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**The Idea of Exchange in Arthurian Legends**

As more details were added into the text of Arthurian legends in those that were produced more closed to the modern era, the knights in the old poems gradually change from flat, saint-like, perfect heroes to more three-dimensional character who cannot always be true to the chivalric code. During the adventures, their spirits are challenged, and different choices are made during the process in order to get out of the dilemmas. The change of literature reflects the change of the society, and people's expectation.

Of all the ideas that are presented, the most impressive one is the concept of "exchange" in the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In this poem, not every offer can be accepted without paying its price.

The first exchange happened at the beginning, in King Arthur's court the Green Knight offered to be struck by someone presented at the feast, and in return, the person who accepted that quest shall be struck back in a year by him. This is a challenge brought by the Green Knight indeed, in order to compromise the authority of his reign, but it also reflects the ethics that those who kill people shall also be killed. Actually, considering the heavy impact that Roman Catholic Church has on the West Europe during medieval era, such exchange is not only a secular rule, but also backed by religious ideals that in bible, we can easily find the parallels of it. For example, in Leviticus, we have "Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death" and in Genesis, there is also " If anyone takes a human life, that person's life will also be taken by human hands". As a knight who serves his lord with loyalty and the LORD with faith, Sir Gawain is naturally bound to this restriction and so are the other knights and aristocrats in medieval courts.

As Sir Gawain started his journey, the second exchange surfaced, that the owner of the castle (who we later know is the Green Knight himself) set a contract with Gawain that whatever he gets outside in the hunt shall be exchanged with whatever Gawain gets in the castle. And that's the exchange on the surface, while the real exchange is the welcome and generosity of the host for kindness, politeness and loyalty of the guest. In the last part of the poem, the reason that Gawain was not hurt at all by the first two hits is because he refused the seduction of the lady of the castle. This shows that Sir Gawain's behavior is virtuous and rewardable and thus it can be seen that being a kind guest was generally praised and rewarded in the society at that time. Although we see that in some Arthurian stories the adultery affair between Sir Lancelot and Guinevere is sometimes sympathized, we see that generally such treacherous action is still not welcomed in the society.

The third exchange connects the last two parts of the poem, that by accepting the lady in the castle's gift without reporting to his host, Sir Gawain was punished and was left a minor scar in the third struck. In this scenario, receiving the belt that make him invincible not only compromised Sir Gawain's perfectness and make him more like a human. Even though Sir Gawain is one of the best knights at King Arthur's court, his valor sometimes may still be defeated by his instinct for survival, which is exactly why he accepted that belt. But just as the virtuous behaviors will be rewarded, any inappropriate acts for a knight, or just for a normal human, even those that are understandable, should be as well punished. And that is the price for accepting an offer that is not supposed to.

The first three exchanges that Sir Gawain experienced is pretty obvious, while the last one is a little harder for the audience to notice. While Sir Gawain successfully survived from the challenge of the Green Knight and earned his reputation for his bravery and purity, he fell in the trap of Morgan Le Fay and unconsciously became a green knight of his. As a result of that, Sir Gawain won reputation and glory for himself and King Arthur's court but also introduced instability into the court of his lord. Although, no text directly mentioned how becoming a green knight made Sir Gawain contribute to the downfall of the famous court, but we see from Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the feud between Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot after the knight of the lake killed two kinsmen of Gawain's when rescuing Guinevere contributed to the split of the Round Table, which eventually led to Sir Mordred’s usurping and the death of King Arthur. Hence, it is reasonable to say that with reputation usually comes with risks and danger. In order to seize the opportunity, not only courage is needed, but also careful consideration is needed before any action is done, or that action may really cause disastrous results.

From all these instances, we see that how plots in literature reflect the social codes and the publication inversed further spread out those rules of chivalry, and thus influence generations of audience around the whole world.