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Published Version

Morris, R. (1988) The knight and the superfluous lady: a problem of disposal. Reading Medieval Studies, XIV. pp. 111-124. ISSN 0950-3129 Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/85215/

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Publisher: University of Reading

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The knight and the superfluous lady: a problem of disposal

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One of the most familiar structuring principles of folktale is the promise of a bride to the achiever of a series of exploits. Guaranteed to raise feminist hackles by its reduction of the bride to a commodity, the theme could equally be accused of imprisoning the hero, who has no choice but to accept the prize.[1] It also imprisons the narrator, who must let the story end when the hero has accomplished his tasks, and who cannot multiply those tasks indefinitely for fear of losing track (as happens in the Welsh *Culhwch and Olwen*),[2] and thus, perhaps, his audience. Thus folktales are generally brief; so are the literary *lais* which draw on them. But medieval romances are characterised first by *length*: prolongation by the multiplication of originally separate episodes. The problem then arises of what to do with originally separate characters. The hero is no problem: as an active, mobile agent he can attach himself to any sets of adventures, and vice versa. Not so the heroine: the same woman can hardly be the prize of a whole series of adventures if the object of each one is to marry her off. Marriage means losing one's virginity, and this can only happen once. Thus an 'amalgamated romance' is likely to end up with a series of superfluous heroines - initially, by accident. But literary invention consists in facing up to such problems, overcoming them, and later deliberately reintroducing them in order that the ingenuity of the solution may be admired. Moreover, since romance (as opposed to folktale) allows for the development of character and the introduction of free will (on behalf of the author and/or his characters), the solutions proposed may be of profound human interest. In this paper I propose briefly to investigate the disposal of some of the superfluous ladies of Arthurian romance.

A modern novelist, using the same folktale starting point as our

romancers, would be likely to ask two initial questions. First, what if hero and heroine, forced together by the narrative tradition of the tale, dislike each other, and refuse to contemplate even the possibility of marriage? Second, what if one or more of the superfluous ladies (and the one chosen lady) become aware of each other's existence, and either make war on each other or band together against the hero? Interestingly enough, these are the questions which medieval romancers are least likely to raise, though we can feel their potentiality as an undercurrent of tension at times.[3] The first possibility is eliminated by an unvarying datum of our romances: the hero is so attractive that no woman could possibly object to marrying him. A man who is not so attractive is *ipso facto* not the hero, and so will never succeed in the tasks, or overcome the hero in battle, so as to be able to claim the lady. There is a notable exception to this rule in Malory's Beaumains,[4] whose ineligibility stinks (literally) in the nostrils of the lady Lynet; but the reader knows from the beginning that this ineligibility is only apparent. Moreover, his chosen lady, Lyones, never gets within smelling distance of him until he is cleansed of his scullion image. This attractiveness of the hero means that any lady will be willing freely to dispose of herself to him. Looked at closely, this may resemble the freedom of the stoic, who can either submit to fate with dignity or be dragged with indignity; but as presented by our authors it is a free bestowal. Equally, no lady 'won' by a hero is superfluous by virtue of being unattractive; but the conditions under which she is offered often means that the hero, and not the lady, feels compelled. This is, of course, one of the things which makes our romances courtly. It is not the lady's rebellion but her narrative superfluity which reveals something of the grimmer side of the feminine condition in the Arthurian world. There is a series of exceptions to this rule in the form of wives, daughters or maidservants who tempt the hero sexually on the orders of their male (or female) superior. This attempt to negate the free will of both parties is normally obvious from the beginning, and resented as strongly by the enforced temptress as by the hero. His reaction is usually a comic antithesis of courtesy, allowing him, author and audience what may be a welcome reaction from courtly self restraint: thus Yder kicks Yvenet's wife in the belly, Lancelot spits and wipes his mouth to remove an unwanted kiss, and Gareth hops out of one side of the bed as the temptress hops (reluctantly) in at the other.[5] The superfluity of these ladies is so obvious that their disposal presents

no problem, any more than their winning would be a triumph. There is nothing diabolical about them (unlike the temptresses of the Vulgate *Queste*, which holds anything to do with sex to be diabolical ipso facto); but they are not interesting because they are not free - except the queen of them all, Bercilak's wife in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and even she is not so much interesting in herself as for what she shows us about the hero and the developing story.[6]

This leads us to an important point. In folktale, the lady is not free to dispose of herself. Like these Arthurian temptresses, she is offered by the dominant male figure, usually the king who sends the hero out on adventure. Return to the king equals return to the heroine, who is then disposed of to the hero.[7] In Arthurian romance, this pattern is unusual. The 'dominant male figure' overall, King Arthur, does not offer the lady as a prize unless she has willingly constituted herself as such in the knowledge that her chosen husband will win the contest.[8] Normally the king and the lady, or ladies, are at opposite poles of the story, and the hero does not set out from the king's court with the fixed and sole purpose of winning any lady as a bride.[9] Most ladies are encountered en route by a hero intent on something else: involvement with them does not simplify or constitute his quest, but complicates it. The ladies know what they want - the hero; the hero often does not. Most of them are not predatory males; the hero often looks more like the quarry, and in escaping one huntress he frequently falls victim to another. Here again, however, there is an important exception to the rule: Iseult la Blonde. She is offered by her father as prize to the slayer of a troublesome dragon, and while it is clear that she does not want the false claimant, the seneschal, it is not at all clear, in the early versions containing this incident, that she wants the true one, Tristan. The free disposal of her person is denied her. Nor does Tristan want her; and she is not in fact bestowed on him, the folktale victor, but on King Mark - who does not really want her either.[10] But the drinking of the potion binds her against - or rather over - her will to the man who 'won' her in the first place, so that the folktale theme is forced back on course again. The ensuing underlying persuasion that Iseult is Tristan's as of narrative right probably contributes, in versions like Eilhart's and Beroul's, to the audience's uneasy belief in the justice of the lovers' cause. On this and on more sophisticated psychological grounds, Iseult aux Blanches Mains must be considered as the superfluous lady; and yet the problem of 'disposal' bears on Iseult la Blonde, who is married off to Mark as if to clear the way for

Iseult the second. It is interesting to watch Thomas and Gottfried toying with this question of which lady is superfluous by suggesting that the two are in a way different manifestations of the same woman. (And, in ironic modern commentary, T.H. White has King Arthur remark that Tristan 'got those two girls completely mixed up'.)[11]

The possibility of various ladies meeting is rendered unlikely in medieval Arthurian romances by their narrative and spatial structure. The interlace technique allows for one story to be told in a series of instalments; it seldom permits two stories to coalesce. The spatial structure favours isolation for all major characters: the knight alone in the forest, the ladies each in her separate castle. (Where a number of highborn ladies do get together, as in Arthur's mother's castle in the *Conte du Graal*, or perhaps the Castle of Maidens in the Vulgate *Queste*, the ensemble is often perceived as vaguely sinister.)[12] Even when to modern eyes the story seems fairly to force a confrontation (the two Iseults, Guinevere and Pelles' daughter or the maid of Escalot), authors generally do all they can to avoid it: the eternal triangle can only be constituted if one of its members is already safely dead! Much more usually, the various heroines do not even know of each other's existence; or if they do (as in the *Bel Inconnu*, the Escalot case and with some of Gawain's cast-offs),[13] they do not perceive each other as individuals, but as obstacles of similar status to other rival attractions like the Grail - which can be just as effective in rendering a lady, or all ladies, superfluous. It is the hero, and, more acutely, the reader, who weigh up the rival ladies and dispense their sympathies accordingly. If anyone remains undecided, however, it is the reader. None of the heroes with whom I am concerned is torn between two or more ladies of equal merit in his own eyes. His true love is given to one, or none. It is the reader who may cast doubt on his choice. The hero sees the problem, precisely, as one of disposal: his agonies are agonies of embarrassment, not of indecision.

How, then, can a lady who has been fairly won, and who consents to 'choose' the hero, be disposed of? Of course, the simplest method is to allow the hero to marry each lady he comes across, and hope that the audience will forget her before the next one comes along. Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Lanzelet notoriously accumulated four wives in much this way.[14] But Ulrich is not unaware of the difficulties; being unwilling (or unable) to resolve them, he actually accentuates them for comic effect, while making it clear that only one lady and wife, Yblis, is worthy of retention. Of the potential disposables,

Galagandreiz' daughter is a minx, Ade's marriage apparently remains unconsummated, and the queen of Pluris is a gorgon. Lanzelet is not guilty of irresponsibility in either accumulating or abandoning his superfluous brides, for he is extremely careful to make suitable arrangements for the really important element in the bargain, the lands that go with each lady. Other heroes will dispose of such lands as enthusiastically as they do of the lady; but responsibility is the last thing which most of our heroes want.

The next simplest method is a false promise of return. The 'love them and leave them' hero must be one of the most universal figures in literature, as in life. In our romances his usual embodiment is, of course, Gawain, whose innumerable conquests figure largely in the study on him by Keith Busby. Gawain's donjuanesque character, however, springs not just from universal typical appeal, but also from particular narrative necessity. King's court and marriageable lady are, as we have seen, normally at opposite narrative poles. But Gawain, as Busby points out,[15] belongs to the court: he could never marry and leave it permanently. Nor, as the doyen of knights errant, could he ever settle down - which clearly implies that all knights errant are potentially 'errant' in the sexual and moral sense as well! Thus - until the final English joke of 'Dame Ragnell'[16] - informed audiences will always know that any lady encountered by Gawain is up for disposal. Some of them - unusually for Arthurian ladies in the 'disposal' position - are aware of it themselves.[17] None attracts much pity, for all chose - if they did not vamp - the irresistible Gawain in the first place, and they all survive the shock of being deserted. But we see that their feminine freedom ends where Gawain's freedom begins. The ladies, frequent in later prose romances, who lay deathtraps for Gawain and his kind can only be trying to limit that masculine freedom - but in a way that would not free them, the ladies, but only consummate their enslavement, as is demonstrated by the *pucele* in *Perlesvaus* who keeps four coffins ever ready, for Gawain, Perceval, Lancelot - and herself.[18]

Gawain, armed with a permanent safe-conduct from narrative tradition, is thus allowed to ride away from his obligations: an indication, maybe, that the intended audience was not overwhelmingly female! There are, however, other cases in which a knight's insincerity and desire to escape are deliberately exploited. Yvain is a classic case.[19] Love internalises, and the narrative centralises, the folktalish compulsion to marry Laudine, but Gawain's warning to

Yvain reawakens his need to escape from what was always a prison, however happy the prisoner felt himself to be. (The consistent linking of faithful love with imprisonment in courtly writing is no mere conceit: it bespeaks the man's terror of female entrapment, which a knight errant, inherently mobile, seems best equipped to escape.) Subsequently, Yvain must, as has often been stated, learn true responsibility towards Laudine[20] - or at least he must learn a way of turning the tables so that Laudine is the one under compulsion. But he can only do either by learning to escape from the kind of trap which Laudine represented for him, so that in future he will know how to call his soul, if not his heart, his own. So he practises on superfluous ladies whose disposal becomes progressively more difficult. Fighting for the Dame de Noroison, he establishes himself in her and her people's eyes as the ideal husband and territorial overlord (3249-50, 3313-14, 3327-31). Lanzelet would have accepted the wife for the sake of the lands; Yvain refuses both. We may feel that his account with Noroison is already in balance, since she healed him of his madness. Yvain's problem, like that of all Arthurian knights in transit, is not how to gain a reward, but how to avoid gaining one which would immobilise him. This is why he can accept to be 'wedded' to the lion, which, as two critics have recently observed, behaves very like a woman - or rather, one particular woman, Enide.[21] But Enide is most unusual in that her husband succeeds in mobilising her as well as himself, so that the marriage trap is, if not sprung, shifted. We may observe, however, that if 'leo est femina', then Laudine herself becomes superfluous, and only becomes the Chosen again when the 'chevalier au lion' is revealed as Yvain.

The Harpin de la Montagne adventure presents the classic symptoms of a superfluous lady: *pucele* threatened with unwanted marriage, father waiting to overflow with gratitude towards her deliverer. But three elements here negate the potential and spare Yvain embarrassment: his haste, which neutralises him emotionally; the fact that this adventure is really borrowed from Gawain, who in any case is related to the *pucele* involved, who thus does not come over as a potential bride; and the presence of the lion, which, curled up by Yvain's bed (4018-23), discourages any amorous assult, whether it be regarded as a sort of jealous mistress or simply as a large fierce animal! But if Yvain here is given a moment of safety, it is only in order that he can be the better entrapped in the *pesme aventure*. The

daughter here is presented in a classically appetising way - far more so than was the initially distracted Laudine. Her father considers both the battle, and his daughter as the prize of it, to be compulsory. Chrétien affords us an exquisitely amusing view of Yvain as he writhes in the double trap. His decision to fight the two *netun* is not altruistic, for it is the only way to escape with honour; but escaping this spike of the trap serves only to impale him more firmly on the other! He passes from flattery to cold courtesy, and from coldness to open rudeness (Qui vialt, si l'ait! Je n'en ai soing', 5986), but eventually he has to cut and run. It is not Yvain's human sympathy but his host's that finally permits this retreat: abandoning his folktalish pose (as it were), the father admits: 'Ja ma fille n'avrai si vil / que je par force la vos doigne' 5760-1). But she *is* vile in Yvain's eyes. Dubost suggests that his promise to return and marry her is sincerely meant, but that he is confused in his mind and really means Laudine.[22] I think it is simple desperation, and a fine irony. Throughout the later part of the romance, Yvain can only fulfil one obligation by being (or risking being) false to another. But it is here that the three hundred proto-capitalist silkweavers come in. The connection of their release to the defeat of the two *netun* is loose, and it is played down until the end of the episode. Then, Yvain departs: not slinking away from a woman he has falsely promised to marry, but surrounded by three hundred rejoicing, grateful, happily superfluous maidens who can trample his shame under their many feet.

The cynical promise becomes a way of life in *Perlesvaus*,[23] which focuses on the adventures of the four heroes who can never, by tradition, commit themselves to a new love: Gawain (forever free), Lancelot (bound to Guinevere), Perceval (vowed to chastity) and Arthur (here, a respectable monarch and husband, bound to Guinevere in life and death as surely as Lancelot is). *Perlesvaus* is not much interested in amorous delicacy. Its women are certainly free and willing to dispose of themselves, but they do so lustfully ('s'esprent de s'amor si durement que pres va qu'el ne li cort seure', pp. 152-3), and this justifies the polite duplicity of their victims ('il a molt a dire entre som samblant e sa pensee', p.289). It is not the author's attitude but his style which works in favour of the superfluous ladies. In a story with a linear structure, what is done is done and can be forgotten. Such a story doubtless appeals to the frightened child in all of us, who hopes that his sins may not only not find him out, but may miraculously cease to be. *Yvain* is not a simple linear structure,

but the point of return is the fountain: outlying loci need only be passed through once. In a fully interlaced structure like that of *Perlesvaus*, the hero will always keep coming back to the same places and the same people; and in *Perlesvaus*, those people have extraordinarily tenacious memories. It is, indeed, the word 'tenacity' which comes to mind rather than 'fidelity', for the ladies, like the two damsels of the Evil Custom and the resourceful vamp of the Chateau de la Gripe, have no respect either for themselves or for the finer personal characteristics of the knights. We are left with the impression that *courtoisie*, originally (as in the lyric) an offensive weapon in the mouth of the would-be male seducer, has become a defensive weapon in the mouth of the would-not-be male seduced. Words like 'amor', 'service', 'amie', 'fiance' now mean a good deal less than they say. Moreover, while the old exploit-and-reward mechanism is still in place, characters have now become aware of it. The women are aggressively conscious of the rights it gives them: 'Vos me desrainastes par l'espiel e par la costume del chastel, si ne m'osez avoir par mauvestié e par perece.' The men are defensively indignant at the unexpected, distracting and unreasonable demands which a newly interlaced adventure makes on them: ' "Conment," fet Lancelox, "je ne sui ça dedenz venu se por herbergier non, et vos me volez si tost embatre en mesllee?" '. These superfluous ladies do not accept their superfluity and they are most unwilling to be disposed of. Their power here is limited, since the ultimate goals of the heroes are not amorous at all; but they look fascinatingly like ancestresses of the monstrous regiment of the *Quinze Joies de mariage* (from fisher-king to fisher-queens, with the knights threshing, not yet happy in the net?).

Perceval himself, in *Perlesvaus*, points towards the virgin knights of the Vulgate *Queste* for whom all women are superfluous, and where even a night's lodging is normally offered only by hermits, the antithesis of sexual temptation. The Grail shifts all adventures on to another plane, where no woman can compete. If we may briefly go backwards along a different track, however, this supremacy of the Grail was not inevitable from the start. It is quite possible that Chrétien did not consider Blanchefleur and the Grail to be rivals; he may have intended the grail problem to vanish once the vital question had been answered, leaving Perceval free to marry Blanchefleur. Gerbert de Montreuil, indeed, has them marry and hints that this is what Chrétien would have wanted; but the marriage remains

unconsummated, in deference to the *Queste's* insistence on the supreme value of virginity, and Perceval's future family, when sex for procreation is finally allowed, will be linked indissolubly to the grail quest. Thus, even here Blanchefleur is hovering on the edge of superfluity; the marriage takes place half way through the continuation, and is then virtually forgotten. In other continuations she is deserted with little compunction; the Perceval of the Second Continuation, hastening from his seduction of her in order to pursue that of the damsel of the Magic Chessboard, is one of the most consummate cads in Arthurian romance. Blancefleur's real misfortune, however, is to have followed Perceval into a literary subgenre in which she is not just superfluous but irrelevant. She lingers parthetically because of the continuators' deference to Chrétien, or, to put it less politely, because they will not make the effort to find a kindly way of disposing of her.[24] She has a posthumous revenge, however (as it were) when the values of the *Queste* are, in late works, mingled with, and eventually swamped by those of the easygoing prose *Tristan*, in which it is the grail that is an encombrance, barely worth the trouble of a reluctant year and a day.[25]

Let us now turn to some cases in which the knight feels some sort of obligation towards the superfluous lady, or in which she fully engages our symparthy in her fight against relegation. Here, we may approach psychological drama and even tragedy.

An interesting and exceptional case is that of *Fergus*.[26] Only one lady is actually involved, but she actually manages to be a sort of rival to herself. She begins badly, by being out of position. As the classic eager hostess, she tries to insinuate herself into the hero's bed before he has deserved any reward from her, and before she even has a task to propose to him. Fergus, shocked by her impropriety (social and narratological), spurns her. This disruption of normal patterns continues in that, though Fergus duly promises to return to the castle, the embarrassed Galiene does not wait but removes herself, thus (unusually) becoming herself the object of the hero's later quest. Towards the end of the romance she is back in position as the besieged lady, but Fergus is then out of position - outside the castle, not in - so that she has to offer herself as prize in a tourney before they are eventually united, still virtual strangers to each other. Galiene is thus more active than the classic Arthurian lady and seems to be disposing freely of herself, but in fact she is only manoeuvering herself clumsily into positions where men can dispose of her. This is

what makes her attractive to Fergus: she is a lady to be sought, not one to stumble on or to escape.

The position in *Le Bel Inconnu* is not dissimilar. Vamped by one lady (though he has already 'won' her), the hero escapes from her and rescues another, with whom he is eventually united after (re)winning her in a tourney. Here, however, the two ladies remain separate, and the hero loves only the first, with whom he is *not* reunited, in life or death, at the end. This romance has received much critical acclaim recently for its sophisticated linking of the hero's fate with that of the author or authorial persona; and there has been some disagreement as to which lady is 'superfluous'.[27] The two ladies never meet, and the second remains unaware of the existence of the first. She (Blanches Mains) claims to have organised the entire adventure leading to the winning of Blonde Esmeree in order to get the hero for herself. (4964ff.) If this is so, she miscalculated in allowing Blonde Esmeree freedom of movement, which allows her to go to Arthur's court and engage its power in her favour. Blanches-Mains, the most clearly fairy-like of all the so-called 'fairy mistresses' in Arthurian romance, seems unable either to leave her island or to hold the hero there against his will. By calling her 'Blanches Mains', and by having the hero 'fight' a serpent in order to win Blonde Esmeree, the author seems to be inviting comparison with the two Isoldes. But which corresponds to which? And which of the two Isoldes was superfluous anyway? Blanches Main's power is, of course, really as illusory as Blonde Esmeree's. Only the author has power - and he has abrogated it to his lady. She alone can decide which of the ladies is to remain superfluous. But if she decides to overturn the *status quo*, and allow the hero to rejoin Blanches Mains, then she herself will have to yield to her lover: the re-establishment of female power in the romance means the relinquishing of it in real life. It is a man's word, after all.

The most pathetic of all superfluous ladies, because the most sustainedly conscious of their plight, are Pelles' daughter and the maid of Escalot,[28] both victims of Lancelot's deviant but undeviating devotion to Guinevere - who, of course, has no real right to him and should properly be superfluous herself, as indeed she declares herself to be at the end of the *Mort Artu*. Pelles' daughter is at first used as a temptress: not, as usual, to test the hero's chastity, but the reverse. Unusually again for a temptress, she sacrifices herself willingly (IV. 209). But she is so profoundly superfluous herself that she has to take the form of Guinevere in order to attract Lancelot's attention at all. If

she were content with her deeper function - to be a vessel for Galahad - we should not worry much about her fate. But she tries to take that fate in her own hand by pursuing Lancelot to court and forcing him to take notice of her - or at least of Guinevere's reaction to her (VI. 171ff.) She is no emotional match for the queen, and when Lancelot is with her on the ironically named 'Isle de Joie' she becomes the epitome of all the imprisoning ladies whom Arthurian knights spend so much time trying to escape (VI. 231). Guinevere acts towards her like a jealous cat, Lancelot like a lout, and her father like an evil old pandar: the whole story predisposes us to accept the total rejection of sex by her redeemed offspring, Galahad.

By the time the maid of Escalot makes her bid for Lancelot, Galahad and his ideals are dead and gone. Total purity is no longer possible, and in an ageing world innocence has no chance either. The maid's youth, her naivety, her social inferiority (all most sympathetically portrayed) are against her. When she realises what she is up against she neither fights nor protests; she disposes of herself in the ultimate passivity of death. But her posthumous message, 'por loiaument amer sui ge a ma fin venue' (p.89) is a bitter comment on the whole action of the *Mort*, in which all come to a sad end 'por desloiaument amer' on Guinevere's and Lancelot's behalf. By declaring the maid to be superfluous Lancelot casts off his last chance of avoiding doom. She was the last thing that could happen in that world 'par aventure', and the openness of 'aventure' always implies some sort of hope. From now on, grim destiny is in control.

Whether or not they win our sympathy, superfluous ladies are always seen by Arthurian heroes as a threat: sometimes to their already pledged honour, but always to their freedom. On this ground, *all* Arthurian ladies are ultimately superfluous. The most desirable ending in real feudal life - a secure marriage and a rich fief - is the antithesis of what a knight errant really desires. He does not want to grow up, and we do not want him to, because when he does his story will end. If the lady exercises her sole freedom - to dispose of herself to the man she has chosen and has a right to - this ends the limitless freedom of her victim. It is, perhaps, partly because this idea is so pervasive that the Arthurian romances, for all their serious and excellent literary (and political) content, were long and widely relegated to the nursery in the post-medieval centuries.

NOTES

[1] See V. Propp, *Morphologie du conte* (Paris, 1970), pp.35-80, 112-44. For an application of Proppian ideas to literary *lais*, see E. Sinaert, *Les Lais de Marie de France* (Paris, 1978), pp.18-45.

[2] See G. Jones and T. Jones, *The Mabinogion*, Everyman's Library 97 (London, 1949), pp.95-136 and introduction, p.xxii.

[3] E.g. *Le Bel Inconnu*, ed. G.P. Williams, Classiques Français du Moyen Age 38 (Paris, 1929); Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant*, ed. D. Buschinger, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 202 (Göppingen, 1976), pp.733-57; *Lancelot*, ed. A. Micha, 9 vols, TLF (Geneva, 1978-83), vols. IV, 202-395 passim, VI. 171-231 passim; *La Mort Artu*, ed. J. Frappier, TLF (Geneva, 1964), 1-107 passim.

[4] Malory, *Works*, ed. E. Vinaver, one vol. Oxford Standard Authors (London, 1971), pp.177-226, especially pp.180-97.

[5] *Yder*, ed. A. Adams, Arthurian Studies VIII (Cambridge & Totowa, 1983), 260-464; *Lancelot*, ed. Micha, III. p.199; Malory, pp.192-4. See also Ph. Ménard, *Le Rire et le sourire dans le roman courtois français au Moyen Age*, PRF 105 (Geneva, 1969), pp.282-3; J.-C. Payen, 'La destruction des mythes courtoises dans le roman arthurien', *Revue des Langues Romanes* 78 (1969), 213-28.

[6] For a recent view of *Sir Gawain* see for example W.R.J. Barron, 'The ambivalence of adventure: verbal ambiguity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in P. Grout et. al. (eds.), *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages*, Arthurian Studies VII (Cambridge & Totowa, 1983), pp.28-40.

[7] Propp, pp.35-80, 112-44; A. Aarne, trans. and enlarged S. Thompson, *Types of the Folktale* (Helsinki, 1961), pp.284-90.

[8] *Fergus*, ed. W. Frescoln (Philadelphia, 1983), 6340-64; *Bel Inconnu*, 5267-84. See M.-L. Chênerie, *Le Chevalier errant dans les romans arthuriens en vers des 12^{e} et 13^{e} siècles*, PRF 192 (Geneva, 1986), pp.438-40.

[9] The principle exception is *Durmart li Galois* (ed. J. Gildea, 2 vols., Philadephia, 1965). So many other adventures intervene, however, that we easily forget the original object of the quest. See B. Schmolke-Hasselman, *Der Arthurische Versroman von Chrestien bis Froissart*, Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 177 (Tübingen, 1980), 139-46.

[10] Eilhart, pp.129-78; Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, trans. A.T. Hatto (Harmondsworth, 1960), pp.163-206.

[11] T.H. White, *The Once and Future King*, Fontana (London, 1962), p.494. For an excellent short account of Tristan's two ladies, and similar problems, see J.M. Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval*

Literature (New York and London, 1975), pp.65-97.

[12] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Conte du Graal*, ed. W. Roach, TLF (Geneva, 1959), 8983-9188; *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. A. Pauphilet, CFMA 33 (Paris, 1923), pp.47-51. On interlace see the classic account by E. Vinaver, *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford, 1971), pp.68-98.

[13] For details of Gawain's cast-offs see K. Busby, *Gauvain in Old French Literature*, (Amsterdam, 1980), passim, and conclusion, pp.390-96.

[14] Ulrich von Zaztikhoven, *Lanzelet*, trans. K. Webster, ed. R.S. Loomis (New York, 1951), passim, and introduction, p.9. For a folktale involving the acquisition of four wives see Aarne and Thompson, *Types*, p.289, motif 856.iii.

[15] Busby, p.382.

[16] 'The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell', in D.B. Sands (ed.), *Middle English Verse Romances*, (New York, 1966), 323-47.

[17] See for example Busby, pp.189-90.

[18] *Perlesvaus*, ed. W.A. Nitze and T.A. Jenkins, 2 vols. (New York, 1932), vol. I., pp.81-82.

[19] Ed. M. Roques, CFMA 89 (Paris, 1960).

[20] For a recent reiteration of this view see M. Santucci, 'Amour, mariage et transgression dans le *Chevalier au lion*', in D. Buschinger and A. Crepin (eds.), *Amour, mariage et transgression au Moyen Age*, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 420 (Göppingen, 1987), pp.161-71.

[21] F. Dubost, 'Le Chevalier au lion. Une "conjointure" signifiant', *Moyen Age* 90 (1984), 195-222 (211-18); A. Gier, 'Leo est femina', in E.P. Ruhe and R. Behrens (eds.), *Mittelalterbilder aus neuer Perspektive*, Beitrages zur romanischen Philologie des Mittelalters 14 (Munich, 1985), pp.269-88.

[22] Dubost, p.218.

[23] Cf. Ménard, p.285.

[24] *Conte du Graal*, II. 1750ff.; *Continuations of the Perceval*, ed. W. Roach, 5 vols., (Philadelphia, 1952-83), vol. IV., 22552ff.; vol. V., 39027ff.; Gerbert de Montreuil, *Continuation*, ed. M. Williams and M. Oswald, 3 vols., CFMA 28, 50, 101 (Paris, 1922-75), 5128ff., 6155ff.

[25] See F. Bogdanow, *The Romance of the Grail*, (Manchester, 1965), pp.88-120.

[26] On Fergus see Schmolke-Hasselman, pp.130-38; D.D.R. Owen, 'The craft of Guillaume Le Clerc's *Fergus*', in L.A. Arrathoon(ed.), *The Craft of Fiction*, (Rochester, Michigan, 1984), pp.47-81.

[27] G. Chandes, 'Amour, mariage et transgression dans le *Bel Inconnu*,

in Buschinger and Crepin, pp.325-33; Ferrante, pp.87-90; J.S. Guthrie, 'The Je(u) in the *Bel Inconnu*: auto-referentiality and pseudo-autobiography', *Romanic Review* 75 (1984), 147-61.

[28] See F. Lot, *Etude sur le Lancelot en prose* (Paris, 1918), pp.425ff.; J. Frappier, *Etude sur la Mort le roi Artu* (Geneva, 1968), pp.294-307.