

LYBEAUS DESCONUS

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INTRODUCTION

Lybeaus Desconus belongs to a widely disseminated intertextual network of narratives in which a handsome and mysterious young outsider comes to the Arthurian court to prove himself worthy of inclusion. Raised in the wilderness and given the nickname Bewfiz (Beautiful Son) by his mother in most versions of the tale, the young man lacks any “real” identity; when he appears before the king unable to articulate a name deemed appropriate for a reputable chevalier, he receives a temporary designation — Lybeaus Desconus, the Fair Unknown — along with an opportunity to demonstrate his physical prowess and intrinsic nobility. The young knight is then tested in the ways in which nearly all medieval romance heroes are tested, and in the course of his quest he learns about chivalric codes of behavior and the truth of his birthright as Guinglain, the illegitimate son of one of the most famous of Arthur’s knights — Sir Gawain.

By whichever name this young man is known in the tale’s many variants, individual, familial, and communal identities form a nexus of recurring medieval concerns. The mode of chivalry practiced by Arthurian knights and the potentiality for an illegitimate young man to discover who he is, who his parents are, where he belongs, and what he is destined to do, all make for compelling narration. That the aspiring youth achieves his reputation and social status not merely on his good looks but rather by earning recognition as one of Arthur’s most notable retainers suggests an appreciation for the role that determination and courage play in the making of a respectable knight, especially one who has been excluded from the court by circumstances beyond his control. The story of the illegitimate but chivalric son not only imagines a place for any disenfranchised youth in courtly society but provides the means by which estranged parents may be reunited and kinship relations legitimatized.

The closest analogue to the Middle English *Lybeaus Desconus* is Renaut de Bâgé’s 6,266-line, late twelfth-century Old French poem, *Li Biaus Descouneüs* (*Le Bel Inconnu*), which perhaps explains why the story is repeatedly referred to as “the Frensshe tale.”¹ Other analogues typically associated with the Fair Unknown tradition, which vary in length and emphasis as well as in language and culture, are the Middle High German *Wigalois* by Wirnt von Grafenberg; its own close analogue, the anonymous *Wigamur* (both exceeding 6,000 lines); and the Italian *Carduino*, which consists of two cantari in ottava rima of a mere thirty-five and seventy-two stanzas respectively.² While the German and Italian variants may be

¹ Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu*. Renaut de Bâgé, formerly known as Renaut de Beujeu, is thought to have written his poem c. 1195.

² von Grafenberg, *Wigalois*; *Wigamur*, ed. Busch; *Cantari di Carduino*, ed. Branca; see also *I Cantari di Carduino*, ed. Rajna.

considered adaptations of Renaut's poem,³ as to some extent is Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth," many other retellings may be more aptly described as episodic parallels or the products of transformative motifs or "memes" with the capacity, as Helen Cooper suggests, "to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures."⁴ Narratives as diverse as the Middle English *Sir Perceval of Galles*, the Irish/Scottish *Laoidh an Amadain Mhoir* (a goatskin-clad simpleton raised outside of civilization), and the Welsh *Peredur, Son of Evrawg*, whose mother whisks him away from court and raises him in the wilderness, reflect diverse recastings of this oft-told tale.⁵ Accounts of the Fair Unknown prompt additional stories that move in different directions, in other words, whether by translation and adaptation or by more subtle shifts in emphasis, characterization, and narrative framing. Memes such as the illegitimate/orphaned/abandoned child, the sovereign/loathly lady, or the supernatural/bestial/human hybrid, to name a few, have the capacity to mutate and reemerge as autonomous narratives in different cultures at different times.

LI BIAUS DESCOUNEÜS AND LYBEAUS DESCONUS

While the Old French *Li Biaus Descouneüs* and the Middle English *Lybeaus Desconus* resemble one another in terms of basic narrative structure, there are a number of differences that distinguish the later Middle English poem from its French predecessor.⁶ The French poem is controlled by the voice of a courtly narrator who dedicates his creative work to his lady, indulges in frequent interjections, and revels in lengthy ethical asides on the necessity for a knight's courtesy to the ladies and taking matters of the heart seriously. This apparatus is omitted in the English poem, whose poet establishes instead a distinctly omniscient distance, adhering to the facts of the events with minimal interpretive and/or philosophical commentary, particularly in relation to love and the women so integral to its expression. Rather than beginning with an encomium to a lady and setting the stage for the courtliness of romance, the English *Lybeaus* begins in a way commensurate with many English and Scottish tail-rhyme romances, that is, with an explicit invocation to "Jhesus Criste oure Saviour / and His Moder, that swete floure" (Lambeth, lines 1–2).⁷ Moreover, the

³ Predelli, *Bel Gherardino*, argues that elements of the Fair Unknown story circulated in Europe earlier than Renaut's version. Renaut drew on these, of course, but so did the *Lybeaus* poet and the *Carduino* poet (p. 227).

⁴ H. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 3.

⁵ Still other analogues named as part of the Fair Unknown tradition with various degrees of resemblance include an Old Yiddish narrative called *Widwilt*, the Old French *Le Chevalier du Papegau*, Claude Platin's *L'hystoire de Giglan*, Robert de Blois's *Beaudos*, *Le Roman de Belris*, a 140-line fragment called "Gogulor," *Bel Gherardino*, *Ponzela Gaia*, the English *Ipomadon*, and Ulrich Von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet*.

⁶ The two narratives resemble each other structurally in the first part only, as the Middle English romance omits the second part, which continues the story after the disenchantment of the Lady of Synadoun. Also, only major differences in plot and characterization are noted in this introduction; minor variations and other details appear in the Explanatory Notes.

⁷ According to Carol Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre*, such invocations form part of the self-consciousness of English romances and constitute a deliberate realignment of the narrative away from the French tradition (p. 32).

English poem's brevity and focus upon the action-adventure components of the narrative underscore a modest narrative economy. The elaborate detail of the French poem — the list of knights at court and at tournament, lengthy descriptions of clothing, armor, décor, urban and natural landscapes, and material wealth — gives way to concision in an English work that intensifies the progressive complexities of the episodic plot. In a move toward a more prescriptive and streamlined retelling of the Fair Unknown story, in other words, the English *Lybeaus* poet concentrates on pivotal scenes among fewer characters refashioned in accordance with the poem's emphasis and concerns. These reconstructed figures appear in episodes that reveal the inexperienced nature of the novice chevalier often referred to as a "child" until he proves himself worthy of inclusion in Arthur's retinue. In its emphasis on the youthful knight's bumbling attempts at courtesy and his eventual acquisition of experience in love and chivalry, the narrative takes on characteristics of a medieval conduct book for a popular rather than an aristocratic audience.⁸

Another notable variation between the French and the English versions of the poem is in the account of the early childhood experience of the hero (his *enfances*) outside the Arthurian court. In the French version, his identity as the illegitimate son of Gawain is kept in abeyance until later in the poem, at the moment he is called upon to proffer the transformative kiss that only Gawain or a kinsman of Gawain can provide. In the English version, however, the revelation to the audience of the hero's "real" name and his relationship to Gawain occurs early, immediately foregrounding the matters of identity so central to Fair Unknown narratives.⁹ The young man appears before the court not knowing his legitimate name, whereupon Arthur, apparently equating nobility, integrity, and success with the boy's good looks, dubs him the Fair Unknown and promises him the first boon to come along. When a maiden (Helie in the French, Elene in the English) comes to court to procure a champion who will liberate her lady (la Blonde Esmere in the French, the Lady of Synadoun in the English), the inexperienced knight reminds Arthur of his earlier promise and receives the king's permission to participate in the quest, much to the maiden's dismay. Another important difference between the two poems is embedded in this scene — when the maiden asks for a knight in the French version she describes him as one who must not only be combat-ready but prepared to withstand the infamous *fier baiser* (fearsome kiss) in order to break the magic spell cast upon her lady. Judged by the maiden to be too young and inexperienced, the Fair Unknown appears unqualified to endure such dangerous intimacy. In the English version, the achievement of the fearsome kiss is not listed among the hero's expected qualifications at the poem's beginning; we must wait until *Lybeaus* is ready to stand up to the test before considering the maturity of his valor.

Nonetheless, the audacious young man accompanies the lady and her dwarf (a character given greater license to speak in the English version) and soon engages in combat with a series of formidable opponents. Beginning with the guard of the Perilous Ford, Blioblieris and his cohort, followed in the next scene by two giants caught in the act of raping a young woman (Clarie in the French version, Violet in the English), *Lybeaus*'s successes impress all

⁸ *Lybeaus Desconus* and other verse romances are often categorized as popular romances, a frequently pejorative classification that colors both style and audience. For a recent discussion of the problems associated with the idea of popular romance audience, see Field, "Popular Romance," and Radulescu, "Genre and Classification."

⁹ See M. Dickson, "Female Doubling and Male Identity in Medieval Romance."

who watch him vanquish his opponents with methodical aplomb. In the French version, the rescued maiden's presence carries over into the next episode in a dispute over a lost dog, which turns out to be a test of the knight's willingness to take up what amounts to a trivial challenge. Li Biaus's attempts to persuade Clarie to return the brachet to its rightful owner (l'Orguillous de la Lande) are met with adamant refusal, at which point its master prepares to retrieve his property by force. In the English version, the dog episode occurs later, where it is the messenger Elene, not Violet/Clarie, who claims the animal. When Lybeaus and Elene encounter the whelp (lost for eight years) Elene admires its beauty, and Lybeaus bestows the dog upon her. When they come upon the original owner, in a gesture of chivalric courtesy, Lybeaus defends the right of Elene to keep the wandering whelp and fights for the claim on her behalf. Whether this act constitutes an error in judgment is left to the audience to decide.

The episode of the sparrowhawk in the French poem is likewise markedly different from its English counterpart. The custom associated with the prized bird is as follows: "any maiden who gains possession of the hawk by taking it from its perch will be renowned as the most beautiful of women. But the maiden who wishes to have this hawk must bring with her a knight who will maintain that she is more beautiful than any other lady or maiden," and challenge by force of arms his claim against the reigning champion.¹⁰ Seeing the hawk, desired by a lady named Margery whose own beloved knight has died in an effort to acquire the bird, persuades Li Biaus to take up her cause. In an astonishing twist in the French narrative, however, the presumably beautiful lady, who is defended by the Knight of the Falcon, is actually "quite ugly and wrinkled," a revelation that prompts the poet's rationalization: "Love makes the ugliest woman seem a beauty, so skilled are her ways of deceit and enchantment."¹¹ In the English version the scene has been cast into a beauty contest grounded in the mercantile realities of the marketplace, omitting reference to love's deceptive powers. Unfairly and unilaterally pitted against the lady of the Knight of the Falcon in order to provoke combat, Elene, while not unattractive, is nevertheless judged inferior in beauty by the townspeople. The English Lybeaus's lack of chivalric courtesy is notable in this episode. While the French poem exalts a knight's commitment to his lady and love's notorious blindness, the English poem exposes Lybeaus's lack of genuine feeling for Elene and insensitivity to chivalric protocols; his motive for combat derives from a beauty contest to which a mature knight would never have subjected his lady.

Points of departure in plot are significant to be sure, but there are also variations in the ways in which some characters are portrayed that underscore differing poetic agendas and emphases. The suitor of la Pucele as Blances Mains (the Maiden of the White Hands) — Malgiers li Gris, in Renaut's version — is transformed from a hostile knight into Maugis, a menacing giant. Malgiers's mission is to defend the causeway to the island for a period of seven years, as local custom requires, at which point he earns the right to marry la Pucele. In the English version, this character becomes a stereotypical Saracen giant whose defense of the lady of the Golden Isle (Dame Amoure) appears to be driven not by a desire to protect her interests but rather to inflict harm whenever another knight approaches. His function

¹⁰ Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 95. The French reads: "Cele qui l'esprievier ara / et a le perce le prendra / si ara los de la plus biele" (lines 1589–91).

¹¹ Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu*, p. 103. The French reads: "Molt estoit et laide et frencie!" (line 1727); "Amor ne l face bestorner; / la laide fait biele sanbler, / tant set de guile et d'enchanter" (lines 1733–35).

in the English narrative, moreover, shifts from unwanted lover of the mistress of the Golden Isle to a serious impediment to Lybeaus's quest.

In a comparable transformation and variation between the French and English versions, a beneficent enchantress such as la Pucele becomes the malevolent sorceress Dame Amoure, who, like her guardian Maugis, threatens Lybeaus by means of her captivating spells, until Elene wakes him out of his stupor and he continues to Synadoun. Once there he encounters Lambard, the steward to the Lady of Synadoun in the English version, who, like Maugis, appears as a giant defender of her castle and therefore just another opponent who stands in Lybeaus's way.¹² While discernible shifts in characterization of these otherwise chivalric figures appear to be in keeping with changes in the portrayals of the enchantresses of the poem, so too is another dimension of meaning added to the English retelling. When the hero defeats the evil enchanters Mabon and Iran (Mabons and Evrain in the French), he enters the castle where the lady, transformed through sorcery into a dragon (a serpent in the French version), is imprisoned. In Renaut's telling, the disclosure of the young knight's identity comes from a disembodied voice (we learn later that it is la Pucele who speaks here) after the transformative kiss has taken place, and he is told that only the son of Gawain could accomplish such a deed.¹³ This disclosure fulfills the requisites set out by Helie at the beginning—that the knight who rescues her lady must be able to endure the *fier baiser* to break the magic spell. At this point in the French narrative Li Biaus (a.k.a. Guinglain) learns who his parents are and that his mother, Blanca mal la Fee, had armed and sent him to Arthur's court rather than choosing to resist his desire to become one of Arthur's knights as in the English version. The understandably grateful Blonde Esmeree (French version) offers Li Biaus her love, her kingdom, and a very political marriage, to which the astonished young knight agrees. But before the wedding takes place, Li Biaus returns to la Pucele where he learns, among other things, that she had known about him from the beginning and was, in fact, the disembodied voice that divulged his identity. The knight lingers with his "true love" in amorous bliss until a call to a tournament at the Castle of Maidens proves too much for him to ignore. Knowing that he will lose la Pucele forever if he leaves her to compete in

¹² There are two orders of giants in *Lybeaus Desconus*, the typical villainous giant who often opposes the knight with unchivalric weapons, such as a club or a grilling spit, and the giant as merely an extraordinarily large human being, who retains chivalric values for the most part, such as Sir Lambard. Although Lambard is called a "giant," he has neither the feral characteristics of the malevolent red and black giants who threaten Violet nor the animal features of Maugis; these are stereotypical giants of romance, and thus no match for Lybeaus. Lambard appears as a giant because of his size, and in this, he is more akin to Sir Valentine in *Sir Launfal* (lines 505–12). Lambard has no associations with violence against women, treacherous and unchivalric behavior, or unorthodox fighting as do the stereotypical giants: instead he tests knights for the task of rescuing the Lady of Synadoun, and once defeated in combat by Lybeaus, he identifies Lybeaus ("Thowe arte of Sir Gawynes kynne," Lambeth, line 1708) and with many expressions of courtesy welcomes him as the deliverer of his Lady. In Naples, Lybeaus's mother is said to be "a giantis lady" (line 2249). See also Explanatory Note to line 1708.

¹³ At that moment, the Fair Unknown in Renaut de Bâgé's version discovers his real name, given to him at baptism: la Pucele tells him that, "King Arthur called you by the wrong name / he called you the Fair Unknown, / but Guinglain is the name you were given at baptism" – "Li rois Artus mal te nonma: / Bel Descouneü t'apiela, / Guinglains as non es batestire" (lines 3231–33). In the English version, Lybeaus discovers from Lambard and the Lady of Synadoun that he is related to Sir Gawain, but his mother reveals his full identity as Gawain's son only in the Naples and Ashmole manuscripts.

this prestigious event, he departs nonetheless and subsequently wins the praise of all who witness his prodigious expertise on the field. When the tournament is over, the king urges the now-proven Arthurian knight to agree to marry Blonde Esmere, an arrangement that will make him the king of Wales. All the while, he longs to return to his true love — la Pucele.

The Middle English romance omits the second part of Renaut's story with the hero's conflict between two women, la Pucele and Blonde Esmere (a conventional tension between passionate love and marriage), his return to la Pucele after his rescue of Blonde Esmere, and the narrator's suggestion at the conclusion that Li Biaus's love for la Pucele might unfold as a narrative sequel. Instead, *Lybeaus Desconus* concludes with the eponymous hero's marriage to the Lady of Synadoun, though the marriage in the English tale is always the conclusion of the tale. Rather, a final reconciliation scene, present in only two of six redactions, brings Lybeaus's mother to Arthur's court where, in a dramatic face-to-face with Gawain, she announces that the newly validated knight is their son. Neither attempting denial nor rejecting accountability, Gawain responds affirmatively, and in a poignant narrative moment father and son reunite. Such an emotional scene is rare even in romances driven by familial reunion (*Sir Degré*, *Southern and Northern Octavian*, *Emaré*, *Lai of Le Freine*, and *Sir Isumbras* come to mind here). The *Lybeaus* poet solves the problem of the hero's identity and place in the world through reconciliation with his separated and heretofore "lost" biological parents in a memorable way.

MANUSCRIPTS AND PROVENANCE

There are six manuscripts containing *Lybeaus Desconus*: London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (C, c. 1400); Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29 (N, 1457); London, Lambeth Palace, MS 306 (L, c. 1460); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 6922, also known as Ashmole 61 (A, c. 1490); London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150 (LI, c. 1400); and London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (P, the Percy Folio, c. 1650). The poem is thought to have been written in the mid-fourteenth century (c. 1350), though the precise date is still a matter of speculation. Correspondences with a number of romances in the Auchinleck collection, "so exact as to rule out the possibility of mere coincidence," suggest that the work was influenced as much by the literary environment of the time as it was by its continental analogues.¹⁴ That there is "evident borrowing from several earlier London romances," including *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Sir Degré*, and *Otuel and Roland*, appears in the battles with giants, the descriptions of dwarves, some phrasing, and the atypical three-stress line that binds the poem together. All of these romances are contained

¹⁴ Loomis, *Development of Arthurian Romance*, cites correspondences between *Lybeaus* and several popular romances: "In *Lybeaus* we find correspondences to phrases and sequences of detail in *Sir Tristrem*, *Sir Launfal*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Sir Degré*, and *Roland and Vernagu* — correspondences so exact as to rule out the possibility of mere coincidence." His exempla are from *Bevis of Hampton* and *Degré*, but he goes on to say that "all six romances which show these correspondences with *Lybeaus* are, or were, contained in the Auchinleck manuscript" (pp. 136–37). See also Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 212.

in the Auchinleck collection, although *Lybeaus Desconus*, once thought to have been included, now appears to be conspicuously absent.¹⁵

Among those to whom the story and its fair protagonist are known is Chaucer, who first mentions the narrative by including “sir Lybeux” (line 900) in a list of “romances of prys” (line 897) in *The Tale of Sir Thopas*. The Host’s noteworthy interruption of the tale suggests to J. A. Burrow that Chaucer must have had the structure of the Canterbury journey in mind when *Sir Thopas* was written, which would make this first reference to *Lybeaus* after 1386.¹⁶ Whether the English version of the Fair Unknown’s story was originally included in the Auchinleck manuscript thought to have been in Chaucer’s possession, or existed in a now-lost exemplar of the redaction included in the fifteenth-century Cotton Caligula A.ii manuscript, is a matter yet to be resolved.¹⁷

Evidence that an earlier, possibly Anglo-Norman version of the poem was in circulation in England is found in a list of romances that includes *Beu Desconu* in Shrewsbury School MS 7, a mid-thirteenth-century manuscript held in the library of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburg in Chester. And while it is important to note that the Shrewsbury list is *not* a modern-day table of contents literally noting items contained in the text but rather an individual folio added toward its end, probably sometime after 1270, it is also important to recognize that some version of the Fair Unknown was known in England earlier than originally thought.¹⁸ Though the title is Anglo-Norman in spelling, the question of whether this *Beu Desconu* refers to a French or Anglo-Norman narrative cannot be answered definitively. As is the case with other such manuscript evidence, the narrative to which the citation appears to refer is non-extant, a status that places it in the company of other such documents, including the one referred to by Chaucer, a “lost antecedent” of the version attributed to Thomas Chestre circulating from about 1350 on, and an apparently lost printed version circulating from the

¹⁵ Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham suggest that *Lybeaus Desconus* was originally included in the Auchinleck manuscript but ultimately lost. See *Auchinleck Manuscript*, p. viii. The prevailing view now, however, is that *Lybeaus* was influenced by the Auchinleck manuscript but written afterward. Rhiannon Purdie comments: “this metropolitan literary circuit was clearly also drawn upon by *Lybeaus Desconus*, a later fourteenth-century London-area tail-rhyme romance which is almost certainly the referent of Chaucer’s ‘sir Lybeux’ in his *Tale of Sir Thopas* (line 900). *Sir Degré* has lent some battle scenes and a description of a dwarf; a version of *Guy* has lent details from Guy’s battles with Amoraunt and Colbrond; *Bevis* appears to have contributed some phrasing. *Otuel and Roland* may have been the inspiration for *Lybeaus’* usual stanza of three-stress lines throughout since these (and *Roland and Vernagu* after line 425) are the only romances to use such a pattern, albeit partially masked by an inevitable scribal drift towards the more usual four stresses in the couplet lines” (*Anglicising Romance*, pp. 124–25).

¹⁶ See Burrow, “Explanatory Notes: Sir Thopas,” p. 918.

¹⁷ Despite Pearsall’s claim that the poem was originally in the Auchinleck manuscript only to be excised later (see note 14 above), Purdie thinks that Chaucer’s knowledge of the work comes from another source entirely, a “later fourteenth-century London-area tail-rhyme romance” (*Anglicising Romance*, p. 124). Burrow, in the explanatory notes to *Sir Thopas*, says “Chaucer perhaps read these [*Sir Launfal* as well as *Lybeaus*] in a lost antecedent of the fifteenth-century MS B.L. Cotton Caligula A.ii, in which they both appear along with *Sir Eglamour* and *Ypotis*” (“Explanatory Notes: Sir Thopas,” p. 917).

¹⁸ Archibald, “Breton Lay in Middle English,” p. 59. See also Brereton, “Thirteenth-Century List of French Lays”; Ker and Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, pp. 296–97.

late fifteenth century to the seventeenth century, the version from which the Percy Folio is thought to have been copied.¹⁹

In a different sort of evidence both extant and prominently displayed, the name “Lybyus Descony[us]” appears along with the names of twenty-four other knights inscribed on the Winchester Round Table sanctioned by Henry VIII in the sixteenth century.²⁰ Lybeaus’s name is painted on the wood in the left hand margin of a table large enough to name twenty-three other knights. Literally written as “S[ir] lybyus dyscony[us],” the Fair Unknown’s name is located in the twenty-second position in a sequence that includes Galahad, Lancelot, Gawain, and Perceval.²¹ Although this artifact was repainted in 1749, the names of the knights are the same as on the original painting in 1516.²² The style of the script, the *textura precissa* used for display in manuscripts and adopted for early printed texts, may or may not bear witness to another lost document, the early printed edition of *Lybeaus Desconus* thought to have served as the exemplar for the Percy Folio. Another possibility is that there is a connection to the Naples and Percy manuscripts to which the spelling of the hero’s name corresponds.²³ Whether there is a tangible link between the Winchester inscription and these versions of the poem remains to be seen. What the inscription indicates without further verification, however, is public acknowledgment and familiarity with the story of the Fair Unknown.

GENRE, STYLE, AND FORM

Lybeaus Desconus belongs to a group of Middle English literary works identified as tail-rhyme romances not only because of their stanzaic form (typically twelve lines) and distinctive rhyme scheme — *aabccbdddbeeb* or *aabaabccbdbb* — but because of their association with French “romaunz,” that is, poetry written in vernacular French. By the fourteenth century the meaning of romance had changed from a mere signification of the vernacular language in which a narrative was written into a literary genre with identifiable patterns of plot, structure,

¹⁹ This is according to Max Kaluza, the earliest editor of the poem. See Kaluza, *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. x–xi. Helen Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, concludes that Kaluza’s surmise has merit on two grounds — the accuracy of the Percy texts and Skelton’s allusions: “Skelton lists [*Lybeaus Desconus*] among other romances known to have been printed in *Philip Sparrow*” (lines 649–50, in Skelton, *Complete English Poems*; see H. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 490n19). In other words, because all of Skelton’s allusions are known to be printed versions, it stands to reason that his allusion to *Lybeaus* came from a printed version as well.

²⁰ Although controversy surrounds the date of its original construction, Henry’s Round Table was painted in its current design with the names inscribed in 1516 or shortly thereafter. See Badham and Biddle, “Inscriptions in the Painting,” p. 256. The spelling, Lybyus Dyscony[us] — a Latin abbreviation for “us” follows the “y” — corresponds to the spelling of the Naples and Percy manuscripts. The Winchester inscription, in other words, attests to the popularity of the literary text and provides further evidence of the continued and wide circulation of *Lybeaus Desconus* in the sixteenth century.

²¹ See Badham and Biddle, “Inscriptions in the Painting,” p. 255.

²² Badham and Biddle, “Inscriptions in the Painting,” pp. 256, 268.

²³ For the spelling on the Winchester Round Table, see Fleming, “Round Table in Literature and Legend,” pp. 5–30.

and narrative style.²⁴ Despite their obvious associations with French antecedents, however, the English tail-rhyme romances distinguish themselves enough from prior influences to be considered a “unique” poetic corpus, although not a distinct “school of writing” as Trounce believed.²⁵ Certainly the rhyme scheme and stanzaic structure differentiate tail-rhyme poetics from early Anglo-Saxon alliteration and its subsequent revival in the alliterative long line of *Piers Plowman* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or the rime royal and early iambic pentameter of Chaucer.

Each rhyming unit of this unique form of Middle English poetry is comprised of a four-stress couplet, usually followed by a short, three-stress line, in a stanzaic pattern that calls attention to the short line as the primary element holding the structure together. Tail-rhyme romance may be rough around the edges, even amateurish or “hack” writing as so many critics have alleged, but it is a significant poetic form acknowledged for its ability to transform old stories into a distinctive literary corpus. That Chaucer parodied tail-rhyme romances in *Sir Thopas* in a negative way is generally accepted by Chaucerians, though perhaps too uncritically. When the tail-rhyme romances are accepted as a significant collective enterprise, however flawed in their execution and design, the mockery may be understood in a more positive sense, that is, as Chaucer’s acknowledgment of the presence of a competing native poetic, fresh in its approaches to the retelling of tales in a style in accordance with popular interests and a newly recognized need for vernacular reading materials.

A feature of tail-rhyme poetry particularly relevant to a discussion of *Lybeaus Desconus* is its tendency toward piety. As the shifts in emphasis from the French to the Middle English *Lybeaus* suggest, the English poem demonstrates a more self-conscious recognition of a theocentric environment than its courtly-oriented French antecedent. One of the first differences noted between the two is, in fact, in the framing of the narrative and *Lybeaus Desconus*’s prayerlike invocations at the poem’s beginning as well as the “Amen” at its conclusion.²⁶ Such narrative framing, when considered in relation to the pious asides and enunciations to various saints throughout the poem, creates the impression of an underlying devotional consciousness that validates the poem’s otherwise secular concerns.²⁷ Indeed, as Susan Crane suggests, “piety enriches and broadens the importance of heroic action, and in so doing it becomes in some ways merely an attribute of secular heroism.”²⁸ That the pious framework of *Lybeaus* has the effect of catapulting secular heroism into the realm of the divine is sug-

²⁴ Furrow, *Expectations of Romance*, pp. 43–94.

²⁵ Trounce, “English Tail-Rhyme Romances,” p. 88, and Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 1. See Calin, *French Tradition*, who observes: “Recent scholars, especially Dürmüller (1975) and Fewster (1987), have made the point that the composers of tail-rhyme consciously employ a conventional, indeed archetypal style and diction and thus constitute a school of writing. According to this thesis, conventional metre and diction ought not to be condemned; they are inherently no better and no worse than other sorts of metre and diction. This formulaic, stylized, distinctive style is formed by and appeals to pre-established audience expectations. It appeals to generic awareness and is, to some extent, self-referential as a code signaling archaic authenticity, narrative pleasure, and the actual presence of romance” (pp. 440–41).

²⁶ All versions of *Lybeaus* end with Amen but two, the Percy Folio (which ends with *ffine*) and MS Hale 150, which ends with *Explicit Lybeaus Desconus*, followed by two lines in a later hand.

²⁷ See Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Middle English Romance*, pp. 29–34.

²⁸ Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 93.

gested by the implicit sanctification of a hero watched over by Christ and “heven’s queene” and protected by a coterie of influential saints.

But there is something more specific to note about the piety found in tail-rhyme poetry, namely, the influence of Latin hymnody. As Rhiannon Purdie observes, “the primary associations accumulated by the tail-rhyme stanza from the twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries were, as one might expect with a verse form related to that of hymns, almost exclusively with didactic and religious material. The authors of the first Middle English tail-rhyme romances may therefore have been attracted to this stanza form precisely because its associations hitherto had been entirely *separate* from those of the romance genre, or indeed any other overtly secular form of literature.”²⁹ While this theory is somewhat speculative, there is something to be said for an underlying presence of religious music in a poem driven by secular desires. The possible influence of Latin hymnody in fact renders the minstrel music at the Lady of Synadoun’s enchanted castle, among other things, a far more suggestive scene.³⁰ The inclination toward a prescriptive morality literally underwritten by liturgical song indicates a poetic agenda aimed not merely at the production of pleasure but at the shaping of ethical behaviors.

AUTHORSHIP

Lybeaus Desconus has been attributed to Thomas Chestre, whose claim to be the “maker”³¹ of *Sir Launfal* appears in one of the manuscripts in which *Lybeaus* is also found: “Thomas Chestre made thys tale / Of the noble knight Syr Launfale.” Such evidence of Chestre’s writing of *Launfal* is rendered credible mostly because there is an identifying signature and claim to authorship by someone named Thomas Chestre.³² Based on what amounts to very slim evidence indeed, the claim is underwritten by an assertion that Thomas Chestre authored two other Middle English romances also found in Cotton Caligula A.ii — *Octovian Imperator* (*Southern Octavian*) and *Lybeaus Desconus*, despite the fact that neither is accompanied by an identifying comment such as that found in *Launfal*, though there are

²⁹ Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 6.

³⁰ Zaerr, “Music and Magic.” However, as Zaerr points out, references to music and minstrelsy in the narrative come from the outside and suggest threat or evil, threat perhaps when associated with the dwarf, but danger and evil when associated with Dame Damour and the sorcerers Mabon and Igrain. See below, pp. 25–26, especially notes 90 and 91.

³¹ The argument that Thomas Chestre is the author of *Sir Launfal*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Octovian Imperator* (*the Southern Octavian*) has been advanced on grounds of content and meter by Sarrazin and Kaluza and on grounds of “habits of composition” by Mills (see Mills, “Composition and Style”; Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*; see Kaluza, “Thomas Chestre, Verfasser des Launfal”). Two of the romances (*Sir Launfal* and *Octovian Imperator*) attributed to Chestre are unique to British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii, and McSparran argues that the unique layout of *Sir Launfal*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Octovian Imperator* in this manuscript suggests a grouping found in the copyist’s exemplar, which might confirm the common authorship of Thomas Chestre for all three romances (see McSparran, “British Library Manuscript Cotton Caligula A.II,” and M. Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance*, p. 71).

³² *Sir Launfal*, lines 1039–40, in Laskaya and Salisbury, *Middle English Breton Lays*, p. 239.

similarities in content and style.³³ Those who advocate Chestre's authorship of *Lybeaus Desconus* advance a plausible argument based on diction, dialect, meter, and "habits of composition."³⁴ Nonetheless, the lack of convincing external evidence, especially when added to the absence of a signature in any of the redactions of the poem, raises more concerns than it lays to rest.³⁵ For these reasons we have chosen to identify the poet of *Lybeaus Desconus* not as Thomas Chestre but in keeping with the way that other anonymous authors of the time have been identified, that is, as "the *Lybeaus* poet."³⁶

NARRATIVE POPULARITY AND EARLY RECEPTION

The six extant manuscripts of *Lybeaus Desconus* attest to its popularity, placing *Lybeaus* in the company of *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *Sir Isumbras* as among the most popular of the Middle English romances.³⁷ In addition to Chaucer's allusion in *Sir Thopas*, the poem and/or its hero are cited in the anonymous *Squire of Low Degree* and in two of the *Gawain* romances, briefly in Malory's *Works*, and twice by John Skelton—in *Phyllip Sparowe* and "Agenst Garnesche"—in ways that indicate a positive valuation and appreciation of the work, its protagonist, and its genre. That perception appears to change by the time Richard Hynde translates Juan Vives's *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1524) as *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1529), and Henry Crosse pens *Vertues Common-Wealth or The High-Way to Honour* (1603). Indeed, reservations expressed about *Lybeaus* as suitable reading material for young women indicate that the genre of the poem had become suspect for a vernacular audience, especially one including women. Likewise, though for slightly different reasons, the seventeenth-century clergyman Bishop Thomas Percy expresses ambivalence in his assessments of the poem, and by the nineteenth century, even after significant efforts had been made to enfold early English poetry into a distinctively British literary tradition, the canon appears not to have included *Lybeaus Desconus*. If the remarks of Henry J. Todd in his 1812 catalogue are any indication of *Lybeaus*'s reception by English-reading audiences, then the

³³ As Purdie states, "The case should perhaps be reopened, although I am not sure there is enough evidence available to solve it" (*Anglicising Romance*, p. 212). The problem with this hypothesis, she notes, is that the "evident fame of *Lybeaus* (compare the reference in Chaucer and wide distribution of its manuscripts) and the very minor impact of *Launfal* (unique manuscript; lack of contemporary references)," mitigates the link between *Launfal* and *Lybeaus Desconus*. There must have been an earlier copy of *Lybeaus Desconus* by another poet in the London area.

³⁴ Mills, "Composition and Style," p. 89.

³⁵ McSparran, "British Library Manuscript Cotton Caligula A.II," pp. 55–58, summarizes the views on common authorship expressed by earlier scholars.

³⁶ That is, similar to the texts of another famous fourteenth-century author, the *Gawain- / Pearl*-poet.

³⁷ The popularity and therefore the centrality of *Lybeaus Desconus* in the Middle English romance tradition has largely been overlooked, despite the survival of six manuscript copies and numerous allusions to it. Recently, for example, Ivana Djordjević and Jennifer Fellow's "Introduction" in *Sir Bevis*, argues: "Although it is relatively little known today, the story of Bevis of Hampton was among the most popular narratives of the medieval and early modern periods, its only serious rival in this respect being that of Guy of Warwick" (p. 1). Furrow's *Expectations of Medieval Romance* makes no mention of *Lybeaus*.

tale seems to have enjoyed its heyday from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, falling into the sphere of the “strangely neglected” by the early nineteenth century.³⁸

While there is a lack of absolute certainty about how Chaucer came to know the tale in the late fourteenth century, it apparently intrigued him enough to invent a rivalry between the indefatigable protagonist of Sir Thopas and Sir Lybeux. Given the association of The Wife of Bath’s Tale with the transformation motif so central to Fair Unknown narratives, it is also quite possible that Alisoun’s tale of an unnamed knight errant may be understood to describe another variation on Lybeaus Desconus or even a disguised version of Gawain himself. Since the knight’s ultimate marriage to the loathly lady who saves his life is common to a number of interrelated narratives, the Fair Unknown’s presence in the *Canterbury Tales* becomes all the more plausible.³⁹ That The Wife of Bath’s Tale evinces such a compelling kinship to the Gawain romances that form a subset of the imposing corpus of Arthurian tales known to a wide audience by Chaucer’s time underwrites an intertextual affiliation that includes *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*, *The Squire of Low Degree*, and to a lesser extent, Malory’s “Tale of Sir Gareth.”⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, the Gawain narratives allude to Gawain’s son in terms that bind the charismatic knight’s progeny firmly to the English branch of the Fair Unknown family. In *Wedding*, for instance, when Gawain not only promises to marry Dame Ragnelle, the loathly lady figure in The Wife of Bath’s Tale, but bequeaths her sovereignty on their wedding night, Ragnelle changes into a beautiful woman with whom Gawain begets a son subsequently named Gyngolyn: “Syr Gawen gatt on her Gyngolyn / That was a good knyght of strengthe and kynn / And of the Table Round” (lines 799–801).⁴¹ Within the context of marriage, this characterization of Gawain’s progeny is untroubled by the stigmatizing effects of illegitimacy that appear to haunt *Lybeaus Desconus*. Instead, he is a crucial signifier of a procreative nuptial ideal, the wedding of “true” love and the famously elusive knight errant, Gawain.

In *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*, the name “Lybeaus Desconus” appears in the list of knights in Arthur’s hunting entourage in an early scene that sets up the meeting of the king’s men with the Carle of Carlisle, a man who, like Bertilak/Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* or Sir Gromer Somer Jour in *Wedding*, challenges the Arthurian court and the veracity of its “proude” knights: “Syr Lebyus Dyskonus was thare / Wytt proud men les and mare” (lines 55–56). Lybeaus is named along with Gawain, who is described as “stwarde of the halle” (line 46) and “master of hem all” (line 47); and while Gawain’s paternity of the

³⁸ See Richmond, *Popularity of Middle English Romance*, especially pp. 1–24. Richmond traces the dissemination of romances in England from manuscript culture to the advent of printing and beyond. As is well known, Caxton printed new materials to satisfy the demand of a growing vernacular audience; medieval romances were widely disseminated in the fifteenth century. This assessment comes from Todd’s *Catalogue of the Archiepiscopal Manuscripts*, p. 41.

³⁹ There is much speculation about the relation of The Wife of Bath’s Tale to the loathly lady/Gawain romances as well as to those of the Fair Unknown. See *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 872–73.

⁴⁰ Another narrative that belongs at least tangentially to this group is *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, which survives in the Percy Folio. The absence of the child of the union between Gawain and Dame Ragnelle as in *Wedding* suggests yet another variation on the tale. See Hahn, *Sir Gawain*. All citations are from this edition.

⁴¹ Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 69.

young man is not in evidence here, his authority as “master of hem all” makes him responsible for overseeing the less-experienced knight.

While the association of Gawain and Lybeaus Desconus is noteworthy, however vaguely that association is forged, what deserves to be addressed more explicitly in *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* is that Lybeaus’s name as cited in the lines above (Lybeaus Desconus) appears shortly before Syr Ferr Unkowthe (Sir Fair Unknown)—as if the two were completely different characters: “Syr Grandon and Syr Ferr Unkowthe / Meryly they sewyde wytt mouthe, / Wytt houndys that wer wyght” (lines 61–63).⁴² Thomas Hahn’s suggestion that Lybeaus’s “mysterious identity seems to have led to his being presented in *Carlisle* as two different knights” is clearly the case.⁴³ The division of one character into two separate entities—one presumably derived from *Li Biaus Descouneūs* and the other from the translation of that name to “the Fair Unknown”—suggests that the meaning of “Lybeaus Desconus” may not be fully understood in English, though confusion and/or doubling of names is not unusual in medieval romance.

While Lybeaus seems to have found a place in this family of narratives, his presence in Malory’s *Works* is less overt, perhaps even latent and embedded in other motifs. Lybeaus is mentioned ever so briefly by his other name — Gyngolyn — as the knight defeated by Tristan during his madness and later as one of the “twelve accompanying his uncles Mordred and Aggravayne in the ambush of Lancelot.”⁴⁴ He is neither a crucial signifier of legitimate wedlock nor much of a signifier at all. As obscure and fleeting as these moments are, however, they register a degree of awareness of this character’s presence. Many have noted the general outlines of the Fair Unknown in the “Tale of Sir Gareth,” the kitchen boy whose kinship to Gawain goes unrecognized when he comes to Arthur’s court to ask for a boon. Sir Kay’s pejorative nickname for Gawain’s brother, “Beaumains” or “Fair Hands,” indicating Gareth’s inexperience at manual labor and combat, as Christopher W. Bruce points out, “suggests Malory’s familiarity with the *Bel Inconnu* or Fair Unknown romances, featuring Gawain’s son.”⁴⁵ The Fair Unknown may be known, in other words, in the figure of the dis-enfranchised youth who rises to a position of status and renown in Arthur’s court, his covert presence accounting for the near absence of an explicit reference to him by name.

There seems to be no absence of citation of the Fair Unknown in subsequent narratives. In *The Squire of Low Degree*, for instance, the young hero is alluded to twice: first, when the Squire expresses a wish to be a king’s son “Or els so bolde in eche fygght / As was Syr Lybius that gentell knyght” (lines 77–78), and second, when his lady advises him to emulate “Sir Lybyus” in order to win her hand in marriage (line 614).⁴⁶ As a poverty-stricken squire “of symple kynne,” the aspiring young man has little chance of becoming a suitor to the daughter of a powerful king. Nonetheless, the lady offers him a glimmer of hope when she cites the Fair Unknown as an exemplum for his edification:

Though you be come of symple kynne.
Thus my love, syr, may ye wynne,

humble descent
In the following way

⁴² Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 86.

⁴³ Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 106n55.

⁴⁴ Malory, *Works*, ed. Vinaver, pp. 494–95 and p. 1164.

⁴⁵ Bruce, *Arthurian Name Dictionary*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ Kooper, *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, pp. 136, 148.

Yf ye have grace of victory,
 As ever had Syre Lybyus (or Syr Guy) —
 Whan the dwarfe and mayde Ely
 Came to Arthoure kyng so fre
 As a kyng of great renowne —
 That wan the lady of Synadowne.
 Lybius was graunted the batayle tho;
 Therfore the dwarfe was full wo,
 And sayd: ‘Arthur, thou arte to blame.
 To bydde this chylde go sucke his dame
 Better hym semeth, so mote I thryve,
 Than for to do these batyles fyve
 At the chapell of Salebraunce.’

the good fortune
once
then
upset

(lines 611–25)

It is probably no coincidence that a redaction of *The Squire of Low Degree* is found in the seventeenth-century Percy Folio, an anthology that also contains *Lybeaus Desconus*. The very fact that these narratives pass into a new audience of “not-so-wealthy commoners, who had only just started to read and buy books,” as Erik Kooper suggests, attests to their cultural capital in an increasingly literate economy.⁴⁷ But popular interest is driven as much by subject matter as by affordability, and the Squire’s humble background and ultimate success are appealing narrative themes. When the proof of the Squire’s eligibility for marriage to a king’s daughter resides in actions modeled on those of Sir Lybeaus, an outsider and ostensible social inferior, his success offers hope that any young man can grow up to be a knight of great renown.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AND BEYOND

The appeal of these themes may provide an explanation, at least in part, for the popularity of the Fair Unknown during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. At least that inference appears to be possible if the work of John Skelton may be taken as evidence. The first of Skelton’s references to Lybeaus is in a poem called “Agenst Gernesche” in which the poet verbally eviscerates his rival “Master Gernesche” in response to an impudent challenge. In an act of what one scholar calls “poetic territorialism,” Skelton defends his art at the expense of his hapless opponent, who not surprisingly loses the debate.⁴⁸ The poet casts his *flyting* in terms of a tournament, a metaphorical framework aptly chosen for its one-to-one confrontational pairing in which the combatant is characterized as a foul and fierce brawler whose disagreeable countenance exceeds only his ineptness in battle: “Ye fowle, fers, and felle, as Syr Ferumbras the ffreke, / Syr capten of Catywade, catacumbas of Cayre, / Thow ye be lusty as Syr Lybyus launces to breke, / Yet your contenons oncomly, yor face ys nat fayer, / For alle your proude prankyng, yor pride may apayere” (lines 15–19).⁴⁹ Though deemed to be as “lusty” as Lybeaus in the joust, Master Gernesche fails miserably in his attempt to overcome a more skilled rhetorician. The allusion to the Fair Unknown, the

⁴⁷ Kooper, *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, p. 132.

⁴⁸ Scherb, “John Skelton’s ‘Agenst Gernesche,’” p. 123.

⁴⁹ Skelton, *Poetical Works*, ed. Dyce.

name that tacitly supplants the hero's other name, provides a comparative standard against which the uncouth and naive poetic novice eager for rhetorical combat and *not* very good looking is measured. Although the comparison makes the challenger worthy of combat he fails to equal the Fair Unknown. What becomes immediately apparent is that the poet's insult works only if his audience is familiar with the reputation of Lybeaus as a hero known for his physical attributes as well as for his martial prowess.

The subject of Skelton's *Phyllip Sparowe* suggests that the early modern audience included female readers. The 1,382-line poem is a lament for a dead bird spoken by a fictional narrator named Jane Scrope from her confinement in the Benedictine nunnery at Carrow. The bird, killed by an apparently voracious convent cat, is the subject of this lengthy eulogy, one that draws heavily from the liturgical Office of the Dead found in every layperson's primer. That dimension of the work is noteworthy in itself: Skelton has provided a credible female speaker with literary skills and an impressive reading list. Not only does the list of works acknowledge and comment upon the triumvirate of early British literature — Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate — but it also includes several works of classical literature and an ample sampling of the “matter” of France, of Rome, and of Greece. Of most interest, especially in relation to the canonical literature just noted, is Jane Scrope's citation of tail-rhyme romances such as “Gawen and Syr Guy . . . And of Syr Libious / Named Dysconius” (lines 629, 649–50). If *Phyllip Sparowe* is “quite simply, about reading and readers,” as one scholar suggests, then readers are invited to identify with this highly literate woman in the act of performing a poem of her own.⁵⁰ At the very least, both speaker and poem acknowledge women's study of literature and endorse an education that includes romances such as *Lybeaus Desconus*.

Such an inclusive approach to literary study seems not to be endorsed by Richard Hynde or Henry Crosse. When Hynde translated Juan Luis Vives's *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1524) as *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1529), he added a number of English narratives that young women were advised *not* to read: “Parthenope, Genarides, Hippomadon, William and Melyour [William of Palerne], Libius and Arthur, Guye, Bevis, and many other.”⁵¹ The association of this list of romances, which includes *Libius and Arthur*, with women's reading is clear — after all, Hynde is translating a work aimed directly at their instruction. But lest we understand Hynde's recommendation as merely another example of gender bias, it is important to point out that the censure of certain reading materials fits into a larger pattern of changing attitudes toward creative work deemed threatening to the morals of minors and other such impressionable people. Henry Crosse's early seventeenth-century *Vertues Commonwealth or The High-way to Honour* (1603), in which the author addresses the value of education and the proper discipline of “youth,” follows in this vein when it prompts such an audience to avoid those who have succumbed to vice: “The drunkard, idler, spendthrift, person with a painted face, etc.” And while Crosse's primary target is the theater and everyone involved in its production and performance, he nonetheless lists medieval romances such as *Libius*

⁵⁰ Schibanoff, “Taking Jane's Cue.” See also Daileader, “When a Sparrow Falls.”

⁵¹ Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*. Vives's list of censured texts reads: “in Spain Amadise, Florisande, Tirante, Tristane, and Celestina. . . . In France Lancilot du lake, Paris and Vienna, Ponthus and Sidonia, and Melucyne. In Flanders, Flori and Whit flowre, Leonel and Canamour, Curias and Floret, Pyramus and Thysbe” (p. 25).

and Arthur as works to avoid.⁵² Like other reformers of the time, Crosse suspects poets to be purveyors of pleasures deemed detrimental to the young whose “untempered affections” are so easily set ablaze.⁵³

One would think that nearly a half century later (c. 1650), attitudes toward romances such as *Lybeaus* might have changed, particularly since Bishop Percy, the antiquarian responsible for assembling the Percy Folio, includes the poem in his collection of reliques.⁵⁴ Percy’s prefatory remarks do indeed seem to provide an antidote to previous negative assessments of certain medieval romances when the bishop voices an affirmative opinion of early poets. As evidence of his high regard, he selects *Lybeaus* as “one specimen of their skill in distributing and conducting their fable, by which it will be seen that nature and common sense had supplied to these old simple bards the want of critical art, and taught them some of the most essential rules of Epic Poetry” (3:xxii). As positive an assessment as this seems to be — that is, even without training these “old simple bards” are able to write something of note — Percy’s subsequent commentary qualifies that assessment by denying the poem epic status.⁵⁵ The bishop apparently thinks highly enough of *Lybeaus* to present it as an exemplary piece of work valued more highly as historical artifact than as a work of art to be appreciated on its own terms.⁵⁶ Like subsequent antiquarians interested in recovering lost texts and shaping a distinctive literary canon in English (John Dryden comes to mind here), Percy acknowledges Middle English romance primarily as evidence that native poetry — beyond the bounds of an evolving Chaucerian canon — might be worth knowing about, its values worth assimilating.

Such interest in the poem appears to have waned in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though it was not completely forgotten. In his preface to the 1812 *Catalogue of the Archiepiscopal Manuscripts in the Library at Lambeth Palace*, Henry J. Todd, antiquarian and

⁵² Crosse, *Vertues Common-Wealth*, pp. 102–03. When Crosse describes the items on his list as “editions,” it suggests that there is indeed another printed version of the *Lybeaus* narrative, one that ties him explicitly to Arthur. This edition is apparently lost. “For if a view be had of these editions, the *Court of Venus*, the *Pallace of Pleasure*, *Guy of Warwicke*, *Libius and Arthur*, *Bevis of Hampton*, the wise men of *Goatam*, *Scoggins* jeasts, *Fortunatus*, and these new delights that have succeeded these, and are now extant, too tedious to recken up: what may we thinke? but that the floudgates of all impieties are drawne up, to bring a universall deluge over all holy and godly conversation: for there can be no greater meanes to affright the mind from honestie, then these pedling bookees, which have filled such great volumes, and blotted so much paper, theyr sweete songs and wanton tales do ravish and set on fire the young untempered affections” (pp.102–03).

⁵³ See the discussion below on medieval conduct books and romance reading.

⁵⁴ Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3:317.

⁵⁵ “If an Epic Poem may be defined, ‘a fable related by a poet, to excite admiration, and inspire virtue, by representing the action of some one hero, favoured by heaven, who executes a great design, in spite of all the obstacles that opposed him;’ I know now why we should withhold the name of Epic Poem from the piece which I am about to analyse” (Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3:xxii–xxiii).

⁵⁶ Percy Folio, “Such is the fable of this ancient piece, which the reader may observe, is as regular in its conduct, as any of the finest poems of classical antiquity. If the execution, particularly as to the diction and sentiments, were but equal to the plan, it would be a capital performance; but this is such as might be expected in rude and ignorant times, and in a barbarous unpolished language” (Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3:xxvi).

keeper of the archives, describes the Lambeth manuscript as one of many volumes to be of great value to patrons interested in early literary work:

To the lovers of our early literature the POEMS in this Collection present an abundant feast. . . . Of the ancient metrical Romance of Sir Libeaus Disconus, there is a most valuable copy, till lately unknown. And in the same volume are several poetical reliques of the olden time.⁵⁷

Todd's implication of himself as a lover of literature is abundantly apparent and perhaps the primary reason for his statement in a subsequent description in his catalogue of the version of *Lybeaus Desconus* contained in Lambeth 306:

This is a valuable copy of the ancient romance of Sir Libeaus Disconus; a copy hitherto unknown to the curious inquirers after our ancient literature. In the old manuscript catalogue this ROMANCE OF PRICE, as Chaucer esteemed it in his RIME OF SIRE THOPAS, has been strangely neglected.⁵⁸

That Todd would consider the work to be valuable but "strangely neglected" and "unknown to the curious inquirers after our ancient literature" appears to contradict claims to the popularity of the work after it passed through the hands of poets, historians, education reformers, antiquarians, bibliophiles, and various others over time. Whether interest in the poem falls away due to a shift in values or as an effect of educational reform and a concomitant antimedieval sentiment remains a subject for further inquiry.⁵⁹ What can be said about Todd's observation with a measure of certainty is that he considered *Lybeaus Desconus* to be worth studying.

LAMBETH AND NAPLES

The Lambeth and Naples versions of *Lybeaus Desconus* chosen for this edition represent two traditions in the manuscript production of the text. According to Maldwyn Mills, the author's "own version of the story is reasonably well preserved in manuscripts Cotton Caligula A.II and Lambeth Palace 306 (CL), while the texts found in manuscripts Ashmole 61, Naples XIII.B.29 and the Percy Folio manuscript (ANP) must derive from a common source in which an unknown reviser had tidied up some of the contradictory material found in the original version."⁶⁰ As Mills maintains, the Lambeth version is "fundamentally the best text of those available to us,"⁶¹ though the Naples redaction is the longest and therefore the most complete reflection of the reviser's work, one that demonstrates a connection to one

⁵⁷ Todd, *Catalogue of the Archiepiscopal Manuscripts*, pp. 40–41.

⁵⁸ Todd, *Catalogue of the Archiepiscopal Manuscripts*, p. 40.

⁵⁹ Sir Walter Scott viewed the Naples manuscript in 1832. He copied *Bevis of Hampton*, but it is unknown if he viewed or read the Naples *Lybeaus Desconus*.

⁶⁰ Mills, "Mediaeval Reviser," pp. 11–12. Mills dismisses the Lincoln's Inn manuscript because half of it is missing, but he claims that it stands "midway between CL and ANP" ("Mediaeval Reviser," p. 12n4).

⁶¹ Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 12.

of the alleged authorial manuscripts, that is, Cotton Caligula A.ii.⁶² Although Mills argues that the reviser mainly corrected the errors and inconsistencies of the author, a case can be made that the reviser, rather than being a correcting “hack,” creatively introduces changes in the text that reflect a fifteenth-century reception of *Lybeaus Desconus*. What emerges from this sequence is a clear illustration of manuscript production in the late medieval period where a reviser functions not merely as a scribe but rather as a co-author. The most relevant of the revised texts is the Naples version with its consistent exploration of the hero, the villains, and the heroines in the cluster containing the Ashmole, Lincoln’s Inn, and Percy versions.

The texts presented together in this volume make it possible for readers to compare the two most significant threads of development in the *Lybeaus* textual tradition.⁶³ Both the Naples and Lambeth manuscripts were produced in the mid-fifteenth century, so that differences in certain key passages render the Lambeth and Naples redactions particularly fruitful substrates for comparative examination. When studied together, each complements the other in ways that reveal something more significant about the Fair Unknown tradition as a whole.

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

An incipit designating Gyngelain as the “bastard son” of Gawain informs the audience uniquely in Lambeth, and Lybeaus’s identity as Gyngelain is made apparent to readers right from the beginning of the poem in all but the Lincoln’s Inn version. Further, his “real” name — Gyngelain — is revealed to the hero and the Arthurian court as well as the audience at the end of the poem in three of the six manuscripts — Naples, Lincoln’s Inn, and Ashmole, a final revelation of identity missing in Cotton Caligula, Lambeth, and the Percy Folio, which lacks an ending altogether. In Naples, Lincoln’s Inn, and Ashmole, at the marriage feast of Lybeaus and the Lady of Synadoun, Gawain commands all those gathered together to call Lybeaus by the name given to him by Gawain, that is, Guinglain: “calle Libeous ‘Gyngelain’” (Naples, line 2267). Because all versions except Lincoln’s Inn begin with the narratorial naming of Gyngelain, Gawain’s revelation of his son’s name at the end is an expected conclusion provided by those versions that end with this scene. Moreover, in the final episode in Naples and Ashmole, Lybeaus’s mother returns to the court of Arthur, and even though time has passed and her son Bewfiz has matured, she recognizes him instantly. In Naples she is afforded the opportunity to reveal the young knight’s identity to Gawain in a disclosure that prompts a joyful kiss of acknowledgment from the famous knight. Gawain then explains to the Lady of Synadoun that he begat Lybeaus of “a giant’s lady” (“a gentyll lady” in Ashmole). These scenes, played out in the last few stanzas in Naples, are completely absent in Lambeth.

⁶² Mills, “Mediaeval Reviser,” pp. 11–12.

⁶³ It is not altogether certain, however, that the shorter form (C and L in this case) indicates the more authorial version of a *Lybeaus Desconus*. Jill Mann, for example, has called into question the assumption that medieval texts that exist in two versions (or more) necessarily progress from a shorter form (closer to the original) and a rewritten expansion. There is no external evidence to support the view that the C and L shorter accounts of *Lybeaus Desconus* reflect more authoritative texts than the lengthier N, A, P, LI tradition. See “Power of the Alphabet,” especially p. 24.

THE LAMBETH MANUSCRIPT

Lambeth 306 is a compendious commonplace book (or miscellany) consisting of ten “originally independent” gatherings or fascicles, many of which are dated to the second half of the fifteenth century.⁶⁴ The entire book, written on paper, measures 29.5 x 21.5 centimeters and sports a style of binding that can be dated to the Tudor era. The section of the fascicle in which *Lybeaus Desconus* is found, thought to date from around 1460, makes that particular section of the manuscript roughly contemporary with the Naples manuscript. The principal scribe writes in a distinctive fifteenth-century secretary hand, though the manuscript includes a number of items added to its contents over time. Some items are attributed to John Stowe, a well-known sixteenth-century historian, while others, written in different hands, indicate owners with interests other than history. Because of the overwhelming number of medical “recipes” and various nonliterary items scattered among didactic narratives, chronicles, historical documents, and memoranda by Stowe, Gisela Guddat-Figge surmises that “the manuscript must have passed through the hands of owners interested in science, especially biology, and medicine, who, in their turn, filled blanks with recipes, diets for a nightingale and other curiosities.”⁶⁵ *Lybeaus Desconus* is located between a list of names of herbs — nomina herborum—and “The Adulterous Falmouth Squire.” The text is written in single columns (fols. 73r–107r) with one marginal note (fol. 74r), where “lybeus disconius” is inserted in a later hand.⁶⁶ *Lybeaus Desconus* is the only romance in Lambeth 306.

THE NAPLES MANUSCRIPT

The Naples manuscript is a plain paper manuscript (seventy-three folios and two fly leaves), copied in the mid-fifteenth century and completed in 1457.⁶⁷ The vellum binding is modern, and the leaves have been trimmed so that pages have an average size of 28.5 x 19.5 centimeters.⁶⁸ There are catchwords but no signatures or marginal notes. Why or how it ended up in Naples or in its present location in the former Royal Library remains unknown. Although there are several opinions concerning the number of scribes responsible for copying the entire manuscript, the *Lybeaus* poem was copied by one scribe who calls himself “More.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*, p. 28. Descriptions of Lambeth Palace MS 306 also occur in James and Jenkins, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*; Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*; Jones, “Life of St. Eustace,” p. 13; and Pickering and O’Mara, *Manuscripts in Lambeth Palace Library*, online at the University of Edinburgh.

⁶⁵ Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ The spelling of “disconious” in the marginal note differs from the text; in fact, it matches the spelling of the Naples title.

⁶⁷ That is, according to a scribal colophon at the end of the manuscript. As to the accuracy of this date, Manly and Rickert note that they have “no reason to doubt it” (*Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 1:376).

⁶⁸ Descriptions of the Naples manuscript can be found in Mills’s introduction to *Lybeaus Desconus*, as well as in Guddat-Figge and Manly and Rickert.

⁶⁹ Without considering the medical recipes, Mills contends that two scribes copied the manuscript, one beginning *Bevis*, and the second completing the manuscript from the second half of *Bevis* (*Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 56–79) and all the other narratives until the end (see Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 7). Manly and Rickert perceive one scribe for the entire manuscript (*Text of the Canterbury*

The manuscript contains in the following order: medical prescriptions (the first three are gynecological recipes), *Sir Beuys of Hampton*, *Of Seint Alex of Rome*, *Libious Desconious*, *Sir Isumbbras* (brief fragment, lines 1–123), and Chaucer's *Grisilde* or The Clerk's Tale (missing lines 1–91). *Libious Desconious* appears in double columns, pages 87–113, with anywhere between fifty-two and sixty lines per page. There are also scribal jottings (including lines from Lydgate's "Beware of Doubleness") as well as later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century notes and drawings. The nature of the medical recipe collection together with the concentration of romances, a saint's life, and *Grisilde* may indicate a collection intended for a female audience.⁷⁰

Like the Ashmole version, the Naples *Lybeaus* contains a number of passages and interpretations not found in Lambeth or Cotton Caligula. In addition to what Mills cites as correcting revisions and adjustments, the most significant additions include an enhancement of the giant features of Maugis, the comparison of Dame Diamour's sorcery to the power of witches, the follow-up killing of Iran, and the arrival of Lybeaus's mother at the marriage celebrations following the wedding of Lybeaus and the Lady of Synadoun at Arthur's court. The significance of these features and their relation to other manuscript versions appear in the Explanatory Notes, but the episode of Lybeaus's mother represents an important addition to the narrative. Up until this point, Lybeaus only knows that he is in some way related to Sir Gawain: Sir Lambart and the Lady of Synadoun have both explained to him that only Sir Gawain or one of his relations could have accomplished the *fier baiser* and rescued the Lady of Synadoun from the evil enchantment of Mabon and Iran. Lybeaus's mother supplies his final identification as the son of Sir Gawain, thus providing a conclusion to Lybeaus's search for identity both personal and social, and it is this knowledge that moves Sir Gawain to embrace his son, acknowledge him publicly, and disclose his true name as Gyngelain (N).

CHIVALRIC ROMANCE AND THE MEDIEVAL CONDUCT BOOK

In an enactment of what Stephen Knight has dubbed the "social function of Middle English romance," *Lybeaus Desconus*, perhaps more than other Arthurian narrative in the English literary canon, addresses the concerns of a variety of audiences — the problematic nature of intimate kinship relations, the resolution of troubled social and political affiliations, the perpetual quest for self-identity and place in the world, and the "proper" relationship between men and women.⁷¹ Romances functioned to some extent like conduct books in medieval society, setting parameters for interpersonal and communal identity and action.⁷² The illegitimate child relegated to the fringes of society, the stigmatization of unwed motherhood, forced separation of family members, the loss of patrimony and social status, as well as simple consent and choice of marriage partner are some of the matters addressed in narratives that encourage audiences to revel in the glamorous life of the adventurous knight while

Tales, 1:376–78), whereas Ralph Hanna suggests there may be three, one for the medical recipes, and the two others described by Mills (Ralph Hanna, private email correspondence with James Weldon, 27 August 2006; it should be pointed out, however, that Hanna's reading was based upon representative samples from the three contended areas of the manuscript and not the entire manuscript).

⁷⁰ See Weldon, "Naples Manuscript," pp. 139–48.

⁷¹ Knight, "Social Function."

⁷² For medieval conduct books, scholarly investigation begins with Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, and Ashley, "Medieval Courtesy Books."

contemplating reconciliation and recompense for those not born into a privileged class or disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control.⁷³

Typically in chivalric romances, discipline and training prepare a novice knight to negotiate a range of obstacles designed to challenge his martial prowess as well as his adherence to strict codes of knightly behavior. Hence, many of these narratives offer situations and circumstances that test the novice at every stage of development. Such physical and intellectual training ostensibly contributes to the shaping of discernment and the young knight's ability to exercise sound judgment in difficult situations, to decide quickly and correctly when to apply force and when to offer mercy, for instance. The process, so evident in the training of renowned chevaliers such as Perceval, Tristan, Lancelot, and Gawain, explains its ubiquitous presence in the literary work of the time.

The mentorship of young knights as a component of chivalric education is particularly relevant to *Lybeaus Desconus* when it comes to the shaping of the protagonist's identity, especially since his father is Gawain, a native British knight whose reputation as "the proverbial equivalent of courtesy itself," accompanies his renown for prowess and loyalty to the king.⁷⁴ By the fifteenth century, Sir Gawain was well known not only in the late medieval literature often referred to as the "Gawain romances" but even beyond the literary world that made him a household name. Perhaps most famous in this regard is the acknowledgement written at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, signaling the close connection between the establishment of the Order of the Garter by Edward III, the poem, and the knight whose character is tested by a verdant outsider, his seductive wife, and Morgan le Fay.⁷⁵ Yet Gawain's training of the Fair Unknown in the English version is perfunctory compared to his more extensive guidance in *Wigalois*, for example, and omitted entirely in some English manuscripts, leaving the impression that everything Gawain's son knows about jousting, horsemanship, and the wielding of lethal weapons is somehow hardwired into his DNA, ready to be recalled by some triggering gesture or verbal cue.⁷⁶ Lybeaus at first appears to know very little about chivalry or the protocols of honor and loyalty or even the basic strategies of civil discourse; he seems to be the very antithesis of courtesy and refined courtly behavior; in other words, he is everything his father is *not*. But what Lybeaus expresses in a rather flagrant disregard for decorum — barging into Arthur's court to demand a boon, for instance — he makes up for in martial acumen, skills apparently bequeathed as much by natural law and biological determinism as by formalized discipline and training.

Akin to *Bildungsroman* and *enfances* literature, *Lybeaus Desconus* is a compelling narrative, a veritable emblem of a hero's progress from a state of ignorance and marginalization to a

⁷³ An example of a female version of the disenfranchised or foundling child is Marie de France's *Lai le Freine* and its Middle English translation *Lay le Freine*. See Laskaya and Salisbury, *Middle English Breton Lays*, pp. 61–87 and 409–14.

⁷⁴ Hahn, *Sir Gawain*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ At the end of the poem is the motto of the Order of the Garter founded in 1350, added by a copyist: *hony soyt qui mal pense* (shame be to him who thinks evil).

⁷⁶ The Lambeth manuscript omits Gawain's training of Lybeaus, and the passage is missing in L.I. C and the N, A, P manuscripts include a three-line passage: "Aftur, him taught Gaweyn, / With strenghe in the pleyn, / Poynt of knyghtis play" (N, lines 91–93).

state of experience and integration.⁷⁷ His story demonstrates the ramifications of illegitimacy and the lack of a “proper” name in a world that demands identities, genealogies, and verification at every turn. The Fair Unknown’s entry into a realm from which he has been excluded or denied—equivalent perhaps to a “wild” child’s introduction into polite society—makes for an attractive underdog narrative, the story of the gradual recognition of a hero’s potentiality for success in the world. Like medieval male Cinderella figures such as Havelok the Dane, King Horn (or Horn Child), Bevis of Hampton, Degaré, Perceval, Lancelot, Gareth, La Cote Male Tayle, Alexander the Orphan, and even Arthur himself,⁷⁸ Lybeaus encourages an audience to identify with his unwavering determination in the face of otherwise impossible odds. With their emphasis on physical attractiveness and the prowess that complements the protagonist’s good looks, male Cinderella narratives foreground the duties and responsibilities of those destined to assume governance of the land. Like their female counterparts, the heroes of these tales engage in domestic labor as a prerequisite for the public recognition of inner virtues disguised at first by humble outward appearances. Like a male Cinderella, the Fair Unknown is typically born of noble blood though he is often unaware of his patrimony until the end of the tale when he is about to marry an appropriately chosen mate.

As is also evident in chivalric literature and conduct books, training for medieval combat did not fully prepare a young man for participation in the refined discourses of the court—the recitation of poetry, the playing of musical instruments, the demonstration of exemplary table manners, carving skills, and overall civility and deference to courtly protocols. Courteous behavior and a dedication to helping those in need—widows, orphans, and disadvantaged others—were expectations for all experienced chevaliers. Since a knight was imagined not only to be a better combatant when he had a lady to impress but to be a better man vis-à-vis her influence and guidance, formidable feats of arms, as well as impressive displays of courtly refinement, were prerequisites to attaining an honorable reputation. The social function of the lady was to lend her prospective champion a patina of civility and to introduce him to the ways of women.

Medieval references to romances indicate that different readers approached these narratives in different ways, however. Male clerics would not necessarily view the genre in the same way as aristocratic women, and even within these groups one finds variations among responses.⁷⁹ In vernacular circles, romances were frequently read as courtesy or

⁷⁷ *Lybeaus Desconus* evinces a kinship to *enfances* narratives particularly in relation to their emphasis on chivalric training. These stories include *Enfances Garin de Monglane*, *Enfances Gauvain*, *Enfances Guillaume d’Orange*, *Enfances Hector*, *Enfances Ogier*, and *Enfances Vivien*. *Les Enfances Gauvain* is the most relevant of these, though it exists now only in a fragment. The Latin version is complete in its telling of the rise of Gawain; his illegitimate birth, and his abduction, fostering and adoption by the emperor of Rome. See *Rise of Gawain, Nephew of Arthur (De ortu Waluuani nepotism Arturi)*.

⁷⁸ See Hoffman, “Malory’s ‘Cinderella Knights.’” To this list of notable protagonists Sarah Patricia Flanagan adds Sir Torrent of Portugal, Tristram, Ipomedon, Sir Isumbras, Guy of Warwick, William of Palerne, Gamelyn, Octavian, Eglamour, and Sir Gowther. See her “Male Cinderella in English Metrical Romance.” See also Wilson, “‘Fair Unknown’ in Malory,” and Salisbury “(Re)dressing Cinderella.” While we recognize the fluidity of gender categories, the designation of “male” Cinderella simply acknowledges traditional scholarship on the subject and provides nomenclature that identifies the essentialist nature of this particular narrative.

⁷⁹ See Furrow, *Expectations of Romance*, pp. 1–42.

conduct books, that is, texts that taught social skills not only for young men and women of the gentry and aristocratic families but also for the children of the upwardly mobile urban middle class. Indeed, in his preface to Malory's *Morte Darthur*, William Caxton argued that stories of knightly deeds formed appropriate reading for "al noble lordes and ladyes, wyth al other estates of what estate or degree they been of," wherein they will find vice punished but also "many ioyous and playsaunt hystoryes and noble and renomed actes of humanyte, gentylness, and chyualryes."⁸⁰

Romances also served as mirrors for young princes and engaged women readers, a practice to which later moralists objected. As noted earlier, Richard Hynde strongly complained of women who wasted their time and endangered their morals by reading such improper narratives: "I marvayle that wyse fathers wyl suffre theyr daughters, or that husbandes wyl suffre theyr wyves, or that the maners and customes of people wyl dissemble and over loke, that women shal use to rede wantonness."⁸¹ Hynde stands in a long line of critics who charged medieval romances with inciting lechery ("wantonness") and promoting violence through tales of knightly combat. Henry Crosse voiced a similar opinion: "it will be demaunded how Ladies, Gentlewomen, &c. should spend the time, and busie their heads, as though idlenesse were not a vice bade inough of it self, without fire to be added, and as though there were not a Bible, and many good booke wherein they might be virtuously exercised."⁸² Margaret Tyler, who translated and published Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra's *Espejo de Príncipes y Cavalleros* in England in 1578, changed the title to *The First Part of the Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood*, suggesting not an audience of "princes and knights" but a wider audience responsive to a more universal focus on admirable behavior or "deedes."⁸³ And although she counters male charges that such reading is inappropriate for women and outside their proper spheres of knowledge, she also makes it clear that her edition is primarily aimed at women. As for allegations of inciting lust and violence, Tyler asserts that her defense is "by example of the best" and despite controversial subject matter such as war, she states that women "can farther wade into them to the search of a truth."⁸⁴ Hynde, Crosse, and Tyler attest to a widely disseminated female practice in the late Middle Ages that placed romances at the center of their reading: whereas Hynde and Crosse dismiss them as empty stories with immoral themes, Tyler defends both the genre and the practice; she suggests that discerning women "farther wade into them" and that they constitute, as her title intimates, "mirrors" of behavior, conduct books for both men and women.

Shunning bad behavior and embracing approved behavior, then, constituted a way of reading romances in the late Middle Ages and beyond. Lybeaus, with his uncouth background, frequently acts wrongly or questionably, especially in the early parts of the narrative. His impetuous and abrupt speeches in Arthur's court mirror uncourtly comportment, and his entry in the gerfalcon contest, where he coerces Elene to substitute deceptively for his lady, or his insistence on keeping the hunting dog of Otis d'Lyle, at best, seem dubious motives for generating the ensuing violence. Women guide and nurture Lybeaus: his mother

⁸⁰ Caxton, "Caxton's Prologue," 1:2–3.

⁸¹ Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, p. 25.

⁸² Crosse, *Vertues Common-Wealth*.

⁸³ Tyler, *Mirrour of Princely Deeds and Knighthood*, p. A.i (title page).

⁸⁴ Tyler, *Mirrour of Princely Deeds and Knighthood*, p. A.iiir.

seeks to protect him from the world of male violence, but in the end (in the Naples and Ashmole versions) endorses his chivalric accomplishments and confirms his completed identity by publicly announcing Gawain's paternity before the court. Elene acts as initiator (as messenger she proclaims his defining quest, the rescue of the Lady of Synadoun), critic (she chastises and belittles Lybeaus at the beginning but ceases when she recognizes his prowess), and finally guide, especially when she stirs Lybeaus from the enchantment of Dame Amoure and sets him back on the road to Synadoun.

Various women present false alternatives to Lybeaus. Violet, whom he rescues from giants, offers the possibility of an arranged marriage, which while acceptable in many ways (she is an earl's daughter), falls below Lybeaus's destiny (he ultimately marries a queen); Elene, in her guise as his lover in the gersfalcon incident, represents a false option, as does Dame Amoure, whose sorcery and sexuality bewitch Lybeaus into temporarily abandoning his quest.⁸⁵ Even when they require rescue, women often offer positive assistance to the young knight as guides and mentors in ways that go beyond damsel-in-distress stereotypes. Violet tests his ability to obey a lady's direction and the Lady of Synadoun prepares him for political marriage and a kingship that he would not be able to attain in any other way. The functions of Elene's guidance and chastisement have already been mentioned, but the loyalty that she demonstrates toward her lady, not unlike the loyalty of any knight to his feudal lord, is exemplary. The Lady of Synadoun and Elene, her messenger and, in many ways, her surrogate, mirror strong independent women; while Elene provides guidance and counsel at every turn, the Lady of Synadoun offers the final pronouncement of Lybeaus's lineage and confirms his true identity.

There is much to admire about a poem that addresses the kinds of kinship matters so much at stake in the real lives of actual women, and it is not surprising that at least one redaction of this poem was thought to have been intended explicitly for an audience of female readers.⁸⁶ Certainly its strong female characters — Elene, the Lady of Synadoun, Violet, Dame Amoure, the hero's unnamed mother — whether cast in terms of stereotypes of victimization or unfettered from the constraints of literary convention, demonstrate ways in which women could assert a modicum of control on the world around them. The possibility of transformation by a kiss initiated not by the knight but by the lady he rescues speaks to the emotional and psychological changes brought about by contact with a force beyond the control of any individual, and offers a potentiality for transcendence that speaks provocatively not only to women but to all readers.

The literary construction of female characters, whether in supporting roles or the role of the woman in need of rescue, may be attributed in part to the literary conventions of the time and the expectations of medieval audiences who by the late Middle Ages had acquired a taste for romance. But so too may the conceptualization of "Woman" have something to do with the real-life experience of young men of the upper classes who often spent their formative years, as Ruth Mazo Karras notes, "in a military atmosphere, highly charged with knightly values . . . [wherein] the daily companionship was with other men, with whom a knight competed for the favor of a higher-status man," hence, "the young knight-to-be thus

⁸⁵ In C, Violet's father, "Erl Antore . . . Profrede hys doftyr hym to wyue" (lines 688–89). Although missing in all other versions, these lines, Mills in his edition maintains, are "genuine" (*Lybeaus Desconus*, p. 220n688–99).

⁸⁶ See Weldon, "Naples Manuscript."

learned that women were objects to be won, while men were comrades and rivals in the winning of honor.”⁸⁷ While such childhood indoctrination may account, at least in part, for the development of fantasy stereotypes such as the unattainable courtly goddess, the transformative loathly lady, the vulnerable damsel-in-distress, and the erotic enchantress, it does not address the strength of many of the female characters in supporting roles, characters who provide narrative direction, initiate the rescue operation, and guide the knight through the perils of the quest. In the trope of rescue at the center of much chivalric romance, a knight is compelled to defeat marauding villains in whatever form they appear, to acquire the object that will prove him to be a man among men, and to restore order to the kingdom. Such constructions of the opposing other, an antagonist typically depicted as rapist giant or fire-breathing dragon, point to an amorphous fear of the unknown and otherworldly places, fears that the literary knight is expected to conquer. But when the lady is *both* damsel-in-distress *and* desiring monster (a woman deformed by sorcery and kept captive in an enchanted castle) as in *Lybeaus Desconus*, anxiety and confusion can drive the hero into momentary paralysis.⁸⁸

FAIRY MISTRESSES, ENCHANTED WOMEN, AND THE POWER OF A KISS

Like *Li Biaus Descouneüs*, *Lybeaus Desconus* incorporates a version of the fairy mistress tale, where a knight falls in love with an otherworldly woman or an enchantress. Usually, the fairy mistress of medieval romance, such as la Pucele as Blances Mains in *Li Biaus Descouneüs*, Tryamour in *Sir Launfal*, La Fata Bianca in *Bel Gherardino*, or Ponzela Gaia in *Ponzela Gaia: Galvano e la donna serpente*, helps the knight accomplish his mission, often becoming the beloved woman who initiates the hero into true love while more malevolent sorceresses or fairies, such as Morgan le Fay, entice the knight to betray his chivalric principles and his destiny.⁸⁹ Dame Amoure (Lambeth) or Diamour (Naples) appears to be the latter sort of captivating enchantress whose function is to undermine the hero’s progress and prevent him from fulfilling the conditions of his quest.⁹⁰ Despite the abbreviated nature of Lybeaus’s liaison with her, as Corinne Saunders points out, “[t]he emphatic vocabulary of sorcery and

⁸⁷ Karras, *From Boys to Men*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ See Neal, *Masculine Self*, pp. 217–22, especially p. 219, for an interesting psychoanalytical reading of this scene.

⁸⁹ See Predelli, *Bel Gherardino*, pp. 225–39, for an analysis of the fairy mistress motif in *Lybeaus* and its analogues. The portrayal of Morgan le Fay as a malevolent enchantress is being reconsidered in the work of a new generation of scholars. See Hebert, *Morgan le Fay*.

⁹⁰ Dame Amoure’s sorcery includes music, one of the clerical arts linking her to the necromancers Iran and Mabon. Part of Dame Amoure’s enchantment of Lybeaus, then, is a result of her minstrelsy: “She made hym suche melodye / Of all maner mynstralsye / That any man myght discryve” (L, lines 1488–90). As Linda Marie Zaerr points out, Dame Amoure’s conjunction of magic and music reappears later in the narrative in the enchanted hall of the clerics Iran and Mabon, so that one seems to be an extension of the other. In Iran and Mabon’s enchanted hall, Lybeaus hears and sees minstrels: “Trumphys, hornys, sarvysse, / Right byfor that highe deys, / He herde and sauge with sight” (L, lines 1836–38). As he proceeds further into the hall, he sees minstrels in the niches of the walls and again hears their music in language, recalling Dame Amoure’s sorcery, “Suche maner mynstralsye / Was never within wall” (L, lines 1855–56). The same “musical” magic victimizes Lybeaus and the Lady of Synadoun, who is transformed into “A worme . . . With a womanes face” (L, lines 2067–68).

witchcraft characterises the love of this lady as dangerous: rather than fulfilling desire, she literally corrupts vision to keep Lybeaus in her seeming paradise, a Circe figure in whom the power of Tryamour is negatively written.”⁹¹

Perhaps the most memorable scene in *Lybeaus Desconus* comes when the eponymous hero meets the Lady of Synadoun, the damsel whose castle-under-siege distress call prompts Arthur’s delegation of the mission to Lybeaus. Having been transformed by two sorcerers, the dragon lady approaches an awestruck Lybeaus, wraps her massive winged appendages around him, and plants the fiercest of dragon kisses upon his lips, an amorous act that triggers her metamorphosis from hybrid monster to fully-formed woman. Like Sleeping Beauty awakened by the kiss of her prince or a female Beast transformed by a male Beauty, the Lady is suddenly returned to her pre-enchanted state, as she appears “moder naked” before the astonished young knight. There is much to be said about a moment in which the enchanted world intimately touches the realm of the human as it does when the dragon lady kisses this impressionable young man.⁹²

The fearsome audacity of such an intimate gesture clearly would challenge any knight’s fortitude and restraint, but given Lybeaus’s kinship to Gawain it is not surprising that such an episode emerges in a romance in which he must prove himself as stalwart in love as he is in battle. As he is the son of Gawain, whose own reputation includes the capacity to break magic spells and resist the temptation of a woman’s kiss, it stands to reason that this scene would be necessary to prove Lybeaus’s ability to endure this species of erotic assault, if only to provide evidence of his kinship to Gawain.⁹³ But perhaps what is most notable about this particular narrative moment is that Lybeaus neither attempts to slay the beast nor to defend himself from her ardent embrace. Instead, he stands immobilized and awestruck as the beastly beauty makes her move.

The transformative kiss known as the *fier baiser* has drawn so much critical attention that it has acquired a name and a genealogy of its own. The *fier baiser* is a popular medieval story in which a young man is required to kiss an enchanted woman who appears in some dormant state of inaction or repulsive physical form, typically as a serpent or dragon, in order to trigger her transformation back to her previous condition. Versions of this motif appear in medieval narratives throughout Europe, overlapping, as Roger Sherman Loomis has demonstrated, with the loathly lady tale in which a knight is tested by his willingness to kiss (or have sex with and/or marry) an enchanted woman in the shape of an ugly hag or loathly lady.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 188. Saunders sees Dame Amoure as essentially separate from the evil sorcerers; she is “a powerful enchantress whose explicitly faery magic contrasts with the ‘nigromancy’ of the two clerks who have enchanted the lady of Synadoun. The episode interweaves the folk motifs of the magical condition and transformation into bestial form, but these enchantments are shaped by clerical magicians” (p. 171). Dame Amoure’s Circe-like enchantment perhaps figures in the animal features of Maugis, but it especially recurs in the music that characterizes her enchantment of Lybeaus and the clerks’ transformation of the Lady of Synadoun.

⁹² Saunders, “Subtle Crafts.” See also her article “Erotic Magic.”

⁹³ Larrington, *King Arthur’s Enchantresses*, p. 215n56; Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 188.

⁹⁴ Loomis, “Fier Baiser in Mandeville’s Travels.” One such version is John Mandeville’s tale of Hippocrates’s daughter, who is changed into a dragon by the goddess Diana until a kiss from a daring knight turns her back into a mortal woman before she dies. Unfortunately, no knight is sufficiently courageous, and she dies having found no rescuer to lift the curse.

His willingness to grant the lady sovereignty and choice in the matter results in her transformation into a feminine icon and fantasy lover. Whether this transformation occurs by day or by night is typically left up to the woman to decide.⁹⁵

While Loomis has argued for a Celtic nature myth as the source of these related tales, Madeleine Tyssens and Christine Ferlampin-Acher demonstrate that the snake-kiss is a pan-European folktale phenomenon, and not just a Celtic variation of the tale.⁹⁶ Two versions of *fier baiser* tales in Great Britain have been recorded by Francis James Child in “Kempe Owyne” and “The Laidley Worm of Spindleston Heugh.”⁹⁷ Other variations are also in evidence. According to Laura A. Hibbard, in the Old French *Gui de Warewic* Guy’s son Reinburn, in what seems an inverted form of the *fier baiser*, must kiss Amis in order to prevent his being turned into a serpent.⁹⁸ In some versions — *Li Biaus Descouneüs*, *Lybeaus Desconus*, *Lanzelot*, *Le Roman de Belris*, and *L’Hystoire de Giglan*, for example — the serpent/dragon woman takes the initiative, while in others — such as *Carduino* and *Ponzela Gaia* — the knight (sometimes with a little coaxing) initiates the disenchanted act.

FROM CHIVALRIC OPPONENT TO MARAUDING GIANT

As in the transmogrification of the enchantresses noted above, *Lybeaus Desconus* presents several of the knight’s opponents in ways that transform their otherwise chivalric characteristics into something far more sinister and threatening. Transformations of characters such as Malgiers and Lambard indicate a shift in perceptions of otherness by late medieval audiences as well as by poets. Not only is Malgiers made into a stereotypical giant named Maugis, but he is aligned with pagan idols associated with Mohammed (Mahomet). And while it is fair to say that negative portrayals may be requisites of the genre, it is also fair to point to increasing xenophobia in England at the time.⁹⁹ Giants of Middle English romance, including Amoraunt and Colbrond in *Guy of Warwick*, Grander’s brother and Ascopart in *Bevis of Hampton*, the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the giant of Mont St. Michel in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, to name a few, provide a means by which a hero’s martial skills and deliberative acuity may be tested, to be sure. But also at stake in these confrontational moments is the validation of institutional authority, since the winner of such battles was thought to be on the side of justice. That being said, there is a discernible element of fearsomeness added to depictions of larger-than-life characters who do not subscribe to the dominant values of the land.¹⁰⁰ Lambard’s characterization accords with other giants of romance, most notably Sir Valentine in *Sir Launfal*, but his otherness is distinctly ethnic when he is made into a Lombard. The presence of giants is clearly nothing new to Middle

⁹⁵ For an interesting range of possibilities see Passmore and Carter, *English “Loathly Lady” Tales*, and particularly Peck’s “Folklore and Powerful Women in Gower’s ‘Tale of Florent.’”

⁹⁶ See Tyssens, “Les Sources de Renaut de Beaujeu,” and Ferlampin-Acher, “La Fée et la Guivre,” pp. xx–xxii. For a more recent survey of the *fier baiser* episode, see Jewers, “Slippery Custom(er)s,” pp. 19–23.

⁹⁷ Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 1:306–11 and 311–13.

⁹⁸ Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England*, p. 142.

⁹⁹ For an interesting reading of Lybeaus, see Cohen, *Of Giants*, especially pp. 73–76.

¹⁰⁰ See Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, esp. pp. 188–221. Also relevant to the discourse on race and ethnicity in the Middle Ages is Heng, *Empire of Magic*.

English romance, but the shifting nature of their characterization provides a significant marker of changing perceptions of religion, race, and ethnicity.

ILLEGITIMACY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND RECONCILIATION

That marriage is considered to be a stabilizing social force in the late Middle Ages probably goes without saying. In a romance that addresses illegitimacy, however, the subject of legitimate marriage accrues greater significance, not only for the children born out of wedlock or not knowing who their parents are, but for the couple whose illicit sexual liaison produces offspring, the procreative “good” reserved for marriage.¹⁰¹ According to medieval law, an illegitimate child was *filius nullius* and could not legally inherit property from either parent, a situation that places Lybeaus in a disadvantageous position from the start.¹⁰² Even though his parents come together in the end in one version (Naples), there is no overt indication that they marry. This leaves the rather awkward dilemma of Lybeaus’s status as renowned but socially disenfranchised, a dilemma resolved by his own marriage to the Lady of Synadoun. And despite the approval of this nuptial alliance by Arthur, both parties consent to an arrangement that promises to benefit each one, albeit in different ways. While the Lady of Synadoun stands to inherit a sizeable kingdom, with “Castellys fyfty and fyve” (L, line 2110), medieval law allowed such property to pass into the governing hands of a husband.¹⁰³ Lybeaus/Guinglain thus gains sovereignty over the Lady of Synadoun’s land and erases his illegitimacy by the reconciliation of his parents, by their public acknowledgment of him as their son, and by his marriage to a queen.¹⁰⁴

THIS EDITION

Readers will note that the editors do not identify possible scribal or spurious verses.¹⁰⁵ Our decision to present both the Lambeth and Naples versions of *Lybeaus Desconus* was made in an effort to provide a complementary double perspective on this important narrative rather than a compilation of all extant redactions or a single tradition of manuscripts considered to be “the two best copies.”¹⁰⁶ An edition that attempts to blend all available redactions, to splice together stanzas and passages too often disjunctive in diction and phrasing, greatly affects the reading of the narrative as a whole. Likewise, a presentation of texts that represents a singular

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *De bono coniugali*, p. 7.

¹⁰² Brand, “Family and Inheritance.”

¹⁰³ Because she succeeds to the kingdom, she can legally “welde all with wynne” (L, line 1787), since she operates within the same framework as male heirs; she exercises seigniorial powers as well as manorial rights and later accepts the fealty of her tenant-knights.

¹⁰⁴ For the significance of female consent and legal arrangements, see Weldon, “Naked as she was bore.”

¹⁰⁵ It is difficult to decide with certainty authorial lines or phrases from authorial revisions, scribal corruptions of authorial revisions, and scribal interventions. For speculations on spurious lines in *Lybeaus*, see Mills, *Lybeaus Desconus*, pp. 10–13, and his articles, “Composition and Style” and “Medieval Reviser at Work.”

¹⁰⁶ We are referring to Max Kaluza’s early composite version and Maldwyn Mills’s critical edition of C and L. For a comparison of the two editions, see Hunt, “Editing Arthuriana,” p. 45.

component of a complex manuscript network forecloses a full appreciation of the richness of the late medieval literary environment in England. The editors of this METS edition believe that by presenting these two versions — one that represents the central editorial tradition of the text (Lambeth) — and the other that represents the most complete of the revisions (Naples) — our readers will generate more illuminating readings of a pivotal narrative in the Arthurian literary corpus and come to a more comprehensive understanding of the dissemination and development of a thriving manuscript industry in the late Middle Ages.

We have followed the editorial conventions of the Middle English Text Series:

- The Middle English letters thorn (þ) and eth (ð) have been replaced by *th*, and yogh (ȝ) by *g*, *gh*, or *y*.
- The use of *u* and *v* as well as *i* and *j* has been regularized in accordance with modern English practices.
- In order to avoid confusion with the definite article *the*, the second person pronoun, often spelled *the* in the manuscripts, is regularly printed as *thee*.
- Roman numerals have been replaced with their numerical equivalents in word form.
- Manuscript abbreviations have been silently expanded throughout the text.
- Punctuation is editorial and follows modern usage. Final *e*'s deemed to have syllabic value as a long vowel have been marked by an accent.
- Word division has been silently regularized in accord with modern English practice, including compound and frequently hyphenated words.
- Capitalization conforms with modern English practice.
- Double *ff*'s have been silently emended to single *f*, except for words such as *off*.

Any other deviations from the Lambeth or Naples manuscripts have been addressed in the textual notes.

A hysto of one Gyngelaine otherwys named by King Athyme kyngis dysconsens
that was biforned bid to þe Galwegne.

Then comme we Galwegne
and his moder þre mete flome
Spede hem sit hec mede
þat lyfeth of a knyng
wys of witt and a myghty merew
and doughty man of dede
His name was on Gyngelaine
Gotten he was of his Galwegne
Under a forest syde
A better knyng was nevþer profitabyl
With dedme at the armable
Seide þe neid of dede
Gyngelaine was fayre of fyshe
Centryll of body and of face þerof
þat wuld though that he were
þis moder þe kept with him myghte
þat he shuld se no knynghe
Armed in no maner
For he was fyn þe bladys ^{not} salvage
And gladly wold wende rane
To his flesshes in feare
And all for dede of myghte woso
His moder alway kept hi dede
As doughty childe and deere
And for he was so fayre of fyshe
His moder clepte hi Gyngelaine
And none oþer name
And this childe was so myghte
He aped now of myghte

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LYBEAUS DESCONUS (LAMBETH PALACE, MS 306)

A tretyes of one Gyngelayne othir wyse namyd by Kyng Arthure Lybeus Dysconeus that was bastard son to Sir Gawayne.

	Jhesus Criste oure Savyour	
	And His Moder, that swete floure,	<i>flower</i>
	Spede hem at her nede	<i>Help them in their</i>
	That lysteneth of a conquerour,	<i>Who listen</i>
5	Wise of witt and wight wereour	<i>Intelligent; skillful warrior</i>
	And doughty man of dede.	<i>valiant; deed</i>
	His name was Sir Gyngelayne,	<i>Begotten</i>
	Gotten he was of Sir Gawayne,	<i>At the edge of the woods</i>
	Under a forest syde;	<i>[more] honorable</i>
10	A better knyght was never prophitable	<i>Round</i>
	With Arthur at the Roun Table:	<i>tell of</i>
	Herde I never of redde.	
	Gyngelayne was fayre of sight,	<i>good-looking</i>
	Gentyll of body and of face bryght,	<i>Noble; handsome</i>
15	Bastard though that he were;	<i>illegitimate</i>
	His moder hym kepte with hir myght	<i>determination</i>
	That he shulde se no knyght	<i>see (have contact with)</i>
	I-armed in no maner,	
	For he was full savage	<i>wild</i>
20	And gladly wold do outerage	<i>violence</i>
	To his fellaues in fere;	<i>companions; together</i>
	And all for dred of wycke loose	<i>fear of a wicked reputation</i>
	His moder alwey kepte him close,	
	As doughty childe and dere.	<i>worthy; beloved</i>
25	And for he was so fayre of fyce,	<i>because; face</i>
	His moder clepte him Bewfiz,	<i>named; Beautiful Son</i>
	And none other name,	
	And this childe was so nyse	<i>naive</i>
	He asked never, i-wysse,	<i>as far as I know</i>
30	Whate hight of his dame.	<i>What name his mother had given him</i>
	Tyll hit befell uppon a day,	<i>Until one day (At that time)</i>
	The childe wente him forthe to playe,	<i>hunt</i>

	Of dere to have som game He fond a knyght there he lay, In armes stoute and gaye, Slayne and made ful tame.	deer; amusement found; where armor strong; beautiful Dead; fully subdued
35	He toke off that knyghtis wede; Hymsylffe therin well fayre can shredre, All in that bryght armour.	knight's armor Dressed himself
40	Whan he had do that in dede, To Glastynbury the childe him yede, Ther lay Kyng Arthure. And whan he came to Arthurs hall	done; in fact youth took himself Where lived
45	He fond him there and his lordis all; This childe knelyd downe on his kne; "Kyng Arthure, Criste thee save and see. I am come oute of fer contré My mone to make to thee.	Christ; protect from a country far away appeal (request)
50	I am a child unkowthe And come out of the southe And wolde be made a knyght; Lorde, I pray thee nowthe, With thi mery mouthe, To graunte me anone right."	outlandish (ignorant) from now mirthful recognize; at once
55	Than saide Arthure the kynge, "To me childe, without dwellinge: Whate is thi name aplight? For never sethe I was born, Sawe I never me beforne So semely to my sight."	Tell; delay What is your name truly since Never saw I [anyone] in my presence [One] so handsome
60	Sayde Gyngelain, "Be Seint Jame! I ne wote whate is my name; I am the more nyse; But while I was at home, My moder, on hir game, Clepped me Bewfice."	By; James do not know naive
65	Than sayde Arthur the kyng, "This is a wonder thinge, Be God and Seint Denyce, Whan that he wold be made a knyght	for amusement Called; Beautiful Son
70	And wote not whate his name hyght And hathe so fayre a vice.	wondrous By; Denis knows not what he is called visage
75	I shall yif hym a name, Amonge you all in same, For he is fayre and fre;	give gathered here together handsome; noble

- Be God and be Seint Jame,
 So clepped him never his dame,
 Whate woman so she be.
 Clepeth him in your use,
 80 Lybeus Disconeus,
 For the love of me;
 Than mowe ye wit, on a rowe,
 That the better ye mowe knowe
 Certis so hight hee."
- By
 called; mother
 Whoever she is
 Call; for practical purposes
 The Fair Unknown
- more; understand in turn
 Certainly might he be called
- 85 Kynge Arthur anone right
 Con make him a knyght,
 In that sylffe daye,
 "Now Kyng Arthur hathe made me knyght,
 I thanke him with all my myght;
 90 Bothe by day and nyght
 With my fomen I will fight
 Them to say with strok of myght
 And to juste in feere."
- at once
 Did
 On; very same
 Now [that]
- foemen (enemies)
 test (assail)
 (see note)
- 95 Whan he was a knyght made,
 Of Arthure a bone he bade
 And sayde, "My lorde fre:
 In hert I were full glad
 The first fyghtinge that ye hadde
 That men will aske of thee."
- boon; requested
 noble
 would be; happy
 battle
- 100 Than saide Arthure the kynge,
 "I graunte thee thine askynge,
 Whate batayll so it bee;
 But me thinketh thou arte to yonge
 To do a gode fyghtynge,
 105 Be ought that I can see."
- grant; your request
 you are too young
 From what
- Withouten eny more reyson,
 Duke, erle, and baron
 Wesshed and went to mete.
 Volatyle and venyson,
 110 As lordis of grete renon,
 I-now they had to ete.
 Nade Arthure syt but a while,
 The mountence of a myle,
 Att his tabyll sett,
- discussion
 Washed; supper
 Wildfowl; venison
 lords; renown
 Enough; eat
 Nor had; sat
 For a few minutes
- 115 Ther con a mayde in ryde
 And a dwerfe by hir syde,
 All beswett for hete.
- [Before] there came
 dwarf
 sweaty; heat

	The may hight Ellene, Gentyll, bryght and shene, A lovely messengere.	<i>maiden was called Noble; beautiful</i>
120	Ther nas countes nor quene So semely on to sene That myght be hir pere. She was clothed in tarse, Rownd and nothinge scarce, I-pured with blawndenere; Hir sadill was overgilt And with diamondis fyltt: Milke white was hir destere.	<i>was neither countess; queen attractive; behold peer exquisite fabric Full cut; skimpy Edged; white fur saddle; overlaid (with gold) covered destrier (riding horse)</i>
125	The dwerf was clothed in ynde, Byfore and eke behinde: Stoute he was and pertte. Amongis all Cristyn kyng Suche sholde no man fynde;	<i>indigo In front Strong; attractive</i>
130	His surcote was so ryche bete. His berde was yelewe as wax, To his girdyll hange his fax: The sothe to say in sertenté, Of gold his shone were dight	<i>surcoat; richly worked beard; yellow belt; hair truth; certainty shoes; made</i>
135	And coped as a knyght: That signyfied no poverti.	<i>caped showed; poverty</i>
140	Theodeley was his name: Wyde were sponge his fame, By northe and eke by southe;	<i>Theodeley Far and wide also</i>
145	Mekyll he couthe of game, Sotill, sawtrye in same, Harpe, fethill, and crowthe. He was a gentill boourdour	<i>Much; knew; entertainment Citole, psalter as well fiddle; stringed instrument noble entertainer</i>
150	Amonge ladyes in boure, A mery man of mouthe. He speake to the mayde hende, “For to tell thine erende,	<i>bedchamber cheerful storyteller noble Now; your errand</i>
	Tyme hit were nouthe.”	
155	The mayde knelyd in hall Befor the knyghtis all And sayd, “My lorde Arthure, A casse is nowe befall, A worsse within wall	<i>kneeled cause</i>
	Was never yitt of doloure.	<i>sorrow</i>
160	Mi lady of Synadowne Is brought in stronge prison,	<i>Snowdon taken into</i>

165	That was of grete value, And pray you sond hir a knyght That is of wer wyse and wight, To wynne hir with honoure."	<i>Who; value beseeches you send her war win her [release]</i>
170	Uppe startte that yonge knyght, With hert mery and light, And sayde, "Arthur, my lorde, I shall do that fight And wyn that lady with myght, If ye be trewe of worde."	<i>heart hopeful undertake win; strength</i>
175	Than sayde Arthoure, "That is sothe, Certeyn withouten othe, Therto I bere recorde. God yf thee strenthe and myght To hold that ladyes right With dynte of sper and swerde."	<i>true oath witness give uphold; cause spear; sword</i>
180	The mayde began to chide And sayde, "Alas that tyde That I was heder i-sentt! Thy worde shall spryne wide: Forlorne is thy prude And thi lose shentt, When thou wilt send a childe	<i>object time here sent Your edict Lost; honor reputation tarnished</i>
185	That is witles and wylde To dele eny doughty dent, And haste knyghtis of renoun, Syr Persyfal and Syr Gawyn, That ben abled in turment."	<i>stupid; churlish blow When you have; renown Perceval; Gawain proven in tournament</i>
190	The dwerfe with grete erroure Went to Kynge Arthowre And saide, "Kynde kyng: This childe to be weroure And to do suche labour	<i>anger</i>
195	Is not worthe a ferthinge Or that he that lady see, He shall do bataylles thre, Wythoute eny lesyng; At Poynte Perilowse,	<i>Rightful king warrior hardship farthing Before; (Lady of Synadoun) battles three doubt</i>
200	Besyde the Chapell of Awntrous, Shall be his begynnge."	<i>fate (chance)</i>
	Syr Lybeus than answerde, "Yett was I never aferde For dred of wordys awe.	<i>afraid fear of daunting words</i>

- 205 To fyght with spere and swerde
Somdell have I lernede.
There many man hathe be slawe,
That man that fleyth by wey or strete,
I wolde the devyll had broke his nek,
210 Wherever he hym take;
Also I wolde he were to-drawe
And with the wyne to wawe,
Till the devill him take.
The batayll I undirtake
215 And never none forsake,
As hit is londes lawe."
- A little something
been slain
who flees*
- drawn and quartered
wind; be tossed*
- it is the law of the land; (see note)*
- The kynge said anone right,
"Thou gettist here none other knyght,
By Him that bought me dere!
220 If ye thinke the childe not wyght,
Get thee another wher thou myght,
That is of more power."
The mayden for ire and hete
Wolde neyther drynke ne ete,
225 For none that there were.
She sate downe dismayde
Tyll the table was raysed,
She and the dwerfe in fere.
- immediately
You will get
[Christ]; redeemed
worthy
wherever*
- rage; anger
drink nor eat
no one
disappointed
taken away
together*
- Kyng Arthoure, in that stounde,
230 Comaunded of the Tabill Rownde
Foure of the best knyghtis,
In armys hole and sownde,
- very place*
- weapons whole; sound; (see note)*
- To arme him anone rightis;
And sayde, "Throwe the helpe of Criste,
235 That in the flome was baptiste,
He shall holde uppe all high hightis,
And be gode champyon
To the Lady of Synadon
And fallen hir soon in fyghtis."
- arm [Lybeaus] immediately
Through
river [Jordan]; baptized
[Lybeaus]; promises
good champion*
- defeat her foe in battle*
- To armen him the knyghtis were fayne:
The fyrst was Syr Gawayne,
That othere, Syr Persvale,
The third was Syr Iwayne,
The fourthe highte Agfayne:
240 Thus telleth the Frensshe tale.
They kestyn on him of sylke
A sorkett white as mylke,
- [Lybeaus]; eager
Gawain
Perceval
Ywain
Agravain*
- placed upon
surcoat; milk*

250	That semely was in sale; Theron an haubryk bryght That richely was dyght With mayles thik and smale.	handsome; hall hauberk appointed links thick; small
255	Syr Gawyn, his owe syre, Henge aboute his swyre A shelde with one cheferon; And an helme of riche atyre That was stele and none ire Sir Percyvale sett on his crowne; Lawncelett brought him a spere, In armes him with to were, And a fell fauchone;	[Lybeaus's] own father Hung; neck chevron (emblem) helmet elaborately made not iron head
260	Iwayne brought him a stede That was gode at nede And egir as eny lyoun.	weapons; fight fine falchion Ywain; steed good in battle high-spirited; any lion
265	The knyght to hors gan spryng And rode to Arthure the kynge And sayde, "My lorde hende, Yeff me thy blesyng, Withoute eny dwellynge; My will is nowe to wende."	mounted gracious Give; your delay depart
270	Arthur his honde up haffe And his blesyng him gaffe, As curteys kynge and kynde, And sayde, "God yf thee grace, Of sped and eke of space, To bryng that byrde oute of bonde."	hand raised gave courteous; just give aid; also lady; bondage
275	The messanger was stoute and gaye And leppete on her palfraye. The dwerfe rode by hir syde, Tyll on the thirde day, On that knyght alwaye Faste he gan to chide. And saide, "Lorell, caytyfe, Though thu were worthe suche fyve, Lorne is thy pryd!	[Elenel]; strong; spirited horse
280	This place beforne kepith a knyght That with eche man will fight: His wordis spryngen full wyde.	Until perpetually Constantly she; complain Fool, caitiff (wretch) Although you Lost; honor
285	He hat Syr William Delaraunce: His fyght may no man staunce, He is a werreour oute of wytt;	before us keeps each reputation is well-known
290		is called strength; stop warrior fearsome

- 295 Throwe herte other throwe haunche,
His spere he will throwe launche
Whoso agayne hym sytt.”
Quod Lybeous Disconeus,
“Is his fyght of suche use?
Was he never i-hitt?
For ought that may betyde,
Ayenes him will I ride
To se how he will fytte!”
- 300 They redyn forthe all thre
Upon that fayre cause
Ryght to Chapell Auntours;
The knyght they con see,
In armys bryght of blee,
Upon the Poynte Perylous.
He bare a shelde of grene
With three lyons of gold shene,
Well proude and precious;
Of sute lynnell and trappes.
310 To dele strokys and rappes
That knyght was evyr vyous.
- 315 Whan he sawe Lybeous with syght
Agayne him he rode right
And sayde, “Welcome bewfere!
Whoso ridis here day or nyght
He most nedys with me fight
Or leven his armes here.”
Quod Lybeous Disconeus,
“For the love of Jhesus,
320 Lette us nowe passe here:
We be fer from any frende
And have wylde wey to wende,
I and this mayden in fere.”
- 325 William answerd thou,
“Thowe shalt not scape soo,
So God yf me rest!
We shall bothe twoo
Fyght or than we goo,
A forlonge here be weste.”
330 Quod Lybeus, “Nowe Y see
Hit will non other bee:
In haste do thi best.
Take thi course with thi shafte,
- Through heart or; hip
through
Whoever opposes him
Said
strength
smitten (unhorsed)
whatever; betoken
Against
sit (remain mounted)
- rode on
just purpose
- did
gleaming in appearance
- bore a shield
lions; shining
- matching harness straps and saddle trappings
deliver; blows
ever eager
- fair knight
Whosoever rides
by necessity
leave; weapons
Said
- pass through
far; friend
uncharted way; go
together
- then
escape so [in this way]
give
- before
furlong to the west
- It will be no other way*

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 335 | Iff thou conne thy crafte,
For here is myne all prest." | prove your skill
ready to go |
| 340 | They wolde no lenger abyde,
But togeder con they ryde
With well grete raundoun.
Lybeus Disconeus that tide
Smote William under the syde
With a sper fellowune;
But William sate so faste
That bothe his styropis to-brast
And his hynder arsoune,
That he begann to stoupe
Over his hors crowpe,
And in the felde fell downe. | wait
did
energy
instant
deadly spear
firmly
stirrups broke
<i>As well as the back of his saddle</i>
slump
hind quarters
field |
| 345 | His stede ranne away,
But William nought longe laye
But stertt up anone ryght
And sayde, "Be my faye!
Nevyr afor this daye
Ne fonde I none so wyght.
My stede is nowe agoo:
Sir, fyght on fote also,
Yff thou be a gentyll knyght."
Sayde Libeus Disconeus,
"By the leve of Jhesus,
Therto I am full lyght." | jumped up quickly
faith
Never before
<i>Have I ever found; strong</i>
gone
foot
If; noble
love
willing |
| 350 | Togeder con they dynge
And fauchones oute to flynge
And faughten frely faste.
Dyntis con they dynge
That fyre, withoute lesyng,
From helme and basnett oute braste;
But Wylliam Sellabraunche
To Lybeus con launche
Through his shelde on highe. | clash
falchions unsheathed
fiercely
Blows they delivered
fire, truthfully
helmet; basinet burst out
did thrust
shield high up; (see note) |
| 355 | Lybeus anone ryght
Defended him with myght,
As werreor queynte and slygh;
Barbe and crest in syght
He made to fle downe ryght
Of Williams helme on highe;
And with the poynte of the swerde
He shove Williams berde | quickly
himself
warrior skilled; clever
Barbel (chin protector)
slip down
on top
shaved; beard |
| 360 | | |
| 365 | | |
| 370 | | |
| 375 | | |

- And came the flesshe not nyghe.
 William smote to Lybeus soo
 That his swerd barst a-two,
 380 That many a man hit syghe.
- (without cutting the skin)
 so powerfully
 burst in two
 saw
- Tho can William to crye,
 "For the love of Mary,
 On lyve now lett me passe!
 Hit were a grete vlynye
 385 To do a knyght to dye,
 Wepenles in a plasse."
 Quod Lybeus Disconeus,
 "By the love of Jhesus,
 Of lyfe gettest thu no grace
 390 But thu swere me an othe
 Or than ye hense gothe
 Righte before my face."
- plead
 It; villainy
 cause; to die
 Weaponless; place
 mercy
 Unless you; oath
 Before you go hence
- "In haste knele thu downe
 And swere on my fauchon
 395 Thou shalt to Artor wende
 And say, 'Lord of renon,
 As overcome person,
 A knyght me heder ganne sende,
 That ye cleppen in your use
 400 Lybeus Disconeus,
 Unkothe of right and kynde."
 William on kneis him sett
 And swore, as he hym hett,
 Her forward worde and ende.
- swear; falchion
 Arthur go
 renown
 a vanquished
 sent me here
 you call; manner
 Unknown; lineage
 his knees dropped
 as he was told
 agreement from start to finish
- 405 Thus they departed all:
 William to Arthours hall
 Toke the right waye.
 A case ther can befall
 Thre prynces proude in palle
 410 He met that ylke daye.
 The knyghtis all thre
 Weren his syster sonnes free,
 That weren so stoute and gaye.
 Whan they sawe William blede,
 415 As men that wolden wede
 They maden grete deraye.
- Something happened
 splendidly clad
 very
 sister's sons freeborn
 who were enraged
 outcry
- And seyde, "Eme William,
 Who hathe wrought thee this shame?
 Why bledest thou so yeren?"
- Uncle
 has done
 are you bleeding so much

- 420 "By God and be Seint Jame,
Of that he is nought to blame,
A knyght wel stoute and sterne.
Lybeus Disconeus he highte
To fell his fone in fyght
425 He nys nothinge to leren.
A dwerfe rydis him byfore,
His squyer als he were,
And eke a well fayre berne.
by
*is called
foeman
has nothing to learn
rides; before
squire
also a fair youth*
- 430 But o thinge grevis me sore
That he hathe made me swere
By his fauchone bryght
That I shall nevermore,
Till I be Artour before,
Stynte day nor nyght.
435 To hym I mot me yelde
As overcomen in felde
Of his owne knyght;
I shall never agenes him bere
Nother sheld nother spere,
440 Thus have Y him hight."
*one; grieves me sorely
swear
Never stop
must present myself
defeated; field
By his (Arthur's)
bear
Neither shield nor spear
promised*
- 445 Than said the knyghtis free,
"Thou shalt awroken bee
Sertys withoute fayle!
Hym agayne us thre
Ys not worthe a stree
For to holde batayle.
Wende thedyr and do thine othe,
And though the traytour be wrothe
We shall him assayll;
450 Or he this forest passe
His hambrek we will to-rasshe,
Though hit be thike of mayle!"
*avenged
Certainly; fail
against; three
straw
endure
Go yonder; keep your oath
formidable
assail (attack)
Before; passes through
hauberk; tear apart
chain mail; (see note)*
- 455 Hereof wylt no wyght
Syr Lybeus that yonge knyght,
But rode forthe pase by pase.
He and that mayden bright
Made togeder that nyght
Gamen and grete solas.
"Mercy," she con hym crye,
460 For she had spoken hym vylonye;
He foryave hir that trespas.
The dwerf was hir squyer
*Of this knew nothing
step by step
together
Sport; pleasure
"Forgive me"
villainy of him
forgave
their squire*

- And served hem bothe in fere
Of alle that worthi was. *together*
- 465 On morowe, whan it was daye,
They redyn on her jornaye
Toward Synadoune. *In the morning*
continued their journey
Toward
- 470 Then met they in the way
Thre knyghtis stoute and gaye,
Rydynge from Carboun. *richly attired*
Caerleon
them
turn around
- 475 To hym they cryed aright
“Traytor, torne agayne and fight,
Or leve here thi renoun!
For here we westward wende
Thyne haubrek we shall rende
Ther to we bethe full bounde.” *relinquish; reputation*
rip to pieces (lacerate)
To that purpose
- Syr Lybeus to hem cryed,
“I am redy to ride
Agenes you all in same!” *them*
- 480 As prince proude in pride,
He prekyd his stede on eche syde
And to them stoutly con rede
On ernest and nought in game.
The eldest brother can bere
To Sir Lybeus a spere:
Gower was his name;
Lybeus rode Gower so neghe
That he to-brake Gowers thiegh,
And evyr after was lame. *all of you at once*
confident in his ability
spurred
against; did ride
In seriousness; not in sport
- 485 *close*
Gower's thigh
ever after [Gower]
- 490 The knyght gronyd for Payne;
Lybeous, with myght and mayne,
Held hym fast adowne. *groaned in pain*
- 495 The dwerfe of Theodoleyn
Toke the stede by the rayne
And lept up in the arson,
And rode forthe, also skette,
Ther the mayde Elyne sette
That faire was of fassyon;
Than loughe this mayden bright
And seide that this yonge knyght
Is chose for champyon. *rein*
saddle
quickly
Where
Who; form
laughed
- 500 *chosen; champion*
- The medyllest brothere beheld
How his brother in the felde
Had lorne bothe mayne and myght.
He smote, as it is tolde, *middle; watched*
field
lost

- Syr Lybeous in the shelde
 With his spere full right.
 The shafte a-two did brest,
 The hede steked faste
 510 In place ther hit was pight;
 Lybeous than can ber
 With the poynte of his spere
 The helme awey of the knyght.
directly
broke in two
lance head stuck firmly
where it; driven [thrust]
carried
helmet
- The yongest brother full yerne
 Upon a stede full sterne
 As egir as eny lyon,
 Hym thought his body can bren
 515
eagerly
strong
fierce
burn; (see note)
- But he myght, also yerne,
 Ber Lybeous downe.
 520 As werour oute of witt
 Lybeous on the helme he hit
 With a fell fauchon;
 So styffe a stroke he sett,
 Throwe helme and basnett,
 525 Hit clave in Lybeous crowne.
Knock
warrior in a battle frenzy
deadly falchion
strong; landed
helmet; basinet
It (his stroke) stuck; helmet
- Tho wax Lybeous agreved
 When he felte on his hede
 The swerde, with egir mode;
 His bronde aboute he wende.
 530 All that he hit he shende,
 Also werreour wilde and wode.
 Full fast men saide thoo,
 “A man agaynes two,
 To fyght is nothinge gode!”
 535 Harde he hewe on him,
 And he, with strokys gryme,
 Styfly agenes him stode.
Then grew; aggrieved
renewed vigor
sword; waved around
destroyed
As if [he were]; crazy
One; against
no fair
slashed
grim
Staunchly against
- But throwe Godis grace,
 That other brother he canne brace
 540 Under his right arme thoo;
 He threwe him in that place
 And in that selfe space
 His lyfte arme brast atwoo.
 The yongest say with sight
 545 That he ne had mayne no myght
 To fyght agaynes his foo;
 To Lybeous up he helde
through God's
seized
very same
left; burst in two
with his own eyes
neither strength nor courage

- His spere and eke his shelde
And mercy cryed hym thoo. *cried for mercy*
- 550 Lybeous answerd, “Naye,
Thou ascapest not so away,
By Hym that holpe mankynde!
Thou and thi bretheren tweyne
Shull plight me your fayne
555 Ye shullen to Artor wende,
And sey, ‘Lord of renon,
As overcome of persoune,
A knyght me hedyr can sende
To yelde you toure and towne
560 And dwell in your bawndon,
Ever withoute ende.’
- “And but ye will so doo,
Certis, I will you sloo,
Longe or hit be nyght.” *unless
slay
Before nightfall
two knights promised*
- 565 The knyghtis sworne two
They shulde to Arthur goo,
Her trowythe ther they plight.
Lybeus and that may
Rydden in her jornaye
570 Ther they haden tight.
Tyll that the therd day
They reden in game and playe,
He and that mayden bryght.
- They reden even weste *[farther] west*
575 Into the wilde forest
Toward Synadoun.
They nuste whate hem was best;
Taken they wolde fayne reste
And myght not come to towne.
580 In the grene greves
Thei dight a loge of leves,
With swerdis bryght and browne;
Therein they dwelled al nyght,
He and that mayden bright,
585 That was of fayre fassyon. *form*
- And evyr the dwarf can wake
That nothinge shulde betake
Here hors aweye with gyle.
For dred he ganne quake
Grete fyre he sawe make, *all night; stayed awake
Their horses; stealth
fear; shake
fire*
- 590

	Thensse halfe a myle. “Aryse, sir,” he sayde, “knyght! To hors that ye were dight, For dred of more perile; 595 Certis, I hire boste And fele grete smylle of roste, Be God and be Saint Gyle!”	<i>Half a mile away</i> <i>may prepare yourself</i> <i>hear boasting</i> <i>smell; roasting</i> <i>Giles</i>
600	Lybeous was stoute and fayre And lepté upon his desteyre And hent shelde and spere, And whan that he nyghed nere, As he rode tawarde the fyre, Two gyauntes he sawe there. That one was rede and lothelych, 605 That other black as eny pyche Gressly bothe of chere! The black helde in his arme A mayde i-clypped in his barme So bryght as blossom on brere.	<i>hearty; bright</i> <i>warhorse</i> <i>picked up</i> <i>drew near</i> <i>giants</i> <i>red; loathly</i> <i>any pitch (i.e., tar)</i> <i>Grisly; countenance</i> <i>clasped to; bosom</i> <i>briar</i>
610	The rede giaunte full yerne A wylde bore canne torne Aboute apon a spytt. The fyre bright can bren, The mayde cryed yerne	<i>eagerly</i> <i>boar; did turn</i> <i>upon; spit</i> <i>burned</i> <i>screamed ceaselessly</i> <i>witness</i>
615	For some man shuld it wit, And sayde ever, “Wayle-a-waye! That ever I shulde bide this daye With two devylles to sitt! Helppe me, Mary mylde,	 <i>live through</i> <i>devils</i>
620	For love of thine childe, That I be nought forgett!”	 <i>forsaken</i>
625	Than Lybeous: “Be Seint Jame! To save this maiden from shame, Hit were enpure enprice; But for to fight with bothe in same, Hit is no childes game — They be so grym and gryse!” He toke his course with a shafte, As a knyght of kynde crafte, 630 And rode be right assyse. The blacke giaunte can to smert Thorugh lounge and hert, That never after can rysse.	 <i>It; worthy enterprise</i> <i>at the same time</i> <i>child's play</i> <i>terrible</i> <i>lance</i> <i>natural cunning</i> <i>just cause</i> <i>pierce</i> <i>lung; heart</i> <i>did rise</i>

	Tho flye the mayden shene	<i>Then fled</i>
635	And thanked tho Heven Quene	<i>(the Virgin Mary)</i>
	That suche socoure hir sent;	<i>succor</i>
	Tho came the mayde Elene,	
	She and the dwarffe bydene,	
	And by the hande hir hentte,	
640	And lad hir into the greves,	<i>together</i>
	Into the loge of levys,	<i>her took</i>
	With well gode entent,	
	And besought swete Jhesus	
	Help Lybeus Disconeus	
645	That he ner nought shent.	<i>led; woods</i>
		<i>lodge; leaves</i>
		<i>good intentions</i>
		<i>beseeched</i>
		<i>never would be overcome</i>
	The rede gyaunte smote thore	
	To Sir Lybeous withe the bore	<i>boar</i>
	As wolfe oute of wede.	<i>wild wolf</i>
	His dynnte he smote so sore	<i>stroke; lethally</i>
650	That Lybeous stede therefore	<i>steed</i>
	Downe to grownde yede.	
	Lybeous was redy bounde	
	And lept on his arson	
	As sparkyll dothe on glede;	
655	With hartt egyr as a lyon,	
	He faught with his fauchon	
	To quyte the gyaunte his mede.	
		<i>spark from a burning coal</i>
		<i>heart fierce</i>
		<i>pay back; reward; (see note)</i>
	Ever the gyaunte faught,	<i>For a long time</i>
	But at the secunde draught	<i>round</i>
660	His spere barst evyn a-twoo;	
	As man that was unsawght	
	A tronchon oute he laught	
	To fyght agaynes his foo,	
	And with the hede of the tre	
665	He smote Lybeous shelde in thre:	<i>top</i>
	Than was Lybeous woo.	
	As he his tronchon up haffe,	
	Syr Lybeous a stroke him gaffe:	
	His right arme fell hym froo.	
		<i>broke; into three [pieces]</i>
		<i>worried</i>
		<i>[the giant]; tree lifted up</i>
		<i>gave</i>
		<i>from him</i>
670	The gyaunte fell to grownde:	
	Syr Lybeous, in that stownde,	<i>place</i>
	Smote off his hede full right.	
	In Frensshe as it is ifounde,	
	He that he gave the fyrste wounde,	
675	He servyd hym so aplyght.	<i>head; decisively</i>
	And then toke the hedis two	<i>found</i>
	And bare the mayden thoo,	
		<i>likewise</i>
		<i>heads</i>
		<i>carried them to</i>

- For whom he made that fyght;
 The mayde was glade and blythe
 And thanked God fele sythe
 That ever he was made knyght. *happy; relieved
many times
[Lybeaus]*
- Quod Lybeous, “Gentil dame,
 Tell me whate is thi name
 And where ye were y-bore.” *Noble lady*
- 685 “Syr,” she sayde, “Be Seynt John,
 My fader is of riche fame
 And wonnes yonder beforne:
 An erle, an olde hore knyght,
 That hathe ben man of myght: *By
father; great renown
was once*
- 690 His name is Syr Anctour.
 They clepen me Violet;
 The gyauntes had me besett
 Aboute our castell yore. *earl; gray-haired
authority
call
abducted
From outside; a while back*
- Yesterday, in the evenyng,
 695 I went on my playenge: *i.e., flower picking*
- None harme Y ne thoughte.
 The gyaunte, withoute lesynge,
 Oute of the busshes con spryng
 And to this fyre me brought; *lying (truthfully)
leapt
fire*
- 700 Of hem I had be shent
 Nad God me socoure sent,
 That all the worlde wrought.
 He quyte thee thy mede,
 That for us canne blede *By him; violated
Had God not sent aid*
- 705 And with His body us bought.” *[May] He give
redeemed*
- Withoute more talkyng,
 To hors con they spryng
 And reden forthe all in same,
 And tolde the erle tydynge *[Lybeaus and company]
rode; together*
- 710 Howe he wanne in fightyng
 His doughter fro woo and shame.
 Than were the hedis sent
 To Kynge Arthour in present,
 With mekyll glee and game; *sorrow
heads
as a gift*
- 715 And tho in courte fast roose
 Syr Lybeous Dysconeus noble loose
 And all his gentill fame. *much good cheer; celebration
quickly arose
reputation
noble; (see note)*
- The Erle, for his gode dede,
 Yave him full riche mede:
 720 Shelde and armes bryght, *[Lybeaus's] good deed
Gave; reward
armor*

- And also a noble stede
 That was gode at nede
 In turnament and in fyght.
 Lybeus and that maye
 725 Redyn in her jurnaye,
 Ther they logen tyght.
 Thanne sawe thei in a parke
 A castell store and starke
 That richely was ydight.
- maiden
*Confer; their
 Where; lodge secure*
- built
- 730 Fayre walled hit was with stone:
 Suche sawe he never none,
 With cornyllus styff and stoute.
 Sayd Lybeous, "Be Seynt John!
 This were a worthy wone,
 735 Who had hit wonne with dyntt."
 Than lough that byrd bryght
 And sayde, "Alwey a knyght,
 The best here all aboute,
 Whoso will with him fyght,
 740 By day or by nyght,
 Lowe he maketh him loute.
- Beautifully; it*
crenellated towers
By
man
conquered; force of arms
laughed; lady
Call for
- grovel
- 745 "For love of his leman,
 That is so fayre a woman,
 He hathe done crye and grede
 Whoso bryngeth a fayrer on,
 A gerfawkon, white as swanne,
 He shall have to his mede.
 And yf she is not so bright,
 With Jeffron he most fight;
 750 And yf he may not spedē,
 His hede shall him be rafte
 And sett upon a shafte
 To seen in lenthe and brede.
- lady*
declared
Whoever brings; one
gerfalcon; swan
reward
as beautiful
(see note 768)
win
cut off
- far and wide*
- The sothe to se wele
 (see note)
- 755 An hede or two up-right."
 Saide Lybeous als snelle,
 "By God and Saint Michelle!
 With Jeffran Y will fyght
 And chalaunge that faukon
 760 And sey I have in towne
 A leman two so bright;
 And when he will hir a-see,
- quickly*
Michael
- lay claim to; falcon*
- lady twice as beautiful*
gaze upon

- I shalle shewe him thee,
By day other by nyghte!" *or*
- 765 The dwerfe said, "By Jhesus!
Gentill Lybeous Disconyous,
Thou puttist thee in grete perille.
Jeffron le Freudous
In syght hathe a queynte use *Noble
yourself; danger
(see note)*
770 Knyghtis to begylle."
Lybeous answerd ther,
"Therof have I no care,
Be God and be Seint Gile!
I shall see his face,
775 Or Y esteward passe
From this cité a myle." *secret stratagem
beguile
By
Before; eastward
city; mile*
- Wythoute more renouen
They dwellyd still in towne
All that nyght in pease. *reason*
- 780 On morowe Lybeous was bowne
To wyne him renon *ready
win himself renown*
And rose, withoute leese;
And armed him right sever *delay
himself; completely
armor*
In that noble armwre
785 That Er Aunctours was.
His stede ganne to stride,
The dwarfe rode him beside
Toward the proude palleys. *Earl
began
formidable palace*
- Jeffrond le Frendys,
790 He rose and was with us,
In that morowe tide *morning*
To honoure swete Jhesus
And ses Lybeus Disconyous,
Come prickande with pryde! *sees
galloping*
795 Withoute any abode,
Agayne Libeous he rode *hesitation
[Jeffron]*
And lowde to hym can crye *loud; did cry*
With vaise sharpe and shille: *voice; shrill*
"Comest thu for gode or ille?
800 Tell me anone in highe!" *you; good
at once*
- Quod Lybeous also tite,
"I have grete delyte *Said; immediately*
With thee for to fighte.
Thou seyste a foule dispite,
805 Ther is no woman so white *false thing
pure*

- As thy leman be lighte,
And I have one in towne
Well fayre of fassyon,
In clothis when she is dight.
810 Therfor the gerfaukon
To Arthur kyng with crowne
Bringe I shall with right.”
- Quod Jeffrey, “Gentyll knyght,
We shull proven aright
815 Whether the fayrer be.”
Quod Lybeous anone right,
“In Cordile cité with sight,
That eche man may hir see,
And amyddis the market
820 Bothe thei shull be sette,
To loke on, bonde and free.
Yff my leman is browne,
To wyn the jerfaukon
Juste Y will with thee.”
- 825 Quod Jeffrounse also snell,
“Forsothe, I graunte it wele;
This daye at undertide,
By God and by Seint Michell!
Oute atte this castell
830 To Cardyle we shull ride!”
Her glovis up they helde
Ther right in the felde,
As prynce proude in pryd.
Lybeus also snelle
835 Rode home to his ostell:
He nolde no lenger abide,
- And hit the mayde Elyne,
That semely was to sene,
To buske and make hir bownde;
840 And seyde, “By Heven Quene,
Geffrouns leman, the shene
Today shall come to towne;
Amydward the cité
That all men shall you see,
845 Of wede and fassyon;
Yff thu arte not so bryght,
With Jeffround I mot fight
To wynne the jerfaukon.”
- lady by daylight*
form
dressed up
gerfalcon
rightfully
- shall prove rightfully*
Who; fairer
soon
- in the midst of*
they (the ladies)
/by those] bound; freeborn
i.e., beautiful enough
gerfalcon
Joust
- quickly*
- noon*
Michael
From
Carlisle
Their gauntlets
right there
princes
quickly
- hostel (guest quarters)*
would no longer stay
- it [told]*
comely
dress; herself presentable
- Jeffron's lady; beautiful*
To the middle of
- clothes; comportment*
If you are; as beautiful
must
win; gerfalcon

- 850 The dwarf answerd and seid,
 "Thow doste a savage dede,
 For any man i-borne!
 Thow wilt not do be rede
 But faryst with thi madd hede
 As lorde that will be lorne.
 855 For His love, forthe we wende,
 That died for all mankynde
 And in Bedlem was borne!"
 Lybeous said, "That were shame:
 I hadd levyr, be Seint Jeme,
 860 With wilde hors to be torne!"
- The mayde Ellyne, also tighth,
 In a robe of samyte
 Gaylie ganne hir atyre
 To do Lybeous prophite,
 865 In kerchevys fayre and white
 Aryved with gold wyre.
 A velvet mantill gaye
 Purfild with gryce and graye
 She did aboute hir swyre;
 870 The serkell upon hir moolde
 Of precious stones and goolde:
 The best of that empire.
- Lebeous sate that daye
 Upon a gode palfraye,
 875 And reden forthe all three.
 Eche man to other ganne saye,
 "Here cometh a lady gaye:
 Is semely unto see!"
 Into the markete thei rode
 880 And boldly ther abode,
 Amydward the citee;
 Then sawe thei Jeffron com ryde
 And two squyers by his syde
 And no more mayne.
- 885 He bare the shelde of gowlys,
 Of sylver thre white owlys,
 And of gold the bordure;
 And of that same colours
 And of that other floures
 890 Was fyne golde and trappure.
 The squiers that by him rode
 That one bare shaftis gode,
- You are doing; uncouth act*
You refuse counsel
follow; irrational impulses
lost
go
Bethlehem
rather, by; James
torn apart
immediately
samite
did she dress herself
profit
head coverings
Decorated
cloak
Edged; gray squirrel fur
neck
circle (crown); head
good saddle horse
beautiful to look at
marketplace
stopped
In the middle of
they saw
companions
He (Jeffron) bore; red (gules)
owls
color scheme
flowers
trappings (decorations)
carried lances

	Thre shaftis gode and sewre;	sure
895	That other lade redy bownde	<i>lady; carried</i>
	The joly gentill jerfaukowne:	<i>noble gerfalcon</i>
	The two ladyes were there.	
	And aftir hym come ryde	
	A lady proude in prude,	
	Iclothed in puryll palle.	<i>Dressed; cloth</i>
900	The folke came fer and wide	
	To se them back and syde:	<i>see</i>
	Howe gent she was and smalle.	<i>refined</i>
	Hir mantill was ryght fyne,	<i>cloak; exquisite</i>
	Ipowderd with ermyne,	<i>Interspersed; ermine</i>
905	Well riche and ryalle.	<i>royal</i>
	The sercle on hir molde	<i>crown; head</i>
	Of stones and of goolde	
	And many a ryche amayle.	<i>enamel figure</i>
	As rose hir ruppe was rede;	<i>complexion; red</i>
910	The here shone on hir hede	<i>hair</i>
	As gold wyre shynnge bryght.	<i>thread (wire) shining</i>
	Hir browes also blacke as sylke threde	<i>silk thread</i>
	Ibent in leynthe and brede;	<i>Curved; length; breadth</i>
	Hir nose was streght and right.	<i>in proportion</i>
915	Hir eyen gray as glasse,	<i>eyes</i>
	Milke white was hir face:	
	So seid they that sawee that syght.	<i>who saw</i>
	Hir swyre longe and smale;	<i>neck; thin</i>
	Hir bewte to tellen alle	<i>beauty</i>
920	No man with mowthe myght.	<i>describes</i>
	But tho men did hem bryng	<i>those</i>
	Two cheyers into the chepyng,	<i>chairs; marketplace</i>
	Her bewtees to discryve.	<i>Their beauties; display</i>
	Then seid bothe olde and yonge,	
925	Forthewithe withoute lesynge,	<i>Immediately; doubt</i>
	“Betwene hem was partye:	<i>Among them; agreement</i>
	Geffroune leman is clere,	<i>Jeffron's lady; beautiful</i>
	As rose on rise or in erbere,	<i>stem; arbor</i>
	Forsythe and nought to lye!	<i>I am not kidding</i>
930	Ellyne the messangere	
	Ne were but a lawnder:	<i>Nothing but a laundress</i>
	Of hir no loose make I.”	<i>praise</i>
	Quod Geffrounde ly Froundes,	<i>Declared</i>
	“Sir knyght, by swete Jhesus,	
935	This hauk thou haste lore!”	<i>hawk; lost</i>

- Quod Lybeous Disconeous,
 "Suche was never myne use;
 Juste I will therfore.
 Yf thowe berest me downe,
 940 Take my hede and the faukon,
 As forwarde was thore;
 And yf I ber downe thee,
 The hauk shall wend with me,
 Magré thyne hede, hore."
- Without more tale to telle,
 They redyn downe in the felde
 And with hem grete partye;
 With cornellus styff and shelde
 Eythir agayne othir in the felde
 950 With well grete envye.
 Her shaftis brosten asondre,
 Her dyntis ferdan as thonder
 That cometh oute of the skey;
 Tabowres and trompours,
 955 Heroudes and dissoures,
 Her strokys con discrye.
- Tho can Geffroune to lepe
 And said, "Gyve me that will not breke:
 A shaffte withoute cornall!
 960 This yonge frely freke
 Sytteth in his sadyll sete
 As stone in castell wall;
 I shall do him stoupe
 Ovyr his hors crowpe
 965 And gyve hym an evill falle:
 Though he be as wise wereour
 As Alysaunder or Kyng Arthur,
 Lawncelot or Syr Percevalle."
- The knyghtis bothe twoo
 970 Redyn togeder thoo,
 With well grete rawndon;
 Lybeos smote Jeffroun soo
 That his shelde smote him froo
 Into the felde adowne.
 975 Then lowe all that ther was
 And sayde, withoute lees,
 Dukes, erle and baron,
 That never yette they seye
- intent
Joust
bring
head; falcon
agreed upon
defeat you
go
In spite of you, old man
- With nothing more to say
rode
party [of knights]
steel-tipped lances
Each against
hatred
Their lances burst asunder
Their blows sounded like
- Drummers; trumpeters
Heralds; raconteurs
Their; did describe
- [a lance]
a head
noble man-at-arms
as firmly
cause; to slump
horse's rump
- Alexander [the Great]*
- then
energy
so [forcefully]
shield knocked away
- laughed all who were there*
lying
earls; barons
had they seen

- 980 A man that myght durye
A cours of Syr Jeffroune. *endure*
joust with
- 985 Geffoun toke his cours outeryght
And was nyghe oute of his witte
For he myghte not spedē,
And rode agene als tighte *started on his way at once*
nearly; mind
That; succeed
- 990 995 And Lebeous on the helme he hitte,
As wolfe that wolde at wede.
But Libeous sate so faste
That Jeffroune downe caste
Bothe hym and his stede:
Geffrounes backe to-brake
That men herd the crake
Aboute in leynthe and brede. *in a state of madness*
sat so firmly [in his saddle]
fell down
with his horse
back broke [so loudly]
crack
far and wide
- 1000 1005 Than sayde all that ther weren
That Jeffroun had ilorne
The gentill jerfaukon;
To Lybeous they hym bare
And went, bothe lesse and more,
With hym into the towne.
Geffroun oute of the felde
Was borne home on his sheldē
With care and reuthefull rowne;
The gerfaukon isent was
By a knyght that hight Cadas
To Arthur, kynge with crowne. *who were there*
lost
him [the gerfalcon] carried
- 1010 1015 1020 1025 And wretyn alle the dede
With him he can to lede
The hauk tho Lybeous wan.
Tho Arthure hard hit redde,
To his knyghtis he sayde,
“Lybeous well wer can!
He hathe sent me with honour
Of foure fightis the floure,
Sethen he fyrst byganne.
I will him send tresoure
To spend with honour,
As falleth for suchē a man.” *shield*
joyless lamentation
named
that; won
heard it (the story) recounted
war (battle)
prize
Since
treasure
hundred pounds
florins
Carlisle
feast
lasted

- As lord of grete renoune;
 And at the six wokis ende
 They toke her leve to wende:
 1025 Duke, erle, and baroune.
 Syr Lybeous and that may
 Tokyn her right waye
 Tawarde Synadowne.
- As they redyn by a lowe,
 1030 Hornes herd they blowe.
 And huntyngre grete of gile.
 The dwerf saide, in a thorowe,
 "That horne wele I knowe,
 For youre frely sale:
 1035 Hit blowis motis jolelye,
 That servid sometyme my lady,
 Semely in hir sale.
 When she was takyn with gile,
 He fled for grete perile
 1040 West into Wyralle."
- As they redyn talkynge
 They sawe a rache com renyngre
 Overthwerte the waye.
 Than said olde and yonge,
 1045 From her first begynnge,
 Thay sawe never none so gaye:
 He was of all coloures
 That man may se of floures
 Bytwene Mydsomer and Maye.
 1050 The mayde saide, alse snell,
 "Sawe I never no jowell
 So lykinge to my paye,
- "So that I hit aught!"
 Lybeous as tight it caught
 1055 And toke hit the mayden clene.
 Thay ridden forthe all softe
 And tolde howe knyghtis faught
 For birdes bryght and shene.
 Ne had they redyn but a while,
 1060 The mountence of a myle,
 In that forest grene,
 They sawe an hynde come strike
 And two grawndis like
 The racche that I of mene.
- end of six weeks*
their permission; go
maiden
Took up their former path
Toward
- rode; hill*
craft
quickly
- noble hall*
hunting calls
- castle*
beguiled
- Wirral*
- rode [while] talking*
hunting dog; running
Across
- i.e., since they were born*
- flowers*
Midsummer; May
instantly
jewel
pleasure
- should have it*
quickly
bore it to
leisurely
talked about
ladies; beautiful
- distance*
- [When]; doe; running*
greyhounds
hunting dog; spoke

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1065 | They hovyd under a lyne
And sawe the course of the hynde,
Lybeous that was so fre.
Then sawe they com behynde
A knyght iclothed in jende | waited; linden tree
path; doe
noble
following
indigo |
| 1070 | Upon a baye destré;
His bugill canne he to blowe
For houndis shulde him knowe
In whate stede that he were.
He seide to hem that throwe, | bay destrier
bugle; began
so that hounds
where he was |
| 1075 | “That racche do I owee,
Agone is eight yere. | greyhound; own
Gone for; years |
| | Frendis, lettes him goo!”
Lybeous answerd thoo,
“That shall never betide: | |
| 1080 | With myn hondis two
I gave it the mayden me froo
That hovith me bysyde.” | No! That shall never happen! |
| 1085 | Quod Sir Otis de Lile,
“Thou puttist thee in grete perile,
To bycker and thou abide.” | Who sits beside me |
| | Lybeous sayde, “Be Seint Gile,
I ne gyf nought of thi gile,
Chorle, though thou chide!” | yourself
bicker when you [should be] patient
By
care nothing of your guile
Churl; complain |
| 1090 | Quod Sir Otys de Lyle,
“Syr, thi wordis ar wile,
Chorle was never my name.
My fader an erle was awhile,
And the countesse of Carlehillie,
Forsothe, was my dame. | your; are rash |
| 1095 | Yf I were armed nowe,
Redy as arte thowe,
We shulden fight in same.
But yf thow the racche levyn,
Thowe pleyest, longe or evyn,
A wondyr wilde game!” | earl for a long time
Carlisle
mother |
| 1100 | Quod Lybeous, also prest,
“Theroft, sir, do thy beste:
The rache with me shall wende.” | Prepared; you are
right now (together)
Unless; leave the hound
before evening
reckless |
| 1105 | Thay token her way evyn west
Into that faire forest,
As the dwerf hem kende.
Syr Otis, with grete errorr,
Rode home to his toure | stance
go
They; their
dwarfed them
anger
tower |

- And after his frendis did send;
 1110 And tolde hem anone rightis
 Howe one of Arthur is knyghtis
 So shamefully canne him shende;
- Arthur's
 defy
- And his racche was inome.
 Than sware they, all and some,
 1115 That traytur shulde ben itake
 And never agene home come,
 Though he were the grymmer grome
 Than Launcelet de Lake.
- taken away
 swore [Otis's friends]
 traitor should be
- They dighten hem to armes
 1120 With swerdys and giyarnes,
 As werre that shulde awake.
 Knyghtis and squyers
 Leppyn on her desters,
 For her lordis sake.
- more fearsome young man
 armed themselves
 battle-axes
- As if they were going to war
 squires
 their warhorses
 their lord's
- 1125 Upon an hill full hie
 Syr Lybeous ther he seye,
 Rydinge forthe pase by pase.
 To hym they con crye,
 "Traytor, thou shalt die,"
- high
 they (Otis's men) saw
 slowly
- 1130 Todaye for thye trespass!"
 Lybeus ayene behelde
 Howe full was the felde,
 So mekyll folke that ther was.
 He sayde, "Mayde Ellyne,
- trespass
 again
 field
 many
- 1135 For this racche, Y wene,
 Me cometh a carefull case.
- Because of; hound
 serious problem
- I rede ye you withdrawe
 To the wode shawe,
 Youre hedis for to hide;
 1140 For Y am frely fayne,
 Though Y shulde be slayne,
 Bekyr with hem to abyde."
- strongly advise that
 edge of the forest
 heads
- Engage them in battle
- 1145 Into the forest he rode
 And ther he boldly abode.
 As avauntors proude in pryde,
 With bowes and arblast,
 They shotten to him faste
- there; waited
 adventurers
 crossbows
- And made hym woundis wyde.
- Syr Lybeous stede ranne
 1150 And bare downe hors and man,
 For nothinge wolde he spare.
- charged
 bore; horse

- All men sayde than,
 "This is the devyll Satan,
 That mankynde will forfare."
 1155 For whomso Lybeous Araught
 At his fyrt drawght,
 He slepte for evermore.
 But sone he was besette,
 As dere is in the nette,
 1160 With grymly woundis sore.
- Who; betray
 whomever; struck
 blow
 i.e., was dead
 trapped
 [a] deer
 serious injuries
- For twelve knyghtis, all prest,
 He sawe come oute of the west,
 In armys bryght and clere.
 Alday thay haden yrest
 1165 And thoughtyn in that forest
 To slee Lybeous that knyght.
 Of sewte they weren all twelve,
 That one was the lorde himselfe,
 In ryme to redyn aright.
 1170 They smotyn to hym at onys
 And thoughten to breke his bonys
 And to fellyn hym in fyght.
- ready for battle
- All day; waited
 plotted
 slay
- Dressed in matching garb
 [Otis de Lyle]
 rhyme
 once
 intended
- Tho myght men hire dynge
 And rounde rappis ryng,
 1175 Amonges hem all in feere:
 The sparkylles conne to spryng
 Forthe, witheoute lesyng,
 From shield and helmes clere.
 Lybeous slowe of hem three,
 1180 The fourthe began to flee
 And durste nought neye him nere.
 The lorde lefte in the stoure
 And his sonnes foure,
 To syllen her lyves dere.
- hear
 hard blows
 together
 sparks began to fly
 truly
- slew; three of them
 fourth began
 stay near
 abandoned; conflict
- sell their lives dearly
- 1185 Tho runne rappes ryffe:
 He one agaynes fyve
 Faughte as he were wode.
 Nye downe they con hym dryve;
 So watyr dothe off the skythe,
 1190 Off hym ranne the bloode.
 Whan Lybeous was ney spilte,
 His swerde barst in the hilte:
 Than was he madde of mode.
 The lord a stroke he sete
- i.e., mayhem ensued
 alone against
 crazed
- Nearly overcame him
 As water does; scythe
- nearly done for
 broke; hilt
 enraged

- 1195 Throwe helme and basnett,
That in the skolle hit stode. *helmet with visor*
skull it stuck
- In swounyng he fel downe
Upon his ferther arsoun,
As man that was all mate. *swooning*
front of his saddle
done for
- 1200 His fone weren full bownde
To persyne his aketowne,
Bothe mayle and plate. *enemies; fully intending*
pierce; armor
chain mail; steel breastplate
- When he ganne sore to smerte,
He pulled up his herte
1205 And sterryd up his state;
An ax he hente him nyghe,
That henge by his thighe:
Almost him thought to late. *began; hurt*
i.e., mustered his courage
stirred; spirit
had at hand
was hanging
it seemed to him too
- Tho he steryd him as a knyght:
1210 Thre stedis adowne right
He slowe at strokys three.
The lorde sawe that in sight
And of his stede he alyght:
Away he began to flee. *Then; aroused himself*
Three horses
slew in three strokes
- 1215 Lybeous no lenger abode
But aftyr hym he rode.
Under a chesteyne tree
Ther he hadde him qwelld,
But that the lorde hym yelde
1220 At his will for to bee, *dismounted*

waited
- And, by certeyne stente,
Tresure, londe and rentte,
Castell, hall and boure,
Lybeous thereto assente, *chestnut*
would have killed
- 1225 By forward so that he wente
Unto Kynge Arthure
And sayde, “Lorde of renowne,
As overcome and prisowne,
I am to thine honowre.” *assented*
sworn contract
- 1230 The lorde graunted his wille,
Bothe lowde and styll,
And ladde him to his toure. *defeated; taken prisoner*
(i.e., subject myself)
- Anone the mayden Ellyne
With gentillmen fytene
1235 Was ifett to the castell.
She and the dwerffe bydene
Tolden all the dedis kene *aloud; silently*
led; tower
- Soon noblemen fifteen led together Told; mighty deeds

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 1240 | Of Lybeous, howe it befell,
And whiche persones foure
He sent to Kynge Arthure,
That he wanne fayre and wele.
The lord was well blythe
And thanked fele sythe
God and Seint Michell | won fairly
i.e., Arthur; grateful
many times |
| 1245 | That swyche a nobyll knyght
Shulde with werre in fyght
Wynne his lady free.
To covere with mayne and myght,
Lybeous a fourtenyght | such
recover; strength
fortnight |
| 1250 | Ther with him canne lende.
He did helen his wounde
And made hym hole and sownde
By the fowrtenyght ende;
Than Lybeous and that maye | stay
heal
whole; sound
end of the fortnight |
| 1255 | Toke her right waye
To Synadon to wende. | maiden
Resumed their
Snowdon |
| 1260 | The lorde, withoutte dwellynge,
Went to Arthur the kynge
And for presowne hym yelde,
And tolde him the begynnyng
Howe suche a knyght in fyghtyng
Wan hym in the felde.
Kynge Arthur had gode game,
And so had alle in same,
That herde that tale ytolde. | [Otis]; delay
as a prisoner surrendered himself
Conquered
amusement
everyone there |
| 1265 | And chosyn hym prophytalbe,
By knyght of the Rounde Table,
To fyght with spere and shelde. | [Arthur] Who; honorably
As |
| 1270 | Nowe rest we here a while
Of Sir Otys de Lyle
And tell we forthe oure talis,
Howe Lybeous rode many a myle
And sey awntours the while
And Irlande and in Walys. | Before
other stories |
| 1275 | Hytt befell in June, Y wene,
Whan fenell hangeth al grene
Abowte in semely saale;
The somerys day is longe,
Mery is the fowlis songe | took part in adventures
In Ireland; Wales
It happened; I think
fennel
sign of the season
summer's |
| 1280 | And notis of the nyghtyngale. | Merry; birds' song
notes |

- That tyme Lybeous canne ryde
Be a reveres syde
And sawe a fayre cité
With palys prowde in prydē
1285 And castelles high and wyde
And gates grete plentē.
He axed whate hit hight;
The mayden sayde anone right,
“Syr, I will telle thee:
1290 Men clepeth this Il de Ore,
Here be fightis more;
Ther is werr in every countré.
- For a lady of price,
Roddy as rose on rice,
1295 This contré is in dowte;
A gyaunt that heght Maugys,
Nowhere his pere is,
Hir hathe besett aboute.
He is as blacke as pyche,
1300 Nowher is none suchē
Of dedis sterne and stowte;
Whate knyght so passyth the bryge
His armys he moste downe legge
And to the gyaunte alowte.
- 1305 He is thirty fote on leynthe
And myche more of strenthe
Than other knyghtis fyve;
Syr Lybeous woll bethynke thee
That thou with him ne macched bee:
1310 He is gryme to discryve.
He berreth on every browe
As it were brystillus of a sowe;
His hede grete as an hyve,
His armys the lenthe of an elle,
1315 His fystis arne full felle
Dyntys with to dryve.”
- Quod Lybeous, “Mayden hynde,
My way nowe will Y wende
For alle his strokys ylle.
1320 If God will me grace sende,
Or this day come to ende
With fight Y hoppe hym fell.
I have sene grete okys
Fallyn with wyndes and strokys,
- river's
palace splendidly built
castles
plentiful
asked what it was called
immediately
you
call; Isle of Gold
battles
war
- Because of: great excellence
Ruddy (red); stem
trouble
called
equal
blocked passage
pitch
[like him]
- Whichever; bridge
lay down his weapons
bow (pay homage)
- feet tall
stronger
- think carefully about
Whether; matched
- each eyebrow
bristles; sow
a beehive
i.e., forty-five inches
fists are powerful
Blows
- Maiden gracious; (see note)
proceed
Despite; strokes ill (evil)
- Before
hope to slay him
oaks
winds; lightning

- 1325 And the lytell stande full stille.
Thoughe that Y be litell,
To hym will I smyte,
Let God do his wylle!" *little [trees] prevail*
- 1330 They rodene forthe all three
Tawarde that fayre cité
That men calleth Ile Dolour.
Maugys they con see
Upon a bryge of tree,
Bolde as a wilde bore. *Toward
Isle of Sorrow
wooden bridge
boar
pitch
too
pagan idols
brightly gilded*
- 1335 His shelde was blacke as pycche,
And all his armour suche:
Thre mawmentis therin wes,
Of gold gayly gilte;
A spere in honde he helde
1340 And his childe him before. *shield in front of him*
- He kryede to hym in spyte,
"Sey, thou fellau in white,
Tell me whate arte thou!
Torne home agene tite,
1345 For thyne owne prophite,
Yf thou lovyst thy prowe."
Lybeous sayde anone right,
"Kynge Arthure made me knyght,
To hym Y made avowe *shouted; anger
Hey you!
what you are
Turn; immediately
safety
your well-being*
- 1350 That I shulde never turne my backe;
Therfor, thou devyll black,
Make thee redy nowe!" *a pledge
i.e., run away
you devil
Prepare yourself now*
- 1355 Syr Lybeus and Maugis
On stedis proude in prise
Togeder redyn full ryght.
Bothe lordis and ladyes
Laynen in her toures
For to se that syght;
And praied to God bothe lowde and stille, *splendidly arrayed
rode purposefully
are positioned; their towers
aloud; silently*
- 1360 Yf it were His swete wille,
Save that Crysten knyght,
And that fyl gyawnte
That levyd on Turmagaunte
This day to dye in fighte. *vile giant
worshiped*
- 1365 Her shaftes borsten on sonder,
Her dyntis ferd as thonder:
The pecis canne of sprynge. *Their lances burst
Their blows seemed like; thunder
pieces; fly off*

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| | | Each spectator
had not been killed
very start |
| 1370 | Euche man had wonder
That Lybeous ne had gon under
At the fyrste begynnyng.
They drewe swerdis bothe
As men that were wrothe
And gonne togedir dynge;
Sir Lybeous smote Maugis soo
That his shelde fell him froo
And in the felde canne flynge. | angry
to strike
so [hard]
from
did fly |
| 1375 | Maugis was qweynt and qwede
And smote Lybeous stede on the hede
And dasshid oute the brayne;
The stede fell downe dede,
Syr Lybeous nought sayde
But steritt hym up agayne,
And an ax hent ybowne
That henge by his arsowne
And stroke to hym with mayne
Through Maugis stede swyre:
He forkarve bone and lyre
That the hede fell in the playne. | cunning; cruel
horse; head
brain
dead
said nothing |
| 1380 | 1385 | seized quickly
hung; saddle
i.e., strongly
horse's neck
severed bone and flesh
head; field |
| 1389 | On fote bothe they fyghte,
Discryven no man myght
The strokys betwys hem two;
Bothe woundes they laughte,
For they were unsaught
And either other is foo. | Describe |
| 1395 | From the oure of pryme
Tyll hit were evensong tyme,
To fyghtyn they were throo.
Sir Lybeous thrested soore
And sayde, "Maugis, thine ore!
To drinke thou lett me goo. | Both scoffed at their wounds
undaunted
each is the other's foe
hour of prime (sunrise)
evensong (vespers)
relentless
thirsted sorely
have mercy |
| 1400 | "And Y shall graunte thee
Whate bone thowe aske of me,
Swiche case if thee betide;
For grete shame hit wolde be
A knyght for thurste to slee,
And no maner parfyte."
Maugis graunted his will
To drynke all his fille,
Withoute more dispite. | grant
Whatever boon you ask
should the need arise
it would
thirst; slay
acceptable |
| 1405 | 1410 | assault
[Lybeaus]; riverbank |

- And throw his helme dranke,
Maugis smertly hym smytte
*through (by means of)
sharply; whacked*
- That in the rever he flye fylle:
His armoure every dele
1415 Was wette and evill ydight;
But up he sterte as snelle
And seyd, "Be Seint Michell,
Nowe am Y two so light!
Weneste thou, fendys fere,
1420 Uncristened that Y were
Tylle Y sawe thee with sight?
I shall for this baptyse
Quyte well thi service,
Thorough grace of God almyght!"
*river [Lybeaus] fell
everywhere
in bad shape
quickly
Michael
twice as eager
Did you think, devil's companion*
- 1425 Then newe fyght byganne:
Eyther to other ranne
And deltyng dynetes strange;
Well many a gentilman
And ladyes as white as swanne
1430 For Lybeous her hondys wrange;
For Maugis in the felde
Forkarfe Lybeous' shelde
Thorough dynte of armes longe.
Than Lybeous ranne awaye
1435 There Maugis shelde laye
And up he gan hit fange.
*Each at the other
delivered hard blows*
- And ran agayne to hym;
With strokys sharpe and gryme
Eyther other ganne assayle.
1440 Till the day was dymme
Upon the watir brym
Bytwene hem was bataylle.
Lybeous was werreour wight
And smote a stroke of myght
1445 Thorowe jepowne, plate, and mayle,
Thorowe the shulderbone
That his right arme anone
Fell in the fled, saunce fayle.
their hands wrung
- Sliced through; shield
By strokes
ran to
Where
it seized*
- And the gyaunte this ganne see,
That he shulde slayne bee:
He fledde with myght and mayne.
Syr Lybeous after ganne tee
With sterne stroky thre
*[Lybeaus to Maugis]
[a] strong warrior
great strength
emblazoned surcoat
shoulder bone
[Maugis's]
field; I kid you not*
- 1450 The gyaunte this ganne see,
That he shulde slayne bee:
He fledde with myght and mayne.
Syr Lybeous after ganne tee
With sterne stroky thre
*began to realize
should be slain
fled
ran after him
three hearty strokes*

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 1455 | He smote his backe on twayne.
The gyaunte ther belevyde;
Syr Lybeous smote off his heved:
Thereof he was fayne.
He bare the hede into the towne;
With a fayre processyoun
The folke come hym agayne. | <i>in two
remained
head
satisfied
carried
came to greet him</i> |
| 1460 | A lady bright as floure,
That men calleth la Dame Amoure,
Resseyved him wele and fayre
And thanked hym with honour | <i>with pomp and ceremony</i> |
| 1465 | That he was hir socoure
Agayne that gyaunte file.
To chambyr she him ledys
And did off all his wedis
And clothed hym in palle, | <i>her champion
Against that vile giant
led
took off; armor
beautiful clothes</i> |
| 1470 | And profirde him with worde
For to be hir lorde
Of cité and castell. | <i>asked
her</i> |
| 1475 | Lybeous graunted hir in haste
And love to hir ganne caste,
For she was bright and shene.
Alas, she hadde be chaaste!
For ever at the laste
She dyde hym traye and tene.
For twelve monthes and more | <i>acceded to her wishes
radiant; lovely
Would that; had been chaste</i> |
| 1480 | As Lybeous dwelled thore
He forgate mayde Elyne,
That never he myght outebreke
For to helpe to awreke
Of Synadowne the qwene. | <i>there
forgot
break away
avenge
queen</i> |
| 1485 | For the faire lady
Cowthe more of sorcerye
Than other suche fyve;
She made hym suche melodye
Of all maner mynstralsye | <i>[Dame Amoure]
Knew
five others [like her]</i> |
| 1490 | That any man myght discryve.
Whan he sawe hir face
Hym thought that he was
In paradice on lyve;
With false lies and fayre | <i>minstrelsy
describe
gazed at</i> |
| 1495 | Thus she blered his eye:
Evill mote she thryve! | <i>paradise on earth
blurred; vision
May misfortune befall her</i> |

- Till it befell upon a daye
He mete Elyne that may
Beside that castell toure;
1500 To hym than ganne she saye,
“Knyght, thou arte false in thi laye
Ageynes Kynge Arthure!
For the love of o woman
That mekyll of sorcery canne
1505 Thow doste thee grete dissehonour:
My lady of Synadowne
May longe lye in preson,
And that is grete doloure!”
- Until
maid
began
promise
To
one
*Who can do great sorcery
yourself; dishonor*
*for a long time; prison
sorrow*
- Syr Lybeus herde hir speke;
1510 Hym thought his hert gan breke
For sorowe and for shame.
At a postsren isteke
There he ganne outebreke
Fro that gentyll dame,
1515 And toke with hym his stede,
His shelde, his iren wede,
And reden forthe all in same.
Hir stywarde stoute and fayre
He made his squyer:
1520 Jurflete was his name.
- It seemed to him; heart would
locked gate
break away
From; noble woman*
*iron clothes (armor)
rode away
Her steward
[Lybeus's] squire*
- They rodyn faste as they maye
Forthe on her jornaye
On stedis baye and browne;
Till on the third daye
1525 They sawe a cité gaye:
Men clepen hit Synadowne;
With castelles high and wide
And palysed proude in prude,
Worke of fayre facion;
1530 But Lybeous Disconyous
Had wonder of that use
That he saye men do in towne.
- their journey
light brown*
called it
finely crafted
*what activity
saw*
- Cor and fenne full faste,
That men hade ere oute caste,
1535 They gadered ynne iwyssse,
Syr Lybeous axid in haste,
“Tell me, mayden chaste,
Whate betokeneth this?
They taken in the goore
1540 That ar was oute yboore:
- Carnage (corpses); filth (see note)*
*took back inside
asked*
*does this mean
bring in; waste
taken out before*

- Me thynketh they do amysse.” *mistakenly*
 Than seyd mayde Ellyne,
 “Syr knyght, withoute wene,
 I tell thee whate hit is. *doubt*
- 1545 “No knyght, for nesshe ne harde,
 Though he shulde be forfarde,
 Getteth here none ostell,
 For doute of the stywarde
 That hight Syr Lanwarde,
 1550 Constable of that castelle.
 Go ryde into the castell gate
 And axe thine inne theratte,
 Bothe fayre and wele;
 And ere he do thi nede,
 1555 Of justis he will thee bede,
 Be God and be Seint Michell!
- And yf he beryth thee downe
 His trumpetis shall be bowne
 Her bemes high to blowe;
 1560 Then over all Synadowne
 Bothe mayde and garson
 This fen on thee to thorowe.
 To whiche lond that yowe wende,
 Ever to youre lyves ende,
 1565 For kowarde thou worthe knowe;
 And thus may Kynge Arthure
 Lesyn his honoure
 For thyn dedis slowe.” *defeats you*
- Quod Lybeous als tite,
 1570 “That were a foule dissypyte
 For any knyght on lyve!
 To do Arthure prophyte
 And maketh that lady quyte
 Thedyr will Y dryve.
- 1575 Syr Gyrflete, make thee yare,
 To juste with thee will not spare,
 Hastely and blyve.”
 They reden forthe at the gate
 Right to the castell yate,
 1580 With faire shaftis fyve. *quickly*
shameful disgrace
- And axed ther ostell
 At that fayre castell
 For auntsors knyghtis *honor*
free that lady
- prepare yourself*
joust
- rode forth to*
five lances
- asked [for] their hospitality*
In
adventurous

- 1585 The porter faire and wele
 Lete hym yn full snell
 And axed him anone rightis
 Who was here governours;
 And they seid, "Kynge Arthure,
 Man of moste myghtis;
 1590 Well of curtaysie
 And ffloure of chevalyre
 To fellen his fone in fightis."
- The porter prophitable
 To his lorde the constable
 1595 Sone this tale tolde;
 And sayde, "Withoute fable,
 Syre, of the Rowne Table
 Ar comen two knyghtis bolde;
 That one is armyd full severe
 1600 In roose rede armoure
 With thre lyons of goolde."
 The lord was glad and blythe
 And sayde, also swythe,
 Justyn with hym he wolde.
- 1605 And bade hem make hem yare
 Into the felde to fare,
 Withoute the castell gate.
 The porter wolde not spare:
 As a greyhounde dothe to an hare
 1610 To hem ranne to the gate
 And sayde anone rightis,
 "Ye auntrous knyghtis,
 For nothinge ye latte:
 Looke your sheldis be stronge
 1615 And your shaftis longe,
 Soketyt and vaumplate,
- And rydeth into the felde:
 My lord, with shafte and shelde,
 Will with you playe."
 1620 Sir Lybeous speake wordis bolde:
 "That is a tale ytolde
 Lykyng to my paye!"
 Into the felde they rode,
 And boldly ther abode
 1625 As bestis brought to baye.
 Lambard sent his stede,
- immediately
 asked; very soon
 their lord*
- flower; chivalry
 defeat; foes; battle*
- honorable
 overseer
 Soon
 No kidding
 Sir*
- impressively
 rose-red*
- just as quickly
 Joust; them*
- prepare themselves
 field; go
 Outside*
- does*
- adventurous
 forebear*
- Spear guards; hand guard*
- lance; shield
 i.e., joust*
- That is what I want to hear
 pleasure*
- waited*
- beasts; bay (cornered)
 sent for*

- His shelde, his iren wede:
Hir tire was stoute and gaye. armor
attire; formidable
- 1630 His shelde was asure fyne,
Thre beer hedis therinne
As blacke as bronde ybrent;
The bordure of ermyne:
Was none so quaynte a gynne
Fro Carlile into Kentt;
1635 And of that silfe peyntoure
Was surcott and trappoure,
In worlde wherso he went.
Thre squiers by hym ryde,
Thre shaftis thei bare him myde
1640 To dele with doughty dynte. azure
Three bear heads
burnt coal
ermine (see note)
clever; device
From Carlisle to Kent
very same design
- Tho that stoute stywarde
That hight Sir Lancharde,
Was armed to the ryghtis,
He rode to the feldewarde
1645 As it were a lebarde,
And ther abode thes knyghtis.
He sette his shelde in grate:
Almoste hym thought to late
When he hym seigh with sightis.
1650 Lybeous rode to hym thare
With a shafte all square,
As man of moste myghtis. hearty steward
called Sir Lambert
- 1655 Ayther smote other in the shelde
That the peces flowen in the felde,
Sothe, withoute wene;
Euche man to other tolde,
Bothe yonge and olde,
“This yonge knyght is kene!”
1660 Lambarte his cours outeright
As werour oute of wytte,
Fro ire and herte tene,
And sayde, “Brynge me a shafte:
Yf this knyght con his craste,
Right sone hit shall be sene!” As if he; leopard
waited
lance rest
too
- 1665 Tho toke they shaftis rownde
With cornelys sharpe ygrowth
And reden with grete raundon.
Eyther provyd that stownde
To gyve other dethes wounde, sharp
- Either struck the other
flew
Truly, without doubt
- fierce
changed course
- anger; hardened heart
- knows
it; demonstrated
- Then
points sharply honed
rode; energy
strove

- 1670 With herte eger as a lyon. fierce
so [hard]
from
- 1675 Lambarte smote Lybeous soo
That his shylde fell him froo
And in the felde fell adowne:
So harde he hym hitte scarcely
- 1680 That unnethis hy myght sytte
Upryght in his arsoune saddle
- 1685 His schafte brake with power;
Lybeous smote hym in the laynore
On his helme so bryght: [Lambert]; chin strap
- 1690 Pesawe, ventayle, and gorger Collar, lower helmet; neckpiece
- 1695 Fly forthe withe the helme so clere,
And Sir Lambarde upright
Sate and rocked in his sadyle
As a childe in his cradill, excellent
child; cradle
strength
- 1700 Withouten mayne and myght.
Every man toke othir by the lappe
And lowghen and couthe her handis clappe:
Barowne, burgeys, and knyght. [those watching]; sleeve
laughed; their; clapped
Barons, burgesses
- 1705 Syr Lambartt thought to justebett: joust better
- 1710 Another helme hym was yfett
And a shafte ummete,
And wan they togeder mette
Eythir to other his shelde sette
Strokys grysly and grete. fetched
unequaled
- 1715 Syr Lambartis shafte to-braste,
And Lybeous shoved soo faste,
In sadylles ther they sete,
That the constable, Sir Lambertt,
Felte over his hors backwarde, Each
lance shattered
where
Fell
benefit
- 1720 Withoute more beyete.
- 1725 Syr Lamberd was ashamed sore;
Quod Sir Lybeous, "Wilt thou more?" you have
- 1730 And he answerd, "Naye!
Sethe the tyme that Y was borne
Sawe I never me beforne I never saw
- 1735 So rydynge to my paye.
Be my trouthe my herte is thine:
Thowe arte of Sir Gawynes kynne,
That is so stoute and gaye. Such riding; pleasure
- 1740 Yf thou shalt for my lady fyght,
Welcome to me this nyght
In sekry and trouthe in faye!" You are; Gawain's kin
Who
security; faith

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | Lybeous sayd, "Sekerlye,
Fyght Y shall for thy ladye,
By heste of Kynge Arthure;
But Y ne wote wherfor ne whye,
Ne who dothe hyr that tormentrye,
To brynge hir in dolour;
A mayde that was hir messanger
And a dwerf brought me here,
Her to socoure." | <i>Certainly
promise (behest)
know neither where nor why
Nor who does her; torment
cause her sorrow</i> |
| 1720 | Lambarde sayde at that stownde,
"Welcome, knyght of the Table Rownde,
Be God and Seint Saveour!" | <i>aid
place
By</i> |
| 1725 | And the mayden Elyne
Was sen for with knyghtis kene
By-for Sir Lambarde.
She and the dwarfe bydene
Tolde of the dedis kene | <i>sent
Before
together
deeds brave
beforehand</i> |
| 1730 | That he did thedirwarde,
And how that Sir Lybeous
Faught with fele shrewes
And hem nothinge spared.
Tho were they all blythe | <i>many villains
did not refrain from assailing
Then; happy</i> |
| 1735 | And thanked God fele sythe,
God and Seint Leonarde. | <i>repeatedly</i> |
| 1740 | Anone with mylde chere
They sett hym to soperie
With mekell gle and game.
Lybeous and Lambard yfere
Of aventours that ther were
Talkeden bothe in same.
Lybeous, withoute fable,
Seyd, "Sir constable,
Whate is the knyghtis name | <i>Soon; uplifted spirit
invited; supper
much joy; entertainment
together</i> |
| 1745 | That holdeth in prisounie
That lady of Synadon,
That is gentyll a dame?" | <i>Talked to each other
lie</i> |
| 1750 | Quod Lambert, "Be Seint John!
Knyght, sir, is ther none
That durste hir away lede:
Twoo clerkys ben hir foone,
Fekyll of bloode and bone,
That havyth ydoo this dede. | <i>knight's
Who holds
noblewoman</i> |
| 1755 | They ar men of mynstrye,
Clyrkys of nigermansye, | <i>Who dares to lead her away
Two clerics; foe
False
done; deed
ministry
Masters of necromancy</i> |

	Here arte for to rede. Irayne ys that o brother And Mabon is that other 1760 For whome we are in dred.	Their; counsel one fear
1765	“Iran and that Mabon Have made in this towne A paleys queynte of gynne: Ther nys erle nor baroun That bereth hert as a lyon, That durst come therin. Hit is by nygrymauncye Iwrought with fayreye, That wondir hit is to wynne; 1770 Therin lyeth in presowne My lady of Synadon, That is of knyghtis kynne.	fortress cleverly engineered neither earl i.e., courage dares It; necromancy Built; fairy (enchantment) extraordinarily difficult it lies; prison Who; knight's kin
1775	“Oftyn we hire hir crye: To sene hir withe none eye, Therto have we no myght. They do hir tormentyre And all the velenye And dreche hir day and nyght. This Mabon and Yrayne 1780 Have sworne her othe certayne To dethe they will hir dight, But she graunte hem tyll To do Mabones will And geven him hir right.	hear her Though we cannot see her power torment villainy afflict (torture) their oath death; bring Unless grant; birthright
1785	Of all this kyngdome fayre Than is my lady ayre, To welde all with wynne. She is meke and bonoure, Therfor we ar in spere 1790 Luste they done hir synne.” Quod Lybeous Disconyous, “By the love of Jhesus, That lady shall Y wynne: Bothe Mabon and Irayne 1795 I shall hewen in the playne The hedys by the chynne.”	kingdom fair heir oversee with honor (joy) meek; good fear Lest; do her sin (rape her) set free cut down heads; chin
	Tho was no more tale In the castell, grete and smale, But souped and made hym blythe.	Then [there]; serious talk Instead [they] supped; merry

- 1800 Barony and burgeyses fale
Comyn to that semely sale
For to listen and lithe
Howe Sir Lambert had wrought
And yf the knyght were oughte,
1805 His crafte for to kythe.
They fownden hem sette in fere
And talkynge at her soper
Of knyghtis stoute and stythe.
- many
noble dwelling
learn
fared
- skill; make known
sitting together
their supper
hardy
- 1810 Tho toke they ease and reste
And lykynges of the beste
In the castell that nyght.
On morowe was Lybeous prest
Of armes of the best:
Full fresshe he was to fight.
1815 Lambarde lad him that gate
To the castell yate
And fonde it full upright.
Further durste hym none brynghe,
Forsythe, withoute lesynge,
1820 Barowne, burgeys, ne knyght.
- their
desires
- prepared
With weapons
Fully rested
- open
no others bring
lying
- Baron, burgess, nor
- But turned home agayne,
Save Sir Jerflete his swayne
Wolde with hym ryde.
Lybeous swore, certayne,
1825 That he wolde see his brayne
Yf he wolde lenger abyde.
To the castell he rode
And with Lambard abode,
To Jhesus than they cryed
1830 He shulde hem send tidyngis glad
Of hem that longe hadde
Distroyed ther welthes wide.
- Except; servent
- i.e., dash his brains out
stay any longer
- prayed
- them who
happiness
- Syr Lybeaus, knyght curtays,
Rode into the paleys
1835 And at the hall he alight;
Trumpys, hornys, sarvysse,
Right byfor that highe deys,
He herde and saughe with sight,
And amydd the hall floore
1840 A fyre well starke and store
That tente and brende bright.
Ferther in he yede
- Sir; courteous
embattled city
dismounted
service at table
in front of; high dais
his own eyes
in the middle of
fire; powerful; intense
gave out light
went

- And toke with hym his stede,
That halpe him in his fyght.
- 1845 Lybeous inner ganne passe *inward proceeded*
To beholde that place: *look around*
The halys in the halle; *remote corners*
Of men more nor lasse
Ne sawe he body nor face *he saw no one*
1850 Butt mynstralis cladde in palle. *Except; fine clothes*
With harpe, lute, and roote *viol*
And orgone noyse of note, *organ noise*
Grete gle they maden all;
With sotill and sawtery,
1855 Suche maner mynstralsye *dulcimer (citole)*
Was never within wall.
- Byfor euche mynstrale stode *In front of each*
A torche bothe fayre and gode
Itende and brente bright.
1860 Sir Lybeous inner yode *Ignited; burning*
To witten with egir mode *proceeded*
Who shulde with hym fight.
He yede into the corners *went*
To beholde the pilleres *pillars*
1865 That semely was of sight, *were beautiful to see*
Of jasper and of fyne cristale, *crystal*
Iflorysshed with amyall, *Decorated; enamel*
That was of moche myght. *a mighty work*
- 1870 The dores weren of brasse, *images*
The wondowes all of glasse, *painted*
Wrought with imagerye; *none fairer was*
The halle ypeynted was:
Nowher none fayrer nas
That he hade seyne withe eye.
1875 He sett hym on the deys: *sat himself; dais*
The mynstrales weryn in pees, *silent*
That were so tryste and trye; *reliable; excellent*
The torchis that brent bright *burned brightly*
They queynte anone right: *suddenly went out*
1880 The mynstrellys weren awaye. *disappeared*
- The dorres and wyndowes all
They betten in the hall
As hit were dynte of thonder; *pounded*
The stones of the walle
1885 On hym conne they falle, *if it; a thunder blast*

- And therof had he wonder.
The deys began to shake,
The erthe began to quake;
As he sate therunder,
1890 The halle roofe unlyke
And the vasure eke,
As it wolde all in sonder.
- amazement
dais
to split open
vaulting
(see note)
- As he sate thus dismayed,
He holde hymselfe dysseyved,
1895 Sertis, herde he nyghe;
Thoo he was better apayde
And to hymselfe sayde,
“Yett Y hope to playe!”
He loked into the felde
- pleased*
Still; fight
- 1900 And sawe, with spere and shelde,
Men in armes twayne,
In pured pure armoure
Was lyngell and trappure,
Wyth golde gaylye dight.
- two men*
refined unalloyed
straps and trappings
adorned
- 1905 That one rode into the hall
And byganne for to call,
“Syr knyght auntours!
Suche case is nowe befall,
They thou be knyght in palle
- adventurous*
- 1910 Fyght thou moste with us!
I holde thee qwaynte of gynne
And thou that lady wynne
That is so precious.”
Quod Lybeous anone ryght,
- Although; in fine clothing*
must
clever; ingenuity
If you [should]
- 1915 “Fresshe Y am to fight,
By the helpe of Jhesus!”
- Ready*
- Syr Lybeous with gode will
And into his sadyll gan skylle,
A launce in honde he hente,
1920 And titely rode hem tyll,
His fomen for to felle,
Suche was his talent.
Whanne thaye togeder smete,
- did leap*
seized
quickly rode to them
foeman
intent
clashed
- Upon her shelde hit sette,
1925 With sperys doughtely of dynte;
Mabounes launce to-braste,
Tho was he sore agaste
And held hym shamely shent.
- their shields*
hearty; blow
Mabon's; shattered
astonished
thought himself shamefully humiliated

	And with that stroke fellowne	<i>felonious</i>
1930	Syr Lybeous bare Maboune	<i>forced</i>
	Overe his hors tayle;	<i>horse's tail</i>
	For his hynder arson	<i>back of his saddle</i>
	Brake and fell adawne	<i>down</i>
	Into the felde saunce fayle;	<i>without</i>
1935	And neygh he had him slayne,	<i>before</i>
	But there come Sir Irayne,	
	In helme, hawbrek of mayle;	
	So fresshe he was to fight,	<i>eager</i>
	He thought anone righte	<i>immediately</i>
1940	Syr Lybeous to assaylle.	
	 Sir Lybeous was of hym ware,	<i>aware</i>
	A spere to hym he bare	
	And lefte his brother stille;	
	Suche a dynte he yave thare	
1945	That his haumbryk to-tare:	<i>[Mabon] lying inert</i>
	That liked bi Irayne ylle.	<i>gave</i>
	Her lawnses they borsten a-two,	<i>hauberk tore</i>
	Her swerdys they drewen thoo,	<i>Iran did not like that</i>
	With hert grym and grylle;	<i>Their lances; in two</i>
1950	They con togeder fight,	<i>Their swords; drew though</i>
	Eyther provid with right	<i>grim; fierce</i>
	Other for to spyll.	<i>defeat</i>
	 As they togedyr gan hewe,	<i>began to strike blows</i>
	Maboune, the more shrewe,	<i>villainous [of the two]</i>
1955	In felde up aroos;	
	He herde and well knewe	<i>strokes</i>
	That Irayne yave dyntis fewe:	<i>was very terrified</i>
	Theroft hym sore agroos.	
	To hym he went full right	
1960	To helpe to fallen in fight	<i>[Iran]; defeat</i>
	Lybeous of noble loose.	<i>fame</i>
	But Lybeous faught with bothe,	
	Though they weren wrothe,	<i>frenzied</i>
	And kepte hymselfe close.	<i>secure (protected)</i>
1965	Tho Yran sawe Maboune	<i>When</i>
	He smote strokys felon	<i>murderous</i>
	To Sir Lybeous withe ire.	
	That evyn he karfe a-downe,	
	Byfor his forther arsowne,	
1970	Lybeous stedys swyre.	<i>The front of the saddle</i>
	Lybeous was werreour slyghe	<i>horse's neck</i>
	And smote evyn to his thighe:	<i>a skillful warrior</i>

- 1975 He karfe bone and lyre;
Ne halpe hym not his armour,
His chawntementis ne his chambur:
Downe fell that sory syre. *shoulder bone; flesh*
Neither did his armor help
nor enchantments; charms (see note)
- 1980 Lybeous of his hors alight
With Mabone for to fight,
In felde bothe in feere. *dismounted*
- 1985 Swyche strokys they dight
That sparkelys sprongen downe right
From shelde and helmes clere;
As they bothe togeder smytte,
Her bothe swerdys mette: *together*
delivered
- 1990 As ye may se hem bere.
Mabon, the more shreweos,
Forkarfe the swerde of Sir Lybeous
Attweyne quyte and skere. *sparks*
shining
Their
villainous
Utterly broke
In two; cleanly
- 1995 Tho was Lybeous asshamed
And in his harte sore agramed,
For he had lorne his swerde,
And his stede was lamed
And he shulde be defamed
To Arthur kynge his lorde. *Then*
sorely enraged
lost
injured
- 2000 To Yrayne swythe he ranne
And hente his swerde up thanne:
Was sharpe on eche a syde;
And ranne to Maboune right
And faste they gonне to fight:
Of love was ther no woerde! *fast*
seized
(i.e., an understatement!)
- 2005 But evyr faught Maboune
As hit were a lyoune
Sir Lybeous for to sloo;
But Lybeous karfe adowne
His shilde with his fawchon,
That he toke Irayne froo.
In the right tale ytolde
The lyfte arme with the shelde
Awaye he smote alsoo; *As if [he]; lion*
slay
carved
falchion
from
left
- 2010 In the right tale ytolde
The lyfte arme with the shelde
Awaye he smote alsoo;
Than cryed Mabon hym tyll:
“Thi strokys arne full ylle;
Gentill knyght nowe hoo! *These*
stop!
- 2015 Ay will yelde me to thee,
In love and grete laughté,
At thine owne wille, *I will surrender loyally*

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| | And that lady fre
That is in my powsté
Takyn Y will thee tille.
For thorough the swerdis dynt
My honde Y have itynte:
The venym will me spille;
I venymed hem bothe,
Certeyn, withouten othe,
Therwith oure fone to felle." | noble
power
through
lost
venom; kill
poisoned them
Certainly; oath
enemies; defeat |
| 2020 | Quod Lybeous, "Be my thryfte,
I will nought of thi yeste,
For all this worlde to wynne;
But lay on strokys swyfte:
One of us shall other lefte
The hede by the chynne!"
Tho Mabon and Lybeous
Faste togeder hewes
And slaked not for no synne;
Lybeous was more of myght:
He clove his helme downe right
And his hede a-twynne. | your offer
swift
cut off
head; chin
slashed at each other
consideration
strength
[Mabon's] helmet
in two |
| 2025 | Tho Mabon was slayne
He ranne ther was Yrayne
With a fawchoune in his fiste;
For to cleve his brayne:
I tell you for certayne,
To fight more hym lyste!
But whan he come there,
Away he was ybore:
Into whate stede he nuste. | When
where
falchion
cleave; brainpan
wanted |
| 2030 | Tho sought he hym, for the nonys,
Wyde in all the wonys:
In trewthe well he truste. | place he did not know
for a long time
dwelling places |
| 2035 | And whan he fonde him nought
He helde himselfe bekaughte
And byganne to syke sore,
And seide, in worde and thought,
"This will be dere bought
That he is fro me fare!
He will with sorcerye
Do me tormentrye:
That is my moste care."
Sore he sate and sighte, | did not find [Iran]
thought; to be deceived
from me fled
harm |
| 2040 | | |
| 2045 | | |
| 2050 | | |
| 2055 | | |

- He nuste whate do he myght,
2060 He was of blysse all bare. *knew not*
bereft of happiness; (see note)
- As he sate thus in halle,
Oute at a stone walle
A wyndowe fayre unfelde:
Grete wondyr, withall,
2065 In his herte ganne falle *uncovered*
And he sate and behelde.
A worme ther ganne oute pas
With a womanes face:
"Yonge Y am and nothinge olde."
2070 Hir body and hir wyngis *wings*
Shone in all thynchis,
As amell gaye and gilte. *Shimmered; ways*
enamel; gleaming
- Hir tayle was mekyll unnethe,
Hir peynis gryme and grete,
2075 As ye may listen and lere.
Syr Lybeous swelt for swete
There he sate in his sete,
As alle had ben in fyre;
So sore he was agaste *mighty underneath*
wings hideous; terrifying
learn
- 2080 Hym thought his herte tobraste *sweltered; sweat*
As she neyhid hym nere.
And ere that Lybeous wiste,
The worme with mouth him kyste *seat*
And clypped abouthe the swyre. *on fire*
astonished
would burst
approached; near
before; knew it
dragon; kissed
grasped him; neck
- 2085 And aftyr this kyssyng
Off the worme tayle and wynge *dragon's tail*
Swyftly fell hir froo:
So fayre, of all thinke,
Woman, withoute lesyng, *from her*
things
- 2090 Sawe he never ere thoo;
But she was moder naked, *before like that*
As God had hir maked:
Therfor was Lybeous woo.
She sayde, "Knigght gentyll, *mother naked (see note)*
- 2095 God yelde thee thi will *distressed*
My foon thou woldest sloo! *rewarded your*
enemies; would have slain
- Thowe haste slayne nowthe
Two clerkys kowthe,
That wroughten by the fende.
Este, west, northe and sowthe,
2100 With maystres of her mouthe, *You have defeated*
renowned
conjured; fiend
mastery; their words (magic, spell)

- Many man con they shende.
 Thorowe ther chauntelement
 To a worme they had me went,
 2105 In wo to leven and lende,
 Tyll I had kyssed Gaweyne,
 That is doughti knyght, certayne,
 Or some of his kynde.
- did; destroy
 Through; enchantment
 dragon; transformed
 sorrow; live; remain
 Until; kissed Gawain
 valiant
 some [member]; kin
- Syr, for thou savyst my lyfe,
 2110 Castellys fyfty and fyve
 Take Y will thee till,
 And mysylfe to be thy wyfe,
 Styll witheoute any stryfe,
 And hit be Arthures will.”
- because you have saved
 Give; to
 your wife
 Meekly; hesitation
 If it is Arthur's
- 2115 Lybeous was glad and blythe
 And lepte to hors als swythe
 And that lady stille;
 But sore he dradded Irayne
 For he was nought islayne,
 2120 With speche lyste he do him spylle.
- swiftly
 as well
 dreaded
 not slain
 might he cause him [Lybeaus] to die; (see note)
- To the castell Lybeous rode,
 Therfor the folke abode
 And beganne to crye.
 Syr Lybeous to Lambard tolde
 2125 And to other knyghtis bolde
 Howe he hem thre ganne gye,
 And how Mabon was slayne
 And wounded was Irayne,
 Thorowe myght of Marye.
- Where; people waited
 dealt with
- 2130 And howe her lady bright
 To a dragon was ydight,
 Thorowe her chawnterye,
- i.e., the *Lady of Synadoun*
 changed
 their enchantment
- And thorow the cosse of a knyght
 Woman she was aplight,
 2135 A comly creature:
 “But she stode before,
 As naked as she was bore,
 And sayde, ‘Nowe am Y sure
 My fone thou haste slayne,
 2140 Mabon and Yrayne:
 In pees thou dost me bryngē.””
- kiss
 [Into]; changed
 enemies
 peace
- When Lybeous Disconyous
 Had tolde the stywarde thus,
 Bothe worde and endeng,

- 2145 A robe of purpyll riche,
Pillured with pure grice,
He sent hir on hyenge;
Kerchewes and garlandis ryche
He sent hir preveliche,
2150 A byrd hit ganne hir bringe;
Whan she was redy dight
She went with many a knyght
To hir owne wonnyng.
All the folke of Synadowne
2155 With a well fayre procession
Her lady conne home brynghe. their; dwelling
- When she was comen to towne,
Of gold and stony a crowne
Upon hir hede was sett,
2160 And were gladde and blythe
And thanked God fele sythe
That hir balys werebett.
Than all the lordis of dignité
Did hir homage and fewté,
2165 As hit was dewe dette.
And euche lord in his degré
Gave hir yeftis grete plenté,
When they with hir mett. gemstones
many times
their sorrows; relieved
fealty
it; due to her
each; according to; rank
gifts aplenty
- Sevyn dayes they dide sojoure
2170 With Sir Lambert in the towre
And all the peopple in same;
Tho went thei with honour
Toward Kynge Arthoure
With mekyll gle and game;
2175 They thanked God with al His myghtis,
Arthur and all his knyghtis,
That he hade no shame.
Arthur gave als blyve
Lybeous that lady to wyfe,
2180 That was so gentill a dame. sojourn
together
To
joy; happiness
eagerly
noble woman
- The myrrour of that brydale
No man myght tell with tale,
In ryme nor in geste:
In that semely saale
2185 Were lordys many and fale
And ladies full honeste.
There was riche service
Bothe to lorde and ladyes description
rhyme; chronicle
splendid hall
numerous
honorable

- 2190 To leste and eke to moste;
 Thare were gevyn riche giftis
 Euche mynstrale her thriftis,
 And some that were unbreſt.
- Fourty dayes thei dwelden
 And ther here feſte helden
 With Arthur the kynge.
 As the Frenſſhe tale us tolde,
 Arthur kyng with his knyghtis bolde
 Home he gonне hem bryngē.
 Sevyn yere they levid same
 With mekyll joye and game,
 He and that swete thyngē.
 Nowe Jhesu Criste, oure Savioure
 And his moder, that swete floure,
 Grawnte us gode endyngē. Amen.

least; also the greatest

*Each minstrel; earnings
 gratuitous (unpromised); (see note)*

*dwelled [there]
 there held their feast*

romance

*brought them
 Seven years; lived together*

i.e., the Lady of Synadoun

Explicit *Lybious Disconyas*.

Here ends Lybeaus Desconus



Figure 2. Eve and the Dragon-Serpent in Eden. The encrossed Lady of Sinadoun appears as “A worme . . . With a womanes face” (2067–8), a description that evokes images of Eve and the Dragon-Serpent, such as found in *Speculum humanae salvationis*, Chapter 1. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Ms. lat. 9854, fol. 5 recto, reproduced in Adrian Wilson and Joyce Lancaster Wilson, *A Medieval Mirror*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c.1984. P. 30. <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7v19p1w6>.

he arwe arwe furone
 and his modir y frere flur
 he hove vnt at onynede
 that hysong of a conyng
 that was vno worthy & vngt hysong
 a sonya man of dede
 his name was hote kyngoldyn
 y gote he was of on fluryn
 bi a prestes fide
 of a leare knyght ne pfectable
 with arthour at the yond table
 hys never yet man vede
 kyngoldyn was swa and hys
 ental of body and swa of fys
 hystard thong he hove
 and his modir lepyn hym vnt myght
 that he shulde be no knyght
 y demed in no maner
 for that he was þ sanage
 and blitheki roode so onraged
 to his felowis in fere
 for dore of wikkid dede
 his modir lepyn hym in doore
 As sonya hilde and dede
 for he was so swa of vys
 he modir callid hym blansys
 and nowe oþer name
 and he hym silus was mynd
 that he ne wox never y vys
 whare he hyst of his dede
 till he hit bi silles upon a day
 the childe went hym to play
 of dede to hanc his fide
 he founyd a knyght whare he lay
 in lym that was swa and gray
 clayne and made ful tame
 the childe drowe of the knyght dede
 and hym silus ther in he sthrode
 in that vlys leuony
 and when he had so that dede
 a none to glastonbury he vede
 ther was kyng arthour
 as he sat in his halle
 a mousys his knyghtis alle
 he grete hym with honomy

and seide arthour my lord
 graunt me to speke a wordis
 y pray yere flamenys
 y am a childe knyghtis
 come out of the swithe
 and wel be made a knyght
 lord y pray yere novite
 and with yere mydry monthe
 graunt me that a none vnyght
 than ead arthour the kyng
 a none without lesyng
 tolld me thi name a pyst
 for sechon y was bord
 his ay y none bi fys
 noþer so swa a vnyght
 the childe said bi fent lym
 y note whatis is my name
 y am the more mynd
 but when y was tame at home
 my modir in hys game
 callid me blansys
 ther said arthour the kyng
 this is a wondre thynge
 bi god and deuot deuotis
 when he blok ben a knyght
 and wote never whatis he hyst
 he is so swa of dede
 y wel hym yold a name
 bi fide yore al in game
 for he is so swa and swa
 bi god and bi fent lym
 so callid hym hene, his dame
 who wounyd a swa who be
 nowe callid hym alle thys
 librius dystomus
 for the lond of me
 han may y written on a vrois
 the swa on thatis y knowe
 lepys oþer he
 kyng arthour anone vnyght
 han hym to make a knyght
 upon the silus day
 and much hym leuony bright
 and wote a swerde bright of myght
 he greate hym fide to say

Figure 3. Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, "Vittorio Emanuele III" MS XIII.B.29, p. 87. Reproduced by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali



LIBIOUS DISCONIOUS (NAPLES, BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE, MS XIII.B.29)

- Jhesu Criste owre Saviour,
And his modir, that swete flour,
Helpes us at our nede,
That listenith of a conquerour
5 That was wis, witty, and wight werroure,
A doughti man of dede.
His name was hote Gyngelyn;
Ygete he was of Sir Gaweyn
Bi a forestis side;
10 Of a betir knyght ne profitable,
With Arthur at the Round Table,
Hurd never yet man rede.
- Who
wise; discerning; valiant
- called
Begotten
- worthy
No one has heard tell of yet
- Gyngelyn was feire and bright,
Gentil of body and feire of sight,
15 Bastard though he were;
And his modir kepit him with myght
That he schulde se no knyght
Yarmed in no manere,
For that he was so savage,
20 And blitheli wolde do outrage
To his felowis in fere.
For dout of wikkid loos,
His modir kepid him in cloos
As doughti childe and dere.
- kept him protected
Armed in any way
he was so uncivilized
without hesitation
companions
fear of his bad reputation
seclusion
[her] strong and beloved child
- fair of face (i.e., handsome)
Beautiful Son
- himself was innocent (naive)
asked; truly
was named by
- went to play (went hunting)
deer
- In armor; sturdy and splendid
rendered harmless

- The childe drowe off the knyghtis wede
And himsilve therin he schrede
In that riche armour.
- 40 And whan he had do that dede,
Anone to Glastonbury he yede,
Ther was Kyng Arthour,
As he sate in his halle,
Amonge his knyghtis alle.
- 45 He grete hem with honour
And seide: "Arthour, my lord,
Graunt me to speke a worde.
Y pray yow, par amour.
- "Y am a childe unknowe.
50 I come out of the sowthe
And wol be made a knyght.
Lord, Y pray you nowthe,
And with your mery mowthe
Graunt me that anone right."
- 55 Than seid Arthur the kyng:
"Anone, without lesyng,
Telle me thi name aplight,
For sithen Y was bore,
Ne say Y never bifore
60 None so feire a wight."
- The childe seid: "Bi Seint Jame,
Y note whate is my name,
Y am the more nyce.
But whan Y was tame at home,
65 My modur, in hur game,
Callid me Beaufice."
Than seid Arthur the king:
"This is a wondir thing,
Bi God and Seint Denyce,
70 When he wol ben a knyght
And wote never whate he hight,
And is so feire of vis.
- "Y wol him yeve a name,
75 Bifore yow al in same,
For he is so feire and fre;
Bi God and bi Seint Jame,
So callid him never his dame,
Who woman so ever scho be.
Nowe callith him alle thus,
80 Lybeus Dysconius,
- took off
himself dressed*
- when he had done that
Immediately; went*
- youth unknown
south*
- now*
- directly*
- lying (truthfully)
truly
since I was born*
- I have never before seen
so handsome a man*
- youth
I know not*
- I am all the more naive [for it]
meek*
- playfully
Beautiful Son*
- Saint Denis
wishes to become a knight*
- Yet knows not what he is named
fair of face*
- all together
fair and noble
James*
- Whatever woman she might be*
- Fair Unknown*

	For the love of me. Than may ye witen on a rowe The feire on thatte Y knowe, Certis, so hate he."	<i>know in an orderly fashion fair one that I acknowledge Certainly, that is what he is to be called</i>
85	Kyng Arthur, anone right, Gan him to make a knyght Upon the silve day, And yave him armour bright, And with a swerde bright of myght	<i>right away that very day gave</i>
90	He gurde him, sothe to say. Aftur, him taught Gaweyn, With strenghe in the pleyn, Poynt of knyghtis play. He hongid on him a schilde	<i>truth in the plain Techniques; i.e., jousting</i>
95	With grefons overgilde, Ipeyntid of lengthe ful gay.	<i>griffons overlaid with gold</i>
100	Whan he was knyght ymade, Anone a bone he bade, And seid: "My lord fre, In hert were Y glad	<i>request generous</i>
105	The first fighting yef Y had That men axen of thee." Than seid Arthur the kyng: "I graunt thee thin asking, Whate bone so hit be.	<i>If I might have the first combat ask your request Whatever the request</i>
110	But ever me thinkith thee ful yong For to do a good fighting, For any thing that Y can se."	
115	Without eny more resoun, Duke, erle, and baroun, Thei wesched and went to mete. Of wilde fowlis and vensoune, As lordis of gret renoune,	<i>further debate washed; dinner venison</i>
120	Inowe thei had to ete. Nad thei ysate but a while, The montenys of a myle, At hare tabul ysete, Ther come a maid in ride.	<i>noblemen greatly esteemed Enough they had to eat They had not been seated for long time it takes to ride a mile their</i>
	A dwarfe rode bi hur side, Al biswat for hete.	<i>All covered in sweat from the heat</i>
	The maid was yhote Elyne, Gentil, bright, and schene, A ladyis mesynger.	<i>was called fair lady's</i>

- 125 Ther was never cuntas ne quene
So semely on to sene,
Ther myght none be hur pere.
The maiden was clothid in tarsis,
Round and no thing skars,
With pelour blandere.
- 130 Hur sadul was overgilde,
With diamoundis fulfillid.
Mylke white was hur desture.
- The dwarf was clothid in ynd,
Bifore and eke bihinde,
135 For he was stout and pert.
Among al Cristen kynde
Suche on schulde no man fynde.
His sircote was overte;
His berde was as yellow as wax,
140 To his gurdul henge the plax,
For sothe, to se with sight.
With golde his schone were dight,
And kopid as a knyght —
Tho semyth of no poverte!
- 145 Deodelyne was his name.
Wide spronge his fame,
Bothe northe and eke bi sowthe.
Moche couthe he of game:
Sotil, sawtre in same,
150 Of harpe, fethil, and crowthe.
He spake to that maide hynde:
“Damesel, telle thyne erande.
Tyme it were nowthe.”
- 155 The maide knelid in halle
Among the lordis and lordlingis all
And seid, “My lord Arthour,
A caas ther is bifalle,
Wors within the walle,
Y note nought suche of dolour.
- 160 My lady of Synadowne
Is brought in stronge prisoun,
That was of grete honour,
And praid you send hur a knyght
In warra that were wyse and wight,
165 To wyn hur with honour.”
- countless nor queen
beautiful to look upon
peer
(see note)*
- Of ample abundance, and in no way skimpy
ermine trim
inlaid with gold
completely covered
destrier (riding horse)*
- indigo*
- fashionably dressed (see note)*
- Such [a] one
a sleeveless surcoat*
- hair*
- His shoes were decorated with gold
in a knightly mantle (cope)
He did not seem impoverished*
- He was skilled in courtly entertainments
Citole, psaltery
harp, fiddle; stringed instrument
gentle maid
declare your message to me
Now the time has come*
- The worst imaginable
I do not know of a more grievous case*
- Who
protection; wise and courageous (see note)*

- Than stert up a yong knyght,
In hert that was lefe and wight,
And seid: "My lord Arthour!
I schall do that fight
- 170 And wynne that lady bright,
Yef ye be trewe of worde!"
Than seid Arthoure: "That is sothe,
Certis, withouten othe,
Therto Y bere recorde."
- 175 And seid: "God yeve thee strength and myght
To wynne the lady bright
With dynt of sper and swerde."
- Than gan Elyne to chide.
"Alas," scho seide, "that tide
- 180 That Y was hedit ysende!
This wordis schalle springe wide;
Kynge, loste is thi pride,
And thy loce yschende,
Now thou woldist sende a childe
- 185 That is wiltes and wilde
To dele droughti dynt,
Whan thou hast knyghtis of mayne,
Persavale and Sir Gaweyne,
That bene price in every turment."
- 190 The dwarf with gret error
Stert to Kynge Arthour
And seid: "Thou gentil kyng,
This childe to bene a werrour,
To done a good labour,
- 195 He is worthe nougant a ferthing.
Er that ever he that lady se,
Bataile five othir thre
He dothe, withoute lesyng.
At Poynt Perillous,
- 200 Baside the Chapel of Aventours,
Ther schalle he bigynne."
- Sir Lybeus than answerid:
"Yit was Y never aferd
For drede of mannys sawe.
- 205 Sumwhate have Y lerid,
Bothe with spere and with schild.
Ther men have ben yslawe,
The man that fleith for drede,
Bi wey othir bi strete,
- eager and courageous*
- record*
- scold*
- story will spread*
- your reputation damaged*
- To deliver powerful sword strokes*
- powerful knights*
- worthy in every tournament*
- in great anger*
- Turned*
- To accomplish a worthy task*
- a quarter of a penny (i.e., worthless)*
- Before*
- Five or three battles*
- He must do*
- fear of [any] man's words*

- 210 Y wolde he were todrawe!
This bataile Y undirtake
And never one forsake,
For suche is Arthouris lawe.”
- 215 The may answerid fulle snelle:
“That semyth thee right welle,
Who so lokith on thee!
Thou ne durst for alle this world
Abide the wynde of a swerd,
For ought that Y can se.”
- 220 Than seid the dwarf that stound
That, “Dede men on the ground
Of thee aferde may be.
Nowe Y rede thee in game:
Go home and sowke thi dame
225 And wynne ther thi degré.”
- The kyng seide, anone right:
“Here getist thou no nothir knyght,
Bi Him that bought me dere!
Yef thou thinke him noght wight,
230 Gete thee anothir wher thou myght
That is of more powere.”
- The maide for noye and hete
Wolde nought drinke ne ete,
For alle that thei myght do,
235 But sate hur downe as careful maide
Til the tabul was unleide,
Sho and the dworf in fere.
- Kyng Arthur in that stound
Commaundid of that Tabul Rounde
240 Four of the best knyghtis
To army him hole and sound
Of the best armour that myght be found
To army the childe at rightis.
- 245 He seide: “Throwe the grace of Crist,
That in the flem Jourdan was baptist,
That he schulde have myght,
And bicome a good champiowne
To the lady of Synadowne,
To sle hur fo in fight.”
- 250 To army him the knyghtis were fayn,
Sir Percevale and Sir Gawayn,
In that semely sale.
- drawn and quartered
once
- maiden; immediately
Your words certainly inspire confidence
[To] whoever beholds you
You dare not
Endure even the wind of a sword [stroke]
- at that time
Dead
May be afraid of you
- nurse at your mother's breast
earn your status there
- i.e., Christ
capable (fit for the task)
- annoyance and anger
- full of care
removed
together
- arm him
- youth; fittingly
the river Jordan; baptized
- eager
majestic hall

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| | The third was Sir Ewayn.
The fourth was Sir Griffayn,
Thus tellith the Frenshe tale.
Thei cast on him of sylke
A gippon as white as mylke,
In a semely sale,
And an hawberk bright,
That ful riche was ydight,
With maile grete and smale. | <i>Ywain</i>
(see note) |
| 255 | | <i>tunic</i> |
| 260 | | <i>shining coat of mail</i>
<i>richly constructed</i>
<i>both large and small rings</i> |
| 265 | Gaweyn, his owne sire,
Hynge abowte his swire
A schilde with on griffoun,
And an helme of riche atyre
Was stele and none yre.
Sir Persevale set on his croun
A griffon he brought with him,
In werre him with to werre,
And a fel fouchone.
Ewayn brought with him a stede
That was good in every nede,
As eger as eny lyon. | <i>Hung about his neck</i>
<i>with one griffon</i>
<i>richly wrought</i>
<i>not iron</i> |
| 270 | | (see note L: 257)
<i>To protect him in war</i>
<i>falchion (deadly sword)</i> |
| 275 | The yong knyght to hors gan spring,
And rode to Arthour the kyng,
And seid: "My lord so hynde,
Yeve me thi blesyng.
Without eny lettyng,
My wille is to wynde." | <i>gracious</i> |
| 280 | Arthour his hond up hafe,
And his blesyng he him yafe,
As curteis kyng and kynde,
And seid: "God yeve thee grace,
And yeve thee sped and space,
To bring that birde out of bond." | <i>delay</i>
<i>to depart</i>
<i>raised</i> |
| 285 | | <i>fortune and opportunity</i>
<i>liberate that maiden from her bondage</i> |
| 290 | The maide was stout and gay,
And lepe to hur palfrey;
The dworfe rode bi hur side.
Until the thrid day
Upon the knyght alway,
Ever sho gan to chide, | <i>proud and noble</i>
<i>leapt into [the saddle off her palfrey</i> |
| 295 | And seid: "Thou wrecche, thou caitife,
Though thou were so stife,
Sone lost is thi pride!
This place kepith a knyght; | <i>constantly</i>
<i>You wretch, you lowborn slave</i>
<i>sturdily built</i> |

- With everi man he wol fight.
His name springith ful wide, *reputation*
- William Celabronche.
His fighting may no man stonche; *overcome*
300 He is werrour out of witte. *deranged*
But throw hart and honche, *heart; lower ribcage*
With his spere he wol lonche *penetrate*
Al that ayens him mete.” *Said*
- Quod Libeous Disconious:
305 “Ys his fighting of suche use *Is that his customary practice*
And was he never yhitte?” *Let befall what shall befall*
Tide so whate bitide, *how secure he sits in his saddle*
To him schalle Y ride, *rode*
And loke how fast he sitte!”
- 310 Than rede thei furthe al thre *bright of hue (shining)*
Upon that feire cause.
Biside the Chapel of Aventours *bright gold*
That knyght thei can se, *Nobly and artfully wrought*
In armour bright of ble *horse's harness and trappings*
315 Upon the Poynt Perilous. *blows*
He bare a schilde of grene *i.e., fair knight*
With three lions of golde schene, *Whatsoever man rides forth here*
Proute and precious, *must*
To suche lengels and trappis.
- 320 To dele men rappis *far to travel*
Ever hath bene his use. *far from our friends*
- Whan he had of Libeous a sight,
He rode to him fulle right *This maiden and I together*
And seid, “Welcome, Beaupere!
325 Whate man that here furth rides,
He mote with me fight,
Othir leve his armour here.”
- Than seid Libeous Disconious:
330 “For the love of swete Jhesus,
Lete us pas, nowe, here,
For we have fer to wynde *escape*
And bene fer fro our frende,
This may and ich in fere.” *before*
- Than seid William tho:
335 “Thou schalt nought ascape so,
So God yeve me rest!
For we shal bothe two

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| | | [As much as] one-eighth of a mile west from here |
| 340 | <p>A furlong here bi west!"
 Than seid Libeus: "Nowe Y se
 That may no betir be,
 In hast do thi best.
 Take thi cours with thi scheft,
 Yef thowe be connyng of craft,
 For her is myne al prest."</p> | <i>There can be no better resolution
 Do your best quickly
 Prepare your lance
 If you have any skill
 here; all ready</i> |
| 345 | <p>No lengir wolde thei abide,
 But togadir gan thei ride
 With grete renowne.
 Sir Libeous in that tide
 Smote William in the side
 With a spere feloun.
 But William sate so fast
 That his stiropis tobarst
 And his arsoun.</p> | <i>power
 at that moment</i> |
| 350 | <p>William gan to stoupe,
 And over his hors crowpe
 In that he felle adowne.</p> | <i>deadly spear
 so securely
 burst
 the raised back of his saddle</i> |
| 355 | <p>His stede ranne away,
 But William nought long lay,
 But stert up anone right,
 And seide, "By my fay!
 Bi this ilke day
 Y founde never none so wight.</p> | <i>crupper
 So that</i> |
| 360 | <p>But nowe my stede is go,
 Fight ye on fote also,
 As ye be a gentil knyght."
 Than seide Libeous Disconious:
 "Bi the love of swete Jhesus,
 Therto Y am right light!"</p> | <i>faith
 powerful
 gone
 eager</i> |
| 365 | <p>Swerdis thei drowe bothe,
 As men that were wrothe,
 And fought furthe fast.
 So fast thei gan dinge,
 The fire, withoute lesing,
 Out of hare helme barst.</p> | <i>furious
 ever more vigorously
 vigorously did they deliver blows
 lying (truly)</i> |
| 370 | <p>But Sir William Celabronche
 To Libeous gan lonche
 Throwe his schilde in hast.
 A quarter fille to ground;
 Sir Libeous in that stound</p> | <i>Burst (sparked) from their helmets
 struck</i> |
| 375 | <p>In hart he was agast.</p> | <i>at that moment
 startled</i> |
| 380 | | |

- 385 Sir Libeaus al with myght
He defendid him anone right,
As werour good and slygh.
Vesour and crest doun right,
He lete fle with myght,
Of Williamis helme in highe,
Than the poynt of the swerd
Schave Williamis berde
- 390 And come the flesche to nye.
William smote Libeous tho,
That his swerde brake atwo,
That many men it sye.
- 395 Than gan William mercy to cry:
"For the love of Seint Marie,
Lete me on lyve pas!
It were gret vilonye
To do a knyght to dye,
Weponles in a place."
- 400 Thanne seid Libious Disconius:
"Bi the love of swete Jhesus,
Thou getist of me no grace
But thowe swere me an othe,
Ar that we asondir goth
Here bifore my face.
- 410 In hast thowe knely adoun,
And swere apon my swerd broun,
Thou schalt to Arthour wynde
And sei: 'Lord of renoun,
I am come to your prisoun.
A knyght me hidir gan synde
That men clepith, in your use,
Libeous Disconious,
Unkouth of kynde and kithe.'"
- 415 William on kneis him sette
And sware as he him hette.
Furthe gan he wynde.
- 420 Thus partid thei alle.
William to Arthouris halle
Toke the right way.
A caas ther gan bifalle;
Thre knyghtis proude in palle
Met he the same day.
His sustir sones he mette there,
Feire knyghtis and fre,
- with all his strength
defended himself valiantly
skillful; cunning
[William's] visor; lowered
He struck; forcefully
At the top of William's helmet
So that
Shaved
too close [for comfort]
saw*
- Let me pass alive (keep on living)
villainy
cause
Weaponless in some locale
Unless
Before we separate and depart*
- kneel down at once
bright sword
travel
as your prisoner
send
according to your custom
Whose lineage is unknown
on his knees
promised
Then he departed*
- Something happened then
splendidly arrayed
sister's sons
noble*

- That were stout and gay.
 Whan thei say William blede,
 As wolfe that wolde awede,
 Thei mede of grete deray.
- 430 And seid to William:
 "Who hath do thee this schame?
 Whi bledist thou so yorne?"
- 435 A knyght that is ful stout and sterne.
 Libious Disconious he hight.
 To falle his foo in fight,
 He is nought to lerne.
 A dwarf ridith him bifore,
- 440 His squyar as he were,
 And eke a wel faire schene.
- "But on thing grevith me more,
 That he hath made me swore
 Upon his bronde bright
- 445 That Y schal never more,
 Til Y come Arthour bifore,
 Stynt day ne nyght.
 To him Y must me yelde
 As overcome in fielde,
- 450 Bi power of his knyght,
 And never agayne him bere
 Nothir schilde ne spere,
 And thus Y have him bihight."
- Than seid the knyghtis thre:
 "Thow schalt wel ywreke be,
 Certis, without faile!
 He alone ayene thre —
 He is nought worthe a stre
- 455 To bide bataile.
- 460 Go furthe, William, and do thi othe,
 And though the traitour be wrothe,
 We schulle him asaile,
 Ar he this forest pas;
- 465 We schul his hauberk of bras,
 Though it be thik of maile."
- Hereof wist no wight
 Ne Libeous, the gentil knyght,
 But rode furthe paas bi pace.
- proud and noble
 saw
 a raging wolf
 cried out in dismay*
- copiously*
- [Because] of one who is faultless
 fierce and formidable
 is called
 overcome
 has little to learn*
- a very beautiful bright [lady]*
- one*
- On his bright sword*
- cease [my journey]*
- against*
- promised*
- well avenged
 Assuredly
 against
 a straw
 endure*
- before
 crush*
- None [of Lybeaus's party] knew about this
 pace by pace*

- 470 He and that maide bright
 Maden togadir that nyght
 Game and grete solas.
 "Merci," scho gan him crye,
 For sho spake him vilonye,
 And he forgave hir hur trespass.
 speak villainy of him
- 475 The dwarfe was hur squyour,
 And servid hem fur and nere
 Of alle that worthi was.
 far and near (i.e., continuously)
- 480 On morow, whan it was day,
 Thei rod on hare journay
 Toward Synadoun.
 Than sawe thei in way
 Thre knyghtis stout and gay
 Come ridyng fro Karlioun.
 To him thei cried anone right:
 "Traitor, turne thowe and fight
 Or els lete thi renoune,
 And that maide bright,
 That is so feire of sight,
 Lede we wolle to toun!"
 yield your reputation
 We will lead [her] back to town
- 490 Sir Libeous to ham cried:
 "Y ame redy to ride
 Agayne yow al in same,
 As princis proude in pride!"
 He prekid his stede that tide,
 495 Al in ernyst and nought in game.
 The eldist brothir than bere
 To Sir Libious a spere,
 Sir Gawer was his name.
 Sir Libious rode to him anone,
 500 And brake his rigge bone,
 And lete him ligge lame.
 backbone
 left him lying crippled
- 505 The knyght merci gan crye.
 Sir Libious than sicurlye
 Hilde him fast adoun.
 The dwarfe, Deodolyne,
 Toke the stede bi the rayne,
 510 And lepe up in to the arsoune.
 He rode than with that
 To the maide ther scho sate
 Of so feire face.
 Than louge that maide bright
 saddle
 laughed

And seid: "This yong knyght
Was wel ychoose champioun."

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 515 | The myddil brothir stode and bihilde.
His brothir in the filde
Had lorne mayne and myght.
He smote so, hit is tolde,
Into Sir Libiousis schilde
With a spere anone right. | <i>lost both his strength and might</i> |
| 520 | Sir Libious awey gan bere
With the poynt of a spere
The helme awey of the knyght.
The yongist brothir gan furth ride
And prekid his stede that tide,
Egir as lioun wight. | <i>spurred</i>
<i>Fierce as a vicious lion</i> |
| 525 | He seide to Sir Libious anone:
“Sir knyght, bi Seint John,
Thou art a fel champioun and light.
Bi God that deide on tre,
Fight Y schalle with thee,
Y trowe, and bere thee doun.” | <i>a deadly and powerful</i>
<i>died on the cross (i.e., Christ)</i> |
| 530 | As werrour out of witte,
Sir Libious gan he hitte
With a felle fauchon;
So stif his stroke he sette
Throwe helm and basnet
He carve Libious croun. | <i>in furor</i>
<i>deadly sword</i>
<i>outer helmet and basinet (inner helmet)</i>
<i>struck Lybeaus's skull</i> |
| 535 | Than was Libious agrevyd,
Whan he frede on his hede
A swerde of egir mode.
His swerde aboute him wend.
Al that him toke he clevyd,
As werrour wilde and wode.
Than seide Libious tho:
“One ayeyne two | <i>felt</i>
<i>fierce hostility</i>
<i>drew</i> |
| 540 | To fight it is nought good.”
Fast he hewe on him
With grete strokis and grym,
And stife agenst hem stode. | <i>Everything he struck he cut through</i>
<i>enraged and furious</i>
<i>Then said</i>
<i>against</i> |
| 545 | But throwe Godis grace,
He smote the myddelist in the place
Upon the right arme tho.
He fledde in that caas, | <i>stood against them courageously</i> |
| 550 | And in that ilke spaas, | <i>at that time</i> |

- 555 The right arme fille him fro.
 The yongist sy that sight;
 He had no mayne ne myght
 To fight ayen his fo.
 Tho up he yelde
 560 Bothe his spere and his schilde,
 And mercy he cried tho.
- fell from him
 witnessed that sight
 strength or courage*
- Sir Libious answerid, “Nay!
 Thou schalt nought so go away,
 Bi Him that bought us bothe.
 565 Thowe and thi brotherne tway,
 Ye schulle sicour me your fay:
 Ye schulle to Arthour wynde
 And sey, ‘Lordis of renoune,
 As overcome presone
- secure me your faith (i.e., make an oath)*
- 570 A knyght us hedit gan send
 To yelde you towre and towne,
 And be undir your bandowne
 To oure lyvys ende.’
- go*
- prisoners*
- “And but ye wol do so,
 575 Certis Y schalle sle you two
 Longe ar it be nyght.”
 The knyghtis sware to him tho
 That thei schulde to Arthour go,
 And trewthe to him thei plight.
- Long before it is night*
- fealty; pledged*
- 580 Libious and that may
 Went in hare way
 As thei had yheght,
 Til the third day
 Thei rode in game and play,
 585 He and that birde bright.
- i.e., to Synadoun
 as they had [originally] vowed*
- beautiful maiden*
- Thei rode ever west
 Into a grene forest,
 And myght not come to toun.
 Thei ne wist whate was best;
 590 Nedis thei must rest,
 And ther they lighte adoun.
 In the grene grevys,
 Thei made a logge of levys
 With swerdis bright and broun.
- groves
 lodge of leaves
 bright; polished*
- 595 Therin thei dwellid al nyght,
 He and that birde bright,
 So feire of facion.
- fair of face [and form]*

- And ever the dwarfe gan wake. *kept awake*
 A fire he sey make,
 600 Fro him nought halfe a myle.
 "Arise," he seide, "Sir Knyght!
 To hors that thou were digit,
 For drede of more perile!
 Certis, Y hire grete bost;
 605 Y have a smyllle of rost,
 By God and by Seint Gile."
- Sir Libious was stout and gay,
 And lepe on his palfray;
 He hent schilde and spere. *seized*
 610 As he went furthe fast,
 Two jeyauntis he founde at the last,
 Whan that he come there.
 That one was blak as picche,
 That othir rede and lotheliche; *red; loathsome*
 615 Ful fowle thei were of chere.
 The blake gan holde in barme
 A feire maide bi the arme,
 Bright so rose in brere. *Very ugly; expression*
The black [giant]; in his arms
As beautiful as a rose on the briar
- The rede geaunte so yorne
 620 On a spitte a bore gan turne.
 For sum man schulde it wete,
 Sho seide, "Welaway!
 That ever Y abode this day
 Bitwene two develis to sytte!
 625 Helpe me, Marie mylde,
 For the love of thi childe
 That Y be nought forgit!" *eagerly*
boar
So that someone might hear
Alas!
experienced this day
i.e., Christ
not be forgotten
- Quod Libeous: "Bi Seint Jame,
 To bring this maide out of schame
 630 Hit were a feire empris!" *worthy undertaking*
 He toke his cours with his scheft,
 As man that cowthe his craft,
 And rode at the right asise.
 To fight with ham bothe in same,
 635 It is no childis game;
 Thei bith fulle grymme and grise.
 The blake he smote smert
 Throwe lyver, longen, and hert,
 That never he myghte arise. *prepared his lance for combat*
skilled in his craft [the art of war]
in the right manner [toward his foes]
them together
grim; terrible
sharply (aggressively)
liver, lungs; heart

- 640 And than fleygh that maide schene, *fled*
 And thonkid heven quene.
 That socour hur sent. *rescue*
 That came maide Elyne,
 Sho and the dwarf bidene,
 645 And bi the honde hur hent. *together*
 Thei went to the grevys
 Into the logge of grene levys
 With welle goode entent, *seized her by the hand*
 And bisoughte Jhesus, *grove*
 650 That he wolde helpe Libeus Disconyous,
 That he be nought yschent. *cheerfully*
defeated
- The rede geaunt smote thore *vigorously*
 To Libeou, with the wilde bore,
 As wolfe that wolde of wede. *an enraged wolf*
- 655 His dynt he sette sore,
 That Sir Libeou stede therfore
 Doune to grounde he yode. *fell to the ground*
 Sir Libeou than ful smert
 Out of his sadille stert,
 660 As sparkil dothe of glede. *As a spark flies from the coal*
 As egir as eny lioun,
 He faught with his swerde broun *bright sword*
 To yelde the geaunt his mede. *reward*
- The giaunt with the spit gave a stroke
 665 With the butte of a yong oke *with the wild boar on it*
 That he had on the bore.
 He leide on Libeou fast,
 While the spit wolde last,
 Ever more and more.
- 670 The bore was ful hote than;
 On Sir Libeou the grece ran,
 Swithe fast thore. *copiously*
 The giaunt was stife and strong;
 Fifteen fote he was longe,
 675 And smote Libeou sore.
- And ever the giaunt *giant [continuously attacked]*
 To Libeou, wel Y wote,
 Tille his spit brake on two.
 As a man that was unsaught,
 680 A tronchon up he caught, *enraged*
 To fight ayens his fo.
 With the ende of a tre
 He smot Libeou schilde a-thre. *in three pieces*

- 685 Than waxid Libeous ful wo.
 Er he the tre up hafe,
 Sir Libeous a stroke him yafe,
 That the right arme fil him fro.
- 690 The giaunt fille to ground,
 And Libeous in that stound
 Smote of his hed ful right,
 In Frensche tale as it is found.
 Tille that othir he went that stound
 And servid him aplight.
 Tho he toke hedis tway
 And bare ham to that may
 That he wan in fight.
 The may was glad and blithe,
 And thonkid God fele sithe
 That ever he was made knyght.
- 700 Tho seid Libeous: “Gentil dame,
 Telle me, whate is your name,
 And where ye were ybore.”
 Sho seide: “Bi Seint Jame,
 My fadir is of riche fame,
 And wonyth here biforne.
 An erle, ykidde a noble knyght,
 That is a man of moche myght,
 His name is furre ytolde.
 Mi name is Violette,
 That the giaunt had bisette
 Undir our castelle ful yore.
- 710 “Yustirday, in the mornynge,
 As Y went in my playnge,
 None eville Y thought.
 The giaunt, without lesinge,
 Out of a busche gan sprynge,
 And to his fere me brought.
 Of him Y had bene yschent,
 Ne God had socoure ysent,
 That alle the worlde wrought.
 He yilde thee thi mede,
 That for us gan blede,
 And with his blode us bought.”
- 725 Withoute more talkyng,
 To hors gan thei sprynge
 And rede furthe alle in same,
- became distressed
Before [the giant] could raise the tree up
- quickly
off
- Immediately
in the same way
- many times
- born
- spoken of far and wide
- many times in the past
- to amuse myself
- his companion
would have been ruined
Had not God sent help
[He] who made the entire world
May He reward you
[He] who bled for us (i.e., Christ)
redeemed us with his blood
- rode; all together

- And tolde the erle tithinge
 Howe he wanne in fightyng,
 His droughtir fro wo and schame. *tidings*
- 730 Than were the hedis ysent
 To Kinge Arthour, in present,
 With moche gle and game. *as a present*
- Thanne in Arthouris court arose
 Libeous Disconiousis noble lose
 735 And his gentil fame. *i.e., was made known publicly
 noble reputation*
- The erle, for his good dede,
 Gave Sir Libeous to mede
 Shilde and armour bright, *as a reward*
- 740 And also a noble stede
 That was good at nede
 In travaile and in fight.
 Sir Libeous and that may
 Rode in hare journay *their*
 Thedir as thei had yhight. *as they had promised*
- 745 Than thei sawe in a park
 A castelle stife and stark,
 That wondir wel was dight, *formidable and imposing
 wondrously well constructed*
- Ywallid was with stone —
 Suche sawe he never none —
 750 With towris stif and stout. *solid; powerful*
- Quod Libeous: “Bi Seint John,
 Hit were a feire wone,
 Whoso had grete dout.” *Said*
- 755 Than lought the maiden bright
 And seide: “This owith a knyght,
 The beste here about.
 Whoso wol with him fight,
 Be he baron, be he knyght,
 He dothe him lowe to lowte. *Should anyone have any doubts
 laughed
 belongs to*
- 760 “For the love of his lemmion,
 That is feire a womon,
 He had do crye and gredie.
 Whoso bringith a feirer ane,
 A jerefawken as white as swane *defeats and humiliates him*
- 765 He schalle have to his mede.
 Yef sho be nought so feire in sight,
 With Greffroun he must fight.
 And yef he may nought spedie,
 His hedde schalle him be reft, *lover
 beautiful woman
 cry; proclaim
 fairer one
 gerfalcon as white as a swan
 as his reward*
- if he is unsuccessful
 cut off*

- 770 And ysette apon a sheft,
To seyn longe and brode. *far and wide*
- “The sothe thowe may se welle.
Ther stont on every cornelle
An hede or two up right.” *truth*
- 775 Quod Libeous also snelle:
“Bi God and bi Seint Mighelle,
With Geffroun Y mote fight
And chalange the jerefawcoune
And sey I have in towne
A lemmann two so bright,
And yef he will hur se,
Forsothe, Y bringe thee,
Be it day othir nyght.” *Michael*
- 780 The dwarf seide: “Bi Jhesus,
Gentil Libeous Disconious,
Thou puttist thee in grete perile.
Geffron le Frediens
In his fighting he hath defens
Knyghtis to bigile!” *twice as beautiful*
- 785 Libeous answerid thare:
“Therfore have thou no care.
Bi God and bi Seint Gile,
Y schalle se his face,
Or Y hens pace
Fro this stede a myle.” *Truly, I will bring you*
- 790 Withouten more resoun,
Thei dwellid stille in the toune
Alle that nyght in pees.
On the morowe Libeous was boune
800 To wynne him renoune,
Certis, withouten les.
He armyd him fulle sure
In that ilke armour
That the erle of Auntouris was.
805 A stede gan he bistride;
The dworfe rode bi his side
To that rownde place.
- 810 Geffron le Frediens
Rose as it was his use
In the morowe tide
For to honour swete Jhesus.
Ther come Libeous Disconious,
- yourself*
- a special defense*
- Before I pass hence*
- From this place*
- ado (further discussion)*
- prepared himself*
- Truly, without lies*
- same*
- custom*

- 814 Come prikyng as prins in pride.
 Without more abode,
 Ayens Libeous he rode,
 And lowde to him he cried,
 With vois scharp and schrille:
 “Comyst thowe for good othir ille?
 Tel me and nought ne hide.”
- any more delay
- 815 Quod Libeous also tide:
 “Y have grete delyte
 With thee for to fight!
 Thowe seiest in despite
 That woman is none so white
 And as thyne is bi day and nyghte,
 And Y have in towne
 Fairer of faciowne,
 In clothis and scho were dight.
 Therfore the jerfawcoune
 To Arthour, kyng of crowne,
 Brynge Y wolle with right!”
- just as quickly
- 825 Quod Geffron: “Gentil knyght,
 Where schulle we preve aplight?
 Ther nowe men mowe se.
 In the myddille of the market
 Ther thei schulle be set,
 To loke on, bonde and fre,
 And my leman be broun.
 To wynne the jerfaucoun,
 Justi Y wolle with thee.”
- beautiful
- presence
- clothes as if she were properly dressed
- 830 Quod Geffron also snelle:
 “Alle thus graunt Y welle,
 This day bi undirtide,
 Bi God and bi Seint Michel.
 Out of this castelle
 To Karlylle wolle Y ride!”
 Hare glovys up thay yolde
 That forward for to holde,
 As prins prout in pride.
 Sir Libeous er he wolde blynne,
 He rode in to his inne,
 And wolde no lengir abide,
- where shall our contest take place
- 835 Quod Geffron also snelle:
 “Alle thus graunt Y welle,
 This day bi undirtide,
 Bi God and bi Seint Michel.
 Out of this castelle
 To Karlylle wolle Y ride!”
 Hare glovys up thay yolde
 That forward for to holde,
 As prins prout in pride.
 Sir Libeous er he wolde blynne,
 He rode in to his inne,
 And wolde no lengir abide,
- quickly
- noon
- Carlisle
- They lifted up their gloves
 To ratify their agreement
- cease (i.e., rest)
- beautiful; fair
- And seide to maide Elyne,
 That bright was and schene:

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 855 | “Loke that thou make thee bowne.”
And seide: “Bi Heven Queen,
Gefferonis lemmone, Y wene,
Today schalle come to towne.
In the myddis of the cité
Ther men schulle you se,
Faire of facioune,
And yef thowe be nought so bright,
With Geffron Y wol fight
To wynne the jerfaucoune!” | ready
<i>i.e., the Virgin Mary</i> |
| 860 | | <i>Beautiful in every way</i>
<i>Yet even if you were not so radiant</i> |
| 865 | The dwarfe answerid and seide:
“Nowe is this a wondir dede,
For eny manne ybore!
Thou doste bi no manis rede,
But first in thi childehede,
As man that wolde be ylore.
Therfore Y thee pray,
Wandir we furthe in our way
That we ne come him bifore.” | <i>You will not act according; counsel</i>
<i>But instead you act as a child</i>
<i>someone who would be destroyed</i> |
| 870 | Libeous seide: “That were schame!
Y had lever, bi Seint Jame,
With wilde hors be ytore!” | <i>Let us depart on our way</i>
<i>do not confront him</i> |
| 875 | | <i>Be torn apart by wild horses</i> |
| 880 | That maide feire and fre
Hied hur, certeyne, to be
Fast to hur atyre,
For to do his profite:
In kerchevys feire and white,
Araied with golde wire;
Of felwet a mantel ful gay,
Yfurrid with grys ful gray,
Scho cast abowte hur swire. | <i>Hastened herself</i> |
| 885 | Stonys abowte hur molde
Were precious endentid with golde,
The best of that empire. | <i>velvet</i>
<i>gray fur</i>
<i>neck</i>
<i>the crown of her head</i>
<i>mounted in gold</i>
<i>in the realm</i> |
| 890 | Sir Libeous sette that may
Upon a good palfray.
Thei rode furthe, alle thre.
Ilke a man to othir gan say:
“Here comyth a lady gay
And semely on to se!” | <i>maiden</i> |
| 895 | In to the market thei rode,
And boldely ther abode,
In myddis of that ilke cité.
Than thei say Gefferon come ride, | <i>Each man [in the crowd] said to the other</i>
<i>an elegant lady</i>
<i>So beautiful to look upon</i>
<i>waited there</i>
<i>they saw</i> |

- 900 Two squyars bi his side,
And no more maigne. *attendants*
- He bare a schilde of grene,
That dight was wel, Y wene,
Of golde was the border, ryngid with floris,
And of the same colour,
905 Ydighte with othir flowris,
Was gayer than any cromponis.
Two squyars with him rede,
Thre speris bare bi his side,
That good were and sure.
910 That othir bare redy boune
The gentil jerfaucoune,
That leide was the wagure. *at hand*
- That astur gan ride
A lady ful of pride,
915 Yclothid in purpul palle.
The folke were come ful wide
To se hur, bakke and side;
Sho was so gent and smale.
Hur mantelle was ruffyne,
920 Yfurrid wel with ermyne
Ryche and rially,
And a bende about hur molde,
Of precious stones of golde,
With many a riche amayle. *in purple attire*
- 925 As rose hur rode was rede;
Hur here schyned on hur hede
As golde wire schyning bright;
Hur browys as silken threde
Ybent in lengthe and brede;
930 Sho was ful feire in sight.
Hur ien were grey so glas;
Mylke white were hur face;
Hur nose was straight and right;
Hur swire was long and smale.
935 Hur beauté, to telle alle,
No man with mowthe ne myght. *reddish*
- Than sho made to bryng
Tway cheiris in to cheping,
Hur beauté to discryve.
940 Than seide olde and yonge,
Forsythe, withoute lesyng: *Decorated with ermine fur*
- from the back and side (i.e., get a good look at her)*
- Decorated with ermine fur*
- Rich; royally band; head*
- enamel*
- red as the rose; complexion*
hair shone
shining bright
brows as silk thread
curved in length; width
- eyes were gray as glass*
- true*
neck
- might [describe fully]*
- Than two chairs; the marketplace
On which to display their beauty
- Truly, without lying*

- “Bitwene ham was grete part.
Geffronis leman is clere
As rose in one erbere,
945 Forsothe, and nought to lye;
Elyne the mesynger
Nas but a lavender
In hur lavendry.”
- Quod Geffron le Fredus:
“By the love of swete Jhesus,
That hawke thou hast forlore!”
- Quod Libeous Disconious:
“That was never myne use!
Justy Y wolle therfore,
955 And yef ye falle me doune,
Take my hedde and that foukone
As covenaut was bifore;
And yef iche fille downe thee,
The fawkon schalle wynde with me,
960 Though thou be wrothe therfore.”
- No more talis thei tolde.
Thei went into the fielde
With welle gret partye,
With strokis stife in schilde;
965 Every ayens othir hilde
With wel grete envye.
Here schaftis brake in sondir,
Hare dyntis fyrde as dondir
That comyth out of the sky.
- 970 Mynstrals and trompours,
Harpours and gestours,
Hare strokis gan discry.
- Than gan Geffron speke:
“Bryng me a scheft that wol not breke,
975 A scheft good with alle!
So this yonge freke
Sittith in sadulle ysteke
As stone in castelle walle.
I schalle make him stoupe,
980 And over his hors croupe
And yeve him an eville falle,
Though he were as wight werroure
As Alexaundre or Kyng Arthour,
Launselake or Persevalle!”
- There was a great difference between them
lady (beloved); beautiful
a rose in a garden*
- No more than a washerwoman
In her laundry*
- my custom [to lose]
I will joust
unhorse me
head; that falcon
According to our agreement*
- Although you may be angry*
- There was no further discussion*
- ready in opposition*
- Each fought with the other
great hostility*
- clash of arms fared as thunder*
- their; proclaimed*
- warrior
lodged*
- bow (stoop)
over the back of his horse*
- hardy a warrior
Alexander [the Great]
Lancelot du Lac*

- 985 The knyghtis bothe two
 Reden togadir tho
 With fulle grete renoune.
 Sir Libeous smote Geffron tho
 That his schilde fille him fro
 990 Into the filde a doune.
 Than loughe alle that ther was,
 And seide bothe more and las,
 Duke, erle, and baroun,
 That never thei ne sy
 995 A man that myght dury
 A stroke of Sir Geffroun.
- Geffron rode to him swithe,
 Forsothe, fele sithe,
 And yit myght not spede.
 1000 He rode ayen ful tite,
 And Libeous on the helme he hite,
 As a man that wolde of wede.
 But Libeous smote so fast
 That Gefferon doune he cast
 1005 Bothe him and his stede,
 That Geffronis rigge tobquake.
 Men myght hire the crake
 Fer of lengthe and brede.
- Alle seide, that ther were,
 1010 That Geffron had forlore
 The gentille joly faukon;
 To Libeous was he ybore.
 Al wend, las and more,
 With him in to the toun.
 1015 Geffron in his schilde
 Was ybore out of the filde,
 With many bolde baroune.
 The gentil faukon ybore was,
 Bi a knyght that hight Clewdas,
 1020 To Arthour, kynge of crowne.
- The knyght him furthe yede.
 With him he gan lede
 The faukon that Libeous wan.
 To Arthour he him bare,
 1025 That the kynge sware
 That Libeous welle warre can:
 “He hath sende me with honour
 Of faire bataile foure,
- then*
powerful determination (valor)
- both of high rank and low*
- did they see*
might endure
- quickly*
Truly, many times
might not succeed against him
swiftly
- was out of his mind*
- backbone*
crack
i.e., far and wide
- beautiful*
- went [with him], lesser [of rank]; greater*
- went*
- can battle well*

- 1030 Sithe he furst bigan.
 I wolle him sende tresour
 For to spende with honour,
 As fallith for suche a man."
- 1035 An hundrid pound honest,
 Of floreyne of the best,
 He sent to Karlille toun.
 Sir Libeous made a fest:
 That furtenyght it lest
 With grete renoune.
 At the sixt wokes ende,
 1040 He toke leve to wynde
 Of duke, erle, and baroun.
 Sir Libeous and that may
 Rode on hare way
 Toward Synadowne.
- 1045 As he rode bi a lowe,
 Hornes he hurd blowe
 And houndis make rebound.
 The dwarfe seide in a throwe:
 "This hornys right wel Y knowe,
 1050 Fer yere ferly falle!
 Sir Otis hit blewe, de la Ile,
 That servith my ladi sum while,
 So semely in hur sale.
 Whan scho was taken with gile,
 1055 He flyghe, for drede of perile,
 West into Wirale."
- As thei rode on hare talkyng,
 Ther come a rache rennyng
 Overthwart the way.
 1060 Thei seide, without lesyng,
 Sith hare first bigynnyng,
 None say thei never so gay,
 For he was of alle colours gay
- Bitwene Midsomer and May.
 1065 That may seide ful sone:
 "Y say never none
 So welle likyng to my pay!"
- Wolde Crist that ich it aught."
 Sir Libeous hit caught
 1070 And gave it maide Elyne.
- Carlisle
- fortnight
- festivity
- sixth week's
- depart
- maiden
- by a hill
- answer in reply
- within a short space
- I recognize
- For many years [occurring] often
- served my lady [of Synadoun] for a period
- beautiful in her hall
- fled, for fear of danger
- an area in northwest England
- hunting dog
- Across their path
- saw; colorful
- (see note)
- I never saw [a dog]
- So appealing to my pleasure
- By Christ, I wish that I owned it

- Thei reden furthe, alle soft,
And tolde howe knyghtis fought
For birdis brighte and schene.
Thei rode but a while,
1075 The space of a myle,
In that forest grene.
Thei sawe an hynde come rennyng,
And two greyhoundis hir folowyng;
The racche bigan to mene.
slowly
maidens bright and beautiful
hound began to moan
- 1080 Thei hovyd undir a lynde
And sawe the cours of the hynde,
Sir Libeous and sho in fere.
Than came ther aftir bihynde
A knyght yclothid in ynde,
1085 Apon a bay destrere.
His bugille gan he blowe
That his men schulde him knowe
In whate stede that he were,
And seid: "By Seint Martyne,
1090 The racche was onys myne,
Nought fully gone a yere!"
waited; linden tree
[as well as] she together
indigo
destrier
whatever location
- Good frende, lete it go."
Sir Libeous answerid tho:
"That schalle it never betide!
1095 For with my hondis two
Y yave it the damesel me fro,
That hovys here biseide."
Quod Sir Otis de la Ile:
"Thowe puttist thee in perile,
1100 Petur!, and thowe abide!"
Sir Libeous answerid: "Bi Seint Gile,
Y yeve nought of thi wile,
Chourle, though thou chide."
That shall never happen
Who sits beside me
You are placing yourself in great danger
[By Saint] Peter, if you persist
care nothing for your cunning [words (or desire)]
churl; complain
- Quod Sir Otis de la Ile:
"Sir, thi wordis bith right file!
Churle nas Y never none!
An erle my fadir was sum while;
The Cuntas of Karlyle,
Certis, scho was my dame.
1105 Yef Y were armyd nowe,
Redy as art thowe,
Forsythe, we schulde fight in same!
But thow that racche bileve,
1110 are very vile
countess; Carlisle
mother
together
Unless you give up that hound

- 1115 Thow pleiest, ar it be eve,
A wondir wilde game!"
- Quod Libeous: "Do thi best!
Here Y am alle prest!
This racche schall with us wynde, than."
Thei toke the wey west,
1120 Into the wilde forest,
As the dwarfe hem kende.
Sir Otus, with grete errorr,
Rode home in that schoure,
And aftir his frendis gan sende,
1125 And tolde ham, anone rightis,
One of Arthouris knyghtis
Shameliche gan him schende,
- And his racche had nome.
Than seide alle asomme:
1130 "That traitour shal be ytake!"
Thei seid he schulde be honge,
Though he were also stronge
As Launcelet de Lake.
Thei dighte ham wele,
1135 Bothe in iren and in stèle,
As werre shulde ther wake.
Bothe knyghtis and squyars
Lepe on hare palfrais,
For hare lordis sake.
- 1140 Fer on an hille fulle hye
Sir Libeous sone thei sye,
Ridinge pace for pace.
To him gan thei ride:
"Traitour! Thow schalt abide,
1145 Today, for this trespace!"
Libeous stode and bihilde
Howe fulfillid was the filde,
So moche folke ther was.
He seide to made Elyne:
1150 "For thi racche, Y wyne,
Me is come a carefull cas!"
- Y rede yow withdrawe
Undir the wode schawe,
Your hede for to hide.
1155 Forsothe, for to sayne,
Though Y schulde be slayne,
- You [are about to] play before evening
unpredictable (i.e., threatening to yourself)*
- ready for whatever happens
go, then*
- guided them
in great anger
quickly*
- told them at once*
- Shamelessly insulted him*
- his hunting dog had seized
all together (i.e., in one voice)*
- [Even] though he were as strong
armed themselves well*
- arise*
- palfreys
their lord's*
- They soon spied Lybeaus
at a slow pace*
- pay (do battle)
trespass*
- crowded*
- I understand
[To] me; a serious situation*
- I advise you to withdraw
Under cover of the forest*

- Ham alle Y schalle abide.” *I shall face them all*
- 1160 Sir Libeous rode in pride.
With bowis and with areblast
To him thei schote fast
And made him woundis wide. *crossbows*
- 1165 Sir Libeous’ stede so ranne
He bare downe hors and man;
For no thing wolde he spare!
Al the folke seide than:
“Here comyth the devil Satan,
That makith wilde fire fare!” *makes a destructive conflagration*
- 1170 Whoso Libeous raught,
He clevith with his draught,
And slowe for evermore.
And sone he was bisette,
As fischis in a nette,
1175 With grevely woundis sore. *Whomever; struck
clove with his blow
slew
besieged
grave wounds*
- 1180 Twelve knyghtis prest
Ther come out of the forest,
In armour cler and bright.
Al that day thei had yrest
And abode in the forest,
To sle Libeous that knyght.
In armour ther were twelve,
That one was Otys himsilve,
In ryme to rede aright,
1185 That smote to him at onys.
Thei thoughten to breken his bony
And sle him in that fight. *knights suddenly
In rhyme to read
at once*
- 1190 Then men myght se aright
Strokis sadly plight
Amonge alle ham in fere.
Forsythe, without lesyng,
The sparklis out gan spryng
Throwe helme and basnet there *Strokes seriously applied
all together*
- 1195 And four awey gan fle; *fled away; (see note)*
Thei durst come him no nere.
The lord faught in that stoure,
And his sonnys fowre,
To sille hare lyvys dere. *sell their lives dearly*

- 1200 Thei leide on stroks ryve,
He alone ayenst fyve;
He fought as he were wode.
Togadir gan thei dryve,
As bene abowte an hyve.
Of ham ranne the blode.
- 1205 Whan Sir Libeous was nere spillid,
His swarde brake bi the hilt;
Than was he mad of mode.
The lord a stroke him sette
Throwe helme and basnet,
1210 That at the skulle withstode.
- In sownyng he fille downe
Over his hors cropoune,
As man that was mate.
His fomen were bowne
1215 To perische his actowne,
Throwe helme and basnet plate.
Whan he gan sore smert,
He plukkid up his hart,
And coverid his state;
- 1220 And hent an ax that was him nyne
That hyng downe bi his thye:
Almost, he thought, to late!
- He sterith him as a knyghte.
Hare stedis downe right
1225 He slowe at dyntis thre.
The lord say that sight,
And off his hors alight,
And aweyward gan he fle.
Sir Libeous no lengir abode,
1230 But aftir him rode.
Undir a chesteyne tre
Ther he had him yquelde,
But as the lord him yilde
At his wille to be.
- 1235 And bi a certeyne stent,
Tresoure, londe, and rent,
Castelle, halle, and bowre
Ther to Libeous assent,
In forward that he went
1240 On to Kynge Arthour,
And sey: "Lord of renoune,
As overcome presoune
- abundantly
as though he were mad
Together they began to assault [him]
bees about a hive
From them blood ran down
exhausted
- furiously angry
stopped just before the skull
- swooning he fell down
the back of his horse
vanquished (checkmated)
ready
pierce his armor
- When he felt the pain
recovered his strength
seized
by his thigh
too late
- stirs himself as a knight
Their horses
With three strokes he killed
saw
from
- longer delayed
Under a chestnut tree
he would have killed him
Except the lord yielded himself
to be entirely within his power
- according to an agreed-upon assessment
Treasure, land, and rent [from land]
Castle, hall, and mansion
- pledge that he go
prisoner

- Y am to thyne honour.”
 The lord graunt it at his wille,
 1245 Bothe lowde and stille,
 And lad him home to his towre. *aloud; silently*
- The dworfe and maide Elyne
 Went with Sir Libeous, Y wene,
 To Sir Otys' castelle. *I think*
- 1250 Sho and the dworfe bidene
 Tolde of the dedis kene
 Of Libeous, howe hit bifelle,
 And of the presentis fowre
 That he sende to Kynge Arthoure
 1255 That he wanne so welle. *together*
- That suche a doughti knyght
 His ladi schulde wyn in fight,
 His ladi feire and hynde. *(see note)*
- 1260 To covery mayne and myght,
 Furti daies with the knyght
 Ther than gan he lende,
 And did him hele his wound,
 That he was hole and sound.
 Bi that day six wokis ende,
 1265 Than Libeous and the may
 Toke the right way
 To Synadowne to wynde. *noble*
recover strength and health
Forty days
dwell
Until
maiden
travel to Synadoun
- That lord, without lettyng,
 Went to Arthour the kynge,
 1270 And for prisoner him yelde,
 And tolde to the kyng *without delay*
- Howe aventours knyght yonge
 Wanne him in filde. *himself*
- Kyng Arthour had good game,
 1275 And the knyghtis in same,
 That hurd that tale ytolde,
 And thei chose for profitable
 The knyght of the Rounde Table,
 To fight with spere and schilde. *adventurous*
Defeated him in the field
was greatly amused
all together
they acclaimed [Lybeaus] accomplished
- 1280 Rest we nowe a while
 Of Sir Otis de la Ile,
 And telle we of othir talis. *i.e., meanwhile*
- Sir Libeous rode many a myle,
 In aventuris and in perile,
 1285 In Cornewaile and in Walis. *we will tell of other adventures*

- Hit bifille in the monethe of June,
 Whan levys and buskis ben grene
 And flowris in semely sale.
 The someris day is longe;
 1290 Mery is thanne the songe
 Of the nyghtingale.
- Than that tyme gan Libeous ride
 Bi a ryveris side,
 He sie a feire cité
 1295 With a palice proude in pride,
 A castelle hie and wide,
 And gatis grete plenté.
 He askid whate hit hight.
 The maide seide, anone right:
 1300 "Y wol tel to thee.
 Men clepith hit Il d'Ore.
 Ther hathe ybe fighting more
 Than ever was in eny contré.
- "For a ladi ful of pris —
 1305 Hir rode is rede as rose on rice —
 This contrey is al in dowl:
 A giaunt that hat Maugus,
 His pere nought yfounde is,
 He hath bisette hur abowt.
 1310 He is blakke so eny picche;
 In al this worlde is him none liche
 Of dedis so sterne and stout.
 Whate knyght that passith this brig,
 His armys must he leg
 1315 And to him alowty.
- He is furti fote longe,
 And also swithe stronge
 As othir knyghtis fifté.
 Sir Libeous, bithinke thee
 1320 With suche one to melle.
 He is wondir grisly;
 Eche here of his browyn
 Is liche the here of a swyn.
 For it is sothe, wittirly,
 1325 His armys bith wondir long,
 And him silve also strong,
 He sleith al that comyth him by.
- bushes
decorate beautiful halls
- saw
palace splendidly constructed
castle high
many gates
- immediately
- nobility (worth)
Her complexion; red as a rose on the stem
in fear
- blocked all passage to her
pitch, tar
none like him
- bridge
He must surrender his arms
bow down to him
- forty feet in length
fifty other knights
reconsider what you are doing
meddle
- hair; eyebrows
hair; swine
true indeed

- “And so is he grymly,
As Y telle thee, wittirly. *truly*
- 1330 He is also grete
As is an ox or a kowe,
For sothe, as Y sey nowe,
Or as grete as eny nete. *ox*
- 1335 A carte stife and good,
Unneth, bi the rode, *Scarcely, by the cross*
May hir gere lede. *carry his equipment*
- He is ful stife and stronge,
Ther may no man his dynt dure, *endure*
- For sothe, so bith thei grete.”
- 1340 Quod Libeous: “Maide hynde, *Gracious maiden*
My wey wolle Y wynde,
For alle his strokis ille. *Despite*
- Yif God wol grace sende,
Er this day come to ende
- 1345 With fighte Y schalle him spille. *kill*
Y have ysey grete okys *seen; oak trees*
Falle with wynde strokis, *blasts of wind*
In litille stounde fulle stille; *In a short time [they] lay low*
Though Y be yonge and lite, *[relatively] little*
- 1350 To him schalle Y smyte.
Lete God do his wille!”
- Thei rode furthe al thre
To that feire cité
That men clepith Il d’Ore. *the Golden Isle*
- 1355 Maugus gan thei se,
Upon a brigge of tre, *On a wooden bridge*
Lokid as a wilde bore, *wild boar*
His schilde was blak as picche —
Libeous say never none suche —
- 1360 Four mawmetts therin was. *pagan idols*
For no while he stode,
But to Libeous yode
And seid to him with wowe: *malevolently*
- “Turne agayne as tite, *at once*
1365 For thin owne profite,
Yif thowe love thi prowe!” *care for well-being*
- Whan he say Libeous with fight, *ready to fight*
He seide anone right: *quickly*
- “Telle me whate art thowe!”
- 1370 Sir Libeous seid aplight: *truly*
“Kynge Arthour made me knyght.

- To him Y made myne avowe
 That Y ne schulde turne my bak.
 Therfor, thowe devil so blak,
 1375 Make thee redy nowe!"
- Maugus on fote yode,
 And Libeous rode to him with his stede,
 For sothe, than, ful right.
 Lordis and ladies bright,
 1380 Lay in hare korvelle
 To biholde that fight.
 Thei praid to God of His wille,
 Bothe lowde and stille,
 To save that Cristen knyght
 1385 That schulde yeve grace that geaunt,
 That levyth on Termagaunt,
 That day schulde dey in fight.
- Ther hare scheftis brake on sondir,
 Everi stroke ferde as doundir;
 1390 The pecis gan out springe.
 Thei drowe swerdis bothe,
 As men that weren wrothe,
 And gan togadir dynge.
 Everi man had wondur
 1395 That Libeous nad go undur
 At the first bigynnyng.
 Sir Libeous smote Maugus tho
 That his swerde fille him fro,
 Without eny lesyng.
- 1400 Maugus cowthe moche quede,
 And hit Libeous' stede on the hede,
 And smote out the brayne.
 Libeous nothing saide,
 But stert up on a braide
 1405 Right ful sone againe.
 An ax he hent ful sone
 And hewe bi his nekke bone,
 And smote to him with mayne,
 That happid to his schilde.
 1410 Hit flye fro him into the fielde
 And fille right into the playne.
- On fote bothe thei fought.
 No man bitwene ham myght
 The strokis bitwene ham two.
- then
towers with ornamental ledges
aloud; silently
believes in [a false god]
sounded like thunder
pieces
strike blows together
had not been killed
his [i.e., Lybeaus's] sword
knew much about evil
in a moment
again
with strength
struck his shield
so that it flew from him
could [count the number of]

- 1415 Depe woundis thei raught,
For thei were unsaught,
And ever of ham othiris fo.
From the owre of the prime
Til it was evesonge tyme
1420 Of fighting were thei there.
Sir Libeous was athursti sore,
And seid, "Maugus, thyne ore
To drinke thowe leve me go."
- "Y schalle graunti thee
1425 Whate bone so ever thou axi me,
Suche grace may betide.
Grete schame it were for thee
A knyght for thurst to sle
And no more profite."
- 1430 Maugus graunte it welle
For to drink his fille
With more delite.
Whan Libeous lay on the wateris bank,
And throwe his helme he drank,
1435 Maugus gan him smyte.
- Into the ryvere he fille,
Armour and everi dele
Ywette and evil ydight.
Up he stert also snelle
1440 And swore bi Seint Michel:
"Nowe am Y two so light.
Wyndist thow, fyndis fere,
Uncristened that Y were?
To thee my trewthe Y plight.
1445 Y schalle for thi baptise
Wel quite thi service
Throwe the grace of God Almyght."
- Thanne a newe fight bigan,
And everi to othir ran,
1450 And gave ther dyntis stronge.
Many a gentil man
And ladies as white as swan
For him hare hondis wronge.
For Maugus in the filde
1455 Clave atwo his schilde,
Throwe dyntis of armys longe.
Than Libeous ran away
- received*
furious in combat
each of them the other's foe
hour of prime (between 6:00 and 9:00 AM)
evensong (i.e., vespers)
- extremely thirsty*
[may I have] your permission
- Whatever request*
Such grace [as] may be required [of me]
- accomplishment*
- pleasure*
- every bit*
Soaked and in bad condition
- twice as keen*
Did you think, companion of fiends
Unbaptized
pledge; vow
for your baptism [of me]
Well reward
- each to the other ran*
- With the strokes of his long arms*

- Ther Maugus' schilde lay,
And up he gan hit fynge. To where
seized
- 1460 Than Libeous ran to him agayne
And smote to him with mayne.
Everi of ham othir gan asaile
Unto the day was done;
After passid evensong,
1465 The knyghtis hilde bataile.
Sir Libeous was werrour wight
And gave a stroke of myght
Throwe splete, plate, and maile,
And throwe his schuldir bone
1470 That his right arme, anone,
Fille into the filde, sans faile. Each of them began to assail the other
Until it grew dark
past evensong
a strong warrior
metal reinforcements; chain mail
at once
truly
- The giaunt gan to se
That he schulde yslayne be.
He stode defens agayne.
1475 Sir Libeous so to him smote
That at the secunde stroke
He brake hys bak atwayne.
The giaunt ther bilevyd.
Libeous smote off his hevyd,
1480 Theroft he was ful fayne.
He bore his hede to towne,
With a feire procescioune;
The folke come him agayne. died
off; head
he was happy to do it
came to meet him
- 1483a [A lady whyt as flowr],
That men clepith Diamour, (see note)
1485 Resceyyd him fulle welle.
The ladi thonkid him with honour
That he was her socour
Agenst the giaunt felle.
Til a chambur scho gan him lede
1490 And chaungid ther his wede.
In palle sho clothid him welle;
Sho proferid him with worde
Ever to be hur lord
Of cité and castelle. rescuer
fierce giant
To a chamber
helped him change his clothes
fine cloth
offered
her lord
- 1495 Sir Libeous graunt it in hast
And love to hur cast,
For sho was bright and schene.
Alas, that sho nad be ychastid!
For ever, at the latist, in haste
fair; beautiful
had not been reformed (i.e., chaste)
in the final analysis

- 1500 Sho dud him trayne and tene.
Thre wokis and more
Sho made him dwelle thore,
And also maide Elyne,
That he ne myght out breke
1505 To helpe and awreke
Of Synadowne the quene.
- For that feire ladi
Cowthe more of sorsery
Than othir wicchis fyve.
1510 Sho made him melody,
With al maner of mynstralsy
That eny man cowthe discry.
Whan he sawe hur face,
He thought that he wace
1515 In Paradis alyve.
With fantasy and feiry
Ever scho blerid his iee,
Therfore, evil mote scho thryve!
- Tille it bifille apon a day
1520 He mette Elyne, that feire may,
Bi the castelle towre.
Til him gan scho say:
“Knyght, fals is in thi lay
Ayens Kyng Arthour!
- 1525 For love of a woman
That moche of sorcery can,
Thou dost thee dishonour!
My lady of Synadoune
May longe ligge in prisoun,
1530 That is ful grete dolour!”
- Whan Libeous hurd hur speke,
Him thought his hart wolde breke
For that gentil dame.
He toke with him his stede,
1535 His schilde and his othir wede,
And riden furthe in same.
That ladiis steward hynde
He made with him to wynde:
Sir Jeffelot was his name.
- 1540 Thei rode furthe talkyng,
And also fast syngyng,
Laughe and made good game.
- treason; wrong weeks there*
break out avenge
Knew more about witches
anyone could describe was
fairy magic blinded him
may she have misfortune
upon maiden
To him your allegiance To
knows much sorcery You dishonor yourself
lie a great tragedy
other equipment together
gracious steward travel with him

- 1545 Sir Libeous and that may
Rode furthe on hare jornay
On stedis bay and broune.
Til on the thrid day
Thei say a cité gay,
Men clepith Cinadowne,
With a castelle hie and wide,
1550 And palys proude in pride,
And worke of feire facion.
Sir Libeous axkid that feire may
Whos was that cité gay,
That stode ther in that towne.
- 1555 And scho him tolde anon:
“Sir,” sho seid, “bi Seint John,
That is my ladyis fre.
And in one castelle
Woneth a giaunt felle,
1560 Forsothe, witturly.
His name is clepid Lambert,
Of alle this lond is stewart,
Sothe, as Y telle thee,
And who so comyth to the gate
1565 For to axi herborowe therate,
Justi with him wol he.”
- Quod Libeous: “Bi my lewté,
That wolde Y blitheli se,
For ought that may betide!
1570 And be he never so stout,
Y schal make him lowte!
So schalle Y to him ride;
Forthi, maide Elyne,
Thowe and the dwarf bidene,
1575 In the towne ye me abide.”
Furthe than the maide rode.
The dwarf than nought abode;
He rode hur side bi side.
- Quod Libeous to Jeffelot tite:
1580 “To me it were a spite
To lete for man on lyve
To do Arthuris profite
And wynne that lady white.
Thedir wolle Y dryve.
1585 Sir Jeffelot, make thee yare
With me for to fare,
- maiden*
- palace splendid in structure*
- beautiful architecture*
- asked*
- noble lady's [castle]*
- Dwells*
- request [safe] harbor*
- Joust with him he will*
- On my honor*
- blithely (willingly) see*
- Whatever the outcome*
- formidable*
- submit*
- Therefore*
- together*
- wait for me*
- did not delay*
- without hesitation*
- an insult*
- To hinder any man alive*
- To increase Arthur's honor*
- And [fail to] deliver that beautiful lady*
- ready*

- Hastely and blithe!”
 Thei rode furthe algate
 Right into the castel gate
 1590 With feire scheftis fyve,
 And axid ther ostelle
 Of that feire castelle
 For two of Arthouris knyghtis.
 The porter feire and welle
 1595 Lete ham into the castelle,
 And axid ham anone right:
 “Who is your governour?”
 And thei seid: “Kyng Arthour,
 Man most of myght.
 1600 He is kyng of curtesy,
 chief of chyvalry,
 Hys foo to fille in fight.”
- The porter, prestabelle,
 To his lord the constabille
 1605 This tale sone he tolde.
 He seid, without fabulle:
 “Thei bene of the Rounde Table,
 Two knyghtis faire and bolde.
 That one is armyd sure
 1610 In ful riche armoure,
 With thre lions of golde.”
 The lord was glad and blithe,
 And seide also swithe,
 With ham justi he wolde.
- He bade ham make ham yare
 Into the fielde for to fare
 Without the castelle gate.
 The porter wolde nought spare,
 So as the greyhound astir the hare,
 1620 Agen he toke the gate,
 And seid anone right:
 “One is come to thee, aventours knyght!
 For nothing ye ne lete:
 Loke your schildis be strong
 1625 And your scheftis longe,
 Othir els your detheis gete.
- “And ridith into the fielde;
 My lord, with spere and schilde.
 With you he wol play.”
- hastily; at once
 straightforward
 the gate of the castle
 five superb lances [ready]*
- asked; hostel, accommodation*
- asked*
- defeat his foe in battle*
- eager to serve*
- just as quickly
 He would joust with them*
- ready*
- Outside*
- adventurous knight
 neglect nothing*
- Or else receive your deaths*

- 1630 Sir Libeous spake wordis bolde:
 "This wordis bith wel ytolde
 And likyng to my pay!"
 Into the fielde thei redyn,
 And ther boldely abedyn,
 1635 And went thei nought away.
 Lambert send aftir his stede,
 His schilde and othir wede
 His tyre was ful gay.
- These words are well spoken
 satisfying to me
 rode
 waited*
- A schilde he bare, fyne,
 1640 Thre boris hedis ydentity therinne,
 Blakke as bound bronde;
 The bordour was of ermyne.
 He say never no suche a gyne
 In londis where he went.
- inlaid
 a branch darkened by fire
 splendid device*
- 1645 Two squyars rode bi his side;
 Thre scheftis thei bare that tide
 To dele doughti dynt.
 He was wondir gay,
 And also large of pay,
 1650 In warre and in turnement.
- at that time
 strong strokes
 splendid
 generous*
- Tho that stoute stewart,
 That hight Sir Lambert,
 Was yarmyd at al right.
 He rode to the fieldeward,
 1655 Prowte as eny Lombard,
 To abide the fightis.
 He sie Libeous that tide,
 And first to him gan ride
 Whan he him sey with iee.
- Then; princely
 at all points (completely)*
- await the combat
 saw; then
 eye*
- 1660 He than to him bare
 A schefta that was square,
 As man of moche myght.
- squared*
- Everi of ham smote othir in the schild;
 The pecis fille into the fielde
 1665 With hare strokis bidene.
 Everiche man to othir tolde,
 Bothe yonge and olde:
 "This yonge knyght is kene!"
 Lambert his cours out rode,
 1670 As man that were wode,
 For ire and ful of tene,
 And seid: "Bringe me a schefta,
- pieces
 both their strokes*
- valiant
 rode his courser out of the field
 out of his mind
 anger; rage*

- And yef he can his crafte,
Sone hit schalle be ysene!" *if he knows his craft [of jousting]
seen*
- 1675 Than toke thei scheftis rounde,
With hedis sharpe ygrounde,
And rode with grete renoune.
Thei prekid in that stounde
To geven dethis wounde,
1680 As egir as eny lyon.
Sir Libeous smote Lambert tho
That his schilde fille him fro
Into the filde adoune.
So harde he him hit
1685 That he myght nought sitte,
Of this was he yboune. *prepared (i.e., he did not fall from his saddle)*
- His schilde brake with power.
And Libeous smote Lambert
On his helme so bright,
1690 The pesyn, ventaile, and gorgare
Fly with the helme in fere.
And Lambert, upright,
That he sate rokkyng in his sadill
As a childe dothe in cradille,
1695 Without mayne and myght.
Every man toke othir bi the lap,
And fast gan with hondis clap,
Barons, burgeis, and knyght.
1700 Sir Lambert fond to fight bette;
A newe helme ther was yfette
And scheftis unmete. *tried; better
extraordinarily large; (see note)*
- Every to othir sette
Strokis grym and grete.
Than the constable, Sir Lambert,
1705 Fille over his stede bakwarde,
Withouten more bigete.
Sir Lambart sware ful sone:
"Bi Him that schope sonne and mone,
He schalle my lady gete!" *Each to the other set
With no further gain
created*
- 1710 Ther Lambard was aschamyd.
Quod Libeous: "Be nought agrevyd."
And he answerid: "Nay!
For sith that Y was borne,
Y say never knyght biforne *saw*

1715 So strong, bi this day.
 Bi the thought that my hert is yn,
 Thou art of Sir Gaweynis kyn,
 That is so stoute and gay.
 Thou art ful stoute in fight,
 1720 And also stronge a knyght,
 Ful sikir, bi my fay!"

Most certainly, by my faith

"Whate art thou," seid Libeous tho,
 "That dothe so mochil wo
 To the quene of Synadowne?
 1725 Telle me er thou hens gone
 Or Y thee telle, bi Seint John,
 Y schal pare off thi crowne!"
 The steward answerid and seide:
 "Sir, be thou nought evil apaide!
 1730 For scho is my lady:
 Sho is quene of this lond,
 And Y hur steward, Y undirstond,
 Forsothe, sicurly."

*then
create such suffering*

cut off the top of your head

displeased

Truly, indeed

Sir Libeous answerid in hast:
 1735 "Fight Y schalle for that lady chast
 As Y hight Kyng Arthour!
 No man schal make me agast,
 The while the life on me may last,
 To wynne hur with honour!
 1740 But Y ne wote wherefore ne whye,
 Ne who hur dothe vilonie
 And bringith hur in dolour."
 Lambart seid in that stounde:
 "Welcome knyght of the Tabul Rounde,
 1745 Bi God, oure Saviour!"

at once

*promised
frightened*

harm

Anone, maide Elyne
 Was ysend bi knyghtis kene
 Bifore Sir Lambert.
 Sho and the dwarfe bidene
 1750 Tolde of the dedis kene
 That thei had thedirward,
 And tolde howe Sir Libeous
 Fought with many aventours
 And him gevid nothinge.
 1755 And then were thei al blithe,
 And thonkid fele sithe
 Jhesus, Hevyn kynge.

sent for

together

on the way here

he surrendered (yielded)

content

many times

- 1760 Anon with milde chere
 Thei setten hem to souvere,
 With mochil gle and game.
 Libeous and Lambert in fere
 Of aventouris that thei in were
 Talkid bothe in same. *together*
- 1765 Sir Libeous seid, withouten fable,
 To Sir Lambart the constable:
 "Whate is the knyghtis name
 That holdith in prison
 The ladi of Synadon,
 That is so gentil a dame?" *together*
- 1770 Sir Lambart seid: "Bi Seint John,
 Knyght, sur, is he none
 That durste hur awey lede!
 Two clerkis ben hur fone,
 Fals of blode and bone,
 That have ydo that dede. *foes*
- 1775 Hit bene men of maistry,
 Clerkis of nigromansy,
 Sertis, right to rede.
 Iran is, than, one brothir,
 And Mabon is that othir:
 For ham we bene in drede. *of special knowledge*
Clerks of black magic (sorcery)
Certainly, to counsel truly
- 1780 "Iran and Mabon
 Maden an hous of grete name,
 A place queynte of gynne. *ingeniously devised*
 Ther nys erle ne baron *is not*
- 1785 That had an hart as a lyon
 That durst come therin.
 Hit is made bi negromansy,
 Ywrought it was with feyry,
 That wondir is to wynne. *fairy (magic)*
marvelously difficult; penetrate
- 1790 Therin lieth in prison
 The ladi of Synadon,
 Comyn of kyngis kynne. *king's lineage*
- 1795 Oft we hire hur crien,
 But to se hur with ien,
 Therto have we no myght.
 Thei dothe hur turmentry
 And al maner vilony,
 Bothe bi day and nyght. *hear*
to see her with our eyes
- 1800 Thus Mabon and Iran
 Have swore hare othe serteyne *inflict pain on her*
sworn their secure oath

- To dethe thei wol hur dight,
But scho graunti ham tille
To do Mabonis wille,
1805 And graunti him alle hur right,

*To inflict death upon her
Unless; grants to them
grant him all her rights*
- “Of alle this lond feire,
That my ladi of is eire,
To wynne alle with wille.
And scho is meke and stille,
1810 Forthei we bene in dispeire
Lest that thei bring hur in synne!”
Quod Libeous Disconious:
“Bi the love of swete Jhesus
That lady wolle Y wynne!
Bothe Mabon and Iran
Y schalle hewe in the playne,
Hare hedis off bi the chynne!”
1815

*Of which my lady is heiress
get it all with force of will
meek; quiet
Therefore
Lest they bring her in sin
rescue
off by the chin*
- Ther was no more tale.
In the castelle, grete ne smale,
1820 But singith and makith ham blithe.
Barons and burgeis fale
Come to that semely sale
For that to listen and lithe
Howe that proude steward,
1825 That men clepith Sir Lambert,
With Libeous his craft gan kithe.
Thei fedde ham at sopere
And bade ham be blithe of chere,
Knyghtis bothe stoute and stithe.
1830

*both those of rank and those below
merry
many
noble dwelling
listen; be attentive
skill at arms made known
strong*
- Ther than gan thei dwelle
In that same castelle
Alle that longe night.
On morowe Libeous was prest
1835 In armour of the best;
Ful fresche he was to fight.
Sir Lambart lad him to the gate
And to the castelle gate,
That stode up ful right.
Further durste thei nought him bring,
1840 Forsothe, withoute lesing,
Baron, burgeis, ne knyght,

*prepared
i.e., to the city gate
i.e., the gate of the enchanted castle*
- But turnid ham agayne.
Sir Geffelot, Libeousis swayne,
With him fayne wolde ride.

*servant
Would eagerly ride with him*

- 1845 Sir Libeous sware his othe, serteyne,
That he schulde Jeffelot slayne,
Yef he ther wolde abide.
Unto the castel ageyne he rode,
And with Sir Lambart ther he bode.
- 1850 To Jhesus fast he cried
That he schulde send tithing glad
Of him that longe had
Thedir ysought fulle wide.
- 1855 Sir Libeous reyght his corcis
And rode in to the palys
And at the halle alight.
Trumpis, pipis, and schalmys
He hurde bifore the highe deys
And sawe ham with sight.
- 1860 In myddis the halle flore
He sawe a fire starke and store,
Was light and brenden bryght,
And furthe in he yede
And ladde with him his stede,
1865 That helpith him in fight.
- 1870 Libeous furthe gan pas,
Furthe into the plas
Ther the fire was in the halle.
Somme, of more and las,
He ne sye in the plas,
1875 But mynstrell clothid in palle,
With setoll and with sawtry,
And every maner mynstralci.
Grete gle thei made alle;
Harpe, pipe, and rote,
1880 Organs mery of note,
Was wrete in that walle.
- 1880 Bi every mynstralle stode
A torche, feire and good;
Thei were ylightid and brende bright.
Sir Libeous in yode,
To wite with egir mode,
Who schulde with him fyght.
He yede abowte into the hall
1885 To biholde the pelouris all,
That were so feire in sight.
Of jasper and of fyne cristall
- if he continued [with Lybeaus] further
[Jeffelot]*
- glad tidings*
- arranged his corselet (breastplate)*
- Trumpets, pipes, and shawms
high dais*
- powerful (blazing) and large
brilliant; burned bright*
- steed*
- no one of greater or lesser rank*
- clothed in fine cloths
citole; psaltry
kind of minstrelsy*
- rote (like a harp)
merry
witnessed*
- i.e., proceeded further
To discover eagerly*
- pillars*

Were thei ywrought alle,
That was so moche of myght.

- 1890 The doris was of bras,
The wyndowis were of glas,
Ywrought with ymagrye.
The halle ypeyntid was;
In the worlde a feirer nas *there was no fairer*
1895 That ever man sawe with ie. *eye*
He sette him on the des. *dais*
The mynstrals were in pece, *silent*
That weren so stourdy. *so loud [before]*
Torchis that weren so bright,
1900 Thei went out anone right —
The mynstrals weren away!
- The dors and the wyndowis al
Beten in the halle,
As were dyntis of dondur. *claps of thunder*
1905 The stonys in the walle
On his hede gan falle;
Theroft had he wondur!
The erthe bigan to quake;
The doris bigan to shake,
1910 As he sate therundur.
The halle rose also, *roof*
Him thought it clave a-two
As it schulde asoundur! *split and collapse*
- 1915 Sir Libeous therof had mervaile
And seide, withouten faile:
“This is a wondur!
Y trowe the devill of helle *I believe [that]*
Be in this castelle
And hath here his resting!
1920 Though the devil and his dame
Come with his brothir in same,
To dethe Y schalle him dynge. *kill him*
Y schalle never onis fle, *once (i.e., never ever)*
Er that Y se what he be,
1925 Aboute this biggyng.” *building*
- As he sate thus and saide, *sat*
Him thought he was betraide!
Stedis hurde he neye. *Steeds; neigh*
Than was he betir apaide *satisfied*
1930 And to himsilve saide:

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| | "Yit Y hopy to play!"
As he lokid into the fielde,
He sawe with scheft and schilde
Men yarmyd twey
In right good armour,
Was coverid with colour,
With golde garlondis gay. | hope to
<i>Two armed men</i>
<i>splendid gold garlands</i> |
| 1935 | Thei come ride into the halle
And lowde bigan to calle:
"Sir knyght of aventours,
Suche a cas ther is bifalle,
Yef thow be prowde in palle,
Fight ye must with us!
Y holde the man of kyn
Yef thow that lady wyn
That is so precious!"
Quod Libeous anone right:
"Redy Y am to fight,
Bi the love of Jhesus!" | <i>adventures</i>
<i>If: splendid in rich clothing</i>
<i>I consider the man to be my kinsman</i> |
| 1940 | Sir Libeous, with good hert,
Into his sadulle he stert.
A spere on hond he hent.
Smertly he rode ham tille,
His fomen for to fille;
Therto was his talent.
Whan thei togadur smote,
Everi on othir schildis hit
With speris doughti of dynt.
Mabon his spere tobarst; | <i>foeman</i>
<i>That was his desire</i> |
| 1945 | Ther of was he sore agast
And hilde him schamely schent. | <i>Each man hit the other's shield</i> |
| 1950 | And with his sterke fauchon
Libeous bare Mabon doun
Undir his hors taile,
That hors he bare to ground,
And Mabon fille that stound
Into the filde, sans faile.
Nerehond he had be slayne,
But than come Iraine, | <i>mighty sword</i>
<i>extremely astonished</i>
<i>shamefully disgraced</i> |
| 1955 | With helme, hauberk, and maile.
Ful fresche he was to fight. | <i>at that time, then</i>
<i>truly</i> |
| 1960 | Sir Libeous, anone right,
Thought him for to asaile. | <i>Nearly</i> |
| 1965 | | |
| 1970 | | |

- 1975 Sir Libeous was of him yware,
And his spere to him bare,
And left his brothir stille.
Suche dyntis thei gave thore
That hare hauberkis totore,
And that likid him ille!
- 1980 1985 Hare speris brake on two;
Her swerdis drowe thei tho
With hertis grym and grille.
Togadir gan thei fight,
Every of othir provid har myght
Othir for to kille.
- As thei togadir gan hewe,
Mabon, the more schrewe,
In the fielde aros.
He hurde, and wel knewe,
That Iran gave strokis fewe;
Theroft his hart aros.
- 1990 1995 To him he went ful right
To help to falte him in fight,
Libeous of gentil los.
But Libeous fought with hem bothe
As he were wode and wrothe,
And kepid him in clos.
- 2000 2005 Whan Iran sawe Mabon,
He smote a stroke of male felon
To Sir Libeous with ire,
That evyn he clave doun,
With his swerde broune,
Sir Libeousis stedeis swire.
Sir Libeous was wondir slighe,
And smote a-two his thighe
- 2010 2015 Ther helpid him none armour,
His acton ne his charmour.
He quidid wel his hire.
Libeous of hert was light
With Mabon for to fight,
In fielde, bothe in fere.
Suche strokis gan thei dight,
That the fuyre sprang out right
Of schilde and helme clere.
As thei togadir smette,
Hare strokis togadir mette,
- then
their chain mail split open
they did not like that
- They drew their swords then
grim; fierce
tested their strength
- greater rogue
he swelled in anger
- To help [Iran] kill him [Lybeaus]
of noble fame
- crazed; furious
kept himself protected
- evil treachery
- even struck down at
bright sword
The neck of Lybeaus's steed
very skillful
- (see note)
protective jacket nor his sorcery
[Lybeaus] acquitted himself well
- keen
both together
They delivered such strokes
fire

- As ye may lysten and lere.
 Mabon smote to Libeous blythe
 And brake Libeous swerde ful swithe
 2020 A-two quyte and clene.
- listen; learn
 quickly
 at once
- Than was Libeous ful wo
 For he had lorne so,
 Forsothe, his good swerde there,
 And his stede was lame.
 2025 He had wende to have come with schame
 To Kyng Arthour, his lorde.
 To Iran fast he ranne
 And hent his swerde thanne —
 Of love ther was no worde!
- lost
 disabled
 expected
 seized then
- 2030 He ranne to Mabon right.
 Ful fast than gan he fight,
 As jestours tellith in borde.
- recite as entertainment (i.e., in romance)
- And ever faught Mabon,
 As it were a lyon,
 2035 Sir Libeous for to slo.
 But Sir Libeous clave adoune
 His schilde with his fawchoune,
 That he toke his brothir fro.
 In right tale it is tolde,
 2040 His right arme with the schilde
 Awey he smote also.
 Than seid Mabon him tille:
 “Thy strokis bene fulle ille,
 Gentille knyght, nowe ho!
- In order to slay
 thrust down
 falchion
 i.e., Iran
 cease
- 2045 “Y wol me yilde to thee,
 With bodi and catelle fre,
 And take alle thee tille.
 And that lady fre,
 That is in my posté,
 2050 Schalle be atte thi wille.
 For throwe thi swerdis dynt,
 Myne honde is schent;
 That wounde wolle me spille.
 Therfore, thowe savy my life
 2055 And ever, withouten strife,
 Y schal be at thi wille.”
- both my person and noble possessions
 take all to yourself
 gentle lady
 in my power
 will be at your will (i.e., in your power)
- ruined
 destroy (kill) me
 spare my life
- “Nay,” quod Libeous, “Bi my thrifte,
 Y wolle right nought of thi gifte,
 For alle the worlde to wilde
- By my good fortune
 I do not want any part of
 to wield (i.e., rule or possess)

- 2060 Turne thee, yef thowe myght,
 For Y schalle, as I hight,
 Hewe thi hed off bi the chynne!"
 Than Mabon and Sir Libeous
 Fast togadre hewe. promised
 2065 Thei left it for no synne.
 Sir Libeous was more of myght
 And clave his helme adoune right,
 And his hede off bi the chynne. traded blows
They did not cease for any cause
his (Mabon's)
- Than Mabon was yslayn,
 2070 He ranne towarde Iran,
 With his swerde in fist
 For to se his brayne,
 I telle yowe, for certeyne. expose his brains
 For to fight more him lust,
 2075 And whan he come thore,
 Awey he was ybore,
 To whiche stede he ne wist.
 He sought him, for the nonys,
 Fulle wide in that wonys. *he wanted to continue the fight*
 2080 On trewthe ful wel he trust. *he [Iran] had vanished*
what place he did not know
Throughout the dwelling
trusted to fulfill his oath
- And whan he myght not fynde Iran,
 He went agen, ful serteyne,
 And sought ful sore,
 And seide in dede and thought:
 2085 "This wolle be dere ybought,
 That he is fro me yfare, has escaped me
 For he wol with sorsery
 Do me grete turmentry,
 And that is my most care!" great harm
- 2090 He sate and ful fast he thought
 Whate he best do mought. *What he might best do*
He was entirely devoid of happiness then
- As he sate in the halle,
 Out of the stone walle
 2095 A wyndowe feire unfolde. opened
 Grete wondir, withalle,
 In his hert gan falle.
 He sate and gan biholde
 A worme ther out gan pas arose
 2100 With a womanis face,
 Yonge and nothing olde.
 Hur bodi and hur whyngis sat; beheld
dragon to emerge

- Shone in alle thingis,
As it were betyn golde. *beaten gold*
- 2105 Hur taile was unmete;
Hur pennys were grym and grete,
As ye may lysten and lere.
Sir Libeaus swat for hete
Ther he sate in his sete,
As he had be in werre.
So sore he was agast,
Him thought his hert tobarst
As scho nyghid him nere,
And ar Sir Libeaus it wist,
The worme with mouthe him kist
And hyng abowte his swire. *extremely large wings*
- 2110 *sweated from the heat in full combat*
- 2115 *would burst approached him before; knew dragon embraced him around the neck*
- And aftir that kissing,
Of the worme bothe taile and wyng
Sone thei fille hur fro. *Immediately fell from her*
- 2120 So feire in alle thing
Woman, without lesyng,
Sawe he never er tho.
But scho was al nakid
As the clerkis hur makid;
Therfore Libeaus was wo. *distressed*
- 2125 Sho seid: "Gentille knyght,
God yilde thee thi fight
My fomen that thou wolt slo. *reward your fight In which you desired to slay my foes*
- 2130 "Thou hast ysley for sothe
Two clerkis that cowthe
And wrought bi the fende.
Bi northe and bi sowthe,
Bi maistry of hare mowthe.
Many men thei schende *You have truly slain who knew [much sorcery] performed [their magic] through the devil*
- 2135 Ever in wo to wynde,
Til Y had ykissid Gaweyn,
That is ful doughti, serteyne,
Othir sum of his kynne. *By the power of their words destroyed; (see note)*
- 2140 And thowe savedist my lyve,
Castels sixty and five
Take Y wol thee tille,
And mysilve to wife,
Stilly, withouten strife
Yif it be thi wille." *To live ever in woe most excellent or someone of his kin; (see note)*
- Because you saved my life sixty-five I wish to give them to you [Along] with myself to wed Silently, without protest*

- 2145 Libeous was glad and blithe
And lepe to hors also swithe
And left that lady stille,
And sore draddid Iran
That he nad nougnt him slain;
2150 With spere he thought him spille
very much feared Iran
He sought to kill him with a spear
- Sir Libeous, that knyght good,
Into the sadil he yood
To loke aftir Iran.
He lokid into a chambir,
2155 That was in an hie tour
went
seek
in a high tower; (see note)
- And ther he sawe Iran.
He drowe his swerde with myght
And smote of his hed aright,
For sothe, of Iran than.
- 2160 To the castelle than he rode
Ther the folke him abode;
To Ihesus gan thei cry.
For Libeous to Lambert tolde,
And othir knyghtis bolde,
2165 This tale ther ful pertly,
How Mabon was slain,
And woundid was Iran,
Throwe the myght of Marie;
That the lady bright
2170 Til a dragon was dight
Throwe myght of sorserye;
i.e., Lambert's castle
awaited his return
publicly
Into the form of a dragon was transformed
- And with a cosse of a knyght,
Womman scho was aplight,
A commely creature.
2175 But scho him stode byfore
As nakid as scho was bore,
And seid: "Nowe am Y sure
My fomen thu hast slain,
Mabon and Iran.
2180 Therfore God joy thee send!"
And whan Sir Libeous in that forward
Had ytolde it to Sir Lambard
Bothe worde and ende,
kiss
She became a woman truly
in that message
- 2185 A robe of purpure pris,
Yfurrid wel with grise,
He sende hur to bigynnyng.
valuable purple fabric
Edged well with gray fur

- Suche riches and garlondis riche
He sende hur preveiliche;
A maide ham gan hur bringe.
2190 And whan scho was redy dight,
Sho went with mayn and myght
Til hur owne wonnyng.
Than alle the folke of Synadoune
With a feire processioune
2195 That ladi gan home bryngue.
- Whan scho come to towne,
Of golde a precious crowne
On hur hed was set.
2200 Ther thei were glad and blithe
And thonkid God fele sithe
That hur balis were bete.
Than alle the knyghtis thrytté
Send hur homage and fewté,
As hit was lawe in lond.
2205 And whan thei had this ydone,
Thei toke hare leve and went sone,
Alle men bowid to hur honde.
- Seven daies thei made hare sojour
With Sur Lambert in the tour
2210 And alle the folke in same.
Than went thei with honour
Unto Kynge Arthour
With moche gle and game.
Thei thonkid God of his myght,
2215 Kynge Arthour and his knyght,
That scho had no schame.
Arthour, he gave blyve
Libeous that may to wyve,
That was so gentil a dame.
- 2220 The myrthe of that bridale
May no man tel in tale,
Ne sey in no gest.
In that semely halle
Were lordis gret and smalle
2225 And ladies ful honest.
Ther was wel sertayne
Servise fulle good wone,
Bothe most and lest.
Forsythe, the mynstrals alle
- headpieces of gold*
ready and dressed
with her retinue
dwelling
- many times*
misfortunes were overturned
[her] thirty knights
homage; fealty
- took their leave; departed soon*
- days they; their sojourn*
together
- [the Lady of Synadoun] had no disgrace*
eagerly
maiden [the Lady of Synadoun]; marry
- Nor describe in any romance*
i.e., of all ranks, high and low
most noble ladies
- Food; in great abundance*
nobility and commoners

- 2230 That were in the halle
Had giftis at that fest.

Sir Libeous' modir so fre
Yede to that maungeré.
Hur rode was rede so rys.
2235 Sho knewe Libeous wel bi sight
And wist welle, anone right,
That he was of moche pris.
Sho went to Sir Gaweyne
And seid, withouten delaye:
2240 "This is our childe so fre!"
That was he glad and blithe
And kissid hur fele sithe,
And seid: "That likith me!"

Sir Gaweyne, knyght of renoune,
2245 Seid to the Lady of Synadoune:
"Madam, trewliche,
He that wanne thee with pride
I wanne him bi a forestis side
And gate him of a giantis lady."
2250 That ladi was blithe
And thonkid him many a sithe
And kissid him, sicurly.
Than Libeous to him ranne
And ever kissid that manne,
2255 Forsothe, trewly.

He fille on kneis that stound
And sate knelyng on the ground,
And seid: "For God alle weldond,
That made this worlde round,
2260 Feire fadir, wel be ye found!
Ye blis me with your hond!"
The hyndy knyght, Gaweyne,
Blessid his sonne with mayne,
And made him up to stond.
2265 And comaundid knyghtis and swayn
To calle Libeous "Gyngelayn,"
That was lord of that lond.

Forty daies they dwellid there
And hare fest thei hilde yfere
2270 With Arthour the kyng,
As in romaunce it is tolde.
Arthour with knyghtis bolde
- mother so noble*
Went to that feast
Her complexion; as red as rose
- many times*
I am very pleased
- renown*
- won you*
sired
begot
- many a time*
truly
- man*
- at once*
- all-wielding (i.e., all-ruling)*
- gracious*
heartily
- knights; squires*
- together*

2275 Home he gan ham bryng.
 Ten yere thei levid in same
 With moche gle and game,
 He and that swete thinge.
 Jhesu Crist our Saviour
 And His modir, that swete flour,
 To blys He us alle bryng. Amen.

years; together
i.e., the Lady of Synadoun

2280 *Qui scripcit carmen sit benedictis. Amen.*¹

Hic explicit Libeus Disconyus.

Here ends Libeus Disconyus

2285 He that lovyth welle to fare
 Ever to spend and never spare quod More
 But he have the more good
 His here wol grow throw his hood²

*declares More [the scribe]
 increasing material wealth*

*Hic pennam fixi penitet me si male scripsi.*³

¹ *Blessed may he be who wrote/copied/recited [this] song/poem. Amen*

² *Hair will grow through his hood (i.e., a threadbare hood indicates poverty)*

³ *Here I set my pen down. I [not the pen] am blameworthy if I have written poorly.*



EXPLANATORY NOTES

Line references are consistent for both texts in the early part of the poem. Thereafter we have listed Lambeth (L) first followed by the corresponding line numbers in Naples (N) in parentheses; when lines are omitted in L, N is the first text referenced. Short stanzas or missing lines are noted for both manuscripts. Perhaps these omissions are deliberate or the lines could have been missing from the scribe's copy-texts.

ABBREVIATIONS: **A:** Ashmole 61 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 6922) (see Shuffelton); **AND:** *Arthurian Name Dictionary*; **C:** London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (see Mills); **L:** London, Lambeth Palace, MS 306; **LBD:** *Li Biaus Descouneis*; **LD:** *Lybeaus Desconus*; **LI:** London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150 (formerly known as Lincoln's Inn, MS Hale 150) (see Cooper); **MED:** *Middle English Dictionary*; **N:** Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29; **NAE:** Lacy, *New Arthurian Encyclopedia*; **ODOS:** Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*; **P:** London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (Percy Folio); **SGGK:** *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Shuffelton: *Codex Ashmole 61*.

Incipit L: *A trety of one Gyngelayne othir wyse namyd by Kyng Arthure Lybeus Dysconeus that was bastard son to Sir Gawayne*. This extended incipit in L is unique among the extant manuscripts. N: *Libious Disconious*.

1–6 The invocation to Christ and his mother is conventional and appears to include the audience in its storytelling. Renaut de Bâgé's poem begins with an encomium to the poet's lady: “Cele qui m'a en sa baillie / cui ja d'amors sans trecerie / m'a doné sens de cançon faire — por li veul un roumant estraire / d'un molt biel conte d'aventure” (For my sovereign lady I have written and sung of a love that knows no falsehood, according to the direction she gave. Now I wish to compose a romance for her from a beautiful tale of adventure) (*Le Bel Inconnu*, lines 1–5). The substitution of the Virgin Mary in the English version underscores similarities between religious discourse and the quasi-religious discourse of courtly love, marking perhaps a shift in emphasis toward piety. The Virgin is the recipient of a number of pleas in the poem, most notably when the maiden Violet is abducted and about to be assaulted by two giants.

4 L: *That lysteneth of a conquerour*. N: *That listenith of a conquerour*. The cues of oral poetry are retained, even though this is a late version of the poem; the oral storytelling tradition and minstrelsy are particularly strong in both L and N. Musical instruments, the dwarf's ability to entertain as well as to advise, and several musical allusions draw attention to the debt that metrical poetry and music owe to each other. See Zaerr, “Music and Magic.” Purdie notes that the rhymes

“conqueror/warrior” appear also in the opening of *Otuel and Roland (Anglicising Romance*, p. 125n111); see *Otuel and Roland*, lines 3, 11.

- 7 L: *His name was Sir Gyngelayne*. N: *His name was hote Gyngeleyn*. L’s manner of naming the protagonist “Sir Gyngelayne” has the effect of legitimating the natural son of Gawain by dubbing him a knight, whereas N does not. The moniker “Lybeaus Desconus” (spelled in various ways in Lambeth and Naples) is later bequeathed upon the hero by Arthur for practical purposes (see L, N, line 80), an act marked by a marginal note in L. In Renaut’s poem, the hero’s name is not revealed until the end.
- 7-30 The story of the hero’s *enfances* in Renaut’s text enters the narrative after the defeat of the enchanters (Mills, *LD*, p. 42). In *LBD*, however, the events of the “enfances” differ from the English versions. Following the *fier baiser*, the disembodied voice of la Pucele as Mains Blancs (the Maiden of the White Hands) informs Guinglain that his father was Gawain and that his mother is Blancemal le Fee (lines 3235–37). The mother of the Middle English Lybeaus, however, is not a “fay” who arms her son to send him to the Round Table. There are several romances where the hero’s mother, estranged from the hero’s father, either because she has been abandoned or because of the father’s death, leaves the court and makes a life in rural seclusion, often in a forest, with her son whom she isolates and protects from the world. In *Sir Perceval of Galles*, for example, Acheflour retires from court upon the death of her husband and lives secluded in a forest with her young son Perceval. Whereas Lybeaus’s acquisition of a chivalric identity begins with his discovery of a dead knight in full armor, Perceval’s chivalric identity begins when he meets fully alive Arthurian knights. Further, the illegitimacy of Gyngeleyn is lessened by the fact that his father is Sir Gawain, one of Arthur’s most honored knights. Gawain ranks among “the most complex Arthurian characters”; he often exemplifies courtesy and chivalric ideals, but his frequent womanizing also receives attention (Shuffelton, p. 474n8). The stigma of illegitimacy imposed upon Lybeaus at the beginning of the poem is somewhat mitigated at the end by full recognition of the Arthurian court and his marriage to the regal Lady of Synadoun. N and A continue and conclude the hero’s *enfances* with the return of Gyngeleyn’s mother to Arthur’s court in the final scene, a family reconciliation not present in the other manuscripts. Sir Degaré, like Lybeaus, is an illegitimate son, but he manages to reconcile his parents and promote their marriage, whereas in *LD*, Sir Gawain and Lybeaus’s mother do not marry.
- 9 L: *Under a forest syde*. N: *Bi a forestis side*. The location of Lybeaus’s conception at the edge of a forest also places him at the outer limits of legitimacy. As Shuffelton notes, “bastardy was often imagined as manifesting itself in moral or physical defect” (p. 475n15); moreover, in the realm of the law, an illegitimate child could not legally inherit property from either parent (Brand, “Family and Inheritance,” p. 73). This medieval context thus provides motive for Lybeaus’s strong drive for public recognition by the Arthurian court and confirms the underlying narrative sense that he is to some extent legitimized by his paternal bloodline and his father’s reputation. According to Thomas Wright, “The story

of rising from an obscure beginning is a very common one in medieval literature, and belongs to a principle of medieval sentiment, that noble blood was never lost . . . and that if a knight, for instance, met with a woman, or however low the circumstances under which the child received its first nurture, the blood it had received from the father would inevitably urge it onward till it reached its natural station" (quoted in Hales and Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Folio*, 2:405).

- 11 L: *With Arthur at the Roun Table*. N: *With Arthur at the Round Table*. The Round Table, added to the Arthurian cycle by Wace in the twelfth century in his *Roman de Brut* ("Fist Artur la Runde Table" [Arthur had the Round Table made], line 9751), has become a symbol of Arthurian governance. The Winchester Round Table shows the names of twenty-four knights, one of whom is Lybeaus Desconus, written "S(ir) lybyus dyscony(us)." See Badham and Biddle, "Inscriptions in the Painting," pp. 255 and 280.
- 19 L: *For he was full savage*. N: *For that he was so savage*. Narratives of *l'enfant sauvage* (the wild child) abound in the Middle Ages. In Middle English romance, the wild child trope may include characters such as Gowther, whose kinship with Merlin (as half-brother) renders him a good candidate for taming; that he is conceived by a demon disguised as his mother's husband (an episode akin to Arthur's as well as Merlin's conception) contributes to his lack of civility. His wild behavior is particularly noteworthy when he is described as having suckled nine wet nurses to death (*Sir Gowther*, lines 119–20). Lybeaus exemplifies his inner wild child in that he inhabits the forest and, like young Perceval, he flagrantly disregards the rules of chivalric behavior.
- 26 L: *His moder clepte him Bewfiz*. N: *His modir callid him Beaufits*. The name means literally "Beautiful Son" (Beau Fitz) and is a term of endearment bequeathed upon the boy by his mother, whose name is unstated, although in *LBD*, Guinglain's mother is Blancemal le Fee. It is tempting to see a pun as well on "Bewvisage." See N, line 72, where Lybeaus is praised for being "so feire of vis" and similarly in L (same line number): "so fayre a vice." Naming is an important feature of medieval romance, a genre often concerned with questions of identity and chivalric education. His mother's term of endearment is later supplanted by Arthur's dubbing of the young man as Lybeaus Desconus, although both names allude to the young hero's good looks and, by implication, his noble blood through kinship with Gawain and Arthur. Lybeaus's testing through adventure confirms the outward sign of noble blood, that is, his masculine beauty, and explains his natural prowess.
- 28 L: *And this childe was so nyse*. N: *And he him silve was nyse*. Lybeaus is called a child here not only because of his apparent youth (as indicated by Arthur in L, line 103: "But me thinketh thou arte to yonge" or N, line 106: "But ever me thinkith thee ful yong") but because his identity is partially defined by his biological kinship with Gawain and by his mother. "Child" also means a young man who aspires to be a knight or a young knight at the early stages of his career. To say that Lybeaus is a "child" because he has not been fully enfolded into chivalric masculinity and Arthur's court is pertinent to the use of the term here, since Lybeaus's identity is fully aligned at this point in the narrative with a mother wholly responsible for

her son's nurture. Like other orphaned, abandoned, fostered, or quasi-legitimate male protagonists of medieval romance (e.g., Tristan, Perceval, Lancelot, and Arthur), Lybeaus cannot be fully masculinized until he has been properly trained in the precepts and practices of chivalry. Only A and P assign a specific age to Lybeaus: "Ten yere olde I am" (A, line 52) and "14 yeere old I am" (P, fol. 157r, line 52 [Cooper]). The typical age at which a young man could be knighted was twenty-one. This rite of passage varied among literary knights: at twenty Chaucer's Squire is still a squire, while Bevis of Hampton becomes *Sir Bevis* at fifteen, as does Sir Gowther.

- 37 L: *He toke off that knyghtis wede.* N: *The childe drowe off the knyghtis wede.* In a system predicated upon honor and prowess, armor stripping is a dishonorable and frowned-upon practice. The scene recalls a similar incident in the tales of Perceval in which the young rustic, with the help of Gawain, appropriates the armor of a dead knight. He, like Lybeaus, is unfamiliar with courtly etiquette. Lybeaus's ignorance and naïveté in this scene illustrate the "savagery" and "outrage" mentioned in lines 19 and 20.
- 41 L: *Glastynbury.* N: *Glastonbury.* A traditional placename associated with Arthurian literature. Its use in the Middle English romance situates Arthur and his court in that part of Britain known as Logres. In Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois*, Arthur's court is located in Brittany, whereas in *LBD*, Arthur's court is in Caerleon in Wales.
- 45 L: *This childe knelyd downe on his kne.* Despite his lack of chivalric training, C and L's Lybeaus seems to know what to do in front of a king, a gesture that tacitly indicates the boy's innate nobility, an apparently inherited character trait that allows the disadvantaged Lybeaus to claim his proper heritage in this early scene. N, A, and P (the stanza is missing completely in LI) omit Lybeaus's gesture of kneeling, perhaps in order to underscore his rustic ways. In N, he simply greets (*grete*, line 45) the king and his *knyghtis alle* (line 44).
- 48 L: missing expression. N: *Y pray yow, par amour.* Literally, for the sake of love, this is a conventional courtly expression added to requests. The expression is used only in N and P.
- 49 L: *I am a child unkowthe.* N: *Y am a childe unknowe.* The boldness of this pronouncement in a court obsessed with gestures of civility and courtesy indicates lack of training in these skills. The translation of L's *unkowthe* as *uncouth* is certainly plausible, but N's *unknowe* suggests that it could also mean "unknown," or that the scribe understood it as a word relating to the overall themes of the poem; the notion that to be unknown is also to be outside the realm of chivalry renders both interpretations possible.
- 52 L: *Lorde, I pray thee nowthe.* N: *Lord, Y pray you nowthe.* This line differs considerably from the other redactions that indicate Lybeaus's age. (See note for line 28.)
- 61 L: *Sayde Gyngelayn, "Be Seint Jame!"* N: *The childe seid, "Bi Seint Jame."* L alone among the manuscripts cites the name "Gyngelayn" here. The naming of saints is significant throughout the narrative. This reference is probably to James the

- Great, the first apostle of Christ to die and to be martyred for Christianity. The shrine with which he is most often associated is Santiago de Compostela in Spain. His cult was so thoroughly linked to pilgrimage that his emblems, the scallop shell and wide-brimmed hat, frequently became the garb of medieval pilgrims (see *ODOS*, p. 135).
- 66 L: *Clepped me Bewfice*. N: *Callid me Beaufice*. This second occurrence of Lybeaus's informal moniker underscores its importance to the narrative. In the *Promptorium Parvulorum*, the nickname means "more beautiful son;" the entry reads "*Byfyece. Filius, vel pulcher filius* (1:28). Shuffelton's suggestion that Rate, the presumed author/scribe of A, "may be evoking another famous romance hero, Bevis (or Beuis) of Hampton, who is not otherwise connected to this story" (p. 475n26), lends another dimension of meaning to the designation. Good looks appear to foreshadow a hero's success.
- 69 L: *Be God and Seint Denyce*. N: *Bi God and Seint Denyce*. Although the naming of saints is a common feature of the English version of the poem, in passages focused on the renaming of the protagonist, the utterance of saints' names calls attention to their value as mediators between human and divine realms. This saint, for whom the abbey of St. Denis was named, was popular in France and also in England, with forty-one churches named in his honor (see *ODOS*, p. 135).
- 80 L: *Lybeus Disconeus*. N: *Lybeus Dysconius*. This short line, consisting only of the two words that compose the protagonist's name, calls attention to itself metrically as well as visually. In L, the name *Lybeus Disconious* in a later hand appears in the margin; interestingly, the spelling *Disconious* resembles the Naples spelling *Dysconious*.
- 88–93 L: "Now Kyng Arthur hathe made me knyght." Alone among the manuscripts, L attributes a verbal response to Lybeaus that suggests an innate graciousness and proclaims his new status to the court.
- 89 L: *I thanke him with all my myght*. N: *And with a swerde bright of myght*. Nancy Cooper ("Libeaus Desconus," p. 400) believes that "bright" is erroneously repeated here from the previous line. A reads "suerd of myght" (line 89), C: "swerde of myght" (line 77), and P rearranges the lines thus: "K[ing] Arthur anon right / with a sword ffaire and bright / trulye þ[at] same day / dubbed that child a knight / And gave him armes bright" (fols. 157r–v, lines 85–89 in Cooper).
- 92–93 L: *to say . . . in feere*. N: *with a swerde bright of myght* (line 89). *say* ("assail"). See *MED* saien (v)d: "to test one's strength on, do battle with; an aphetic form of asseien; to try, test, challenge" *in feere* (in the company of men). Having been knighted, Lybeaus is eager to prove himself in combat. In N, he is taught by Gawain.
- 93 L: Short stanza. Following Arthur's investiture of Lybeaus, Gawain trains him in knightly combat and provides him with a shield only in N, A, P, and C. The passage is missing in both L and LI. Gawain's mentorship is important to the shaping of Lybeaus's identity as a knight and a tacit if unacknowledged recognition of their father-son relationship and Lybeaus's innate nobility. The shield,

- of course, marks a knight's identity in the field. N: *Aftur, him taught Gaweyn . . . He hongid on him a schilde* (lines 91–94). Also missing in L and LI, the details of the shield appear in C, N, A, P. The griffon, a hybrid fabled animal with traits of a lion and eagle, appeared in medieval bestiaries, encyclopedias, and travel literature, and was adopted as a common feature in heraldry. It is somewhat ironic that the Fair Unknown should be given such a well-known identifying heraldic device. At N, line 264, however, the shield has only one griffon as its device. N: *a schilde / With grefsons overgilde, / Ipeyntid of lengthe ful gay* (lines 94–96).
- 95 L: *Of Arthure a bone he bade.* N: *Anone a bone he bade* (line 98). The novice knight's request for the king's granting his petition is reminiscent of a similar scene in Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, though such a request is an important trope of romances and of Arthurian literature more generally. Notice how N's "Anone" creates a Lybeaus more impetuous than L's.
- 103 L: *But me thinketh thou arte to yonge.* N: *But ever me thinkith thee ful yong* (line 106). Arthur's assessment here emphasizes the youth and inexperience of Lybeaus and perhaps refers back to the king's initial reluctance to dub him without proof of his abilities or lineage. If Lybeaus is as young as ten or fourteen as some manuscripts suggest (see note for lines 28 and 52), then Arthur's hesitancy is well justified, although medieval boys were expected to engage in adult activities earlier than modern boys. Aristocratic males, for example, were generally imagined to be ready for marriage at age fourteen (for girls, age twelve). Military training also began early. William Marshall served as a squire for eight years, during which time he trained for combat; he was thirteen when he entered the service of William, lord of Tancarville (Painter, *William Marshal*, pp. 16–17).
- 108 L: *Wesshed and went to mete.* N: *Thei wesched and went to mete* (line 111). The motif is found in *Emaré*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, and *Robyn Hode and the Potter*. This custom is reiterated in several different ways in courtesy books that advocated teaching children, particularly boys, from a young age, e.g., *The Young Children's Book* from Ashmole 61, *Dame Courtesy* from Ashmole 61 (previously published as *The Babees Book*, ed. Furnivall; see Shuffleton, *Codex Ashmole*, p. 447), etc. See also the texts in Furnivall's edition of *The Babees Book*, including *Aristotle's A B C*, *Urbanitatis, Stans Puer Ad Mensam*, etc., as well as the texts in Johnston, *Medieval Conduct Literature*.
- 115 L: *Ther con a mayde in ryde.* N: *Ther come a maid in ride* (line 118). As often happens in Arthurian narratives, an adventure ensues just as the court sits down to dine (perhaps the best time to catch everyone at home). There is a strong resemblance to Lunete in Chrétien's *Yvain* here.
- 116 L: *And a dwerfe by hir syde.* N: *A dwarfe rode bi hur side* (line 119). The dwarf is a stock character of medieval romance, but this particular dwarf has a name and description of his own. Unlike most medieval dwarves he is more virtuously construed (see notes for lines 130–40 below).
- 118 L: *The may hight Ellene.* N: *The maid was yhote Elyne* (line 121). In *LBD*, the messenger is named *Helie*. Other variations include *Elene* (C), *Elyn* (A), and *Hellen* (P). The line is missing in LI.

- 124–26 L: *She was clothed in tarse, / Rownd and nothinge scarce, / I-pured with blaundenere.* N: *The maiden was clothid in tarsis, / Round and no thing skars, / With pelour blandere* (lines 127–29). References here to *tarse* and *blaundenere* suggest an exotic opulence to Elene's dress. *Tarse* refers to a costly fabric associated with Tharsia, whereas *blaundenere* refers to rich fur, possibly ermine. The dwarf in *Sir Degaré* has a surcoat “forred with blaundeuuer apert” (line 794). Other manuscript variants include *blandere* (N, line 129), *blaunner*, (C, line 117), *blaundyner* (A, line 129), and *Blaundemere* (P, fol. 157v). The line is missing in LI. Editors have found *blaundenere* (L) or *blandere* (N) difficult. The Auchinleck editors of *Sir Degaré* transcribe the word as “blauchener” (line 794), but the manuscript reads “blaundener.”
- 129 L: *Milke white was hir destere.* N: *Mylke white was hur desture* (line 132). According to the *MED*, the term refers to “a riding horse of noble breed, a knight's mount.” Later in the poem, the horse is called a palfrey, a steed more closely identified with women and ordinary riding rather than a steed used for battle, although the terms appear to be used interchangeably in *LD*. The luxurious saddle decorations as well as the milk white color of the horse indicate the high status of both.
- 130 L: *The dwerf was clothed in ynde.* N: *The dwarf was clothid in ynd* (line 133). *Ynd(e)* could be the color of the cloth (indigo) or a kind of cloth associated with India, extravagant and exotic, distinguishing the dwarf as a special envoy from a significantly noble court. The manuscripts do not agree on the color or the fabric of the dwarf's clothing; P clothes him “with scarlett ffine” (fol. 157v). N's “hynd” is probably an error for “ynd.” Mills (*LD*, p. 208–09n121–32) notes the similarity between this description of Theodeley (N's Deodelyne) and the dwarf in the Auchinleck *Sir Degaré*, lines 781–94.
- 132 L: *Stoute he was and pertte.* N: *For he was stout and pert* (line 135). The term *pertte* means “attractive” or “comely,” according to the *MED*. The dwarf here resembles the lady of *Sir Launfal* as described in lines 292 and 294, “Sche was as whyt as lylle yn May . . . He seygh nevere none so pert.” *Stoute* here does not represent portliness but rather strength or courage.
- 135 L: *His surcote was so ryche bete.* N: *His sircote was overte* (line 138). Mills (*LD*, p. 209n126) corrects L with a reading from C, here corroborated by N. The reference is to the *surcot ouvert*. Mills directs readers to Joan Evans, *Dress in Mediaeval France*, frontispiece, pp. 17, 31, and fig. 67 (p. 209n126). A reference to *sorcot overt* also appears in *Sir Degaré*, line 793. This is another instance where N agrees with C and not with L, A, or P (the line is missing in LI); C reads “Hys surcote was ouert”; P: “His cercott was of greene”; and A: “His sircote was yallow as floure.”
- 136 L: *His berde was yelewe as wax.* N: *His berde was as yelow as wax* (line 139). Dwarves play an important part in medieval romance, and not all conform to negative stereotypes of this stock character. Many function similarly to Shakespeare's “licensed” fools as messengers, philosophers, or counselors to the king. Sometimes they are wicked and treacherous as is the dwarf in the Tristan narratives; at other times they are loyal as in Malory's “Tale of Sir Gareth.” Physiognomy, the medieval science of physical form and shape thought to correspond to one's

- intrinsic worth, appears not to apply to these characters. The dwarf in *LBD* and *Wigalois* enters Arthur's court riding on the back of his lady's saddle. Perhaps it is only by coincidence that the dwarf's "yellow beard" matches the color of his lady's hair. However, as Mills notes (see the quotation Mills cites on p. 208n121–32), the dwarf in *Sir Degaré* has hair as "crisp an yhalew as wax" (line 786).
- 137 L: *To his girdyll hange his fax*. N: *To his gurdul [henge] the plax* (line 140). C also reads "To hys gerdel henge the plex" (line 128), once again agreeing with N and opposed to L, A, and P. (See Mills, *LD*, p. 209n128.) According to the *MED*, *plax* refers to braided hair or beard, whereas *fax* refers to the hair of the head.
- 142 L: *Theodeley was his name*. N: *Deodelyne was his name* (line 145). See C *Teandelayn*; A *Wyndeleyn*, P *Teddelyne*. The line is missing in LI. These are the Middle English versions of Tidogolain, the dwarf in *LBD*, who serves Helie, the lady-in-waiting to Blonde Esmeree, the French text's equivalent to the Lady of Synadoun. Vernon J. Harward, Jr., *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance*, places this character within a category he defines as "romance dwarfs," whom he describes as often having characteristics such as "beauty or handsomeness of countenance, excellent proportion of body and limbs, and, twice, [as described in this poem, having] fair hair" (p. 29). Theodeley/Deodelyne is clearly what Harward calls a "petit chevalier" (p. 29). The messenger's name Elyne (the spelling in N) is incorporated into N's spelling of the dwarf's name, *Deodelyne* (italics added). Both dwarf and Elyne function as metonymic surrogates for the Lady of Synadoun, whose messengers they are. Together their attitudes and comments challenge, test, and later confirm the prowess and knighthood of Lybeaus.
- 146–47 L: *Sotill, sawtrye in same, / Harpe, fethill, and crowthe*. N: *Sotil, sawtre in same, / Of harpe, fethil, and crowthe* (lines 149–50). These are the stringed instruments — citole, psaltery, harp, fiddle, and crowthe — that Theodeley/Deodelyne apparently masters, indicating that he is indeed a "petit chevalier" educated in courtly accomplishments pleasing to aristocratic ladies. Music and minstrelsy appear also in the Golden Isle and the enchanted castle of Synadoun. (See Zaerr's discussion in "Music and Magic.") The debt that medieval poetry pays to music is addressed in Strohm and Blackburn, *Music as Concept and Practice*, especially in the section on minstrels and their education (pp. 98–103) as well as the section on instrumental music (see below note 216), "Soft Instruments," pp. 147–56.
- 148–50 L: *He was a gentill boourdour / Amonge ladyes in boure, / A mery man of mouthe*. N here (lines 145–53) appears to have a defective stanza, missing L's triplet. Mills (*LD*, p. 289) notes that L 148–50 are lacking in N, but that they are present in all other versions of the poem (except LI, where this entire section of the poem is missing). These lines, however, carry an almost sexual implication concerning the relationship of the dwarf to women in their bowers, and they appear in neither *Sir Degaré* (see note to line 136 above) nor *LBD*. In other words, the omission in N may be intentional, a way of evading an unnecessary sexual implication.
- 160 L: *Mi lady of Synadowne*. N: *My lady of Synadowne*. The imprisoned heroine of *LBD*, la Blonde Esmeree, the queen of north Wales, is presented by Helie as the "daughter of King Guingras" (line 177). See the note for L, line 1772. Synadoun

refers to the ancient Roman station of Segontium, called later by the Welsh Cair Segeint, Caer Seint, or Caer Aber Seint, at the base of Mount Snowdon in Wales. It became known as Snauedon and later simply Snowdon (see Loomis, “From Segontium to Sinadon,” pp. 526–28). Synadoun was also associated with magic and a history relevant to the curse placed upon the queen. According to the *AND*, a curse inhibited construction on Vortigern’s fortress at Snowdon, which could only be removed by the blood of a fatherless child. His emissaries brought before him Ambrosius (in Nennius) or Merlin (in Geoffrey of Monmouth), who stayed his execution by showing a hidden lake beneath the foundation, where two dragons fought, one white, the other red; the victory of the white dragon, Merlin said, “foretold Vortigern’s eventual defeat” (*AND*, p. 449). In the Welsh *Lludd and Llefelys*, the dragons had been buried there by Lludd. In the *Historia Meradoc*, Snowdon is the capital of Wales, whereas in *LBD*, it is at the base of the Snowdon mountains laid waste by two sorcerers, Mabon and Evrain, until disenchanted by Guinglain, the son of Gawain (p. 449).

- 162 L: *That was of grete valure*. N: *That was of grete honour*. This description appears to refer to the lady and not the prison, since virtue typically resides in human subjects rather than in inanimate objects. The term valor or honor applied to a woman is significant, however, since, according to the *MED*, the term embodies chivalric virtues of “nobility of character,” “spiritual worth,” “courtliness,” “refinement,” “bravery,” “courage,” “physical strength,” “stability,” and “endurance.”
- 164 L: *That is of wer wyse and wight*. N: *In warra that were wyse and wight*. N’s reading “warra” conflicts with L and A, which have “wer” and “were” respectively. C deviates completely, omitting the concept of war, and substituting the line “With herte good and light” (line 155). The line is missing in LI, but P carries forth the idea of war in a much altered line, “For to win her in fight” (line 170 [Cooper]; fol. 157r). Given that the manuscripts disagree, N’s “warra” is a possible variant of *ware* or *wara*. The phrase “in warra” is probably a variant of “on warra,” meaning watchful or alert (*MED*). The line thus describes an alert or keen knight who is both wise and courageous.
- 165 L: *To wynne hir with honoure*. N: *To wyn hur with honour*. In *LBD*, Helie forewarns the Arthurian court that the knight who frees her lady must first accomplish the “Fier Baissier,” the Fearsome Kiss (line 192). Here, in the ME narrative, Lybeaus has no prior knowledge of this expectation and so is taken completely by surprise when the dragon kisses him later.
- 166 L: *Uppe startte that yonge knyght*. N: *Than stert up a yong knyght*. In *LBD*, Arthurian knights hesitate to volunteer for the task, whereas here Lybeaus simply asks first.
- 178 L: *The mayde began to chide*. N: *Than gan Elyne to chide*. Shuffelton calls Elene a “*demoisele mesdisante*, a sharp-tongued maid who never hesitates to voice severe criticism, particularly when the hero engages in something foolhardy” (p. 476 n181). One might consider her to be the prick of Lybeaus’s conscience since she reminds him of his promise to Arthur at crucial points in the narrative.
- 183 L: *lose*. N: *loce*. The term refers to “reputation” or “being known.” The Naples scribe frequently uses *c* and *s* interchangeably.

- 197–200 L: *He shall do bataylles thre . . . At Poynte Perilowse, / Besyde the Chapell of Awntrous.*
 N: *Bataile five othir thre . . . At Poynt Perillous, / Biside the Chapel of Aventours.* Lybeaus has many more fights than predicted by the dwarf (William Selebraunch and his three nephews, two giants, Sir Jeffroun, Sir Otis de Lile, Maugys, and Sir Lambert; before he actually sees the Lady of Synadoun, he must fight Iran and Mabon). Nor does Lybeaus begin his adventures at Poynt Perillous by the Chapel of Adventours. In *LBD*, Tidogolain does not speak or prophesy in this scene. According to Mills, Poynte Perilowse “roughly corresponds to *le Guè Perilleus* of the same episode in BD (323), but the Old French romance makes no mention of the *cause* with which the *Poynte* is presumably identified in L 301” (p. 213). Perhaps its mention here creates a bridge to the French romance and a reminder that Lybeaus is Gawain’s son. According to the *AND*, this is “a treacherous ford in the land of Galloway that no knight dared to cross. Gawain reached it during his travels and tried to jump his horse across it, but his horse jumped badly and dumped him into the river” (p. 401). Lybeaus will win against his opponent(s) here but will experience a river dunking later in the poem. Moreover, “chapel” is as likely to refer to a haunted place or fairy mound (as in *SGGK*) as to an orthodox parish church. The *MED*, in fact, cites this line, (chapele, n5c, “a haunted place, a fairy mound”). According to Shuffelton, “*Antrus* is a corrupt form of the name found in other manuscripts, *Awntrous*, and the Chapell of *Antrus* may be translated as ‘the Chapel of Adventures’” (p. 476n202–03).
- 203–16 The punctuation that Mills provides in his edition to L (lines 207–10) exaggerates the boast to the point of dissembling, as Lybeaus seems to claim experience in mortal combat that he does not yet have. A slight alteration in punctuation, however, makes more sense in context and avoids vilifying the hero. He has *some* training in weapons (see note to lines 90–93 above). The remainder of the passage expresses Lybeaus’s firm conviction that to flee the potentially fatal battle is reprehensible.
- 216–25 L: short stanza. This stanza is missing in L and C, but present in all other manuscripts (N, A, P, and LI). It includes two rather stunning lines quoted in *The Squire of Low Degree*: “Therfore the dwarfe was full wo, / And sayd: ‘Arthur, thou arte to blame. / To bydde this chylde go sucke his dame / Better hym semeth, so mote I thryve” (lines 620–23). The Naples lines spoken by the dwarf are strikingly similar: “Go home and sowke thi dame / And wynne ther thi degré” (lines 224–25). With this particularly insulting remark, the dwarf cuts Lybeaus down to size and manifests the threat to the young hero indicated as well through his association with music. See note 146–47 above.
- 223–28 L: *The mayden for ire and hete / Wolde neyther drynke ne ete. . . .* N: *The maide for noye and hete / Wolde nought drinke ne ete . . .* (lines 232–37). In *LBD*, Helie and Tidogolain leave once Arthur has given his decree, before the meal, so that Lybeaus has to catch up with them later. Here the two messengers remain at the table and do not eat, but all three begin the quest together.
- 227 L: *Tyll the table was raysed.* N: *Til the tabul was unleide* (line 236). Shuffelton remarks that “in medieval halls, the large dining tables were movable boards, taken up and stored after meals to make space for other activities” (p. 476n239).

- 231 L: *Four of the best knyghtis*. N: *Four of the best knyghtis* (line 240). L adds a fifth knight in the arming of Lybeaus, Lawncelett, who gives him a spear (line 258). In L, the first four knights are Gawain, Perceval, Ywain, and Agravain. N's four differ in identity and order, and where L lists Gawayne, Persyvale, Iwayne, and Agfayne (Agravain), N lists Percevale, Gawayn, Ewain, and "Griffayn," and excludes Lancelot (see the note for L240 [N250]). Shuffelton believes that the N, A reading of Gryffayn or Geffreyen is a corruption of Agravain (p. 476n257), and although this is plausible, the name may also be a corruption of Griflet (also known as Girflet or Jaufre). The names connected to Gawain, that is, Perceval and Ywain, may have evoked the name Griflet. For an account of the connections among Jaufre/Griflet and Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain* and *Perceval*, see Hunt, "Texte and Prétexte." Griflet in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is one of the knights killed by Lancelot in his rescue of Guinevere. For a history of Sir Griflet in French and English Arthurian tales, see Reno, *Arthurian Figures*, pp. 133–34.
- 232 ff. L: short stanza. N: *Of the best armour that myght be found* (line 242).
- 235 L: *That in the flome was baptiste*. N: *That in the flem Jourdan was baptist* (line 245). As the passage makes clear, this is a reference to the archetypal baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. The trope is recalled later in the poem when Maugis/Maugus dunks Lybeaus in a river during a battle (see L, lines 1413 ff. and N, lines 1436 ff.).
- 240 L: *To armen him the knyghtis were sayne*. N: *To army him the knyghtis were fayn* (line 250). In *LBD*, the Fair Unknown appears in Arthur's court fully armed. Arthur does not knight the young warrior (he accepts him into his service as a knight of the Round Table), nor do his companions give him arms and weapons. The knights "fayne" named in the following lines are interesting, particularly since Gawain is first on the list and his brother Agravain is also included. In the middle are Perceval and Yvain, two knights arguably made most famous by Chrétien de Troyes; Lancelot is named shortly hereafter as the knight who provides lance and sword. Purdie links this scene in *LD* to the arming scene in *Otuel and Roland (Anglicising Romance*, p. 125 and n111). N, lines 271–72 (C, lines 235–36; L, lines 261–62) thus corresponds to *Otuel and Roland* 312, 315. However, where C, line 232 (L, line 258) recalls *Otuel and Roland* 303 (Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 125n111), N does not. Lancelot does not number among the arming knights in N, A, and P as he does in C and L (the episode in LI is illegible).
- 242 L: *Syr Persyvale*. N: *Sir Perceval* (line 251). In *Sir Perceval of Galles*, Perceval resembles Lybeaus in that he appears in Arthur's court without chivalric upbringing and demands to be knighted; he also subsequently confirms his knightly worth. Ironically Perceval and Gawayn, the knights Elyne would have preferred as champions of her lady, are the first knights to prepare Lybeaus for his quest.
- 244 L: *The fourthe highte Agfayne*. N: *The fourth was Sir Griffayn* (line 254). See note 254 below where a griffon becomes part of the heraldry not found in L.
- 246 L: *They kestyn on him of sylke*. N: *Thei cast on him of sylke* (line 256). The arming scene depicted in L beginning at this line and in N at line 256 is an important set piece of chivalric romance and takes on the symbolic meanings of sacred ritual

and the dressing of a knight or a priest. See Ramón Lull, chapter 6 “The Significance of a Knight’s Arms,” *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, pp. 76–89, a popular text that circulated in England in “numerous manuscripts of French versions” (p. xvi), e.g., St. John’s College, Oxford, Codex 102 (late fourteenth century) and BL MS Additional 22768 (first half of the fifteenth century) and translated with some elaboration into English prose in 1456 by Gilbert of the Haye (the Abbotsford manuscript). For Haye’s version of chapter 6, see pp. xli–xlii. The most memorable literary example in Middle English perhaps is the arming of Gawain in *SGGK*, though Chaucer’s arming of Sir Thopas may be a close second, with its mirror of mockery [CT (VII[(B²)] 857–87]. The attention paid to the description of the arming contrasts interestingly with both the undressing of the enchanted lady and her subsequent redressing as Lybeaus’s bride.

- 254 L: *A shelde with one cheferon*. N: *A schilde with on griffoun* (line 264). Only L varies from the heraldic griffon at this point (but see note for line 93 above). C has *gryffoun* (line 231); A: *gryffyn* (line 267); P: *griffon* (fol. 158v); and LI *griffown* (fol. 4r). Guinglain’s shield in *LBD* has a “lion of ermine” emblazoned on it (line 74). The shield hung around Lybeaus’s neck by Gawain is significant, especially in relation to its emblem. Noteworthy in this regard, as Hahn observes, may be “the fifteenth-century depiction of a coat of arms composed of a green field emblazoned with three gold griffins registered to ‘SIR GAWAYNE *the good knyght*’ (Harleian MS 2169; this is reproduced in *The Ancestor: A Quarterly Review of County and Family History, Heraldry and Antiquities* 3 [1902], p. 192” (*Sir Gawain*, p. 390).
- 257 L: *Sir Percyvale sett on his crowne*. N: *Sir Persevale set on his croun / A griffon he brought with him* (lines 267–68). Gawain has just set a helmet on Lybeaus’s head, and Perceval seems to add a crest in the figure of a griffon, which is also the heraldic animal depicted on his shield. This reference to a helmet crest is unique to N. Helmet crests, although first devised in the twelfth century, became fashionable in the fifteenth (Bradbury, *Routledge Companion to Medieval Warfare*, p. 266). Chaucer appears to ridicule such pretensions in the Tale of Sir Thopas, CT (VII[(B²)] 906–08): “Upon his creest he bar a tour, / And therrinne stiked a lylie flour— / God shilde his cors fro shonde!”
- 260 L: *And a fell fauchone*. N: *And a fel fouchone* (line 270). For a good note on falchions see Ewart Oakeshott’s *European Weapons and Armour* and *The Sword in the Age of Chivalry*. See also Oakeshott, *Archaeology of Weapons*, p. 235, and *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050–1350*, by David Nicolle. The MED defines a falchion as “A large, broad sword with a curved blade, a falchion; also, a short stabbing-sword or dagger.” The Middle English Breton lay *Sir Gowther* features a falchion as a weapon that represents in part Gowther’s identity and prowess. As David Salter puts it in a chapter on the poem, this is a weapon that only Gowther “is strong enough to wield” (*Holy and Noble Beasts*, p. 72).
- 264–66 L: *The knyght to hors gan spryng / And rode to Arthure the kynge / And sayde, “My lorde hende.”* N: *The yong knyght to hors gan spring, / And rode to Arthour the kyng, / And seid: “My lord so hynde”* (lines 274–76). N here agrees with L (and C, lines 241–42). According to Purdie (*Anglicising Romance*, p. 125n111), these lines link

- LD* to *Otuel and Roland*, lines 324–25. Lybeaus departs on the quest here with Elene and the dwarf, whereas in *LBD* he leaves the Arthurian court only with his squire Robert, as Helie and Tidogolain have already left (see note for lines 223–28 above). Throughout *LBD*, Squire Robert assists Li Biaus, but Squire Robert is not a character in *LD*.
- 270–71 L: *Arthur his honde up haffe / And his blesyng him gaffe*. N: *Arthour his hond up hafe, / And his blesyng he him yafe* (lines 280–81). The blessing by the king authorizes the mission. The upraised hand of a monarch with Arthur's authority is significant in itself, but to have a blessing (here more a sanctioning of the mission than a religious blessing) from him indicates his confidence in Lybeaus's ability to carry out his mission.
- 281–82 L: *Faste he gan to chide. / And saide, “Lorell, caytyse.”* N: *Ever sho gan to chide, / And seid: “Thou wrecche, thou caitife”* (lines 291–92). L seems in error here, since Elene is the one who needs to be convinced that Lybeaus is in fact a worthy knight, and since the dwarf has already made his opinion clear, his chiding seems superfluous. Like N, C also attributes the chiding to Elene: “sche be-gan to chyde” (line 258) as does LI, “schee gonue chide” (fol. 4), although in A and P, both Elene and the dwarf combine efforts (“gan thei chyd” [A, line 294] and “they gan to chide” [P, fol. 158v]). Helie also chides at this point in *LBD*.
- 288 L: *He hat Syr William Delaraunce*. N: *William Celabronche* (line 298). William's role as the first major opponent of Lybeaus is unique to the Middle English version of the poem. In *LBD*, Li Biaus's first opponent is Bliobliferis, guardian at the Perilous Ford (see Theodeley's/Deodelyne's “prophecy” earlier) (see note to lines 197–200). Bliobliferis seems to be a crusader; he wears “a silk tunic from the Holy land” over his hauberk (lines 357–58). Li Biaus defeats him and sends him to Arthur's court. However, his three companions, “Elin the fair, lord of Graie, / the strong knight of Saie, / and William of Salebrant” (lines 527–29) encounter him prior to his departure and seek to avenge his defeat. The English romance substitutes the name William Delaraunce/Celebronche for Bliobliferis, and his three companions become three unnamed kinsmen, probably because of the demands of rhyme scheme. “Celebronche” rhymes in N with “stonche” and “honche” and “lonche”; see also below, lines 376–77, where “Celebronche” again rhymes with “lonche.” Later “William” rhymes with “schame” and “St. Jame” (lines 431, 433). “Bliobliferis,” placed in the same rhyming position, would not rhyme so easily in English. As the main opponent, William is given a more expansive role in the ME version. Lybeaus's decision to fight against a knight who has just been described as “a werreour oute of wytt” (L, line 290) suggests Lybeaus's impetuosity and lack of experience in battle, if not in matters of mature deliberation. That he is victorious and does not kill his opponent in this version as he does in *LBD* places greater emphasis on William's importance as a witness to Lybeaus's growing prowess; he is expected to tell his story of defeat when he returns to Arthur's court. Also noteworthy is that *LD* appears in the Percy Folio along with *The Squire of Low Degree* in which there is a reference to Salebraunce, though in the *Squire* the name refers to a chapel where five battles are to be fought rather than to a person: “Than for to do these batayles fyve / At the

- chapell of Salebraunce" (lines 624–25). See Kooper, *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, pp. 127–79.
- 306–07 L: *He bare a shelde of grene / With three lyons of gold shene.* N: *He bare a schilde of grene / With three lions of golde schene* (lines 316–17). Heraldry is part of an elaborate sign system, a means by which knights could be identified even when their faces were covered by a visor and helmet. Colors, animal totems, design features, and other details signify the status, if not the identity, of the knight.
- 309 L: *Of sute lynnell and trappes.* N: *To suche lengels and trappis* (line 319). The sense here seems to be that the device of the lion on William's shield is replicated on the harness and trappings of his horse, a typical medieval practice.
- 314 L: *And sayde, "Welcome bewfere."* N: *And seid, "Welcome, Beauvere."* (line 324). William's familiar greeting seems to suggest that he knew Lybeaus was coming or perhaps that the young knight's distinctive physical features lend him a generic identity, thus prompting a remark akin to "hey, good lookin'."
- 368 ff. L: short stanza. N: *A quarter fille to ground; / Sir Libeous in that stound / In hart he was agast* (lines 379–81). William has sliced away a quarter of Lybeaus's shield. C has a "kantell," which the *MED* (cantel) defines as "A chunk, piece, slice."
- 382 L: *For the love of Mary.* N: *For the love of Seint Marie* (line 395). William's call to the Virgin, the emblem of mercy, suggests his desperation. The act recalls Gawain's plea for aid from the icon of Mary painted inside his shield immediately after which Bercilak's castle appears in *SGGK* (lines 753–62).
- 395 L: *Thou shalt to Artor wende.* N: *Thou schalt to Arthour wynde* (line 408). Shuffelton suggests that "Arthur acts as both a lordly receiver of tribute and as a recording authority or audience who validates the accomplishments of the hero" (p. 477n411). He cites a discussion in Maddox's *Arthurian Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, pp. 14–25.
- 400 L: *Lybeus Disconeus.* N: *Libeous Disconious* (line 413). The iteration of the hero's name in a line of its own calls attention to its significance. The name is repeated at several points in the poem and again at the end, thus trumping the number of times Gyngelain is used (in L, four times including the incipit). Here the stress pattern guiding the pronunciation of the name appears to be Lýbeūs Díscónéus. Contrast with line 423 following.
- 423 L: *Lybeus Disconeus he highte.* N: *Libious Disconious he hight* (line 436). The pronouncement of a name that literally signifies nothing recalls the scene in Homer's *Odyssey* in which Odysseus says his name is "nobody" when asked by the Cyclops who has just stolen his sheep and done injury to him. Medieval writers are not likely to have known Homer's epic poems directly but rather through Virgil's *Aeneid* and its retelling of the Trojan War. The *Lybeaus* poet frequently uses amphibrach (unstressed, stressed, unstressed syllables).
- 428 L: *And eke a well fayre berne.* N: *And eke a wel faire schene* (line 441). The description here is of Lybeaus's squire, who is otherwise not a prominent player in the English version. In *LBD*, however, he has a name (Robert) and an identity

as a squire. That he is also a fair youth is in keeping with the emphasis on Lybeaus's level of maturity and good looks. The squire becomes something of a reflection of his knight. The equivalent line in N describes the lady "schene" who accompanies the knight.

- 430–31 L: *That he hathe made me swere / By his fauchone bryght.* N: *That he hath made me swore / Uppon his bronde bright* (lines 443–44). Chivalric society is dependent upon honor by word as well as deed, hence the importance of oaths. There is also an implicit threat in the falchion/brond.

- 451 L: *His hambrek we will to-rasshe.* N: *We Schul his hauberk of bras* (line 464). The manuscripts disagree on what exactly the three knights will do with Lybeaus's hauberk. They will "to-rasshe" it, which Mills renders "tear to pieces" (L, line 451). P and A have them unlacing his hauberk ("unlace" in both). C does not have this line, and in LI the passage is missing. N's reading "of bras" makes sense, however. William's nephews do not accuse Lybeaus of having a hauberk made of an inferior metal (brass); rather the verb "bracen" can mean to seize or grasp, to impale, or to wrap or fasten together. The sense here suggests that the brothers threaten to "of bras," that is, unravel or break Lybeaus's chain mail to pieces.

- 452 ff. L: short stanza. N: also missing. Appears only in C as follows:

Now lete we Wylyam be,
 Pat wente yn hys jorne
 Toward Artour þe Kyng.
 Of þese knyȝtes þre
 Harkeneþ, lordynges fre,
 A ferly fayr fyȝtyng.
 Pey armede hem full well
 Yn yren and yn stel,
 With-out ony dwellyng
 And leptede on stedes sterne
 And after gon y-erne
 To sle þat knyȝt so yenge.
 (lines 430–41)

- 454 L: *Syr Lybeus that yonge knyght.* N: *Ne Libeous, the gentil knyght* (line 467). While L emphasizes age, N emphasizes nobility.

- 458 L: *Gamen and grete solas.* N: *Game and grete solas* (line 471). It is unnecessary to understand the line as indicating, as Mills does, "a night of love-making" (LD, p. 58), a reading recently repeated by Shuffelton (p. 477n474) and Cory Rushton, "Absent Fathers, Unexpected Sons," p. 145. The innocence of the couple's mirth is evoked by the final line of the stanza, indicating that the dwarf served them "Of alle that worthi was" (L, line 464; N, line 477). For the argument countering the reading by Mills, see Weldon, "Naked as she was bore," pp. 70–71.

- 470 L: *Rydyng from Carboun.* N: *Come ridyng fro Karlioun* (line 483). As suggested by N and the other versions, this is probably Caerleon, a small town in southeast Wales on the River Usk. According to the NAE, Caerleon is a castle important to Arthurian legend "as the place where Geoffrey of Monmouth has Arthur hold

a plenary court, after organizing the conquests made in his first Gallic campaign. Geoffrey may have chosen it simply because it was near his native Monmouth and he had seen the ruins, which in the twelfth century were still conspicuous" (NAE, p. 65).

- 488 L: *That he to-brake Gowers thiegh.* In C and L, the eldest brother is Gower; in A, he is Banerer; in P, Baner; and in N, Gawer (LI has a missing folio here). Also, in C, L, A, and P, Lybeaus breaks the eldest brother's thigh or leg, but in N, Lybeaus breaks his spine: *And brake his rigge bone* (line 500). In general, N presents Lybeaus as more aggressive and violent in his early formative adventures.
- 499–501 L: *Than louge this mayden bright / And seide that this yonge knyght / Is chose for champyon.* N: *Than louge that maide bright / And seid: "This yong knyght / Was wel ychose champioun"* (lines 511–13). That Elene has finally been convinced of Lybeaus's capabilities as a knight is indicated in the sense of relief conveyed in her "louge." That women often provide the encouragement for a knight's achievement can also take the form more traditionally associated with courtly love; the knight becomes a better combatant in arms when he fights for his beloved, at least in theory. Chrétien's *Lancelot* provides a study in how much power a lady (i.e., Guenevere) could have over her champion.
- 518 L: short stanza. N: *Sir knyght, bi Seint John* (line 527). Most probably this refers to John the Apostle, a privileged witness to special events in the Gospels, such as Christ's agony in the Garden. John was known for his ardent temper, and his invocation here would be appropriate in the context of Lybeaus's deadly prowess in his battle with the three nephews of William. See *ODOS*, p. 262. The oath by Saint John at this point in the text appears only in the N, A, P tradition. See also note to line 731 below.
- 581–82 L: *Thei dight a loge of leves, / With swerdys bryght and browne.* N: *Thei made a logge of levys / With swerdis bright and broun* (lines 593–94). The detail of making a lodge out of leaves and swords is not in *LBD*, but using their swords Bevis and Terri build a lodge of leaves for the pregnant Josian in *Bevis of Hampton* (see lines 3621–23).
- 586 L: *And evyr the dwerf can wake.* N: *And ever the dwarfe gan wake* (line 598). N streamlines the narrative here by omitting three lines in the C, L, A, LI, and P accounts, which attribute the dwarf's inability to sleep for fear of theft: L: *That nothinge shulde betake / Here hors aweye with gyle. / For dred he ganne quake* (lines 587–89).
- 597 L: *Be God and be Saint Gyle.* N: *By God and by Seint Gile* (line 606). Giles is the patron saint of cripples, lepers, and nursing mothers (see *ODOS*, p. 211). Saint Giles's shrine was on the pilgrim's route to Compostela. He founded a monastery at Saint-Gilles in Provence (*ODOS*, p. 211).
- 598–99 L: *Lybeous was stoute and fayre / And lepte upon his desteyre.* N: *Sir Libious was stout and gay, / And lepe on his palfray* (line 607–08). In *LBD*, combat with the giants takes place between Blioblérius and his companions Elin of Graie, the lord of Saie, and William Salebrant. Also, after their defeat, the lord of Saie with the wounded Elin

(William has been killed) returns Clarie, the victim of the giants, to her family. In the ME version, Lybeaus takes Violet to her father himself. In Wace's *Roman de Brut*, a giant abducts Eleine, the niece of Arthur's kinsman, Hoel, and he carries her to Mont St. Michel, intending to rape her; she dies in the attempt. Arthur, Bedevere, and Kay interrupt the giant as he is roasting a wild boar on a spit, and Arthur kills him. (See Wace, *Wace's Roman de Brut*, ed. Weiss, lines 11287–560). The story is retold in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, where the giant not only slays a maiden but feasts on children. He has men and beasts roasting on spits when Arthur approaches him, and is more elaborately described in animal terms: "He grenned as a grayhound with grysls tuskes" (line 1075). See the description later of Maugis, who is also cast as a stereotypical subhuman giant. Although this episode is originally found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, subsequent versions elaborated his representation of the giant, who is *not* portrayed in explicitly animal terms despite his animal behavior. Further, Geoffrey of Monmouth's scene of Arthur to the rescue on Mont St. Michel recalls the biblical story of David and Goliath, where the child David defeats the gargantuan threat to the Hebrew nation. One might say that these implications are suggested in every scene of giant slaying in medieval romance. Other exempla include *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Launfal*, *Sir Degaré*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, and *SGGK*; Spenser's Orgoglio is the giant whose defeat moves Redcrosse into eventual recognition as a figure for St. George.

- 603 L: *Two gyauntes he sawe there*. N: *Two jeyauntis he founde at the last* (line 611). See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's discussion of this scene in *Of Giants*, pp. 73–76.
- 604–05 L: *That one was rede and lothelych, / That other black as eny pyche*. N: *That one was blak as picche, / That othir rede and lotheliche* (lines 613–14). There has been considerable debate about whether the color of knights and the giants they fight refers to skin color or the color of armor. (A special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 [2001] contains a number of essays that address matters of race and ethnicity pertinent to a reading of otherness.)
- 607–08 L: *The black helde in his arme / A mayde i-clypped in his barme*. N: *The blake gan holde in barme / A feire maide bi the arme* (lines 616–17). There is an allusion here to Arthur's battle with the rapist giant of Mont St. Michel (see note to lines 598–99 above). In Wace's *Brut* (and in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*), the maiden dies during the giant's assault, and so does not suffer the indignity of rape. In *LBD*, the rape is interrupted, and the maiden does not die (see lines 707–16, p. 45), as is the case in *LD*.
- 609 L: *So bryght as blossom on brere*. N: *Bright so rose in brere* (line 618). This detail alludes to the flower (rose) on a branch in springtime, and evokes conventional female beauty. Although brief, it gestures to the rhetorical *effictio*, an elaborate description of (noble) feminine pulchritude consisting of stereotypical details arranged from head to toe (see Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*). Here the line metonymically suggests the conventional beauty of Violet. Later a similar phrase describes Lybeaus's mother in N: "Hur rode was rede so rys" (line 2234).

- 615 L: *For some man shuld it wit.* N: *For sum man schulde it wete* (line 621). This appears to be a legal term equivalent to “witness.” In English law, witnessing a crime in the making required the witness to call attention to the deed by raising the hue and cry. The maiden’s prayer to “Mary mylde” appears to be gender specific and notable in that way. As patron saint of childbirth, the Virgin Mary seems an odd choice, but, given the sexual nature of the threat and the Virgin’s traditional function as mediatrix, perhaps all the more understandable.
- 626 L: *Hit is no childes game.* N: *It is no childis game* (line 635). According to the author of *Ratis Raving*, a child’s game could include gathering flowers, building houses with sticks, making sailing ships with any available materials, making and dressing dolls or “poppets,” and playing at sword fighting (among others). Many children’s games were enacted in imitation of adult activities, including “war games” played by boys. (See Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children*, especially chapter 5.) Since Lybeaus is still a “child” in terms of his chivalric experience, if not his specific age, depending on which version of the narrative one is reading, the reference here is significant. In L, C, LI, and P this line forms part of Lybeaus’s speech. In N and A, however, the fearful observation that two of these grim foes pose a threat belongs to the narrator, not the hero. The N, A Lybeaus, in other words, appears more courageous and determined and less timid. Also noteworthy is the proverbial nature of the expression. According to Whiting C221 (p. 83), this line and variations on it appear in several ME narratives, including *Otuel and Roland*, *Gregorius*, *Octavian*, *Tottenham*, and old Januarie’s lines in Chaucer’s Merchant’s Tale, *CT* (IV[(E)] 1530–31): “I warne yow wel, / it is no childes pley / To take a wif,” and *Le Morte Darthur*. The use of a related proverb in line 1683 (L) to describe how one of Lybeaus’s opponents rocks in his saddle after their combat emphasizes the connection between chivalric readiness and maturity.
- 643–44 L: *And besought swete Jhesus / Help Lybeus Disconeus.* N: *And bisoughte Jhesus, / That he wolde helpe Libeus Disconyous* (lines 649–50). That Elene prays to Jesus for aid in helping Lybeaus underscores the specificity of the request for divine intervention. Here Mary is not asked to play her traditional role of mediatrix but rather her Son is called upon to intervene. When envisioned in his role as the sword-wielding apocalyptic Christ, this seems an appropriate choice for a knight.
- 646–47 L: *The rede gyaunte smote thore / To Sir Lybeous withe the bore.* N: *The rede geaunt smote thore / To Libeous, with the wilde bore* (lines 652–53). Mills (LD, 218n616–18) links this idea of the giant striking with a roasted boar on a spit to *Wace*, where a giant is roasting a *char de porc*; he sees the passage as perhaps inspiring this event in LD.
- 648 L: *As wolfe oute of wede.* N: *As wolfe that wolde of wede* (line 654). The poet deploys similes rather infrequently, and the repetition of this particular phrase at line 986 in L calls attention to that fact. It may also be calling attention to a trope of the wild beast as a thematic concern of the poem, as well as a reality of medieval life in England. According to a relevant entry in *The Dictionary of Medieval Terms and Phrases*, “there were enough wolves in England during the reign of King John (1199–1216) for a bounty of 5s to be offered for their catching and killing. There are many AS placenames which indicate the presence of wolves, e.g.

Woolley in Yorkshire [*<wolves' + OE leah=wood*] and Woolmer in Hampshire, [*<wolves' + OE mere=lake*]. In 1209 two colts were killed and eaten by wolves in Hampshire. There are also sufficient records of wolves being caught in the king's forests to make it unsurprising that during the 1130s there were full-time royal wolf hunters, with a pack of two dozen hounds and also greyhounds. A wolf-catcher in Worcestershire in the early 13c was paid 3s a year. No records survive to show how many, if any, he caught, or whether indeed there were any wolves left in that part of England. Certainly, wolves were killing deer in the Forest of Dean in 1290s [*sic*]. Wolves appear to have survived in England until the 17c, and longer in Scotland" (ed. Corèdon and Williams, p. 300).

- 657 ff. L: short stanza. N: *The bore was ful hote than; / On Sir Libeous the grece ran* (lines 670–71). The detail of the hot grease causing a wound or pain as well as the extended description of the red giant reaching a height of fifteen feet appears in the N, A, and P tradition only (it does not occur in LI). Mills (*LD*, p. 218n657) compares this scene to one in the *First Continuation of Perceval (Continuations*, ed. W. Roach), where a knight strikes Sir Kay with a bird that has been roasting over the fire (see lines 9373–75).
- 657 L: *To quyte the gyaunte his mede*. N: *To yelde the geaunt his mede* (line 663). The exchange of blows is construed as payback and retribution, literal acts reversed by the notion of redemption. Coming on the heels of a plea for rescue, this line appears to be ironic.
- 662 L: *A tronchon oute he laught*. N: *A tronchon up he caught* (line 680). The giant demonstrates his strength by pulling a fully grown tree out of the ground. As he lifts it to deliver a blow, Lybeaus recognizes an opportunity to prune the limb by which the giant just uprooted the tree.
- 673 L: *In Frensshe as it is ifounde*. N: *In Frenscche tale as it is found* (line 691). Although a convention of romance is to acknowledge a French source, whether or not it is the actual source, this is probably an allusion rather than an explicit reference to *LBD*. Shuffelton, who presumes Chestre to be the author of *LD*, comments: "Though this phrase suggests that Chestre is working directly from a French source, several factors limit the certainty of this interpretation. Several other manuscripts preserve entirely different readings of this line, and it is a common formula used by many other Middle English romances" (p. 477n699).
- 674–75 L: *He that he gave the fyrste wounde, / He servyd hym so aplight*. N: *Tille that othir he went that stound / And servid him aplight* (lines 692–93). The idea of a "first wound" appears only in L. Mills (*LD*, p. 219n643–44) notes that N (C, A, P, LI) makes more sense here than L, which contradicts the earlier slaying of the black giant by suggesting that he had only been wounded by "the fyrste wound" (line 674). Mills argues for the superiority of L, however, by noting the repetition of the tag line in N, lines 690 and 693, "in þat stound" and "that stound," which suggests a scribal error of repetition. He also observes that "Chestre . . . [was] unconcerned to accommodate statements made in one part of his work with those found at another." The possibility of a scribal error with tags, however, does not invalidate the more sensible reading of N (C, A, P, LI).

- 676–77 L: *And then toke the hedis two / And bare the mayden thoo.* N: *Tho he toke hedis tway / And bare ham to that may* (lines 694–95). Lybeaus displays the severed trophy heads to a grateful maiden before sending them to Arthur's court. Cohen's comment is worth noting here: "Following the structure received from the David and Goliath story, the display of the conquered giant's head is often in its simplest terms part of the rite de passage from boyhood to manhood, from mistakes and potential ambiguity into the certainties of stable masculinity" (*Of Giants*, p. 73).
- 690 L: *His name is Syr Anctour.* This line in which Violet names her father is missing in N. Mills's note on Anctour is useful: "The name of this character recalls the Antore who in AM 9751 meets his death at the hands of giants, but in his function he more closely resembles the aged father of Enide (E 375 *in passim*). The corresponding figure in BD [LBD, i.e., *Li Biaus Descouneūs*] is not characterized at all (see 892), but in Platin's *Giglan* he is described as *ancien*, and it seems possible that the name in LD [LD, i.e., *Lybeaus Desconus*] may have arisen from a contracted form of the adjective *anci(e)nor* (? **anciōr* l. ivv) in the OF source. But whatever the provenance of the name it was sufficiently unfamiliar to be replaced by that of Arthur in two of the less reliable texts of LD. . . . This king is also associated with the scene in the version given of it in the *Didot Perceval*, since the giant there waits for the girl's father to set out for Arthur's court, before abducting her" (p. 219n660). According to the entry in the *AND*, Antor (with variations of spelling including Antore, Antour, Anton, and Entor) is "Arthur's foster-father, and the father of Kay, in the Prose and Vulgate *Merlins*, the *Didot-Perceval*, and Tennyson. Robert de Boron seems to have originated the character . . . [where] Antor raised Arthur after Merlin presented him with the child. . . . His character appears in the Post-Vulgate and Malory as Ector" (p. 28). J. D. Bruce suggests that the origin of the name lies in a possible corruption of Arthur, "given the literary tradition of naming children after their foster fathers" (*AND*, p. 28). As Shuffelton notes, "A character with a similar name (Antor, Antour) appears in several Arthurian romances as Arthur's foster father and the father of Kay the Seneschal. See *The Erle of Tolous* (Shuffelton item 19), line 853 and note. Perhaps the name is meant to evoke loose associations of benevolent paternity" (p. 477n716). The name of Violet's father in L is Anctour (line 690) or Antore (C, line 3660), Anter (A, line 716), Antory (LI, line 372), or Arthore (P, line 723 fol. 161v. [Cooper line 72]). The omission in N appears to be an error because later reference is made to Lybeaus donning armor, "That the erle of Auntouris was" (N, line 804). Only C preserves a stanza in which the earl offers Lybeaus his daughter in marriage, which Lybeaus refuses. Mills (LD, p. 220n688–99) argues for the authenticity of this stanza on the basis of content and rhyme scheme. However, in LBD, the maid's name is Clarie, and she is taken back to her unnamed father's castle by the surviving nephews of Blioblteris (the events are different). The passage authenticated by Mills, in other words, may not be authentic at all. It does not appear in the original and exists only in C. Mills (p. 221n688–99) locates the origin of the offer of Violet to Lybeaus in the episode of the gerfalcon in *Erec et Enide*, in which Erec expresses his wish to marry the host's daughter, Enide.

- 691 L: *They clepen me Violet.* N: *Mi name is Violette* (line 709). In a scene that recalls the beginning of the poem, the maiden is asked to identify herself. Unlike Lybeaus she is able to name her father (except in N), and she describes him as “of riche fame” (L, line 686) The name of the lady is unusual, and the only other reference appears to be Violet the Bold, “one of many ladies at King Arthur’s court to fail a chastity test involving a magic goblet” (AND, p. 488). Gerbert de Montreuil, who wrote the continuation of Chrétien de Troyes’s *Perceval*, has a romance called *Roman de la Violette* (c. 1220), where the heroine has a birthmark resembling a violet. Jean Froissart wrote *La plaidoirie de la rose et de la violette*, an allegorical debate between two courtly ladies, one of whom is named Violette.
- 698 L: *Oute of the busshes con spryngē.* N: *Out of a busche gan spryngē* (line 716). The description of Violet’s abduction recalls the abduction of Guenevere by Meleagant, though here it is construed as an ambush done without much premeditation. Mills notes that “Chestre’s account seems to have been influenced by the later scene at the Île d’Or, in which he tells how another black giant (Maugrys) besieges a city to gain possession of a lady (lines 1243–51): this modification makes it seem strange that Vyolette should wander about, so freely and unsuspectingly, on her own” (LD, p. 220n661–66). The idea that a giant lurks in the bushes conventionally associates him with rural, uncivilized, even nonhuman behaviors and values. See the description of Maugis/Maugus below.
- 713–14 L: *To Kynge Arthour in present, / With mekyll glee and game.* N: *To Kinge Arthour, in present, / With moche gley and game* (lines 731–32). The severed heads are sent to the court as proof of Lybeaus’s prowess and growing reputation. The “glee and game” here indicate something of a victory celebration.
- 717 ff. L: short stanza. N: also missing. The passage is supplied here by C:
- The Erl Antore also blyue
Profrede hys doftyr hym to wyue:
Vyolette that may;
And kasteles ten and fiue
And all after hys lyue
Hys lond to haue for ay.
Than seyde Lybeaus Desconos,
“Be the loue of swete Jhesus,
Naught wyue yet Y ne may;
J haue for to wende
Wyth thy mayde so hende.
And therfore, haue good day!”
(lines 688–99)
- 719 L: *Yave him full riche mede.* N: *Gave Sir Libeaus to mede* (line 737). The earl rewards Lybeaus with armor and a horse tested “in tournament and in fyght” (L, line 723). These items are notable for their material value, but also stand as an indication of a formal recognition of Lybeaus’s status as a knight. See note to line 690 above.
- 727 ff. L: The adventure of the knight with the gerfalcon begins here. Compare N, 745 ff. In *LBD*, the adventure with Otis precedes the gerfalcon story. Renaut’s source for his version of the story is the sparrowhawk episode in Chrétien de Troyes’s

Erec et Enide. In *LBD*, Helie, Robert the Squire, and the dwarf spy a castle, Beclues, and on their journey, they come upon a maiden (Margerie) whose lover-knight has been killed. She explains to them the conditions set by the lord of the castle, Giflet (French *Giflés*), son of Do: any maiden who dares take the beautiful sparrowhawk that sits on a golden perch must have a knight willing to claim her to be the most beautiful maiden of all. He will then be challenged by the lord of the castle. The party proceeds to where the sparrowhawk sits, and Li Biaus asks Margerie to take it. The lord of the castle appears with his beloved, Rose Espanie; he defends her position as the most beautiful of women, despite the fact that she is “ugly and wrinkled” (*LBD*, line 1727). Li Biaus defeats him. In *LD*, the hero’s motive for the challenge lies neither in revenge for past personal insult, as in *Erec and Enide*, nor to avenge the wrong committed against a maiden, as in *LBD*, but in Lybeaus’s personal sense of adventure, a motive criticized by the dwarf. Margerie and Robert disappear in *LD*, and decapitation becomes the loser’s reward. Mills (*LD*, pp. 220–21n, L 750–53) contends that decapitation, which makes the episode more forbidding, has been transferred from Renaut’s later episode with Malgiers.

- 731 L: *Suche save he never none*. N: *Suche save he never none* (line 749). Although opulent and marvelous castles are common in romance, Lybeaus’s lack of chivalric experience and his early life in the woods away from Arthur’s court help to explain his awestruck response, “Be Seynt John!” (L, line 733; N, line 751).
- 744 L: *He hathe done crye and grede*. N: *He had do crye and grede* (line 762). The phrase suggests an official and public announcement, here of a challenge to combat.
- 746 L: *A gerfawkon, white as swanne*. N: *A jerefawken as white as swane* (line 764). Possibly the white gerfalcon of Iceland (*MED*), a large hawk used for hunting and much prized. This hunting bird is a substantial reward for what amounts to a beauty contest between Lybeaus’s lady and the lady of his opponent, Jeffron. Like people, birds of prey were often classified in a hierarchical system. According to Richard Almond, “The basic division in the manual is between *hawks of the tower* and *hawks of the fist*, which conveniently corresponds largely to the falcons (*Falconidae*) and the hawks (*Accipitridnae*). The short-winged hawks were more popular with the French whereas the long-winged hawks, generically falcons, were more favoured in England. The latter birds include the peregrine, merlin and hobby, all of which were, and still are, used by falconers to fly at live quarry. *Roy Modus*’s division differs somewhat from the basic classification. He places the peregrine falcon, lanner, saker and hobby as hawks of the tower, whereas the goshawk, sparrow hawk, gyrfalcon and merlin are classed as hawks of the fist” (*Medieval Hunting*, p. 42). This episode of the gerfalcon, while in *LBD*, is likely to have derived from Chrétien de Troyes’s *Erec et Enide*.
- 754 ff. L: short stanza. N: *Ther stont on every cornelle* (line 773). Mills translates C’s “karnell” — “Ther stant yn ech a karnell” (line 737)—as battlement. The word means corner or angle, or the front of a building (*MED*).

- 757 L: *By God and Saint Michelle*. N: *Bi God and bi Seint Mighelle* (line 776). This probably refers to Michael, the avenging archangel and principal combatant against the dragon/devil of Apocalypse. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the Arthurian themes of this narrative, his most famous shrine is Mont Saint Michel, celebrated as a place of divine judgment in *The Alliterative Morte Arthur*, where, according to the *ODOS*, “a Benedictine abbey was founded in the 10th century” (p. 349).
- 761 L: *A lemmen two so bright*. N: *A lemmen two so bright* (line 780). This beauty contest motif is also present in *Sir Launfal* when Tryamour and her ladies are compared to Guenevere (Gwenore) who has insulted Launfal and made a false accusation, thereby necessitating a trial. Because Launfal has broken his pledge of discretion and silence to Tryamour, he is no longer able to call upon her for aid. The outcome of the trial will depend on whether his claim of a lady more beautiful than Guenevere is true.
- 768 L: *Jeffron le Freudous*. N: *Geffron le Frediens* (line 787). All manuscripts have trouble with this name; C: Gyffroun le Fludous (line 772) or Flowdous (line 751); L: Jeffron le Freudous (line 768) or Freudys (line 789); LI: Jeffron le Frondous (fol. 8v); A: Gefferon lefrondeus or lefrendeus (fol. 46r); P: Giffron la ffrandous (fol. 162r), and Cooper, line 802, has Giffron La ffraudeus. In *LBD*, the knight’s name is Giflés, li fius Do (line 1805). Mills notes that “Gyffroun is in himself one of the most polite and reasonable of all the hero’s antagonists” (*LD*, p. 221n785–89). While Jeffron is clearly more chivalrous than the other antagonists, “polite” and “reasonable” are perhaps exaggerations.
- 785 L: *That Er Aunctours was*. N: *That the erle of Auntouris was* (line 804). This refers to the earl Antore mentioned earlier in L, C, and A as the father of Violet but omitted in N. The bestowing of the earl’s armor upon Lybeaus, however, is mentioned at N, lines 736–38, so N’s omission of the earlier passage is likely an error. See note to line 690.
- 794 L: *Come prickande with pryde*. N: *Come prikyng as prins in pride* (line 813). The resonance of this with Spenser’s Redcrosse Knight, who goes pricking across the plain at the beginning of Book 1 of the *Faerie Queene*, is worth noting, though there is no evidence that Spenser knew *LD*. To “prick” means to spur a horse to move at a quicker pace, but also connotes “distress,” “grief,” “gloating,” or “urging to action” as used in the devotional work, *The Prick of Conscience*.
- 805 L: *Ther is no woman so white*. N: *That woman is none so white* (line 824). The color gestures to the conventional *effictio*, the formal rhetorical description of ideal beauty, where “white” signals the delicacy of a woman’s skin rather than its color. Thus the line means “that no woman is as beautiful.”
- 817 L: *In Cordile cité with sight*. N: short stanza. The site is probably Cardiff as is the case with Cardyle in L, line 830. Variant spellings are: Cardelof, Cardull, Karlof, Cardeuyle, Kardeuyle, Kardill, Karlill, Cardigan. Shuffelton speculates that the city is “[p]ossibly Carlisle, in northern England,” but, as Mills argues, the Welsh city of Cardiff is more likely (*Shuffelton*, p. 478n844; *LD*, p. 222n800).

- 837 L: *And hit the mayde Elyne.* N: *And seide to maide Elyne* (line 853). Lybeaus's election of Elene to the role of substitute maiden differs from source and cognate tales. Chrétien's Erec selects his host's daughter, Enide, whom he later marries, as his fair maiden to champion in the contest. *LBD* has the wronged Margerie claim the sparrowhawk for him so that he can avenge her. Lybeaus, however, has neither love nor justice as a motive here; his is a subterfuge that allows him to meet his opponent in combat and utilize chivalry to promote himself and his reputation.
- 850 L: *Thow doste a savage dede.* N: *Nowe is this a wondir dede* (line 866). The wise dwarf in L reminds the still-churlish Lybeaus that this is not what chivalry is supposed to be, whereas in N he reminds Lybeaus that he is not evincing appropriate adult (chivalric) male behavior. Using ladies as tournament prizes undermines the central tenets of chivalry, that is, to honor ladies and fight on their behalf, and to champion their causes, especially if they involve unlawful captivity. This is the damsels-in-distress motif so prevalent in Arthurian romance. This stanza is not in C. N and A draw attention to inexperience and youth, L, to churlishness and madness (*madd hede*, line 853).
- 854 L: *As lorde that will be lorne.* N: *As man that wolde be ylore* (line 870). Despite the apparent similarity between L's "lorne" and N's "ylore," the two words are different. L's "lorne" means "lost," as the dwarf chastizes Lybeaus for acting mad, as someone who is either "lost" mentally or a suicide (running toward certain death). N, however, alters the charge of madness to childishness; the dwarf accuses Lybeaus of juvenile behavior, acting as a schoolboy who has yet to learn something of value.
- 857 L: *And in Bedlem was borne.* N: *That we ne come him bifore* (line 873). L's reference to Bethlehem and the birth of the Christ Child points to an archetypal event that underscores the religious ideals of chivalry, that is, humility and obedience to one's Lord, even when He appears in the body of an infant. This will stand in stark contrast to the necromancers depicted later. Lybeaus's response here indicates his misunderstanding of these chivalric ideals (much akin to Perceval's early misunderstanding of the purpose of the Grail quest) and his sensitivity to the imputation of his prowess.
- 861 L: *The mayde Ellyne, also tighth.* N: *That maide feire and fre* (line 877). Mills (*LD*, p. 222n844–91) notes similarities between this description of Elene and Dame Tryamour in *Sir Launfal*. The description of Elene's attire, ornamentally beautified with precious metals, jewels, and furs, indicates the wealth supporting Elene, perhaps provided by her lady, the queen of north Wales, also known as the Lady of Synadoun. The rest of Elene's attire reflects the "best" of the "empire" she represents, that is, North Wales. L adds to her apparel "a robe of samyte" (line 862), a costly fabric that enhances her appearance even further.
- 885–87 L: *He bare ... gold the bordure.* N: *He bare ... golde was the border, ryngid with floris* (lines 901–03). Although the details differ, both texts offer a depiction of Jeffron's heraldic device; heraldry and its emblems were an important means by which identity could be ascertained when a knight was unknown and his face was

covered by a visor. The description of the shield, like the description of the ladies' attire, typically signals allegiance to a court and kinship group. Its obvious display of material wealth suggests the high standing of the knight in his relation to the court. See notes to lines 93 and 254 above.

- 898–99 L: *A lady proude in pryde, / Iclothed in purpyll palle.* N: *A lady ful of pride, / Yclothid in purpul palle* (lines 914–15). The description of Jeffron's lady differs somewhat from the description of Elene. Jeffron's lady wears purple, while Elene wears white. In her edition of *LBD*, Karen Fresco adds that “purple was a rare and costly fabric, probably made out of silk imported from Tyre and Alexandria. It came in several colors and seems to have been worn by royalty. In *LBD* only Blonde Esmerée, a princess, wears *popre*” (p. 393n3279). In *LD* there is also an elaborate description of the lady's rosy complexion and her blond hair, “as gold wyre shynynge bryght.” Blond hair is considered desirable in ladies of medieval romance in general, but in the French version hair color is particularly important as indicated by the name of *LBD*'s Lady of Synadoun, that is, la Blonde Esmerée. For a classical medieval description of idealized female beauty, see Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, pp. 36–37.
- 912 L: *Hir browes also blacke as sylke threde.* N: *Hur browys as silken threde* (line 928). Well-shaped, clearly separated, and darkly colored eyebrows were considered a sign of beauty, as were gray eyes, milky white complexion, and an elongated “swyre,” that is, neck. A woman's eyebrows, if not separated but rather as one continuous growth across the forehead, were considered a sign of sexual promiscuity. There is an interesting contrast to be made with the later description of the eyebrows of the Saracen giant Maugis.
- 930–31 L: *Ellyne the messangere / Ne were but a lawnder.* N: *Elyne the mesynger / Nas but a lavender* (lines 946–47). When it becomes apparent that Elene cannot win this beauty contest, an unflattering comparison to a laundrywoman ensues. In *Erec et Enide*, the sparrowhawk contest over the most beautiful woman resides less in the relative merits of each woman and more in the power of love to influence the judgment of lovers. Renaut takes this idea to an extreme in that Giflet's damsel is truly ugly, so that there is no real contest between her and Margerie; instead, Renaut's narrator marvels at how “love could so disturb his judgment . . . for Love makes the ugliest woman seem a beauty” (lines 1731, 1734). In *LD*, by contrast, the contest is real, and onlookers declare that Elene, though fair, is much less beautiful than Jeffron's maiden. Unlike Jeffron (or Erec or Giflet), however, Lybeaus is not in love; only pride motivates him here. This is the first of two or three episodes that project weakness or bad judgment by the hero (see note to line 837 above). The mistaken motives are also marked by Lybeaus's severely violent defeat of Jeffron, who has his “rigge tobrike” (N, line 1006; L, line 990, “Geffrounes backe to-brake”), the same excessive result of violence inflicted upon one of William's nephews earlier, so that he has to be carried to town on his shield. Shuffelton notes that “In comparison to other versions of this motif, the outcome here is surprising. Usually the hero's lady is judged more beautiful, prompting a combat to settle the dispute. Though Elyne has been described as *bryght*, *schene*, and *sembly* (lines 120–32), perhaps her beauty is

- downplayed here so that Lybeaus's attempt to win the falcon seems all the more rash" (p. 478n953).
- 944 L: *Magré thyne hede, hore* (so, too, C, line 915). N: compare line 960. In agreement with L, C has "*Maugre thyne heed hore*" (line 915) and LI, "*Maugre thy berd hore*" (Cooper line 513; fol. 8v), whereas in agreement with N, P has "*Maugre thy head indeed*" (Cooper line 978; fol. 163r) and A, *Thoff thou be wroth therforn* (line 971); LI, C, and L imply that Geffron is an older or an old man, which does not make sense here.
- 951–52 L: *Her shaftis brosten asondre, / Her dyntis ferden as thonder*. N: *Here schaftis brake in sondir, / Hare dyntis fyrde as dondir* (lines 967–68). The sound and fury signifies the intensity of this confrontation between the brash young upstart and his experienced opponent.
- 960 L: *This yonge frely freke*. N: *So this yonge freke* (line 976). The description here likely is more positive than it appears to be to modern readers since "frely freke," according to the *MED*, denotes the fair, noble, freeborn knight rather than the more negatively construed modern word for one who resides outside the norm in terms of appearance or behavior, that is, "freak."
- 967–68 L: *As Alysaunder or Kyng Arthur, / Lawncelot or Syr Percevalle*. N: *As Alexaundre or Kyng Arthour, / Launselake or Persevale* (lines 983–84). The comparison to these particular figures, all of whom had similar childhood experiences and a distinctive fearlessness in combat, underscores one of the central themes of romance, that is, that even those fairly unknown can acquire a legitimate place in the annals of literary history, if not history itself. The *enfances* of LD is often compared to the *enfances* of Sir Perceval of Galles; both are examples of the fair unknown motif and both men come to Arthur's court knowing little of chivalry. That all these historic icons are products of a traumatic or atypical childhood appears to be a prerequisite of transformation in narratives of heroic triumph.
- 986 L: *As wolfe that wolde at wede*. N: *As a man that wolde of wede* (line 1002). The shift from wolf to man signals recognition of a proverbial expression and alters the more typical and negative aphorism of a wolf in sheep's clothing. (See note for line 648.)
- 1000 L: *Was borne home on his shelde*. N: *Geffron in his schilde / Was ybore out of the filde* (lines 1015–16). Carrying bodies off the field using a shield as a stretcher is an ancient practice, maybe one reason shields were designed to be as large as possible. See also note for line 488.
- 1003 L: *By a knyght that hight Cadas*. N: *Bi a knyght that hight Clewdas* (line 1019). This may refer to Cadoc the king who "fought in a Castle of Maidens tournament, where he was defeated by Gawain's son Guinglain" in Renaut's version (AND, p. 93, s.v. "Cadoc"). In A, this character is named Lucas; other variants are Gludas (C), Caudas (LI), and Chaudas (P).
- 1011–13 L: *He hathe sent me . . . he fyrst byganne*. N: *He hath sende me . . . Sithe he furst bigan* (lines 1027–29). Arthur's recognition of Lybeaus's deeds vis-à-vis the "trophies" he sends back to the court points to the central tenet of feudal relations, that is,

the king's duty to reward his knights and the knight's duty to fight on behalf of the king. Lybeaus has fought, at this point, William, his three nephews, two giants, and Jeffron: seven opponents in four battles.

- 1019 L: *Kardill towne*. N: *Karlille toune* (line 1035). This refers to Carlisle, the chief residence of King Arthur, or perhaps Cardiff. See note for line 817.
- 1034–35 L: *For youre frely sale: / Hit blowis motis jolelye*. N: *Fer yere ferly falle! / Sir Otis hit blewe, de la Ile* (lines 1050–51). The dwarf, presumably speaking to Elene, recognizes the sound of the horn as coming from the vicinity of Synadoun, thus signaling the company's progress. This marks the beginning of the episode with Sir Otis de Lile (or de la Ile), once a loyal servant of the Lady of Synadoun, who has since abandoned her to her fate. As Mills notes, this name is equivalent to Orguillous de la Lande, the huntsman knight of Renaut's *LBD*, line 1486, whose name translates to "Proud Knight of the Glade." In *LBD*, the story of the hunter (*li venere*) and the brachet takes place before the adventure of the sparrowhawk. Clarie, the maiden rescued from giants by Li Biaus, catches up with him and his party. They spy a stag followed by hunting dogs with a small brachet trailing behind. Clarie picks up the brachet, saying that she will take the dog to her lady, when the hunter rides up and demands the return of his brachet. In this version, Li Biaus attempts to persuade Clarie to return the brachet, but she refuses, and at this point the hunter conspires to take the dog back by force. One might compare this situation to Malory's Torre and Pellinore, a section in which knights go out to claim hounds or deer that belong to someone else, resulting in deaths and destruction that call into question the tenets of chivalry. In *LD*, the hero seems more at fault for having given Elene the brachet himself and therefore he is completely responsible for refusing to return it to Otis, once more placing himself in the wrong. In *LBD*, Orguillous de la Lande attacks Li Biaus alone, whereas in *LD*, Sir Otis later waylays Lybeaus with a host of knights; this proves to be his most difficult combat yet, one in which he is seriously wounded. Mills (p. 226n1009) points out that the name in *LD* may derive from Duke Otus, who in *Guy of Warwick* is Guy's entrenched enemy.
- 1040 L: *West into Wyralle*. N: *West into Wirale* (line 1056). This refers to what was known as the Wilderness of Wirral, a forested area northwest of Liverpool, next to Wales. Gawain finds himself in the "wyldrenesse of Wyrale" (line 701) in *SGGK*.
- 1042 L: *They sawe a rache com renyng*. N: *Ther come a rache rennyng* (line 1058). Unlike the greyhound bred to hunt by sight, this breed of dog hunts by scent.
- 1047 L: *He was of all coloures*. N: *For he was of alle colours gay* (line 1063). Although N indicates the variegated colors of the canine, "of alle colours gay," missing from this short stanza are the lines that complete the description, "That man may se of floures / Bytwene Mydsomer and Maye" (L, lines 1048–49).
As Mills (*LD*, p. 227n1021–23) suggests, the description of the brachet may reflect the multicolored Peticrewe in *Sir Tristrem*: "He was rede, grene and blewe" (line 2404), although in that narrative the animal is not a hunting dog but a lap dog presented to Duke Gilan of Wales by one of the goddesses of Avalon. The bell around its neck was thought to bring happiness to the owner of the dog,

- hence Isolde, in her efforts to be as unhappy as Tristan, rips it off. Lybeaus's chasing of the diminutive canine recalls a similar episode in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, only there the attention-getting whelp leads the dreamer to a grieving knight (lines 386–449). References to this particular breed of dog appear also in other notable ME romances (see Lupack, *Lancelot of the Laik* and *Sir Tristrem*, pp. 224–25, lines 2399–2420).
- 1048 L: *That man may se of floures*. This line is missing in N, but the sense survives there without it, namely that the many colors are those nature brings forth between Midsummer and May (see below).
- 1049 L: *Bytwene Mydsomer and Maye*. N: *Bitwene Mydsomer and May* (line 1064). Midsummer, usually in June, marked a time of festive celebration of the longest day of the year.
- 1083 L: *Quod Sir Otis de Lile*. N: *Quod Sir Otis de la Ile* (line 1098). Mills identifies this name as equivalent to l'Orguillous de la Lande, the huntsman knight of *LBD*, line 1486 (Mills, *LD*, p. 236; Fresco, p. 88). The name may also refer to the treacherous Duke Otoun in *The Stanziac Guy of Warwick*. In A, this character is named Otys de la Byle. See note to line 1034 above.
- 1088 L: *Chorle*. N: *Chourle* (line 1103). The use of *churl* here suggests Lybeaus's own lack of training in the finer points of courtesy. He resorts to name-calling to which Otis responds with verbal indignation and an identification of just who his parents were, that is, "My fader an erle was . . . the countesse of Carlehillie, / Forsothe, was my dame" (lines 1092–93). Shuffelton notes that "Rate's spelling of the insult, *carle*, and the place name, *Carlehyll* has created a little joke here, perhaps inspired by another Middle English romance, *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*" (p. 478n1120).
- 1108 L: *Rode home to his toure*. N: *Rode home in that schoure* (line 1123). N's phrase is a variation of "a god schoure," that is, quickly.
- 1117–18 L: *Though he were the grymmer grome / Than Launcelet de Lake*. N: *Though he were also stronge / As Launcelet de Lake* (lines 1132–33). The comparison here is interesting, since Lancelot is known as much for his fierce loyalty and devotion to Guenevere as he is for his fierceness in battle. So too the term refers to Lybeaus's immaturity. The *MED* defines *grome* as ranging in meaning from "infant" to "boy" to "young man" as well as social ranking: "A man of low station or birth; also, a worthless person."
- 1146 L: *arblast*. N: *areblast* (line 1161). This is a synonym for a crossbow as well as a term for the missile discharged from the weapon.
- 1153 L: *This is the devyll Satan*. N: *Here comyth the devil Satan* (line 1168). Another example of misidentification and name-calling; this name is often used in romance to describe giants, heretics, and pagan others.
- 1161 L: *For twelve knyghtis, all prest*. N: *Twelve knyghtis prest* (line 1176). There is a distinct imbalance between opposing sides here.

- 1179–80 L: *Lybeous slowe of hem three, / The fourthe begon to flee.* N: *And four awey gan fle* (line 1194). N omits a line here and changes the text so that *four* flee rather than the *fourth*.
- 1183 L: *And his sonnes foure.* N: *And his sonnys fowre* (line 1197). Mills notes that “the huntsman’s sons are not mentioned in any of the cognates,” and he cites a similar passage in *Bevis of Hampton*: “Two ffosters he smote adowne / Wyth the dynte of hys tronchon / vi he slewe at dyntys thre / And odur vi away can flee” (LD, p. 229n1153–58). Shuffelton observes that “The appearance of Sir Otys’s sons is not otherwise mentioned, and seems an afterthought on the part of Chestre” (p. 478n1210).
- 1186 L: *He one agaynes fyve.* N: *He alone ayenst fyve* (line 1200). The imbalance between oppositions heightens the degree of aggression and makes the next line — *Faughte as he were wode* — necessity rather than the hyperbole typical of chivalric romance. As the scene suggests, getting into a state of battle frenzy enables Lybeaus to overcome the inequity. He is even able to kill three horses, one stroke each. In this instance, Lybeaus does not balk at being outnumbered, as he did when faced with two giants.
- 1194 N: Short stanza. See L, lines 1180 ff.
- 1202 L: *Bothe mayle and plate.* N: *Throwe helme and basnet plate* (line 1216). That Lybeaus is able to cut through chain mail or helmet as well as steel-plated armor suggests his extraordinary strength. Just as Havelok the Dane demonstrates his manpower in feats of strength that later enable him to reclaim his patrimony and avenge the death of his sisters, so too Lybeaus demonstrates his martial prowess. Havelok, unlike the others, goes through a number of contests literally designed to test his strength as a man, not as a knight. He is also described as taller than other men.
- 1217 L: *Under a chesteyne tree.* N: *Undir a chesteyne tre* (line 1231). As Mills aptly observes “the submission of one character to another under a (chestnut) tree occurs in a number of romances. Sometimes the dominating character possesses supernatural powers, as in *Sir Gowther*. . . where a fiend begets a child on a lady; sometimes both characters are human, as in *Le Bone Florence*” (LD, p. 230n1189–94). Other romances in which this motif may be found include *The Erle of Tolous*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *Sir Orfeo*.
- 1247 N: short stanza. See L, lines 1233 ff.
- 1263 L: *Kynge Arthur had gode game.* N: *Kyng Arthour had good game* (line 1274). Arthur’s delight in storytelling prior to sitting down to a meal is extended to his reception of prisoners. The submission and recounting of the narrative and the knight responsible for the defeat contributes to Lybeaus’s burgeoning reputation, a necessity for a knight who needs to prove himself. Lybeaus’s growing list of credentials convinces the king that he has chosen wisely. This is the first instance where Arthur and the court recognize Lybeaus as an accomplished knight of the Round Table.

- 1269–71 L: *Nowe rest we here a while / Of Sir Otys de Lyle / And tell we forthe oure talis.* N: *Rest we nowe a while / Of Sir Otys de la Ile / And telle we of othir talis* (lines 1280–82). As is typically found in tail-rhyme romance, these lines mark a transition from one episode to the next.
- 1273–74 L: *And sey awntours the while / And Irlande and in Wals.* N: *In Cornewaile and in Walis* (line 1285). Requisite adventures for the aspiring knight are suggested here. Although crossing the Irish Sea is not a formidable challenge to the resourceful knight, the link between these two Celtic kingdoms is a feature of Arthurian literature, particularly the Tristan thread. Both N and A place Lybeaus's adventures in Cornwall and Wales, whereas P has him in England and Wales. L and C place him in Ireland and Wales. A journey to Ireland would take Lybeaus out of his way, and there is no such itinerary in any of the sources. Mills, following Schofield, sees the reference to Ireland as a misunderstanding of a source passage, suggesting that C and L represent the author's line (*LD*, p. 231n1222–24). N, A, and P, however, place Lybeaus within the conventional settings for Arthurian adventures and offer a more reasonable and typical area of sojourn rather than an extended period of quest such an Irish journey would require. See also the note for line 1479 below, where N also reduces the amount of time Lybeaus spends with Dame Amoure / Diamour. These are examples of N (and often A, P) revising or correcting the excesses of the other manuscripts' details (see Mills, "Mediaeval Reviser").
- 1276 L: *Whan fenell hangeth al grene.* N: *Whan levys and buskis ben grene* (line 1287). L's specific reference to fennel refers to a perennial plant described in one of the quotations in the *MED* as having a "double manner of kynde, wilde and tame" (p. 487). Although less specific, N, too, marks a shift in the narrative with a shift in seasons, when leaves and bushes were green; see Malory's opening of "The Knight of the Cart" and "Slander and Strife" in *Le Morte Darthur*.
- 1280 L: *And notis of the nyghtyngale.* N: *Of the nyghtingale* (line 1291). Nightingales have long been associated with pivotal moments in romance narrative. In Marie de France's *Laiistic*, the songbird provides an excuse for the lovers to communicate at night. When the jealous husband discovers the ruse, he kills the bird and throws its body at his wife, staining her white chemise with blood. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (Book 2, line 918), the nightingale sings outside Criseyde's window as she dreams of the white eagle who steals away her heart. There the mirage is ominous in that it recalls the allusion to the myth of Philomela and Procne at the outset of the fated day (Book 2, lines 64–70).
- 1290 L: *Men clepeth this Il de Ore.* N: *Men clepith hit Il d'Ore* (line 1301). Literally the Isle of Gold or Golden Isle, this place appears in *LBD* as the island replete with a castle belonging to the Maiden of the White Hands (la Pucele as Blances Mains); in *LD*, the castle belongs to Dame Amoure/Diamour, whose name evokes the seductive love she will later proffer Lybeaus.
- 1291 L: *Here be fightis more.* N: *Ther hathe ybe fighting more* (line 1302). P (line 1337) reads: "There hath beene slaine knights more" (fol. 165v, line 1337 in Cooper).

- 1296 L: *A gyaunt that heght Maugys*. N: *A gyaunt that hat Maugus* (line 1307). The corresponding figure in *LBD* is Malgiers li Gris, a knight who guards the fantastic castle, l'Isle d'Or, the Golden Isle (line 1930) and who is the suitor of the enchantress la Pucele as Blances Mains, the Maiden of the White Hands (line 1941). La Pucele has promised to marry him if he can defend the causeway that leads to the castle:

The maiden had decreed that any knight who could defend her island for seven years, against any knight who passed that way, could marry her. Malgier set his sights on accomplishing the goal, although he was so loathsome that the Maiden would have found some way to get out of the marriage anyway. After five years, he had killed 140 knights and seemed undefeatable, but he was finally killed by Gawain's son Guinglain. (AND, p. 340)

Malgiers has defeated all would-be suitors and placed their helmeted heads on stakes before the causeway. Although he is an evil knight ("fel, cuvers et mals / mais trop ert plains de mautalans" [cruel, base, and wicked, / a faithless scoundrel]) (lines 2035–36), he is not, like Maugis, a Saracen giant. Mills assumes that the author has confused Malgiers li Gris with "the typical Saracen giant of heroic romances" (*LD*, p. 232n1243–48). This may not be a matter of confusion. Maugus does resemble stock Saracen giants, who are racially distinct. Maugus is called a "devil so blak" (N, line 1374), as is the Saracen giant in *Octovian Imperator*, which, like *Sir Launfal*, has been attributed to Thomas Chestre. The giant in *Octovian Imperator* does not wear black armor, but he has "blake yghen" (line 935), is similarly associated with animal traits, and has an inhuman height: "He was of lengthe twenty feet" (line 925). Giants in medieval romance are also associated with "unbridled lust," functioning as emblems of lower or bestial human aspects (Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, p. 209). This reinvention of Maugus, then, may have to do with the parallel shift in the characterization of the lady of Il d'Or. In *LD*, she is a malevolent enchantress who sidetracks Lybeaus from his true quest to rescue the Lady of Synadoun, while in *LBD* la Pucelle is a benevolent sorceress who helps him. It is generically and aesthetically appropriate, therefore, for an evil enchantress to have a Saracen giant associated with lust to challenge Lybeaus. The combination of evil enchantress and stock evil giant, then, brings two conventional villains to bear on Lybeaus, whereas Li Biaus fights a combatant who turns out to be another suitor and thus a competitor for la Pucele's affections. The name "Maugys/Maugus" has eluded modern scholarship, though the *chanson de geste* hero Maugis bears some kinship to the Maugus of *LD*. Maugis belongs to the Charlemagne stories of France, and his family exploits are contained in what is known as the "Renaud de Montauban cycle" of tales. Maugis or Maugris was a foundling raised by the fairy Oriane; he became a great enchanter, learned in both white magic and the black arts. Later, he becomes the lover of the enchantress/fairy Oriane. At one point, Maugis dons Saracen arms. Maugus in *LD* similarly has Saracen arms and battles in the service of an (evil) enchantress. The Middle English author may have imported and adjusted his material in order to develop his version of the *LBD*, especially his adjustment of the alliance between the "Saracen hero" Maugus and the malevolent Diamour.

- 1305 L: *He is thirty fote on leynthe.* N: *He is furti fote longe* (line 1316). As Mills notes, “the description of Maugys’s size . . . makes his fighting on horseback unexpected.” He remarks, moreover, that Chestre “was not wholly consistent in remodelling Malgiers on the lines of a Saracen giant” (*LD*, p. 233n1291–93). Perhaps this giant is more akin to Ascopard in *Bevis of Hampton*, who begins as a supporter of Bevis and Josian but becomes a traitor later in the narrative. Also, Amoraunt, the giant in *Guy of Warwick*, may be alluded to in this recharacterization. Only N has Maugus’s height as forty feet, clearly exaggerating his gigantic size in order to develop the stock Saracen villain. A’s Magus (the name is perhaps a play on the Latin word for magician, *magus*) is “thryty fote longe” (line 1331): P reduces his height to “20 ffoote of length” (line 1351, fol. 165v). The line is missing in LI.
- 1317 ff. L: missing stanza. N: *And so is he grymly, / As Y telle thee, wittirly. / He is also grete / As is an ox or a kowe . . . Or as grete as any nete* (lines 1328–33). Mills (*LD*, p. 232nL1316) notes that this stanza, which expands the giant’s description, appears only in A and N. It follows the typical elaboration of comparisons to animal traits common to stock giants in medieval romance. See note 1305 above. A, however, introduces an ass and a cow as beasts scarcely able to draw Maugis’s cart of equipment. N, by way of contrast, introduces animals as comparisons to the giant; Maugis is as large as an ox, a cow, or any “nete” (ox). The Naples text, then, emphasizes animal characteristics, and we might say that the poet “transforms” Maugis by moving him in the direction of the bestial, which is perhaps intended to link him more firmly to the Circean Dame Amoure/Diamour.
- 1331 L: *That men calleth Ile Dolour.* N: *That men clepith Il d’Ore* (line 1354). L seems to veer away from the original name of the island to suggest perhaps its dark side, a cause of human pain and sorrow, but N repeats the name of the Golden Isle in anticipation of Lybeaus’s encounter with the sorceress, Dame Amoure or Diamour, who dwells there. In *LBD*, the Isle d’Or is an enchanted island with a fabulous castle where la Pucele lives.
- 1337 L: *Thre mawmentis therin wes.* N: *Four mawmetts therin was* (line 1360). ME romance often represents Saracens as idol worshipers. Mawmetts are pagan idols. The word comes from Old French *Mahomet*, a corruption of Mohammed, whose name thus became synonymous with “idol.” A and N characteristically enhance the stock, villainous nature of Maugis, here increasing the mawmetts on his shield from three to four; so too, C, line 1275.
- 1343 L: *Tell me whate arte thoue.* N: *Telle me whate art thoue* (line 1369). In *Ywain and Gawain*, Colgrevance tells a story in which a peasant asks him, “What ertow, belamy” (line 278), and later King Arthur asks Ywain the same question, “What man ertow?” (line 1341). Such questions in medieval romance foreground the theme of chivalric identity, and therefore Lybeaus identifies himself here as an Arthurian knight. His full identity, his true name and parentage, is later revealed in stages by Sir Lambard, the Lady of Synadoun, and (in N, A only) Lybeaus’s mother.

- 1353–54 L: *Syr Lybeus and Maugis / On stedis proude in prise*. N: *Maugis on fote yode, / And Libeous rode to him with his stede* (lines 1376–77). L and C present Maugis on horseback, which, as Mills (*LD*, p. 233n1291–93) notes, is unlikely given his size. A, N, P place Maugis on foot, thus eliminating the inconsistency. See also Mills, “Mediaeval Reviser,” pp. 13–14.
- 1363 L: *That levyd on Turmagaunte*. N: *That levyth on Termagaunt* (line 1386). Termagaunt is the name of another pagan god sometimes said in ME romances to be worshiped by Saracens.
- 1375 L: *That his shelde fell him froo*. N: *That his swerde fille him fro* (line 1398). A, N agree that Lybeaus loses his sword here, whereas L, C, P have him lose his shield at this point in his fight with Maugis, which later proves inconsistent. Since Lybeaus reaches for an ax as a weapon in the next stanza, it seems reasonable that he has lost his sword. N omits the detail of the ax’s location found in A, C, L, and P (the stanza is missing in LI); e.g., “That henge by his arsowne” (L, line 1384).
- 1378 L: *And smote Lybeous stede on the hede*. N: *And hit Libeous’ stede on the hede* (line 1401). Horses die as frequently as the knights they carry in this romance. Lybeaus will retaliate against Maugis’s horse by driving his ax “Through Maugis stede swyre” (L, line 1386). The killing of a knight’s horse may be read as a symbolic act, indicting that in chivalry equine lives are also at risk.
- 1383 L: *And an ax hent ybowne*. N: *An ax he hent ful sone* (line 1406). Note that here N once more presents a more coherent text; where L, C, and P have Lybeaus smite off the head of Maugis’s horse (which he is too large to ride), N has him aim at Maugis’s neck, missing, and striking the giant’s shield instead so that it flies away, thus remaining consistent to the idea that Maugis fights on foot and not on horseback. Maugis is depicted in A as losing only a piece of his shield. Later, however, Lybeaus runs to recover that shield: N’s version presents the more credible adventure.
- 1395–96 L: *From the oure of pryme / Tyll hit were evensonge tyme*. N: *From the owre of the prime / Til it was evesonge tyme* (lines 1418–19). It was customary for fighting to cease at evensong or vespers.
- 1399 L: “*Maugis, thine ore.*” N: “*Maugis, thyne ore*” (line 1422). Combat would seemingly have few rules, but there are still common courtesies to be expected. Here Lybeaus requests a moment to refresh himself with a drink of water, after which Maugis “smertly hym smytte” (L, line 1412). Maugis’s unchivalric action endorses the medieval stereotype of the Saracen giant.
- 1422 L: *I shall for this baptyse*. N: *Y schalle for thi baptise* (line 1445). The irony of this retort suggests the symbolic meaning of Lybeaus’s refreshment. Like Spenser’s Redcrosse Knight, his strength has been renewed by water from the well (or stream). Mills’s remark expands the allusion to a scene in *Guy of Warwick* in which the eponymous hero battles the giant Amoraunt: “Guy agrees [to allow Amoraunt to drink from the river] and Amoraunt quenches his thirst, but later denies Guy permission to do the same unless he discloses his identity to him. But even when he has done this, Amoraunt refuses to let him go, and he has to make

a dash for the river. While he is drinking he is knocked into it by the giant, but he quickly recovers, curses the giant for his treachery, and says that although ‘baptized’ by Amoraunt, he does not owe his name to him” (*LD*, p. 234n1333–62). The reference to “baptism” is found in the Anglo-Norman *Gui* and in the ME texts of *Guy* found in manuscripts Caius 107 (8514–17) and CUL MS ff.ii.38 (8265–68) (Mills, *LD*, p. 234n1333–62). The allusion to baptism is not in the *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*, however.

- 1445 L: *jepowne*. The jupon (gipon) may refer to the tunic worn under the breastplate, but more likely here it designates his surcoat bearing his coat of arms worn outside chain mail and breastplate. See *OED*, jupon, n. 1.
- 1449–50 L: *The gyaunte this ganne see / That he shulde slayne bee*. N: *The giaunt gan to se / That he schulde yslayne be* (lines 1472–73). Mills (*LD*, p. 235n1384–94) observes a close correspondence between this scene and the scene in *Octovian Imperator* where Florent kills the giant Guymerraunt (in the *Northern Octavian* the giant’s name is Arageous or Aragonour).
- 1462 L: *la Dame Amoure*. N: *Diamour* (line 1484). La Pucele in *LBD*, this lady’s symbolic name literally means Love in L, but in N perhaps it is more akin to Duessa in *The Faerie Queene*. A, C, and P retain the image of “whiteness” found in *LBD*: A, line 1498, “That lady was whyte as flower;” C, line 1399, “A lady whyt as flowr,” added to N here to retain the sense, and P, line 1507, “A Ladye white as the Lyllye flower.” L and LI mention only that she is “bright” (L, line 1461; LI, line 694). It seems likely, therefore, that N would have retained the image of whiteness captured in A and P. As Maria Bendinelli Predelli (*Bel Gherardino*, p. 235) suggests, whiteness conventionally marks noblewomen as fitting objects of knightly love, and the phrase “white as flower” or “white as lily flower” is merely a chivalric stereotype. However, it may be a direct echo of *LBD* or a similar version, where “whiteness” is a significant attribute of la Pucele, figured not only in her name but in her description (see lines 2238, 2403–10): her whiteness, too, is compared to a lily flower — “Mains ot blances con flors de lis” (line 2241) — which conveys a dimension of sanctity to her role, since the lily is traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary. Unlike la Pucele, however, Dame Amoure/Diamour is cast as a malevolent enchantress. Blancemal’s name and the attribute of whiteness serve to mark her ambiguity, much like la Fata Bianca in *Bel Gherardino* or Li Biaus’s mother in *LBD*. In both *LD* and *Bel Gherardino*, the figure of the sorceress retains the “whiteness” of la Pucele, even while their narrative roles have changed. Sanctity, however, is rendered ambiguous in the Old French name, Blancemal, a combination of *blance* (white) and *mal* (evil), and perhaps this is why Lybeaus’s mother is not named in *LD*. Like Circe, Dame Amoure/Diamour tempts Lybeaus away from his quest to liberate the Lady of Synadoun and to disregard Elene: “he forgate mayde Elyne” (L, line 1481). In Chrétien de Troyes’s *Yvain*, the eponymous knight forgets to return to his wife, Laudine, in a year as promised.
- 1473 L: *Lybeous graunted her in haste*. N: *Sir Libeous graunt it in hast* (line 1495). Dame Amoure/Diamour offers Lybeaus what appears to be her hand in marriage together with all of her cities and castles, that is, her inheritable lands and properties

as well as the cities owing her allegiance (and taxes). Lybeaus accepts this proposition. Only N inserts the pronoun “it” in Lybeaus’s acceptance, a pronoun that logically connects his agreement to Diamour’s offer. The other manuscript variants include C, line 1411, “Lybeauus graunte dyd yn haste”; A, line 1510, “Lybeus grantyd hyr in haste”; and P, fol. 166v, “Sir Lybius frened her in hast,” where *frened* probably signifies “frended,” that is, he became friends with her (Cooper’s text, line 1519 reads *frened*). The variants without the pronoun perhaps imply his consent to her proposition of marriage, but when combined with “her” might also suggest that his consent was primarily to her person, her beauty. N makes it clear that his consent is to her proposition first, and then afterwards he “love to hur cast” (line 1496). The distinction of the pronoun is significant, given the text’s focus on marital consent throughout; this illegitimate marriage based upon magical coercion contrasts markedly with Lybeaus’s later legitimate marriage, which is based upon free consent. See Weldon, “Naked as she was bore.”

- 1475–76 L: *For she was bright and shene. / Alas, she hadde be chaaste.* N: *For sho was bright and schene. / Alas, that sho nad be ychastid* (lines 1497–98). Shuffelton notes that these two lines are missing in A and suggests that the omission may be deliberate: “Though the lines may have been missing in Rate’s exemplar, it is also possible that he omitted them due to their suggestion of a sexual liaison [as in L and N]. But line 1513 [A]—‘sche dyde hym traye and tene’—nevertheless hints at Denamowre’s seduction of Lybeaus” (p. 479n1511), as does his protracted stay with her and her offer of marriage. In L and N, the narrator immediately characterizes the enchantress as an improper match for Lybeaus.
- 1479 L: *For twelve monthes and more.* N: *Thre wokis and more* (line 1501). In *LBD*, the hero spends only one night with the sorceress, whereas Lybeaus spends a year or more with her in C, L, P but only three weeks in A, N. The length of his stay is illegible in LI, line 712, although the reference to “monyth and more” clearly indicates more than several weeks. The reduced amount of time of Lybeaus’s enchanted stay with Diamour in A, N to some extent lessens his culpability as well as the power of the enchantress over him.
- 1487 L: *Than other suche fyve.* N: *Than othir wicchis fyve* (line 1509). N, together with C and LI, introduces the term *wicchis*, further intensifying the impression that the sorcery practiced by Dame Amoure/Diamour is aligned with the occult. Further, her enchantment is associated with minstrel music (“She made hym suche melodye / Of all maner mynstralsye” (L, lines 1488–89). As Linda Marie Zaerr, “Music and Magic,” points out, a conjunction of magic and music appears in the enchanted hall of Iran and Mabon, where Lybeaus hears and sees minstrels: “Trumpys, hornys, sarvysse, / Right byfor that highe deys, / He herde and sauge with sight” (L, lines 1836–38). As he proceeds further, he sees minstrels in the niches of the walls and again hears their music: “Suche maner mynstralsye / Was never within wall” (L, lines 1855–56). That the necromancy of Mabon and Iran involves magic and music, similar to the musical sorcery of Diamour, is suggestive. Also important to note is that the analogues frequently depict Lybeaus’s mother as a woman of fairy or possibly an enchantress. In *LBD*, for example, the protagonist’s mother is Blancemal le Fee. In the ME romance,

- Lybeaus's mother is not depicted as either a fairy or a sorceress, although in N she is referred to as "a giantis lady" (line 2249).
- 1498 L: *He mete Elyne that may*. N: *He mette Elyne, that feire may* (line 1520). That Elene hangs around until she can catch Lybeaus alone to correct his errancy underscores her loyalty to the cause of her lady as well as her confidence in Lybeaus's now-proven abilities to accomplish the mission.
- 1520 L: *Jurflete was his name*. N: *Sir Jeffelot was his name* (line 1539). Also known in other variants as Gyrflete, Jerflete, Jeffelot, or Gesloke. A squire made into a steward marks a distinctive move up the social ladder. In A, this character is called Syr Gesloke. R. W. Ackerman suggests a link with Girflet, son of Do of Carduel, who became a knight of the Round Table and was "slain by Lancelot in the abduction of Guinevere" (*Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English*, p. 112). See also note to line 240 above. In *LBD*, squire Robert accompanies the hero from the Arthurian court together with Helie and the dwarf. Furthermore, Gyflet, son of Do, in *LBD*, is the name of the knight of the gerfalcon. See note to lines 727 ff.
- 1533–35 L: *Cor and fenne full faste, / That men hade ere oute caste, / They gadered ymne iwyssse*. The custom of carrying waste products outside the boundaries of the city is reversed in these lines. That the use of the word "cor" may suggest the presence of one or many corpses is in accord with the uncanny effects of the occult forces conjured up by Mabon and Iran. In C this passage reads: "For gore and fen and full want / That there was out ykast / To-gydere they gadered ywys" (lines 1471–73); N omits the passage entirely, as does A, while in LI it appears as follows: "Bothe gor and fen faste, / That hadde out beo caste, / Th . . . gedred yn iwis" (lines 763–65); and in P: "They gathered dirt & mire ffull ffast; / Which beffore was out cast, / They gathered in Iwis" (lines 1579–81; fol. 167r). That the city is called "Gaste" or "Desolate" or "Waste" City as an analogous name for Synadoun underscores an implicit connection to the dead and to practices of necromancy, though the term appears to be used ambiguously. Roger Sherman Loomis notes in "From Segontium to Sinadon: The Legends of a *Cité Gaste*" that the city was built on or near the site of Segontium, the ancient Roman fortress located in north Wales. Also relevant to the haunting elements of this part of the poem may be the site's association with the defeat and death of the British king Vortigern prophesied by Merlin when he interpreted the symbolic meaning of opposing red and white dragons discovered underneath the tower that Vortigern was attempting to build. The prophecy revealed the demise of the red dragon and the ascendancy of the white, a sign of victory for the Saxons.
- 1539–40 L: *They taken in the goore / That ar was oute yboore*. This line and stanza are missing in N. The custom in this enchanted castle appears to be atypical for medieval waste management but perhaps typical for the strangeness of this section of the poem. As Derek G. Neal points out, "Lybeaus arrives with the go-between Elaine and her steward at a town where 'filth and ordure' are 'collected back in' rather than 'thrown out.' In this strange place lurks humiliation rather than death: Lybeaus risks being spattered with filth if he loses the challenge of Sir Lambard, hence (according to Elaine) to be known as a coward" (*Masculine Self*, pp. 220–21).

- 1549 L: *That hight Syr Lanwarde.* N: *His name is clepid Lambert* (line 1561). Also Lambard, Lambarte, Lamberd, Lambardys, and Lancharde, this character is the constable or steward of the Lady of Synadoun's castle; he is in a position that bequeaths him responsibility for overseeing everything that goes on both inside and outside. Here he assumes the role of porter, the most relevant example of which is found in *SGGK*. The name also recalls a character in the Anglo-Norman *Gui*, who, as Mills explains, "is a vassal of Otes (Otus *Guy*) and who equals him in villainy. . . . In *LD*, Lambard is essentially a 'good' character, but his habit of fighting with all visitors to the castle, including those who had come to rescue his lady, could easily have raised doubts about his real nature and caused the author of the OF *Lybeaus [sic]* to bestow upon him a name with associations of treachery" (*LD*, p. 236n1487). Shuffelton notes that no version is entirely coherent in its portrayal of Lambert (p. 479n1574). Stephen Knight suggests that the name evokes the Lombards, the great bankers of the later Middle Ages, and their powerful importance to aristocratic landholders ("Social Function," pp. 107–08). See Richard Kaeuper, *Bankers to the Crown*, on England, Lombardy, and mercantilism. In Thomas Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, Lombardy, the setting of Sir Launfal's tournament with the gargantuan Sir Valentine, provides an amusing satire on such mercantile/chivalric inequalities.
- 1549 L omits the detail of the castle-dweller as giant. N: *a gyaunt felle* (line 1559). This line is also missing in C, P, LI but present in A, line 1572, "a gyaunt felle." Found only in N and A, the phrase seems to suggest (erroneously) that Lambert is a giant, like Maugis. Also in N, A the lines describing the habits of the citizens of Synadoun to throw garbage on the loser (L, lines 1560–68) are omitted (see note to lines 1539–40 above). Mills (*LD*, p. 236nL1530–68) suggests that the comparison to a giant represents an attempt to make Lambert more negative and that the poet/reviser dropped this effort later, reverting to the more positive characterization of Lambard in *LBD*. See also Shuffleton, p. 479n1574. N's use of "giant," however, differs. The point here is that Lambert is a man of extraordinary size or strength (*MED*) rather than the folktale villain or stereotypical giant; in other words, N makes him a formidable opponent.
- 1554 L: *And ere he do thi nede.* N: omitted. Why Lambert should humiliate Arthurian knights or why there is an assumption that all challengers are Arthurian knights is not clear. See Textual Note to N, line 1554.
- 1581 L: *And axed ther ostell.* N: *And axid ther ostelle* (line 1591). Medieval hospitality required monasteries and castles to admit travelers, especially at night or in inclement weather. This custom appears in romances; Gawain tells the porter of Bercilak's castle that he comes "herber to craue" (*SGGK*, line 812).
- 1587 L: *Who was here governours.* N: *Who is your governour* (line 1597). This expression recalls *SGGK*, when Bercilak, in his guise as the Green Knight, enters Arthur's hall, he asks, "Wher is. . . / Be gouernour of þis gyng" (lines 224–25). See also note 1581 above.
- 1593 L: *The porter prophitable.* N: *The porter, prestabelle* (line 1603). The chain of command is made clear: the porter reports to the constable before letting the

- knights in. This contrasts sharply with the actions of the porter in *SGGK* wherein Gawain is admitted immediately once he is recognized as one of the most famous knights of Arthur's court. According to the *MED* "prestabelle" may mean "eager to serve" but may also be related to the sixteenth-century French word, *prestable*, meaning "remarkable," in which case it would be close in meaning to L's "prophitable."
- 1597 L: "Syre, of the Rowne Table." N: "Thei bene of the Rounde Table" (line 1607). The identification of Arthur's knights differentiates them from all others in terms of renown and respectability.
- 1609 L: *As a greyhounde dothe to an hare.* N: *So as the greyhound aftir the hare* (line 1619). In another rare simile the poet creates a hunting image against which the porter is compared ironically — this is what he is *not*. The greyhound was noted for its speed, and the point here is that porter races to inform Lambard as speedily as a greyhound pursues a hare.
- 1629–30 L: *His shelde was asure fyne, / Thre beer hedis therinne.* N: *A schilde he bare, fyne, / Thre boris hedis ydentity therinne* (lines 1639–40). L's azure shield differs from N's merely fine one. Blue is one of the most frequently used colors (or tinctures) in heraldry. Others commonly used are red, black, and green, while more uncommonly used tinctures are purple, sky-blue, and mulberry. The ermine on the shield refers to a pattern, not fur; see Friar, *Dictionary of Heraldry*, p. 343 and p. 159. The two versions also differ in the animal heraldry, where L has bears' heads and N, boars' heads. Both emblems suggest formidable strength. The two shields seem to bring together the details of the shield belonging to Sir Degaré's father, a fairy knight, who bears a shield "of asur / And thre bor-hevedes therin / Wel ipainted with gold fin" (lines 997–99).
- 1641 ff. These lines confirm Lambert's powerful build, which N and A express as giant-like (see note to line 1549 above). L, A, and P compare him in this stanza to a leopard (L: "lebard" [line 1645]; A: "lyberd" [line 1662]; P: "Libbard" [fol. 167v]; missing in LI), whereas only N makes Lambert a Lombard (line 1655). In Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, Sir Valentine, another Lombard, is "fyftene feet" tall (line 512), but there is no suggestion that he, any more than Lambert, is a Saracen giant or stereotypical villainous or rustic giant. It is worth noting here that Lambert has none of the inhuman and animal characteristics associated with Maugis or the two giants who abduct Violet.
- 1655 N: *Prowte as eny Lombard.* Lombardy is more famous for its bankers than "prowte" knights. Compare the satiric battle between Launfal and the giant of Lombardy in the ME *Sir Launfal*. See note 1549.
- 1683–84 L: *Sate and rocked . . . in his cradill.* N: *That he sate . . . in cradille* (lines 1693–94). Lybeaus has given his opponent a taste of his own medicine in this scene of role reversal. Whiting lists this line in *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases*, p. 83.
- 1701 ff. N and A arrange this stanza differently from L. The details of the fighting part of the stanza are abbreviated, and Lybeaus, rather than offer more violence (see

- L, line 1702, “Wilt thou more?”), immediately responds generously to Lambert’s shame at having been unsaddled: “Be nouȝt agrevyd” (N, line 1711).
- 1701 N: short stanza. See L, lines 1689–1700.
- 1708 L: *Thowe arte of Sir Gawynes kynne*. N: *Thou art of Sir Gawaynis kyn* (line 1717). Unlike what happens in *LBD*, the Lady of Synadoun’s constable, Lambert, recognizes Lybeaus as a kinsman of Gawain, the most formidable British knight in Arthur’s court and, in a deft maneuver of self-preservation, pledges his loyalty to the stronger knight. Further, in *LBD*, la Pucele reveals his identity, whereas in *LD* Lambert partially reveals it; the Lady of Synadoun, after her disenchantment, also recognizes Lybeaus’s identity in terms of kinship with Gawain, but it is Lybeaus’s mother who finally and fully completes his identity when she attends her son’s marriage feast at Arthur’s court and reveals that Lybeaus is not only a kinsman to Gawain but his son (N, A only).
- 1709 N: *He schalle my lady gete* (line 1709). See also A: *He schall my lady gete* (line 1709). Lambert’s prophecy that Lybeaus is the champion who shall rescue the Lady of Synadoun is missing in L and occurs only in A and N.
- 1736 L: *God and Seint Leonarde*. N: *Jhesus, Hevyn kynge* (line 1757). Although N invokes Christ, L refers to Saint Leonard, one of the most popular saints of western Europe. Leonard was patron saint of hospitals, prisons, pregnant women, and captives. The evocation of his name seems appropriate considering the Lady of Synadoun’s imprisonment.
- 1756 L: *Clyrkys of nigermansye*. N: *Clerkis of nigromansy* (line 1777). Necromancy, according to the *MED*, refers to sorcery or black magic. Corinne Saunders, in *Magic and the Supernatural*, notes that necromancy may refer to demonic practices and the conjuring of the dead, but observes that “it is very rare for romances to describe explicitly demonic magic practised by humans” and that romance writers “employ ‘nigromancy’ not to depict rituals wholly different in kind from natural magic . . . but rather to suggest more dangerous rituals that enter further into the conscious practice of magic” (p. 154). Helen Cooper, in *The English Romance in Time*, writes, “Middle English ‘nigromancy’ is magic on the edge of acceptability, not magic conducted through the agency of the dead” (p. 161). In *LD*, necromancy is only mentioned twice, in the lines above and later in L, lines 1767–68: “Hit is by nygrymauncye / Iwrought with fayreye.” In N the comparable lines are “Hit is made bi negromansy, / Ywrought it was with feyry” (lines 1788–89). The text implies perhaps that the ghostly magicians who perform in the enchanted hall and vanish suddenly are necromantic spirits, but as the text offers no explicit reference to the dead, they seem more illusory than necromantic. The magic of the clerks appears elsewhere in the poem as *chambur* (L, line 1975; N: *charmour*, line 2007), *chaumentement* (L, line 2103; N, missing line), *charunterye* (L, line 2132), and *sorcerye* (L, line 2055; N: *sorserye*, line 2087; N: *sorserye*, line 2171).
- 1758 L: *Irayne ys that o brother*. N: *Iran is, than, one brothir* (line 1779). Variants include Yrayn, Jrowne, and Evrain in *LBD*.

- 1759 L: *And Mabon is that other.* N: *And Mabon is that othir* (line 1780). Variants include Maboun and Mabouunys. A likely derivation of “an enchanter and hero from Welsh legend derived from the Celtic god Maponos. He was the son of Mellt and Modron (herself taken from the goddess Matrona). He is named as a servant of Uther Pendragon in an early Welsh poem. In *Culhwch and Olwen*, Culhwch needs his assistance in the hunt for the boar Twrch Trwyth” (AND, p. 333). In *LBD*, Mabon and his brother, Evrain, enter the city of Snowdon disguised as jongleurs; they cast spells so that the populace believed they were insane, and they laid waste to the city, which became known afterwards as the Desolate City. Mabon attempted to coerce la Blonde Esmeree into marriage by transforming her into a snake, a form she would endure while she refused him or until rescued by “the greatest knight . . . from the court of Arthur” (see *LBD*, lines 3319–62, especially 3353–59).
- 1772 L: *That is of knyghtis kynne.* N: *Comyn of kyngis kynne* (line 1793). C, L, P make the Lady of Synadoun “of knightis kin.” A is silent on her kinship. LI, fol. 10v, refers to her as “so gent a dame.” Only N raises her status to a king’s daughter, thereby elevating Lybeaus’s station as her (future) husband.
- 1790 L: *Luste they done hir synne.* N: *Lest that thei bring hur in synne* (line 1811). The sense here seems to be that Iran and Mabon are trying to force the Lady of Synadoun to give Mabon all her inheritance, that is, to marry him. Lambard and the townspeople fear that they may “force” her into sin, that is, if Mabon rapes her and then claims her as his wife. The enchantment of the Lady of Synadoun, in other words, has coerced marriage and propertied wealth as its motive.
- 1833 L: *Syr Lybeaus, knyght curtays.* N: *Sir Libeous reyght his corcis* (line 1854). L reads here “knyght curtays,” so too, C, A, LI, and P. N’s reading is unique; Lybeaus arranges his “corcis,” that is, corset, a piece of body armor or corselet, in preparation to enter the enchanted hall. The action suggests the young knight’s trepidation.
- 1850 L: *Butt mynstralis cladde in palle.* N: *But mynstrell clothid in palle* (line 1871). The negative association between fairy magic and music links the enchanted castle to the enchantment of the Golden Isle and Dame Amoure/Diamour. For a useful discussion of minstrels and minstrelsy of the time, see Howard Mayer Brown and Keith Polk, “Instrumental Music.” See also the note to line 1487 and Zaerr, “Music and Magic.”
- 1854 N: *Sir Libeous reyght his corcis.* This line appears only in Naples, which the *MED* locates under “righten” v. 1c, “to aim (a weapon), point; direct (one’s course), in which case the line would mean “Sir Libeous directed his course.” All other manuscript versions of *Lybeaus* have some form of “curtays” in a line similar to A’s “Syr Lybeus, knyght curtays” (line 1830). However, “righten” v. 2a and 2b may also involve armor, as in “set one’s gear in order” or “to make weapons ready”; the *MED* gives the example, “right her armour” (*Merlin*, line 150). Similarly, in the *Prose Merlin*, Leodagan acquires armor: “And [thei] hym unbounden, and right his armoure, and sethen made hym to lepe on a steede that was stronge and swyfht” (*Arthur at Tamelide*, lines 222–24). The difficulty of the Naples line is compounded by the ambiguity of the word *corcis*. If the word

refers to “course,” as implied in the *MED* reading, then the Naples line is an anomaly, as *MED* gives no other example of “righten” connected with course or direction; all other *MED* examples under 1c collocate “righten” with weapons aimed or pointing, not with setting out on a “course” or “direction.” It may be that the noun *corcis* is a scribal distortion of *cors*, *corset*, or *corselet*. Hewitt describes fourteenth-century inventories that support this reading: the inventory of Louis Hutin (1316) mentions a “cors d’acier,” that of Humphry Bohun (1322) includes a “corset de fer,” and that of the Earl of March (1330) a “corsetz de feer” (*Ancient Armour and Weapons*, 2:136). *Corcis* as *cors*, *corset*, or *corselet* thus preserves the usual *MED* senses of *righten* 1.a.b. and c. and 2.a. and b. Lybeaus does not direct his course or point his horse in the right direction, then; rather, he arranges his armor properly before riding into combat.

- 1872 L: *The halle ypeynted was*. N: *The halle ypeyntid was* (line 1893). The splendor of the locale enhances its enchantment. The hall is reminiscent of other enchanted places, most significantly in ME narrative, such as in the otherworldly palace of the fairy king in *Sir Orfeo*: “Amidde the lond a castel he sighe, / Riche and real and wonder heighe, / Al the utmast wal / Was clere and schine as cristal” (lines 355–58). Orfeo thinks “it is / The proude court of Paradis” (lines 375–76). Also resonant is the enchanted hall encountered by Sir Degaré, a palace filled with beautiful women, mirth, music, and a sumptuous feast.
- 1888 L: *The erthe began to quake*. N: *The erthe bigan to quake* (line 1908). The natural world marks the impending battle as in the earlier scene of thunder and lightning. It is also possible that the earthquake, thunder, and lightning are illusory, wrought by magic.
- 1892 ff. L: missing stanza. N: *Sir Libeous therof had mervaile . . . Er that Y se what he be, / Aboute this biggyng* (lines 1914–25). This stanza is unique to N. See Sir Gawain’s musings about the “dele” and “fende” that might fittingly inhabit the green chapel, “a chapel of meschaunce” (SGGK, lines 2185–98).
- 1975 L: *His chawntementis ne his chambur*. N: *His acton ne his charmour* (glossed as sorcery, line 2007). There clearly appears to be a scribal error in L since “chamber” makes little sense, even if one stretches the imagination to define the word as “body.” Hence, we have glossed the word as “charms” (sorcery).
- 2006–08 N: short stanza. See L, lines 1974–75.
- 2021–22 L: *The venym will me spille; / I venymed hem bothe*. The mention of venom occurs in C, L, and P (the lines are missing in LI); no venom is mentioned in N or A. The poisoned sword is another means by which Mabon and Iran engage in a nonchivalric mode of combat. Shuffelton notes that “Like N, Rate’s copy-text had these lines instead of three lines in the Cotton manuscript and in L explaining that Mabon has poisoned the swords. As a result of this foul play, Lybeaus’s refusal to spare Mabon’s life seems more explicable in those manuscripts” (p. 480n2009–11).
- 2037 L: *Tho Mabon was slayne*. N: *Than Mabon was yslayn* (line 2069). Lybeaus cleaves the skull of Mabon; in Renaut’s version smoke comes from the skull’s mouth:

“Donné li a si grant colee / que mort l’abat guile baee. / Del cors li saut une fumiere / qui molt estoit hideusse et fiere / qui li issoit par mi la boce” (lines 3059–63). (The Fair Unknown dealt him such a great blow/ that he knocked him down dead, his mouth agape. / From his body there arose / a horrid and fearful plume of smoke, / which spewed out of his mouth.) Meanwhile Iran appears to disappear.

- 2060 ff. Both L and N are missing this stanza. Only P includes it as follows:

Then he was ware of [a] valley;
 Thitherward he tooke the way
 As a sterne Knight and stout.
 As he rode by a riuer side
 He was ware of him that tyde
 Upon the river brimm:
 He rode to him ffull hott,
 & of his head he smote,
 Ffast by the Chinn;
 & when he had him slaine,
 Ffast hee tooke the way againe
 For to haue that lady gent.
 (Cooper, lines 2104–15; see also fols. 120r–v)

- 2067 L: *A worme ther ganne oute pas.* N: *A worme ther out gan pas* (line 2099). *Worm* is a word typically equated with *serpent* or *dragon*. The woman/beast here is clearly a dragon since she is a worm with wings and a tail. Medieval portrayals of the Fall often depict the serpent as a woman; for example, the serpent in the sculpture above the left portal, west façade, Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, looks like the archetypal Eve. See page 83 for an image of Eve and the Dragon-Serpent in *Speculum humanæ salvationis*, and for more on this point, see Weldon, “Naked as she was bore,” pp. 73–77.
- 2069 L: “*Yonge Yam and nothinge olde.*” N: *Yonge and nothing olde* (line 2101). In L, the Lady of Synadoun addresses Lybeaus directly as a dragon-woman, whereas in N, the dragon-woman does not address him, and this line represents indirect narratorial comment. No form of this line appears in the French *LBD*.
- 2083 L: *The worme with mouth him kyste.* N: *The worme with mouthe him kist* (line 2115). This is the *fier baiser* episode at the heart of the Fair Unknown narrative and the effective cause of the disenchantment of the Lady of Synadoun. Other “fearsome kisses” take place in *Ponzela Gaia*, *Carduino*, and *Lanzelet*, as well as in *LBD*, but in no other episode is the dragon/serpent endowed with a “womanes face.” Similar to the loathly lady narrative, the kiss disenchants the dragon-lady, transforming her into her previous form, a beautiful woman. This is also the moment in which Lybeaus’s identity is manifestly revealed, for only the kiss by a blood relative of Gawain can affect the disenchantment.
- 2085–87 L: *And astyr this kyssyng / Off the worme tayle and wyng / Swyftly fell hir fro.* N: *And astir that kissing, / Of the worme bothe taile and wyng / Sone thei fille hur fro* (lines 2117–19). In *LBD*, as Ferlampin-Acher notes, the transformation of disenchantment is never seen (*La Fée et la Guivre*, p. lix128); so too, in *Lanzelet* and the other

European analogues where the transformation also occurs “off stage” or is never directly described. Only in *LD* does the disenchantment take visible form.

- 2091 ff. L: *But she was moder naked, / As God had hir maked: . . . As naked as she was bore.* N: *But scho was al nakid / As the clerkis hur makid; . . . As nakid as scho was bore* (lines 2123–24; L, line 2137, N, line 2176). The disenchantment involves the disappearance of the serpent-Eve-dragon disguise (“Off the worme tayle and wynge / Swyftly fell hir froo” [L, lines 2086–87]), suggesting that the transformation returns the lady to a state of innocence equivalent to a prelapsarian Eve, the mother of all humankind. Not only is she innocent but without shame. N’s original reference to clerks recalls the enchantment caused by Iran and Mabon, and perhaps implies their malicious disrobing of her prior to covering her with the magic dragon disguise. Later, however, when Lybeaus recounts the story to Lambard, he describes her, “As nakid as scho was bore” (N, line 2176). Another parallel to this striking image is the story of Saint Margaret, patron saint of childbirth, who is swallowed by a dragon but erupts from its belly reborn. See Weldon, “Naked as she was bore,” p. 81.
- 2120 ff. L: missing stanza. N: *To loke aftir Iran* (lines 2153 ff.). This passage dealing with the search for and killing of Iran occurs after the disenchantment only in the N, A tradition. For Mills, it is a revised passage that corrects the unsolved mystery of Iran’s disappearance and provides closure. N omits the repetitive lines from A at this point: “And ther sone he wane. / He went into the towre / And in that ilke chambour” (A, lines 2113–15). Of the two, N is more sensible than A, and from line 2153, the passage is original with N.

Syr Lybeus, the knyght gode,
 Into the castell yode
 To seke after Irain.
 He lokyd into the chambour
 Ther he was in towre,
 And ther sone he hym wane.
 He went into the towre
 And in that ilke chambour
 He saw Irain that man.
 He drew hys suerd with myght
 And smote of hys hede with ryght,
 For soth, of Irain than.
 (Shuffleton, A, lines 2108–19)

- 2134 N: Short stanza. See L, lines 2097 ff.
- 2137 L: *As naked as she was bore.* N: *As naked as scho was bore* (line 2176). See note for line 2091 above.
- 2138 N: Short stanza. See L, lines 2109 ff.
- 2160 ff. N: Short stanza. See L, lines 2121 ff.
- 2178 L: *Arthur gave also blyve.* N: *Arthour, he gave blyve* (line 2217). Arthur’s blessing and consent to the marriage sanctions it and renders Lybeaus’s mission complete. He has literally won the lady’s hand in marriage. In *LBD*, this is a

bittersweet reward, since in that poem Lybeaus's true love is the Maiden with the White Hands whom he had left abruptly to complete his mission.

- 2192 ff. L: missing stanza. N: 2232 ff. The arrival of Lybeaus's mother is unique to A and N, and solves what Mills perceives as an inconsistency in the other manuscript versions, where Gawain's sudden recognition of his son is left unexplained ("Mediaeval Reviser," pp. 17–18). The appearance of Guinglain's mother not only solves what Mills perceives as an inconsistency, Gawain's sudden recognition of his son, which is left unexplained in C and L but added to A and N; it also provides reconciliation of the separated and "lost" parents. The family reunion motif appears in *Sir Degaré*, *Octovian Imperator* and the *Northern Octavian*, *Emaré*, and *Sir Isumbra*. Illegitimate but chivalric sons occur in the story of Lancelot and Galahad, *Le Livre de Caradoc*, and *Ysaje le triste*.
- Gawain's address to the Lady of Synadoun (N: 2244 ff.) is unique to N, A, P, and LI. Only in N, however, does Gawain refer to Lybeaus's mother as a "giantis lady" (line 2249) — see note to line 1487 above. A refers to her as a "gentyll lady" (line 2209); so, too, LI, "gentil lady" (Cooper, line 1077; fol. 12v). Although her description as a giant's lady might seem incongruous, there is a sense in which N's reading restores the idea that Lybeaus's mother is kin to a race of nonhuman beings. *LD* belongs to a group of folkloristic narratives in which the hero's *enfances* is obscure; he is raised outside of civilization and his parents or one of his parents and/or guardians is divine or animal (Walter, *Bel Inconnu*, pp. 49–72). In *LBD*, Guinglain's mother is Blancemal le Fee (line 3237), for example; in, *Wigalois*, she is Florie, daughter of a fairy king. If, as a giant's lady, Lybeaus mother is meant to be a giant's daughter, then she recalls folklore tradition in which a giant's daughter helps the hero or marries the hero, as in the British folktale "Nix Nought Nothing." In the Celtic story *How Culhwch Won Olwen*, Culhwch weds Olwen, the beautiful and nonmonstrous daughter of the giant Ysbaddaden. In folklore and myth, giants, like fairies, live outside human communities, so the N association of Lybeaus's mother with giants maintains the obscure and uncivilized (nonhuman) parentage of the hero lost in the other versions of *LD*. It is also possible that the "giant" status of Lybeaus's mother indicates her "otherness" — that she resides outside the court and is marginalized by her unwed, single-parent status.
- 2199 L: *Sevyn yere they levid same*. N: *Ten yere thei levid in same* (line 2274). The marriage in N lasts longer than L's, although neither text (nor any other version) mentions children, which are often the conventional index of a successful medieval marriage.
- 2204 L: *Grawnte us gode endynge. Amen.* N: *To blys He us alle bring. Amen* (line 2279). Despite the naming of Lybeaus in the incipit of L as Guinglain, the name given to him by Arthur (Lybeaus Desconus) is the name that accrues recognition and authority in the chivalric world. This is the name that is cited on the Winchester Round Table.
- 2280 N: *Qui scripcit carmen sit benedictis. Amen.* A formulaic ending which often concludes secular as well as religious manuscript entries. The correct spelling is *scripsit*; however, the variant *scripcit* also frequently appears in manuscript colophons.

For instance, the exact phrasing and spelling closes *The Prick of Conscience* in Manchester, John Rylands Library, Eng. 51 [olim Quaritch Sale Cat. 344, Item 28], fol. 116v (see *The IMEV: An Open-Access, Web-Based Edition of The Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. Linne R. Mooney et al., Number 3428: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/record.php?recID=3428>). This is the first of a hierarchy of display scripts in the Lybeaus portion of N, here a bastard display script composed of a mix of more formal bookhand scripts, including an approximation of *textualis semiquadrata* with its occasional feet in the minims, occasional separate letters, angular letters, and a more formal cursive blend of mainly Secretary forms (the letter *a*) together with some Anglicana forms (the long *s*).

- 2281 N: *Hic Explicit Libeus Disconyus*. This colophon is written in the scribe's most elevated and formal bastard display script.
- 2282–85 N: *He that lovith welle to fare / / His here wol grow throw his hood*. This homely verse, which apart from the more formal capital *h* and top line with its stylistic decorative features, is written in the same script as the text (a mix of Secretary and Anglicana features) and inserts a conventional moral on the page, although it is not clear whether or not it is meant as a commentary on *LD*. These moralizing verses appear in Bodley MS 315 (SC 2712) which was presented to the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral in the mid-1470s by Magister John Stevens, a canon at Exeter. According to the manuscript, the Naples verses are among several which appeared on the wall of the dining hall of the Augustinian Canons' Priory of St. Stephen of Launceston in Cornwall. See Rossell Hope Robbins, "Wall Verses at Launceston Priory." The sense is that indiscriminate spending leads to poverty, a condition marked by the wear and thinness of the material of the hood that allows the wearer's hair to poke through the material. The scribe signs his name here as More, whom Manly and Rickert identify as a Harry More, although they offer three other potential scribal candidates who were writing/copying at the same time: an Oxford stationer John More, a London stationer Richard More, and a Bristol scrivener William More (*Text of the Canterbury Tales*, 1:376). There is, however, no scholarly agreement on these suggestions. Verses from Lydgate's "Beware of Doubleness" as well as a disguised signature of the scribe as More conclude the final item in N, *Grisilde or The Clerk's Tale* on p. 146 of the manuscript.
- 2286 N: *Hic pennam fixi penitent me si male scripsi*. This is a smaller script than that used for line 2281 and less formal, although here, too, there are suggestions of *textualis*. The same Latin phrase is repeated at the end of the Naples manuscript, concluding the tale of *Griselde* (Chaucer's Clerk's Tale). See Weldon, "Naples Manuscript." See the note for lines 2282–85 above.



TEXTUAL NOTES TO LAMBETH PALACE, MS 306

ABBREVIATIONS: **A:** Ashmole 61 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 6922) (see Shufferton); **C:** London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (see Mills); **L:** London, Lambeth Palace, MS 306; **LD:** *Lybeaus Desconus*; **LI:** London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150 (formerly known as Lincoln's Inn, MS Hales 150) (see Cooper); **N:** Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29; **P:** London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (also known as the Percy Folio); **LBD:** *Li Biaus Descouneüs*.

- Incipit L: *A trelys of one Gyngelayne othir wyse Namyd by Kyng Arthure Lybeus Dysconeus that was bastard son to Sir Gawayne.*
- 1 oure. Mills notes superscript *r* added later (LD, p. 75), though it is difficult to determine when that insertion was made.
- 11 *Roun Table.* L: *roundable.* As is the case with most proper nouns in ME manuscripts, *Roun(d) Table* appears as one word uncapitalized. Conventions of capitalization vary widely, though rubrics (historiated or not) are most often the exception. Mills detects an erasure under the *r* (LD, p. 75).
- 12 *Herde I never of redde.* L: *Herde J neuer of nor redde.* Nor added above *redde*.
- 16 *kepte.* L: *kept.* We have added a final *e* to *kepte*.
- 19 *savage.* L: *savage* crossed out and followed by *sawge*. Mills emends to *savage* (LD, p. 75) in accordance with the *Middle English Dictionary* citation.
- 20 *And gladly wold do outerage.* L: *do* is crossed out and *not* is added above. The sense is that if Lybeaus is *full savage* (*sawge*) as the previous line suggests, then he would more likely *do* outrageous violence than refrain from doing it. We have restored the appropriate verb.
- 26 *clepte.* L: *clept.* The final *e* has been restored in accordance with Mills (LD, p. 75).
- 30 *Whate hight of his dame.* L: *Whate hight off his dame.* Mills notes correctly that there is another word above *off* which appears to be added after an attempt to cross out that word. The replacement superscript is *onys*. He retains *off* to maintain the orthography of the manuscript (LD, p. 77). We have eliminated the second *f* for the sake of clarity.
- 38 *can shrede.* L: *gan shrede.* Mills emends *gan* to *can* based on his observation that *c* appears to be written over *g* (LD, p. 77).
- 70 *Whan that he wold be made a knyght.* L: *Whan that wold be made a knyght.* There is an erasure and a lacuna in this line in which Mills has inserted an appropriate pronoun. N: *When he wol ben a knyght* (line 70).
- 71 *hyght.* L: *heght.* Mills detects an *e* written over the *y* in *hyght* (LD, p. 79). We have retained the *y*.

- 74 *same*. L: *fame*. Mills sees a cross-stroke in the *s* of *same* (LD, p. 79); the sense is better retained by this emendation.
- 86 *Con.* L: *Gon.* Mills detects a *c* written over the *g* (LD, p. 79), an emendation that makes more sense of the line.
- 92 *strok of myght*. L: *stroke of myght*. The final *e* on *stroke* is blurred. Cooper emends to *strokes* (p. 15).
- 114 *Att his tabyll sett*. L: there is a word crossed out before *sett*. Mills identifies it as *sete* (LD, p. 81).
- 115 *Ther*. L: *The*. Mills adds *r* (LD, p. 81).
- 118 *The may hight Ellene*. Mills reads *Ellyne* explaining that the *y* has been erased and *e* written over the erasure (LD, p. 81).
- 122 *on*. L: *one*. There is clearly a final *e* on *one*. We have emended to retain the sense of the line.
- 129 *Milke*. In L, the first letter is blurred.
- 130 *The dwerf was clothed in ynde*. L: *The dew dwerff was clothed in ynde*. Mills sees a mark of deletion through the word “*dew*,” though it appears not to be fully expunged (LD, p. 83). This may be evidence of scribal error and revision.
- 131 *Byfore*. L: *fore* is added above the line. It appears to be filling in the gap before the partially deleted word *fore* that follows, making the beginning of the line read: *Byfore fore*.
- 135 *His surcote*. L: *Hi surcote*. Mills has added the *s* to the pronoun as have we (LD, p. 83). The final *e* in *surcote* appears smudged.
- 143 *Wyde were*. L: *Whyde wher*. Mills detects an erasure here, *were* written over *wher* (LD, p. 83). He has restored the original word as have we.
- 152 *erende*. Mills notes an erasure in the middle of this word (LD, p. 83).
- 167 *hert*. L: *her*. We have completed the word *hert* to make sense of the line.
- 174 *bere recorde*. L: *bererecorde*. We have noted the oblique stroke between *bere* and *recorde* to separate the two words.
- 177 *sper and swerde*. L: *sperand swerde*. We have separated the word *sper/and* according to the stroke that appears in the manuscript.
- 188 *Persyfal*. L: *Persyfale*. We have deleted the final *e*.
- 189 *ben abled*. L: *beneabled*. We have emended according to the oblique line in the middle of this word.
- 196 *Or that he that lady see*. L: *that lady see*. Two words before *lady see* have been crossed out. Mills reads *lay see* (LD, p. 87).
- 206 *I lernede*. L: *J leerde*. There is a crossed-out word before *leerde*, which appears to be inserted in another hand. In agreement with Mills we have emended to *lerned* (LD, p. 87).
- 207 *Ther many man hathe be slave*. There is a crossed-out word, *may*, before *many*.
- 215 *forsake*. L: *for forsake*. The preposition appears to be crossed out.
- 216 *As hit is londes lawe*. N: *For suche is Arthouris lawe* (line 213). This stanza in L contains three additional lines not present in N (fifteen rather than twelve).
- 218 *gettist*. L: *getist*.
- 226 *dismayde*. L: *dismaysed*. Mills’s emendation of *dismaysed* makes more sense of the line (LD, p. 89).

- 236 *hightis*. L: *hightth*. Mills emends to *hightis* as have we (LD, p. 89).
 239 *fyghtis*. L: *fyghtth*. Emended to maintain consistency with line 236.
 253 *aboute*. Mills detects a *w* written over the *u* (LD, p. 89).
 254 *A shelde with one cheferon*. N: *A schilde with on griffoun* (line 264).
 260 *And a fell fauchone*. L: *And fell a ffawchone*.
 276 *stoute and gaye*. Mills detects a *w* written over *u* (LD, p. 91).
 282 *caytyfe*. L: *catyve*. Mills detects an erased *ff* under the *v*. We have emended accordingly.
 286 *with eche*. The considerable gap between these words suggests an erasure. Mills notes an extra *h* and *e* in the space and something in the left margin that appears to be erased words “the which” (LD, p. 91).
 288 *Delaraunche*. L: *delarawnche*. There appears to be another letter under the *w*. What is most notable about this line, however, is that the name of this character has changed from “Salebrant” as it appears in *LBD*.
 315 *ridis*. L: *ridith*. Emended to *ridis* to maintain consistency with other words ending with *th*, e.g., *knightis*. The *-is* suffix indicates the plural form.
 331 *non other*. L: *no nother*. Mills emends correctly to *non other* (LD, p. 95).
 332 *In haste*. L: *J haste*. Adding a preposition makes sense of the phrase.
 342 *William*. L: *Will* appears to have an abbreviation mark indicating the full name.
 352 *afor*. L: *afore*. Mills notes that the final *e* was added later (LD, p. 95).
 386 *plasse*. L: *plase*. The second *s* is barely visible.
 388 *love*. L: *lesse*. Mills emends to *love* (LD, p. 99), an emendation with which we agree based on readings from other versions.
 393 *knele thu downe*. L: *knele downe*. Mills notes a caret insert after *knele* (LD, p. 99).
 394 *fauchon*. L: *ffauchone*. Mills emends to *ffauchon* presumably to maintain the rhyme with *renon* (LD, p. 99).
 401 *kynde*. L: *kyende*. Partially visible *y* with *e* inserted over *kynde* emended for clarity’s sake.
 404 *forward*. Caret indicates place where first *r* is inserted over the word.
 421 *nought*. L: *nougthe*. We have emended to *nought* in order to maintain the meter of the line.
 426 *rydis*. L: *rideth*. Emended for greater consistency among plural verbs.
 429 *But o thinge*. L: *But othinge*. We have emended to indicate the word *one*.
 457 *togeder*. L: *to geder*. Emended to make sense of the line.
 461 *foryave*. L: *for yave*.
 469 *knyghtis*. L: *knighth*.
 482 *rede*. L: *ryde*. *y* written over *e*.
 487 *so neghe*. L: *so nygh*. *y* written over *e* and final *e* is erased.
 502 *beheld*. L: *be helde*.
 514 *The yongest brother full yerne*. L: *the yongest brother* appear as guide words at the bottom of the folio page.
 518 *yerne*. L: *yern*. Final *e* appears to be erased. We have restored it.
 519 *Ber*. L: *Bere*. Mills identifies a final *e* added by a later hand (LD, p. 107).
 523 *styffe*. *fe* ending added later as indicated by a different hand.
 523 *sett*. Second *t* appears to be partially erased.

- 524 *basnett*. Second *t* appears to be partially erased as in *sett* above.
 527 *hede*. L: *hed*. Final *e* partially erased.
 531 *Alse*. L: *Als*. Final *e* partially erased. We have restored it to preserve the sense of the line.
 532 *thoo*. L: *tho*. Second *o* thoroughly erased.
 536 *gryme*. L: *grym*. Final *e* partially erased.
 540 *thoo*. L: *tho*. Final *o* partially erased.
 543 *atwoo*. L: *atwo*. Final *o* partially erased.
 545 *no myght*. L: *nemyght*. Oblique line separating *ne myght*. Mills reads *no* for *ne* as do we (LD, p. 109).
 557 *of*. Under erasure.
 562 L: rubricated capital *A*, two lines deep, begins line.
 571 *therd day*. L: *therday*. Emended to make sense of the line.
 579 *towne*. L: *towe*. Emended to make sense of the line.
 582 *browne*. L: *browe*.
 588 *Here*. L: *Her*. Final *e* is under erasure.
 595 *hire*. L: *hre*.
 602 *fyre*. L: *fere*.
 605 *pyche*. L: *pytche*.
 624 *enprice*. L: *enprise*.
 632 *Thorugh lounge and hert*. L: *eke thorugh* inserted above *hert*.
 645 *ner*. L: *ne*. We have emended to maintain the sense of the line.
 650 *therefore*. L: *there fore*.
 718 *The Erle*. L: large unhistoriated capital *T* in red.
 739 *him*. L: *ho*.
 813 *Quod*. L: *Qud*.
 819 *And amyddis the market*. L: Large unhistoriated capital *A* in red with guide letter in lower case.
 852 *Thow*. L: *Tow*.
 862 *samyte*. L: *sanyte*.
 863 *hir atyre*. L: there appears to be a word crossed out between these two.
 901 *back*. L: *backis*.
 935 *hauk*. L: *haukys*. The sense of the line calls for one hawk rather than many.
 936 *Quod*. L: *Qud*.
 943 *hauk*. L: *haukis*.
 1001 *rowne*. L: *rowme*.
 1007 *hauk*. L: *haukis*.
 1021 *forty* L: *xlti*. *Xlti* is crossed out in the body of the narrative and reinserted in the left margin.
 1029 *As they redyn by a lowe*. Large unhistoriated capital *A*. Catchwords *hernes herd* at bottom of folio page.
 1089 *Quod*. L: *Qud*.
 1101 *Quod*. L: *Qud*.
 1106 *dwerfhem*. L: *dewerffhen*.
 1110 *rightis*. L: *righth*.
 1269 In L, large unhistoriated capital *N* in red.
 1275 In L, large unhistoriated capital *H* in red.

- 1376 *felde*. L: *felde*.
1495 *Thus*. L: *This*.
1544 *I tell thee whate hit is*. L: Catchwords *no knyghth* follow at bottom of folio page.
1572 *prophete*. L: *profyte*. Mills reads *propfyte* (*LD*, p. 169).
1589 *myghtis*. L: *myghth*.
1592 *fightis*. L: *fighth*.
1609 *greyhounde*. L: *geyhounede*.
1652 *myghtis*. L: *myghth*.
1665 *they*. L: *the*.
1702 *Quod*. L: *Qud*.
1787 *welde*. L: *wele*.
1799 *souped*. L: *stoupeth*.
1876 *mynstrales*. L: *mynstales*.
1947 *Her*. L: *He*.
1976 *Downe*. L: *Dowe*.
2017 *my powsté*. L: there appears to be a word crossed out between these two.
2071 *thynchis*. L: *pynchis*.
2074 L: Catchwords at bottom of folio page, *hyr peynis*.
2106 *I*. L: this word has been inserted with a caret.
2113 *stryfe*. L: this word has been inserted with a caret.
2114 *be*. L: this word has been inserted with a caret
2118 *he*. L: this word has been inserted with a caret.
2130 *her lady*. L: there appears to be a word crossed out between these two.



TEXTUAL NOTES TO NAPLES, MS XIII.B.29

ABBREVIATIONS: **A:** Ashmole 61 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 6922) (see Shuffelton); **C:** London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (see Mills); **L:** London, Lambeth Palace, MS 306; **LI:** London, Lincoln's Inn, MS 150 (formerly known as Lincoln's Inn, MS Hale 150) (see Cooper); **N:** Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.29; **P:** London, British Library, MS Additional 27879 (also known as the Percy Folio).

- 1 N: guide letter *J* and space three lines deep for later insertion of decorated capital.
Thei. N: *the*.
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- N: *and*. N: *an*.
N: *ynd*. N: *hynd*.
henge. N: *kyenge?* This word is ill-formed, and the scribe appears to have attempted a correction by superimposing a *y*, with the result that the first letter of the word is illegible. It may be a *k* or a *b*.
sawtre. N: *swithe*. L, C, and A have a version of *sawtre* here.
telle. N: *telle me* (makes no sense in context).
knelid. N: *kene*.
Sir. N: *si*.
errour. N: *errout*.
Lybeus. N: *.l.*, which is N's typical abbreviation for the name of the hero.
Scribal ink blot over *g* of *degré*.
Commaundid. Linear scribal correction *commaandid* corrected to *commaundid*.
Compare the fourth person: *Agrafrayn* (C, line 221), *Agfayne* (L, line 244).
A. N: *at*.
As. N: *and*.
palfray. N: *palfaray*.
here furth rides. N: *he furth right*.
his. N: *hir*.
two. N: *to*.
her. Interlinear scribal correction with the addition of *r* after *he*. The scribe has also corrected the *a* in *al*.
slygh. N: *slyght*.
his. N: *is*.
a. N: *missing*.
sei. N: *seid*.
Unkouth. N: *unkough*.
on. N: *un*.
Thei. N: *the*.

- 439 Scribal correction of *e* in *bifore*.
 491 Interlinear scribal correction over *m* in *ame*, which is then crossed out.
 494 Following this line, L reads: *And to them stoutly con rede* (line 482), giving the stanza an unusual thirteen lines. N omits this line and corrects the stanza.
 498 *his.* N: *is*.
 499 *Libious.* N: *l.*
 519 L has three lines here that are missing in N, A, P. The stanza is missing in C and LI. The following stanza also has some missing lines and some new ones added. These words of the youngest brother, for example, are only in N, A.
 533 *Sir.* N: *sir*. The letter combination *ir* is ill-formed. The stem of the *r* touches the stem of the *i*, and the headstroke of the *r* is exaggerated.
 538 *Than.* N: *That*.
 554–55 *And in that ilke spaas, / The right arme fille him fro.* So A. L reads “And in that selfe space / His lyfte arme brast atwoo” (lines 542–43).
 574 *so.* N: *se*.
 592 Scribal interlinear correction — *geuy* crossed out and *grewys* written after.
 593 *Thei.* N: *the*.
 594 *broun.* N: *bron*.
 649 *bisoughte.* N: *bisoughe*.
 663 *geaunt his.* N: *geauntis*.
 665 *With.* N: *but*. Scribal error perhaps because of following *butte*.
 691 Boxed catchwords at bottom of p. 94b, *tille that othir*.
 692 Underlined catchwords at top of p. 95a, *it is founde*. These catchwords refer back to p. 94b, the last words of which are “it is found” (line 691).
 694 *Tho.* N: *the*.
 698 *thonkid.* N: *thongid*.
 705 *biforne.* N: *biforme*.
 763 *feirer.* N: *feire*.
 778 What appears to be a partially boxed catchword on p. 95b, *turne over*, is not actually a catchword. It seems to be the scribe’s note to himself.
 787 *Geffron le Frediens.* N: *Geffron Jle Frediens*. See line 808 below.
 793 *his.* N: *is*.
 797 *dwellid.* N: *leftin*; L: *dwellyd* (line 778).
 813 *prins.* The scribe uses Latin abbreviations but often modifies or adapts them to the English spellings of his dialect. Here, for instance, the abbreviated *p* form (see C, lines 256 ff.), which usually signals a Latin abbreviation for *per* or *pre* (or *pro*) but which here represents *pri*. *Prins* (not *prens*) is the usual N spelling; see line 849 below, where *prins* is written out fully. See also the notes for lines 849 and 1462.
 817 *schrille.* N: *schille*.
 842 *graunt.* N: *gaunt*.
 849 *prout.* Another example where the scribe uses the Latin *pre* abbreviation for simply *pr*. See note 813 above and line 318, where the word *proute* is written out in full.
 903 *border.* N: *borders*. The plural noun makes no sense here.

- ryngid with floris.* N: *ryng flor*, where the scribe has inserted an *r* above the *o*. In C and L, the word “floures” (C, line 860; L, line 889) refers to color: e.g., “And of that same colours / And of that other floures” (L, lines 888–89). In the A, N, LI, P tradition, however, flowers are decorative items on the shield; e.g., “Of gold was the border, / And of the same colorus, / Dyght with other floures” (A, lines 914–16). N’s line seems to be a scribal error connected with the A, N, P sense. A plausible rendering of the line, then, is “ryngid with floris.”
- 906 *cromponis*. This word “cromponis” and line 903 above are unique to N.
- 919 *ruffyne*. Compare LI: *rosyn*.
- 926 *on*. N: *in*.
- 927 *schyning*. N: *schynding*.
- 933 *straight*. N: *stranght*.
- 949 *Geffron le Fredus*. N: *Geffron Ile Fredus*. See Explanatory Note 768. All versions of LD have difficulty with this name. Here the French article *le* is misspelled as *Ile*.
- 1051 *de la Ile*. N: *de a Ile*.
- 1078 *greyhoundis*. N: *grewhondis*.
- 1102 *wile*. N: *while*. The other manuscripts have *gile*.
- 1136 *ther*. N: *the*.
- 1178 *cler*. N: *cleir*. See *clere*, line 943.
- 1215 *actowne*; N: *attowne*.
- 1220 *an ax*. N: missing word, as attested in L, C, A, P (stanza missing in H).
- 1248 *Sir Libeous* written over illegible erasure.
- 1280 ff. Guide letter *r* and space three lines deep for later insertion of a decorated capital.
- 1287 *buskis*. N: *buskid*.
- 1307 *Maugus*. The scribe writes a Latin abbreviation stroke over the *a*, and it is likely that he intends the abbreviation to represent *au* rather than *an*, *Mangus*. Elsewhere the spelling *Maugus* is used.
- 1318 *knyghtis*. N: *knightti*.
- 1373 *turne*. N: *turine*.
- 1407 *nekke*. N: *hekke*.
- 1420 *there* seems to be a scribal error. The rhyme scheme is broken: A has “tho” (line 1434); L, “throo” (line 1397).
- 1440 *swore*. N: *swere*.
- 1462 *othir*. The scribe has written a thorn with a Latin abbreviation symbol for *er*, so that the word technically should be *other*. However, the scribe again adapts the Latin symbol for his normal spelling of *othir*, the usual form which appears throughout the manuscript. See the note for line 813 above.
- 1464 *After*. N: *Afer*.
- 1471 *sans faile*. N: *sam faile*.
- 1483a Missing line. L, line 1461: *A lady bright as floure*. The text in N is supplied from C.

- 1509 *Than othir wicchis fyve.* L has “other suche fyve” (line 1487), as does A (line 1522). This is one of the interesting variations where N (and LI) agrees with C, line 1425, as Mills points out (*LD*, p. 235n1425).
- 1520 *He.* N: *the.*
- 1548 *Men.* N: *me.* L, line 1526: *men clepen hit.*
- 1554 The word *towne* is written over an illegible erasure.
- 1554 A, N omit the lines L:1530–41 and the stanza L:1557–68 where the inhabitants of the castle gather refuse in order to throw it on the heads of challengers to humiliate Arthurian knights, thereby embarrassing Arthur further. A and N thus delete this insult to Arthurian knights.
- 1594 *porter.* N: *portelle.*
- 1603 *prestabelle* is unique to N: other manuscripts have some form of L’s *prophitable* (line 1593).
- 1619 Scribal interlinear correction with *r* inserted above the *g* of *greyhound*.
- 1677 *renoune.* L has *raundon* (line 1667), C *resoun* (line 1605), and A *rawndon* (line 1684).
- 1679 *To.* N: *And.* *And* does not make sense since neither really does deliver a mortal wound. They are attempting to do so, however, so “To” is a better choice of expression here.
- 1684 *he him.* N: *have and.* We have corrected this following L, line 1674, *So harde he hym hitte.*
- 1690 *and.* N: *an.*
- 1761 *Libeous.* N: *Libeouc.* Compare with the *c* in “chast” (line 1735) and in “clerkis” (line 2130). The scribe forms a minuscule *c* in two ways, the more common angular variety, and the one here where the angularity disappears. Unlike a *t* formation, the headstroke differs from the *t* headstroke and does not cross the stem, as it does in *Lambart* in the same line. This scribe often alters *s* and *c* for spellings; see the *certeyne* / *serteyne* shifts and the unique *Cinadowne* for *Sinadowne* (line 1548). *Libeouc* makes more sense as the manuscript reading in this context.
- 1779 *one.* N: *one is.*
- 1811 Scribal correction of *g* in *bring.*
- 1820 An *e* has been inserted above *makith.*
- 1834 Scribal correction of *h* to *f* in *of.*
- 1843 *Libeousis.* N: *l is.*
- 1923 *onis.* N: *enis.*
- 1967 *sans faile.* N: *samfaile.*
- 1984 Scribal correction of the *r* of *provid* over illegible erasure.
- 2017 *and.* N: *an.*
- 2024 *lame.* N: *lane.*
- 2063 *Sir Libeous.* N: *si.L.*
- 2134 ff. Missing lines. L: *Thorowe ther chauntement / To a worme thei had me went / In wo to leven and lende, / Tyll I had kyssed Gawayne* (lines 2103–06).
- 2165 Scribal correction. The scribe has written *t* above the *r* of *perly.*
- 2184 *pris.* Once more the scribe adapts the Latin abbreviation for his English spelling so that the word reads *pris*, not *pres.* See the note for line 813

above. The spelling of this word throughout the manuscript is *pris*: see lines 2237 and 1304.

- 2197 *a precious.* N: *a precious a.*
2239 *delaye.* N: *delayne.*
2283 *Ever.* N: *eur.*



LIST OF NAMES, PLACE-NAMES, AND VARIANT SPELLINGS

Agrafrayn, Agafayne

Alysander, Alysaunder, Alexaundre

Antore, Anctour, Anter, Antory, Arthore, Aunctours, Auntouris

Artour, Arthour, Arthur

Bewfiz, Beaufice, Bewfys, Beufise, Beuys

Cadas, Clewdas, Gludas, Caudas, Cludas, Claudas, Lucus

Cardiff, Cordile, Cardelof, Karlof, Cardeuyle, Kardeuyle, Kardill, Karlille, Cardigan

Carleon, Carboun, Carlioun, Karlowne, Caerleon, Skarlyon

Chapell of Awntrous, Chapel of Auentours, Aduentrous Chappell, Chapell of Antrus

Dame D'Amore, Dame Amoure, Diamour, Damore, Damour, Madam de Armoroure,
Denamowre

Delaraunche, Delarawnche, Celabronche, Celebronche, la Braunche, la Brawnche,
Dolebraunche

Denys, Denyse, Denyce

Edward, Leonarde

Elene, Ellene, Ellyne, Elyne, Hellen, Elyn

Eweyn, Iwayne

Gaweyne, Gawain, Gawyn, Gawayn

Glastynbury, Glastonbury

Gower, Gawer, Gauerer

Gyfflet, Gyrflete, Jerflete, Jeffelot, Gesloke, Gyfflet, Gyffet, Turfete

Gyffroun le Flowdous, Jeffron le Frendys, Jeffron le Freudous, Gyffroun le Fludous,

Gyffron la Fraudeus, Gefferon Lefrenceus, Geffron la Fredicus

Gyngeleyn, Gyngelain, Guinglain, Gyngelayne, Ginnglaine

Iran, Irayn, Yrayn, Iran, Irowne, Yrayne

Lambard, Lambert, Lancharde, Lanwarde, Lambarde, Lamberd, Lambardys

Launcelet, Lawncelett, Lawncelot, Launselake

Lybeaus Desconus, Libious Discoinous, Libeous Disconious, Libeus Desconuz,

Lybeus Disconeus, Libius, Libeus, Libious, Lebeous, Libeous

Maboun, Mabon, Mabownys
Maugys, Maugis, Maugus

Otes de Lyle, Otis de Lile, Otyl de la Byle

Persyfal, Persyfale, Persavale, Perceval, Percivall, Persyvall, Persyvall

Synadoun, Synadown, Synadowne, Cinadowne

Termagaunt, Turrmmagaunt
Theodeley, Deodelyne, Wyndelyn, Teddelyne

Vyolette, Violette, Violet

Wales, Walys, Walis
Wirral, Wyralle, Wirale
Wylleam, William, Will



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GLOSSARY

We have made ample use of the *Middle English Dictionary* in compiling this glossary. If there is variation in spelling, the Lambeth spelling occurs first, followed by the Naples spelling.

aketowne, actowne, acton *a quilted or padded jacket worn under armor*
algate *straightaway, at once*
aplyght, aplight *an expression used to add emphasis*
ar *see or*
arblast *weapon consisting of a bow set on a shaft, i.e., a crossbow*
arsoun *uptilted front or back of a saddle*
asise *custom or practice; a standard of measure*

barme *breast, bosom; arms*
bassnet, basnet *a light helmet worn under the fighting helmet*
bawndon, bandowne *control, power, governance*
besette *surround, besiege; simply protect*
beyete, bigete *advantage, gain*
bidene *all together; all told*
bileve *leave it where it is, turn away from*
bilevyd *departed; died*
blawndenere, blandere *rich fur, possibly ermine*
blynne *stop, cease*
bone *petition, request*
borde *dining table, table of honor*
bowne, bownde, boune *ready, prepared*
braid, breid *a moment*
bras *impale; break to pieces*

brond(e) *torch; torch stick*
bround *burnt; blackened*
browne, broun *polished brightly*
bryght, bright *fresh, beautiful, splendid*
burgeys, burgeis *free citizen of a town*

can *see con*
cantel *chunk, piece, slice*
cheiris, cheyers *chairs*
chepyng *marketplace*
chorle *any person not belonging to the nobility or clergy*
con, can *understands how to use; knows*
coped, kopid *wearing a cloak*
cor, corps, course, kose *a dead body, corpse; the body (as distinct from soul); head or limbs*
corcis *corset or corselet; breastplate*
cornelle *corner or angle of a building; front*
covery, coverid *recover, recovered*
cromponis *setting for jewelry*
cropoune *hindquarters of an animal*

destere, desture *a riding horse (as opposed to a warhorse)*
dight *arranged; adorned*
dissoures *storytellers, minstrels*
doughti, doughty *valiant, fierce in combat, bold*
drawght, draught *blow of a sword*
durye, dury *endure*

- egir** *fierce, enraged; eager*
empris *enterprise, chivalric adventure*
entent *wish, desire, will*
envye *hatred, ill will*
errour(e) *anger, wrath*
- falle** *many*
fange, fyngē *seize*
fare *travel*
fassyon, facion *physical appearance, figure, shape, face, presence; fashion*
fauchone, fouchone *sword*
fax *hair of the head*
fellowne, feloun *treachery*
felwet *velvet*
fenne *swamp, mud, dirt, trash*
ferde *suitable, appropriate to*
ferli *terrifying, terrible*
fond *put forth one's best effort*
foreward *agreement*
frede *experienced, felt*
freke *a brave man, warrior, man-at-arms*
fyngē *see fange*
- gestours** *reciters, storytellers*
gorger, gorgare *the piece of armor that protects the neck*
grede *proclaim or announce*
grise *terrible, frightening*
grom, grome *a boy, youth, young man*
gryce, grys *gray; robe made of fur (possibly Russian gray squirrel)*
gynne, gyne *ingenious device*
- hende, hynde** *courtly, gracious, noble*
hete *anger*
hight, yhight *was called; had promised*
- ilke** *each; the same; that*
- jepowne** *a light tunic*
- kopid** *see coped*
korvelle *corbel, an ornamental projection jutting out from a wall, supporting the weight of a tower or window*
- kythe, kithe** *make known, reveal*
- lavender** *laundry*
lawnder, lavender *washerwoman, laundress*
- laye, lei** *obedience to law, allegiance to oath, faith*
- laynore** *a thong or strap, possibly of a helmet*
- lefe** *eager, willing*
leman, lemmoun *lover, paramour*
lende *dwell, rest*
leese, les *lies, used in the formula "without lees" (without lies, truly)*
- lesyngē** *lying*
lewte *honor*
lithe *be attentive*
loose, loce, lose, los *reputation*
lorne *lost*
louge, lought(e) *laughed*
loute, lowte *bow, prostrate oneself*
lowe *hill, mountain*
lynnell, lengels *straps of a charger's harness*
- mawmentis** *representations of a pagan deity, idols*
mayne, maigne *retinue, attendants*
moolde, molde *head, crown of the head*
- nete** *beast; ox, heifer, cow*
noye *annoyance, wrath*
- or, ar, er** *before*
outrage *inappropriate or excessive action, possibly violence; unchivalric deed(s)*
overthwart *across, lying crossways*
- palfaray, palfray** *a riding horse (as opposed to a warhorse)*
pare *cut, trim*
pay(e) *pleasure, satisfaction, liking*
pertte, pert *attractive*
pesawe, pesyn *ornamental collar attached to helmet*
plax *braided hair of head, beard*

preson, presond *present, gift*
prestabelle (v.) *eager to serve, capable in service*
prestabelle (adj.) *remarkable*
pris, price *fame, renown, worthiness, nobility, reputation; worthy*
prove, preve *test, put to trial*
prowe *well-being, honor*

quede *evil; wickedness*
quyte, quite *repay, requite*
qwelled, yquelde *killed, destroyed*

rasshe *tear up (see **to-rasshe**)*
raught *reached*
reddе, rede *tell, recount, narrate*
resound *speech, discourse, debate*
rice *branch, stem*
ruffyne *reddish in color*
ryffe, ryve *abundantly, frequently*

sawe *declaration, proverb*
shawe, schawe *forest, thicket, foliage*
shent, yschent *harmed, defiled*
socoure *help, assistance*
soth(e) *truth*
splete *metal plate for reinforcing armor*
stark(e) *strongly made, solid*
stent(e) *an assessed value*
stert *jumped up and faced; turned abruptly*
stif(e) *mighty, stalwart, fierce*
store *powerful, unyielding, solid, strongly built*
stound *period of time, time*
stout(e) *strong or valiant; noble or arrogant; proud, splendidly built*
stythe, stithe *hardy, strong*

tho *then, at that time*
thore *there, at that time*
thorowe, throwe *short period of time; quickly*
thrytte *tested, proven, faithful*
to-rasshe *tear up*
trappes, trappis *ornamental, usually decorated, coverings of a horse*
trewthe *oath, promise*
trompours *trumpeters*
tyte, tide *quickly, hastily*

uncowthe *unknown, unidentified*
unsaught *hostile, angry; engaged in combat*

ventayle, ventaile *lower part of a helmet*
vis, vise *face*

warra, ware *shrewd, alert, wise*
wende, wynde *travel, depart*
were, weire *protect, provide defense*
wight *courageous, valiant; powerful*
witen, wote *know(s), understand(s)*
witty, witti *intelligent, discerning*
wode *deranged, insane*
wone *building, residence*
wowe *affliction, distress*

yare *ready, prepared*
yave *gave*
yfett, yfette *provided, procured, fetched*
ykidde *born*
ylore *received instruction, taught*
yode *went*
yorne *enthusiastic, keen, eager*