

him that he would shield him while he was in that place, and bring him back again unharmed. And he promised him to do so, being overjoyed at the rare music. Then he went on farther until he met the fell goddesses that men of the people call Parcae,⁵ saying that they know no respect for any man, but punish each according to his deeds; and they are said to rule each man's fate. And he began to implore their kindness; and they fell to weeping with him. Again he went on, and all the dwellers in hell ran to meet him, and fetched him to their king;⁶ and all began to speak with him and join in his prayer. And the ever-moving wheel, that Ixion king of the Levitas⁷ was bound to for his guilt, stood still for his harping, and King Tantalus,⁸ that was in this world greedy beyond measure, and whom that same sin of greed followed there, had rest, and the vulture, it is said, left off tearing the liver of King Ticcus⁹, whom he had thus been punishing. And all the dwellers in hell had rest from their tortures whilst he was harping before the king. Now when he had played a long, long time, the king of hell's folk cried out, saying, 'Let us give the good man his wife, for he hath won her with his harping.' Then he bade him be sure never to look back once he was on his way thence; if he looked back, he said, he should forfeit his wife. But love may hardly, nay, cannot be denied! Alas and well-a-day! Orpheus led his wife along with him, until he came to the border of light and darkness, and his wife was close behind. He had but stepped into the light when he looked back towards his wife, and immediately she was lost to him.

These fables teach every man that would flee from the darkness of hell and come to the light of the True Goodness that he should not look towards his old sins, so as again to commit them as fully as he once did. For whosoever with entire will turneth his mind back to the sins he hath left, and then doeth them and taketh full pleasure in them, and never after thinketh of forsaking them, that man shall lose all his former goodness, unless he repent.¹

5. Parcae is here used in error; it is the Latin name for the Fates, the three goddesses who respectively hold the distaff, spin out, and cut the thread of one's life. As the subsequent account indicates, the reference here is in fact to the three Furies, winged goddesses who brought vengeance upon those who had gone unpunished for their crimes.

6. I.e., Hades (also known as Pluto), king of the dead, god of the underworld.

7. As punishment for attempting to seduce the goddess Hera, Ixion is bound in the underworld to an eternally revolving wheel.

8. This figure gives his name to his punishment. For the crime of a greed directly offensive to the gods (different versions of the legend change the details of the crime), Tantalus is deprived of food and water, and yet tantalized with fruit suspended over his head and with water which rises to his neck; the food and water withdraw if he moves to consume them.

9. For assaulting the goddess Leto, the giant Tityus is tied down forever to have vultures devour his constantly regenerated liver.

1. Boethius's moral is briefer and more allusive, to the effect that all hard-won (moral) excellence is lost to one who gazes back on infernal things.

Sir Launfal¹

Apart from employing a smattering of traditional Arthurian lore—such as the details of King Arthur's court and his marriage (ll. 13–42)—*Sir Launfal* is notable for being an inventive composite of motifs and events which could have been taken from any number of medieval tales. For instance, the tournament at Arthur's court (ll. 433–504) and the "Valentyne" escapade (ll. 505–612)—both episodes unique to this version of the story—may in part have been suggested by similar episodes in the Middle English romances of *Libeaus Desconus* (thought also to have been written by the *Launfal* poet, ll. 769 ff.) and *Guy of Warwick* (ll. 895 ff. and 1261 ff., known episodic sources for *Libeaus*). Occasional details suggest the further influence of other romances and *chansons de geste* (cf. ll. 327, 561, and notes thereto).

The poem's nominal source is the Old French *lai* of *Lanval*, written by the great poet Marie de France in the last third of the twelfth century (and probably sometime before 1189). A more immediate source, however, would have been a relatively faithful Middle English translation of *Lanval* very close to that represented by the poem *Sir Landevale*, here printed. The dependency of *Sir Launfal* on such a text is evident in the many lines repeated verbatim and other close verbal echoes; we also know, however, that *Launfal* occasionally reflects the peculiarities of yet other surviving English versions of the story, perhaps even a specific version of Marie's *Lanval*.² A comparison with *Landevale* nevertheless provides invaluable insights into the methodological and aesthetic proclivities of the *Launfal* poet—notably in the ways in which the extremes of *Launfal*'s success and failure are amplified and their measure taken. At the same time it ought to be said that, for all its arabesques, *Launfal* is not necessarily a better poem than *Landevale*.³

The next most important influence on *Sir Launfal* is a version of the Old French *lai* of *Graelent*, a close (non-Arthurian) analogue to, and itself quite

1. Editions and translations of the texts mentioned in this headnote, as well as references to related scholarship, are cited in the Selected Bibliography. On the date of the poem, see the leading footnote to the edition proper. For an overview of the backgrounds of Arthurian literature, see the headnote to selections from Chrétien's *Yvain*, pp. 329 ff.

2. Cf., for instance, the notes to ll. 50, 422, and 618 of *Sir Launfal*. For further insights into the possible links between *Launfal* and other versions (namely *Sir Lambewell* from the Percy Folio MS—about the MS, see the leading Sources and Backgrounds footnote to *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, p. 380—and *Sir Lamwell*, surviving fragmentarily in Cambridge University Library MS Kk.v.30 and in two printed fragments: 1) Malone 941 and 2) Douce Fragments e.40, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), see the review by M. Mills cited in the Selected Bibliography.

3. A case could be made, however, for arguing that *Launfal* was written for comic ends and that this has been accomplished with tantalizing skill; see, for instance, the article by Carol Nappholz cited in the Selected Bibliography.

possibly a source for, Marie's *Lanval*. Sir *Launfal* appears to be indebted to *Graelent* for the following: (1) the episode of the Queen's selective generosity which in turn makes the knight destitute (*Launfal*, ll. 67-72; in *Graelent* the Queen of Brittany, whose amorous advances have been rejected by the knight, Graelent, advises the King to withhold his pay); (2) the assistance given to the ostracized knight by the landlord's daughter (*Launfal*, ll. 191-216); (3) the episode of the knight's waiting in his chamber and the subsequent arrival of a procession of gifts (*Launfal*, ll. 373-420); (4) the details of the knight's loss upon betraying the existence of his mistress (*Launfal*, ll. 733-44).

Sir Landevale†

- Sothly,° by° Arthurys day
 Was Bretayn yn grete° nobley,°
 For, yn hys tyme, a grete whyle°
 He sojourned° at Carlile;¹
 5 He had with hym a meyné° there,
 As he had ellyswhere,
 Of the Rounde Table the knyghtys all,
 With myrth° and joye yn hys hall.
 Of eache lande yn the worlde wyde°
 10 There cam men on every syde—
 Yonge knyghtys and squyers
 And othir bolde bachelers°—
 For-to se° that nobley
 That was with Arthur allwey;°
 15 For ryche yeftys° and tresour
 He gayf° to eache man of honour.
 With hym there was a bachiller
 [(And hadde° y-be° well many a yer°),]
 A yong° knyght of mucche myght;
 20 Sir Landevale, forsoith,° he hight.
 Sir Landevale spent blythely°
 And yaf° yeftys largely;°
 So wildely his goode° he sett°
 That he fell yn grete dette.
 25 [Then he began to mak his moane:°]²
- Truly/by, in
 great/nobility, high regard
 while
 resided
 company, retinue
 mirth
 wide
 young men
 see
 always
 gifts
 gave
 had/been/year
 young
 forsooth, truly/was called
 gladly
 gave/generously
 property, wealth/spent
 debt
 complaint

† Text of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C. 86, ff. 119v-128r, printed with permission of the Bodleian Library. The manuscript dates from the very late fifteenth century, possibly the early sixteenth century; the poem's date of composition (as a translation from French) is held to have been in the first half of the fourteenth century. The poem is written in nominally four-stress rhyming couplets. Unless otherwise stated, lines in square brackets are supplied from *Sir Launfal* where a lacuna is obvious and the rhyme suggests little deviation from the original; "[. . .]" indicates a line which is missing (to judge from the rhyme) and cannot be reconstructed.

1. Carlisle (about which, see *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, l. 2, n. 1.)

2. Line supplied from Cambridge University Library MS Kk.v.30 (*Sir Lamwell*).

- "Who hath no good, goode can he none—"³
 And I am here in uncuth londe
 And no gode have under honde.
 Men will me hold for a wrech;
 30 Where I become, I ne reche!"⁴
 He lepe° upon a coursier,°
 Withoute grome° or squier,
 And rode forth yn a mornynge
 To dryve away longynge.
 35 Then he takyth° toward the west,
 Betwene a water° and a forest.
 The sonne was hote° that undermytde;°
 He lyght° adowne, and wold abyde,
 For he was hote yn the weddir.°
 40 Hys mantell° he toke and fold° togeder;°
 Than lay downe that knyght so free°
 Undre the shadow of a tree.
 "Alas!" he said, "no good I have.
 How shall I doo? I can not cravel!"⁵
 45 All the knyghtys that ben° so feers,°
 Of the Rounde Table they were my pyers;°
 Every man of me was glade,°
 And now they be for me full saide."
 "Alas! Alas!" was his songe;
 50 Sore° wepyng, his hondis° he wronge.°
 Thus he lay yn sorow full sore.
 Than he sawe, comynge oute of holtys° hore,°
 Owte of the forest cam° maydyns two,
 The fayrest on grounde that myght goo.°
 55 Kyrtlys° they had of purpyl° sendell,°
 Small° i-lasid,° syttyng° welle;
 Mantels of grene velvet,
 Frengid° with gold were° wele i-sette.
 They had on° atyre° therewithall°,
 60 And eache of them a joly cornall,°
 With facys° white as lely° floure,
 With ruddy, rede°-as-rose colour.°
 Fayrer women never he see;
 They semyd° angels of hevin° hie.°
 65 That on° bare° a gold basyn,
 That othir a towail,° riche and fyn.
- leaped/charger
 groom, servant
 lakes, turns
 stream
 hot/morning
 alighted, dismounted
 weather
 cloak/folded/together
 magnanimous, gracious
 are/fierce
 peers
 glad
 sad
 Sorely, Bitterly/hands/wrung
 woods/gray, ancient
 came
 go
 Frocks/purple/silk
 Tightly/laced/fitting
 Fringed/wire
 over/attire, clothing/with that
 coronet
 faces/lily
 red/coloring, complexion (of cheek)
 seemed/heaven/high
 one/bore
 towel

3. I.e., he who has no wealth can do no good. (Landevale is the speaker.)

4. And I am here in an unfamiliar land and have no wealth to hand. Men will treat me as an outcast; I do not know what will become of me! (The implication that Landevale is a foreigner comes from Marie de France's *Lanval*, ll. 27-28, where it is noted that the knight, though a king's son, held his heritage far away.)

5. I.e., I do not know where to ask for help.

To hymwarde com the maydyns gent.^o
 The knyght anon agaynse^o hem went;
 "Welcom" he said, "damsels fre."
 70 "Sir knyght", they seid, "Wel thu be.⁶
 My lady, that is as bright as floure,^o
 The gretith, Landavale, paramour;^o
 Ye must come and speke with her—
 Yef^o it be your will, sir."
 75 "I graunt,"^o he said, "blythely,"^o
 And went with them hendly.^o
 Anone he in that forest sy^o
 A pavilion,^o i-pight an hy⁷
 With treysour i-wrought^o on every syde,
 80 Al of werke of the faryse.^o
 Eche^o pomell^o of that pavilion
 Was worth a citie,^o or a towne;
 Upon the cupe^o an heron was—
 A richer nowher ne was;
 85 In his mouthe a carboncle,^o bright
 As the mone^o that shone light.
 Kyng Alexander the conquerour,
 Ne Salamon^o yn hys honour,
 Ne Charlemayn^o the riche kyng—
 90 They had never suche a thing.
 He founde yn that pavilion
 The Kyngys doughter of Amylion⁸
 That ys an ile^o of the fayré
 In occian,^o full faire to see.
 95 There was a bede^o of mekyll^o price,^o
 Coverid with purpill byse,^o
 Thereon lay that maydyn bright,
 Almost nakyd, and upright.
 Al her clothes byside her lay;
 100 Syngly^o was she wrappyd,^o parfay,^o
 With a mauntell of hermyn,^o
 Coverid^o was with alexanderyn.^o
 The mantell for^o hete down she dede^o
 Right to hir gyrdillstede.^o
 105 She was white as lely^o in May,
 Or snowe that fallith yn wynterday;
 Blossom on brere,^o ne no floure,
 Was not like^o to her coloure—
 The rede rose whan it is newe

gracious, noble
toward

flower
with love

If
grant, agree/with pleasure

graciously

saw

pavilion, tent

wrought

fairies

Each/finial sphere

city

top

carbuncle, rubious gem

moon

Solomon

Charlemagne

isle, island

occident, the west

bed/much, great/value

linen

Solely/wrapped, covered/indeed

ermine

(Which) covered/alexandrine purple

because of/(un)did

waist

lily

brier

comparable

6. (May) it be well with you.

7. Pitched high aloft.

8. I.e., the daughter of the King of Amylion. (The name is a corruption of Marie de France's Avalun, or Avalon—about which see *Sir Launfal*, l. 149, n.)

110 To her rud^o is not^o of hewe.^o
 Her heire^o shon as gold wire—
 Noman can tell^o her atyre.
 "Landavale," she seid, "myn hert swete,⁹
 For thy love now I swete.^o
 115 There is kyng ne emperour—
 And^o I lovyyd hym, paramor,
 As moche as I do the—
 But he wold be full glad of me."
 Landevale beheld the maydyn bright;
 120 Her love persyd^o hys hert right.
 He sette hym down by her syde:
 "Lady," quod^o he, "whatso^o betyde,^o
 Evermore, lowde and stylle,
 I am redy at your wyll."¹¹
 125 "Sir knyght," she said, "curteyse and hend,^o
 I know thy state,^o every ende.^o
 Wilt thou truliche^o the to me take,^o
 And all other for me forsake?
 And I will yeve^o the grette honoure,
 130 Gold inough,^o and grete tresour;
 Hardely^o spende largely!^o
 Yife yeftys blythely!^o
 Spend and spare not!—for my love.
 Thou shalt inough to thy behove."¹²
 135 Tho^o she said to his desyre,^o
 He clyppid^o her abowte the swire^o
 And kyssyd her many a sith.^o
 For her profer^o he thankyd hir swyth.^o
 This lady was son^o up sette,^o
 140 And bad hir maydyns mete^o fette,^o
 And to thir^o handys water clere,
 And sothyn^o went to soupe.^o
 Bothe they togedirs^o sette;
 The maydyns servyd theym of mete—
 145 Of mete and dryng^o they had plentie,
 Of all thing that was deynté.^o
 After soper the day was gone;
 To bedde they went both anon.
 All that nyght they ley yn-fere^o
 150 And did what^o thir will were—
 For pley they slepyd litill that nyght.
 Tho^o it began to dawne^o light;
 "Landavale," she said, "goo hens^o now.

complexion (of cheek)/nothing/color

hair

describe

sweat, perspire

If

pierced

said/whatsoever/happens

gracious

condition/aspect

truly/betake

give

enough, in plenty

Boldly/generously

gladly

Then, At that time/liking

clasped, embraced/neck

time

offer/at once

soon/sitting

food/fetch

their

thence/supper

together

drink

choice, delicious

together

whatever

dawn

hence

9. I.e., sweetheart.

11. I.e., in every way (*lit.* loud and quiet) I am prepared to do your will.

12. You shall have enough for your need.

Gold and sylver take with you,
 155 Spend largely on every man—
 I will fynd you inough than.
 And when ye will,° gentil knyght,
 Speke° with me, any night
 To sum° derne° stede° ye goo,
 160 And thynke on me, soo and soo;³
 Anon to you shall I tee.°
 Ne make ye never bost° of me!
 And yff thou doyst,° beware beforne°—
 For thow hast my love forlorn!
 165 The maydeyns bringe hys horse anon;
 He toke hys leve, and went sone.°
 Of tresour he hath grete plentie,
 And ridith forth ynto the cieté.°
 He comyth hom to hys in,°
 170 And mery he makyth hym therin.
 Hys sylf he clothyd full richely,
 Hys squyer, hys yoman,° honestly.°
 Landavale makyth° nobile festys;°
 Landavale clothys the pore gestys;°
 175 Landavale byith° grette stedys;°
 Landavale yevyth riche wedys;°
 Landavale rewaredith religionse,°
 And acquiteth the presons;°
 Landavale clothes gaylours;°
 180 Landavale doith° each man honours.
 Of his largesse eche man wote;°
 But how it comyth,° noman wote.
 And he will, dern or stelle,
 Hys love ys redy at his wylle.⁴
 185 Upon a tyme, Sir Gawyn
 The curteys knyght, and Sir Ewayn,
 And Sir Landavale with them also,
 And othir knyghtys twente° or moo,°
 Went to play° theym° on a grene°
 190 Under the towre where was the Quene.
 Thyse knyghtys with borde⁵ playd tho;
 Atte the last to daunsyng° they goo:
 Sir Landavale was to-fore° i-sette°—
 For his largesse he was lovyd the bette.°
 195 The Quene hersylf beheld this all;
 "Yender,"° she said, "ys Landavall.

would
 Speak
 some/secret/place

come
 boast
 do/in advance

soon
 city
 inn, lodging

yeoman/decently
 arranges/feasts
 guests
 buys/steeds
 clothes
 religious orders
 prisoners
 gaolers, jailers
 does (to)
 knows
 comes

twenty/more
 amuse/themselves/green, lawn

dancing
 in front/placed
 best

Yonder, There

3. I.e., in one way or another.

4. If he wills it, secretly or quietly, his beloved is immediately at hand.

5. I.e., at a board game (probably backgammon).

Of all the knyghtys that ben here
 There is none so faire a bachyler;
 And° he have noder° leman° ne wyf,°
 200 I wold he lovyde me as° his lif.
 Tide° me good or tyde me ille,
 I wille assay° the knyghtys wille."
 She toke with her a company,
 Of faire laydys thyrti;°
 205 She goith adown anonrighytys°
 For-to daunce with the knyghtys.
 The Quene yede to the first° ende
 (Betwene Landavale and Gawyn so hend)
 And all her maydens forth aright,°
 210 One-be-one, betwyxt° eche knyght.
 Whan the daunsyng was i-slakyd,°
 The Quen Landavale to° concell° hath takyd.°
 "Shortely,"° she said, "thu gentil knyght,
 I the love with all my myght,
 215 And as moche desire I the° yere°
 As the Kyng—and moche more!
 Gode° hap° is to the tanne°
 To love more me° than any woman."
 "Madame," he said, "be° God, nay!
 220 I wil be traitour never, parfay;
 I have do the Kyng oth and feaulté—
 He shall not be traid° for° me!"
 "Fy!" said she, "thow fowle° coward!
 An harlot° ribawde,° I wote, thou harte!
 225 That thow livest, it is pitie;°
 Thow lovyst no woman, ne no woman the!"
 The knyght was agreved° thoo;°
 He her ansurid° and said, "Noo!
 Madame," quod he, "thu seist thi will,⁸
 230 Yet can I love dern° and stelle,°
 And am i-loved, and have a leman
 As gentill and as faire as° any man.
 The semplest° maide with her, I wene,°
 Over the may be a quene."
 235 Tho was she ashamyd and wroth.
 She clepid° her maydens bothe;
 To bede° she goith alle drery;°
 For doole° she wold dye, and was sory.°
 The Kyng cam from huntynge,

If/ neither/ lover/ wife
 as (much as)
 Betide
 assay, test

thirty
 immediately

leading

properly
 between
 dwindled

(In) to/ confidence/ taken
 In short

thee/ eagerly

Good/ luck/ brought

by

betrayed/ because of
 foul

scoundrel/ villainous/ art, are
 (a) pity

offended/ then
 answered

secretly/ quietly

as (has)
 simplest, plainest/ believe

called
 bed/ dreary, miserable
 sadness/ sorrowful

6. I.e., to love me more.

7. I.e., I have sworn an oath of fealty (a solemn feudal contract of loyalty) to the King.

8. I.e., say what you will.

240 Glade and blithe yn all thing,
And to the Quene can he tee.⁹
Anon she fel upon her knee;
Wonder° lowde° can she crie,
"Al! helpe me, lorde, or I die!
245 I spake to Landavale on a game,¹
And he besought me of shame°
As a foule viced° tratour;
He wold have done me dishonour—
And of a leman bost he maide°
250 That werst° maide that she hade
Myght be a quene over me—
And all, lorde, in dispite of the!"
The Kyng wax° wondir wroth,
And forthwith swore hys othe
255 That Landavale shulde bide° by the lawe—
Be bothe hangyd and drawe°—
And commanded .iiii.° knyghtys
To fetche "the traitour" anonrightys,
They° .iiii. fechyng° hym anon.
260 But Landavale was to chamber gone;
Alas, he hath hys love forlorne!—
As she warnyd hym beforne.
Ofte he clepid° her, and sought,
And yet it gayneth hym nought.
265 He wept and sobbet° with rufull° cry,
And on hys kneys° he askyth mercy;
[He bet° hys body and hys hedde ek,°]
And cursed hys mouth that of hir spake.
"O!" he said, "Gentill creature,
270 How shall my wrechyd body endure,
That worldys° blysse° hath forlore
And her that I am under arest° for,
With suche sorowe?—alas that stounde!"
With that he fel dede° on the grounde,
275 So long° that the knyghtys comyn°
And ther so they hym namyn°,
And as theff° hym ladde° soo
(Than was his sorow doble° woo!°)
He was brought before the Kyng.
280 Thus he hym grete° at the begynnyng:
"Thow atteynt° takyn° traytour,
Besoughtest thou my wiff° of dishonour?
That she was lothely thou dedist° upbrayde,
That of thy leman the lest° mayde°

9. And he made his way to the Queen.

1. I.e., in jest, in play.

Wondrously/loud

shameful act
depravedmade
worst

grew

abide
drawn, disemboweled
four

Those/fetching

called (for)

sobbed/rueful, piteous
knees
beat/alsoearthly/delight
arest
momentdeathly, as if dead
untill/came
took up(a) thief/led away
(a) double/woe, sorrowgreeted
attainted, convicted/captured
wifedid/reproach
least/maid

285 Was fayrer than ys my wyff—
Therefore shalt thou lose thy lyffe!"
Landavale ansuryd at hys borde²
And told hym the sothe,° every worde,
That it was nothing so—
290 And he was redy for-to die tho°
That° all the countrey wold looke°
Twelve knyghtys were drevyn to a boke³
The soth to say, and no leese,°
Alltogedir as° it was.
295 Thise .xii.° wist°, withouten wene°,
All the maner° of the Quene:
The Kyng was good, all aboute,
And she was wyckyd, oute and oute—
For she was of suche comforte°
300 She lovye men ondir° her lorde.
Therby° wist thei it was all
Longe on her, and not on Landewalle.⁴
Herof they quyten° hym as treue° men,
And sith° spake they farder° then,
305 That yf he myght hys leman bryng,
Of whom he maide knolishyng°—
And yef° her maydenyse° bryght and shyne
Wern fairer than the Quene
In maykyng°, semblaunt°, and hewe°—
310 They wold quyte hym gode and true;
Yff he ne myght stonnd thertill,⁵
Thann° to be at the Kyngys will.
This verdite° thei yef to-fore° the Kyng.
The day was sett her for-to bryng;
315 Borowys° he founde to com ayen°,
Sir Gawyn and Sir Ewyn.
"Alas!" quod° he, "now shall I die;
My love shall I never see with ee!"
Ete ne drynke wold° he never,
320 But wepyng° and sorowyng° evir
(Syres, sare° sorow hath he nom;°
He wold hys endyng day wer com,
That he myght ought° of lif goo!)
Every man was for hym woo;
325 For larger° knyght than he
Was ther never yn that countrey.
The day i-sett° com on hyngne;°

truth

then

(If) that/foresee, ordain

lies

how

twelve/knew/doubt

habits

constitution (that), temperament (that)

besides

Therefore

acquitted/true

since, thereafter/further

acknowledgment

if/maidens

proportion/appearance/complexion

Then

verdict/before

Guarantors, Sureties/again

said

eye

desired

weeping/grieving

sore, painful/taken

out

more generous

appointed/quickly

2. I.e., in his place. (A trial setting is implied.)

3. See *Sir Launfal*, l. 786, n.4. See *Sir Launfal*, l. 794, n.

5. (And) if he could not abide by that (proposal).

His borowys hym brought before the Kyng.
 The Kyng lett recorte^o tho
 330 The sewt^o and the answer^o also,
 And bad hym bryng his [lef^o]⁶ in syght;
 Landevall sayd that he ne myght.
 Tho were comaundyd the barons alle
 To gyve judgement on Sir Landevall.
 335 Then sayd the Erle of Cornwayll
 That was att the councell,
 "Lordyngys, ye wott^o the Kyng oure lord;
 His oun mowth beryth^o record
 That yf we go by the lawe,
 340 Landevale is worthy to be drawe.
 Butt greatt vilany^o were therupon
 To fordo^o suche a man,
 That is more large^o and fre^o
 Then^o eny^o of us that here be.
 345 Therefore, by oure read,^o
 We woll the Kyng in suche a way lede^o
 That he shall comaund hym to goo
 Oute of this land for evermo."⁷
 While they stode thus spekyng,
 350 They sawe in-fere^o cum rydyng
 Two maydyns, whyte as flower,
 On whyte palfrays,^o with honour.
 So fayre creaturys with yen^o
 (Ne better attyrd^o) were never seen.
 355 Alle the^o judgyd theym so sheen
 That over Dame Gaynour they myght be a queen.
 Then sayd Gawen, that curteys knyght,
 "Landevale, care the no-wyght!⁷
 Here comyth thy leman, kynde i-core,⁸
 360 For whom thow art anoied^o sore."
 Landevale lokyd and said, "Nay, i-wysse!^o
 My leman of hem ther non is."
 Thise maidens come so riding
 Into the castell, befor the King.
 365 They light adowni, and grete hym so,
 And besought hym of a chamber tho,
 A place for their lady that was cummyng.
 Than said Arthour, the nobill King,
 "Who is your lady, and what to done?"⁹

6. The manuscript reads "borowis" (guarantors, sureties), which makes no sense, given that the presence of these figures is noted three lines above; the supplied reading is from *Sir Launfal*, l. 832.

7. I.e., let nothing worry you!

8. Of such choice nature.

9. Who is your lady, and what (is she) to do?

*be recounted
 suit, charge/verdict
 love*

*Sirs/know
 bears*

*dishonor
 destroy
 generous/magnanimous*

*Than/any
 advice
 lead, direct*

evermore

together

*riding horses
 eyes
 dressed
 they*

*troubled
 to be sure*

370 "Lord," quod^o they, "ye may wetyn^o sone."
 The King lete,^o for her sake,
 The fairest chamber to be take,^o
 Thise maidens gon to bowre^o on hye.
 Than said the King to his baronye,
 375 "Have i-do,^o and gyve jugement!"
 The barones saide, "Verament,^o
 We have beholde these maidens bright—
 We will do anonright."¹
 A new speche began they tho;
 380 Summe said wele,² and summe said not so.
 Summe wolde hym to dethe deem—^o
 The King their lorde for to queme,^o
 Summe hym wolde make clere.^o
 And while they spake thus in-fere,^o
 385 Other maidens ther commyn tho;
 Well more fairer than the other two—
 Riding upon moilés^o of Spayne,^o
 Bothe sadellys and bridels of Almayn—^o
 They were i-clothed in atire;
 390 And eache a man had grete desire
 To beholde her gentrise,^o
 They came in so faire assise.^o
 Than sade Gawyn the hend,
 "Landevale, broder, heder thou wende!³
 395 Here comyth thy love—thou maist wel se!
 That one herof, I wote,^o ys she."
 Landevale,^o with dropyng^o thought:^o L. (said thus)/depressed/countenance
 "Nay, alas, I know them nought;
 I ne wote who they beith,^o
 400 Ne whens they com, ne whethir they lith."⁴
 These maidens reden^o ynto the paleys,^o
 Right afore the Kyngys deys,^o
 And gretith^o hym and his Quene ek.^o
 That on^o of them thise wordys spake:
 405 "Sir, riche Kyng Arthure,
 Lete dight^o thyn hall with honour,
 Bothe rofe^o and grounde and wallys
 With clothys of gold and riche pallys;
 Yet^o it is lothely,^o yef^o thou so doo,
 410 My lady for-to light^o therto."
 The Kyng said, "So shall it be;
 My lady ys welcom, and soo be ye."

*said/know
 allowed
 chosen
 bower*

*done
 Truly*

*sentence
 please
 innocent
 together*

*mules/Spain
 Germany*

*good manners, breeding
 setting*

know, am sure

are

ride/palace

dais

greet/also

one

adorn

ceiling

hangings

*Otherwise/loathly/unless
 alight, dismount*

1. We have now seen the splendid maidens—we will act immediately (to reconsider).

2. Some spoke of (Landevale's) good fortune.

3. There you go!

4. I.e., nor whence they came, nor whither they go.

- He bade Sir Gawyn bryng hem yn-fere
 With honour ther° the othir° were.
 415 The Quen therfore trowid° of gyle,⁵
 That Landevale shuld he holpyn° in a while
 Of° his leman that ys comyng;
 She cried, and said, "Lorde and Kyng,
 And° thow lovyst thyn honour
 420 I were° avenged on that tratour;
 To sle Landevale thu woldest not spare°—
 Thy barons do thy besmare!"⁵
 While she spake thus to the Kyng
 They saw where cam ridyng
 425 A lady, herself all alone—
 On erthe fayrer was never none—
 On a white palfrey comlye°
 (There nesse° kyng that hath gold ne fee°
 That myght by° that palfrey
 430 Withoute sellyng of lond away!)
 This lady was bright as blossom on brere°—
 Her yeen° lofsum,° bright and clere—
 Jentyll and jolyff° as birde° on bowgh,⁶
 In all thing faire ynowgh.⁶
 435 As rose in May her rude° was rede,
 Here here° shynyng on her hede
 As gold wyre° yn sonn° bright.
 In this worlde nas so faire a wight.⁶
 A crown was upon her hede,
 440 Al of precious stones and gold rede;⁶
 Clothid she was yn purpyll pall,⁶
 Her body gentill and medill° smale;⁶
 The pane° of hir mantell, inwarde,⁶
 On hir harmes° she foldid owtewarde,
 445 Whiche wel becam that lady.
 There white grehoundys went hyr by;
 A sparowhauke she bare upon hir hand.
 A softe° paas° her palfrey comaunde;⁶
 Throw the citie rode she
 450 For° every man shuld hir see.
 Wiff and childe, yong and olde,
 Al com hir to byholde;
 There was man ne woman that myght
 Be wery° of so faire a sight.
 455 Also° son° as Landevale hir see,
 To all the lordys he cryed on he,⁷

5. I.e., your barons make a mockery of you!

6. Red gold (about which, see *Havelok*, l. 47, n.)

7. On high, aloud.

there (where) / others
 imagined / guile, trickery

helped
 By

If
 would be
 refrain

attractive
 is not / property
 buy

brier
 eyes / lovely
 merry / bird / bough
 enough, in plenty
 complexion (of cheek)
 hair
 wire, thread / sun
 person

cloth
 waist / narrow
 side / inward, on the inside
 arms

gentle / pace / established

So that

weary, tired
 As / soon

- "Now comyth my love! Now comyth my swete!
 Now comyth she° my bale° shall beete!⁸ she (who) / suffering / relieve, cure
 Now I have her seyn with myn ee!
 460 I ne reke° when that I dye."
 The damsell com rydyng stoute° care
 (in a) stately (manner)
 Alone yn the citie throwoute,
 Throw the palys ynto the hall
 Ther° was the Kyng and the Quene all.
 465 Her .iiii. maidens with gret honour
 Agayne° her came oute of the bowre,⁸
 And held her steroppys° so;
 The lady dyd alight tho,
 And they gently can hyr grete,
 470 And she hym° with wordys swete.
 The Quene and othir ladyes stoute
 Behelde her all aboute;
 They to° her were also° donn°
 (compared, next) to / as / dun, dark
 As the monelyght° to the sonne!
 475 Than every man had grete deynté°
 Her to beholde, and preiseth hir beauté.
 Than said the lady to the Kyng,
 "Sir, I com for suche a thinge:
 My trew leman, Sir Landevale,
 480 Is accusyd amonges you all
 That he shuld with tratoury°
 Beseche° the Quen of velony°.
 That ys fals, by Seynt Jame!⁸
 He bad° her not, but she bad hym!
 485 And of that othir°—that he saide
 That my lothliest maide
 Was fairer than the Quene—
 Loke anone yf yt so bene!"⁸
 The Kyng beheld and sawe the southe,⁸
 490 Also erlys° and barons bothe;
 Every lorde said than
 Landevale was a trew man.
 When the jugement gyvyn was,
 At the Kyng her leve she takys,
 495 And lepe upon hir palfrey
 And betoke° them to Gode and goode day.
 The Kyng full fare,° and all his,
 Besechit hir, withoutyn mys,⁸
 Longer to make sojournyng;
 500 She said, "Nay," and thankyd the Kyng.
 Landevale saw hys love wold gone;⁸
 go

There (where)

Toward / bower, chamber
 stirrups

them

moonlight
 pleasure

treachery
 Beseech, Beg / shame, dishonor
 James
 bade
 other (charge)

truth
 earls

commended
 courteously
 wrong, fail

8. Look now if it is so!

- Upon hir horse he lepe anon,
 And said, "Lady, my leman bright
 I will with° the, my swete wight,
 505 Whedir° ye ride or goo—
 Ne will I never parte you frool!"
 "Landevale," she said withoutyn lette,°
 "Whan we first togedir mete,
 With dern° love, withouten stryfe,°
 510 I chargyd° you yn all your lyff
 That ye of me never speke shuld;
 How dare ye now bie° so bolde
 With me to ride withoute level°
 Ye ought to thyng° ye shuld° me greve."°
 515 "Lady," he said, "faire and goode,
 For His love that shed His blode,
 Foryef° me that trespase,°
 And put me hole° yn your grace."
 Than that lady to hym can speke,
 520 And said to hym wyth wordys meke,°
 "Landevale, lemman, I you forgyve
 That trespase; while ye leve°
 Welcom to me, gentill knyght—
 We woll never twyn,° day ne nyght!"
 525 So they rodyn° evynryght,°
 The lady, the maydyns, and the knyght—
 Lool° howe love is lefe° to wyn°
 Of women that arm of gentyll° kyn!
 The same way have they nomyn°
 530 Ryght as before she was comyn;°
 And thus was Landevale brought from Cardoyll°
 With his fere,° into a joly yle°
 That is clepyd° Amylyon¹
 That knowith every Brytan.²
 535 Of hym syns° herd never man—
 No further of Landevall tell I can;
 Butt God, for His greatt mercy,
 Bryng us to His blysse on highe.
 Amen.
 540 Explicit°
- (go) with
 Whither
 delay
 secret / strife
 charged, entreated
 be
 leave, permission
 think / would / grieve, offend
 Forgive / offense
 wholly
 meek, gentle
 live
 separate, part
 rode (off) / straight away
 Look, Behold / desirable / gain
 noble / kind, sort
 taken
 Carlisle (cf. 1.4)
 companion / isle, island
 called
 since
 (Here) ends (the text)

9. I.e., just as she had taken earlier when she was coming.

1. see l. 92, n.

2. That is known by every Breton.

The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne¹

Four surviving MSS attest to the popularity of the *Awntyrs* in the fifteenth century at least;² and each MS presents variant readings of a kind which suggest antecedent currency in some form of oral transmission. The readings of each of the four versions are, nevertheless, substantially close most of the time, and the omission in all of the ninth line of the fourth stanza shows that they derive from a common original. That "original" was itself, however, a sophisticated composite of several favorite thematic and textual traditions—and the effectively bipartite structure of the poem is the most obvious sign of that composite provenance. The second episode (beginning at l. 339), with its account of a knightly duel fought to establish rightful claim over certain lands, is the more conventional for an Arthurian romance—the final duel between the titular heroes of *Ywain and Gawain* (ll. 3499 ff.) comes to mind. Indeed, because it is Gawain who agrees to take up Galeron's challenge, the episode aligns itself with a group of English romances in which the ideals of Arthurian courtesy (most often exemplified by Gawain) are examined, usually by being tested against often discourteous, often supernatural, challengers. Best-known and most accomplished of these is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; *The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, both edited in the present volume, are also representatives of the group.³

The first episode has the more complex background. The ghost of Guenevere's mother not only requests the singing of masses for the repose of her soul, but also utters monitory prophecies about the demise of Arthurian civilization, draws plangent attention to the implications of her own putrefaction, and gives advice to the highborn (in particular to Gawain and Guenevere) on how they must achieve salvation: the association of topics

1. For a brief overview of the background to Arthurian literature (and related Celtic traditions), see the Sources and Backgrounds headnote to *Ywain and Gawain*, pp. 329 ff. Editions and translations of the text mentioned in this headnote, as well as references to related scholarship, are cited in the Selected Bibliography.

2. The MSS are identified in the leading footnote to the edition proper.

3. The others are *The Avowyng of King Arthur*, *Sir Cawan*, *Sir Kaye*, and *Sir Bawdewyn of Bretan* (preserved uniquely in the "Blackburne Ireland" MS—one of the MSS in which the *Awntyrs* is found); *The Grene Knight*; *The Turke and Gowin*; *The Jeaste of Syr Cawayne*; *Golagus and Gawain*; *Syre Gawene and the Carle of Carelyle*; and *King Arthur and King Cornwall*. The *Awntyrs* also belongs to a subgroup of these texts which are set in Inglewood Forest or which feature Tarn Wadling; about the group, see the Sources and Backgrounds headnote to *The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell*, pp. 378–79.