

Tradizione letteraria pre-galfridiane

- Il nome: in gallese Brenin Arthur, in inglese Arthur
- Fonti che precedono la *Historia regum Britannie* di Geoffrey of Monmouth (1135) sono dette «pre-Galfridian» o «pre-Galfridiane» (Galfridius = Goffredo = Geoffrey)
- *Y gododdin* (manoscritto XIII sec., forse IX o X sec.) di un guerriero dice che nonostante il suo valore «non era un Artù»; altre leggende lo descrivono come a) un valoroso guerriero, uccisore di mostri; b) figura del folklore, capo di una banda di eroi sovraumani che vivono nella natura; c) associato con l'aldilà; la sua banda include degli eroi pagani; attaccò l'aldilà per trovare tesoro e liberare prigionieri

Fonti storiche

- Nella *Historia Brittonum* del IX sec. Attribuita a Nennius, religioso gallese, menziona 12 battaglie in cui un generale «Artorius» combattè contro i sassoni culminando nella Battle of Badon (dove Artù uccide 960 uomini da solo)
- Gli *Annales Cambriae* (X sec. Basato su una cronaca iniziata nel tardo VIII) associano Artù alla Battle of Badon , dove Arthur e Medraut (inglese Mordred) muoiono entrambi, datandola al 537-539 (ma è possibile l'evento sia preso da *Brittonum*)
- Gildas nel *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (VI sec) menziona la battaglia di Badon ma non Artù, la Cronaca Anglosassone non lo menziona, e non lo menziona Bede nella sua storia del VIII sec. Non vi sono altre menzioni nel periodo anglosassone.

Tradizione galfridiana

- Geoffrey of Monmouth: *Historia regum Britanniae* (1135): re celtico che sconfigge i sassoni ma viene ferito mortalmente combattendo una ribellione guidata da suo nipote Mordred
- Monmouth scrive anche il *Roman de Brut* (latino)
- Chretien de Troyes nel tardo 1100 scrive 5 romanzi in versi in francese. Introduce il tema dell'amore tra Lancillotto e Ginevra (Guinevere) e quello del Gral (trovato da Galahad figlio di Lancillotto); *Vulgata* in prosa francese espande su queste storie e sulle campagne militari di Artù
- 1330: Traduzione dal francese: *The Tale of Sir Orfeo*: inizio romanzo cavalleresco
- XIV sec. (1300-99): Alliterative *Morte Arthur* e Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*
- Verso 1485 Thomas Malory scrive il romanzo in prosa *Morte d'Arthur* in inglese
- Nel tardo Ottocento Alfred Tennyson scrive *The Idyls of the king*

La Morte d'Arthur di Malory (1485)- precedenti

- Lo *Stanzaic Morte Arthur* (Morte Arthur a strofe) è un poema anonimo del XIV sec. di 3969 versi che tratta della relazione adulterina tra Lancillotto (Lancelot) e Ginevra (Guinevere) e dello scontro tra Lancillotto e Re Artù che ne consegue, del tradimento di Mordred e della morte di Re Artù.
- È un adattamento di un poema francese *La Mort Artu*
- Viene chiamato così per distinguerlo da un altro poema, il *Morthe Arthure* allitterativo.
- Tutte queste opere hanno ispirato la parte conclusiva della più l'opera di Malory *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

(<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/benson-and-foster-king-arthurs-death-introduction>)

- Lo Stanzaic Morte d'Arthur è una brillante condensazione del romanzo in prosa francese (La Mort Artu) che, insieme allo Stanzaic Morte Arthur stesso, fu la fonte degli ultimi due racconti di Malory, "The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere" e "The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur". Scrivendo un secolo prima che Sir Thomas Malory completasse il suo Morte Darthur, lo sconosciuto romanziere inglese ottenne già molti di quei pregi attribuiti al lavoro successivo di Malory producendo una narrazione relativamente compatta e snella. Il Mort Artu francese è una narrazione lenta e complessa, caratterizzata da un'elaborata rete di episodi e da un trattamento completo delle implicazioni psicologiche e filosofiche dell'azione. L'autore del Morte Arthur stanzaico, come la maggior parte dei romanziere inglesi del suo tempo, era meno interessato alle astrazioni psicologiche. Egli ridusse il materiale che aveva ereditato dai francesi a circa un quinto della sua lunghezza originale, producendo un'opera che ha successo grazie alla sua narrazione snella e rapida e che acquista forza grazie alla sua più ovvia focalizzazione sulle azioni stesse.

Excalibur (Morte d'Arthur)

- Artù morente ordina a Bedivere di gettare nel lago Excalibur e poi riferirgli cosa ha visto.
- Bedivere «If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good...»
- La sequenza si ripete, e irato Artù lo minaccia:
- «Ah, traitor untrue... I shall slay thee with mine own hands...»
- «...he thre the sword as far into the water, as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water» (389)

- Sir Bedivere saw that boot was best,
And to the goode sword he went;
Into the se he it cast;
Then might he see what that it ment.
There came an hand withouten rest,
Out of the water, and fair it hent,
And braundished as it sholde brast,
And sithe, as glem, away it glent.

Gawain: opere

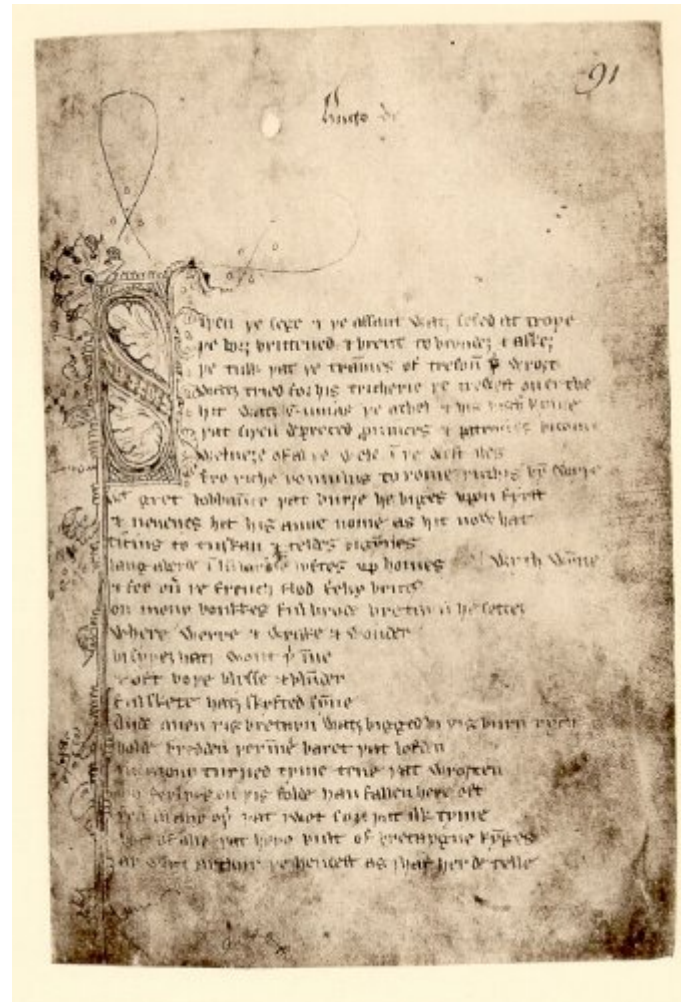
- Menzionato come Gwalchmei nelle prime fonti gallesi
- Protagonista in:
- *Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion* (Chretien de Troyes, c. 1180)
Yvain riesce a sposare Laudine con l'aiuto della serva Lunete. Gawain lo convince però ad andare con lui in cerca di avventure; promette a Laudine di tornare dopo un anno ma poi si diverte così tanto che se ne dimentica e lei lo ripudia. Disperato Yvain diventa pazzo. Poi ritorna in sé e pensa a come riconquistare la moglie. Nel frattempo, con l'aiuto di un leone sconfigge un drago. Poi salva Lunete che sta per essere messa al rogo e di nuovo, con il suo aiuto, riesce a conquistare Laudine che lo perdona.
- [*De Ortu Waluuanii*](#) (latino, circa 1200)
- [*Yvain and Gawain*](#) (m.e., primi del 1300): adattamento inglese del romanzo di Chretien
- [*Diu Crône*](#) (tedesco, circa 1220)
- [*The Awntyrs off Arthure*](#) (medio inglese, circa 1400). King Arthur kills a deer and is confronted by the mystical knight Sir Gromer, who tells him he must find the answer to a riddle: "What do women most desire?" and return within a year. If the answer is wrong he will cut off his head. Arthur and Gawain travel the country looking for an answer. Una donna bruttissima gliela dà in cambio della promessa di Gawain di sposarla: vogliono la sovranità, la possibilità di decidere da sole. Arthur si salva ma Gawain è costretto a sposarla
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (c. 1370)
- and [*The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell*](#) (c. 1450?)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Tardo XIV secolo

Manoscritto originale (Cotton Nero A.x)

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Cotton Library

- Robert Cotton raccolse numerosi manoscritti nel secolo 1550 quando Enrico VIII ordinò la chiusura dei monasteri
- Oltre a Sir Gawain, vi erano tantissimi manoscritti, come il Cotton Vitellius (Beowulf)
- Su ogni sezione vi era un busto di solito di un imperatore
- Sir Gawain è classificato come Cotton Nero A.x (sezione Nerone, scaffale primo, manoscritto decimo)
- Nel 1731 la biblioteca bruciò e circa un quarto dei manoscritti fu distrutta o danneggiata, come il Beowulf (per fortuna erano state fatte copie di molti)
- Attualmente la collezione è ospitata nella British Library

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

- Composto nel tardo 1300
- Contenuto nel Cotton Nero A.x (1° edizione 1839)
- L'autore si suppone sia il «Pearl Poet» autore di Pearl e altri testi del manoscritto
- 2530 versi e 10 strofe
- Metro non sillabico e senza rime, allitterativo e con caesura
- Alternato con sezioni di 5 versi rimanti (bob and wheel)

Bob and wheel

- *(bob)*
ful clene
(wheel)
for wonder of his hwe men hade
set in his semblaunt sene
he ferde as freke were fade
and oueral enker grene

Trama 1

- La narrazione si apre alla **corte di Camelot**, in Inghilterra, durante i festeggiamenti per Natale: a Capodanno si presenta a corte un **misterioso cavaliere tutto verde** con un'ascia in mano, il quale **sfida Artù e la sua corte** proponendo un gioco: domanda se a corte c'è qualcuno disposto a decapitarlo con la sua stessa ascia, a condizione che però, un anno e un giorno dopo, lo sfidante sia disposto a farsi a sua volta decapitare [\[3\]](#). Artù rifiuta la proposta, e al suo posto **raccoglie la sfida** il cavaliere più giovane della corte, nonché suo nipote, **Galvano**; a questo punto il Cavaliere Verde si fa decapitare e, una volta mozzata la testa, questi la raccoglie dal pavimento, e ricorda al giovane Galvano la promessa fatta: deve farsi trovare dopo un anno e un giorno alla **Green Chapel**, luogo la cui posizione è sconosciuta a tutti;

Trama 2

- All'avvicinarsi della scadenza, Galvano si mette in viaggio e, dopo alcune peripezie, raggiunge un castello, dove viene accolto calorosamente dal signore del maniero, Bertilak de Hautdesert, e da sua moglie; Galvano racconta loro del suo appuntamento presso la Cappella Verde e dice che deve continuare la sua ricerca perché gli rimangono solo pochi giorni; Bertilak ridendo spiega che la Cappella Verde è a meno di due miglia di distanza da dove si trovano e propone a Galvano di soggiornare presso il castello per alcuni giorni; prima di andare a caccia il giorno successivo, **Bertilak propone un affare a Galvano**: egli darà a Galvano quello che catturerà, a condizione che Galvano dia a lui quello che egli avrà a sua volta ottenuto durante il giorno (secondo la tradizione dello scambio dei doni);

Trama 3

- Dopo che Bertilak parte per la caccia, Lady Bertilak visita Galvano nella sua camera da letto, cercando di sedurlo. Nonostante i suoi migliori sforzi, non riesce ad ottenere altro che un unico bacio. Quando Bertilak ritorna dà a Galvano il **cervo** (simbolo della rigenerazione vitale, della longevità e del ciclo delle rinascite successive; nella leggenda greca di Cipariso, la morte del cervo è all'origine del cipresso, simbolo dell'immortalità e dell'eternità) che ha ucciso, il suo ospite risponde donando a Bertilak il bacio della donna, senza dirgli però da chi lo ha ricevuto; il giorno successivo la dama del castello tenta nuovamente di sedurre Galvano, ma tutto quello che ottiene sono due baci, che saranno scambiati da Galvano con un cinghiale (**simbolo dell'energia della ferinità selvaggia e di coraggio indomito**) catturato durante la caccia; il terzo giorno la donna tenta ancora di conquistare il suo ospite, regalandogli una fascia di seta verde che avrebbe dovuto proteggere il cavaliere da qualsiasi colpo che gli fosse stato inferto, ottenendo in questo modo tre baci. Quella sera, Bertilak ritorna con una volpe (simbolo di astuzia, viene associata anche alla sessualità), ricevendo in cambio da Galvano i tre baci, ma non la cintura, che Galvano tiene per sé;

Trama 4

- Il giorno successivo Galvano parte per la Cappella Verde con indosso la cintura; lì trova il suo sfidante intento ad affilare l'ascia e si dispone a ricevere il colpo, secondo i patti; il Cavaliere Verde si prepara a mozzare la testa di Galvano, ma per ben due volte tentenna e la terza volta lo colpisce dolcemente sul collo, causandogli solo una piccola ferita; a questo punto il **Cavaliere Verde** si rivela essere il signore del castello, **Bertilak de Hautdesert**, e spiega che l'intero gioco è stato organizzato da **Morgana**, sorella e nemica di Artù. Galvano è in un primo momento sconvolto e pieno di vergogna, ma i due uomini si chiariscono cortesemente. Bertilak spiega che lo ha leggermente ferito perché lui non aveva detto l'intera verità, ma che comunque si è comportato in modo tutto sommato onorevole. Galvano torna a Camelot, dove indosserà la cintura come **segno di vergogna** per la sua incapacità di mantenere la sua promessa con Bertilak. Artù decreta che tutti i suoi cavalieri d'ora in poi devono indossare una fascia verde, in onore dell'avventura vissuta da Galvano.

Temi

- Ambiguità del codice cavalleresco
- Donna virtuosa / Belle Dame Sans Merci
- La decapitazione
- Lo scambio di doni
- Numero 3

I.1

SIPEN þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
Soon as the siege and assault had ceased at Troy,
þe borz brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
the burg broken and burnt to brands and ashes
þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wrozt
the traitor who trammels of treason there wrought
was tried for his treachery, the foulest on earth.
Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe:
Hit watz Ennias þe athel, and his highe kynde,
It was Aeneas the noble and his high kin
þat sipen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicomme
who then subdued provinces, lords they became
Welneze of al þe wele in þe west iles.
well-nigh of all the wealth in the Western Isles:

1.1 (seconda parte)

- forth rich Romulus to Rome rapidly came,
- with great business that burg he builds up first,
- and names it with his name, as now it has;
- Ticius to Tuscany, and townships begins;
- Langobard in Lombardy lifts up homes;
- and fared over the French flood Felix Brutus
- on many banks all broad Britain he settles
- then,
- where war and wreck and wonder
- betimes have worked within,
- and oft both bliss and blunder
- have held sway swiftly since.

1.2

- But of all that here built, of Britain the kings,
- ever was Arthur highest, as I have heard tell.
- And so of earnest adventure I aim to show,
- that astonishes sight as some men do hold it,
- an outstanding action of Arthur's wonders.
- If you will list to this lay but a little while,
- I'll tell it straight, as I in town heard it,
- with tongue;
- as it was said and spoken
- in story staunch and strong,
- with linked letters loaded,
- as in this land so long.

1.4

- When they had washed well they went to be seated,
- the best of the barons above, as it seemed best;
- with Guinevere, full gaily, gracing their midst,
- dressed on the dais there, adorned all about –
- splendid silk by her sides, and sheer above
- of true Toulouse, of Tartar tapestries plenty,
- that were embroidered, bright with the best gems
- that might be price-proved with pennies
- any a day.
- the comeliest to descry
- glanced there with eyen grey;
- a seemlier ever to the sight,
- sooth might no man say.

1.6

- Then the first course came with crack of trumpets,
- with many a banner full bright that thereby hung;
- new noise of kettledrums and noble pipes,
- wild warbles and wide wakened echoes,
- that many a heart full high heaved at their notes.
- Dainties drawn in therewith of full dear meats,
- foods of the freshest, and in such files of dishes
- they find no room to place them people before
- and to set the silver that holds such servings
- on cloth.
- Each his load as he liked himself,
- there ladled and nothing loath;
- Every two had dishes twelve,
- good beer and bright wine both.
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The green knight on his ground graciously stands:
with a little lean of the head, flesh he uncovers;
his long lovely locks he laid over his crown,
and let the naked neck to the stroke show.
Gawain gripped his axe and glanced it on high,
his left foot on the field before him he set,
letting it down lightly light on the naked,
that the sharp of the steel sundered the bones,
and sank through the soft flesh, sliced it in two,
that the blade of the bright steel bit in the ground.
The fair head from the frame fell to the earth,
that folk flailed it with their feet, where it forth rolled;
the blood burst from the body, the bright on the green.

Immagine dal manoscritto originale

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Yet nevertheless neither falters nor falls the fellow,
but stoutly he started forth on strong shanks,
and roughly he reached out, where the ranks stood,
latched onto his lovely head, and lifted it so;
and then strode to his steed, the bridle he catches,
steps into stirrup and strides him aloft,
and his head by the hair in his hand holds.
and as steady and staunch him in his saddle sat
as if no mishap had him ailed, though headless now
instead.

He twined his trunk about,
that ugly body that bled;
many of him had doubt,
ere ever his speech was said.

20

- For the head in his hand he holds up even,
- towards the dearest on dais addresses the face;
- and it lifted its eyelids, and looked full wide,
- and made this much with its mouth, as you may now hear;
- ‘Look, Gawain, be you geared to go as you promised,
- and look out loyally till you me, lord, find,
- as you swore oath in this hall, these knights hearing.
- To the green chapel you go, I charge you, to find
- such a dint as you dealt – deserved you have –
- to be readily yielded on New Year’s morn.

24: partenza di Gawain

- There was much dark dolefulness deep in the hall,
- that so worthy as Gawain should wend on that errand,
- to endure a dreadful dint, and no more with sword
- wander.
- The knight made yet good cheer,
- and said: 'Why should I falter?
- Such destinies foul or fair
- what can men do but suffer?'

La vestizione

- Then set they the plate shoes on his strong feet,
- his legs lapped in steel with lovely greaves,
- with knee-pieces pinned thereto, polished full clean,
- about his knees fastened with knots of gold;
- then the cuisses, that cunningly enclosed
- his thick-thewed thighs, attached with thongs;
- and then the hauberk linked with bright steel rings
- over rich wear, wrapped round the warrior;

Il pentangle / pentangolo



Pentangolo

- First he was found faultless in his five senses,
- and then failed never the knight in his five fingers,
- and all his trust in the field was in the five wounds
- that Christ caught on the cross, as the creed tells.
- And wheresoever this man in mêlée was stood,
- his first thought was that, over all other things,
- all his force in fight he found in the five joys
- that holy Heaven's Queen had of her child;
- for this cause the knight fittingly had
- on the inner half of his shield her image painted,
- that when he beheld her his boldness never failed.
- The fifth five that I find the knight used
- was Free-handedness and Friendship above all things;
- his Contenance and Courtesy corrupted were never,
- and Piety, that surpasses all points – these pure five
- were firmer founded in his form than another.

II.23

- But then the weather of the world with winter it fights,
- cold shrinks down, clouds are uplifted,
- shining sheds the rain in showers full warm,
- falls upon fair flats, flowers there showing.
- Both ground and groves green is their dress,
- birds begin to build and brightly sing they
- the solace of the soft summer ensuing after
- on bank;
- and blossoms bloom to blow
- by hedges rich and rank,
- while noble notes do flow
- in woodland free and frank.

II.31

- Many cliffs he over-clambered in countries strange,
- far flying from his friends forsaken he rides.
- at every twist of the water where the way passed
- he found a foe before him, or freakish it were,
- and so foul and fell he was beholden to fight.
- So many marvels by mountain there the man finds,
- it would be tortuous to tell a tenth of the tale.
- Sometimes with dragons he wars, and wolves also,
- sometimes with wild woodsmen haunting the crags,
- with bulls and bears both, and boar other times,
- and giants that chased after him on the high fells.
- had he not been doughty, enduring, and Duty served,
- doubtless he had been dropped and left for dead,

11.44

- You shall linger in your room and lie there at ease
- tomorrow till Mass, and then to meat wend
- when you will, with my wife, that with you shall sit
- and comfort you with company, till I come to court:
- time spend,
- And I shall early rise;
- a-hunting will I wend.'
- Gawain thinks it wise,
- as is fitting to him bends.

11.45

- ‘And further,’ quoth the lord, ‘a bargain we’ll make:
- whatsoever I win in the wood is worthily yours;
- and whatever here you achieve, exchange me for it

III.48 (primo giorno)

And as in slumber he lay, softly he heard
a little sound at his door, and it slid open;
and he heaves up his head out of the clothes,
a corner of the curtain he caught up a little,
and watches warily to make out what it might be.
It was the lady, the loveliest to behold,
that drew the door after her full silent and still,
and bent her way to the bed; and the knight ashamed,
laid him down again lightly and feigned to sleep.
And she stepped silently and stole to his bed,
caught up the curtain and crept within,
and sat her full softly on the bedside
and lingered there long, to look when he wakened.

III.48 (continues)

- The lord lay low, lurked a full long while,
- compassing in his conscience what this case might
- mean or amount to, marvelling in thought.
- But yet he said to himself: 'More seemly it were
- to descry with speech, in a space, what she wishes.'
- Then he wakened and wriggled and to her he turned,
- and lifted his eyelids and let on he was startled,
- and signed himself with his hand, as with prayer, to be
- safer.
- With chin and cheek full sweet,
- both white and red together,
- full graciously did she greet,
- lips light with laughter.

III.52

- ‘One gracious as Gawain is rightly held to be,
- with courtesy contained so clear in himself,
- could not lightly have lingered so long with a lady,
- but he had craved a kiss out of courtesy,
- with some trifling touch at some tale’s end.’
- Then quoth Gawain: ‘Indeed, let it be as you like;
- I shall kiss at your command, as befits a knight,
- and further, lest I displease you, so plead no more.

125
129
arund is mikil an p^{er} Vil me nozt amend
Sum tūne Vas treth e as thon r fro thame coupe hu d foud



III.49

- But would you, lovely lady, but grant me leave
- and release your prisoner and pray him to rise,
- I would bound from this bed and dress me better,
- I should discover more comfort in speaking with you.'
- 'Nay, forsooth, beau sire,' said that sweet,
- 'You shall not rise from your bed. I charge you better:
- I shall wrap you up here on this other side,
- and then chat with my knight whom I have caught;
- for I know well, indeed, Sir Gawain you are,
- that all the world worships, wherever you ride.

- Your honour, your courtesy, is nobly praised
- among lords, among ladies, all who life bear.
- And now you are here, indeed, and we on our own;
- my lord and his lords are far off faring,
- other knights are abed, and my ladies also,
- the door drawn and shut with a strong hasp.
- And since I have in this house him who all like,
- I shall work my time well, while it lasts,
- with a tale.
- Your are welcome to my body,
- Your pleasure to take all;
- I must by necessity
- your servant be, and shall.'

- Thus they mulled many matters till mid-morn passed,
- and ever the lady let fall that she loved him much;
- yet the knight held to his guard, and acted full fair.

- ‘One gracious as Gawain is rightly held to be,
- with courtesy contained so clear in himself,
- could not lightly have lingered so long with a lady,
- but he had craved a kiss out of courtesy,

...

- She comes nearer at that, and catches him in her arms,
- leans lovingly down, and the lord kisses.

11.53 (cervo pulito)

- Then lopped off the four limbs and rent off the hide,
- next broke they the belly, the bowels out-taking,
- deftly, lest they undid and destroyed the knot.
- They gripped the gullet, and swiftly severed
- the weasand from the windpipe and whipped out the guts

54 (scambio)

- ‘And I give all this to you, Gawain,’ quoth the man then,
- ‘for according to covenant you may call it your own.’
- ‘That is so,’ quoth the knight, ‘I say you the same:
- what I have worthily won this house within,
- shall with as good a will be worthily yours.’
- And he clasps his fair neck his arms within,
- and kisses him in as comely a way as he can:
- ‘Take you there my prize, I received no more;
- I would grant it all, though it were greater.’
- ‘That is good,’ quoth the lord, ‘many thanks therefore.
- This may be the better gift, if you would tell me
- where you won this same prize by your own wits.’
- ‘That was not pledged,’ quoth he, ‘ask me no more;
- for you have taken what’s due, none other to you
- I owe.’

59 (Il giorno)

- By my faith,' quoth the lady, 'you cannot be spurned;
- you are strong enough to constrain by strength, if you like,
- if any were so villainous as to deny you.'
- 'Yes, by God,' quoth Gawain, 'true is your speech,
- but threats do never thrive in the land where I live,
- nor any gift that is given without a good will.
- I am at your command, to kiss when you like;
- you may lip when you will, and leave when you wish
- in a space.'
- The lady bends her adown
- and sweetly she kisses his face;
- much speech they there expound
- of love, its grief and grace.

65 (secondo scambio: due baci)

- ‘Now Gawain,’ quoth the good man, ‘this game is your own,
- by a firm and fast promise, as in faith you know.’
- ‘That is true,’ quoth the knight, ‘and as surely true
- is that all I got I shall give you again, by my troth.’
- He clasped the lord at the neck and gently kissed him,
- and after that of the same he again served him there.

III.70 (terzo giorno)

- In heavy depths of dreaming murmured that noble,
- as one that was troubled with thronging thoughts,
- of how destiny would that day deal him his fate
- at the Green Chapel, where he must meet his man,
- bound there to bear his buffet without more debate.
- But when he had fully recovered his wits,
- he started from dreaming and answered in haste.
- The lovely lady with laughter so sweet,
- bent over his fair face and fully him kissed.

III.74

- And she pressed the belt on him urging it eagerly;
- and he granted it, and she gave it him with goodwill,
- and besought him, for her sake, never to reveal it,
- but loyally conceal it from her lord. The knight agrees
- that no one should know of it, indeed, but they two,
- betimes.
- He thanked her as he might,
- with all his heart and mind.
- By then the gallant knight,
- she had kissed three times.

91 Il primo colpo

- But Gawain glanced at the grim blade sideways,
- as it came gliding down on him to destroy him,
- and his shoulders shrank a little from the sharp edge.
- The other man with a shrug the slice withholds,
- and then reproves the prince with many proud words:
- ‘You are not Gawain,’ quoth the man, ‘held so great,
- that was never afraid of the host by hill or by vale,
- for now you flinch for fear ere you feel harm.
- Such cowardice of that knight have I never heard.
- I neither flinched nor fled, friend, when you let fly,
- nor cast forth any quibble in King Arthur’s hous

93

- Up the weapon lifts lightly, is let down fair,
- and the blade's border beside the bare neck.
- Though heaved heavily it hurt him not more,
- but nicked him on the one side, and severed the skin.
- The sharp edge sank in the flesh through the fair fat,
- so that bright blood over his shoulders shot to the earth.
- And when the knight saw his blood blotting the snow,
- he spurted up, feet first, more than a spear-length,

- ‘For it is mine that you wear, that same woven girdle;
- my own wife gave it you, I know it well forsooth.
- Now, know I well your kisses and conduct too,
- and the wooing of my wife; I wrought it myself.
- I sent her to test you, and truly I think you
- the most faultless man that was ever afoot.
- As a pearl beside whitened pea is more precious,
- so is Gawain, in good faith, beside other good knights.
- But here sir you lacked a little, wanting in loyalty;
- but that was for no wily work, nor wooing neither,
- but for love of your life – so I blame you the less.’
- The other strong man in study stood a great while,
- so aggrieved that for grief he grimaced within.
- All the blood of his breast burnt in his face,
- that he shrank for shame at all the man said.

- For fear of your knock cowardice me taught
- to accord with covetousness, forsake my kind,
- the largesse and loyalty that belongs to knights.
- Now am I faulted and false, and ever a-feared;
- from both treachery and untruth come sorrow
- and care!
- I confess to you knight, here, still,
- my fault in this affair;
- let me understand your will,
- and henceforth I shall beware.'

-

- Then laughed that other lord and lightly said:
- 'I hold it happily made whole, the harm that I had;
- You are confessed so clean, cleared of your faults,
- and have done penance plain at the point of my blade,
- I hold you absolved of that sin, as pure and as clean,
- as though you were never at fault since first you were born.
- And I give you, sir, the girdle that is gold-hemmed.
- As it is green as my gown, Sir Gawain, you may
- think upon this same trial when you throng forth
- among princes of price, and this the pure token
- of the test at the Green Chapel to chivalrous knights.

- Bertilak de Hautdesert I am in this land,
- through might of Morgan la Faye, that dwells in my house,
- and is mistress of magic, by crafts well learned
- the mysteries of Merlin, many has she taken,
- for she has dealt in depths full dearly sometime
- with that excellent sage, and that know all your knights
- at home.
- Morgan the Goddess
- therefore is now her name;
- none has such high haughtiness
- that she cannot make full tame.

99

- ‘She sent me in this same wise to your wide hall
- for to assay its pride, test if all that were truth
- that runs on the great renown of the Round Table.
- She worked all this wonder your wits to ravel,
- to grieve Guinevere and to bring her to die
- aghast at that same ghoul with his ghostly speech
- with his head in his hand before the high table.
- That is she that is at home, the ancient lady;
- she is even your aunt, Arthur’s half-sister,

101

- 'Lo, Lord!' quoth the knight, and handled the lace,
- 'This is the belt of blame I bear at my neck,
- this is the hurt and the harm that I have learned
- through the cowardice and covetousness I caught there.
- This is the token of the untruth I am taken in,
- and I must needs it wear while I may last.
- For none may hide harm done, and go unscathed,
- for where it is once attached depart will it never.'
- The King comforts the knight, and all the court also,
- laughing loudly thereat, and lovingly agreeing,
- those lords and ladies that belonged to the Table,
- that each born to the brotherhood, a baldric should have,
- a belt, oblique him about, of a bright green,

- Thus in Arthur's day this adventure was tried,
- the books of Brutus thereof bear witness.
- Since Brutus, the bold baron, first bent hither,
- after the siege and assault had ceased at Troy,
- there is,
- many an adventure born
- befallen such, ere this.
- Now who bears the crown of thorn,
- May He bring us to his bliss! **AMEN.**
-
- **HONY SOYT QUI MAL PENCE**
-

- Re Edward III stava ballando con Joan of Kent, sua cugina e sposa di suo figlio, a un ricevimento a Calais per celebrare la caduta della città dopo la battaglia di Crécy (1346). La sua giarretiera scivolò giù e la gente rise alla sua vergogna. Edward si mise la giarrettiera sulla propria gamba dicendo : "Honi soit qui mal y pense. Tel qui s'en rit aujourd'hui, s'honorera de la porter." [citation needed] Molti ritengono la storia apocrifa.[7]
- Stando a David Nash Ford, anche se formalmente l'Ordine della Giarrettiera echeggiava i valori della tavola rotonda, esso serviva probabilmente a ottenere supporto per la sua dubbia rivendicazione del trono francese e il motto è un riferimento a chi si opponeva al progetto.

Gawain in altre storie

- Cap. XXI di Morte d'Arthur
- Gawain viene disarcionato in un torneo da Sir Lamorak. Ammirato Artù accoglie quest'ultimo nella sua corte. Gawain e gli altri che egli ha sconfitto si risentono e tramano contro di lui. Gawain aveva ucciso il padre di Lamorak, re Pellinore, perché riteneva egli avesse ucciso il re di Orkney suo padre. Sir Lamorak va a trovare la madre di Gawain, Morgause, la regina di Orkney, con cui ha una relazione, e va a letto con lei. Gaheris, fratello di Gawain, entra nella camera e taglia la testa alla madre. Lamorak lo insulta e dichiara anche che non è vero che Pellinore avesse ucciso il re di Orkney. Gaheris lo accusa di mentire ma lo risparmia dicendo "...by cause you art naked I am ashamed to slay thee".

- ...your father, King Pellinore, that was shamefully slain by the hands of Sir Gawain, and his brother, Sir Gaheris: and they slew him not manly but by treason” (MA, 139).

Lancelot and Elaine

- Allora Dama Brisen portò a Sir Launcelot una coppa di vino; e non appena ebbe bevuto quel vino... andò a letto; e pensò che Elaine fosse la regina Guenever. Sapete bene che Sir Launcelot fu contento e lo fu anche lady Elaine si aver riceguto Sir Launcelot tra le sue braccia".
- "...traditrice, che cosa sei tu con cui ho giaciuto per tutta questa notte? Tu morirai seduta stante per mia mano". Allora questa bella dama Elaine saltò fuori dal suo letto tutta nuda, e si inginocchiò davanti a Sir Launcelot, e disse: Onesto cavaliere cortese... ti chiedo di avere pietà di me... perché ho nel mio grembo colui che sarà il più nobile cavaliere del mondo". [gli dice di essere Elaine figlia di re Pelles]. "Ebbene, disse Sir Launcelot, ti perdonerò quest'atto; e con ciò la prese tra le braccia e la baciò, perché era una dama tanto bella, e per di più sensuale e giovane, e saggia, tanto quanto lo era chiunque altro in quel tempo" (128).

Secondo incontro di Lancillotto e Elaine

- Qualche tempo dopo Launcelot la vede a corte ma si rifiuta di guardarla. Elaine è devastata. Dama Brisen va da Launcelot e gli dice che Ginevra lo aspetta e lo conduce alla camera di Elaine "per il dito". "Wit you well the lady was glad, and so was Sir Launcelot, for he weened that he had had another in his arms" (135) La regina Ginevra manda una donna per lui che trova il letto vuoto e si infuria. Nel frattempo Launcelot sta dormendo nel letto con Elaine. Parla nel sonno del suo amore per Ginevra ed Elaine è ferita e arrabbiata. Lei tossisce per svegliarlo e lui si rende conto che lei non è Ginevra si precipita fuori in camicia e si imbatte in Ginevra che lo insulta. Launcelot sviene, si sveglia, salta fuori da una finestra e scappa nel bosco selvaggio e continua a correre per "due anni" e diventa pazzo.