gawain accepts the girdle by framing it as a token of remorse, penance, and Bertilak;

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[209] Ecclesiastes 7:29, *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*; Lorris and Meun, ll. 9925-8. Frances Horgan translates this as 'not even Solomon could find [good women], no matter how well he knew how to test them, and he himself declares that he never found a constant woman', in Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[210] *Gawain*, l. 2416.

[211] Ll. 2425-8.

again, Gawain rejects the Lady's role.[212] It is not clear whether this rejection stems from an attempt to redeem himself or the Lady. While the girdle acts as 'a mirror that reflects unsettling circumstances and aspects of selfhood', Gawain's response is a 'revelation' of his nature.[213] However, his reply might also be a refusal to recognise the Lady's independence or her role in his discovery.

Gawain's attempt to remove female agency collapses when he asks Bertilak for his name, which Bertilak uses to introduce Morgan's name to the narrative.[214] Though Gawain is now presented with a specific woman to blame, he refrains, which supports the interpretation that Gawain rejects women's autonomy in order to keep the blame focused upon men. By introducing Morgan as the greatest power in the narrative, Bertilak has also recast the narrative's struggle. This is not a conflict between genders (the Lady and Gawain) or peers (Bertilak and Gawain) but one between family members with strong gender undercurrents (*brother* Arthur, *sister* Morgan). Gawain cannot respond to this, for such familial matters are completely outwith the romantic context which he had placed over his experiences. While he responds to Bertilak's request for reconciliation with the Lady with vaguely misogynistic tropes, he can only politely reject the request to reconcile with Morgan.

Like the ladies of *Meliador*, the women of *Gawain* reflect and reverse one another. However, there is not a direct correlation between the women; rather, they are joined in a complex web. These connections rely upon the duality of literary medieval women as both independent actors and objects to employ. This duality becomes a spectrum in *Gawain*, with women's description and agency increasing as their beauty decreases. Thus, the Virgin (as the sublime but ineffectual terminus) is only a figuration on a shield, Guinevere is a jewel set into described surroundings, the Lady is a lovely disputer, and the loathsome Morgan controls the plot.

The focus of Arthur's court upon Guinevere situates women's importance to the narrative, reinforced by the inclusion of the Virgin on Gawain's shield. However, these women are static. Intercession from the Virgin is either ineffectual or non-existent and Guinevere is a non-entity, a passive tool through which Morgan affects

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[212] Ll. 2429-40.
[213] Donald Maddox, *Fictions of Identity in Medieval France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 201 and 209.
[214] *Gawain*, l. 2443.

Camelot. While the Lady reflects Guinevere in beauty, she actively employs her skills of rhetoric in persuading Gawain (though she is arguably also a tool of Morgan and Bertilak). The Lady is the single visibly active woman in a narrative where women with power (Guinevere, the Virgin, and Morgan) are conspicuously absent. Yet though the Lady is beautiful, physical, and powerfully active, she does not act of her own initiative. The ultimate source of the narrative is the supernatural, powerful, static Morgan, who despite her (conjured?) ugliness receives the Hostel's honour. This outrightly rejects the concept that women should cultivate beauty to gain reputation, and it is the narrative's subtle manipulation of women's social roles that is key to the society of the Hostel.

Conclusion: Display and Agency

While knights must create worth through deeds, women are supposed to gain worth through their own presentation, for they are not able to perform deeds. Yet active women explicitly appear in illuminations [figs. 58 and 59], and the narratives depict both active and passive women. Surprisingly, the majority of ladies in the narratives belong to the former. However, the socially superior women are generally passive or inert, such as the Virgin Mary, Morgan, and Hermondine. Both narratives also give women some sense of autonomy. Though the ladies may be framed by their adherence (or non-adherence) to beauty standards, they also have wisdom, power, and personal agency. Even as characters (like Gawain) and social structures (like the tournament-quest) attempt to deny them personal control, ladies such as Phenonée and the Lady ignore, manipulate, and occasionally reject these restrictions.

Yet passivity remains the primary quality of the noblest women, most explicitly seen in both narratives' Guineveres. In *Gawain*, though Guinevere's presence and reactions are vital to events, she is a reactive vessel used to moderate the court's response. Similarly, *Meliador*'s Guinevere cannot grant Sagremor's desires, only implying that he shall become an Arthurian knight as a reward for great deeds; her power relies upon Sagremor's success. Only women of lesser status may actively manipulate the narrative, as with Florée and the Lady. Sufficiently subversive paths must be suggested or enacted by a secondary party, as seen with Phenonée/Luciienne and, in a manner, Morgan/Bertilak.

Remarkably, it is only women associated with the Otherworld whose garments are discussed in our narratives: the fairy women, the Lady, and Morgan. Women without supernatural associations are characterised by their character, their location and surroundings, or their actions; they are already presumed to dress in a courtly manner. However, both narratives manipulate the concept of the body-blazon. Froissart divides it, using descriptions of the face and colouring for his noble women (particularly Sebille) and descriptions of clothes for his unnaturally-white fairy women. While the *Gawain*-Poet uses it together, he only applies it to the Lady and Morgan, rejecting such a blazon for Guinevere, and subverting it by focusing on the contreblazon of the ill-formed Morgan. Whether subversions of body-blazons and discussions of beautiful apparel were specifically an Othering tool in literature of the fourteenth century would require a broader examination than this study allows, but it seems significant that *Meliador* and *Gawain* use it as such.

The women of *Meliador* and *Gawain* are active and intriguing. Though the emphasis on general corporeality is a contrast to the overtly 'dressed' nature of the knights, it serves a similar purpose. Women are not defined simply by their clothes and colours. They 'wear' their bodies in such a manner that they are defined by their total physicality, including appearance and action. At the same time, they do not overly-manipulate their appearance. Because the borders between their garments, body, and self are blurred, any alterations may indicate falseness, as with the Lady. This contrasts with the knights, whose changes may also suggest falseness (as with Gawain's blue attire) or simply create venues for greater deeds (as with the anonymity required of *Meliador*'s tournament-quest). These women are simultaneously active participants, modifiers of their lives, bodily creatures, and objects of display and trade. True to their forms, they are intrinsically linked to their men as rewards for masculine deeds, tools for reconciliation, and active social mediators.

Chapter 6: Gift, Award, and Accessory

The basic role of gift-giving in society is to reinforce social bonds.[1] These may be presented publicly or privately, extended from a sense of obligation or desire, and be elicited by various situations (such as holidays, the creation of love contracts, or solidification of allegiance). Within our texts, gifts are primarily wearable items that strengthen the social hierarchy through presentation. These gifts are intimate (worn on the body) but can also be common. As shall be seen with rings, gifts may be presented as expensive, finely crafted, and unique despite emanating from literary traditions. These implications are explored throughout this chapter by focusing on an important ring in *Meliador* and the Lady's girdle in *Gawain*. These items are framed by wider social exchange patterns and the other gifts in the narratives. However, while gifts and trophies are used explicitly in our texts as tools to express love and fellowship or to reward good deeds and prowess, these are often situated in the language of trade. Because this interweaving of presents and products invokes economic exchanges, what appear to be objects drawn from romantic literary tradition must be framed dually through the languages of gift and commodity.

It is not clear where the line between gift and commodity lies. The reasons for exchange are wide and varied for both, though gifts and commodities can be widely divided by the emphasis of exchange: commodities are exchanged to receive an item, while gifts are given to reinforce social bonds. However, most cultures dictate that gifts must be repaid equally, and both gifts and commodities are surrounded by ceremonies of exchange.[2] Indeed, to refuse a gift is difficult and potentially humiliating, for refusal may 'show fear of having to repay' the gift.[3] Furthermore, gifts are a subset of exchangeable goods which are considered suitable for gifting.[4] Generally luxury or prestige objects, such items have often been linked to noble classes due to their economic value.[5] Yet gift-giving was not limited to a class or even social equals: in her *Livre du Corps de Policie* Christine de Pizan presumed that

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[1] Appadurai, p. 38; Buettner, pp. 600 and 615; Ad Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities in *Sir Amadace*', *Review of English Studies*, 51 (2000), 371-94 (p. 377).

[2] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen and West, 1954), p. 1.

[3] Mauss, pp. 38-40.

[4] Appadurai, p. 38; Mauss, p. 42.

[5] Harwood, p. 483.

nobles shall give items to the poor. However, she argued that items given to the poor may be small, for 'liberalité aussi doit estre moderee et attempree par discrecion faite'.[6] This implies that gifts could be selected from what would be luxurious for a person of the recipient's status. Gift-giving requires consideration of appropriateness for giver, recipient, and occasion, and these complex requirements become embodied within the object given.

Several attempts at distinguishing gift from commodity have been made. Sarah-Grace Heller argued that, within medieval Europe, a gift culture preceded moneyed commodity-exchange societies; in contrast, Arjun Appadurai argued that exchanging commodities creates value, which then informs items used in gift-exchanges.[7] Ad Putter stated that the key component was time: the commodity is transferred virtually instantaneously, while gifts require time to complete, eventually transforming into a cyclical exchange due to this.[8] Most convincing, however, is the delineation used by Sarah Kay and Michael Camille: the difference relies primarily on 'emphasis and perspective', with exchange of gifts focusing upon the persons involved while commodities focus upon the thing itself.[9]

Christine de Pizan's discussion of gifts supports this person-centred viewpoint, and further differenced between gifts based on the recipient's merit (as a reward) and gifts extending from the giver's *largesse*.[10] Both she and Geoffroi de Charny accentuate the giver, whose actions should reflect his *largesse*.[11] Charny asserted that gift-giving was a way to earn esteem, but such *largesse* was only suitable for 'li grant et li moyen' who should award subordinates who either served them well or were likely to do so in the future.[12] Theoretically, a noble's acquired riches would then be re-circulated amongst allies and friends as gifts and rewards;

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[6] Christine de Pisan, *Le Livre du Corps de Policie*, ed. by Robert H. Lucas (Geneva: Droz, 1967), pp. 45-6. 'Liberality must also be moderate and tempered by discretion' [translation from Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. by Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 27].
[7] Appadurai, p. 3; Heller, p. 142.
[8] Putter, 'Gifts', p. 378.
[9] Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love* (London: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), p. 52; Kay, *Chansons*, pp. 39 and 223 (qtd.).
[10] Christine de Pisan, p. 45. Note that arguments attempting to delineate commodity and gift minimally discuss prizes as another type of exchange, suggesting widely that prizes simply exist *between* gift and commodity. Although this is not the forum to examine prizes fully, it is an area that requires further examination.
[11] Charny, §19; Christine de Pisan, p. 45
[12] Charny, §19. 'Those of high or middle rank' (trans. by Kaueper and Kennedy, p. 113).

practically, this was also a way to receive greater wealth in reciprocated gifts while creating or enforcing new relationships (which would hopefully benefit the giver in the future).[13] Charny also emphasised the religious component of gift-giving, asserting that people should be mindful that God is the origin of all things and thus all items exchanged are in fact gifts from God.[14] However, this view does not prevail in courtly love, where gifts were used to create romantic bonds.[15]

While gift-exchanges in courtly love are superficially a transaction between equals, courtly love's almost worshipful view of women belies this. It has been suggested that general medieval gifting practices were gendered, and most love-tokens were in fact small women's luxury accessories.[16] These serve as offerings from the devotee, and suggest a supposedly intrinsic inequality between the two parties. At the same time, women were known to give less expensive articles to female compatriots; since women's expenditures were often coalesced into that of their husbands or guardians, their actual patterns of transferrance are obscured.[17] The exchanges that remain visible are often gendered. While women often received accessories such as combs and mirrors as romantic favours, they also gave gendered love-tokens. These were not men's objects but were feminine, somewhat sexualised objects such as sleeves and veils.[18] As the borders between women's bodies and clothes were particularly indistinct, the giving of the self (in romantic love, intended marriage, or sexual partnership) is strongly implied through such gifts. At the same time, such romantic gifts also served as formalities in creating potential marriage matches wherein the final gift was the woman herself, transferred from guardian to husband.[19] It may be for this reason that the Old Woman in the *Roman de la Rose* takes a starkly economic view of these exchanges, stating that the appropriate lover should give gifts to his beloved's maids, sister, and mother, and the clever woman

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[13] William Calin, *The Epic Quest: Studies in Four Old French* Chansons de Geste (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 22-3; Kay, *Chansons*, p. 40. While Calin and Kay focus on epics, their points are applicable throughout high and late medieval literature and society.
[14] Charny, §42; Putter, 'Gifts', pp. 374, 386, and 388.
[15] Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*, p. 8.
[16] Andreas Capellanus, *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, ed. and trans. by P.G. Walsh (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1982), p. 268; Camille, *Medieval Art*, pp. 51 and 53; Heller, p. 74. For closer study of such objects (particularly mirrors, combs, and purses), see Camille, *Medieval Art*, pp. 51-71.
[17] Buettner, p. 614
[18] Barker, p. 107.
[19] Kay, *Chansons*, pp. 162 and 229-30; Putter, 'Gifts', p. 385.

should take as much from her lover as possible.[20] Through these gifts, a woman may profit within a system where she herself may be given away.

Exchanges in the illuminations highlight men's roles. Though the manuscripts used here do not strictly depict any gift-exchanges, they portray several exchanges in which the objects highlight bonds between people, such as when Galehot yields his sword to Arthur [fig. 42]. This sword serves as a physical sign of Galehot's surrender, the end of his military action, and his new allegiance to Arthur. This contrasts with the only book presentation illuminated in the manuscripts used here, which depicts an author or translator in act of trading a manuscript with a superior [fig. 61]. It is difficult to tell in which direction the manuscript is moving: is this a presentation, commission or some other kind of trade? While the kneeling man may represent the actual scribe of MS fr. 100 presenting it to the commissioner, he may also be the fictive translator of the Prose *Tristan* receiving the fictitious Latin source from a patron or presenting the completed French work to a patron. This may be clarified by its neighbouring illumination, which parallels the manuscript's exchange in depicting Joseph of Arimathea presenting the Holy Grail to Alain le Gros [fig. 62]. By placing it next to figure 61, figure 62 juxtaposes the Grail with the manuscript. Figure 61 may be intended to parallel figure 62, with the author about to receive a manuscript that equates in value (morally, spiritually, or economically) with the Grail. Conversely, if figure 61 is a presentation scene, the manuscript contrasts with the Grail. The Grail is a spiritual commodity that cannot be bought; in an ownership reminiscent of Charny's commandments, it can only be accepted and safe-guarded. In contrast, a manuscript may be bought, traded, presented, or rejected.[21] Notably, all these exchanges are between men.

Conversely, four illuminations depict the presentation of shields to Guinevere [figs. 57, 63, 64, and 65]. These illuminations both depict the same two parts of the Grail-cycle [figs. 63 and 64; figs. 57 and 65]. In the first scene, a lady presents a broken shield to Guinevere that signifies Gawain's defeat and capture; in the second,

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[20] Lorris and Meun, ll. 13701-28.

[21] Unfortunately, further study of these images would require close discussion of the narrative as well as consideration of the manuscript's possible origins, and is thus outwith this study.

a squire presents Gawain's shield to Guinevere.[22] Figure 65 echoes other scenes of exchange, with a kneeling inferior handing Guinevere Gawain's shield (though this illumination also captures the exact moment of exchange). Similarly, figure 63 depicts Guinevere receiving the broken shield from upon a throne. These cannot be taken as an exemplar for women's roles in exchanges, for their similarity to exchanges between men may reflect Guinevere's role as a validator of knighthood. Furthermore, Guinevere's role in these images contrasts with figures 64 and 57. In figure 64, Guinevere does not receive the shield in a court but instead approaches the knight and lady. With a raised hand, she actively engages with them to learn the shield's origin. Figure 57 amplifies this: Guinevere, already having received the shield, cradles it intimately, highlighting the familial relation between Guinevere and Gawain, her husband's nephew. Here, Guinevere is the secular paragon of female virtue, the perfect courtly woman, expressing warm affection towards one of her knights' belongings. Overall, Guinevere's acceptance of objects may be gendered masculine or feminine, but both seem to be related to her social rank.

While the basic role of gift-exchanges is to create social bonds, this is complicated by the economic values of gifts which also allow them to be viewed as commodities. Furthermore, society seems to employ gift-giving differently depending on gender. Where men's *largesse*, deeds, or future service is emphasised, women are recipients of gendered objects, givers of mildly sexualised items, or gifts themselves. These differences frame the following discussion. However, due to the focus upon wearable items certain gifts and prizes in the narratives must be excluded from this analysis, such as Agamanor's hawk and the paintings he makes for Phenonée. Rather, this examination focuses first on rings in *Meliador* and then the girdle in *Gawain*, using other gifts of display (such as the axe, ring, and glove in *Gawain*) to frame these most important items.

Meliador's Ring

In *Meliador*, male characters adopt colours and costume to influence social situations while female characters are used to highlight literary topos with specific garments being reserved for Otherworldly women. Within the narrative men's feats

[22] Norris J. Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries and Index of Proper Names', *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, vol. X (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2010), p. 47.

of prowess and acts of love also earn tangible rewards from women, often in the form of wearable objects, and their use of these items shape their meaning. These are not only tokens of affection or tournament prizes but objects that connect characters, disclose deeds, and symbolically represent identities.

Froissart was not a stranger to gift-giving. When he presented Richard II with an anthology of poetry in 1395 this was outwardly a gift, as was his reading of *Meliador* to Gaston Fébus.[23] However, in both cases he received lodging and board in return as well as information for his *Chroniques*. Though this is neither gift nor payment as is normally conceived, it can be viewed as appropriate compensation for the author, and displays the intricate relationship between gift and commodity. It is thus intriguing that within *Meliador* Froissart often uses the term 'estrine' for gifts.[24] *Estrine* comes from *strina*, the Latin term for both a favourable omen and a New Year's gift; this latter sense came to predominate by the early fifteenth century.[25] However, Froissart also used it in the sense of 'fortune' (good or bad) within his *Chroniques*, demonstrating that *estrine* still preserved some of both senses of *strina*.[26] Furthermore, *estrine* was adopted as a commercial term, relating to varied concepts such as credit, the first deal of the day, a portion of profits reserved from sales set aside for alms (transforming the luck of the *strina* into a blessing gained through money), and even a bonus item given with a purchase.[27] Overall, the *estrine* was simply a gift, but one with aspects of fortune and a sense of beginnings related to economic value.

Commerical value influenced gifts, which were often luxury items. In the fourteenth century, expensive cloth and clothing were given to individuals and religious instituations during life or in wills.[28] Jewellery was also a common gift, and

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[23] Buettner, p. 616; Coleman, p. 132; Froissart, 'Troisième Livre', *Chroniques*, § 14, and 'Chroniques: 1392-1396', in *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. 15, ed. by Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels, Belgium: Victor Devaux, 1871), p. 167. While Richard II ostensibly enjoyed the anthology, the source of this information is Froissart himself, and the potential for self-flattery makes his description questionable.
[24] For example, Agamanor calls his paintings a 'bonne estrine' (l. 20888), a phrase also applied to the ring to be discussed (l. 12234)
[25] Carol M. Chattaway, *The Order of the Golden Tree: The Gift-Giving Objectives of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), pp. 7 and 88-9; *DMF*, 'estrenne, subst. fém.'; Du Cange, 'strena 1' and 'strina'.
[26] Picoche, p. 21.
[27] Chattaway, p. 8; Heller, p. 153.
[28] Kathleen Ashley, 'Material and Symbolic Gift-Giving: Clothes in English and French Wills', in *Medieval Fabrications*, ed. by E. Jane Burns, 137-46 (p. 142); Hodges, 'Sartorial Signs', p. 250.

rings were particularly popular objects.[29] Made of uncommon and prized materials, jewellery was a form of wearable wealth. Along with other jewelry and *vaisselle* (that is, plate used for meals), these were amongst the most popular items for gifts.[30] Part of the draw of such gifts was that they were articles for both display and use, either decorating the body and affixing attire or used at the table. Decorated in aesthetically pleasing and technically difficult fashions, such items were lovely to behold. Such gifts were practical and beautiful.

Rings entered the literary imagination as a common love-token. Made of an unending circle, rings are intrinsically potent symbols. Decoration with gems increased their value, for many jewels were considered to have inherent virtues and physical benefits; engraving the ring with certain values or sentiments increased its symbolic worth or even implied magical powers.[31] Intriguingly, in many texts (such as *Amadas et Ydoine*, *Brun de la Montaigne*, *Désiré*, *Girart de Roussillon*, *Iwain*, *King Horn*, *Melusine*, the *Tristan* material, and *Ywain and Gawain*), rings repeatedly move unidirectionally from women to men.[32] In *Sir Launfal*, there is further gendering of gifts: while both Launfal and Arthur's new queen give gold and silver, Launfal also gives clothes while the queen gives out jewels, brooches, and rings.[33] Such instances of female-associated jewellery suggest that rings as literary tokens may have been gendered; indeed, rings imply a certain amount of sexual symbolism, being the shape of a yonic symbol. Froissart was aware of sexual connections with rings. In the Amiens version of his *Chroniques*, he relates how Edward III tried to forcibly grant a ring to the Countess of Salisbury as a love-token; it is hinted that Edward III later raped her.[34] As somewhat gendered objects, when these rings move in complex manners between characters their implications will be multifaceted. It is movement such as this that occurs in *Meliador*.

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[29] Buettner, pp. 604 and 615.
[30] Buettner, p. 604.
[31] Jessica Cooke, 'The Lady's "Blushing" Ring in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Review of English Studies*, 49 (1998), 1-8 (p. 4); Woolgar, pp. 52 and 266.
[32] Jessica Cooke, p. 4-5; Heller, p. 63; Hulbert, p. 707; Kay, *Chansons*, p. 216. Notably, after his list of items appropriate to give a woman, Andreas Capellanus only notes that knights may receive rings from their beloved (p. 268). Within Beroul's *Tristan*, there is the significant instance of Mark switching his ring with Yseut's (Kay, *Chansons*, p. 216), while Hulbert notes that the gifts all originate from fairies in *Iwain*, *Désiré*, and *Brun*. The role of gender and the Otherworld in such exchanges in wider literary tradition has not yet been studied, and I intend to pursue this in the future.
[33] Chestre, ll. 28-31 and 67-71.
[34] Ingledew, p. 84.

Three rings feature in *Meliador*, all presented initially to men by women. It is the third of these that is by far the most interesting, presented by Florée to Meliador, who eventually gives it to Hermondine. The second ring is of little interest, presented as a reward to the secondary knight Gratien.[35] However, the first ring also originates from Florée, who presents it to Camel de Camois along with a letter from Hermondine concerning the tournament-quest. Florée states that the ring is for Camel to wear during his works of prowess (that is, his participation in the tournaments) as well as for 'le plus encoragier'.[36] This is a peculiar command, for Florée and Hermondine have already decided that Camel is an inappropriate suitor due to his somnambulism and overzealous courtship; indeed, the tournament-quest's purpose is to find a more appropriate husband for Hermondine. Yet 'encoragier' can also mean to control one's self. [37]As Camel's somnambulism could be viewed as stemming from poor self-control, Florée may intend to suggest that Camel can win Hermondine *if* he gains control over the inappropriate and unnatural facets of his nature. If he cannot, it is inevitable that in the course of the tournaments the best knight shall defeat Camel and win Hermondine. Significantly, Meliador is introduced less than three hundred lines later.[38]

As this first ring originates with Florée, the ring is not a love-gift. Rather, it is a symbol of the tournament's requirements for Camel. Florée continues to present rings in order to affect men's actions with the third ring. She bestows this upon Meliador when the knight defeats Camel and rescues her father (previously kidnapped by Camel) at her request. In the process, Meliador kills Camel and removes his main rival for Hermondine. This ring serves as a reward which she asks Meliador to wear

> …pour m'amour
> Et en mon nom, jusques au jour
> Que bien le porés emploiier. [39]

[35] *Meliador*, ll. 5196-7. While this ring is also given by a Florée, she is a different character from the cousin of Hermondine, and plays only a minor role.
[36] Ll. 2300-2306, qtd. 2302. 'The more to encourage [you]'.
[37] Hindley, Langley, and Levy, p. 258.
[38] *Meliador*, l. 2593. Though this gap would be significant were it in *Gawain*, it is trivial in the context of *Meliador*'s thirty-thousand-plus narrative.
[39] Ll. 9629-31. 'For my love and in my name, until the day you can use it properly'.

Though the sentiment that it should always be worn echoes her presentation of Camel's ring, this ring is a token of thanks and loving gratitude, not a reminder for self-control. It is starkly different from Camel's ring. This is particularly apparent in the inscription which Florée has concealed on the inside of the ring: 'Ciz sui qui le soleil d'or porte, | par qui Oultrecuidance est morte'.[40] Later, the ring is described as gold and well-made, with blue (probably enamelled) letters: Meliador and Hermondine's colours.[41] Though it is a reward for Meliador, rather like the Green Knight's first axe in *Gawain* this object tells its own story, its phrase revealing why Meliador bears it.

The description of the ring is problematic. Because Meliador is ignorant of the inscription, it must not be visible on the ring. It is possible that the ring has been inscribed on the interior, concealed against his flesh because Florée has asked him to always wear the ring. In this case, it would resemble figure 66, a fifteenth-century English ring inscribed with 'god be my help At nede'.[42] However, Meliador's ring is noted to have 'carnieres' (clasps/hinges) that are hidden and soldered shut; later the ring falls into two parts.[43] Only Florée knows how to open these, breaking the soldering several times. These hinges' placement on the band and method of opening are unclear. If the inscription is on the inside of the band, a ring that separated into two would be unnecessary to view the inscription. Instead, the presence of the hinges suggests that there is a secret compartment. While such is not clearly mentioned, Froissart may have been attempting to describe something like figure 67.[44] This French or English ring, made around 1400, is inscribed with 'oue tout mon coer' and contains a hidden sliding compartment. Beneath the jewelled bezel, this compartment is only accessible when the ring is removed. This example demonstrates that secret compartments existed in jewellery around the time of *Meliador*'s composition. As such, though a compartment is not explicit in the text, it seems to be the most practical interpretation for the construction of Meliador's ring.

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[40] *Meliador*, ll. 9612-4, qtd. 9613-4. 'I am the one who bears the golden sun, by whom Arrogance [Camel] is dead.' Froissart used various forms of the word *outrecuidance* in his *Chroniques* to indicate knights who were ignoble combatants (Picoche, pp. 65-6).
[41] *Meliador*, ll. 14408-9 and 14463.
[42] Object number M.66-1960, Victoria and Albert Museum <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>.
[43] *Meliador*, Ll. 9608 and 17563
[44] M. 189-1962, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Significantly, Florée withholds the information of the identity-revealing inscription.[45] From Florée's earlier dealings with Camel, the text establishes Florée's excellence in inoffensively manipulating social situations into the appropriate outcome. Indeed, she appears to know as much (or more than) the audience. As the inventor of the tournament-quest, Florée also knows that Meliador must remain anonymous and cannot woo Hermondine outright. Thus, she takes the revelation of his identity into her own hands, secreting it upon an object that she knows will eventually be given to her mistress. Florée knows that it is not a question of whether the ring shall end up in Hermondine's possession (its 'better employment' demonstrating Meliador's love) but when and how. The ring is not simply a thank-you gift: it connects Meliador and Florée and creates a path to Hermondine that moves the plot forward.

This ring is finally bestowed on Hermondine in Aberdeen during Meliador's mercantile subterfuge. As jewels and jewellery were often purchased *en masse* and kept on hand for gifts to social inferiors,[46] Meliador's presentation of such to Hermondine is a sensible subterfuge. From these items, Meliador rewards his hostess Lady Fromonde with a jewel for gaining him access to Hermondine; this resonates with the *Roman de la Rose*, for the Old Woman stated that the women surrounding a beloved should also be given gifts.[47] However, Meliador's ring is not among his wares; according to Florée's requirements, he still wears it.[48]

Meliador gives the ring to Hermondine in a complex and dramatic manner. When he opens the coffer containing the jewellery, he removes the ring 'tout dessus' and pretends that it came from the coffer.[49] The narrative emphasises that he is still ignorant of the ring's secret compartment and Florée's inscription (significantly, Florée is not present during this exchange).[50] Handing the ring to Hermondine, he calls it a 'bonne estrine'.[51] Meliador emphasises the commercial aspect of *estrine*, stating that in his land jewellers grant a gift to the first customer of the day, which

[45] *Meliador*, ll. 9626-7.
[46] Buettner, p. 615.
[47] Heller, p. 153; Lorris and Meun, ll. 13699-72; *Meliador*, ll. 12076-150.
[48] *Meliador,* ll. 12006-11.
[49] Ll. 12224-5, qtd. 12225.
[50] Ll. 12226-9.
[51] L. 12234; he calls it 'l'estrine' again in l. 12241.

shall be paid for by later transactions.[52] Though ‘le premiere’ is nominally the first customer of the day, as Meliador is not actually a merchant Hermondine is his only ‘first’. The ring is not a mercantile but a courtly gesture, embodying Meliador’s affections as they receive their ‘first use’. The blessing a merchant receives from an *estrine* is applied instead to Meliador’s suit of Hermondine. While Meliador’s subterfuge presents the ring commercially, it is actually a gift from a worthy knight to his lady (though Hermondine is unwitting of this). The depiction and presentation of the ring crystallises this scene’s amalgamation of commercial terms and courtly love.

Intrigued, Hermondine takes the ring, acknowledges its loveliness, and puts it on. [53] The finality of this line, ‘en son doy le met; la le let’, emphasises the significance of their first interaction.[54] Hermondine is enchanted by the ring, watching it for five or six moments, and the ring acts almost as a double for Meliador, wooing Hermondine with the generosity and beauty of the gift.[55] Unaware of its romantic significance, Hermondine flatters and teases Meliador, stating ‘Mestres, moult grant mercis. | Ce vous sera li mieus vendus’. [56] Though Hermondine is amused that the merchant has given her his best item for free, the audience understands that *par ordenance* she shall eventually return Meliador’s love. This is both a gift and an exchange: he shall receive Hermondine in return, and she is a greater prize than the ring. Until then, the ring that reveals Meliador’s identity and bears their colour physically connects them. It is a ‘moiien’, their intermediary.[57]

Though the focus is upon the ring in this presentation scene, it instigates the revelation of Meliador’s identity. This necessarily shifts the focus onto the people, reminiscent of Kay’s and Camille’s definition of *gift* versus *commodity.*[58] When Florée returns to Hermondine to inform her of Camel’s death, she recognises the ring on Hermondine’s finger as that which she had forged for Meliador.[59] At Florée’s inquiry Hermondine states that a merchant presented it to her while selling other

[52] *Meliador*, ll. 12235-40.
[53] Ll. 12242-4.
[54] L. 12244.
[55] Ll. 12245
[56] Ll. 12246-7. ‘Master [of your guild], thank you greatly. This will be your greatest sale!’
[57] L. 12228.
[58] Kay, *Chansons*, pp. 39 and 223.
[59] *Meliador*, ll. 14404-7

jewels.[60] Florée replies that it resembles the ring she gave to the knight who killed Camel; humorously, she seems slightly annoyed to see the ring, for it was only recently given.[61] Hermondine has worn the ring since she received it (suggesting that she missed the secret hinges), but yields it to Florée, who breaks the soldering to reveal the phrase 'cilz sui qui le soleil d'or porte, | par qui Oultrecuidance est morte'.[62] Meliador's identity as the Blue Knight is exposed to Hermondine, the Blue Lady, through letters 'd'azur'. [63] Through this revelatory scene, the ring illustrates the relationships between Florée, Hermondine, Meliador, and Camel, becoming a physical connector of all four characters while simultaneously revealing Meliador's tourneying identity to Hermondine.

Though this ring originated with Florée and now belongs to Hermondine, it is primarily a signifier of Meliador. This is shown after the third tournament, when Meliador approaches Florée as the one who fought Camel and received the ring.[64] Meliador uses the deed and the reward to identify himself to Florée, who presumably does not recognise him without his knightly harness. As if to trap Meliador in his gifting of the ring, Florée asks to see it as proof of his identity. Naturally, Meliador cannot produce it because Hermondine wears it; he replies enigmatically 'il est hors ou ens', and a sense of uncertainty enters the narrative.[65] However, Florée fakes illness in order to leave the post-tournament festivities and meet with Meliador, demonstrating that she does not disbelieve him.[66] Rather, she once again manipulates the plot. In this meeting, she gets Meliador to confirm that he is 'le chevalier au soleil d'or'.[67]

This short conversation raises Meliador's fluid identity, for while Meliador names himself with his tourneying identity, Florée asks after this 'qui estes vous?', intimating that she desires not his tourneying identity but his name. In reply, Meliador asks whether she does not recognising him, ignoring both name and adopted identity in preference for his physical appearance, the one identifier that

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[60] *Meliador*, ll. 14419-27
[61] Ll. 14430-9.
[62] Ll. 14442-60, 14471-2 (qtd.).
[63] Ll. 14463.
[64] Ll. 16769.
[65] Ll. 16775-8, qtd. 16778. 'It is out or in'.
[66] Ll. 16833-54.
[67] Ll. 16886-91.

(barring disfiguration) cannot be altered. Florée denies recognising him, and Meliador prompts her by reminding her of the ring.[68] As if she intended this response, Florée asks again where it is; as Meliador is no longer in public he is not reticent in stating that he has given it to the one whom he has also given his love.[69] At this, Florée's tone changes: she has been waiting for confirmation of Meliador's love of Hermondine. Flattering Meliador ('doulz sires chiers'), she tells him to meet her elsewhere to discuss this matter.[70] The existence of the ring creates these interactions, instigating an argument between characters over Meliador's true identity (which itself struggles with what composes identity) while revealing Meliador's love for Hermondine.

Immediately after this, Florée discusses Meliador's identity with Hermondine's maidservant Argentine, who recognises Meliador as a merchant. Florée rebuffs this ('c'est li bleus chevaliers sans doubte') and arranges with Hermondine to meet the Blue Knight.[71] Florée, Hermondine, and Meliador meet, and Hermondine demands that Meliador recognise the ring, divulging her knowledge of his mercantile deception.[72] Meliador, surprised at her confrontation, is shamed into silence.[73] Florée diffuses the tense situation by taking the ring and opening it, stating that the ring was once hers, but the ring exists specifically for this moment: she had it crafted specifically to disclose the Blue Knight's deeds.[74] This is 'l'ordenance' for which the ring was made.[75] Though the ring originated with Florée and belongs to Hermondine, its purpose is to identify Meliador. In a sense, it is part of him. However, as Meliador is Hermondine's knight, as such his love, service, and even identity, represented in and revealed by the ring, belong to Hermondine. Accordingly, once Florée shows the message to Meliador she returns the reassembled ring to Hermondine, the rightful owner.[76] Though Meliador and Hermondine must continue the ruse of anonymity in public, through Florée's arrangement they have been introduced and known to each other as each other's

[68] *Meliador*, l. 16900.
[69] Ll. 16901-4.
[70] Ll. 16908 and 16918-25.
[71] Ll. 16931-17400; Argentine's recognition and Florée's response are ll. 16957-61.
[72] Ll. 17544, 17546.
[73] L. 17548-52.
[74] Ll. 17554-63
[75] L. 17564.
[76] Ll. 17571-81.

beloved.[77] Through the ring and Florée, the best knight's love of the best lady is declared and her reciprocity is secured. The *ordenance* of the ring is to create the rightful arrangement of the political hierarchy via romantic arrangements.

In the text's finale, the ring's purpose leads to the completion of proper *ordenance*: Meliador marries Hermondine in a rightful arrangement of the political hierarchy via romantic action. The best knight (his royalty of spirit innate) secures the affections of the best lady, the Princess of Scotland, in exchange for his ring. The ring is not only a symbol of affection but a unifier which affirms the social hierarchy. Yet because the presentation of the ring to Hermondine combines economic exchange, gifts in courtly life, and romance traditions, it suggests a critique of both the romance genre and its social equivalent, courtly love. By weaving together courtship and mercantile enterprises, it commodifies courtly love. In this, objects given as love-tokens are in fact half of an exchange that is only finalised by marriage. However, without Florée to open and interpret the ring Meliador and Hermondine are unaware of its true value and significance. While this implies that neither inspected the ring well enough to notice its hinges, poorly playing their roles of merchant and customer, it also insinuates that actual comprehension of economic exchange is unnecessary. Rather, the economic aspect is a play-act; what is important is the transfer of love. The ring reveals the complexities, not of economic value, but of literary significance and social commerce.

Gifts for Gawain

The presentation of gifts in *Gawain* in some ways reflects those in *Meliador*, such as with the mercantile language used during the exchange game. However, the use of gifts is altered by the temporal context of Christmastime; the opening of the narrative emphasises that the Arthurian court exchanges New Year gifts.[78] Though New Year was a traditional part of Christmastime celebrations, it does not correspond to agricultural, legal, or liturgical calendars (which, notably, all began at different dates), and contrasts with traditional Arthurian adventures, which often began at Pentecost.[79] While a close discussion of New Year dates is overly digressive for this argument, it should be noted that the concept of 'New Year' was flexible, and

[77] *Meliador*, ll. 17654-76.
[78] *Gawain*, ll. 66-7; Harwood, p. 486.
[79] Barker, p. 93; Hulbert, pp. 712 and 719.

late medieval calendars always began on 1 January.[80] *Gawain*'s New Year follows Christmastime and artistic traditions.

Regardless of the date of New Year, the narrative ascribes significance to the fact that these gifts are given at *a* New Year. Such a custom was documented in England in the twelfth century, and by the early 1400s such gifting was also routine in France.[81] The custom of New Year gifts is echoed in the terminology used for the court's gifts. While some of these are simply 'Ȝeres ȝiftes', others are 'hondeselle'.[82] Like *estrine*, *hondeselle* had some associations with luck and fortune, used by 1225 for 'a token or indication' of such.[83] By the end of the fourteenth century it was also used to denote gifts specifically exchanged at New Year. As with the ladies' and men's garments, such could suggest a later date for *Gawain*.

To provide context for the girdle, the other gifts in the narrative must be briefly discussed. Gifts pervade the narrative, and the Green Knight's appearance is even framed as one, the narrator describing the encounter as 'this hanselle hatz Arthur of auenturus'.[84] This emphasises that the gift belongs to Arthur, who desired it, and not to Gawain.[85] Yet it is Gawain who accepts the challenge and receives the first specific physical object exchanged in the narrative: the Green Knight's axe. The axe's gleaming lace prefigures the gifting of the girdle, also called a lace, and is one of the more subtle doublings within the narrative.[86] Furthermore, while it is technically Gawain's participation in the first beheading that creates the obligation for him to reciprocate in a year and a day, the axe embodies their contract.[87] It is a physical representative of Gawain's responsibility to complete the game.

The importance of exchanges in the narrative is solidified by the Hostel's exchange game. However, these exchanges are not framed as gifts, for the Host calls

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[80] For example, see Books of Hours such as Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65 (*Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*).
[81] Buettner, p. 600;Tolkien and Gordon, p. 82.
[82] *Gawain*, ll. 66-7.
[83] *MED*, 'hanselle (n.)' (qtd.). Andrew and Waldron distinguish 'hondeselle' from 'Ȝeres ȝiftes' by suggesting that *hondeselle* were specifically given to subordinates (p. 210). This seems to be drawn from Gollancz, p. 97, who suggests that because the nobles 'forth runnen' (l. 66) the *hondeselle* were for subordinates. Tolkien and Gordon, p. 82, are silent on this interpretation of *hondeselle*, which is not supported by the *MED*.
[84] *Gawain*, l. 491. 'This gift of adventure that Arthur received'.
[85] L. 492.
[86] Ll. 218-20 and 1830. Intriguingly, the Green Knight's holly bob is not doubled.
[87] Ll. 288-98

his hunting spoils 'quatsoeuer I wynne' and anything that Gawain achieves 'chek'.[88] This latter term can refer to events causing harm, booty received from such, more neutral feats, or stopping another from winning (as in chess).[89] By using this term, the combination of game and economics invoked throughout the exchanges by the Host become tinged with ambiguity and overtones of violence. This is lessened somewhat by the results of the first and second exchanges. These comprise Gawain exchanging one and then two kisses (from the Lady) for the quarry that the Host and his court caught and killed.[90] After the first hunt the Host boasts about the sumptuous return he made on their bet, but concedes that the kiss 'may be such hit is þe better'; after the second he exclaims 'ȝe ar þe best þat I knowe!'[91] While Gawain's nonviolent kisses win over the slain beasts, the Host's response may be mildly sardonic. Practically, the animals are the greater prize, providing a form of sustenance and yielding soft wearable skins, and the kisses could be viewed as gestures of thanks instead of exchanges. Conversely, though foodstuffs and other 'natural products' were often given as presents, they are extremely rare in records of New Year gifts.[92] Moreover, while the animals fulfil common needs, a kiss is a courtly gesture of romance or fealty. Kisses are symbolically luxurious. Thus, in the context of gifts, prizes, and the New Year, a kiss wins.

In conjunction with the kisses, these scenes may have been foreshadowed at the beginning of the narrative wherein Arthur's court exchanges New Year gifts. The knights

> ...ȝelde hem bi hond,
> Debated busyly aboute þo giftes;
> Ladies laȝed ful loud þoȝ þay lost haden...[93]

Andrew and Waldron follow Gollancz's suggestion that these exchanges are in fact 'a guessing game', where a lady's incorrect guess wins the knight a kiss.[94] If this is an accurate interpretation, it serves as a pleasant precursor to the exchanges not just between the Lady and Gawain but between Gawain and the Host.

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[88] *Gawain*, l. 1106-7.
[89] Andrew and Waldron, p. 248; *MED*, 'chēk (interj. & n.)'.
[90] *Gawain*, ll. 1374-90
[91] Ll. 1392-4 and 1645.
[92] Buettner, p. 608.
[93] *Gawain*, ll. 67-9.
[94] Andrew and Waldron, p. 210 (qtd.); Gollancz, p. 97.

Such parallels are mitigated by the Host, who couches the second exchange in the language of trade.[95] This is echoed in and juxtaposed by the bedroom scenes, where Gawain couches much of his language in terms of gift-giving. This is particularly stark when the Lady implies that, should Gawain wish, he has the power to force his affections on her.[96] Gawain responds that such would be unseemly when not given freely and 'with goud wylle'; such acts should be gifts.[97] By doing so, Gawain transforms the Lady's following kisses into gift items. Though these are evaluated by the Host economically, the exchange-game itself has facets of gift-giving. Because Gawain does not exchange a physical object it is the Host's response and his corresponding interaction with Gawain that is principal. Indeed, the exchanges seem almost fabricated to separate the two during the day and draw them together in the evening. Like the gift-exchange of the axe, this game creates a clearly delineated relationship that requires certain actions.

This shifts with the introduction of the Lady's gifts. Like the exchanges, these are also threefold. The Lady begins by asking for Gawain's glove, but when rebuffed she offers first a ring and then her girdle. In discussing this scene, the glove and the ring have been largely ignored.[98] However, the Lady's request of the glove, nominally to lessen her sorrow over Gawain's departure, inverts the presentation of women's garments as favours.[99] When Gawain politely refuses because it is both insufficient and too much like a 'drurye' (implying that any gift he offers could be interpreted as a love-token), Gawain also rejects the Lady's gender-reversal.[100] In response, the Lady offers her own objects in a more traditional exchange.

The ring that she offers is very fine, worked from red-gold with a large and bright gem that 'stondande alofte'.[101] Based on the etymology and use of 'blusschande', Jessica Cooke has argued convincingly that the stone on the Lady's ring is red.[102] This is also supported by artistic tradition, where sunbeams could be

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[95] *Gawain,* ll. 1646-7.
[96] Ll. 1495-7.
[97] Ll. 1499-1500.
[98] The exception is Jessica Cooke's 'The Lady's "Blushing" Ring'.
[99] Barker, p. 107; *Gawain*, ll. 1799-1800.
[100] *Gawain*, 1805-6
[101] Ll. 1817-20.
[102] Jessica Cooke, pp. 1-3.

represented with red pigment.[103] The ring may therefore resemble the rings in figures 68 and 69.[104] These rings are from the fourteenth century and of either English or French origin; the former has an octahedral diamond and the latter has a garnet and engraved gold band.

While such a gem would echo Gawain's garments, the red-gold ring also reiterates the Hostel's red-gold tapestry-rings noted at Gawain's arrival.[105] Gawain rejects the ring immediately, arguing that since he has nothing appropriate to exchange, he should not take.[106] However, it is implied that Gawain rejects the ring because it is unsuitable. While in *Meliador* Florée gave rings for various reasons and without romantic overtones, she clearly declared her reasons for bestowing rings. Conversely, the Lady's presentation of gifts follows several conversations concerning love; as she does not state if the love she desires is chaste or physical, her gift could be memento or love-token. Because of this uncertainty, the ring may be seen as a sexualised marker of potential adultery. As Gawain has already noted, any exchange between them may be easily mistaken as a *drurye*; without clarification from the Lady, his only recourse is to refuse her gifts. The Lady excuses him, suggesting that he refuses because the ring is too rich; if he accepts, he becomes overly beholden to her.[107] As Gawain is certainly worthy of a rich gift, the Lady may be assuming humility, suggesting that she is not worthy to give the ring. However, this allows her to switch quickly to a 'girdel, þat gaynes yow lasse'.[108]

The girdle has been interpreted in as many different ways as Gawain's pentangle. It is a blatantly sexual love-token, a chaste gift, a piece of armour, or even reminiscent of Christ's crown of thorns.[109] Like rings, girdles and belts were common gifts in literature and daily life.[110] Unlike rings, belts and girdles were

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[103] Camille, 'Before the Gaze', p. 203.
[104] Object number 000-100-002-586-C, National Museums Scotland <http://nms.scran.ac.uk/>; object number M.288-1962, Victoria and Albert Museum.
[105] Blanch, p. 80; Jessica Cooke, p. 3; *Gawain*, ll. 857-8.
[106] *Gawain*, ll. 1821-3.
[107] Ll. 1827-8.
[108] L. 1829.
[109] Cherewatuk, p. 141; Friedman and Osberg, pp. 302-3, 313 and 315; Geraldine Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *PMLA*, 106 (1991), 500-14 (p. 501); Ingledew, p. 215 (qtd); Levy, pp. 104-5.
[110] Heller, p. 73; Maria Stürzebecher, 'Four Richly Decorated Silver Gilded Belts of the Early 14th Century from the Jewish Erfurt Treasure', presented at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 12 July 2011.

necessities with many garments. As items of display, girdles could be richly embroidered, made of metal or cloth, and opulently decorated with pearls, ornamental plates, and pendants.[111] While girdles were not necessarily gendered objects they were occasionally given to brides by their grooms, and embroidery was commonly produced by women.[112]

The girdle that the Lady offers does not seem to be extremely decorated. Nonetheless, it is a rich item made of green silk and decorated with gold, reminiscent of the Green Knight's garments.[113] 'Brayden' and 'beten with fyngrez' are unclear expressions that indicate weaving, embroidery, and possibly small plaques.[114] Later, when Gawain wears the girdle, it is noted specifically to have polished 'pendauntez' that 'glyterande golde glent vpon endez', which implies that the belt ties instead of buckling.[115] However, the overall shape of the girdle is not clear. While the Lady wears it 'knit vpon hir kyrtel, vnder þe clere mantyle', this could be many kinds of belts.[116] It is unlikely to be the straight and high-worn belts often found in the early fifteenth century over houpelandes (as worn by Guinevere in fig. 8), but it could resemble either the dangling gold-decorated belt of Guinevere in figure 52 or the thin, draping belt worn beneath a *surcot ouvert* in figure 55. Presumably, the belt beneath the *surcot ouvert* has been wrapped once beneath the woman's bust and then draped around the hips to be tied in front. The girdle is probably a long belt such as this latter example, as Gawain later wraps the belt twice around him.[117]

In opposition to suggestions that Gawain acts shamefully or unsuitably by wearing a woman's girdle,[118] the Lady is not offering a specifically feminine object. Thin belts were also worn by men, and lengthy belts were suitable for overweight persons or for display purposes.[119] The description of the girdle when compared to what is currently known about men's and women's belts suggests that any explicit

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[111] Brooke, p. 45.
[112] Loomis, 'More Celtic Elements', p. 158; Stürzebacher. Friedman and Osberg provide a list of items that they imply are reserved for women's girdles, such as decoration, placement about the hips, and attached daggers and purses (p. 306); however, the majority of these facets were also found on men's girdles.
[113] *Gawain,* l. 1832.
[114] *Gawain*, l. 1833 (qtd.); *MED*, 'breiden (v. (1))'.
[115] *Gawain*, ll. 2038-9.
[116] L. 1831.
[117] L. 2033.
[118] Crane, *Performance*, p. 138; Hodges, 'Costume Rhetoric', p. 277.
[119] Camille, *Medieval Art*, p. 53.

gendering comes from the girdle's ownership. However, as Bertilak later claims it as his own, the precise possessor of the girdle is unclear.[120] Such a length would qualify the belt as a decorative garment unsuitable for a knight to wear to combat, but it would still be suitable for a man to wear—such as the Green Knight.

This rich description of the girdle is given by the narrator. When the Lady offers the girdle to Gawain, she describes it as 'unworthi'.[121] When Gawain refuses it, she questions whether Gawain rejects the girdle because it is 'symple', 'littel and lasse hit is worþy'.[122] Yet the narrator's earlier description demonstrates that these declarations of simplicity and unworthiness are questionable if not outright false. While it is obvious that such a gift would appear to be a love-token, Gawain does not reject the girdle on this basis. Indeed, he only states this when asked to give a glove, where the fault would lie on him as the giver. If he were to accuse the Lady of attempting to force a *drurye* upon him, he could accidentally imply that on some level she desires to be perceived as adulterous. Instead, he rejects the ring because he does not have a way to repay it. The Lady agrees with him, but reframes the ring as an object that would cause Gawain to be overly beholden to her. Gawain adopts this in rejecting the girdle, stating that he already owes her for her hospitality.[123] In response, the Lady reworks his refusal again, accusing Gawain of refusing because the girdle is too simple.

That the Lady first quantifies the girdle as not too rich to reject then too simple to accept is significant; this re-interpretation reforms her argument. While the girdle appears to be trifling, she argues that it is perfectly acceptable because of 'þe costes þat knit ar þerinne'.[124] 'Costes' can refer to both attributes and a price, and suggest that whatever Gawain gains by accepting the girdle shall eventually require reckoning. Significantly, the girdle is also called a 'lace' by the impartial narrator.[125] Used in the thirteenth century for a braided cord (usually made of silk and gold), 'lace' in the sense of a belt is first recorded here in *Gawain*.[126] However, in the fourteenth century, 'lace' was also used for nets and snares. With these two

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[120] *Gawain*, ll. 2358-9.
[121] Ll. 1835 (qtd.), 1846-54.
[122] Ll. 1846-8.
[123] Ll. 1835-45.
[124] L. 1849.
[125] L. 1831.
[126] *Gawain*, ll. 1830; *MED*, 'lās (n.)'.

descriptions, the girdle appears meant to entrap Gawain. Indeed, like a lure on a fishing rod it is these qualities that prompt Gawain to accept the girdle and protect himself from being slain.[127]

Whether the girdle actually has magical powers is indefinite. The Lady claims that any man who wears the girdle will not be by 'haþel under heuen tohewe ... | for he myȝt not be slayn for slyȝt vpon erþe'.[128] Though this seems to suggest that the girdle magically protects its wearer from death, it does not necessarily imply safety from maiming. The girdle may grant the wearer temporary immortality but not invincibility. Another restriction may also be implied by 'slyȝt', which may refer to something trivial (as it is used in *Pearl*) or refer to trickery.[129] The girdle may only protect the wearer from an undeserved death or from deceptive violence.

At the same time that the Lady transforms the gift from an apparently sexual love-token into a magical talisman, she asserts its inappropriate sensuality by requesting Gawain to conceal it from her husband.[130] As Gawain has already accepted the girdle, he is placed in a 'Catch-22':[131] he cannot hide the girdle from his Host and break their exchange game, he cannot reveal the girdle and reject the Lady's commandment, and he cannot return it discourteously. Despite this, there is no sign of argument or the adulterous overtones of the gift. Instead, the narrator notes that Gawain views the girdle as 'a juel for þe jopardé' of the beheading game.[132] While the acceptance of the girdle may be considered a 'sleȝt' (the same word as *slyȝt*), because it protects him from death it is 'noble'.[133] Though Gawain accepts the object as a gift, this suggests that he views it as a commodity. To Gawain, the importance of the girdle lies not in its ties with the Lady but with how it can serve him.

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[127] Andreas Capellanus aligns love with fishing and the lover with the fisherman: 'Sicut enim piscator astutus suis conatur cibiculis attrahere pisces et ipsos sui hami capere unco, ita vero captus amore suis nititur alium attrahere blandimentis' (p. 36) ['Just as a clever angler tries to entice the fish with his morsels and to catch them on his bent hook, so the man ensnared by love tries to attract another by his charms' (p. 37)]. This is inverted by the Lady.
[128] *Gawain*, ll. 1853-4.
[129] *MED*, 'sleight (n.)'; *Pearl*, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 53-110 (l. 190).
[130] *Gawain*, ll. 1862-3; Heng, p. 506.
[131] Silverstein, p. 16.
[132] *Gawain*, ll. 1856 (qtd.) and 1863-5.
[133] L. 1858.

This viewpoint is supported by the following scene, wherein Gawain attends chapel and confesses his sins.[134] It is implied that Gawain does not confess the girdle because he receives complete absolution; he would not be absolved if he divulged his intent to withhold the girdle from the Host. However, this supposes that Gawain conceives the girdle as part of the exchange game, but his acceptance of the girdle suggests that he has conceptually separated the beheadings and the exchanges. The exchanges are games, and while there are overtones of games *à outrance* versus *à plaisance* for the beheadings, to Gawain it is life or death. As such, to Gawain the girdle is not a prize that needs to be exchanged with the Host but a protective commodity outwith their agreement. It does not need to be mentioned when Gawain receives absolution, because—in Gawain's view of the girdle as a commodity—he is not at fault. This is a false distinction that separates the interwoven beheading and exchange games and fractures Gawain's relationships with his hosts. Yet Gawain's misstep is initiated by his desire to save his life. That this is forgivable is suggested by Gawain's complete absolution, which foreshadows Bertilak's forgiveness at the Green Chapel.

Gawain's emphasis upon the girdle as an object changes the format of the third exchange. Reversing the order of the previous exchanges, Gawain approaches the Host and immediately grants him three kisses.[135] This disallows reading the kisses as thanks for the Host's part in the exchange, particularly as Gawain invokes commercial terms, declaring his part in the exchange 'pertly payed'.[136] The Host also inverts his speech; while he had previously boasted of his catches, he now derides his poor catch of a single fox, which he despondently presents to Gawain.[137] That both characters now highlight the economic value within this exchange reinforces Gawain's transition to a commodity-viewpoint. By accepting the girdle, Gawain transforms the exchanges from an economically-laced gift exchange into one that is fully commercial.

That the girdle is either commodity or gift is as much a false division as treating the beheadings and exchanges as disparate games. This is highlighted before

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[134] *Gawain*, ll. 1876-84.
[135] Ll. 1936-7.
[136] Ll. 1938-41, qtd. 1941. 'Openly paid'.
[137] Ll. 1943-6.

Gawain leaves Hautdesert on New Year: as Gawain wraps the girdle twice around himself, the narrator specifically calls it a *drurye*.[138] Furthermore, before Gawain puts on the girdle he places his sword over his 'balȝe haunchez', or thighs and pelvis.[139] This phrase and the placement of the sword heighten the sexual qualities of the girdle, drawing attention to its potential to be viewed as a love-token. However, as Gawain wears the girdle openly over his sword-belt, he presumably does not expect the girdle to either be recognised or interpreted as such.[140] Moreover, though 'þe lace' is 'þe ladiez gifte', Gawain wears it 'for gode of hymseluen'.[141] By conjoining Gawain's view of the girdle as a life-saving commodity with *drurye*, the narrator draws attention to this conceptual conflict.

These suggestions towards Gawain's incorrect viewing of the beheading game and girdle, implying inappropriate sexualisation and selfish self-preservation also coincide with heightened personal display in this passage. In addition to rephrasing Gawain's surcoat to add previously unaccounted-for jewels and riches, the narrator notes that 'þe gordel of þe grene silke þat gay wel bisemed, | vpon þat ryol red cloþe, þat ryche watz to schewe'.[142] Yet the narrator also states that Gawain wears the girdle not 'for pryde' but for saving himself from harm.[143] It is clear that Gawain has taken the girdle because he cannot rely on his knightly prowess to save himself in the beheading. This is emphasised by how Gawain wears the girdle. As the double-wrapped girdle probably covers most of the sword-belt and is too long to be suitable for combat, with its long tail it effectively conceals or even symbolically displaces the primary knightly weapon.[144] Furthermore, the girdle is also placed over Gawain's surcoat, which carries the pentangle.[145] In a way, the girdle acts as a heraldic badge that undermines the pentangle. The girdle replaces two of the most potent images in Gawain's knightly display (heraldry and sword) and symbolically disarms him in a parallel to his earlier disarmament at the Hostel. However, it is Gawain's adoption of the girdle that causes this symbolic disarmament, suggesting

[138] *Gawain*, ll. 2033.
[139] Ll. 2032.
[140] Longo, p. 73, incorrectly states that Gawain 'conceals the girdle under his armour', which its placement over the sword-belt disproves.
[141] *Gawain*, ll. 2030-1.
[142] Ll. 2035-6.
[143] Ll. 2035 and 2041-2.
[144] Charny, §36; Malcolm Vale, p. 68
[145] Barron, p. 263.

that Gawain no longer trusts in his armaments. Gawain, powerless to fight against the beheading, has replaced the accoutrements of his knighthood with the protection of the girdle.

The narrative significance of the girdle may be emphasised immediately before Gawain's beheading, when the narrative notes that Bertilak's enormous axe 'watz no lasse, bi þat lace þat lemed ful bryȝt!'[146] Which 'lace' is referred to here is unclear, for it could refer to the girdle, the decoration wrapping the first axe, or suggest a double of that decoration upon this second axe. Gollancz supports the first interpretation, while Andrew and Waldron note the possibility of the latter interpretation.[147] Andrew and Waldron add that 'it is difficult to see how it could play any part in an observer's assessment of the size of the blade'.[148] As an alternative, Andrew and Waldron suggest that Gawain invokes the magic girdle '*in petto*'. As this scene will eventually revolve around the girdle, it is contextually sensible for this phrase to allude to the girdle. However, it seems peculiar to state that this is spoken by Gawain particularly as it is in past tense, unless it is a metatextual prefiguration of Gawain's relation of the story to the Arthurian court at the end. Rather, this 'lace' may be a summative reference to both the girdle and the first axe's lace, uniting them on Bertilak's final weapon. Viewed as such, this line draws together two carefully seeded references to laces at the moment when their relation to the beheading game, bedroom scenes, and exchange game is revealed.

Though the narrative hints that Gawain's interpretation of the girdle as a commodity is not entirely correct, Bertilak's declaration at the Green Chapel that 'hit is my wede þat þou werez, þat ilke wouen girdel | myn owen wyf hit þe weued, I wot wel forsoþe' forces both Gawain and the audience to reconsider the previous narrative.[149] Bertilak's statement strongly suggests that the girdle is the same barred belt that he wore as the Green Knight in Camelot, and further discloses that Bertilak and his wife were working in concert.[150] Moreover, this implies that the girdle was

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[146] *Gawain*, ll. 2222-6. 'It was no less, by that lace that gleamed brightly!'
[147] Andrew and Waldron, p. 288; Gollancz, p. 127. Tolkien and Gordon, p. 113, do not comment on it, but reference the original axe's lace.
[148] Andrew and Waldron, p. 288.
[149] *Gawain*, ll. 2358-9. 'It is my girdle that you wear, that same woven girdle | that my own wife gave you, I know it fully and truthfully '. I have altered Andrew and Waldron's punctuation and removed their full stop after 'wouen girdel', which overly weakens Bertilak's declaration of knowledge.
[150] L. 162.

how the Green Knight survived the beheading, regardless of his Otherworldly nature.[151] As Gawain is also not beheaded, it is arguable that the girdle works for him as well, and may tie into the girdle's protection from 'slyȝt': Gawain is not slain by trickery, and retaining the girdle for self-preservation is not significant enough to earn him death.[152] Had Gawain accepted the girdle for reasons other than his own survival (such as pride or love of the lady) then he may well have died.

Bertilak does not explicate the girdle's powers, leaving its abilities and whether he ever wore it unclear. Instead, he emphasises his relationship to Gawain through his knowledge of Gawain's kisses and his 'costes als'.[153] This language specifically parallels the 'costes' of the girdle.[154] However, the girdle's role in this scene is to signify that Bertilak is aware of all of Gawain's actions: the encounters with the Lady, his retention of the girdle, and his desire for self-preservation.[155] He does not fault Gawain for his wife's actions (which he ordered), nor does he note the economic value of the girdle. Instead, Bertilak is only concerned with Gawain's oath-breaking and concealment, otherwise praising Gawain as 'þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote ȝede'.[156] Gawain's only fault is that he hid the girdle and broke the bonds created by the exchange game.

Gawain's response is surprisingly aggressive: he removes the girdle and throws it at Bertilak.[157] The term used here for the girdle, 'kest', is unique in this use; it otherwise widely means a 'sling' or 'predicament', both of which the girdle has been to Gawain.[158] It is an item of help and harm. Yet Gawain ignores these qualities as he launches into a speech accusing himself of cowardice, covetousness, fault, falseness, treachery, and 'vntrawþe', and of ignoring 'larges and lewté'.[159] Gawain's anger, though physically expressed towards Bertilak by throwing the girdle, is in fact

[151] Loomis, 'More Celtic Elements', p. 157, suggests this interpretation, while Jessica Cooke, p. 7, questions it (her phrasing suggests hesitant agreement). Friedman and Osberg, p. 313, disagree on the basis that 'if it were indeed a girdle of invincibility, Bertilak would not have parted with it'. However, this conclusion ignores the implications of the exchange game and implies selfishness on Bertilak's part (an attribute firmly opposed to the Host's magnanimity).
[152] *Gawain*, ll. 1854.
[153] L. 2360.
[154] Ll. 1849 and 2360.
[155] Ll. 2361-8
[156] Ll. 2363. 'The most faultless man that ever walked on foot [i.e., who lived]'.
[157] Ll. 2376-7.
[158] *MED*, 'cast (n.)'.
[159] *Gawain*, ll. 2379-83, qtd. 2381and 2383.

directed at himself. Underneath Gawain's action is in fact an attempt at restitution. In retaining the girdle, Gawain broke the rules of the exchange game and ignored two of its key facets, *largesse* and loyalty. By throwing the girdle at Bertilak, Gawain has attempted to complete the exchange game.

In return, Bertilak declares Gawain punished with the small nick on his neck and fully forgiven, his language ('confessed so clene') echoing Gawain's absolution at the Hostel ('sette him so clene').[160] Bertilak's reason for forgiving Gawain is clear: he empathises with Gawain's desire for self-preservation. If Bertilak himself wore the girdle at Camelot, this becomes even clearer: this is not empathy but sympathy. This seems to be emphasised when he returns the girdle to Gawain, stating that he wants Gawain to think on 'the gurdel þat is golde-hemmed; | ... [as] grene as my goune' as a symbol of this adventure.[161] The insinuation is that Gawain needs to remember this quest's lesson for the rest of his life, but as this statement is situated within the re-forging of the relationships that Gawain broke by retaining the girdle, it emphasises not wrong-doing but remembrance and reconciliation. With the exchange game completed and the re-gifting of the girdle to Gawain, Bertilak appeals to Gawain to feast with him and his wife, thus renewing their relationships.[162] By weaving his gifting of the girdle with a request for remembrance of the girdle and relationship renewal, Bertilak crystallises the importance of the games' players over their objects.

When Gawain accepts the girdle 'wyth guod wylle', he declares that he still does not desire it

> ...for þe wynne golde,
> ne þe saynt, ne þe sylk, ne þe syde pendaundes,
> for wele ne for worchyp, ne for þe wlonk werkkez...[163]

but again for its intangible traits. However, the intangible traits that Gawain now ascribes to it are those of his failing. This is a significant transformation of the object. First viewable as a love-token, Gawain's initial treatment of the girdle as a commodity transformed the *drurye* into a token of *self*-love. Now with full knowledge of his situation and overly-narrow interpretations, the girdle becomes an

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[160] *Gawain,* ll. 1883 and 2391.
[161] Ll. 2395-9, qtd. 2395-6.
[162] Ll. 2400-5
[163] Ll. 2430-2. 'For the lovely gold, | nor the sash, nor the silk, nor the pendants on the edges, | certainly not for worship nor for its wonderful decorations'.

example of penance; with Bertilak's early request still echoing, he asks that this revision 'I wolde yow pray, displeses yow neuer'.[164] Instead of a symbol of impenetrability and triumph, Gawain asks humbly to wear it as a symbol of vulnerability and fault.

The girdle's symbolic representation of weakness is exemplified in the manner which Gawain wears it henceforth. Wearing the girdle as a baldric, it wraps around his neck where 'þe hurt watz hole þat he hade hent'.[165] This introduces a duality to Gawain's wound, for 'hole' can be both healed and with a cavity.[166] His wound is both mended and still present (as a scar?), and the girdle on his neck highlights this. Furthermore, as a baldric the girdle also crosses Gawain's surcoat and thus his pentangle.[167] Instead of obscuring the pentangle's qualities, the girdle indicates Gawain's consideration of his faults, continued penance, and rededication to his virtues. Moreover, the girdle no longer obscures Gawain's sword-belt, but mimics the support that a baldric could give to a sword-belt. Overall, the multifaceted qualities of wearing the girdle as a baldric denote that Gawain 'watz tane in tech of a faute'.[168]

Upon Gawain's return to Camelot, he enters wearing the girdle and tells the story of his journey in order.[169] The details of the adventure are described as its 'costes', echoing both the girdle and Bertilak's judgment of Gawain's character.[170] With almost penitentiary groaning and acknowledgment of shame, Gawain describes his interpretation of 'þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek'.[171] Along with being an ordinary in heraldry, 'bende' also has overtones of captivity and shackles, the perfect term for a symbol of wrongdoing.[172] Due to the position of the axe-wound and the baldric-girdle, this statement coalesces these in the term 'bende'. Additionally, Gawain states that

Þis is þe laþe and þe loss þat I laȝt haue

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[164] *Gawain*, l. 2439.
[165] Ll. 2484-6, qtd. 2484.
[166] *MED*, 'hōl(e (adj. (1))' and 'hōl(e (adj. (2))'.
[167] *Gawain*, ll. 2485-7; *MED*, 'abelef (adv.)'. The *MED* glosses 'abelef' as 'obliquely, slantwise'; as this word only appears in *Gawain* this seems to be based on the girdle's left-hand knot and is the best definition available at this time.
[168] *Gawain*, ll. 2488.
[169] Ll. 2489 and 2494-05.
[170] L. 2496.
[171] Ll. 2502-4 and 2506 (qtd.).
[172] *MED,* 'bēnd(e (n.(1))'.

Of couardise and couetyse, þat I haf caȝt þare;
Þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne.[173]

Like the axe, the girdle represents a tale, speaking of Gawain's 'vntrawþe' towards Bertilak. Gawain further highlights that he wears the girdle in remembrance of his fault, his declaration that he 'mot nedez hit were wyle I may last' echoing Bertilak's request for such.[174] However, Gawain appends to this that it specifically reminds him that, though one 'hyden his harme', such shall not prevent the fault from existing.[175]

The court's response is only surprising if the audience has forgotten their reaction to the Green Knight. Arthur's comforting of his knight and nephew repeats his reassurance of Guinevere; on both occasions this also assuages the court. [176] This is also the moment probably represented in the final illumination in BL Cotton Nero A.x [fig. 5]. Arthur, taking Gawain's hand, raises his nephew up as he signifies absolution with his free hand. Significantly, the girdle is absent from this and all other illuminations in the narrative, but in this illumination Guinevere makes an odd but potentially significant gesture. Her visible arm is bent roughly in right angle, while the hand either rests in front of or grips her belt; all her fingers are closed except the first and the thumb as if pointing. This same gesture is used by Arthur in figure 2. If they are pointing, Guinevere indicates Gawain and Arthur's united hands; this contrasts with Arthur's indication of the Green Knight's severed neck. Although there are other pointing figures in the illuminations in BL Cotton Nero A.x, this exact gesture is limited to these two figures. By situating this gesture by characters' belts, the illuminations subtly suggest the girdle without depicting it.

After this reconciliation between Arthur and Gawain, the entire court agrees to adopt a baldric in the style of 'a bende abelef hym about, of a bryȝt grene'.[177] This baldric is to be worn by all the 'lordes and ladis' as a symbol of brotherhood.[178] This line is now often emended to 'lordes and ledes', which is supported by the other masculine terms in the scene, such as 'broþerhede'.[179] Battles argues against this as a nonsensical emendation, based on the fact that women were often included in

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[173] *Gawain*, ll. 2507-9.
[174] Ll. 2505-12 (qtd. 2510).
[175] Ll. 2511-2 (qtd. 2511).
[176] Ll. 467-75 and 2513-4.
[177] L. 2517.
[178] Ll. 2515-6, quotation following Battles, p. 337.
[179] Andrew and Waldron, p. 299; *Gawain*, l. 2516. Notably, neither Gollancz nor Tolkien and Gordon use this emendation.

knightly orders and ‘brotherhoods’.[180] This emendation also ignores that masculine terminology is often used collectively for mixed-gendered groups such as the one in this scene: the adoption of the baldric extends from ‘alle þe court’ laughing.[181] Furthermore, baldrics were not restricted to men [fig. 70] but were also worn by women [fig. 63]. Baldrics were not necessarily gendered objects. Thus, in a final reworking of the girdle, the whole of Camelot transforms it into a symbol of their fellowship out of love for Gawain.[182]

This neatly parallels and opposes the reception of the first axe. While that axe was hung upon the wall, an untouchable relic to be admired and discussed by the whole of the court, the girdle moves beyond an object with a story. As it did in the Hostel and the Green Chapel, the girdle has the power to create, alter, and solidify relationships; in the finale, this happens on a massive scale. Briefly serving as a heraldic badge of the Lady and then Bertilak, the girdle becomes the badge of Camelot, representative of Arthur’s nephew and potential heir.

Overall, the New Year’s gifts, axes, kisses, glove, and ring in *Gawain* serve to blur the lines between gift and commodity. This structure is then used to create tension in the employment of the girdle. Using concepts of gift-giving and mercantile trade, the narrative intentionally blurs these activities and seems to question the validity of such distinctions. Further, it emphasises the role of both the granting and the receiving parties in gift-giving. By placing importance on personal interactions in such exchanges, it also demonstrates the punishments earned when such social expectations are broken. Though Gawain eventually completes the exchange game, he must pay for his deception with blood; while he is forgiven, he must follow Bertilak’s command of remembrance and accordingly expresses penitence on return to Camelot. It is the reunification and restoration of relationships that such objects create that is important, not the objects’ inherent significances. The narrative role of gifts is to highlight their own unimportance beyond something to exchange. It is the people who exchange that matter, not the gifts.

[180] Battles, pp. 336-41.
[181] *Gawain*, ll. 2513-4.
[182] L. 2518.

Conclusion: Creating Relationships

Meliador and *Gawain* use costume accessories similarly in gift-exchanges. Both narratives interweave these exchanges with mercantile language though to different ends. While Meliador's ring suggests a commodification of courtly love by employing mercantile language, Gawain's girdle uses economic terminology to reframe a love-token as a commodity. At the same time, both narratives suggest a rejection of commodification within courtly circles. Gawain's treatment of the girdle as a commodity is a gross misinterpretation of the object and his situation, while *Meliador*'s treatment of the ring, though laced with commercial expressions, is always clearly an exchange of a love-token to Meliador, Florée, and the audience. It is only Hermondine who misinterprets it.

Characters also actively reinterpret the meaning of objects. Although *Gawain*'s girdle passes through many hands, its inherent qualities are vaguely delineated, thus allowing characters to openly and continuously rework it for their purposes. Thus, for the Lady it is an intimate token (be it sexual or chaste); for Gawain, it is a protective commodity. For Bertilak, the girdle is first his own item, then his rightful prize in the exchange game, and finally a reward to grant to Gawain. Gawain accepts it only as an object of penitence, but Arthur's court transforms it into a bond of fellowship. Meliador's ring is similar. Florée presents the ring as a reward, but her intention is unclear; the engraving implies that she intends the ring to identify Meliador. For Meliador, it is a token of thanks from Florée and a token of love to Hermondine. For Hermondine, it is only a nice gift from a merchant until Florée reveals its origin. At the end, it is a unifier of Hermondine and Meliador.

By using objects to (re)unite characters, both narratives emphasise the importance of social harmony. In *Meliador*, the identity-exposing ring's convoluted path serves to bring about the wedding of Hermondine and Meliador (the proper *ordenance*), while in *Gawain* the girdle serves to save Gawain, signify his penitence, and reunite him with his family and court as a knight absolved of fault. The girdle unifies this social class; similarly, Meliador's ring creates the proper social hierarchy. However, although *Gawain*'s finale asserts the importance of social re-integration, interpersonal relationships, and reconciliation, *Meliador* demonstrates that courtly society is not necessarily divorced from commerce and the 'trade' of courtly love.

Together, the discussion of these narratives illustrates the complicated uses of gifts as well as the difficulty in delineating between gift and commodity as concepts. Although there are no clear lines where gifts begin and commodities end, both narratives assert that the examination should begin, not with the objects, but with the people.

Closing Remarks: Rediscovering the Objects of the Mind's Eye

This thesis examines the fictionalisation of costume in *Meliador* and *Gawain*. Overall, these narratives seem to describe apparel from the latter part of the fourteenth century, roughly contemporaneous with the manuscripts; these garments are intrinsically related to the cultural climate of that time. By supporting the items in the narratives with historical background and examples from illuminations, the discussion aimed to acknowledge the fluidity and subjectivity of material culture, reality, and fiction in the fourteenth century while resisting false objectivity in a subject that requires pluralistic interpretations. Throughout the narratives, these items conveyed information concerning changed relationships, internal journeys, and identity creation, concealment, and revelation. Furthermore, the cultural significance of these garments helped reveal how worn objects were used to address social concerns. While individual identity is first shaped by one's communal role, it is further changed by how one reacts to one's role. As costume is itself the mediator between body and society, their employment in personal display (reacting to one's social position) alters the reception of characters by both internal and external audiences.

Meliador and *Gawain* employed characters' costumes to emphasise wider themes. In discussing knights' courtly costumes, costume was established to have properties to deceive as well as to conceal and reveal identity. Indeed, colours adopted from garments fully replaced identity in *Meliador*. In relation to concealing identity, both Gawain's deceptive blue outfit and Meliador's mercantile attire were not only disguises; these costumes connected them to Arthurian antecedents. Examining arms and armour uncovered how wearable items could disclose social tensions and paradigmatical incongruencies (such as that between games *à outrance* and *à plaisance*). These objects were also used to distance the narrative from violence, replacing it with philosophical approaches to chivalry and social re-integration. While wearing armour created physically unidentifiable participants in these games, heraldry allowed participants to assume new roles. Heraldic blazon was used in the mode that it would have been in the fourteenth century: for creating and altering relationships as well as for identification in battle and game. As both narratives widely ignored traditional Arthurian heraldry, they consciously employed

new identifiers as social signs. In contrast to these primarily masculine items, portrayal of the women was surprising. The concept of the body-blazon was undermined in the narratives. While Froissart largely ignored the literary technique, only employing it in part for Sebille and the fairy women, *Gawain* subverted it by giving Morgan's contreblazon greater attention than the Lady's blazon. However, such manipulation highlighted how both narratives allow their female characters significant autonomy within their social limits. These women are more than chivalric inspiration; they are active players. This is solidified through the examination of worn gifts, which in the narratives are primarily given by women. Gifts exemplify costume's multiple facets: they are commodities/necessities, items of display, and social unifiers. Furthermore, the tension between gift and commodity highlights the paradox of gifting apparently intimate tokens that are in fact common literary gifts. Overall, gifts suggest that luxurious display is not about commodity but about demonstrating identity. Within a courtly society, objects should illuminate the persons who are connected to them.

Creating identity is a primary theme of the tournament-quest of *Meliador*, where names are obscured and secret. Colours are necessarily adopted in a sort of 'identité sans nom', allowing the participants to be interpreted through their colours and clothes. However, at times the emphasis on creating identity contradicts with *ordenance* progressing in an almost predestined manner. This is particularly clear with Agamanor, who challenges concepts of inherent knightly worth by choosing to aim for second place in the tournament-quest. As this is with Phenonée's encouragement, it leads to the proper outcome, but it also encourages the audience to question whether *ordenance* is destined, created, or chosen.

On the whole, the narrative of *Meliador* is similar to a *Bildungsroman*: the primary knights journey from unmarried youths competing in tourneys to married maturity. In many ways the concept of *ordenance* makes this narrative transparent, but worn items are used to manipulate the level of clarity. On one level, characters may only know knights by their colours; their specific shields reinforce anonymity while creating abstract identities. On another level, both audience and characters know how the plot shall proceed. Characters such as Florée cut through ambiguity to an almost clairvoyant knowledge of *ordenance*. Finally, these multiple levels shall

suggest a plurality of audience-based interpretations, where only those who pay close attention shall know where the narrative shall end. As a construct imperative to the narrative's created world, *ordenance* is obscured by the manipulated identities to create a complex narrative that rewards an audience's close attention.

Conversely, *Gawain* rewards close attention with further complexities and ambiguities. Its Arthurian world initially appears to support an object-based symbolism, suggested strongly by the emphasis on the pentangle. Highlighted by detailed descriptions, this creates an expectation of clear signification through objects, but the overarching narrative intentionally obfuscates the significance of items for both audience and characters. The girdle exemplifies this through the many different values ascribed to it. Gawain's 'failure' at the Hostel extends from his misconception of the girdle's implications; this results in the girdle's value being clarified by Bertilak, openly reinterpreted by Gawain, and then transformed by the Arthurian court. Indeed, the whole narrative appears to be about misunderstandings and alternative interpretations.

It is difficult to reduce *Gawain* to overarching themes, for the narrative is rich and deep but its meaning is difficult to grasp. It may be read as dramatic and comedic, a challenge and support of knightly values or a parody of romances. Gawain may be a fool, a victim, or a hero; Bertilak is both an aggressor and a wise and merciful judge. Yet several things are strongly present, such as the tensions between game and battle. However, other expected tensions are complicated by the narrative. For example, anticipated friction between Gawain's Christian devotion (found in his pentangle) and the Otherworldly Hostel (exemplified by the girdle) is superficially non-existent. When more closely examined, religion becomes intertwined with wider issues concerning gender relations within the narrative, which is emphasized by the autonomy and descriptions of the ladies. Yet the narrative denies these gender issues at the end by transforming the story into one concerning familial relationships, and uses descriptions of display (such as the Green Knight's appearance, Gawain's armour and pentangle, the Lady's blazon and Morgan's contreblazon, and the girdle) to create expectations and guide the audience's understanding.

In relation to the narratives, the illuminations used in this thesis demonstrate the usefulness of considering the visual aspects of fictional costume. While garments in illuminations may be pseudo-historical and Orientalised, they can also react intriguingly against the narrative. It is evident that worn items described within the texts can be discovered and explicated in the illuminated manuscripts, though some latitude must be allowed for changes made between the texts' composition and the illuminations' creation. Furthermore, this is not restricted to illuminations and their corresponding manuscripts; as this thesis established, illuminations can also be productively (albeit carefully) applied to intertextual situations.

Finally, there are multiple topics that this thesis touched on which are worthy of further attention. First, all the illuminated manuscripts employed warrant greater examination; of special mention are the boundary-breakings in MS fr. 97 and the Orientalisation and overpainting of MSs fr. 117, 118, 119, and 120. Though this thesis addresses the relationship between text and illumination in *Gawain*, the entirety of the BL Cotton Nero A.x illuminations and narratives require additional analysis, especially as it seems that the illuminator was sufficiently familiar with *Gawain* to add his own interpretations. Within wider Arthurian literature, fourteenth-century narratives, and the romance genre, areas for study include the conceptual role of colour, tensions between combat *à outrance* versus *à plaisance*, and the subversion of lady's body-blazons. The latter in particular should be studied across multiple vernacular texts, for its clear subversion in both *Meliador* and *Gawain* could suggest a wider trend. Moreover, Arthurian studies are in need of a comprehensive assessment of Arthurian heraldry that carefully investigates the creation and progression of traditional heraldry while acknowledging the fluidity of fictional blazons. More closely within *Gawain*, the relationship between liturgical events, religious references, and gender needs greater study, while *Meliador* contains interesting venues for considering the invocation of mercantile language and the construction of tournament society. However, of specific interest is the relationship of Wenceslas's poetry to the overarching narrative, which deserves greater consideration in scholarship of *Meliador*. Finally, the importance of rings throughout romance literature warrants a comprehensive study of the objects as gifts, commodities, and social lubricants.

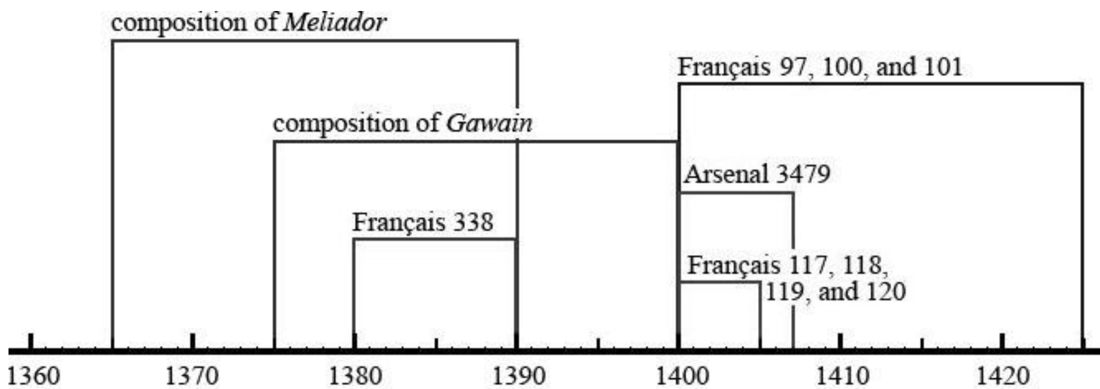
This thesis studied the use of fictional costume and colour in Arthurian romances, where society behaves not according to historic fact but to historic ideal. The intrigue of these items is not in discovering meanings but in examining how the narratives mediate between different social implications to create ambiguity. This uncertainty then creates new significance from the conflict. Though such uncertainties mean that interpretations can never be proven to accord with authorial intention or audience reception, it is certainly fruitful to provide views for both. Indeed, ambiguity allows scholarship a wide range within which to suggest analyses, and a plurality of such suggestions is particularly valuable because creators' intentions and reader responses may change over time. Thus, this thesis recommended multiple points of view and alternate interpretations for how colour and costume in *Meliador* and *Gawain* can create, conceal, modify, and reveal characters. In the end, it opens the door for further study, expansion, and alternate interpretations on how Arthurian characters can wear their identities.

Appendix A: List of Figures on Digital Appendix

1. MS fr. 12557, folio 1
2. BL Cotton Nero A.x, folio 94v
3. BL Cotton Nero A.x, folio 129
4. BL Cotton Nero A.x, folio 129v
5. BL Cotton Nero A.x, folio 130
6. MS fr. 120, folio 537
7. MS fr. 119, folio 321v
8. MS fr. 118, folio 264
9. MS fr. 338, folio 39v
10. MS fr. 118, folio 167v
11. MS fr. 118, folio 265
12. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 476
13. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 550
14. MS fr. 118, folio 155
15. MS fr. 97, folio 373
16. MS fr. 338, folio 117v
17. MS fr. 118, folio 283v
18. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 580
19. MS fr. 97, folio 422
20. MS fr. 120, folio 519
21. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 555
22. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 622
23. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 420
24. Effigy of John Marmion (late 1380s) from Blair, p. 67
25. Object IV.470, Royal Armouries
26. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 432
27. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 411
28. MS fr. 118, folio 253v
29. MS fr. 338, folio 371
30. MS fr. 338, folio 145v
31. MS fr. 100, folio 375
32. MS fr. 120, folio 522v
33. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 523
34. MS fr. 100, folio 40
35. MS fr. 97, folio 27v
36. MS fr. 338, folio 208
37. MS fr. 338, folio 213v
38. MS fr. 118, folio 237v
39. MS fr. 100, folio 335
40. MS fr. 100, folio 261
41. MS fr. 101, folio 394
42. MS fr. 118, folio 215v
43. MS fr. 101, folio 137
44. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 492
45. MS fr. 119, folio 363
46. MS fr. 119, folio 369v
47. Visual armorial of the blazons belonging to knights Camel de Camois fought in *Meliador*, by Elysse T. Meredith
48. MS fr. 119, folio 352v
49. Visual armorial of the blazons of knights in *Meliador*, by Elysse T. Meredith
50. MS fr. 118, folio 219v
51. MS fr. 101, folio 51
52. MS fr. 118, folio 218v
53. MS fr. 97, folio 308
54. MS fr. 118, folio 286
55. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 583
56. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 567
57. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 509
58. MS fr. 119, folio 354v
59. MS fr. 97, folio 87
60. MS fr. 338, folio 112v
61. MS fr. 100, folio 1, frame A
62. MS fr. 100, folio 1, frame B
63. MS Arsenal 3479, folio 506
64. MS fr. 118, folio 229v
65. MS fr. 118, folio 231
66. Object M.66-1960, Victoria and Albert Museum
67. Object M.189-1962, Victoria and Albert Museum
68. Object 000-100-002-586-C, National Museums Scotland
69. Object M.222-1962, Victoria and Albert Museum
70. MS fr. 118, folio 275v

Appendix B: Manuscripts and Illuminations

Timeline of Manuscripts



London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.x

Dating to around 1400, this manuscript contains four verse narratives (*Pearl*, *Patience*, *Cleanness*, and *Gawain*) written in a Midlands dialect of Middle English. Comprised of 89 folios, 36 of these folios are dedicated to *Gawain*.[1] There are twelve illuminations in the manuscript. Four belong to *Gawain*, with one preceding the narrative and three following. Whether any of these illuminations were inserted after the manuscript was composed is unclear. The illuminations make use of six distinct pigments: a goldenrod yellow, two reds (pinkish and scarlet), white, and two blues (one deep, the other blue-green). To achieve the Green Knight's green, the illuminator overlaid the yellow with blue-green. Saturation is varied to signify shading.

Images from Cotton Nero A.x are copyright the British Library Board and used with permission.

Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3479

This manuscript is part of a set of the complete *Lancelot-Graal*. Its sibling, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS Arsenal 3480, is in the process of digitisation as of 2011-2012, and thus was not available for the majority of this study. Created before 1407, these manuscripts were first owned by Jean sans Peur, duke of Burgundy, appearing in his inventory of 1420.[2]

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[1] Andrew and Waldron, pp. 1-5; Gollancz, pp. ix-x; Tolkien and Gordon, vii-viii, xx-xxii, and xxii-xiv.
[2] Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 70.

MS Arsenal 3479 contains 45 illuminations, 14 of which are used in this thesis, while its sibling has 85.[3] The illuminations were worked on by the (workshop of the) Maître des *Cleres Femmes*, but in collaboration with the (workshop of the) Maître de la *Cité des Dames*.[4] Another artist, the Maître du second *Roman de la Rose* du Duc de Berry, has also been identified as working on the text.[5] There are obvious stylistic differences between these three illuminators. Some illuminations have minor damages, but there is no overpainting. Most illuminations are a square that fits into one of the two columns of text; however, there are several instances of illuminations that extended across both columns.

Garments are interpreted unevenly and freely by the different illuminators. Contemporary clothes are juxtaposed against conservative ones, and there are a few instances of Orientalisation. Men's dress is generally late-fourteenth century loose surcoats and houpelands, though there are several instances of less extravagant robes found on older kings. These kings have pointed beards; younger men are beardless, have short, fluffy hair and pointed toes. The ladies' fashions follow the same mixture as the men: several queens have conservative loose veils and high wimples and one wears a *surcot ouvert* edged in ermine, while others wear more contemporary veils with sharp corners, dresses with tight bodices, tight sleeves, and full skirts, or high collars and waists with wide sleeves. Dagging appears on both mens' and womens' garments. The armour is primarily plate of the late fourteenth century, with bascinet helms and some mail exposed beneath skirts. However, major liberties in style, sensibility, and reality are taken in armaments, particularly in the earlier illuminations.[6] Heraldry is depicted fairly realistically and consistently.

Folio 411

Unaware of his heritage, the white knight Lancelot defeats multiple knights over two days. In the intervening evening, the Lady of the Lake hosts Lancelot and gives him new armaments.[7]

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[3] Stones, p. 29.
[4] Meiss, pp. 373, 378, and 380; Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 70.
[5] Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 70, notes that this suggestion of a minor painter comes from François Avril.
[6] The *Mandragore* database links the illuminations in this section to the Maître des *Cleres Femmes*.
[7] Information concerning the *Lancelot-Graal* narrative in Appendix B is derived from Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', particularly pp. 32-9, 42-53, 59, 64-9, and 83-9.

Folio 420

'Lancelot learns his name and his lineage by lifting a large slab in the graveyard'.[8] The lady present may be the Lady of the Lake or another young woman.

Folio 432

This imaginative and somewhat Orientalised image could be several points in the *Lancelot-Graal* narrative; to determine its exact moment would require closer study of the manuscript than its digitisation allows. However, it may coalesce Lancelot rescuing a knight with a battle that he wins despite being wounded.

Folio 476

Galehaut surrenders to Arthur.

Folio 492

The Arthurian knights quest for Lancelot, who has been imprisoned by the Lady of Malehaut. Gawain leads the search.

Folio 506

A lady presents a broken shield to Guinevere that signifies Gawain's defeat and capture.

Folio 509

Guinevere is given a broken shield belonging to Gawain and receives news that Gawain has defeated and dubbed a knight named Helain.

Folio 523

In searching for Gawain, Hector des Marés must stay a night in a castle where 'every knight errant must spend one night in the castle and swear an oath to be hostile to all who make war against the castle'.[9]

Folio 550

Gawain and his lady share a bed as the lady's father enters with two men to kill Gawain.

Folio 555

At the request of a maiden, Hector des Marés battles Persidés, who has wed and imprisoned the maiden's sister.

[8] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 38.
[9] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 47.

Folio 567

Lancelot, driven mad by imprisonment, is rescued by a lady and healed by the Lady of the Lake.

Folio 580

Elice, a messenger of the false Guinevere, delivers a letter to King Arthur.

Folio 583

Arthur, convinced by the knight Bertolais of the validity of the false Guinevere, rejects the true Guinevere.

Folio 622

On Pentecost, Gawain is kidnapped in the presence of Lancelot, Yvain, and Galescalain by the knight Caradoc.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Fonds Français 97

Very little is known about this manuscript. Its origin has been narrowed to between 1400 and 1425 in Paris, and it contains the French prose narrative *Tristan de Léonois* in 555 folios.[10] This manuscript's 235 illuminations are startling: characters in the foreground receive only the barest colouration at best, while the background is painted lightly but realistically. The exception to this is folio 225v, which appears to have been overpainted. Additionally, many of the illuminations' edges are broken, most often by trees and buildings but occasionally by animals and people. Illuminations are confined to one of the two columns of text, but some folios have an illumination in each column. Five illuminations are used in the thesis discussion.

The ladies wear dresses that are found throughout the other manuscripts discussed; high-waisted dresses are also depicted with turned-down collars. Their headdresses are particularly fifteenth-century in style, with high horned stuffed rolls and *cornette*-style veils. One queen wears an archaic *surcot ouvert* and vertical braids. Not much attention is paid to heraldry, but there is some consistency in blazon if not shield shape. Armour is generally plate with mail at the neck; both frogmouth and pignose helms appear, as do axes and other pole weapons.

[10] *Mandragore*; Maud Simon, 'La Mort des amants dans le *Tristan en prose*: Quand la légende révèle à travers l'image son ancrage biblique', *Moyen Âge*, 110 (2004), 345-66 (p. 350). Simon only links MS fr. 97 to the fifteenth century, while the *Mandragore* database places it within the first quarter.

Folio 27v

Tristan kills Morholt, brother of the queen of Ireland, and ends the tribute of youths that Mark has been paying to Ireland. While the folio depicts Tristan fighting with a pole-axe, the narrative specifies him fighting with a sword.[11]

Folio 87

Gawain fights Lamorat, son of King Pellinor, who has abducted a maiden. Gawain loses, but the maiden escapes.

Folio 308

Agloval, son of King Pellinor, wishes his mother farewell as he leaves to search for the missing Lancelot.

Folio 373

Though the exact narrative point being illustrated requires closer examination than is possible through the digitised source, this illustrates Arthur with his court.

Folio 422

As with folio 373, this illumination requires closer consideration of the manuscript. This depicts Galahad receiving his shield, and may depict his visitation of a wounded Tristan at an abbey.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MSs Fonds Français 100 and 101

Created between 1400 and 1425, this set contains *Tristan de Léonois*. The first volume contains 84 illuminations, while there are 68 in the second (152 total). Owned by Margaret d'Écosse (born 1424), MSs fr. 100 and 101 bear many similarities to a *Tristan* owned by Jean, Duc de Berry (now Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2537), which was commissioned in 1410.[12] Stylistically similar to the work of the Maître de Bedford and BnF, MS Latin 7789, made in 1405 for Louis II de Bourbon, the manuscripts cannot be closely connected to either the Maître de Bedford or a smaller time period.[13] It may have been mentioned in an inventory of the Duke of Bourbon, but this is not certain. Nine illuminations are used from these two manuscripts.

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[11] Synopses of *Tristan* are derived from Renée L. Curtis, trans. and ed., *The Romance of Tristan: The Thirteenth-Century Old French 'Prose Tristan'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), particularly pages. 37-8, 90, 101-3, and 313-4.
[12] Stones, p. 26.
[13] Ménard, p. 176.

Clothing is generally uncoloured, though accessories are more likely to be painted. Most backgrounds are painted fully and realistically, though MS fr. 100 has two patterned backgrounds; both manuscripts play with the patterned-background tradition by giving interiors patterned floors and wall-hangings that resemble the older, stylised backgrounds. Women's dress is very similar to MS fr. 97. Helms are mixed, with open and pignose bascinets, frogmouth helms, and kettle helms. The arm is almost fully plate, excepting some bascinet's mail aventails, and in tourneys blunted lance-tips, leg-protectors, and tall saddles can be seen. The heraldry is particularly consistent and allows the reader to identify Palamedes at his baptism by the shield hanging about his head.

Note that the majority of the folios from these manuscripts could be several different parts of the *Tristan* narrative; as such, their information is primarily drawn from the caption given on the *Mandragore* database.

MS fr. 100, folio 1, frame A

This depicts either the manuscript's presentation, the manuscript's commission, the receipt of the fictional Latin source by the equally fictional translator of the Prose *Tristan*, or the first presentation of the Prose *Tristan* by said translator. The top left of four frames arranged in a square.

MS fr. 100, folio 1, frame B

Joseph of Arimathea bestows the Grail upon Alain le Gros. The top right of four frames arranged in a square.

MS fr. 100, folio 40

Tristan kills Morholt, brother of the queen of Ireland, and ends the tribute of youths that Mark has been paying to Ireland (hence the ship). While the illumination depicts the knights jousting, the narrative specifies him fighting with a sword. The same scene as MS fr. 97, folio 27v.

MS fr. 100, folio 261

Tristan receives a message from Iseut's messenger.

MS fr. 100, folio 335

An overcome Palamedes is saved by Tristan.

MS fr. 100, folio 375

Knights joust.

MS fr. 101, folio 51

Tristan speaks with Iseut.

MS fr. 101, folio 137

King Arthur meets Iseut.

MS fr. 101, folio 394

Palamedes is baptised.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MSs Fonds Français 117, 118, 119, and 120

Created in the beginning of the fifteenth century, these four manuscripts are siblings containing the *Lancelot-Graal*.[14] They were completed no later than 1404, as they were purchased in January 1405 by Jean, Duc de Berry.[15] These four manuscripts have 130 illuminations in total, the majority of which were painted by or in the workshop of the Maître des *Cleres Femmes* in Paris; 22 illuminations are used in this thesis. The illuminations follow the same topical program as MS Arsenal 3479. Illuminations are generally within one column of the two-column text, though there are some double-wide illuminations.

Many of the manuscripts were altered by overpainting around 1460 under the ownership of Jacques d'Armagnac.[16] Many of these changes were to faces and hands, but close examination reveals that some equestrian equipment and knights' surcoats were also altered. Further, many patterned backgrounds were replaced with more realistic landscapes. Many of these larger overpainted areas have been damaged, revealing the original illumination. Both the overpainter and the *Cleres Femmes* workshop used a wide variety of rich and saturated colours; detail-oriented, items such as furs are displayed realistically and so distinct as to be identifiable.

In clothing, there is a mixture of fashionable and outmoded clothes that display items available during the late fourteenth century and into the fifteenth. Men wear slighter looser surcoats and tunics than earlier manuscripts, but some are so short as to end just below the bum and almost expose the genitals; their toes are

[14] Stones, p. 26, states that these manuscripts contain the full cycle; Delcourt, 'La Légende', p. 66, adds that the text contains an interpolation of *Perlesvaus*. The *Mandragore* database does not include *Perlesvaus* in its list of the narrative parts.
[15] Meiss, pp. 373-4.
[16] Delcourt, 'La Légende', pp. 66 and 72.

barely pointed and there are a few occasions of *mi-parti* hose. There are also multiple instances of richer courtiers wearing long houpelands with wide sleeves. Similarly, ladies' outfits show great variety, with different necklines (including high, scooped, or v-shaped). There is also one instance of an updated *surcot ouvert.* The majority of armour is plate, though there is also mail as skirts, at necks, at the backs of legs; there is one instance of a mail coif. Helms are frogmouths. Shields are particularly realistic, often depicted slung around necks, and the illuminator has use shields as identifiers and relationship markers: the relatives of Lancelot and Gawain each share similar arms. Finally, there are some attempts at historicising appearances, with kings and older figures wearing forked beards and moustaches. They wear a mixture of houpelands and long, loose robes. In addition, there are several instances of Orientalisation in negative characters' costumes.

MS fr. 118, folio 155

Ban and Bors, allies of the young Arthur, sit with Queen Elaine and her infant son Lancelot.

MS fr. 118, folio 167v

Bors and Lionel attend a feast held by Claudas, who is trying to kill Bors. 'The messenger [of the Lady of the Lake] pins a magic clasp on each of them to protect them from all weapons. Lionel strikes Claudas with a cup, and a mêlée ensues in which Lionel and Bors kill Dorn. By casting a spell on the two boys and transforming them into greyhounds, the messenger successfully kidnaps them'.[17] The illumination successfully depicts the majority of this plot.

MS fr. 118, folio 215v

Galehaut surrenders to Arthur. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 476.

MS fr. 118, folio 218v

Galehaut, who admires Lancelot greatly, arranges an encounter between Guinevere and Lancelot. Lancelot tells the Queen of the deeds he performed for her.

MS fr. 118, folio 219v

Continuing from the previous image, the Queen grants her love and a kiss to Lancelot at Galehaut's urging. Guinevere arranges for the Lady of Malehaut to become her companion and Galehaut's lover.

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[17] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 34.

MS fr. 118, folio 229v

A lady presents a broken shield to Guinevere that signifies Gawain's defeat and capture. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 506.

MS fr. 118, folio 231

Guinevere is given a shield belonging to Gawain and receives news that Gawain has defeated and dubbed a knight named Helain. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 509.

MS fr. 118, folio 237v

In searching for Gawain, Hector must stay a night in a castle where 'every knight errant must spend one night in the castle and swear an oath to be hostile to all who make war against the castle'.[18] Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 523.

MS fr. 118, folio 253v

Travelling in North Wales, Gawain helps Sagremor defeat three knights. The illumination depicts more than in the narrative and strongly Orientalises them.

MS fr. 118, folio 264

Elice, a messenger of the false Guinevere, delivers a letter to King Arthur. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 580.

MS fr. 118, folio 265

Arthur, convinced by the knight Bertolais of the validity of the false Guinevere, rejects the true Guinevere. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 583.

MS fr. 118, folio 275v

Bertolais perjures himself by swearing to the false Guinevere's legality.

MS fr. 118, folio 283v

On Pentecost, Gawain is kidnapped in the presence of Lancelot, Yvain, and Galescalain by the knight Caradoc. Same scene as MS Arsenal 3479, folio 622.

MS fr. 118, folio 286

Drian, trapped in a cursed coffin, is rescued by Lancelot, who is welcomed by Drian's family.

MS fr. 119, folio 321v

Lancelot crosses the Sword Bridge.

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[18] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 47.

MS fr. 119, folio 352v

Sagremor fights a knight.

MS fr. 119, folio 354v

'Dodinel and the young lady he is following encounter a dwarf, who kisses the lady against her will. The lady slaps the dwarf, and the dwarf's knight throws his lance at the lady. This infuriates Dodinel; he challenges and defeats the knight'.[19]

MS fr. 119, folio 363

The narrative begins to move into Grail Quest. Hector and Gawain attempt to approach twelve tombs that surround a burning tomb. Each tomb has a sword thrust into it; these swords attack the knights when they approach.

MS fr. 119, folio 369v

This illumination depicts a minor adventure of Agravain's.

MS fr. 120, folio 519

On a quest to find Lancelot, Perceval and Hector find him on an island. Maidens watching the island inform the knights that only one can cross at a time, so Perceval goes first. He and Lancelot fight, but Lancelot stops when he realises he fights a fellow Arthurian knight.

MS fr. 120, folio 522v

'A nun presents Galahad to Lancelot and asks the latter to knight the young man'.[20] The illumination has taken liberties with its depiction of nuns, though this may be in part due to overpainting.

MS fr. 120, folio 537

During the Grail-Quest, Perceval becomes stranded on an island where a lion's cub has been kidnapped by a serpent. During the following fight between the two beasts, Perceval aids the lion and kills the serpent.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Fonds Français 338

The earliest manuscript used in this thesis, MS fr. 338 was created between 1380 and 1390 in Paris, France.[21] Little is known of the manuscript's ownership; however, the arms on the first folio have been identified as those of Charles de Trie.

[19] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 64.
[20] Lacy et al., 'Chapter Summaries', p. 84.
[21] Ferlampin-Acher, 'L'Aventure chevaleresque', p. 151.

The French prose narrative *Guiron le Courtois* is accompanied by 72 illuminations, possibly created by the Maître du *Rational des divins offices*, seven of which are used here. The text is arranged in two columns, and usually the illumination fits within a column, often placed near decorated capitals. Some illuminations span both columns. There is minor damage to several illuminations, but nothing that overly obscures images.

Men's and women's clothes are typical of the middle of the fourteenth century. Women wear tight bodices and sleeves, low necklines and full skirts, and wear their hair in vertical braids by their temples. Some kings are portrayed in archaic long, loose robes. Men's armour is primarily plate, and helms are generally pig-nosed bascinets, though there are minor instances of mail attached to helms and underneath surcoats. Overall, there is little care for consistency in knights' shields, with multiple disparate shields being carried by the same character regardless of the story.

Note that due to the limited work on *Guiron le Courtois* the narrative information related here is drawn from the *Mandragore* database.

Folio 39v

Morhaut discovers the sleeping Brunor.

Folio 112v

The Queen of Scotland arrives at a castle.

Folio 117v

The Queen of Scotland listens to a harpist.

Folio 145v

Multiple knights harass Larquiman.

Folio 208

Faramon and Lac battle.

Folio 213v

Faramon and Lac reconcile.

Folio 371

Brehauz discovers the deceased Febus.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Fonds Français 12557

Dated to around 1400, this manuscript was originally comprised of 228 folios; two are now missing to leave 226 folios.[22] Each folio is divided into two columns of 34 lines each. The manuscript contains one illumination on the first folio, which seems to be greatly damaged by moisture. The manuscript was possibly owned by Charles, duc d'Orléans, as a 'livre de Meliador' is listed in his inventories in 1415, 1427, and 1440.[23] The manuscript was originally catalogued under *Roman de Camel et d'Hermondine* and was rebound in the nineteenth century under the title *Roman du roy Artus*.

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[22] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 18-19; Longnon, p. xlvi. Folios 1 and 46 of MS fr. 12557 are available from *Mandragore*.

[23] Longnon, p. xlviii.

Appendix C: Synopsis of *Meliador*

The narrative of *Meliador* progresses like a serial, spending significant time with characters brought together by its primary concern, a tournament series. These are not the known knights of Camelot; rather, *Meliador* is set in a nascent Arthurian world. Dembowski divides this narrative into ten parts: a prologue and opening, four 'acts' (each of which corresponds with a tournament), three 'entr'actes', and the *Roman de Sagremor*.[1] This latter section is a departure from the primary plot between the third entr'acte and final act, and follows the adventures of the newly-introduced young knight Sagremor.

The narrative opens with the antagonist, Camel de Camois, hunting deer. He comes upon a castle where Hermondine, Princess of Scotland, and Florée, her cousin and maidservant, are staying. He falls instantly in love with Hermondine, but is portrayed as an inappropriate match due to his overzealous ardour and his somnambulism. This is the motivation for the establishment of a series of five tournaments. Florée devises these tournaments, that they shall be fought *incognito*, and that the grand champion of the tournaments shall marry Hermondine in hopes that the best knight shall defeat Camel. King Arthur and Hermont, the King of Scotland, agree to jointly sponsor the tournament-series.

Meliador, son of the Duke of Cornwall, is introduced at the first tournament (set in Scotland). Consciously deciding to love Hermondine, he adopts the identity of the Blue Knight with the Golden Sun in her honour and wins the first tournament easily. After this tournament, at Florée's behest Meliador defeats and kills Camel in single combat and rescues Florée's father, whom Camel had captured before the first tournament. In thanks, Florée gives him a ring with a secret inscription that reads 'ciz sui qui le soleil d'or porte, | par qui Oultrecuidance est morte'.[2] Meliador then rescues the minor lady Florence and sets off for the second tournament in his home of Cornwall. In a realistic touch, Meliador's ship from Scotland to Cornwall shipwrecks on the Isle of Man. Travelling to Hermondine's current abode in Aberdeen, Meliador disguises himself as a jeweller with the help of his squire

[1] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 63-87.
[2] *Meliador*, ll. 9613-4.

Lansonnés in order to meet his lady-love. When he meets her, he gives her the ring that Florée gave him.

The second tournament introduces Phenonée, Meliador's sister and organiser of this tournament, and the Norman winner Agamanor, the second-best knight after Meliador. Phenonée falls in love with Agamanor in his guise as the Red Knight. However, she fears that the *incognito* knight is in fact her brother, for she knows him to be the best of knights. After this tournament, Phenonée works to discover whether Agamanor is her brother; on finding out that he is not, she sends him a recreated version of his shield to declare her interest in him.

Meliador and Agamanor finally compete during the third tournament in Signandon (Stirling), which Meliador wins. Afterwards, Meliador gains entry to Hermondine as the knight who gave her the ring. His identity is finally revealed and they spend a chaste knight together talking under Florée's supervision. Meanwhile, Agamanor courts Phenonée. Like Meliador, he goes in disguise. Taking up the role of an artist, he creates a painting that reveals his identity as Phenonée's love.

Though the main plot threads are generally resolved, the narrative continues as Meliador journeys to Ireland, where he inspires Sagremor (here the son of the barbaric Irish king) to become a knight. This opens the *Roman de Sagremor* tangential to the main plot. Under the mentorship of the honourable Irish knight Dagor, Sagremor disobeys his father and leaves the country to become a knight. Sagremor is dubbed by Arthur, but falls in love with the maiden Sebille. Dagor rebukes Sagremor for his unseemly pining for Sebille, and tells him to earn Sebille's love through knightly renown. Chastised, Sagremor sets off alone to develop his skills and renown as a knight-errant in Sebille's name. After Sagremor fights Agamanor, the *roman* truly departs from the rest of *Meliador* as Sagremor enters the Otherworldly forest Archenai, rides a white deer, has a dream-vision of Sebille, and meets three fairy women. This more traditional Arthurian experience abruptly concludes as the narrative turns to the fourth tournament of Florée's series.

The fourth tournament is treated as the final in the series. Meliador wins again, with Agamanor in second place. Three knights in third place round out the international winners: Norse Tangis, Italian Gratien, and Welsh Dagoriset. After this, Meliador and Agamanor marry Hermondine and Phenonée respectively, the three

third-place knights marry minor ladies (Gratien marrying Florence), and Florée marries the traditional Arthurian knight Agravain.

Dembowski argued for a fifth missing act that incorporates Sagremor into the main plot via a tournament at Camelot.[3] Although the initial premise of the story discusses a five-tournament series with the intent to marry Hermondine to the winner, I am not wholly convinced that the story extended greatly beyond what is extant in MS fr. 12557, particularly as Hermondine marries Meliador after the fourth tournament and the text stops conveniently before Froissart's inspiring patron is named. However, if the manuscript as it stands is close to the one read to Gaston Fébus in the winter of 1388-1389, up to twenty folios could be missing from the end of MS fr. 12557, leaving Dembowski's suggestion a considerable possibility.

[3] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart*, pp. 128-49.

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