



Hacettepe University Graduate School Of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature Programme

**(DE)MONSTRATING THE OTHER: MONSTROSITY AS
PERFORMANCE IN MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES**

Ulaş ÖZGÜN

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2022

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ABSTRACT

ÖZGÜN, Ulaş. *(De)monstrating the Other: Monstrosity as Performance in Middle English Romances*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2022.

This study argues that in the selected fourteenth and fifteenth-century Middle English romances, namely, *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1330), *Richard Coer de Lyon* (c. 1330), *Sir Gowther* (late 15th c.) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400), *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* (c. 1400), *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (c. 1500), the knights and their adversaries are not distinct from each other and the two are in fluid states of becoming monstrous or chivalrous at the moment of their encounters. In this study, monster is defined as a person who is the source of underserved harm to people around, the society and its institutions in general. The two sides' consequential performances during their interactions are analysed to determine their proclivity to either side. It is claimed that analysing monstrosity through the performative framework that relies on harm provides a fluid understanding of monstrosity that is compatible with the romances' larger concerns of segregation, violence, introspective criticism of knights. This study investigates romances that are set inside and outside England's geographical borders; borders in East during the crusading campaign; the Scottish and Welsh borders in the North. The instantaneous performances of the knights and their adversaries are analysed to demonstrate this emergent fluidity at the borders.

Keywords: Monstrosity, Chivalry, Fluid Identities, Romances, Borders.

ÖZET

ÖZGÜN, Ulaş. *Ötekiyi Canavarlaştır(ma): Orta İngilizce Romanlarında Performans Olarak Canavarlık*, Doktora Tez, Ankara, 2022.

Bu çalışma, seçili on dördüncü ve on beşinci yüzyıl Orta İngiliz romanlarında, *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1330), *Richard Coer de Lyon* (c. 1330), *Sir Gowther* (15. yüzyılın sonu), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400), *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* (c. 1400), *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (c. 1500), şövalyeler ve düşmanlarının birbirinden farklı olmadığını ve ikilinin karşılaşma anında canavar ya da şövalye olma konusunda akışkan bir hal içinde olduğunu iddia eder. Bu çalışmada canavar, genel olarak çevredeki insanlara, topluma ve sosyal kurumlara nedensiz zarar veren kişi olarak tanımlanmaktadır. İki tarafın etkileşimleri sırasındaki sonuçsal edimleri, her iki tarafa olan eğilimlerini belirlemek için analiz edilir. Canavarlığı, zarara dayanan edimsel çerçeve aracılığıyla analiz etmenin, romanların ayrımcılık, şiddet, şövalyelere yönelik eleştiri gibi daha önemli kaygılarıyla uyumlu, akışkan bir canavarlık anlayışı sağladığı iddia edilir. Buna göre, bu çalışma, Haçlı seferleri sırasında doğu sınırları ve kuzeyde İskoç ve Galler sınırları olmak üzere İngiltere'nin içinde ve dışındaki sınırlarda geçen romanları incelemektedir. Bu sınırlarda ortaya çıkan geçişgenliği göstermek için şövalyelerin ve rakiplerinin anlık edimleri analiz edilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Canavarlık, Şövalyelik, Akışkan Kimlikler, Romans, Sınırlar.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KABUL VE ONAY.....	i
YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI.....	ii
ETİK BEYAN.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ÖZET.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: DE/MONSTRATING THE OTHER.....	12
1. 1. MONSTER AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT IN THE MIDDLE AGES	12
1. 2. MONSTER STUDIES' APPROACH TO MONSTER.....	23
1. 3. MONSTROSITY PERFORMED BY KNIGHTS.....	32
1. 4. CONCLUSION.....	38
CHAPTER II: MONSTERS OUTSIDE OR MONSTERS INSIDE: FLUID MONSTROSITY IN <i>GUY OF WARWICK</i> , <i>RICHARD COER DE LYON</i> , AND <i>SIR GOWTHER</i>	40
2. 1. SARACEN MONSTROSITY AS A FRAGILE CONSTRUCT	45
2. 2. UNCONTROLLED VIOLENCE AND THE MONSTROSITY OF THE KNIGHTS.....	63
2. 3. CONCLUSION.....	81

CHAPTER III: COURTEOUS MONSTERS IN <i>SIR GAWAIN AND THE CARL OF CARLISLE, THE WEDDING OF SIR GAWAIN AND DAME RAGNELLE, AND SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT</i>	82
3. 1. FLUID REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GREEN KNIGHT, THE CARL, AND DAME RAGNELLE.....	87
3. 2. TRAVERSALS OF THE FLUID BORDERS IN <i>SIR GAWAIN, CARL OF CARLISLE, AND THE WEDDING</i>.....	100
3. 3. CONCLUSION.....	127
CONCLUSION	128
WORKS CITED.....	132
APPENDIX 1. ORIGINALITY REPORT	148
APPENDIX 2. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM.....	148

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to argue that in the selected Middle English romances – *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400), *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* (c. 1400), *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (c. 1500),¹ *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1330), *Richard Coer de Lyon* (c. 1330), and *Sir Gowther* (Late 15th c.) – the knights and their monstrous enemies are not clearly demarcated from one another but the two are rather in fluid states of becoming monstrous and/or chivalrous through their performances that inflict undeserved harm or merit. Monsters as articulations of humanity’s deepest fears and anxieties flourish on geographical and conceptual borders of the unknown. These unchartered territories are populated with monsters in various shapes and forms. The romances in this study are selected and grouped according to their settings that are located inside – *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, *The Wedding* – and outside – *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther* – of England’s geographical borders. The selected Arthurian romances are set on the Northern borders of Scotland and Wales, whereas the crusade romances are set on the Eastern frontiers. These regions as alterity and convergence between the knights and their enemies provide the necessary ground for power dispute in which the other is pushed to the unintelligible realms of monstrosity in order to legitimise the normative standards and goals of the dominant culture. However, the standards of the dominant culture are structured upon physical, political, cultural, religious, economic, and societal precepts that are ever-changing so that attributing the status of a monster to a designated group of people is a futile attempt to establish and solidify one’s identity. It is futile because constructing normality through monstrosity creates a binary that makes one, as Margrit Shildrick posits, “dependent on the other for definition, in terms both of meaning and of boundaries” (28). The temporal and spatial relativity of normalcy, however, expose the fragility of the binary with the monster so that they are constantly in danger of collapsing on one another.

Describing knights as monstrous is a bold claim that needs a contextual definition to be meaningful. Ironically, the monster is a very elusive term that resists any clear definition. In this regard, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s article entitled “Monster Culture: Seven Thesis” dwells on the monster’s slippery nature because it refuses “to participate in the classificatory ‘order of things’” (7). Monster thrives on difference and multiplicity as it is everything that the normative self is not. This is mainly because of the exclusionary aspect of normalcy that distinguishes the singular, most familiar phenomenon to be the norm. In turn, the multiplicity of alternative

¹ Hereafter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will be referred to as *Sir Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* as *the Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* as *The Wedding*.

phenomena is pushed to derogatory status. Accordingly, the monster is a necessary component of the normative self's discourse that attempts to constrain the other in a particular sphere of intelligibility to establish the former's superiority. Therefore, the monster is essentially a cultural construct that primarily concerns itself with the other and it is only comprehensible from a particular discursive point of view. In this regard, Cohen underlines the monster's cultural body "as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place" ("Monster Culture" 4). A monster's diversion from the norm often illustrates the particular underlying reason for its creation. Hence, the monster is essentially contingent and in opposition to normalcy but it is prone to change according to ever-changing spatio-temporal parameters.

Yet, the contours of the monster are still rough and need a clearer methodological framework for analysis. The definition of the monster tends to borrow from a plethora of theoretical approaches that essentially deal with the other. In this regard, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock aptly comments on the eclectic nature of the monster studies as a field, it "is itself inevitably a kind of monster – a Frankenstein's creature assembled out of the diverse approaches and perspectives" (Introduction 2). Despite the sporadic academic interest in the monsters during the early twentieth century, the monster studies as an academic branch has received particular interest since the mid-80s as an offshoot of the poststructuralist way of thinking within the academic circles. In this regard, Bettina Bildhauer underlines the importance of recent theories in terms of understanding the construction of the monster: "the idea that the subject constructs itself by banishing the other ... beyond the boundaries of its physical and imagined identity is a commonplace in contemporary thought influenced by psychoanalytic and poststructural theory" (76). Similarly, this study's perception of monstrosity is composite and is indebted to various theoretical frameworks that characterise distinct components that make up the monster as a whole.

First of all, as has been suggested, the interdependence of binaries for definition plays a significant role in terms of understanding monstrosity in this study. In this regard, the poststructural way of approaching binary oppositions aids this study. Poststructuralism challenges the binary oppositions that language systems consciously or unconsciously construct. As a result, critics such as Jacques Derrida demonstrate that hierarchical structures occur within these pairs; one acquires the legitimate and central position while the other is pushed to the margin. However, the two legs of binaries are inseparable from one another since they depend on one another for definition (Klages 53-55). Therefore, privileging one at the expense of the other is untenable. Similarly, there is an intricate and interdependent relationship between

chivalry and monstrosity. In this study, chivalry is perceived to be the norm that acquires the role of regulation, which will be discussed in detail below. Monstrosity, on the other hand, is excess, divergence, or lack that signals a diversion from this norm. The two terms are dependent on one another for definition. From this perspective, monstrosity is defined as non-conformity through excess, lack, or deviance from the established norms of chivalry. Therefore, although monstrosity seems to concern itself particularly with the other, the critical commentary is primarily about the normative self because the monsterisation process operates by imputing the “unwanted or unrecognized qualities and attributes, so as to construct the other. The difference of the other is emphasized in order to reinforce an imagined notion of sameness, where identity depends upon a relation to difference. But if we define ourselves against the other, we also define ourselves by internalizing the other” (Uebel, *Ecstatic Transformation* 45). As Uebel suggests monstrous others are everything that the normative self is not but at the same time the projection of those qualities that are considered monstrous is actually generated within the self. Accordingly, as will be argued below, qualities that are attributed to monstrous others are shared by the knights as well.

The second aspect of monstrosity is also related to various binaries associated with monsters and heroes. Mythologists like Joseph Campbell express that monsters are popularly represented as posing various forms of threats to the social order of humanity and “[t]hey have to be cleared away” or “suppressed” by the heroes to re-establish order (312). In this regard, order and chaos, merit and harm, and good and evil are among the several binaries shared between the monsters and the heroes, or knights in this study. Within this context, the harm-based theory of evil propounds that “*undeserved* harm ... becomes evil in the absence of moral justification” (Kekes 59, emphasis original). Evil and by extension harm’s threat to a particular society is measured by actions that are detrimental to the safety of individuals and their societies. Moreover, according to this perception of evil, the consequences of agents’ actions are what matters in terms of categorising an act as evil or not. In this respect, Daniel M. Haybron suggests that “[t]he motives, intentions, or feelings of the agent count only insofar as they contribute to the suffering of undeserved harms” (363-64). The result-oriented perception of evil renders the harmful performance as the essential determiner of evil. In this regard, even “[c]ustoms, laws, rules, ceremonies, and rituals may be evil in a derivative way if conformity to or participation in them causes much undeserved harm” (Kekes 48). In this regard, behavioural, cultural, religious, and social aspects that are pushed outside the normative sphere are evil because of the implicit harm they pose to the normative society. In this regard, monstrosity is closely related with disruption and evil because of the immediate threat that monsters impose on societies.

Within the scope of the romances, chivalry as a cultural construct is configured as an aspirational set of behaviours purported to moderate the knight's character. It acts as a normative ethos regulating the knights' reciprocation with the world around them. It encourages selfless devotion to God and motivates the knight for safeguarding his respective society. On the other hand, monstrosity is presented as falling outside the discursive limits of chivalry. In this interdependent relationship, monstrosity always suggests the subversion of the chivalric norm via excess, lack, or deviance that harms or disrupts the integrity of the regulating ethos. From this perspective, harm is imputed to be an aspect of monstrosity because of its disruption of the physical integrity of an undeserving subject or set of rules that govern a particular society. In this context, as stated above, the knights may also become sources of monstrosity through their performances that inflict undeserved harm to individuals or the chivalric code.

The third aspect of monstrosity is related to the concepts of performance and performativity. As it is clear, monstrous identity in this study is treated as a cultural identity that is intelligible only through a particular discursive production of meaning. Cohen emphasises the monster's discursivity by stating that it is "pure culture" existing "only to be read" ("Monster Culture" 4). Hence, monstrosity is a collection of physical, behavioural, cultural, religious, ritualistic, and linguistic markers of identity that are performative and produce the categories of the monstrous and the chivalrous identity. Erving Goffman is one of the best-known theorists for his employment of performance as a dramatic enactment of identity. In his *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1956), he claims that people in their social life wear specific masks to assume certain characteristics and manage expectations: "In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to – this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be" (30). Clearly, Goffman acknowledges the non-existence of a fixed self which enables people to assume different roles in their social lives. In time, these roles are actually what approximate the agent to their "truer self" because performance relates to "copying an imagined original; knowing, more or less consciously, the repertoire of behaviours associated with our roles, we do those behaviours over and over again – they become second nature" (Lawler 121). Steph Lawler indicates that the repetition of these assumed social roles intertwines with the agent so closely that it is very hard to ascertain any difference from one's own nature.

Similarly, gender theorists such as Judith Butler question the so-called innateness of the gendered behaviours and argue that these performances are imposed by normative heterosexuality. Accordingly, identity does not arise from a fixed, stable self but it actually comes into being through acts, gestures, and enactments that are "*performative* in the sense that

the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (*Gender Trouble* 136). Therefore, cultural constructions can and do impose on the body and actions. Monstrosity, too, is essentially a cultural construct that should be seen as not an ontological category locked eternally on the other, but an epistemological one that is meaningful only through the reiteration of acts that comprise its reality within a particular time and place. Therefore, chivalrous and monstrous identities are performative. According to Butler, identity is a dynamic process, “a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification” (*Gender Trouble* 43). Performance reinforces fluidity since it negates essence in an embodied self, thereby dissociating monstrosity from those excluded as monstrous others. Hence, perpetrators of monstrosity might not always come from those regarded as monstrous but the knights are also sources of monstrosity through their performances of excessive, deviant, and divergent actions that do not conform to chivalric norms.

Still, Maurice Keen attempt to portray a rigid association by stressing the chivalric identity’s integral relation with the nobility: “Chivalry cannot be divorced from the martial world of the mounted warrior: it cannot be divorced from aristocracy, because knights commonly were men of high lineage” (Introduction 2). However, the relationship between chivalry and aristocracy was loosened especially after the fourteenth century. As Jesús R. Velasco illustrates, for the newly emerging social groups, “mostly of bourgeois origin ... knighthood was a mine to exploit in order to shape political and social hopes and ... transform political and legal entities into structures of power that we call urban centers” (304-05). The increased pace of urbanisation marks the entry of bourgeois commoners into the knightly class. In this regard, the link between aristocracy and chivalry is not strong anymore but it allows permeability between the estates through performative compliance to chivalric values. Moreover, Susan Crane illustrates that like monstrosity, chivalry “is first of all an embodied performance, a mastering of techniques and technologies that produce the *chevalier*, the *ritter*, the *cavallero* as one who undertakes adventures and combats mounted on a horse” (137, emphasis original). It is a conglomeration of various tangible and intangible markers that make up the knight.

Evidently, monstrosity is a border phenomenon that is always attempted to be pushed to the other side. However, the monster’s contingency to spatio-temporal parameters and its performative fluidity grant the concept a transgressive quality between the established binaries and borders. As a result, the monster “expos[es] classificatory boundaries as fragile by always threatening to dissolve the border between other and same, nature and culture, exteriority and

interiority” (Uebel, “Unthinking the Monster” 266). Those wanted outside – monstrous others – never remain excluded forever and the borders, be it geographical or conceptual, are always vulnerable to the monster’s transgression. Monster’s incessant breaches of the boundaries threaten the safe and enclosed space of the self. For Uebel, the resulting “interaction in the contact zone is thus always charged with ambivalence-oscillation or hesitation between extremes of attraction and repulsion, of mastery and anxiety” (*Ecstatic Transformation* 41). The tension is understandable because these areas facilitate encounters between groups from different social, religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Homi Bhabha refers to these contact zones as the “Third space of enunciation,” the “interstitial” or “in-between spaces” which “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (Introduction 2). As Bhabha suggests within these areas a desire for the assertion of legitimacy and dominance ensues. During these encounters, the “[t]erms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively” (Bhabha, Introduction 4). Accordingly, as the last component of monstrosity, this study investigates the encounters of the knights and their monstrous enemies at the borders inside and outside of Britain, which result in the rigorous monsterisation process of the other. The knights’ performative compliance to their chivalric principles is inevitably put to the test in these contested spaces in the selected romances. During these encounters, the knights and their adversaries carry in themselves the potential for chivalry and monstrosity at the same time. Their manner of reciprocation with each other and the resulting harm to the chivalric values are the factors that determine their eventual subscription to either group.

Consequently, from this general framework, monster is defined as a person who is a source of undeserved harm. Monster is not someone who is physically divergent from the normative human body for the West. S/he is a person who commits transgressive acts that inflict various forms of harm to her/his people and society at large. The rather modern perception of the monster who is guilty of violating moral/ethical codes are relevant in some of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Middle English romances as well. In this regard, the ensuing fluidity of monstrosity via performance of harmful acts is concomitant with the romances’ larger concerns of introspective criticism of the knights and legitimate and illegitimate use of violence, and treatment of the others. In turn, monstrosity is defined as not a permanent status that subjects are forever constrained into but a temporary condition that they are reduced to because of their performances that either harm the physical integrity of others or transgress norms – in this case, chivalric norms – that are professed to regulate society.

With regards to the performative framework, Cohen's seventh and last thesis in his essay regarding monsters expostulates that "The Monster Stands at the Threshold [...] of Becoming" ("Monster Culture" 20). Despite the premise of this thesis, ironically, it is this thesis that receives the least attention by Cohen who only writes a paragraph commenting on the monster's incessant ability to return: "They can be pushed to the farthest margins of geography and discourse, hidden away at the edges of the world and in the forbidden recesses of our mind, but they always return" ("Monster Culture" 20). Later on, in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (1997), Cohen further explores the performative aspect of identities in the Middle Ages by touching upon Gowther's transformation to a knight "by mapping the potentialities of his unsocialized self across the grid of the canine bodies with whom he shares food and place" and slowly "Gowther's becoming-animal curves into his being-man" ("Gowther Among the Dogs" 220). In this regard, monsters' normalisation process has been somewhat explored but the knights' deviance from chivalry through performance and the complex entanglement between the knights and the monsters have still received little attention. In contrast, chivalry's performative aspect has been well-established. In this regard, Susan Crane argues that "[c]hivalric identity resides in performance and its judgment by one's peers" (138). Hence, chivalric virtues such as courtesy and hospitality require spectacle and manner to be meaningful. Similarly, in the romances, monstrosity requires performative divergence from these codes of ethics that position the agent to monstrosity. However, the complex entanglement between the two identities from a performative framework has received little attention. Therefore, the consequential fluidity during the encounters between the two identities is the focus of this thesis.

Existing research on monsters mainly focuses on how certain subaltern groups such as different races, nations, social groups, or women are pushed to the realm of monstrosity. Notable studies include Jason Ryan Berg's dissertation entitled "How Monstrosity and Geography were used to Define the Other in Early Medieval Europe" which deals with the monstrous perception of Scythians, Turks, Huns, Goths, Picts, Franks, and Lombards (Introduction 11-12). Similarly, Carl Roland Follmer argues that the Eastern nations are monsterised through a process of purging the West's unwanted qualities on the monstrous Other. Accordingly, the preconceptions of the other are "based largely on hearsay and pseudo-fact, [which] created a distorted view of Islam shared by most, if not all Europeans" (Introduction 3). Misty Rae Urban, on the other hand, dwells on the misogynistic tradition in the romances. She argues in her dissertation entitled "Monstrous Women in Middle English Romance" that the so-called "inferior woman is relied upon to reproduce and maintain a social order by managing households, raising children, producing legitimate heirs, and observing a set of values that establish and promote proper

heteronormative relations within the domestic unit” (273). In this way, the constructed monstrous women trope is demonstrated to be an essential component of the order within society. Mainly, these studies do not dwell on the entangled aspect of cultural production and monsterisation process. In this regard, this study’s Bhabhaesque framework that argues cultures to be entangled with one another and produced at the moment of encounters via performance provides a fresh, dynamic, and fluid take on the concept of monster.

Unfortunately, in Turkey, there are not any dissertations that deal with the monsters in the Middle Ages. Existing studies mainly cluster around the resurgence of interest in monsters that took place in the nineteenth century novels, monsters in children’s literature and today’s pop culture. Esra Erdem deals with the intricate relations between the humans and monsters in her thesis “The Concept of Human and Monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*”. Ece Bulut dwells on the representation of monsters in children’s books in “Children, Monster and the Mothers (*Where the Wild Things Are* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*)”. Pembe Gözde Erdoğan analyses the influence of monsters in popular American TV series in “American Prime-time Monsters: An Analysis of the Gothic Other in *True Detective*, *American Horror Story: Coven* and *True Blood*”. In this regard, the current study hopes to fill the gap in Turkish academic scene in terms of the monster’s fluid relationship with the knights in romances.

Consequently, monsters flourish at frontiers where heterogeneity produces multiple possibilities of becoming. The present study investigates the fluid relationship between the knights and their monstrous enemies in the selected Middle English romances. Contrary to John Finlayson who perceives romance as “a series of adventures which have no social, political, or religious motivation and little or no connection with medieval actuality” (“Definitions” 55), treatment of monstrosity in the romances suggests an affinity towards larger historical, religious, social, and political concerns of the Middle Ages. Accordingly, the romances that deal with the crusade history reciprocate the failures of the crusading enterprise and assume a critical perspective on the members of the crusading enterprise. Similarly, the selected Arthurian romances reflect the tensions between the commoners and the nobility in medieval Britain, and comment on issues of the nobility’s virtues and their ill-treatment of the commoners.² However, this study largely restricts its focus on the performative fluidity of monstrous and chivalric identities and the resulting notion that in the selected romances there is no clear-cut demarcation between the knights and the monsters but they are rather in fluid states of becoming. This study is interested

² A brief discussion on the critics’ perspectives about the religious, historical, political, social, and economic implications of the rigorous monsterisation process is provided in the first chapter.

in the monstrosity of the knights more than the monstrous acts that have been attributed to those perceived as monstrous because focusing on the monstrous acts of knights foregrounds the untenability of polarities and establishes the fact that cultures are produced within a complex web of contacts and interactions.

Moreover, this study restricts its locus of attention to three romances at the borders inside and outside Britain in order to analyse the fluidity between the knights and their enemies. The selected crusade romances are dialogic with each other in terms of themes, the crusading background, and the role of penance. Likewise, the selected Arthurian romances contain various shared concerns such as class conflict, courteous behaviour, and truth. Of course, a similar fluid framework can also be applied to other crusade romances such as *The King of Tars* (c. 1330) in which the Saracen Sultan converts to Christianity, or *Bevis of Haumpton* (c. 1324) in which the Saracen giant, Ascopard, joins forces with Bevis, rejects conversion, and betrays Bevis in the end. In addition, the resulting fluidity also occurs in Arthurian romances in the Northern borders such as *The Turke and Sir Gawain* (1650s) at the end of which which a similar transformation occurs, and the character of Turk transforms into a valiant knight. However, this study limits its focus to these romances to apply the performative framework of analysis in a more comprehensible and extensive manner.

Accordingly, in the first chapter, a brief survey of the constructed nature of monstrosity is provided to contextualise the understanding of monstrosity in the Middle Ages. It is then demonstrated that monstrosity is not bound solely to physical divergence but is always a conglomeration of various physical, behavioural, cultural, religious, habitual, and societal precepts that give the monster an essentially performative identity. Moreover, a brief survey of the monster studies in the first chapter further illustrates this study's perception of monstrosity, and establishes clearly the contours of what is regarded as monstrous and chivalrous. In the next section, the trace of monstrosity in the cultural construction of the chivalric ethos is also presented to underline that the demarcations between the monstrous and chivalrous are always already blurred.

In the second chapter, it is argued that in the selected crusade romances³ which are set in the Eastern frontiers against the Saracens, *Guy of Warwick*,⁴ *Richard Coer de Lyon*,⁵ and *Sir*

³ Romances are traditionally classified under various categories according to their subject matters, metrical forms, their length, date of composition, dominant motifs, different languages, audiences, and literary merit. Albeit its sporadic use, the use of the term "crusade romance" does not refer to an established category for romance classification. In this study, the term is used to loosely refer to selected romances that deal with the Saracen threat and the crusading background. For a detailed survey on romance classification, see Taşdelen 16-41.

Gowther,⁶ the intended binaries between the monstrous Saracens and the knights are not as clear and distinct as the romances suggest. The Saracen monstrosity is constructed by their excess, deficiency, and deviance from the set of norms that regulate the knights. However, the knights also share the monstrous attributes of the Saracens. Moreover, the knights are also agents of monstrosities, especially through their controlled or uncontrolled violence to the illegitimate outlet, that is, to their own societies. In this regard, the chapter focuses on monstrosity through uncontrolled violence. It problematises the fluid borders between chivalry and monstrosity since its execution to a legitimate or illegitimate source, that is, the Saracens or the knights is the defining element. Accordingly, the monstrous characters and the instances prioritise performances that harm the people or various political, religious, and social institutions.

The third chapter argues that the romances, *Sir Gawain*,⁷ *Carl of Carlisle*,⁸ *The Wedding*,⁹ are critical of the knights' immediate association of divergent bodies with monstrosity. The chapter focuses on the tensions produced by the traversals of the boundaries and the resultant conflicts and the eventual reconciliation with the monstrous other. Accordingly, the chapter illustrates

⁴ Middle English *Guy of Warwick* survives in three manuscripts in complete form, and partially in two manuscripts. Complete manuscripts in chronological order are presented as follows: Edinburgh, *National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck) folio: 108ra-175vb*, London, *British Library, Sloane MS 1044 (item 248) (Sloane)*, Cambridge, *Goonville and Caius College, MS 107/176 (Caius)*. Partial manuscripts are presented as follows: Aberystwyth, *National Library of Wales MS 572* and London, *British Library, Additional MS 1408 (NLW/Bl)*. In this thesis, Julius Zupitza's critical edition that is based on the Auchinleck and Caius versions of the verse *Guy of Warwick* will be used.

⁵ *Richard Coer de Lyon* survives in seven manuscripts. A version is chronologically presented as follows: Cambridge, *Gonville and Caius College, MS 175/96, folio 1-98*, London, *British Library, MS Additional 31042, folio 125r-163r*. B version is chronologically presented as follows: Edinburgh, *National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (Auchinleck) folio: 326r-327v*, London, *British Library, MS Egerton 2862, folio: 1r-44v*, London, *College of Arms, MS Arundel 58, folio: 250r-275r*, London, *British Library, Ms Harley 4690, folio: 109r-115v*, Oxford, *Bodleian Library, MS Douce 228, folio: 1r-40v*. In this chapter, instead of Karl Brunner's version of the romance published in 1913, Peter Larkin's recent edition of *Richard Coer de Lyon* will be used.

⁶ *Sir Gowther* exists in two late fifteenth-century manuscripts: Edinburgh, *National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.3.1 folio: 11r – 28r*, and London, *British Library Royal MS 17.B.43 folio: 116r – 131v*. In this thesis, the recent critical version that uses the Advocates as its basis with the opening lines supplemented from the Royal is used. Laskaya, Anne, and Eve Salisbury, eds. "Sir Gowther." *The Middle English Breton Lays*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995, pp. 263–307.

⁷ The romance exists in only one manuscript: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. 1400s. *MS. Cotton Nero A.x.* Bodleian Lib., Oxford. All quotations are taken from Tolkien, J. R. R., E. V. Gordon, and Norman Davis, eds. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. Print.

⁸ The romance has two versions. The earlier one dated circa 1400 is referred to as A text which is found *MS Brogynton II (formerly Porkington MS 10)*. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. The B Text is dated around 1650 and is found in *Percy Folio MS (BM Addit. 27 879)*. British Library, London. All quotations are taken from Hahn, Thomas, ed. "Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle." *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. 81-113. Print.

⁹ The romance exists in a single manuscript which dates around 1450s: *Rawlinson C*. Bodleian Library, Oxford. All quotations are taken from Hahn, Thomas, ed. "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle." *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. 41-80. Print.

that the knights and their monstrous enemies are in fluid states of becoming whereby their performances during these interactions with each other determine their subscription to monstrosity or chivalry. In the romances, the characters and the instances of encounters will be analysed according to the definition of monstrosity which is reliant on monstrous performance that is harmful to the individuals and the society at large.

CHAPTER I

DE/MONSTRATING THE OTHER

This chapter aims to provide a brief survey of the components that constitute the understanding of monsters in this study. Firstly, a contextual framework of the monster in the Middle Ages will be provided to demonstrate that the monster is essentially a cultural construct in the Middle Ages. Monster's physical difference is traditionally important because it serves as a text to be read, decoded, and deciphered about the foreboding calamities during the classical period. However, it will be claimed that the monster does not essentially rely on physical difference. A collection of disembodied cultural, habitual, religious, customary, and linguistic differences can also make the subjects monstrous. In the selected fourteenth and fifteenth-century romances, namely, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*, the strict association of deformed disposition with monstrous conduct is argued to be severed from one another. The knights are observed to perform monstrosity which suggests criticism of the medieval religious, political, economic, and social issues. Secondly, this chapter provides a brief survey of the monster studies to underline any convergence and divergence of this study's perception of the monster from the existing studies. Lastly, the chapter provides a brief survey of chivalry to contextualise its place in monstrosity.

1. 1. Monster as a Cultural Construct in the Middle Ages

Monsters are cultural constructs despite their primary distinction being physical differences. These monstrous beings have always been present in the imagination of humans from the earliest times of history to the present day; they decorated the walls of the Upper Palaeolithic settlers living in caves in southern France and Spain (Gilmore 24); they figured as deities in civilisations around the fertile crescent and Indus valley; they acted as the enemies of the heroes in legends and epics of times unknown. In today's world, as essential components of popular culture, they fill up the big screens, appear in video games, music videos, literature, and art. Humanity have always been obsessed with the concept of the monster. Since the very beginnings of humanity's artistic history, new and aw(e)ful beings have continued to spring up in different shapes and forms in literally every medium around the world. The case was similar in the Middle Ages, and Britain was not an exception either. A glance over the cultural heritage and artefacts of the period proves that the medieval mind was also preoccupied with divergent bodies; giants and dragons abounded in medieval literature, diverse humanoid creatures sprang up from the margins of the manuscripts, gargoyles and griffins embellished the walls of the

churches and buildings, unicorns figured in heraldry, and various mythic bestial creatures were carved into armours and jewellery and were woven into tapestries for various purposes.

As these examples suggest monstrosity manifests itself first and foremost as a visual difference. Pramod Nayar demonstrates that monster studies in collaboration with the critical posthumanist views have shown how “humans have consistently (i) defined themselves against the ‘animal’, the mutant/deformed/monstrous and the machine; (ii) marked the boundaries of the human by separating, through rigorous socialization, sanitization and coercion, particular characteristics of human life as merely ‘animal’ to be expelled, and the ‘essential’ human to be retained” (110). Monster studies has shown that the tendency to impute even the slightest deviation from the human form to monstrosity actually serves as a reinforcement of the unsullied physical body of the human subject. This tradition was also prevalent in the Middle Ages. Perceived as physically different, monsters were measured against the normative human and animal bodies in terms of physical deficiency, excess, or a conglomeration of various bodily parts pertaining to humans and animals. One of the most important and influential writings on monster taxonomy in the Middle Ages was undertaken by the Church Father Isidore of Seville who assumed a so-called “scientific” approach in his book *Etymologiae* (c. 600-625) and divided monsters into twelve categories eleven of which concerned bodily deformations within human and animal bodies. According to Isidore of Seville, these twelve categories are as follows: 1. enlargement of the whole body, 2. shrinkages of the whole body, 3. enlargements, disfiguration or multiplication of a specific body part, 4. deficiency of a specific body part, 5. conglomeration of human and animal body parts, 6. offspring of a species different from the mother, 7. translocation of a specific body part, 8. fusion of body parts, 9. premature growth of bodily parts, 10. mixture of the listed deformities, 11. hermaphrodites, 12. monstrous races (xi. iii. 7 – 12).

Seville’s categorisation largely focuses on the boundaries of the normative human body, which is itself a cultural construction, and largely singles out the deformations of the human body that is perceived as normal. On the subject of disability and deformity, Lennard J. Davis argues that disability or deformation of the body “is not a minor issue that relates to a relatively small number of unfortunate people, it is part of a historically constructed discourse, an ideology of thinking about the body under certain historical circumstances” (2). From this perspective, Seville’s categorisation can also be traced back to the Roman tradition of associating evil with deformity. Accordingly, the etymological root of monster derives from the Latin word *monstrum* which means “to show”. The Latin word in turn stems from the Greek word *monare* which means “to warn” (Cawson 1). Stephen T. Asma explains that the Romans associated

physical deformity with evil or the warning of the gods' wrath so that they even took the extreme measure of exterminating deformed babies for fear of the safety of their society (Asma 39-40). Understanding of deformity as monstrous is the product of a classical discursive tradition that associates physical divergence with evil. Despite acknowledging the tradition of perceiving anomalous births as monsters, it is not this studies' area of focus. Although bodily deformity is one of the indicators of monstrosity, it is argued that there is no strict correlation between bodily deformity and monstrosity in the romances analysed in this study.

Nevertheless, Seville's last category suggests that bodily deformity does not encapsulate the concept of the monster. Seville's twelfth category refers to monstrous races that are believed to have been living in the East. As cultural inheritance transmitted from the xenophobic culture of the Greek and Roman civilisations to the Middle Ages, the Greek and Roman accounts contained monstrous races that consisted of a very broad spectrum. There were races whose physical deformities were at the forefront such as the *Blemmyae* who were described by Pliny the Elder as "being without heads; their mouth and eyes are attached to their chest" or *Monocoli* as "hav[ing] only one leg and hop with amazing speed" (57, 78). Yet, there were also groups of people that were incorporated into the realms of monstrosity because of their cultural, behavioural, customary, dietary, and linguistic differences. For example, *Astomi* were people who smelled apple for nutrition or *Troglodytes*' dietary habit was eating snakes, Wife-givers presented their wives to the passing travellers, and Speechless Men communicated via gesturing (Friedman 11-21). These fabulous races that did not seem to have any physical deformity on the outside were also categorised as monstrous since they led different lifestyles than that of the Greeks and Romans. They were regarded as monsters because their obverse practices "defined the 'right' choice of food and table manners [and other cultural practices and conduct], which had an important function in demarcating social groups and decorous behaviour" of the West (Bildhauer and Mills, Introduction 11). In this way, monsters presented all the possibilities that the normative self refuses to be.

The ethnocentric and xenophobic line of thinking of the Greeks and Romans was not broken in the Middle Ages as some of the Greek and Roman accounts were conserved and transmitted partially or as a whole. Especially Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (A.D. 77), which was partially preserved in the account of the Roman author Gaius Julius Solinus' *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* composed in the third century A. D. (Rossi-Reder 62), made a huge impact on the conception of the monsters in the Middle Ages. As a result, the influence of the monstrous races could be discerned in the theological ruminations of the important church members such as St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville, bestiary tradition, *mappea mundi* such as the Ebstorf and

Hereford maps¹⁰, teratology books such as the eighth century Anglo-Latin *Liber monstrorum*, and the tenth or eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon text, *Wonders of the East*. In these texts, the spatial placement of these monstrous races to the farthest regions of the known world in the East stemmed from the same tendency of the West's conceptual attribution of their most unwanted qualities to the monstrous other. As the West endeavoured to draw its boundary by singling out the right, multiplicity of wrongs enabled the flourishing of monstrous races that were monstrous not only physically but also culturally. Hence, the other can be pushed to the category of the monster by its cultural, behavioural, linguistic, dietary, habitual, and customary alterity.

Still, the famous maxim of Sir John Mandeville seems to define a monster mainly through its physical deformity as he regards the monster as “a þing difformed eþen kynde bothe of man or of best or of ony þing ells” (30). The popular reading associates the word “kynde” with the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first entry: “Birth, origin, descent” (“kind,” def. 1a) or the third: “The character or quality derived from birth or native constitution; natural disposition, nature” (“kind,” def 3a). Thereby, Mandeville seems to juxtapose monsters with humans and animals or with the natural world in general. Lisa Verner offers an alternative reading of Mandeville's maxim by focusing on the deformity aspect of the quote: “A broad interpretation of ‘deformed’ would include behavior as well as appearance. Surprisingly, this corresponds nicely to the late medieval definition of ‘kind’ as a form of moral feeling, for ‘ægen kynde’ can also mean ‘morally perverted’” (Introduction 5). In this way, Verner's reading not only solves the problem of removing monsters from God's creative capabilities but it also dissociates monstrosity from its apparent physicality and situates it in the more permeable plane by emphasising perversity and corrupt conduct as an indication of it.

The fact that the monstrous races were outside the natural order of creation had been troubling scholars from the early Middle Ages. St. Augustine in his book *City of God* (c. 413-426 A.D.) rejects the idea of such a possibility:

Whoever is anywhere born a man, that is, a rational, mortal animal, no matter what unusual appearance he presents in colour, movement, sound, nor how peculiar he is in some part, or quality of his nature, no Christian can doubt he springs from that one protoplast ... if they are human, they are descended from Adam (xvi. 8).

For Augustine, their rationality and descent from the line of Adam still do not negate these beings' monstrosity as he regards them simultaneously as humans and monsters. However, he

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis on the monstrous races in the Medieval *mappea mundi* tradition, see: Friedman 37-58; Mittman 27-57; Naomi 175-92. Campbell 56-67.

propounds that their existence is a sign of the vast possibilities of creation and the deficient understanding of humans in coming to terms with the fact that: “God ... knows where and when each thing ought to be ... because He sees the similarities and diversities which can contribute to the beauty of the whole. But He [sic] who cannot see the whole is offended by the deformity of the part, because he is blind to that which balances it” (xvi. 8). Augustine’s commentary on monsters’ anomalous position underlines the apparent subjectivity of the existing human-made normative categories the result of which is an inevitable failure of the apprehension of the monstrous races. For him, the existence of monsters cannot be and do not have to be understood. They do not have any intrinsic value other than displaying the omnipotence of God. In this respect, Augustine’s observation of the monster as a sign of God’s power refers at the same time to the Roman tradition of perceiving deformities as portents and to Cohen’s perception of monsters as cultural constructs “only to be read” (“Monster Theory” 4). The tradition of reading the monster’s physical body as a text was also popular in the Middle Ages. For example, bestiary collections contain information about the common and the fabulous animals. These animals were not deemed valuable in themselves but illustrate moralities that generally emphasized the omnipotence of God.

However, Augustine’s positive approach to these monstrous races because of their descent from Adam was later on counterbalanced by a negative approach which foregrounded the idea that they were either descended from the line of Cain who had committed the monstrous act of killing his brother out of jealousy or Noah’s son, Ham, who had been guilty of crimes that caused his eventual exile (Friedman 89). In either case, according to this view, malevolent or evil performance predated physical divergence since these biblical characters were originally in the normative human form but their reprobation resulted in the physical deformity of their offspring. Therefore, from the Christian perspective, deficient, excessive, or deviant behaviour that disregarded God’s law indicated moral depravity which caused eventual divergence in the subject’s corporeality.

According to David Gilmore, the transference of the monstrous races’ origin from Adam to the line of Cain or Ham took hold mostly in north-western Europe in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, and probably resulted from “the Germanic peoples’ late conversion to Christianity and the insecurity of the new religion in those remote places” (55). The monsters were regarded as enemies of Christ whose paganism and amorality encouraged delinquency in the absence of consequential punishment and a sense of guilt that was ever-present in a Christian’s conscience. As a result, the monsters “symbolized the unmitigated and irredeemable evils associated with unrepentant heathenism” (Gilmore 55). Firmly associated with evil and malevolence, monstrous

racés were perceived as cursed and abominable. Their inward malevolence was reflected in their outward dispositions and they became the source of evil and malice for Christianity because especially in the early Middle Ages, “a flawed or deviant body was assumed to be the result of a flawed or deviant mind and soul” (Mittman and Kim 336).

Accordingly, frequent association of monstrous behaviour with those physically divergent enemies of the heroes in epic tradition, “exemplified in the Norse and Teutonic sagas like the Icelandic *Edda*, the German *Nibelungenlied*, and Anglo-Saxon epics like *Beowulf*” resulted in the representation of “monstrous humanoids like Grendel ... [as] embodiments of evil forces, the implacable enemies of God ... [and] as mortal enemies to be destroyed” (Gilmore 55). One particular example of this tradition is the representation of Grendel and his mother in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* (c. 700-1000). Hostile to everything related to civilisation, they inhabit the misty swamps. They are disturbed by the singing in the mead hall and cause terror and bloodshed every day for twelve years. Their malevolence is bolstered by their deformity as Grendel is described “in the shape of a man, moves beyond the pale / bigger than any man, an unnatural birth” (1352-53). Their inclination for evil is emphasised further by the description of them as “the kindred of Cain” (56) who was cursed by God. Therefore, as sources of malice and threat to society, they must be destroyed by the eponymous hero. Establishing Grendel and his mother as the progenies of Cain demonstrates that in the Middle Ages sin and malevolent behaviour are also important markers of monstrosity. If morally and religiously responsible human agents fail to adhere to the established laws of God, they could also become monsters through deviant, deficient, or excessive acts and behaviours that breach the commandments of God.

Toward the end of the twelfth century, however, the rigid association of malevolence with deformity began to disintegrate. Caroline Walker Bynum in her book *Metamorphosis and Identity* (2001) refers to this change as “a quite stunning shift of intellectual paradigms” (Introduction 25). Accordingly, in the later Middle Ages, “people were increasingly fascinated by change,” which resulted in a “proliferation of tales of vampires, fairies, and werewolves” (Introduction 25-26). In her book, Bynum mostly restricts her study to Gerald of Wales’ cartography/travel books of Ireland and Wales, and miscellaneous folktales and ghost stories. However, her detection of this paradigm shift is crucial since this change of perspective led people to think about “the possibility that persons might, actually or symbolically, become beasts or angels” (Bynum, Introduction 25-26). This permeability and interchangeability of humans with the monster weakened the consistent association of monstrous behaviour with the other.

Another factor that facilitated the permeability of monstrous identity through performance was the perception that, in the Middle Ages, biology or descent was not the essential predeterminer of what would today be called community identity. On the cultural constructedness of communal identity in the Middle Ages, Robert Bartlett provides examples from the writings of medieval scholars such as Regino of Prüm. According to Prüm, communal identity is largely a cultural construct: “the various nations differ in descent, customs, language and law” (qtd. in Bartlett, “Race and Ethnicity” 47). The perception of communal identity as a conglomeration of Prüm’s four characteristics (descent, customs, language, and law) reveals that communal identity is essentially malleable and is always prone to change. Especially, customs, language, and law could be “transformed not only from one generation to the next, but even within an individual lifetime. New languages can be mastered, new legal regimes adopted, new customs learned” (Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* 197). These cultural markers or customs include a wide variety of habitual practices such as “social comportment, table manners, bathing habits, bodily modification, clothing, armor, self-adornment, hairstyle, grooming” (Cohen, *Hybridity* 17).

Moreover, descent or biology as another aspect of communal identity, was not perceived as stable or fixed as modern corporeality suggests. Somatic transformations had always been regarded as a possibility in the Middle Ages. In the Eucharist, a contentious ritual hotly debated by clerics for centuries, Christians assumed that “the substance of the bread and wine ... changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ” (Macy 374). As indicated above, medieval preoccupation with change and transformation is also reflected in the romances since characters’ corporeality is subject to change either through miracles or magic. For example, through God’s grace Gowther can “garus tho blynd to see ... / And makus tho crokyd right / And gyffus to tho mad hor wytte” (739, 741-42) Bodies can shapeshift or be dismembered or conjoined as in the example of the Green Knight. They can revert to their original state once the spell is broken upon fulfilling an agreed covenant as in *The Wedding*. They can be totally transformed into something else; for instance, in the famous baptism scene of *The King of Tars* (c. 1330), the monster child transforms from a lump of flesh to a healthy infant. Then, the Sultan, who experiences this miracle, converts to Christianity and after his baptism, he too transforms from a black Saracen to a white man. Inspired by the baptismal transformation scene, Geraldine Heng comments on the imposition on culture on corporeality in the Middle Ages: “... religion, which we had assumed to belong purely to the realm of culture, can shape and instruct biology: a startling logic suggesting ... biological essences seemingly indivisible from religion” (*Empire of Magic* 228). The confluence of body and culture renders even the physical body malleable as it becomes subject to and is affected by the cultural, religious, and habitual

performance of the agent. Therefore, even the physical body itself cannot be relied upon as the essential determiner of identity. Hence, these mutable components of identity offer fluidity between Christians and their enemies which is duly made use of in the romances.

Accordingly, in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*, the firm association between physical deformity and monstrosity is absent. As argued in the second chapter, the established binaries between the knights and their monstrous Saracen enemies are not stable and the monstrous attributes of the Saracens are in fact shared by the knights. As Robert Rouse argues, the failure of the crusade campaign is the instigating factor for the creation of these romances including *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther* (“Crusaders” 176). Rouse further argues that *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther* imparted “a critique of the practice of western chivalry, a model of potential reform, and a cautionary commentary upon the territorial goals of crusading activity” (“Crusaders” 176). The loss of the Holy Land occupied the collective consciousness of Europe bursting with introspective criticism towards actors of the crusade. Christopher Tyerman in *God’s War* (2006) terms the examples of such texts in the fourteenth century as “recovery literature” which refers to “books, pamphlets, and memoranda concerned with the crusade,” and aims at “the restoration of Jerusalem” by directing constructive criticism (827). As products of fourteenth century, the selected romances in this chapter can be seen as examples of this tradition.

In this regard, this study uses Julius Zupitza’s critical edition of *Guy of Warwick* which largely bases itself on the Auchinleck manuscript dated around 1330 and occasionally benefits from the Caius manuscript dated around the 1470s. Ivana Djordjević’s detailed study of the existing manuscripts reveals that the Auchinleck version follows closely the Anglo-Norman version referred to as the G manuscript and Ewert’s manuscript, both dating around the first half of the thirteenth century (35-36). Retention of Guy’s monstrous behaviours in the Auchinleck manuscript seems to be a deliberate choice to denigrate the knights in the romance. Another indication of this negative attitude can be discerned by looking at the fifteenth-century Caius manuscript version of *Guy of Warwick*. This version was reputed to have been produced with professionalism and care observable from the delicately limned letters and illuminations which “suggests connections within the highest levels of the London book trade” (Wiggins, “Makeover Story” 490). Thereby, the Caius manuscript might have reconfigured the romance to meet the tastes of the fifteenth-century aristocratic class. Accordingly, Guy’s monstrous behaviours such as the killing of Duke Florentine’s innocent son, or episodes involving Guy’s

seeking personal revenge were carefully excised to portray an unbridled example of chivalry (Wiggins, “Makeover Story” 484-85).

A similar makeover was undertaken for the romance, *Richard Coer de Lyon*. John Finlayson illustrates that except for the earliest known version in the Auchinleck manuscript (c. 1330) all the other extant manuscripts contain a certain degree of interpolated material be it historical or fictional (“Richard” 161). These interpolations complicated Richard’s reputation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries because they introduced overwhelmingly troubling aspects of him. These episodes include switching of Richard’s mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, with a monstrous one, Cassiodorien, who refuses to hear Mass and eventually flies away; Three Days’ Tournament in which Richard kills his own men; his scouting expedition to the Holy Lands; his imprisonment on his way back in Germany where he kills the son of Mordred by cheating in the exchange of blows; his consumption of lion’s heart; introduction of two fictitious knights, Fouke Doyly and Thomas of Multon who act as a foil to Richard’s monstrous nature; Richard’s two cannibalism episodes; his duel with Saladin (Larkin, Introduction 3-4, Roger Loomis “Richard Cœur de Lion” 511). These episodes largely contain instances that undermine Richard’s portrayal as a just and able knight/king. Therefore, the monstrous representation of Richard in the interpolated romance can be considered in line with the critical trend that surged in the fourteenth century, especially after the loss of the Holy Lands, a period in which, as Janet Coleman suggests, “few works were meant merely to entertain, but were intended rather to ... criticize and eventually to reform social practice, by which was meant the behavior of church officials and the politically and economically powerful” (16).

Similarly, as argued in the third chapter, the demarcation between the Arthurian knights and their monstrous enemies from the Northern borders is blurred via performances of monstrosity conducted by either party. Various arguments have been imputed for the underlying reasons for this contestation between the knights and the monsters. For example, Joseph Taylor reads the romance *Carl of Carlisle* from the perspective of the complex relations of central and marcher laws that generate “negotiations between lords and kings within and across national lines, and the confused claims of territory at the Anglo-Scottish border” (193). The resultant conflict between the Arthurian knights and the monstrous Carl is an expression of a contention of national scale among Scottish lords and the English kings.¹¹ Sarah Lindsay analyses the same romance in terms of class conflict by drawing attention to the romance’s popular appeal to the

¹¹ On *Carl of Carlisle*’s reflection of national struggle at the borders, Glenn Wright also finds shared plot points between *Carl of Carlisle* and the Scottish romance *Rauf Coilgear* (1572) (647-62).

“gentry and merchant classes” (404). Hence, the eventual assimilation of the “monstrous” Carl into the Arthurian society indicates “the possibility of being chivalrous without exercising violence or possessing noble blood” (Lindsay 404).¹² The conflicting parties for Michael Johnston, however, are not the commoners and the nobility, but the romance reflects more about “the minor, provincial aristocracy’s ability to participate as full-fledged members of England’s governing class” (1).

Likewise, Michael Bennett’s reading of *Sir Gawain* puts forward a similar dynamic for power ascendancy; the self-made barons like Knolles and Calveley from Cheshire, who were referred to as “beastlike” (qtd. in “Literary Achievement” 79) in the contemporary chronicles of the court, rose to dominance during the reign of Richard II but were disenfranchised after his death (“Literary Achievement” 63).¹³ The alleged commission of the romance by one of these Cheshire barons remaining in London explains the favourable representation of the monstrous Green Knight/Bertilak whose alternative court with “hunting, true hospitality and clear-eyed, non-traditional assessments, may well enshrine the projected self-consciousness of that new class fraction of *arriviste* soldiers” (Knight, “The Social Function” 116). The extensive use of mercantile language employed especially in the covenant parts of the two exchange games is put forward as an aspect that may have appealed to “an audience of sophisticated and wealthy merchants and knights in the late fourteenth century ... London” who “embodied the fusion adumbrated in the poem” (Mann, Price and Value” 314).¹⁴ Furthermore, the representation of the mysterious Green Knight has garnered much critical debate concerning the function of his presence. His unusual hue associates him with the Devil since the colour green is “sometimes assigned by the Middle Ages to Satan” or it may represent “life, rebirth, youth, love, faithfulness, and chastity (Randall 479, 483); he may also be a “wild man” or “a dying and rising vegetation god, an archetypal Death figure” (Besserman 220); he is also identified as the

¹² Similarly, Sean Pollack attributes the reconciliatory engagement between the monstrous Carl and the Arthurian court to the growing relevancy of the mercantile class to the nobility in *Carl of Carlisle* which subjects “[c]hivalry as a complex set of codes ... under continual negotiation, redefinition, and scrutiny” (18). Raluca Radulescu talks about *Carl of Carlisle*’s reflection of the “tensions between the aspirations of the lower classes to higher social station” (57). L. C. Ramsey ascribes the romance’s “enforced equality of terms between unequal persons” to “the grace of the superior” (206). Taco Brandsen re-articulates the function of the political bargain at the end as an expression of “each party to respect the other’s right and thereby to restore order” (300).

¹³ On the influence of Cheshire soldiers of fortune in London and Richard II’s court see, Michael Bennett’s book *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Thomas Alfred’s *The Court of Richard II and Bohemian Culture: Literature and Art in the Age of Chaucer and the Gawain Poet* and Ad Putter’s *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*, especially, 189-91.

¹⁴ Ad Putter remarks about the “dynamics of debt and payment” (*Sir Gawain* 239) as a motivating factor in the romance which binds Gawain to “a contractual obligation ... which requires him to act against his impulses” (*Sir Gawain* 239); see also Stephanie Trigg, 251-55.

folklore figure of the green man, “a challenger to games and contests and a tempter, wearing green cloak of a huntsman” (Sadowski 93). Moreover, his green disposition may also associate him with the peasantry who are more in tune with nature and the land. Indeed, Laura Hubbard Loomis argues that Green Knight may be a churl like the Carl in *Carl of Carlisle* since the name, Bercilak, may derive from the Celtic word “*bachlach* (churl)” (“Gawain” 532).¹⁵ Indeed, as Lee Ramsey observes, the storylines of the Northern romances “derive from French romances” even though “[t]he ultimate sources are in Celtic folk tales” (200, 202).¹⁶

Celtic folk tales as the source of *The Wedding* are further supported by Richard Sherman Loomis who identifies the loathly lady as the Earth Goddess, Eriu that represents the sovereignty of Ireland (*Celtic Myth* 222). Similarly, John Bugge argues that Sir Gromer Somer Joure, whose name means “man of a summer’s day,” is identified as “the sun god” (200).¹⁷ However, the recent critical tradition moves away from the symbolic reading of these characters and investigates the social, political, and economic undercurrents of the monsterisation process. For example, Mary Leech analyses the grotesque body of Ragnelle, which challenges the accepted norms of the chivalric society, and states that Ragnelle’s body points “to the uncontrolled or the feared aspects of the world outside the societal order” (214). Similarly, Collen Donnelly argues that the burlesque nature of the romance coupled with Ragnelle’s unconventional body and behaviours become “blatant disapproval of noble sentiments and literary modes, if not of the nobility all together” (322). Sheryl L. Forstre-Grupp bestows positive agency to Dame Ragnelle in her article that focuses on the “contemporary inheritance laws and customs of primogeniture, which ... denied female siblings equal rights of inheritance” (107). Consequently, Ragnelle’s desire to marry Gawain becomes a carefully devised plan to circumvent her disadvantaged position for inheritance in medieval society.

As these various readings manifest, monsters and monstrosity were utilised by the medieval people to reflect on the various moral, political, social, religious and economic concerns. The existence of a large corpus of teratology scattered across a wide range of mediums proves that it was a topic that was ingrained in their minds. Similar to every period in human history, the

¹⁵ See also Besserman, 220-22. On the other hand, Ad Putter believes that Bertilak’s name derives from Old French Bertolais who is the adversary of Arthur in *Lancelot* and who appears as Bertelak in the Middle English *Merlin (The Works 759)*.

¹⁶ A. W. Haffernan traces the exchange of blows section of *Sir Gawain* to “the Middle Irish tale of *The Feast of Bricriu*, [in which] Cuchulainn answers the beheading challenge of an ugly giant by decapitating him and then putting his own neck on the giant’s chopping block” (105). See also Laura Hubbard Loomis, “Gawain” (530) and Kittredge, “A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight” (9-26). In the seventeenth century version of *The Carl of Carlisle* this motif reappears, but this time “Gawain’s beheading of the monstrous carl releases him from enchantment and turns him back into a normal human knight” (Cooper, Introduction xviii).

¹⁷ See also Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 391-92; Susan Carter, 36.

concept was used as an effective tool to define the boundaries of the normative self. However, as is indicated by the case of the monstrous races, the concept of the monster offered more than deviance from the normative physical body. The self's effort to establish what was singularly right and normative caused the multiplicity of monsters to thrive so that the concept contained endless possibilities of monstrosity in terms of behaviour, culture, habit, language, diet, weaponry, clothing, and so on. It is this fluidity that constantly threatens the normative self to be encapsulated by the monstrous other. It is also this fluidity that transformed the monstrous races from being signs of God's omnipotence to being natural enemies of Christianity. Accordingly, it is argued that in the selected romances, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*, the fluid framework of monstrosity yields deep insights on the nature of evil, violence, and harm. Dissociation of monstrosity from divergent corporeality and introducing a performative aspect to monstrosity blur the boundaries between the knights and monsters.

1. 2. Monster Studies' Approach to Monster

This section provides a brief survey of the monster studies and the analytical and theoretical frameworks that influenced this study. Monsters have been prevalent in the collective consciousness of humanity from the earliest times of history. Contrary to the popularity of monsters in the fictional, medical, historical, religious, and travel texts, academic interest in the monsters flourished only in the second half of the twentieth century by taking cues from the critical theories such as poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and psychoanalysis. One of the earliest scholars to highlight the lack of interest in monsters within the academic circles was J.R.R. Tolkien. His famous lecture entitled "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics" expostulated the popular notion that *Beowulf*'s "weakness lies in placing the unimportant things at the centre and the important on the outer edges" (5). In this famous lecture in 1936, he addressed the scholars' criticism of the poem's overt use of fantastical elements as a factor undermining the seriousness of the work, and the consequential damage fantasy inflicted on the historical aspect of the poem in the Anglo-Saxon period. In response, Tolkien argued that "the monsters are not an inexplicable blunder of taste; they are essential, fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its lofty tone and high seriousness" (19). Following the steps of Tolkien, this study also perceives monsters as crucial to the analysed text's central concerns because the performative fluidity of monstrous and chivalrous identities in the selected romances illuminates various fallacies and errors within the feudal world's organisational structure and the treatment of others.

Apart from Tolkien, in the first half of the twentieth century, Rudolf Wittkower's "*Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters*" (1942) traces the conceptual journey of the monstrous races from the Greek culture to seventeenth-century Europe in a very detailed manner. He demonstrates how these monsters "shaped not only the day-dreams of beauty and harmony of western man but created at the same time symbols which expressed the horrors of his real dreams" (197). Accordingly, his study underlines the centrality of these monstrous races in the collective consciousness of the European mind. He tracks down the influence of the xenophobic Greek and Roman culture's tendency to perceive the tribes outside of their realms as monsters, and how this notion was transported over to Europe. His study was later on expanded by John Block Friedman in *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (1981). In this book, Friedman argues that these races stem from "such factors as fantasy, escapism, delight in the exercise of the imagination, and – very important – fear of the unknown" (24). Moreover, Friedman delves into anthropological research as to the historical existence of these monstrous races. He puts forward the idea that these races probably emanated from the existing tribal societies: "the Pygmies can be identified as aboriginal people who are far from imaginary, ... Amazons reflect the customs of matriarchal societies, the Amyctryrae could have been based upon lip-stretching customs of the Ubangi, the Anthropophagi were cannibals" (24). In a similar manner to Friedman, Adrienne Mayor proposes an archaeological explanation as to the origins of monsters. She propounds that the fossils of huge prehistoric animals are the primary reason for the monster lore in antiquity since "those fossil exposures exist precisely where ancient Greek myths located the destruction of giants or monsters, and where the ancients claimed to have observed gigantic bones" (Introduction 4). However, her argument strictly confines its focus to the Mediterranean cultures and falls short of explaining the existence of monsters in virtually every other culture in the world. Although it is anthropologically and archeologically crucial and valuable to research the possible instigating factors that produced the monsters in various cultures, the inception of the concept of monster is a far more complex phenomenon that contains within itself the dynamics of power, psychology, emotions, aesthetics, philosophy, theology, and sociology. Still, Friedman's and Mayor's contributions made way for the academic interest that would exponentially increase in the second half the of the twentieth century.

Accordingly, the interest in the monster increased within academia in direct proportion to the proliferation of critical theories. In his works during the 1960s and 1970s, poststructuralist Jacques Derrida interrogated and deconstructed binary oppositions that privileged one term against the other. He introduced the concept of *différance* to deconstruct the privileged position of speech over writing. For him, the term "is a non-concept in that it cannot be defined in terms

of oppositional predicates; it is neither this nor that; but rather this and that (e.g. that act of differing and of deferring) without being reducible to a dialectical logic either” (110). The view, thus, propounds that words or signs can never summon their intended meaning since “language constructs meaning solely through difference, through contrasting one term with its other” (Bildhauer and Mills, Introduction 13). For example, “normal” is only relevant in relation to “abnormal” or “monster” (Bildhauer and Mills, Introduction 13). Monstrosity is never a clear-cut opposite of normal since normal is forever interlinked with the monster and carries the trace of monstrosity within it. Derrida demonstrates the mutually constitutive nature of the binaries in terms of meaning and critiques the structuralist notion of language that is reliant on binaries that privileges one at the expense of the other.

Moreover, instead of an all-encompassing quest for truth, the poststructuralist theory assumes fluid, pluralistic, contextual truths produced by discourses. For Michel Foucault, “[d]iscourses can be seen as sets of deep principles incorporating specific grids of meaning which underpin, generate and establish relations between all that can be seen, thought and said” (Shilling 66). It is a socio-historically contingent system of thinking responsible for organising and generating meaning and knowledge accepted in a particular society collectively as a fact. According to Foucault, there is an intricate relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse which he expresses as follows:

Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctified; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*Power/Knowledge* 131)

Consequently, during the process of formation of “truth,” the dynamic struggle between power and knowledge produced within these social systems is responsible for which discourse to be singled out and put forward as the dominant ideology at the end. This aspect underlines discourses as cultural constructs strictly contingent on spatial and temporal systems of meaning production. By extension, this process of meaning production is also valid for the discourse of normative self and the monstrous other. Thus, geographically, “what one culture construes as monstrous aberration could be considered normal by another” (Weinstock, Introduction 26), and temporally, “there are monsters on the prowl whose form changes with the history of knowledge” (Foucault, “The Order of Discourse” 60). Foucault suggests that one society’s attempt at legitimisation of its values always requires the monsterisation of others that are pushed outside the dominating discourse.

Taking a cue from the critical discussions generated by poststructuralism, critics of monster studies underline the monster's discursivity by stressing its strict contextuality. Cohen argues that monster is a concept that resists easy definition as it requires to "be examined within the intricate matrix of relations (social, cultural, and literary-historical) that generate them" ("Monster Culture" 5). He underlines the contingency of the monster to socio-cultural parameters to be meaningful. Still, this does not show that the monster is devoid of meaning. On the contrary, it is "not meaningless but meaning-laden" (Bildhauer and Mills, Introduction 2). The monster has a multiplicity of meanings among which one is determined during the complex interaction of the monster with the normative self. Therefore, the monster always "needs social context, a cultural milieu, a value system, or a belief system against which, and within which, it may be perceived as aberrant" (Strickland, Introduction 8). The monster's contingency to normative self with regard to meaning challenges the established binary mode of thinking. In this regard, Asa Simon Mittman underlines the monster's importance in terms of exposing the constructed nature of this categorical thinking: "the monstrous is that which creates a sense of vertigo, that which calls into question our (their, anyone's) epistemological worldview, highlights its fragmentary and inadequate nature, and thereby asks us ... to acknowledge the failures of our systems of categorisation" (*Maps*, Introduction 8). As long as one term needs another for its meaning, the two can never be opposites and the imaginary boundaries between the two terms evaporate establishing a permeability of meaning.

As a result, within this permeable state of meaning the two terms – monster and normal – remain locked with each other and constantly cross over each other's borderlines. Michael Uebel underlines this permeability by highlighting that borders have the "double status as both markers of separation and line of commonality" ("Unthinking the Monster" 265). Similarly, monstrous identity is a permeable one traversing freely across the borders. With regard to the monster's permeable identity, Richard Kearney describes monsters as "[c]reatures which hang around borders, and disrespect their [the borders'] integrity. They comprise a species of sinister miscreants exiled from the normative categories of the established system" (119). This conceptual fluidity enables the monster and the normal to override each other across the borders. This is reflected in the monsters' spatial habitation as they are geographically represented as living in "borderline places, inhabiting an 'outside' dimension that is apart from, but parallel to and intersecting the human community" (Gilmore 12). Therefore, whether monsters are projected as the other and located in the swamps, deserts, high mountains outside civilisation, margins of the manuscripts, or the peripheral strips in the *mappea mundi*, their presence always threatens to invade the centre.

In this respect, analysing the process of pushing non-normative groups to the periphery and their eventual threat of invasion of the centre underlines monster studies' close affinity with postcolonialism. Inspired by Foucault's notion of discourse and the mutually constitutive nature of the binaries, Edward Said formulates a definition of Orientalism that is similar to the monsterisation process of the subaltern. Accordingly, he describes Orientalism "as a Western style for dominating, restricting, and having authority over the Orient" undertaken for consolidating the European culture and identity via "setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Introduction 3). Orientalism operates by projecting the West's fantasies and desires on the Eastern civilisations. These constructed fabrications about the East situate it within the disadvantaged side of the binaries, thereby legitimising the West's colonial enterprise. Unfortunately, however, Said's foundational study on the relationship between the West and the East does not dwell on the Middle Ages, but in large part focuses its area of investigation on the eighteenth century and onwards. This aspect renders Said's analysis of the dynamics between the East and the West partial since he misses important historical and cultural moments such as the Crusades during the Middle Ages. However, this field of study was compensated by medieval scholars who were critical of Said's partial analysis and who attempted to bring postcolonial studies over to the Middle Ages.

In this regard, Bart Moore-Gilbert claims a more complex relationship between the East and the West than Said's presentation: "Islam is implicitly interlinked with Christianity, at least historically speaking, and not simply as some utterly Other alien faith" (57). David Chioni Moore compares the Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's choice of writing in the vernacular to Chaucer's. For a similar choice that rejects participation in a privileged but largely external literary tradition, "Ngũgĩ is today called postcolonial, while Chaucer is perceived to stand at the head of the colonizer's history" (112-13). On the other hand, Anne McClintock is hesitant about the use of the term postcolonial by the scholars of the Middle Ages as she argues that it is a modern problem contingent on imperial discourse, and the term refers to the historical posterity of colonial expansion and is, therefore, bound by a "commitment to linear time and the idea of 'development'" (10). In response to arguments concerning the difference between modern and premodern motives of conquest and expansionist projects, Patricia Ingham and Michelle Warren in the introduction of *Postcolonial Moves* (2003) claim:

The ideological force of the West's colonizing claim to be "modern," and the concomitant claim that its colonizing forces are agents of "modernization," is furthered (rather than unsettled) by defining colonialism as a "modern problem." Such temporal limits, to be sure, circumscribe in the interest of historical particularity and definitional clarity. Yet in so doing such assertions imply, if

unwittingly, colonial “modernity” as a fact of history rather than an ideology of colonialism. (Introduction 2)

Accordingly, Ingham and Warren suggest that associating Western rhetoric of civilisation against primitivity with modernity is a flawed temporal perspective that does not encapsulate colonial discourse in its entirety. For example, during the Crusades, a systematic body of texts against the races in the East was propagated by the Catholic Church to conquer Jerusalem. After the Council of Clermont, near Cluny, Pope Urban II (1088-99) gave a speech to the laymen that would ignite the crusading fervour for centuries to come. In this speech that Robert the Monk rendered as an eye-witness, the Pope urged Christians to “[l]et therefore hatred depart from among you, let your quarrels end ... wrest that land from the *wicked* race, and subject it to yourselves” (7; emphasis added). As it is clear from the speech, colonial ideology is not a temporal zeitgeist contextually relevant in a specific time or a place, but a conviction of superiority that undermines the other’s political, cultural, economic, territorial, linguistic heritage and sovereignty in hopes of rationalising the invasive aims of the West.

Accordingly, the postcolonial framework has been utilized by some scholars of the Middle Ages. Its theoretical affinity with the monster studies helped scholars demonstrate the expansionist fantasies of Europe in the Middle Ages by touching upon the process of pushing the subaltern groups to monstrosity. Geraldine Heng in her book entitled *Empire of Magic* (2003) argues that romance is not devoid of historicity but conflates fantasy and history in a complex matrix of a national programme to propagate an imperialistic fantasy: “From the very inception of the genre, Arthurian romance is imbricated in the history of medieval European empire formation in the Levant: a colonial experiment for which the cultural rescue and popularity of Arthur’s deeds offer ideological support” (46). Therefore, in romance’s formative years, knights’ feats against the monstrous other in the early romances repair British history in an attempt to bolster and consolidate national identity. Correspondingly, Ali Belenli employs the Saidian framework to analyse the non-Arthurian romances that are set in the East. These romances feature the Saracens and their exotic representation that sometimes borders on monstrosity. He claims that the Western identity in the Middle Ages was created by solidifying the East as cultural and religious other: “the Middle English romances shape and convey an image of the East which is created by the West” (104). In addition, Jeffrey Cohen expands the discussion by illustrating that monstrous representation is not only reserved for the people of the East but subaltern ethnicities in general. Cohen argues that Gerald of Wales’ *Itinerarium Cambriae* (1191) and *Topographia Hibernica* (1188) are not just travel narratives but imperialist cartographies that consciously represent the indigenous people of Wales and Ireland

“as primitive, subhuman, incomprehensible in order to render the taking of their lands unproblematic” (“The Bodies of Gerald of Wales” 87). Therefore, de-humanisation and the monstrous representation of the other become an ideological tool to rationalise the West’s alleged superiority and legitimise their exploitation and imperialistic fantasies.

In this regard, monster studies correlates with the postcolonial framework in terms of analysing the constructed binaries. In this study, it is also demonstrated that those subaltern groups of people inside and outside Britain who have been traditionally pushed into the monstrous realm cannot be contained within that realm indefinitely. In this regard, Bhabha’s concept of hybridity comes into place. Hybridity refers to transcultural forms produced within the contact points that Bhabha calls the “Third Space of enunciation” (54). According to Bhabha, during the encounters between the two opposing forces – the coloniser and the colonised – the distinction between the two is blurred, and cultural identities “are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of culture are untenable” (55). Hence, hybridity exposes the discursive illusion of cultural purity and isolation and signals the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between the two at the contact zones. Furthermore, the condition of hybridity is subversive in the sense that it adopts, appropriates, and re-invents the imposed identities:

Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (Bhabha 159-60)

Bhabha underlines the performative aspect of this imposed identity which is gradually appropriated within these interstitial spaces. Similarly, in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding* monstrosity and chivalry are produced at the border spaces. Chivalry of the knights and the imputed monstrosity of the other are ideal and “pure” conditions within their own private and enclosed borders. However, once the two parties come across each other at the contact points, they are in a fluid condition of potentiality. Their subsequent performance actually determines their temporary identifications with chivalry or monstrosity.

In this regard, the concepts of performance and performativity become prominent. The application of the term performative can be traced back to J. L. Austin’s speech act theory that he developed in his book *How to Do Things with Words* in 1955. Austin introduced the

performative as a new “category of utterance that has no truth value since it does not describe the world, but acts upon it - a way of doing things with words” (Livia and Hall 11). Therefore, statements such as “I now pronounce you husband and wife” are performative because it is by the utterance of the words that the act is performed. As is clear, the performative utterances require a collectively established contextual framework in order to be comprehensible. Accordingly, as Susan Crane aptly observes, proclamation at a wedding “marries people not because it is a totally self-generated assertion of will but because it reiterates a convention within a ritual framework that people generally accept as accomplishing marriage” (Introduction 3).

Detecting the ritualistic aspect of performance in a highly formalised contextuality, scholars from drama, anthropology, and cultural studies such as Clifford Geertz, Erving Goffman, Victor Turner, and Richard Schechner expanded the application of performance into an explanatory model for human behaviour and identity formation by seeking to understand social behaviour as a function of learned repeated, rather than natural or instinctive, activities. (Wiegert 62). Accordingly, Richard Schechner considers “any action that is framed, enacted, presented, highlighted, or displayed ... [as] a performance” so that the subject of performance includes “human actions ranging from ritual, play, sports, popular entertainments, the performing arts ... , and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing ... , the media, and the internet” (Schechner, Introduction 2). For Schechner, these formalised events in general contribute to the creation of individual and communal identity. Similarly, Erving Goffman likens people’s interactions with each other to a dramatic piece that includes performance, setting, appearance, manner, and front, which is “the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance” (13). This view extends performance to everyday life. However, Goffman does not imply that people always in some sense feign during their interactions although sometimes it may well be the case. Ian Hacking explains that there is an intricate relationship between the agent and the performer that is internalised over time: “Throughout Goffman’s work the idea of *role* is central ... The roles are not gliding surfaces that conceal the true person. The roles become aspects of the person, some more owned, some more resented, but always an evolving side of what the person is” (290).

The approximation of cultural identities with the self, however, constrains people into hegemonic structural categories. In this regard, Judith Butler underscores the innateness of particularly sexual identity as a product of the hegemonic heteronormative discourse that constrains people into constructed binaries such as male/female, sex/gender (*Gender Trouble* 7).

She is inspired by Monique Wittig's formulation of sex which Wittig argues to be "taken as an 'immediate given,' a 'sensible given,' 'physical features,' belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an 'imaginary formation'" (1824). Wittig's approach underlines that women's classification as a natural group is another form of oppression for women to tackle. Similarly, Judith Butler applies performativity of identities to underscore the collapse of "sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social), which means that there is no 'natural body' that pre-exists its cultural inscription" (Salih 62). From the moment of citing the baby as a boy or girl identity is constituted through repeated acts that are defined by the regulative discourses of a particular society. Accordingly, Butler states that

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. (Gender Trouble 33)

This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one is, it is something one does, a sequence of acts, a "doing" rather than a "being" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 25).

Similarly, monstrous and chivalrous identities are not perceived as ontologically stable identities that are closely associated with particular divergent physiologies. They are essentially epistemological and cultural constructs that must be repeatedly performed to be intelligible. The propriety of fragmented, disembodied identities to the worldview of the Middle Ages is also marked by Susan Crane who states that "[p]ostmodern versions of the self embedded in materiality and open to integration with other spaces of being, both organic and mechanical, would look more familiar to a medieval knight than the free-floating, autonomous self of the Enlightenment" (Crane 139). In *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*, chivalry and monstrosity are intelligible through public displays of performances of merit or harm to be legitimate or illegitimate. Therefore, the knights' virtues are constantly put to test during their encounters with their enemies at the contact zones.

1. 3. Monstrosity Performed by Knights

Chivalry is a concept exact contours of which are difficult to pinpoint since it is dynamic and changes according to centuries, individuals' perceptions of it, religious or secular perspectives, and real-life or literary points of view. For instance, to restrain the unruly knights wreaking havoc in Europe and channel their destructive potential to the rising force in the East, the Catholic Church conceptualised an ideology of chivalry during the Crusades that prioritised piety, labour in the way of God, suffering, perseverance, prowess against the heathen enemy and denounced tournaments because of its liability to occasion for the death or injury of a fellow Christian (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 52-67, 94-96). In contrast, Chrétien's romance tradition upheld tournaments as an essential aspect of chivalry because they presented the knight in question with a chance to display his prowess. In addition, it celebrated courtly love and endorsed qualities such as loyalty to one's liege, largesse, courtesy, mercy, prowess against one's enemies irrespective of religion, and concern for reputation (Barron 28, 38-39; Keen, Introduction 2). Ramon Llull's didactic treatise on chivalry entitled *Libre del ordre de cavayleria* (The Book of the Order of Chivalry [c. 1279-83]) stressed a distinction between the order of knighthood and priesthood, and a knight's job of maintaining law and justice (Keen, Introduction 11). On the other hand, Geoffroi de Charny's treatise entitled *Livre de chevalerie* (The Book of Chivalry [c. 1350s]) devoted a large portion to battle-tactics and virtues of prowess on the battlefield.

First and foremost, chivalry was deeply intertwined with the feudal order of the Middle Ages. It basically promoted a socio-cultural way of life and behavioural pattern that regulated the lives of the nobility for the betterment of their conduct. It was a moral code that aspired to lead the knights to good and directed them towards the betterment of their society because, without any guiding set of principles, knights were understood to indulge in sin and divergent behaviour. As Maurice Keen points out, chivalry can be "described as an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements were fused together" (Introduction 15). This fusion came about rather slowly and carefully over a period of centuries so that the ethos of chivalry was shaped and reshaped through the contribution of religious treatises, crusade propaganda, didactic works on chivalry, literary traditions of epic, *chanson de geste*, romance, love songs of troubadours, and family history (Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility* 87-90).

Hence, there was a close and mutualistic relationship between chivalry in real life and its representation in literature. Robert Rouse refers to this relationship as "symbiotic" and states that "practices that became popular in chivalric life soon became part of the literary

representation of chivalry, and this representation, in turn, influenced new audience of knights both young and old” (“Historical Context” 16-17). This led to the development of a complex set of values and behavioural patterns an example of which can be found in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’arthur* (1485):

Then the King established all the knights, and gave them riches and lands; and charged them never to do outrage nor murder, and always to flee treason, and to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen and widows succour; strengthen them in their rights, and never to enforce them, upon pain of death. Also, that no man takes no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no love, nor for no worldly goods. So unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year so were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost. (III. 15)

Evidently, chivalry has close ties with the feudal system in terms of creating political and economic dependency to the king at the top. King Arthur’s generosity is underlined by the bestowal of lands and riches to the knights, while at the same time binding the knights’ prosperity via loyalty to their lord. The Pentecostal oath annually reminds the knights of their duties, restraining them and imposing on them a set of behavioural patterns that are believed to be for the good of society and the betterment of the knights’ moral virtues. Accordingly, excessive emotions are shunned, mercy to enemies and courtesy to ladies are encouraged, and the battle for worldly goods and prestige is avoided.

In this regard, the importance of oath as a verbal bond is also underlined by the Pentecostal oath as it was a speech act that had great value in the Middle Ages. It was a form of covenant in societies “where written documents were employed little or not at all to enact agreements. In their place the spoken word was invested with a ritual solemnity which gave it the characters of sacredness and inviolability” (Thundy 13). Assurance of an oath was protected by the honour of the involved parties. Thereby, oath-keeping was an indication of noble character, and “keeping the word-bond is the sole gauge of nobility” (Donnelly 324). Conversely, oathbreaking intimated deficiency of honour, indicated moral depravity and evil intent against the opposite party, and suggested disregard for the codes that bind one to these established set of principles, thereby it was considered a monstrous act that violated the essential code of chivalry. Annual renewal of the oath also intimates the knights’ liability towards monstrous acts as they constantly need to be reminded of their duties.

Moreover, oath had a crucial role in chivalry in terms of acting as an invisible bond that binds the actor to a set of moral codes and regulations set by the chivalric ideology or binding the

knight to his promise. In addition to the necessity of keeping promises, the internal regulating principle of chivalry was called measure, temperance, or moderation (Finlayson, “Definitions” 53). It was the key virtue of chivalry that regulated and balanced all of the qualities of the knight and tempered the knight’s excessive, deficient, or deviant action against the established codes or patterns of behaviour. It governed the life of the knight, directing him away from overindulgence in glory, food, drink, or sexual pleasure. Even the prowess of the knight in battle or combat had to be tempered with certain rituals and codes that could not be violated. Consequently, in combat or battle, the knight’s reason for taking arms had to be just, he had to enter the combat on equal footing against his adversary, observe fair play, and show mercy to those that pleaded it. The combat or battle itself could be violent as long as it did not violate these established rules and brought ignoble victory to the knight through the performance of foul play (Christoph 112-13). Therefore, temperance constituted the core of chivalry since it provided a form of structural limit that guided the knight towards good behaviour.

British, and, in general, European society in the Middle Ages was governed by the sense that written laws and unwritten rules that rigidly regulated the daily life and compartmentalised people into different estates were for the good of the society as “each part contributed to the health of the whole and in which there was a coincidence between private and public good” (Rigby 308). This rigid social compartmentalisation was seconded by the virtue of restraint since restraining oneself against worldly goods and pleasures was perceived as a way of attaining God’s grace. This can be deduced from the writings of Christian person of letters one of whom was the famous mystic Hildegard of Bingen:

Your eyes see clear when with good striving you look to God and your knowledge is wakeful, when you restrain yourself amid the baseness of this world and your mind flies aloft, when you flee the vices of the deceiving devil and the scurrility and vanity of the vagaries of human conduct. In your thoughts, however, take great care to flee from churlish behaviour, which is ignorant of the renown of a royal court – namely anger and vengeance, which suppress measured and honourable action. (qtd. in Dronke 189)

Clearly, delights in this world were only divergence from the path of God contrived by the Devil. Hence, excess, deficiency, or deviance should be avoided by self-moderation. Even the excessive emotions were perceived as churlish and not suited to the noble mind. Similarly, within the system of the regulative chivalric ideology that aimed at good conduct, temperance encouraged moderation and conformity. This is indicated by Ramon Llull in his treatise on chivalry as he regarded temperance as a virtue that protected the knight from “two vices, one of which is a sin of too great a quantity and the other of too little a quantity” (165).

The particular reason for the implementation of moderation is the brutal history of the warrior class. During the eleventh century, the clerics perceived the violent and deviant impulses inherent within the emerging warrior class and took active measures to influence the idea and purpose of chivalry. As one of the three pillars of feudal European society, the clergy's prioritisation of religious learning, morality, and proper conduct helped to expand "the view of what chivalry meant, and brought home effectively the lesson that *chevalerie* without *clergie* (learning) was nothing worth" (Keen, Introduction 5). Hence, the clergy gave a divine purpose to the knights. Also, the historically complex developmental relationship within the court makes the clerical influence inextricable from the idea of chivalry. In this regard, Stephen Jaeger traces the origins of chivalry and contends that the educator/statesman figure within the court that was popularly occupied by the courtier bishops acted as a civilising catalyst for the warrior class within the court (Introduction 12). From the time of the Carolingians that accommodated a royal Christian chapel in its court periphery, chaplain/bishop figures' self-representations in *vitae* – biography tradition of important Churchmen – foregrounded regulative qualities such as proper conduct, the gentleness of spirit, proportionate physical beauty, patience, and temperance as opposed to vices such as wrathfulness, vengefulness, and anger (Jaeger 23-47). Accordingly, the bishop's attributed virtues that pertain to the order of an individual and by extension of society such as "restraint, moderation, self-control, the subjection of passion to reason, humility" are "transferred gradually – via instruction – onto the class of knights" (Jaeger, Introduction 12-13). There was a conscious and rigorous desire to temper the knights and curb their excessive emotions and actions by the Church.

However, the knights were also governed by the co-existing influences from military and aristocratic spheres. Pre-Christian warrior cults and epics fostered magnanimity, liberality, courage, and a desire for reputation (Keen 52-53). Love songs of Southern France troubadours encouraged adoration of a lady and earthly love that would garner the courtly love tradition. (Keen 30, 52-53). Family histories and conduct books on chivalry by real knights envisioned a personal perception of knighthood which sometimes encouraged bravado, pride, and lavish display of merit through tournaments and feasts. As an example of these conduct books, Geoffroi de Charny regards tournament as an essential aspect of chivalry since it "earn[s] men praise and esteem for [it] require[s] a great deal of wealth, equipment and expenditure, physical hardship, crushing and wounding, and sometimes danger of death" (48). Yet, aspects of commendation for Charny were the very things the clerics approached with disdain. Tournaments were seen as a mock performance of warfare, inflicting physical harm to one's fellow Christians. As a result, it was perceived as unacceptable from the clerical point of view. Thereby, at the axis of aristocratic and clerical influence, the Church historically acted as a

restraining force and a bestower of divine purpose to these knights because of the turmoil the knights caused.

In this regard, especially in the eleventh century, the knights were seen as a source of unrest. Richard Kaeuper illustrates that the relatively stable political landscape and the clarification of inheritance patterns hindered legitimate warfare within Europe to acquire new lands and produced a surplus of landless knights (*Chivalry and Violence* 11-29). These landless knights wreaked havoc in Europe and “fought each other as enthusiastically as any common foe; perhaps even more often they brought violence to villagers, clerics, townspeople, and merchants” (Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* 8). As a result, chivalry as a source of uncontrolled violence in Europe led members of the Catholic Church to regard the knights as disrupters of public order. The Church denounced the knights who were perceived to be leading lives of sin and destruction. Accordingly, the knights were described scornfully in some of their writings, statements, and letters. For instance, Pope Leo IX, one of the Gregorian reformist popes, criticised the Norman knights in Italy for behaving ““with an ungodliness worse than that of the pagans”” (qtd. in Ashe 155). A similar definition of monstrosity is observable in a letter to Archdeacon John, Peter of Blois. The letter complains that knights “plunder and despoil the poor servants of Christ, and, what is worse, they oppress mercilessly the wretched and satiate [impleant] with the pain of others their own forbidden pleasures [illicitos appetitus] and unnatural desires [extraordinarias voluptates]” (qtd. in Cohen, *Of Giants* 76). Description of knights satisfying their unnatural desires quite strongly evokes the clerical perception of knighthood in monstrous terms since the secular knights’ prioritisation of their unchecked lust for the appeasement of their desires goes against the principles of measure and restraint of the Christian religion.

As a result, the performances of uncontrolled violence directed at the European societies position the knights as monstrous figures who become threats against the established order of the European society. Thereby, to divert the harm and destruction the knights wreaked in Europe, the clerics stepped up to maintain order by formulating licit and illicit forms of fighting. The formulation process corresponded to a historically climactic moment of culminated tension and enmity brewing for several centuries between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Consequently, for Hanning, during the discussions of reform for the unruly violence of the knightly class three objectives emerged: “First a defence had to be found against it, then it had to be disciplined and finally it had to be diverted into a holy purpose. This holy purpose was twofold: first to defend the church and the poor, and second, to fight the enemies of Christ” (2). Thus, channelling knightly violence to the enemies in the East imbued chivalry with a holy

purpose so that the knights were expected to be not only pious but also active protectors of the Church. Moreover, the newly acquired purpose transformed the monstrosity of knights and made them enforcers of Christian norms in the foreign lands. The Church's strategy of alleviation of internal strife by uniting Christians against a designated common enemy was supplanted by active propagation of dehumanisation and a call to arms with promises of spiritual salvation.¹⁸

The Church assumed an active role in the European politics and war on behalf of God because these crusaders were not only "perceived as soldiers fighting a war in the service of God or Christ, they were considered to be bound to God by the terms of feudal obligation" and "the call for a crusade by the pope was to be understood as God calling on his 'faithful followers' (*fideles suos*) to join his army just like a worldly king in times of war" (Maier 56). The reason for such a belief was that the call had been popularly attributed to Christ's words in the Bible which is also the foundational passage on Christian asceticism: "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16.24). From this extract, the ascetic virtues of Christianity such as hard physical labour (attending crusades) and renunciation of material wealth were conceived and propagated. Accordingly, as Richard Kaeuper in *Holy Warriors* (2009) demonstrates, the knights "absorbed and participated in this broad cultural investment in meritorious suffering and atonement. Although a general cultural value, asceticism was vigorously urged upon them in specific terms. A steady flow of miracle stories and sermon *exempla* that featured knights regularly linked their physical pain and suffering with divine forgiveness" (63). Religious asceticism was incorporated as an effective method to direct the unruly knights to a meritorious purpose.

¹⁸ Diverting the unruly actions of the knights against the common enemy in the East was one reason for Pope Urban II's call to arms to reclaim Jerusalem. In the struggle with the Holy Roman Empire, the Church's call to arms would strengthen the hand of the papacy in terms of their active role and leadership in European politics. In the meantime, the escalating tension between the Church and the Holy Roman Empire would be channelled onto the foreign enemy. Furthermore, the potential restoration of the Holy Lands by the instigation of the Western Catholic Church would allow religious superiority over the Eastern Church as the two became separate entities in 1054. In addition, fear of sin and desire for achieving salvation, personal glory or patriotic pride, the rise of religious fervour among Christians, ever-increasing need for land in the feudal system, duty of the vassal to his lord, the rich noblemen's desire for conquering Mediterranean port cities to trade with the rich cities of the East were some of the political, economic, social, religious reasons for the ensuing Crusades. For more information, see: Richard Kaeuper's *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry*; Avner Falk's *Franks and Saracens: Reality and Fantasy in the Crusades*; Marcus Bull's *Eyewitness and Crusade Narrative: Perception and Narration in Accounts of the Second, Third and Fourth Crusades*; Stefan Vander Elst's *The Knight, the Cross and the Song: Crusade Propaganda and Chivalric Literature, 1100 - 1400*.

As a result, selfless and meritorious deeds were glorified whereas uncontrolled violence and harm for selfish aims were denounced as not befitting of chivalry. The repercussions of this notion are detectable in Ramon Llull: “But alle the knyghtes now iniuryous and prowld ful of wyckednesse be not worthy to Chyualrye but oughten to be reputed for nought where thenne ben humylyte & justice what done they or wherof serue they” (97). Llull’s perception of harm is in accordance with Kekes’ harm-based formulation of evil. For Kekes, the main instigator of evil is failing “to subordinate self-love to the moral law” (136). The moral law is the absolute principle that defines the standard of right action. Satisfaction of personal needs in matters that concern public welfare is evil because it undermines the sustainable and healthy bonds of society (Kekes 136). Similarly, chivalric principles fused with Christian asceticism and divine ordinance were seen as regulating principles for the knights. Violation of these chivalric principles by the knights injures the strict relations historically founded on societal trust and becomes monstrous.

As Llull suggests above, the ontological separation of knights from chivalry is important. For him, those that are capable of evil intent and inflict injury to others are not worthy of being considered chivalrous. At the same time, his suggestion underlines the performative nature of the chivalrous identity. Within the system of the regulation, chivalric ideology aimed for good conduct and temperance and encouraged moderation and conformity (Jackson 16). In contrast, monstrous behaviour in the selected romances thrives in excess, deficiency, or deviance from chivalry. As stated above, everything chaotic, non-conformistic, and reactionary to the established codes of conduct that are harmful can be perceived as inherently evil and, thus, monstrous. Therefore, an important component of monstrous performance requires the agent’s infliction of undeserved harm to an individual or their society at large either knowingly or unknowingly. Although the majority of the instances of harm infliction in the romances are physical, various types of harm such as psychological harm, legal harm, social harm, and economic and political harm can also be included within this category.

1. 4. Conclusion

Monstrosity as a cultural construct was a phenomenon that dated as far back as humanity’s earliest artistic expressions. Historically, monster’s divergent corporeality played an important role in demarcating the contours of legible human corporeality. Yet, a closer look at the monster reveals that monsters have not solely been marked by their physical difference but by various different socio-cultural tenets that complicate their relationship with the normative self. In the romance context, monsters are firmly related with the knights. By taking cues from academic

disciplines and cultural theorists that deal with the other such as monster studies, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism, this chapter formulates a framework for monstrosity. Accordingly, monstrosity is a temporary epistemological condition that agents reduce themselves to by performing acts that harm and violate code of ethics that is established to maintain order within a particular society. Monstrous behaviour flourishes in an atmosphere of unrestraint that enables the agent to exercise actions without any constrictive measures and consequential guilt. The regulative attempt of the Church to control the knights was a major driving force in terms of formulating an ethos that foregrounded moderation. This is because chivalry's historical development contains traces of monstrosity. However, in the selected romances, it will be illustrated that performance of monstrosity has always been prevalent in the knights. The contextual relationship between chivalric behaviour and monstrous behaviour is the scale for calibrating the measure for what is monstrous or not.

CHAPTER II

MONSTERS OUTSIDE OR MONSTERS INSIDE: FLUID MONSTROSITY IN *GUY OF WARWICK*, *RICHARD COER DE LYON*, AND *SIR GOWTHER*

This chapter argues that the binary between chivalry of the knights and the monstrosity of the Saracens is not as stable as the romances purport it to be. The perception of monstrous identity as a cultural construct dissociated from the agent's ontology enables performative fluidity which, in turn, makes the knights prone to monstrous behaviour. In *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther*, the Saracen identity is constructed, albeit unsuccessfully, as monstrous not because of their divergent physiognomy but because of the Saracens' purported excess, deficiency, and deviation from the set of behavioural principles that governs and regulates the knights. However, the knights who encounter the Saracens at the Eastern frontiers also perform harmful acts that violate these established norms so the knights also become sources of monstrosity to their own people and fellow knights. In this regard, monster is defined as a person who is essentially a source of undeserved harm to others and her/his society in general. This harm is facilitated by transgressive acts that violate the physical integrity of individuals or norms that regulate the feudal society of the West. Hence, monstrosity is not a permanent condition that subjects are pushed into for their differences. It is rather a temporary condition that agents bring themselves into because of their performances. From this perspective, this chapter essentially focuses on the permeability between the traditional concepts of chivalrous and monstrous identities in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon* and *Sir Gowther*.

This study formulates four characteristics that comprise monstrous identity. First of all, it is a temporary condition that agents bring themselves into via performative non-conformity to selective normativity produced within a particular discourse, that is, the chivalric worldview. In this regard, monstrosity is similar to Butler's view of gender as performative which questions "the political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology" (*Gender Trouble* 43). Similarly, monstrous identity is not strictly bound to divergent corporeality but perceived as an epistemological category intelligible through divergent behaviour. As a natural extension, the second characteristic refers to the relational aspect of monstrous identity. The analysis of the monstrous always requires the scrutiny of the cultural parameters against which the monstrous other is positioned. As Margrit Shildrick underlines in her discussion of the monstrous other and the normative self, the relationship between the two "is always caught up in historically and culturally specific determinants, what matters here is that those two concepts remain locked in a mutually constitutive relationship" (*Embodying the Monster* 29). As argued below, in *Guy of*

Warwick, Richard Coer de Lyon, and Sir Gowther, monstrous identity of the Saracen has a bounded relationship with the chivalry of the knight. Chivalry, which was historically “complicit in problems of securing public order” developed into a complex ethos in time that undertook the role of a regulative code of conduct for the good of the Christian society (Kaeuper, *Holy Warrior* 5). In this regard, chivalry is associated with the good and order in the romances whereas monstrous identity is associated with evil and disruption caused by the undeserved harm in any shape or form to the physical integrity of a person or violation of the codes purported to regulate the Western society as the third characteristic. Border encounters play a significant role as the fourth characteristic. As Richard Kearney aptly emphasises, “[m]onsters also signal borderline experiences” which reminds “that the self is never secure in itself” (Kearney 3). Indeed, frontiers generate confrontation between different identities, races, religions, and cultures and monstrosity is the direct manifestation of the endless negotiation for power. Therefore, these boundaries, in this case the Eastern war frontiers, serve as fluid spaces that facilitate encounters between those that are otherwise deemed to be very distinct from each other and which consequently expose the essential proximity between the two. Accordingly, it will be demonstrated that during their encounters with the Saracens, the knights in *Guy of Warwick, Richard Coer de Lyon, and Sir Gowther* become figures of monstrosity via their performances of excess, lack, or deviance that are commonly associated with their enemies.

The romances in this chapter are grouped according to their topical and topographical affinity. Each romance is set largely outside of Britain and assumes crusading against the Saracens as their focal point. As largely caricatured racial and religious others, the Saracens have always remained relevant for the West as the monstrous outsiders. Cohen underlines the fact that for the Normans, apart from the subaltern groups such as the English, Irish, Scots, Welsh, or Jews, Saracens figured as potent and indispensable other “who had [n]ever inhabited Britain, but who were present all the same through historiography, crusade polemic, and the visual arts” (*Hybridity*, Introduction 3). Thus, monstrous Saracens served as an internalised outsider whose geographical distance did not hinder their cultural proximity but conversely, they played a major role in the formation of the communal identity of not only the British but also the whole Christendom (Norman 77). Accordingly, the knights’ confrontation with the Saracens functioned as a way of consolidating their Christian chivalric identity. The knights’ manner of reciprocation with the Saracens plays a significant role in terms of their performative estrangement from and re-absorption to chivalry and Christianity.

This religious hostility towards the Saracens may have been one of the reasons for the composition of especially *Sir Gowther* and *Guy of Warwick*. *Sir Gowther* is variously

categorised under the heading of “Romances of Trial and Faith” (Loomis, *Medieval Romance* 3) or dubbed as “homiletic romance” (Mehl 88), or “secular hagiography” (Bradstock 41) because of its dominant penitentiary aspect. Similarly, *Guy of Warwick* is regarded as a “combination of a Saint’s legend and courtly romance” (Mehl 157). Guy’s religious reformation and the miracles he displays alive and posthumously indicate that the romance “was originally written by a cleric who wished to glorify the family of the Earl of Warwick by presenting such a saintly portrayal of their ancestor” (Mehl 157). Andrea Hopkins underlines the inclusion of “hagiographic materials” into *Guy of Warwick* (*Sinful Knights* 79) and comments on its didactic similarity to *Sir Gowther* in its employment of “a characteristic ‘penitential pattern’” (*Sinful Knights* 115) which is significant in that the two romances contain knights – Guy and Gowther – who perform monstrosities and spend the rest of the romance hoping to be reconciled with God through penance. As an anonymous medieval sermon illustrates, penance is divided into three segments: “compunccion of herte, confession of mowthe, and satisfaccion by dede” (qtd. in Sirko 168). Performative aspect of penance is relevant to the discussion of monstrosity and chivalry in *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Gowther* since these concepts are largely perceived through the lens of behavioural conformity or nonconformity. Similarly, Christian perception of penance requires the performance of a physical act that validates the penitent’s religious reformation. Penance demonstrates fluidity and the possibility of change through acting in a manner that is acceptable for Christianity.

Richard Coer de Lyon exists in two manuscript branches: B version is considered closer to the presumed historical Anglo-Norman text that is now lost while the A version contains the interpolated romance material (Finlayson, “Richard” 159-60). The interpolated materials have been the focus of many scholars because of the implications these materials entail. The negative image of Richard is reinforced in the interpolated romance materials. The sections in question portray an ultimately egotistical and demonic Richard who cherishes secular ideals such as personal glory, material gain, and reputation. Indeed, such a portrayal problematises Richard as a worthy king: “his supernatural and implicitly demonic heritage and of his paradigmatically monstrous acts throughout the text, acts that lead his allies, enemies, and occasionally even his vassals to identify him as a devil, or, tellingly, the son or brother of the devil” (Florschuetz 122). Similar to Gowther, Richard is a gigantic figure who relishes from performances of excess. Unlike the previous two romances, however, Richard in *Richard Coer de Lyon* shows no sign of repentance of his monstrous performances. His exaggerated and caricature-like portrayal does not develop in any meaningful way so that he functions as a foil to the crusaders such as Fouke Doyly and Thomas of Multon who abide by the chivalric principles throughout the romance.

In the romances, the knights' uncontrolled violence to their societies are considered monstrous. The portrayals of Richard and Gowther might suggest that physical divergence from the established norms of the West is the primary indicator of monstrosity. Indeed, physical divergence indicates a particular proclivity to monstrous behaviour. However, in the next section, the construction of Saracen monstrosity will be demonstrated to be constituted by a conglomeration of malleable precepts which includes physical divergence along with behavioural, cultural, religious, habitual, and linguistic distinctions that pose harm to Western normative principles. The selected romances are ideologically infused to celebrate the crusading endeavour and consequently denigrate the Saracens as monstrous because of their professed difference. However, looking at monstrosity as a cultural construct produced as a temporary condition that inflicts harm to characters' society or individuals enables a fluid analysis of characters. From this perspective, the emergent fluidity undermines the fixed and enclosed monstrosity of the Saracens and makes the Christian knights liable to monstrosity as well. To present these aspects, summaries of the romances within the context of uncontrolled violence and monstrosity at the frontiers in the East are given as follows.

Guy of Warwick is a romance of chivalric violence. It is traditionally divided into two cycles. In the first cycle, Guy, as a former-steward-turned-into-knight, embarks on a journey to the Continent to achieve renown for the hand of Felice, daughter of the Earl of Warwick. He wins tournaments while at the same time gaining lots of European enemies such as Duke Otous. As a result, he is ambushed by Duke Otous and all of his companions except for Herhaud are slain. Guy, then, proceeds to help Duke Segyn who is besieged by the German Emperor. In this confrontation, Guy acts as a negotiator between Duke Segyn and the German Emperor. Afterwards, Guy and Herhaud decide to go to Constantinople to further achieve praise by fighting against the Saracens. Guy is very successful in his fight against the Saracens but the intrigues in the Greek court anger Guy to the point that he even resolves to switch sides and offer his services to the Saracen Sultan against the Christians. Especially after the murder of a lion by the jealous Greek Morgadour that Guy has saved, he decides to return home. On his way back to Europe, Guy encounters Tirri who tells Guy about how Duke Otous plans to marry Tirri's lover, Oisel. Guy saves Oisel and then proceeds to slay Duke Otous. During a hunting trip, Guy quarrels with the Earl of Florentine's son whom Guy kills and escapes without receiving any punishment. After seven years, Guy is now back home and marries Felice but his sins as former knight dawn on him and he decides to walk to Jerusalem on foot as a pilgrim for his penance. Pinar Taşdelen aptly observes that "Guy's pilgrimage to Bethlehem and Jerusalem is to cleanse his soul of his sin of neglecting his duty to God while fighting in battles" (211). In this regard, sin as the consequence of Guy's monstrous actions compels him to this journey. As

the first cycle suggests, Europe is in a disarray due to internal fights and feuds. Guy is also a large part of this chaos.

In the second cycle, however, Guy's battles are few and far between. He wages his wars in disguise and only fights when a dire emergency compels him to fight. Guy now returns to East where he meets Earl Jonas. He agrees to fight as a champion for a Saracen king, Triamour, who promises to free Jonas and the rest of the Christian captives should Guy fight against Amoraunt. Later on, in Europe, Guy again meets Tirri, who is accused by Duke Berard of murdering his uncle, Duke Otous. This time he agrees to fight as a champion for his friend. Back home, Guy sees that England is attacked by the Danes. The King of England persuades Guy to fight against their champion, Colbrond, one on one for the salvation of England. After all these fights, Guy withdraws to a hermitage and dies peacefully.

Richard Coer de Lyon, too, contains violence in the legitimate context of chivalrous adventure and crusades. However, the illegitimate context such as Richard's violence for the sake of violence or nationalistic feuds are also observable as the European nations are all riven by strife while the Saracens are unified. The romance begins with the marriage of King Henry and the Eastern princess, Cassidorien. In his youth, Richard is a ferocious young man who enters a tournament match in England and kills one of his opponents. Then, Richard decides to go to the Holy Land disguised as a pilgrim. On the way back, he is captured by the King of Almayne. In jail, he kills the King's son during an exchange of blows by waxing his hands and cheating in his victory. Yet, his ransom is paid and he returns to England. Six months later, Richard decides to join the Crusades with a vast army. First, the English forces fight with France, then Richard directs his course to Cyprus and captures the island. Then, he sails for Acre to fight against the Saracens for the Holy Lands. During one of the battles, Richard falls very ill and craves pork but the cooks prepare the meat of a Saracen due to scarcity of food. Richard enjoys the meat and is now fully replenished. He, later on, learns the source of the meat and receives the news with amusement. He commits cannibalism the second time when he kills the Saracen hostages and serves their heads to the Saracen envoys that have come to negotiate for their ransom. Moreover, Richard executes sixty thousand Saracens because they do not provide any information about the whereabouts of the True Cross. Richard also encounters Saladin in a battle and manages to wound him but Saladin escapes from the battlefield. In the meantime, Philip and the Duke of Austria leave a siege open and return home. Frustrated by their withdrawal, Richard continues to capture cities. However, the news of his brother John's usurpation of the English throne compels him to return home. Before going back, Richard

strikes a three-year truce with Saladin and departs for home but is killed by an arrow shot in Europe.

Sir Gowther introduces a very violent knight named Gowther whose father is an incubus that impregnates a duke's wife. As a child, he bites off his mother's nipples and drains nine wet nurses. At fifteen, he terrorises his land, raping nuns, killing the clergy, and burning nunneries. Fed up by the excessive violence of Gowther, an old earl calls him the Devil's son. This prompts Gowther to ask his mother about his progeny. Upon discovering the truth that he is indeed the son of an incubus, he travels to Rome to seek salvation. The Pope ordains him a penance not to eat anything that does not come out of a dog's mouth and not to speak until a sign of God's forgiveness emerges. Gowther leaves Rome and arrives at the castle of the Emperor of Almayne where he is treated like a dumb fool. The Emperor and his mute daughter understand that Gowther's behaviours are for his penance so they keep him well-fed. The Saracen Sultan requests to marry the Emperor of Almayne's daughter but is refused. Consequently, the Saracens declare war and Gowther prays to God for help. For three days, a suit of armour (black, red, and white) and a steed magically appear and Gowther fights in the battle unrecognised. On the third day, Gowther is wounded which causes the Princess to fall from the tower. On the third day, she wakes up announcing that Gowther is forgiven. The two marry, and Gowther leaves Austria to his steward but builds an abbey in compensation for his previous wrongs. After his death, he is buried in the abbey and is venerated as a saint.

2. 1. Saracen Monstrosity as a Fragile Construct

Despite attempts to push the Saracens to the category of the monstrous other, the Saracens and the knights ultimately share similar tendencies towards violence attributions. In this regard, at first, the construction of the Saracen monstrosity in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther* will be illustrated in this section. Then, it will be argued that the monsterisation process of the Saracens is largely dependent on malleable constructs that are performative in nature so that the Saracens' professed monstrosity will be shown to be shared by the knights as well. Lastly, the instances of the honourable and humane portrayals of the Saracens in the romances will also be pointed out to demonstrate the essential fragility of the dichotomies between the monstrous Saracens and the knights.

Monstrosity is an epithet that is consciously or unconsciously attributed to the designated other(s) because of their divergence from the self's subjective and normative standards. Crusades (1095-1291) in the Middle Ages provided such a historical period of encounter and

active contestation of superiority on the contact points between the East and the West. During the crusading enterprise, there was a systematic propagation by the Catholic Church to differentiate and thereby to undermine the peoples of the East. The Church designated the Saracens as the common enemies who were referred to as a “wicked race” (qtd. in Robert the Monk 7) by Pope Urban II during his speech after the Council of Clermont in 1095. Accordingly, the peoples of the East were subjected to systematic denigration in clerical writings, official letters, sermons, chronicles, and fictional works such as *chanson de gestes*, romances, hagiographies, and pseudo-travel books.¹⁹ The underlying factor of such an endeavour is suggested by Michael Uebel: “[t]he difference of the other is emphasized in order to reinforce an imagined notion of sameness” (*Ecstatic Transformation* 45). This “notion of sameness” manifested as communal identity in the Middle Ages was essentially relational on the premise of not me/us. In this way, the denigration of the peoples of the East worked as an effective tool to render the destruction of the Saracens and the conquest of Jerusalem possible (Praver 469-73). As an extension of the monsterisation process of the Saracens, the selected romances attempt to portray them as monstrous via their physical, behavioural, religious, cultural, dietary, and linguistic differences. In a way, the Saracens are construed to be the composite image of everything that the Christians are not and should not be.

Therefore, the Saracens’ monstrosity in the romances is marked by various tangible and intangible attributes. First of all, the Saracens’ corporeal divergence is apparent by their large bodily proportions and their black skin colour which are primarily associated with malevolence. Accordingly, in *Sir Gowther*, they are described customarily as “Sarsyns blake” (478). In *Guy of Warwick*, Guy’s Saracen opponents in the second cycle of the romance are described as having

¹⁹ The same process of denigration was also conducted by the Muslims. The Christian crusaders had been reductively referred to as *al-franji*. Crusaders were frequently represented as not very different from animals in the Muslim chronicles such as *Kitab al-I’tibar* (12th c. [The Book of Contemplation]) by Usama ibn Munqidh (1095-1188), *Dhail Ta’rikh Dimashq* (12th c. [Continuation of the Chronicle of Damascus]) by Hamza ibn Asad abu-Ya’la ibn al-Qalanisi (1070-1160), and *al-Kāmil fit-Tārīkh* (c.1231 [The Complete History]) by Ali ibn al-Athir (1160-1233). Franks’ lack of jealousy for their partners, their lax bonds of amity and friendship, and their dishonesty and foreign customs were frowned upon. They considered themselves superior and more sophisticated in matters of medicine, law, mathematics, religion and art. The primary aim of this study is to analyse the process of monsterisation conducted by the Western sources, and the employment of the intangibility of such a representation in the fourteenth and fifteenth century selected romances. Therefore, the Eastern sources are not the primary interest of this study. For more information on this topic, see: Maalouf, Amin. *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*. Translated by Jon Rothschild, Al Saqi Books, 1983. Print. Hallam Islam, Elizabeth M. Parkinson. Eds. *Chronicles of the Crusades: Eye-witness Accounts of the Wars Between Christianity and Islam*. Los Angeles, CA: Welcome Rain, 2000. Print. Haddad, Wadi Z., editor. *Christian-Muslim Encounters*. University Press of Florida, 1995. Falk, Avner. *Franks and Saracens: Reality and Fantasy in the Crusades*. London: Karnac, 2010. Print. Partner, Peter. *God of Battles: Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997. Print.

black skins and giant bodies: Amoraunt is as “blac he is as brodes brend: / He semes as it were a fende, / Pat comen were out of helle” (62: 10-12); Colbrond is described in the language of excess and lack: “A michel and unrede. / Al his armour was blac as piche / Wel foule he was and lothliche” (258: 7-8). About their physical description, Ali Belenli aptly states that these “giants are not only represented as the stereotypical enemy but also as the enemies of normality” (82). Indeed, their huge bodies and black skins evoke the feeling of disgust as they look like demons coming from hell. A similar infernal association occurs in *Richard Coer de Lyon*. When Richard demands the pork meat that he thinks replenishes his health, the cook despairingly brings forth the severed head of a Saracen whose “swarte vys [black face] whenne the kyng seeth, / Hys blake berd and hys whte teeth” (3211-12) surprises Richard for a brief moment and leads him to exclaim: “What devyl is this?” (3214). The scene is particularly contrived to reinforce “the horror of the dead, its [the head’s] color difference, and its inhuman, devilish nature” (Heng, *Empire of Magic* 64). In addition, the contrast between the Saracens’ rotten black face and white teeth creates the generic racial marker of difference against the fair complexion of the knights. Their corporal divergence is largely utilised to render them non-human.

Therefore, the Saracens’ excessively large bodies and their blackness are associated with their lack of moral principles. The idea can in fact be traced back to humoral theory that was popular during the Middle Ages which extrapolated that “a sun-influenced balance of the humors [provided] a scientific explanation for the aberrance of the Saracen personality” (Cohen, “On Saracen” 200). In conjunction with the humoral theory, the Saracens had been traditionally identified with the cynocephali²⁰ who had also dark complexion and were commonly believed to have resided in the East in the books of teratology that dated back to classical Greece and Rome. For Uebel, the association of the Saracens with cynocephali “conveys the ideas of religious heresy, monstrosity, remoteness, and irrationality – in short, pure deviance” (*Ecstatic Transformation* 17-18). In line with this generic association, the Saracens are commonly referred to as (black) hounds in the romances. In *Sir Gowther*, the Emperor refuses the Saracen Sultan’s proposal to marry his daughter by stating: “And y wyll not, be Cryst wonde, / Gyffe hor to no hethon hownde” (391-92). Similarly, in *Richard Coer de Lyon* “hound” (4054, 5113, 5231, 6136, 6786, 7120) is a frequent epithet that is applied to the Saracens. In *Guy of Warwick*

²⁰ Cynocephalus is one of the popular Plinian monstrous races whose name comes to mean dog-head in Latin. According to Greek historian Ctesias’ account, they “live in the mountains of India. They communicate by barking. Dressed only in animal skins, they live in caves and are fleetfooted hunters, using swords, bows, and javelins” (qtd. in Friedman 15). Cynocephali’s uncivilized lifestyle coupled with their divergent corporeality is conveniently associated with the Saracens to comment on their incomprehensible and distant culture.

the movement of Amoraunt is described in canine terms: “To Gye rode as an hounde” (8560). Moreover, the prophet Muhammad’s name is conveniently bastardised to establish his canine connection: “Mahounde” (*Guy* 3642, 3646, 3653, 3703). Their incomprehensible bodily formations are shown in turn to be reflective of their deficient moral codes.

Accordingly, the Saracens are largely represented as leaning towards evil and foul play during their engagements with the knights. For example, Guy’s first encounter with the Saracens during the siege of Constantinople is the dreaded warrior named “amiral Costdram” (2905). He is the nephew of the Saracen Sultan, has a reputation for his ruthlessness, and has in fact killed the Byzantine “þemperour sone” (2916). Costdram’s dreadfulness does not only stem from his strength but from the fact that “His armes alle avenimed bep / Þat venim is strong so þe dep” (2911-12). His use of venom during the fights makes him a very difficult challenger for knights to overcome. About Costdram, Robert Rouse remarks that “the envenomed nature of Costdram’s weapons mark[s] him out as Other, casting doubt upon his honour and differentiating him from Christian knights such as Guy, to whom the use of such weapons is both unknown and unthinkable. Costdram here represents an image of a knightly Other, *unheimlich* in comparison with the normative values of Guy’s own Western conception of knighthood” (“Expectation” 130, emphasis original). Costdam’s fighting style is challenging and unconventional for the knights due to his reliance on trickery rather than skill in fighting.

Similarly, Amoraunt in *Guy of Warwick* asks Guy to let him drink water in the middle of the fight and promises to bestow the same favour if Guy needs it (8324-41). Yet, he refuses to fulfil his part of the “couenaunt” when Guy asks him the same thing (8401-13). This is because Guy’s thirst puts him in a disadvantaged position which, for Amoraunt, increases his chance of slaying Guy, thereby receiving the Sultan’s lands and daughter (122: 2-8). Moreover, Amoraunt’s violation of the established covenant in favour of the lands and the prospect of marriage highlight the carnal and materialistic desires in him which spoil the sacredness of interpersonal pacts. Yet, in largely illiterate societies publicly recited pacts are significant since “[a] ceremonial oath provided an opportunity for ... bearing witness in a binding and unchallengeable manner” (Zupka 63). Therefore, breaking an oath harms the societal relations that are based on mutual trust, thereby failure to adhere to the recited covenants can be regarded as monstrous. Likewise, in Guy’s final battle back in England, the Danish invaders bring an African giant named Colbrond (10324). The Danish king promises that if a champion manages to win the combat against Colbrond he will go back to Denmark “And neuer do Englonde harme mare, / Ne hys Eysers fro that nyȝt / Neuer challenge of England ryȝt (10579-81). Similar to Amoraunt, Colbrond refuses to give Guy another weapon when Guy breaks his sword although

the chivalric custom permits Guy to have another weapon. Instead, he tries to attack Guy while he is armless (10719-29). Of course, Guy manages to kill him against all odds in the end and the Danes subsequently comply with the terms of the covenant (10769-73). However, a marked difference is established between the Danes and their Saracen giant; the European enemies honour the established covenant whereas the Saracens do not see any harm in violating their covenants.

Likewise, in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, it is the Saracens such as Saladin who perform monstrous acts during their encounters with Richard. In the romance, Saladin is portrayed as a “maystyr nigromacien” (5530) who has a deep connection with the evil forces that enable him to conjure “Thorwgh the feendes craft of helle, / Twoo stronge feendes of the eyr / In lyknesse of twoo stedes feyr” (5332-34). Saladin promises to face Richard in the battlefield if he accepts to ride the two horses that Saladin has given as presents. In contrast, Richard is aided by the forces of good; an angel appears in his dream and instructs Richard how to master the horses (5548-75) so that he manages to wound Saladin and force him to flee the battle next day (5826-31). Correspondingly, against the forces of evil, the Christians are frequently aided by God in *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Gowther*. For instance, directed by Tirri’s dreams, Guy finds a magnificent sword in a cave of treasure to aid him in his fight against Berard (9404-12). King Athelstan’s prayer for help is answered by angels who announce that Guy will fight against the Danes for the English (243: 1-12). Gowther’s fight against the Saracens constitutes an essential part of his reformation process as a Christian knight. Thus, he is supplied with armour and steed by God during the course of three days of fighting against the Saracens. The timely intrusion of the Saracens to the romance provides an effective outlet for Gowther’s destructive force to be “directed not inward, toward his community, but outward, to the enemies of the Christian community at large” (Oswald 184). Thus, the harmful and chaotic violence of Gowther is employed as a meritorious force for the furtherance of Crusading activity against the Saracens. Gowther’s uncontrolled violence towards his society as discussed below is monstrous because of the apparent physical, social, economic, and religious harm it inflicts on his society. Yet, violence “directed against the legitimate body of the Saracen *other* is the true goal of the Christian knight, leading to both earthly and heavenly reward” (Rouse “Crusaders” 182). The contextual contingency of monstrosity and normality becomes apparent via the legitimate and illegitimate employment of violence.

In this regard, the connection of the Saracens with evil and Christians with good constructs a binary which is peremptorily exploited in the romances. For example, the Saracen Sultan in *Sir Gowther* expressly states that if the disguised warrior in black and red armour – Sir Gowther –

did not join the battle on the Christian side, “Full *evyll* we had ben steyd” (528, emphasis added). The dialogue of the Saracen Sultan is formulated in a way that implies his enjoyment of evil. In a sense, the Saracen becomes “a monster, an abject and phantasmatic body produced through category violation in order to demarcate the limits of the Christian possible” (Cohen, “On Saracen” 202). Hence, the Saracens are not what they essentially are but are refracted images of the Christian vacuity. Thereby, the binary does not define the contours of the other but it actually concerns itself more with the perverted projection of the self’s image onto the other (Said 87). The practice is carried over to the construction of various tenets of the Saracens. For example, religion of the Saracens in the romances becomes the distorted image of the Christian concept of the holy trinity. Accordingly, as John Tolan demonstrates, the Saracens were customarily represented as “worship[ing] a trinity of golden idols: Apollo, Tervagant, and Mahomet” (*Sons of Ishmael* 1). This is reflected in *Guy of Warwick* in which the Saracens are represented as believing the unholy trinity of deities: “Appolyn” (3699), “Termagant” (3701), “Mahound” (3703). The inverted trinity of the Saracens is of course the corrupted version of Christianity. Constructed as “the depository of all Christian heresies, Islam, through its cultural marginality and deviance, became a measure of Christianity’s symbolic centrality and stability” (Uebel, *Ecstatic Transformation* 31). Therefore, the Saracen religion is mentioned only to reinforce the glory of Christianity.

In addition, instead of the monotheistic religion of Christians, the Saracens are represented as polytheistic. Similar to a mixture of idolised, fabricated, and classic gods represented in *Guy of Warwick*, in *Richard Coer de Lyon* the Saracens believe a host of different gods such as Mahoun (2714), Termagaunt (2714), Jubiterre (4451), Appolyn (3744), Plotoun (6476). However, the numerical superiority of Saracen gods actually reduces their divine authority. Consequently, the unyielding reverence demonstrated to God by the Christians is easily broken in the Saracens’ case. For example, when the Saracens’ siege of Constantinople is breached by the efforts of Guy, the Sultan is quick to defame his Gods: “ye false goddis vntruste, / ... And thou, Mahound, their aller Lorde, / Thou art not worthe a mouse torde!” (3693, 3703-04). Moreover, upon wounding the Saracen Sultan during their duel, Guy ridicules the inferiority of the Sultan’s religion, ““Mahoun halp þe litel þer! / Bodi & soule no nouzt þer-of” (3642-43).

Saracen’s easily broken faith to their Gods and their tendency to resort to foul play indicate that they are not particularly governed by any discernible code of ethics that restrain their actions. They are under the full reign of their irrational impulses and desires. In this regard, “drawing upon a longstanding clerical tradition that represented the prophet Muhammad as heresiarch who appealed to these followers by indulging their hedonistic desires” the romances popularly

“depicted the Saracen as steeped in the sin of *luxuria*” (Elst 108). As opposed to the discourse of restraint that is promoted by the West, the Saracens’ hedonistic way of life garners excess in every way possible so that debauchery becomes the staple of their monstrous representation. For example, the Saracen Sultan in *Sir Gowther* is portrayed as sporting three lions richly adorned with jewels and whose “helmyt full rychely frett, / With charbuckolus stonus suryly sett / And dyamondus between” (583-85) to underline his vanity. His lust for the daughter of the Emperor of Germany is actually the instigator of the war as the Saracen Sultan threatens to “slay thi [the Emperor’s] men bot thu hym sende / Thi doghttur that is so feyr and heynde, / That he mey hur wedde” (385-87). Therefore, the imperative to protect the chastity of the European princess against an irrational and impulsive Sultan provides a legitimate defence against the Saracens. Similarly, the Sultan in *Guy of Warwick* is first described through his wealth: “It is the wicked hooste of Sarasyn: / It is the Admirall Cosdram, / The neuyew of the riche Sowdan” (2905-06). In addition, the Saracen Sultan of *Guy of Warwick* is motivated by an unquenchable desire for unmeasurable destruction which makes him monstrous:

For of Coyne the riche sowdan
(Proude he is, and of grete boban)
He hath with him fifteen kynges,
And .xxx. admiralis, without lesinges.
In-to Constantyn-noble the Emperour flowen is,
And they haue him beseged, y-wys.
There is him lefte noon other Citee,
Bot all haue destroyed without pitee. (2815-22)

As is clear, the Sultan’s riches, army, and destructive impulse are used to emphasise the overall excess in his conduct and show his monstrosity. Likewise, in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, Richard’s troops outside the walls of Acre witness the “Sarazynez have ryhchesse” (2783). Yet, Richard’s troops are “all good dystresse” (2784) because of the hunger and hot weather that they face in the East. The contrast between the excess of the Saracens and the apparent lack of resources for Richard’s army seems to underline the meritorious suffering of the Christians. However, at this point in the narrative, the narrator also adds that Richard’s troops “thoughte to wynne to oure pray / Of that resore and that noblay” (2785-86). The extract underlines the Christian army’s similar desire to enjoy the riches that the Saracens actually enjoy if they had the same resources.

This scene marks one of the underlying similarities between the Christians and the Saracens despite the romance’s attempt to establish a clear-cut binary between the two. As the examples above suggest, the Saracen is formulated to be the very condition that Christians should at all cost shun. However, it is a condition that is largely malleable and essentially performative in nature, and the romances illustrate this performativity. For example, at the beginning of *Guy of*

Warwick, Guy as a mere steward at the house of Earl Rohaud professes his love to Rohaud's daughter, Felice. However, she takes it as "deshonour" to her reputation (401) because she is a noblewoman who is conscious of her status and the status of her prospective matches whereas Guy is a mere steward. Thus, she calls Guy a "heþen" (413) – an epithet associated with pagans and Saracens – because of Guy's ill manners that violate the established boundaries by professing his love. Felice is conscious of the fact that nobility is a highly rigid and enclosed society that is more interconnected to various other dynasties around Europe than "commoners [who] are foreigners by blood and peasants are slightly more than animals" (Tinsley 48). Naturally, every intrusion wherever it comes from – outside or below their hierarchy – is a potential threat. Therefore, for Felice, Guy's proclamation of love is a monstrous act that can only be performed by people who are strangers to the customs of the Western feudal society.

Felice's remark indicates that she has a very rigid understanding about identities. For her, religion plays a significant role in terms of defining the boundaries between the East and the West and monstrosity and normality. In this regard, Geraldine Heng asserts that the crusaders incessantly "describe[d] themselves as a special transnational race of people defined by their religion, and blazoned by the cross they bore: *gens Christiana*" ("Cannibalism" 107). Accordingly, one of the Christian chroniclers, Fulcher of Chartres emphasises the cultural construction of Christian identity:

Who ever heard of such a mixture of languages in one army, since there were French, Flemings, Frisians, Gauls, Allogroges, Lotharingians, Allemani, Bavarians, Normans, English, Scots, Aquitainians, Italians, Dacians, Apulians, Iberians, Bretons, Greeks, and Armenians? If any Breton or Teuton wished to question me, I could neither understand nor answer. But we who were diverse in languages, nevertheless seemed to be brothers in the love of God and very close to being of one mind. (xiii. 4-5)

However, celebration of religion as the unifying principle between an otherwise ethnically diverse group of people paradoxically underlines the porosity that conversion entails. For example, Richard accuses Conrad of Montferrat of committing treason against Christianity by forsaking his religion: "He [Conrad] was Crystene be my fadyr day, / And siththen he has renayyd his lay / And is becomen a Sarezyn" (*RCL* 3259-61). Conrad is also accused of stealing Crusade money (3264-65), and bribing Saladin to be the King of Syria (3255-56) all of which makes him essentially a Saracen and hence monstrous in the eyes of Richard.

In the first chapter, the cultural constructedness of communal identity in the Middle Ages is mentioned. Accordingly, Regino of Prüm lists four characteristics for communal identity –

descent, customs, law, and language – that are essentially mutable in nature. These performative components of identity offer fluidity between Christians and their Saracen enemies. Hence, basing monstrous and European identity on performative markers enables mimicry. For example, in *Richard Coer de Lyon* the Saracens that come to aid Acre dress themselves in the manner of French fashion, fill their ships with wine, and shave their beards (2472-85). They communicate with Richard's party with the help of a translator whose accent eventually gives away their true identity so that Richard attacks their ship (2485-2520). The scene suggests that communal identity is largely based on cultural markers and could easily be adopted or performatively misrepresented which blurs the boundary between Christians and Saracens. Similarly, Gowther's use of a falchion, which is a curved broadsword "and symbol of Saracens" (Classen, "The Foreigner" 123), reinforces the fluidity of cultural materials between the Saracens and the Christians. At first, the falchion "functions as the outward and visible symbol of these inner qualities" (Classen, "The Foreigner" 123). Thus, the falchion becomes a token of Gowther's otherness to Christian society, which is corroborated by his monstrous acts and will be discussed in detail in the next section. His attachment to the sword is so great that when the Pope asks him to "Lye down thi fachon then the fro" (289), he refuses the Pope on the grounds that he has but few friends (293-94). Still, Gowther's use of the falchion against the Saracens underlines the fluid aspect of this cultural marker of monstrosity. During his rigorous penance, Gowther re-appropriates the very symbol of monstrosity into something that is meritorious to Crusading ideal: "Gowther defeats that with which he was metonymically and symbolically allied through the entire narrative" by utilizing the falchion (Oswald 185). Thereby, falchion as a marker of Gowther's difference is re-appropriated in the text to signify his eventual reformation by fighting against the Saracens. Thereby, the falchion traverses the cultural borders between the Saracens and the Christians, losing its meaning as a Saracen artefact. Its value is actually performatively determined by whether it is detrimental or meritorious to the Crusading cause.

Similarly, Richard is also portrayed as carrying mace as a weapon which is also one of the favourite weapons of the Saracens: "With fauchouns and with maces bothe; Kyng Richard they made ful wrothe" (7085-86). As embodied performative markers of the normative Western civilisation, the knights actually "fight with weapons and techniques that require skill, training, and substantial fiscal and technological resources," whereas their enemies "fight with crude weapons ... which require only brute force in their manipulation" (Rider 128). Richard's weapon, on the other hand, each time becomes bulkier and blunter. He, later on, sports a huge axe made in England with which he can "smote right tho / Dores, berres, and iren chaynes," (2223) and finally, his weapon becomes a poleaxe (6800). For an English knight and a king,

axes or poleaxes are not quite befitting to their status since they are generally associated with giants or monstrous enemies of the knights because of such weapons' requirement of brute force and unsophisticated method of handling. However, the axe is celebrated in the romance because of its merit to the crusading campaign.

The performatively fluid aspect of monstrous and chivalrous identities is also demonstrated across different estates. In *Guy of Warwick*, Guy resolves to walk barefoot to Jerusalem as his penance due to the monstrous actions that he terms as "sinnes" in the first cycle of the romance: "To bote min sinnes ichil wende / Barfot to mi liues ende / To bid mi mete wiþ care" (22: 10-12). His resignation from his status as a knight is signified by his decision to bestow his sword to his son and leave behind his armour and his horse which are the immediate tangible markers of a knight (32: 1-6). As Susan Crane argues, secular chivalry is "first of all an embodied performance, a mastering of techniques and technologies that produce the *chevalier*" (137). Accordingly, Guy gives up being a knight, starts wearing a pilgrim's cloak, and sports a suitable beard to signify his newly assumed role as a pilgrim. As a result, the reputed knight is now unrecognised even by his close companions such as Herhau and Tirri. Moreover, Guy also "refuses to reveal his name, something which he was only too eager to disclose in the days when he was earning himself a reputation" (Hopkins, *Sinful Knights* 105). His reluctance of revealing his identity signals that he is now humbled and does not see himself as the real victor of his fights, but as an instrument for God to achieve victory against the Saracens.

These examples indicate that the boundaries between the Christians and the Saracens are actually quite fragile than it is purported to be and the monstrous behaviours can easily be adapted by the knights as well. In this regard, Gowther and Richard's divergent corporeality that resembles the Saracens' gigantism is another aspect that collapses the boundaries between the Saracens and the knights. For example, Gowther is indeed a semi-monster from his father's side; his father is an incubus who tricks Gowther's mother into sexual intercourse by pretending to be her husband. The incubus is an infernal being, Middle Eastern in origin but is also relevant to the Judeo-Christian tradition (McCoy 316). Gowther's paternal heritage is duly reflected in his physiognomy as his growth in a year equals "odur chyldur in seyvon or sex" (146). At the age of fifteen, he fashions his own falchion that "No nodur mon might hit beyr" (141). Perhaps his father's Eastern origins compelled him at first to craft such a weapon. In this regard, Hülya Taflı Düzgün states that "Gowther's monstrosity is because of his father. Here, Gowther's physical and spiritual imperfections appear to be the symbol and embodiment of his father's spiritual irregularity" (292). Indeed, the influence of Gowther's demonic paternity on his monstrosity is suggested in two instances. Firstly, the Incubus confidently declares the pre-

determined fate of the child upon impregnating the Duke's wife in the orchard by disguising himself as the Duke: "Y have geyton a chylde on the / That in is yothe full wylde schall bee" (76-77). Secondly, the mayhem Gowther wreaks upon the land during his youth is described as the "wyrke" of his "fadur wyll" (176). Hence, the text associates Gowther's physical and behavioural monstrosity with his paternal heritage, however, as argued in the next section, the text also problematises this deterministic perception by foregrounding agency of the subject to break away from the predisposed characterisation to do evil via his own free will.

Richard is also frequently portrayed in physically excessive terms, almost giant-like: "Ther was non so stoute ne gryme" (563). Alan Ambrisco locates the origins of Richard's extreme fierceness and strength in his "barbarity," a kind of "subhuman" quality that, he claims, derives from his maternal genealogy (511). At the very beginning, the romance replaces Richard's historical mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, with an Eastern princess, Cassodorien, who displays unusual habits. She faints upon hearing the Sunday Mass, and on the way to her chamber, she exclaims that "I dar nevere see no sacrament" (194). The sacrament of the Eucharist during the usual Sunday Mass contains the symbolic eating of Christ, which is the only permissible way of performing cannibalism within the Western culture. It is an important public performance that "identifies a community of Christians who have congregated in order to be incorporated into the body of the church and the body of Christ" (Blurton 76). Therefore, it incorporates the participants into the Christian community regardless of their physical outlook, cultural difference, region, or gender. Cassidorien's reluctance and subsequent avoidance of the Mass for fifteen years signals her failed incorporation into the cultural and religious sphere of the English. Furthermore, Cassidorien's forced attendance to Mass after fifteen years of avoidance acts as a revealing instance that exposes her monstrosity. Upon being forced to hear the Mass, she escapes with her daughter by flying through the roof of the Church, leaving behind her husband, and her sons, Richard and John. Nicola McDonald points out Mass as the pivotal moment of her estrangement process:

The narrative is careful to locate Cassidorien's alienation from the mass in the 'sakeryng' (222), the precise moment at which the bread and wine of communion elevated for the congregation to see, is transformed into the body and blood of Christ ... Cassidorien, like the witches, Jews and heretics (all familiar host abusers) of popular eucharistic miracles, is outed, so to speak, by *corpus verum*, the wheaten disc that once consecrated (so late medieval theologians insist) is the actual flesh and blood of Christ. (140)

As stated, Cassidorien's monstrosity is signified through her nonconformity to the cultural and religious practices of the West. She chooses to remain an outcast and escapes through the roof and from the romance altogether as a monster figure.

Instead of his Eastern mother's refusal to partake in the ceremonious act of eating the flesh of Jesus, Richard's hearty consumption of Saracen flesh functions as a key point of his transformation into a monster. For the Europeans, cannibalism "was that dehumanizing, monstrous condition that cancelled out the coordinates of recognizably human identity and reduces the sentient to the subhuman" (Heng, "Cannibalism" 110). As a cultural taboo, cannibalism "constitutes an extreme 'deformation' of the victim's body, a mutilation" (Bildhauer, "Blood, Jews" 81). The performance of cannibalism actively breaches the integrity of one body and thus collapses the boundaries between the self and the other. As Margrit Shildrick states, "[t]o be self is above all to be distinguished from the other, to be ordered and discrete, secure *within* the well-defined boundaries of the body" ("The Self's Clean" 306). Therefore, cannibalism is monstrous because of letting what should remain outside – another person's flesh – inside. For this reason, most frequently, "the cannibals' own bodies are also deformed, as they ingest and digest foreign body parts and visibly form a monstrous conglomerate with them" (Bildhauer, "Blood, Jews" 81). Accordingly, the practice of cannibalism had long been associated with the Plinian races that were believed to be residing in the East: "Not only does the act of cannibalism in and of itself establish monstrosity, it is also a common characteristic among many kinds of monsters ... [such as] giant[s] or dog-headed" people of the East (Williams 145).

Richard's gigantic proportions might also indicate the cannibalistic roots that he inherits from her mother's side. Indeed, Richard's regained vitality upon consuming the flesh of the Saracens is a clear indication of his monstrous condition. Previously, during the battle against the Saracens, Richard falls ill because of the arduous journey to the East and the extreme weather conditions. In order to recover from this mysterious malady, he demands pork, a dietary habit of Christians that marks another clear divide with the Saracens. However, due to scarcity of pork and food in general, the cooks decide to secretly prepare Saracen meat instead of pork and serve it to Richard. Surprisingly, the food replenishes Richard so much so that he is able to join the fight with "gret delyte" (3133). It seems that Richard's nourishment with human flesh matches with his inherent but unrealised gustatory abnormality that once activated allows him to accentuate his full potential as a monster. The connection between his food choice and monstrosity is pointed out by Suzanne Conklin Akbari, too, who observes that "[b]y eating unclean things, Richard assimilates that which is outside the boundaries of ordinary life,

becoming a liminal figure” (“The Hunger” 212). Liminality as a condition of in-betweenness calls to mind monstrosity. In describing the monsters, Jeffrey Cohen highlights the “ontological liminality” of monsters because of their defiance to “easy compartmentalization” (“Monster Culture” 7). As stated above, Richard’s performance of anthropophagy positions him as a liminal figure with human and non-human characteristics. Moreover, Richard enjoys this state of fear and terror that he incurs in the Saracens and the English alike. Upon learning the actual contents of the food, Richard has no qualms about the moral implications of his act and delightfully exclaims that there will not be any scarcity of food anymore: “For hungyr, ar I be woo, / I and my folk schole eete moo!” (3225-26). Consequently, the existence of two distinct episodes of anthropophagy running counter with each other conveys the monstrosity of Cassodorien and Richard in *Richard Coer de Lyon*.

Gowther’s and Richard’s excessive bodies of gigantic proportions that resemble the Saracens’ purported gigantism may be perceived as the very reason for their monstrous performances. However, monstrosity is not always the result of divergent corporeality. In fact, knights who physically conform to the norms of the West are also capable of committing monstrous acts as much as their Saracen enemies. For example, in the second cycle of *Guy of Warwick*, reformed Guy fights three opponents overall; two Saracens – Amoraunt and Colbrond – and one European – Duke Berard. As the European enemy of Guy, Duke Berard destabilises the intended binaries between the Saracens and the Europeans because he is a figure no less monstrous than Guy’s Saracen enemies in terms of displaying deficient morals and resorting to foul play during his fight with Guy. Accordingly, the Duke falsely accuses Guy’s friend, Tirri, of murdering his uncle, Duke Otous, and plans to take over Tirri’s lands (9194-217). His fight with Guy does not conclude on the first day, and at the same night, Duke Berard instructs his four knights to kill Guy in his sleep (9748-55). As a result, these four knights throw Guy’s bed into the river where Guy is saved by a fisherman and hurries back to defeat and kill Berard the next day (9762-969). As Berard’s example demonstrates, physical divergence or conformity is by no means the essential determiner of monstrous behaviour in the romances.

In fact, behavioural and cultural stereotypes that the romances employ to distinguish between the Saracens and the knights are fragile constructions. For instance, the generic representation of the Saracens as easily turning back on their gods in *Guy of Warwick* is counterbalanced by Guy’s conduct during his time in Constantinople in the first cycle of the romance as he, too, changes sides. In fact, the primary motivation of Guy for going to the East upon hearing the besiege of Constantinople by the Saracen Sultan stems not primarily from religious duty, but from a concern for securing a reputation as a knight. Accordingly, his companion Herhaud states, “... y graunt it so bee: / Grete worship it may tourney the” (2855-56). On Guy’s

characterisation at this point, Robert Rouse remarks that “[r]ather than casting Guy in the role of a pious *milites Christi*, the romance presents him as the more troubling figure of a crusading knight motivated not by God, but by his own continuing quest for chivalric glory” (“An Exemplary” 99). Guy’s subversion of the holy purpose of the crusade for showcasing personal glory and prowess is monstrous because it disrupts the hierarchy of obedience that the knights should observe. As Eric Demski remarks, “the knight has a rule that keeps his obediences [sic] and loyalties in the right order, so that he may govern and order his obedience in a way most pleasing to God” (449). This hierarchical ladder of obedience can be dated as far back as to Augustine’s concept of “the order of love” which he uses to distinguish between earthly love and divine love for a better society in *The City of God*: “For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love: it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinally; evilly, when inordinately” (XXII. 73). Augustine comments on the virtue of not only loving the right things and concepts but also loving them in the right order. The disruption occurs because of displaying misplaced and disproportionate love for lesser goods above greater ones. Hence, Guy’s prioritisation of his reputation for securing the hand of Felice mars the religious sanctity of the crusading endeavour and love for God.

Indeed, Guy’s monstrosity is manifold; his misdirected loyalties are shown to be a liability and a source for unreliability since “at one point he is actually prepared to offer his services to the Soudan” (Hopkins, *Sinful Knights* 96). This is prompted by Morgadour who tricks Guy into visiting Emperor Ernis’ daughter, Clarice, and then informs the Emperor about Guy’s entry without any permission. The Emperor does not receive the news with any particular hostility but Morgadour warns Guy about the enraged Emperor who now plans to kill Guy (3161-332). Blinded by his growing fame and vainglory due to his success against the Saracens, Guy is also infuriated and decides to join the Sultan’s forces: “Þat in wrete fram þe [the Emperor] wil parti. / Vnto þe Soudan he [Guy] wil fare” (3326-27). In addition, when the Emperor catches up with Guy to dissuade him from his decision, Guy replies like a soldier of fortune who only serves to leaders that appreciate his services more:

Me was y-teld biforn now riȝt
 Of on þat is þi priue knigȝt, [Morgadour]
 Þat þou no hadest to don wiþ mi seruisse,
 & þat y þe serue wiþ feyntise;
 & þat ich was biwrayd to þe
 (For þi nold ich no longer here be)
 And þat þou wost do me to-hewe,
 & mine barouns, þat ben so trewe.
 For þi y þouȝt þat y go scholde
 To hem þat mi seruisse ȝeld me wold;

Ac for al Damas & þat cuntre
 Nold ich haue holden oʒaines te.' (3359-70)

As stated above, verbal bonds of the knights in the Middle Ages were citational performances that bound the two parties in a solemn pact, and breaking of an oath suggested deficiency of honour. Therefore, Guy's decision to join Saracen forces despite his pledge "Þat treweliche ichil [he] serue þe [the Emperor]" (2892) is a monstrous act that undermines Guy's honour and violates the code of knighthood. More importantly, however, Guy's resolution is monstrous not only because of dishonouring a verbal contract but also providing his service to a Saracen Sultan. The act would destroy hierarchical order of obedience and render him a detrimental figure to the crusading campaign. Despite the fact that the prospect is never actualised, consideration of such an act demonstrates how monstrous Guy has become at this moment in time. As Rebecca Wilcox also observes, Guy's attempted cooperation with the Saracens indicates that "he has lingered away from home far too long, ... Guy's contact with the Greeks poisons him with unorthodox ideas and values" (225).

Likewise, monstrosity in *Richard Coer de Lyon* is also performative; Philip as the king of France is portrayed as performing monstrous actions that do not befit a crusader king. He constantly endangers the lives of the crusaders for his selfish gains. He is frequently described as a cowardly and morally weak king who takes bribes from the Saracens (4679-729). Furthermore, Philip's historical withdrawal from the Third Crusade is re-imagined in the romance and the reason is imputed to his desire "For a porcyoun of golde" (5453) promised to him by the Saracens. The magnanimity of his monstrous action is underlined by blaming Philip as the responsible person for the failure of the siege of Babylon: "For hadde Phelyp trewe bee / At that sege of that cytee, / Hadde ther non iscapyd than" (5421-23). Later on, Richard also has to withdraw from the third crusade, but his withdrawal is attributed to his brother's betrayal. Richard receives the news of John's coronation as the King of England with the help of the barons at home. John's coronation as the king introduces another internal conflict that mars the crusading enterprise:

"What devyl!" he [Richard] sayde, "Hou gos this?
 Telles Jhon of me no more prys [appraise],
 He wenes that I wil nought leve long;
 Therefore, he wyl doo me wronge,
 And yif he wende I were on lyve,
 He wolde nought with me stryve.
 I wole me of hym so bewrake [avenge],
 That al the world therof schal speke! (6331-38)

Hence, the crusading knights' secular aims such as personal glory and material gains clash with the crusading campaign and make the knights monstrous as they clearly abuse God's place within chivalry.

Pejorative epithets play a significant role in terms of monsterisation of the other. However, the struggle for power and leadership among the European nations engenders enmity that results in the employment of the same process of dehumanisation used for the people of the East. In this context, the Greeks are treated as treacherous people that undermine the crusading vigil of the West. Accordingly, in *Guy of Warwick* and *Richard Coer de Lyon*, they are customarily labelled as "Griffouns" (*Guy* 3028), or "Gryffoun" (*Richard* 1669, 1856, 2898, 6090, 6109). Moreover, Richard even names his wooden castle as "mate-gryffon," (1856) which comes to mean harm to the Greeks (Gillingham 167). The association of the Greeks with the famous mythological monster, Griffin, comes from the Greeks' behavioural similarity to the griffin: "[t]he deceit and thievery of the Byzantines is moreover the favourite theme of contemporary Occidental writers. The idea is, then, that this quality suggested to the Crusaders the habits ... of the mythical griffin, who passed for a rapacious monster" (Livingston 48). Likewise, in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, the French and the Greeks repeatedly insult the English by calling them "taylarden" (1776), that is, the tailed ones or dogs with tails: "Go home, dogges, with your taylor;" (1830). Bradford Broughton argues that the image of the "'tailed English,' likely derives from a legend that has pagan Englishman growing tails after the devil urged them to abuse St. Augustine of Canterbury" (97). Hence, the derogatory legend about the English is used as an ideological tool to monsterise the English and allows the French and the Greeks to establish their superiority over the English. As Cohen asserts, presentation of "an anterior culture as monstrous justifies its displacement or extermination by rendering the act heroic" ("Monster Culture" 7-8). This anteriority may point to antecedent, opposite or, as these examples demonstrate, coterminous fractions within a seemingly unified Christendom.

Indeed, this is an example of intercultural monsterisation which shows that in terms of monstrosity some European nations are even worse than the Saracens. For example, in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, Englishness is established in comparison to not only the Saracens but in fact, more importantly, to the French. For Suzanne Yeager, the Anglo-French animosity resulting from the Hundred Years' War and the loss of Norman and Angevin territories are important reasons for the anti-French sentiment in *Richard Coer de Lyon* since "by the late fourteenth century, some English people may have perceived their French adversary to be as repellent as their Islamic one" (74). Accordingly, the French are monstrous in that they are portrayed as

cowardly, greedy, and treacherous. On the other hand, the Saracens, albeit occasionally, are complimented for their military ingenuity and craftiness:

Frenssche men arn arwe and feynte,
And Sarezynys be war and queynte,
And of here dedes engynous;
The Frenssche men ben covaytous. (*RCL* 3849-52)

It seems that the porosity between the Saracens and the Christian knights illustrates the fluidity of monstrosity. Accordingly, the Saracens sometimes behave in ways that are more humane and rational than their Western counterparts. In this regard, Siobhain Calkin points out the “bizarre similarity” of the Saracen and Christian knights in their capability of doing right and wrong which “provokes consideration of how groups may be differentiated when the samenesses connecting them are many and the difference few” (59). Indeed, as stated above, despite the attempt to establish clear-cut boundaries between the East and the West, monstrosity is not unilateral. For example, the Saracen warriors such as Cosdram are often described as praiseworthy and strong knights: “There nys man ne knight noon / that in wrath darre loke him vpon” (*Guy* 2905-06). Moreover, they are often described as wearing an armour similar to that of knights: “Gij to þe amiral smot so, / Scheld no hauberk nas him worþ a slo” (2935-36). In addition, the political, social, and cultural structures of the Saracens are frequently envisioned in a way very similar to Western feudal structure. Saracen Sultans are often represented as having a host of loyal vassals that are in control of various castles and regions in the East. For example, in *Guy of Warwick*, Guy at one time agrees to help a prisoner named Earl Jonas who is a Christian commander held in custody with his fifteen sons. Jonas is instructed by his imprisoner, the Saracen lord Triamour, to find a legible champion to fight for him in return for the freedom of Christian prisoners (135: 1-6) because Triamour’s son inadvertently kills the Sultan’s son during a game of chess. Triamour pleads trial by combat to the Sultan to settle the score for his son’s misdeed so that Jonas persuades Guy to become a champion for Triamour. Thus, Christian Jonas and Saracen Triamour are united by the same concern for their family. In addition, the political relations with their lords, customs for hostages, pledges and fights underline the essential similarity between the two cultures. Furthermore, Triamour is proven to be true to his promise after Guy’s victory and provides a safe passage for the Christians (141: 1-2).

As for *Richard Coer de Lyon*, unlike the relatively good attitudes of the Saracens, it is the monstrosity of Richard that is in the foreground. Richard’s excessively brutal treatment of the Saracens generates the obverse effect and actually reinforces a sympathetic portrayal of their

plight as they are oppressed with an unreasonable ruthlessness. The Saracens' emotions under these circumstances are often relayed with a human touch that is always missing in Richard. For instance, after Richard's conquest of Acre, the captured Muslim commanders are positively described as "Hardy knyghtes and of most prys, / Of hethenesse chef lordynges," (3350-51). Concerned for the safety of their brethren, the Saracens opt for the diplomatically rational course of action by offering a large amount of ransom for the release of their people whose health and wellbeing they care about immensely: "Of tresore Kyng Richard wole be fawe [happy], / That oure children may come hom hayl [healthy]" (3370-71). However, Richard unreasonably gets offended and feels humiliated by such an offer despite its common practice in the West. The instance not only underlines Richard's irrational nature and unsteady temper that do not befit a knight but also illustrates a common cultural point shared with the Saracens in which Richard is the one acting unchivalrously.

Richard's subsequent performance is clearly monstrous as he proceeds to behead the hostages and subsequently serves their heads to the Saracen envoy. The act defies any of the accepted rules of hospitality and chivalry. Geraldine Heng tries to defend Richard's diabolical plan as a meticulously planned "diplomatic exercise, carefully staged to bring home the full, intimidatory power of Christian military-gustatory aggression to Saladin's aged, aristocratic ambassadors" (*Empire of Magic* 73). Indeed, the Saracens present at the meal are utterly shocked when they discover the content of the meal; the ghastly sight of the heads terrifies the envoys so much that "The teres ran out of here eyen; / And whenne they the letter redde, / To be slayn ful sore they dredde" (3466-68). Richard's message is certainly transmitted across the envoys but his conduct is monstrous as it violates every code of chivalry, hospitality, and royal custom. Richard's monstrosity is recognised by both the Saracens and the English at present. Therefore, as much as Richard enjoys his demonic scheme as he proceeds to eat the Saracen heads "with herte good" (3481), even asking in jest the reason for the Saracens' reluctance to eat their meals, the horror of Richard's performance is so potent for the rest that "Everyman" including the English "sat style and pokyd other" (3483) in silence.

As argued above, the representation of Richard as the sole performer of cannibalism makes it clear that the text presents fluidity in terms of monstrosity. The representation undermines the correlation between cannibalism and the people of the East. This aspect is reinforced by Saladin's reception of the news as he is so shocked and reviled that he cannot help but exclaim: "It [Richard] is a devyl, withouten fayle" (3664). Saladin's response to Richard's anthropophagy illustrates the moral and behavioural bottom line Richard's character has been reduced to. This is because Richard's monstrosity evokes "fear, loathing or, at best, horrified

pity; by disturbing the neat, almost sacred, divide between edible and inedible, they [cannibals] challenge the very integrity of what it is to be human” (McDonald 124). As Nicola McDonald suggests, Richard’s cannibalism is an act situated on the threshold between the permissible and the profane, human and non-human. Thereby, Richard’s performance becomes monstrous in its disruption of the boundaries of not only chivalry but also humanity. Furthermore, the act is also monstrous because it is in no way meritorious to the furtherance of crusading activity and crosses the line of licit violence on the Saracens chartered by the clergy. In fact, according to Marcel Elias, the treatment of the Saracens in this scene, “imbued with emotional stimulation, is one that collapses the disparities between Christians and Saracens, inviting the reader to relate to and even sympathize with the envoys’ perspective” (32).

Consequently, despite the fact that the Saracen is formulated to be the very condition that the knight should at all cost shun, the Saracens may indeed display qualities that outshine their knightly counterparts. The crusade romances are the by-products of an endeavour to establish and celebrate the communal identity of the West. The task requires the monsterisation process of the other via attributing the unwanted and undesirable aspects of the self to the other since “the centre is ... dependent upon the margins for its continued existence” (Camille 10). However, as argued above, a closer look reveals that the clear-cut boundaries between the Saracens and the knights are not tenable. In this regard, formulation of chivalry and Saracen monstrosity on malleable precepts endorses the fluidity of monstrosity via performance. This section largely focused on the untenable distinctions between the knights and the Saracens. The next section will largely focus on how the knights become major sources of monstrosity by their excessive, deficient, or deviant behaviour in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther*.

2. 2. Uncontrolled Violence and the Monstrosity of the Knights

This section explores the knights as sources of monstrosities to their societies and investigates the similar process of expulsion by which the knights channel their harmful and illegitimate violence to a legitimate and meritorious outlet, that is, the crusades. During this process, it is the fluidity of monstrosity and chivalry that enables the monstrous knights to be reformed via their performances. Analysis of the monstrous from the perspective of a goal-based performance that is detrimental to individuals, institutions, crusading cause or the Western society at large makes the knights susceptible to monstrous behaviour. From this perspective the first section indicates that monstrosity is not solely attributed to various designated others such as the Saracens. Due to its construction on malleable tenets that are essentially performative, monstrosity is

performed by the knights as well. Accordingly, this section largely focuses on the monstrosity of the knights, their monstrous conduct within the realms of Christendom, redirection of their monstrosity to a safer outlet, that is, the Saracens, and their eventual choice of reformation or not in the selected crusade romances, namely, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Guy of Warwick*. As has been established, monstrosity is largely a process of imputing unwelcome qualities to “the others existing outside of a centered socio-political system ... in the chaotic space beyond the pale of civilisation, a space haunted by exiled criminals, the insane, real and mythical beasts, and nearly all that has a negative valence in opposition to the positive values of ‘good society’” (White 5).

As has already been expressed, the life of a knight is governed by a complex set of ethics and rules that historically is known as chivalry. Particularly, the virtue of temperance or chivalric measure is responsible for “balancing the various virtues to produce a character which will be at all times stable” (Jackson 91). The perceived normality concerning the knights is that every aspect of a knight ought to be governed by moderation and he is always required to govern his disposition and feelings and should not succumb to strong emotions such as fear and anger. However, in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther* the knights are subject to their unrestrained and unchecked impulses which cause harm to their own societies for various reasons. Richard’s prioritisation of personal agendas at the expense of public welfare, Guy’s lack of knowledge in terms of rules that govern the knight, Gowther’s natural tendency to cause excessive harm are some of the aspects that afflict the knights. Consequently, these knights become sources of monstrosity via their performances that inflict undeserved harm to various individuals and their societies at large.

Starting with Guy, the critics tend to overlook the inherent complexities and regard Guy as the undisputed pinnacle of chivalry for the English. Thorlac Turville-Petre states that he is “the model of the knight of England” (116); Simons celebrates him as “an English hero” whose “battles are not only to gain knightly reputation and to further the cause of Christendom: they are also designed to spread the name of England as a country of heroes” (20). Yet, a closer look reveals that Guy tends to perform monstrosity. For instance, Guy’s loyalties to his nation and Christianity are at best misconstrued, especially in the first cycle, since he even considers offering his services to the Saracen Sultan and kills the son of an aristocrat due to a burst of anger. Guy’s main cause of his infliction of harm to the Christendom derives essentially from his sudden promotion to the knightly status without any formal, cultural, behavioural training. Unlike his daughter Felice, Earl Rohaud’s perception of knighthood does not require any patrilineal membership to nobility, a worldview that essentially facilitates Guy’s admission to

knighthood. Accordingly, despite being a steward at the Earl's castle, Rohaud knights Guy after Guy proclaims to serve the Earl faithfully: ““Bleþeliche, Gij, seþþe þou wilt so' / Þerl dede anon aparaille / Gyes dobing wiþ-ouren feyle” (696-98). In reality, the sole motivating factor for Guy's aspiration to chivalry is to win the hand of Felice since Felice proclaims that she will only marry the best knight in the world: “I woll laue noo knaue in wone / Before that he bee knight bee-come, / Faire and hende and gretly sette by” (667-69). As has been suggested in the first section, unsettling the right order of love and reverence may indeed render the agent a source of potential evil and harm, hence monstrous. In this regard, the prioritisation of service to Felice over God disrupts the established hierarchy right from the beginning. Upon being knighted, Guy goes to Felice and proclaims that “Icham newe dobbed as 3e may se, / Ouer þe se ichil now fare / To win priis & los þare” (754-56). His resolution is devoid of any idealism of piety to God or loyalty to his lord and his country but focuses on achieving fame and glory. Therefore, Guy's lack of proper education in chivalric principles and misconfiguration of his priorities make him a potential threat for the Christendom that may have monstrous consequences.

In order to win praise and reputation, Guy sails to the Continent and takes part in tournaments where he meets the Duke Otous, his European archenemy in the first cycle of the romance. Guy gains the grudge of Duke Otous upon unhorsing him in one of these tournaments (903-04). This is one of the instances proving that personal ambitions and grudges compel knights to act in ways that could be harmful to each other and by extension to Europe's societal, religious, and political agendas. In the romance, Duke Otous is presented as a figure who is solely motivated by his personal agenda instead of his society as a whole. He ambushes Sir Guy and his company and kills Guy's whole band except for Guy and Herhauð due to his personal grudge (1291-516). He forcefully tries to marry Oisel who is actually in love with Tirri (4569-928). He plots treachery behind Tirri's father, Aubri to conquer their land since he holds grudge against Tirri for the love he has for Oisel (4931-6435). Consequently, Duke Otous features as an evil person devoid of any chivalric principles to restrain him. His egotistical schemes for personal satisfaction work constantly for the worse of his society at large, thereby, making him a monstrous character for the whole Christendom.

Similar monstrous performances are enacted by Guy at various occasions which approximate him to the character of Duke Otous. Sudden bursts of strong feelings such as hatred, jealousy, and anger may sometimes take over Guy. For example, when he is wounded by Duke Otous in a tournament match, instead of humbly accepting defeat, Guy storms out and swears revenge against the Duke: “Þerfore Gij him was swiþe loþ [hate] / & wel depe he swore his oþ / Þat he

of him awreke [avenge] wald be” (1279-81). The use of such strong words as hate and vengeance suggests his excessive emotions and is reflective of the growing enmity between the two knights. Another example where Guy is overcome by his powerful emotions and performs monstrosity is during his diplomatic mission to reconcile Duke Segyn with the Emperor of Germany. In the meantime, Duke Otous also tries to persuade the Emperor to end the peace negotiations with Duke Segyn and promptly kill Guy by suggesting that he will look like a weak ruler if he accepts the death of his sister’s son, Sadok, without any retribution (2717-32). During the negotiations, Guy is frustrated with Otous and loses his temper, “Als a wilde bore he lepe him to / ‘Otus’ quaþ Gij ‘þou schalt daye” (2738-39), and he “smot wiþ his fest / Amide þe tep riht al in earnest” (2743-44). An ideal knight, however, must temper his emotions and act in a controlled manner especially during such an important diplomatic mission. Guy’s uncontrollable anger and ferociousness imperil the diplomatic effort between the two rulers. Guy’s monstrosity in this situation is underlined by the animal epithet of “wilde bore” used by the narrator which “has been a traditional representative of anger” in the Middle Ages (Haskell 59).

Apart from his impulsive decision to change sides during the siege of Constantinople, Guy’s unrestrained emotions lead him to commit one of the most monstrous actions of the romance back in Europe. Guy embarks on a boar hunting session with his band and hunts an exceptionally large and dangerous boar and blows his horn to call his band (6715-68). This alerts Earl Florentine that someone is in his woods. Promptly, he sends his son to ensure the safety of their lands from thieves (6769-76). The Duke’s son sees that Guy has killed one of their boars without permission and requests his presence before the Earl and demands Guy to forfeit his horse in compensation (6779-90). During their subsequent quarrel, the son of the Earl tries to knock Guy off his horse with his staff. Enraged by the indignity of being struck, “Wip his horn he [Guy] him smot, / His breyn he schadde fot hot” (6807-78). Therefore, Guy’s uncontrollable rage causes him to kill an innocent man who only complies with his father’s wishes and is there to defend his own lands. The Earl’s son does not use any violence but only seeks compensation for their loss. Later on, Guy chances upon Earl Florentine’s castle and asks a local man about the lord of the castle. The man replies: “‘y schal telle þe, / A better man no miht þou se: / It is þe gode erl Florentin” (6827-29). The vassal’s words make it clear that Earl Florentine is not an evil person. In fact, he is generous, courteous, and well-loved by his vassals. Guy’s murder of the Earl’s son is monstrous as he does not deserve such a violent treatment. The deed also generates societal, political, and economic consequences in the feudal order because the loss deprives the Earl of the only eligible inheritor for his land. In the feudal society, inheritance laws dictated that if there was no immediate heir, the land would be

transferred over to the next of kin, preferably male over female (Donahue 603). This naturally created patrimonial anxiety for succession for the vassals and especially for their lords since it meant a possible dynastic change and a shift of power. Therefore, the murder of the Earl's son disrupts the line of succession and creates uncertainty and potential chaos in terms of the land's political, societal, and economic stability.

The ensuing episodes complement the monstrous aspect of Guy's behaviour. Guy enters Florentine's castle and requests a meal which is served with utmost courtesy. While Guy is eating his meal, however, the Earl's retainers bring the dead body of his son, and Guy is identified as the murderer. Understandably, the Earl and his men attack Guy but he proceeds to kill Florentine's best knights and appeals to Florentine's sense of honour by reminding him that he is a guest to his house. According to Andrea Hopkins, "[i]n this grotesque and tragic situation it is scarcely heroic for Guy to remind Florentine of his duty as a host" (99). As befitting a proper knight, however, the Earl withdraws from the combat and wails over his son's dead body. Guy takes this as a chance for escape which reinforces the image of him as a monstrous knight. When Guy finally returns to England, he has already drifted apart from being an ideal knight.

Similarly, in *Richard Coer de Lyon* Richard's lust for power and glory makes him a monstrous character. For instance, he perceives Jerusalem "as an acquisitive object" for his reputation (Yeager 48). His use of violence and enjoyment of cruelty to achieve power mark him as a monstrous figure through performances that are ever-increasing in severity in the romance. This image is corroborated by the interpolated romance materials which portray an ultimately egotistical and demonic Richard who cherishes secular ideals such as personal glory, material gain, and reputation. Historically, Richard had been largely celebrated as the pinnacle of chivalry and the prime example of a crusader due to his successful crusading activity in the Third Crusade. Despite the modern tradition of perceiving him as an absentee king, "the general complaisance of the English magnates during this long period hardly seems to indicate much aristocratic discontent with the situation" (Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*). On the contrary, his bravery on the battlefield, devotion to the crusading cause, and the famous rivalry with Saladin earned him a solid reputation as the ideal crusader knight. Even the contemporary Muslim chronicler Ibn-al-Athir points out that "Richard's courage, shrewdness, energy, and patience made him the most remarkable ruler of his times" (qtd. in Gillingham 95).

Still, his reception as the brave King of England was not a series of unbridled praise over the subsequent centuries as Jean Flori in *Richard the Lionheart: King and Knight* demonstrates that there was a tradition of criticism from contemporary and later authors that condemned his

indulgence in a sinful life and associated him with the vices of debauchery, greed, lust, and pride (465-70). In addition, the unclear outcome of the Third Crusade was occasionally attributed to Richard's wayward lifestyle as Timothy Guard demonstrates that the fourteenth-century preacher John of Bromyard in his *Summa praedicatorum* "singled out the king's lapse into vanity and pride as a reason for the destruction of the Third Crusade. Treachery, jealousy, and loose-living had invaded the ranks of Richard I's army, according to the preacher" (178). Therefore, the unusually monstrous representation of King Richard that seeped into the romance may come from the alternative strand of negative criticism towards Richard in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Indeed, such a portrayal "problematize[s] Richard as either a Christian or English protagonist, both as a result of his supernatural and implicitly demonic heritage and of his paradigmatically monstrous acts throughout the text, acts that lead his allies, enemies, and occasionally even his vassals to identify him as a devil, or, tellingly, the son or brother of the devil" (Florschuetz 122). As stated above, Richard's demonic heritage and excessive bodily proportions are attributed to his Eastern mother Cassidorien. The knights in the romances prefigure as the norm against which the monstrous enemies are often measured. The knight's proportionate body is set against the excessive, deviant, or deficient corporeality of his adversaries. Yet, Richard is frequently depicted as a stately and huge man: "How hewge he was wrought and sterne" (6255). Upon feats of great physical power or cruelty, "This is a devyl, and no man" (1112) is a generic exclamation by his Western and Eastern enemies alike. During the tournament matches at the beginning of the romance, Richard disguises himself to join the tournament, and each day he terrorises the scene with increasing ferocity to the point that on the second day, he even kills his opponent/fellow soldier. It is Fouke Doly who finally stops him on the third day and his description of the disguised Richard as a "pouke" (568) and "wode schrewe" (574) indicates the terror Richard's physical and moral disposition imposes.

Richard's representation in the romance constantly treads on the fine line of a courageous crusader and a monstrous tyrant. Marcel Elias and Angela Florschuetz argue that interpolated sections destabilise "the image of King Richard ... by stressing ambivalent features of his character" (Elias 8) or subvert the romance's intended premises such as "the text's ability to deliver on the nationalistic promises of its opening" (Florschuetz 131). He is frequently described as "a doughty man, / A stout werreour and a queynte [skilful] / And nevere founden in herte feynte" (6218-20). He conquers lands and castles with his physical might and tactical genius. His heroic legacy instils fear and intimidation in his opponents so much so that at one point in the romance, the Saracens refuse to fight him and instead "ovyr the bord lopen [jump]

thay / And drownyd hem in the see that day” (2581-82). On the other hand, he is described as an excessively evil man enjoying the employment of foul play, unnecessary violence and cruelty to everyone so that he begets not only the hatred of his Saracen enemies but also his fellow crusaders on account of his performances violating the chivalric principles of the Western tradition.

Such monstrosities can be illustrated as follows. During Richard’s custody under the German king, the king’s son, Ardour, who is described as “a knight of grete fame” and “stronge, and fere” (742-43), visits Richard in his cell to challenge him for a test of strength. Ardour proposes that he will strike a blow barehanded and the next day he will allow Richard to strike him in the same manner. Richard accepts the challenge, however, upon receiving the blow to his ear, albeit in strict compliance to their agreement, Richard believes that Ardour “dyd him wronge” (762) and swears revenge. As Marcel Elias argues, from this point on, “the narrative ascribes particular prominence to Ardour’s goodwill, courtesy, and desire for a fair fight” (25). Conversely, however, Richard begrudges Ardour, waxes his hand to artificially strengthen his punch, and with his waxed hand he “brak hys [Ardour’s] cheke bon” (797) and kills him. The scene becomes a striking example of Richard’s monstrosity. His tendency to deviate from chivalric principles in order to achieve his aims and become a source of violence makes him more of a monster than an ideal Christian knight. Moreover, the text’s emphasis on Ardour’s adherence to the “forwarde as a trewe man” (786) heightens Richard’s foul play, and “the vindictive, wrathful drive to Richard’s violence, measured against Ardour’s ‘curtese’ and ‘good wyll,’ is cast in a critical light and set forth as disturbing – a feeling which the reader retains throughout the rest of the romance” (Elias 26). Richard’s performance as a knight thus exposes the vulnerability of the clearly defined boundaries between the normative self and the monstrous other. As Margrit Shildrick aptly observes, monstrosity is “a deeply disruptive force” (Introduction, *Embodying the Monster* 1). Monstrosity forces normality to remain within the securely enclosed discursive vicinity of the familiar self to be meaningful. At the same time it threatens to expose the constructed nature of the contingent meaning by corroding these established boundaries of the self. Richard’s performance is monstrous not only because it leads to the death of a fair challenger, but also because it oversteps the established conventions of the chivalric code and exposes the fluidity of the established boundaries by performance.

Similar to Richard, Gowther in *Sir Gowther* has a familial anomaly that affects his overall conduct at the beginning of the romance. As has been stated above, his father is an incubus who was perceived as a member of the malicious race of monsters that were generally male and raped women in their sleep (Carrera 69-70). According to Macrobius, the incubus is

encountered in *phantasma* or *visum*, which is regarded as a type of dream “between wakefulness and slumber” (89). The incubus inhabits this ephemeral semi-consciousness in which reality and imagination are mixed. Hence, the incubus is attributed the ability to transgress and violate the boundaries between reality and the imaginary. It is in this liminal state that his actions affect the physical world. Usually, the incubus “presses them [the sleeping women] with a weight” in their sleep, leading to the conception of a child (Macrobius 89). In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was a resurgence of interest towards the lore of the incubus. Important figures such as St. Thomas Aquinas described the incubi as monsters who “took no pleasure in their carnal activities, but were motivated entirely by envy. While they were spirits and composed of air, they could assume living bodies, and do what living bodies could do” (qtd. in Hopkins 166). Switching easily between the two states of being, the incubi “would temporarily reside in illusory male forms,” and they would transfer the semen to the female host (Cohen, “Gowther Among the Dogs” 223). Similar to the tradition, the incubus in *Sir Gowther* appears “As lyke hur [Duchess’] lorde as he might be” (70) and proceeds to take advantage of the Duchess’ moment of despair for a child when she “preyd to God and Maré mylde / Schuld gyffe hur grace to have a chyld” (64-65). The incubus conveniently appears at the moment of the mother’s emotional low point because after ten years without a child, she faces the threat of abandonment by the Duke: “Y tro thu be sum baryn, / Hit is gud that we twyn [separate]; / Y do bot wast my tyme on the” (56-58). The Duke himself is burdened by the anxiety of the patrilineal succession of his noble name.

Therefore, as Alcuin Blemires illustrates, the monstrosity of Gowther transpires as a consequence of “the ruthless patriarchal pressure for ensuring dynastic succession” (49-50). The Duke’s failure of the masculine performance expected of him by the feudal society demonstrates his deficiency as a proper man and a husband in the Middle Ages. The Duke’s ineptitude to produce a child also makes him monstrous because of the immediate danger it poses for the sustainability of his ancestral line and by extension his country. According to Joanne Charbonneau, the Duke’s frustration caused by the societal pressure is channelled over to the Duchess, which, in turn, generates a desperate desire “for a child, a desire that, because thwarted and frustrated, is transformed into something ugly and monstrous: blame and renunciation, and then desperation as the about-to-be-cast-off wife fall into the common folkloric trap of wishing for a child no matter what” (24). The need for an eligible heir is fulfilled by the cajoled seduction scene which gives rise to a second cycle of deceit as the Duchess approaches her husband the same day, claiming that “Tonyght we mon geyt a chyld / That schall owre londus weld” (83-84). Yet, the desperate need for a male heir to sustain and govern the land is ultimately subverted by Gowther who becomes a source of chaos and

destruction for the land. Gowther's parents, as the victim and the culprit of unleashing a monster to the Christian society, are peremptorily punished by death and exile. The Duke feels intense sorrow about how Gowther turns out to be and "fell don ded" (154). Likewise, the Duchess feels great remorse and embarks on a self-inflicted exile to live solitarily outside the society: "Mor sorro for hym sche might have non, / Bot to a castyll of lyme and ston / Frely then scho fled;" (157-59). From this perspective, the poet's initial plea to God at the beginning of the romance to "shilde us from the fowle fende" (4) who dallies "with ladies free / In likeness of here fere [husbands]" (8-9) becomes contextually significant in terms of voicing the anxiety caused by sexual perversity.

Accordingly, Gowther's demonic paternity makes him monstrous and alienates him from the Christian cosmography, resulting in his anti-clerical wrath directed at the members of the Church. Clearly, Gowther's monstrous performances distance him from Christianity. Accordingly, he refuses to hear "Masse ne matens ... / Nor no prechyng of no frere" (172-73). He physically assaults the members of the Church and kills "men of holy kyrke ... / Wher he might hom mete" (170-71), "And make frerus to leype at kraggus / And parsons for to heng on knaggus, / And odur prestys sloo;" (199-201). Gowther's misuse of his aristocratic power through the employment of unnecessary violence towards the Church subverts the existing social dynamics and delicate balance of power established between the classes of nobility and the clergy. By extension, the disarray within the nobility and the clergy destroys the proper function of the community since they are the two pillars of the feudal order that regulate the spiritual and secular tenets of the feudal society.

Gowther's monstrous conduct can also be observed in his treatment of the women in the society. In this respect, Gowther's gigantism might be the essential factor in his exercise of sexual violence against women. As has been asserted above, Gowther's incubus father is confident about transferring his evil nature to his son: "full wylde [he] schall bee, / And weppons wyghtly weld" (77-78). Indeed, he grows at an unnatural rate, becoming a giant at a very early age. With regards to the giant's "indomitable corporeality," Cohen argues that it is disturbing "because he [the giant] cannot be fully banished from, or integrated into, those identity categories that his body constructs" (Introduction, *Of Giants* xiv). Giants are perceived as monsters standing between the border of human and non-human. Measured against the human body, the giant's fleshed-out body is uncannily similar to the human, but at the same time, it is more than human. Therefore, giants evoke a sense of terror by displaying the frailty of the human body and generate a desire for the unrealised potentiality of bigger and better human selves. Moreover, as Cohen claims, a giant's body is "a violently gendered body ... reducible to

some pure state of male identity” (Introduction, *Of Giants* xii). Gowther’s unquenchable carnal needs such as food, sex, and physical violence, all of which are excised from Gowther during his reformation process, represent a repressed male desire for the original state of manhood. Therefore, the giant’s body is a representation of masculinity in its hyper form as it “remind[s] men of the unquestionable masculinity they wish to possess, and that they might achieve by conquering the body of the monster” (Oswald 160).

In Gowther’s case, the knight is the giant since the Duke knights Gowther at a very young age with the hopes of reforming him: “He [Gowther] was so wekyd in all kyn wyse / Tho Duke hym might not chastise, / Bot made hym knight that tyde” (149-51). Yet, the attempt proves futile and unlike his foster father whose deficient reproductive capabilities impair his masculinity, Gowther possesses excessive masculinity which finds its expression via his sexual aggression towards women characterized by his “rampant appetite, both somatic and social” (Cohen, “Gowther Among the Dogs” 226). Accordingly, his unquenchable appetite leads him to drain nine wet-nurses’ life out of them (109-20), and he rips his mother’s nipples (129-33) as a suckling. His concupiscence leads him to spoil maidens and “take wyffus again hor wyll, / And sley hor husbondus too” (197-98). He even rapes nuns and burns them alive by locking them in their convent (181-192). The last monstrous act towards the nuns in the convent concisely exemplifies Gowther’s main targets in society. As Dana Oswald states, in this scene, “Gowther particularly subverts the order of the circulation of women: by raping nuns, he puts women who ought to remain out of circulation back into it, against their and the Church’s will, locating himself as an authority above that of the Church” (176). Gowther’s usurpation of control signifies the reign of excess in all forms as his violation of the nuns undermines the Church’s doctrine of restraint as a virtue symbolized by the nuns’ act of celibacy.

At the beginning, *Sir Gowther* seems to suggest a deterministic and static view of monstrosity that associates divergent corporeality with monstrous behaviour. Yet, reformation through wilful subjection to change is foregrounded later in the romance. Gowther’s reformation process is first ignited by a regional earl who is unable to withstand the never-ending monstrous acts of Sir Gowther and accuses him of being “sum fendys son” (209). Gowther is frustrated, however, his quick resolve to seek his mother to uncover the truth implies that even he is secretly curious about the reason for his inclination towards excessive violence. Upon learning from her mother that he is in fact begotten by a fiend, Gowther willingly embarks on a journey to the Papacy to confess his sins and reform his monstrous way of life. In this regard, Gowther’s honest resolution to take up responsibility for his previous actions and his wilful assumption of agency to counterbalance his past life are key aspects of his reconciliation via performance.

Similar to Gowther, Guy in *Guy of Warwick* also experiences an episode of enlightenment. He makes an honest resolution to undo his previous mistakes right after he comes back to England and marries Felice. The severity of his monstrous conduct downs on him during a hunting session. Impressed by the vastness of the heavens, Guy is troubled by how little he has done for God. He feels fearful for the loss of his soul and the eventual punishment waiting for him in the afterlife:

“Allas,” he seyde, “þat y was born:
 Bodi & soule icham forlorn.
 Of blis icham al bare
 For neuer in al mi liif biforn
 For Him þat bar þe croun of thorn
 Gode dede dede Y nare
 Bot wer & wo ichaue wrouzt. (7137-43)

Guy finally realises the monstrosity he has performed by disrupting the hierarchical order of love in chivalry. Similar to Gowther, Guy’s reformation also comes about through his willingness to undergo rigorous penance.

For this reason, penance plays an important role in terms of enforcing this porosity. In this regard, Christianity and its application in the romances encourage fluidity through behavioural conformity to prescribed penance. As Catherine McKenna demonstrates, penitential practice consists of two parts: “*poenitentiam accipere* and *poenitentiam agere*” (75). The former refers to the acceptance of penance, and the latter refers to the performance of penance (75). Hence, the wilful concession to go through penance and the actual performance of penance as a unified whole signify the cleansing of an agent from his past deeds. From twelfth century onwards, there was “[a] steady flow of miracle stories and sermon *exempla* that featured knights [who] regularly linked their physical pain and suffering with divine forgiveness” (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 63). In this regard, Guy’s self-inflicted and Gowther’s ordained penances similarly approach penance from the perspective of physical suffering. Their penance also illuminates the previously monstrous aspects of their lives.

Accordingly, Guy recognises his monstrous way of life and he declares that “to bote min sinnes ichil wende / Barfot to mi liues ende / To bid mi mete wiþ care” (7145-47). His resolution to walk barefoot is complemented by his renunciation of the instruments of his uncontrolled violence which are his steed, armour, and weapons, the embedded markers of war and violence. Therefore, Guy’s uncontrolled violence that harms friends and foes alike is curbed by the repudiation of active adventurous life that constantly seeks confrontations for personal feuds or

glory. Instead, in the second cycle, Guy does not seek any form of fight but is often persuaded by others, who are the immediate subjects of undeserved harm, to act on their behalf. As a result, Guy fights only three times in the second cycle: He fights as a champion for Triamour against Amoraunt in order to free Christian captives; he fights for the life of his friend Tirri against the monstrous Duke Berard; he fights for his nation against Colbrond and by extension the Danes. The fights for Christians, his friend, and his nation are consonant with the chivalric virtues of piety, friendship, and loyalty to one's liege and, by extension, to one's country. In addition, his combats underline that Guy's violence is not delivered blindly anymore but only addressed to those that deserve such a treatment irrespective of their religious or racial orientation.

On the other hand, Gowther's monstrosity requires a more intense process of physical suffering due to the severity of his previous actions. The Pope declares that Gowther should "yet no meyt bot that thu revus of howndus mothe" (296) and he should "Ne no worde speke for evyll ne gud" (298) until there is an indication of God's forgiveness. The mouth is held to be an important sign of Gowther's monstrosity because it is an organ standing on the threshold between the internal and external space of beings and acts as a mediator. David Williams demonstrates the mouth's "two basic functions: admitting and emitting. Strict regulation of what is taken in through the mouth and what is expelled from the mouth contributes to the construction of the concept of the normal, not only in the restricted areas of eating and of speaking but in all forms of behaviour" (141). However, Gowther's gigantism prevents any regulatory mechanism to control what goes in and out of his mouth. Therefore, the Pope's prescription of penance suitably aims at restraining Gowther's physical excess by enforcing a mediated and "controlled consumption of food" (Chen 366). Eating food that comes out of the dog's mouth is intended to curb Gowther's voracious appetite since he will now only be able to eat as much as a dog's regular diet. Moreover, as Robert Rouse argues Gowther's degradation to the level of an animal is "a suitable commentary on the nature of the violence that he has performed" ("Crusaders" 181). Gowther's new status also implies that his reformation process must start from the very beginning, that is, by becoming a dog and adopting the eating and behavioural habits of an animal who is one of the closest companions to humanity. Laskaya and Salisbury point out that the choice of a dog's diet is also fitting for Gowther as he will learn virtues such as watchfulness, obedience, and fidelity that are commonly associated with dogs (302n305) qualities of which monstrous Gowther lacks.

During his penitential process, Gowther comes to a castle where he passes through the knights of the castle stealthily as a dog and sits under the high table of the Emperor. A steward comes to

beat him with a stick only to be interrupted by the Emperor's curiosity about the ongoing incident (319-38). The Emperor quickly perceives that "it wer gyffon hym [Gowther] in penans" (347). The rest of the court mistake Gowther's performance as an unconventional court entertainment and refer to him as "Hob hor fole" (371). Historically, court fools were either "entertainment fools" who employed self-deprecating humour to entertain others or "people with developmental disabilities" that sparked people's curiosity as sources of entertainment (Covey 236). Gowther's performance of a dog leads the courtiers to assume that he is undertaking a self-deprecating humour. Gowther's stay at the royal court, however, is beneficial for his reformation process since it gives him a chance to mend his previously monstrous conduct by observing the royal etiquette, civilised manners, "social behavior and elaborate manners and feasting" (Charbonneau 27). In this regard, Gowther's time with the Emperor functions as an instructive experience in which he is exposed to the cultural, behavioural, habitual, dietary, and linguistic norms of the West. Gowther's developmental process illustrates the fluidity between monstrous and chivalrous identities as they are essentially "instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of" self (Butler, "Performative Acts" 519). Therefore, Gowther is progressively normalised by first performing like a dog. His gradual shift from a monster to a familiar animal, dog, signifies this gradational normalisation.

Furthermore, unlike *Guy of Warwick*, *Sir Gowther* introduces the trope of the crusade as an additional element for Gowther's reformation process. The text introduces the threat of the Saracens right after Gowther is sufficiently exposed to the Western cultural norms. Hence, Gowther is now able to develop his knightly identity upon the fundamental tenets of his newly acquired cultural values within the Emperor's court. The romance carefully circumvents any significant elaboration of characterisation regarding introduction of the Saracens to the text. Conversely, it presents a stereotypical representation of the Saracens as the enemy in order to avoid any form of moral ambiguity that can be seen in *Richard Coer de Lyon* and *Guy of Warwick*. The image of the Saracen as a form of threat is also reinforced by the fact that unlike Guy and Richard, Gowther fights against the Saracens in order to defend the Emperor's country. Gowther's battle against the threat of invasion by the Saracen Sultan brings immediate legitimacy to his battle. In addition, the fight with the Saracens conveniently diverts Gowther's recalcitrant violence towards his own society to a safer channel by imbuing it with a meritorious purpose of self-defence. Thus, the contextual contingency of monstrosity and normality is emphasised via the legitimate and illegitimate employment of violence. Gowther's violence against his society is monstrous because of the apparent physical, social, economic, and

religious harm it inflicts on his society. Yet, violence “directed against the legitimate body of the Saracen *other* is the true goal of the Christian knight, leading to both earthly and heavenly reward” (Rouse “Crusaders” 182). Clearly, in Gowther’s case whether his actions produce merit or harm plays an important role in terms of categorising him monstrous or not.

The immediate threat of Saracen invasion and the desire for protecting the chastity of the Emperor’s daughter compel Gowther to pray to God for a horse and armour which appear as soon as his “preyr made” (409). The instantaneous materialisation of his wish suggests that Gowther is chartered by God to fight against the Saracens. Gowther’s exercise of violence towards the Saracens does not remove his potential monstrosity but channels it towards the common enemy. Finding a legitimate outlet for his violence, Gowther proceeds to “sluye tho Sarsyns kene” (435) on the battlefield. This aspect underlines the constructed nature of monstrosity and chivalry because the meritorious or detrimental nature of the performance determines the act as chivalrous or monstrous. The progress of Gowther’s reformation by fighting the Saracens is signified through the traditional trope of fighting three days with different colours of armours. On the first day, his armour and horse were of “blacke color” (412), “A reyd hors and armur bryght” (467) on the second, and “mylke whtye” (563) on the third. Oya Bayıltnıř Öğütçü asserts that in the Middle Ages, “self-fashioning performances” are conducted through people’s “costumes, their mounts, the food they consume ... all of which are part of their daily identity performances” (Introduction 40). Similarly, the colour symbolism of the armours in the romances plays a significant role in terms of revealing a person’s moral state. Thus, the change of Gowther’s armour from black to red and then to white symbolically suggests his actualised redemption because white generally denotes purity and innocence. The change of colours according to the performance of Gowther reinforces the idea of fluid monstrosity since it signifies Gowther’s gradual shift from monstrosity.

After their penitential process, the combats of Guy and Gowther against their opponents are different from Richard in terms of their compliance to fair play and legitimate self-defence. Richard’s actions, however, problematise the borders between legitimate and illegitimate use of violence even against the Saracens. Indeed, Richard’s brutal actions against the Saracens may at first seem justified since the crusading propaganda had been built around the idea of dehumanising Saracens so as to free the participants of holy war from the sin of killing a human being and legitimise the annexation of the Holy Lands. Bernard of Clairvaux endorses that killing Saracens in the holy war does not count as murder: “if he [a holy knight] kills an evil-doer, he is not a man-killer, but, if I may so put it, an evil-killer” (39). Identifying Saracens with evil is an effort to undermine their embodied, cultural, and religious similitude with that of the

Christian West, thereby alienating and reducing them to a category of less-than-human status in an effort to legitimise the subjection of the Saracens. When Richard has scruples about his decision about the massacre of the Saracens in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, he is comforted by the angels at the right moment: ““Seygnyours, tues [kill], tues, / Spares hem nought – behedith these!”” (3749-50). The intrusion of the angels suggests that as the ordained enemies of God that have been customarily dissociated from the normative attributes of humanity, the lives of the Saracens do not matter as their existence does not help Richard’s furtherance of crusading goals.

However, even if the Saracens are popularly represented as “anti-types of humanity” (Uebel *Ecstatic Transformation* 13) that are not bound by any moral or cultural codes familiar to the West, the primary responsibility of a knight is to overcome these opponents within the strict regulative code of chivalry in order not to step outside the boundaries of the normative types of behaviour attributed to these knights. Accordingly, as Siegfried Christoph remarks, even the knightly confrontations contain “stylized violence” which observes “certain rituals, that is subject to the law of custom” (116). Violations include such as killing an enemy on the battlefield that surrenders or striking an unarmed man is monstrous not because of the aberrant violence of the act but because of its implicit violation of rules that harms the code of ethics governing chivalry. In this regard, it seems that, according to the chivalric code, rules distinguish the knights from their “monstrous” enemies. In turn, monsters are characterised by “break[ing] the rules and do[ing] what humans [in this case the knights] can only imagine and dream of. Since they observe no limits, they respect no boundaries, and attack and kill without compunction” (Gilmore 12). The construction of elaborate customs aims to constrain the knights and regulates their impulses. However, the knights’ behavioural violation of these codes can easily approximate them with those that are not bound by such codes and render them monstrous as argued above.

From this perspective, Richard repeatedly acts in ways that are not befitting a chivalrous king. For instance, on several occasions (3325-34, 6055-6212), Richard promises the Saracens that they can go unharmed if they surrender, however, as soon as he lures them out of their castles, he breaks his promise or supplants conditions that cannot be fulfilled within the appointed time. Failure to commit to personal oaths was perceived as one of the monstrous things that knights could undertake. As the thirteenth-century polymath Ramon Llull (*c.* 1232- *c.* 1315) who wrote the influential book on chivalry, *Llibre qui es de l’ordre de cavalleria* (1279-84) states, “if taking a vow and making a promise to God and swearing an oath truthfully are not proper to the knight, where else lies the essence of Chivalry?” (94). Similarly, Christine de Pizan in *Le livre*

du corps de policie (1406-07) “identified being truthful and keeping one’s oath as one of the most important qualities in a knight, denounced the ignoble vices of dishonesty and the inability to keep a promise” (qtd. in Taylor 79). As discussed above, breaking an oath is one of the monstrous performances a king or a knight can commit. In another case, after taking the city of Acre, having murdered and mutilated the leaders, Richard demands ransom for the remaining hostages from Saladin and information concerning the whereabouts of the sacred cross in the city. Richard announces that if his demands are not met, the hostages “schole dye in evyl rage!” (3722). The Saracens swiftly and with much concern answer that “They nyste [do not know] where the croys was become” (3732), but Richard who does not accept “No” as an answer orders the execution of the sixty thousand Saracen hostages. Richard’s description of his rage as evil hints at the excessive nature of his conduct. As Adam J. Kosto illustrates, “conditions of confinement vary widely according to the social status of the prisoner, and good treatment of one’s captives became a centrepiece of the chivalric ethos” (37-38). From this viewpoint, Richard’s treatment of the hostages defies any acceptable rules of chivalry.

In contrast to Richard’s relentless moral and performative violations, the interpolated sections introduce two fictional English knights, namely, Fouke Doly and Thomas Multon, to counterbalance Richard’s monstrosity. Probably originated because of the early redactors’ glorification of their patrons (Finlayson, “Richard” 166, Roger Loomis “Richard Cœur de Lion” 511), these knights have their own small campaign against the Saracens in which they do not follow their king’s example. For instance, upon capturing the city of Orglyous, Thomas Multon resolves to spare the lives of the Saracens until he is forced to kill them because of their treacherous attempt to kill Multon and his soldiers (4069-4302). According to Lesley Coote, unlike Richard, Multon’s initial display of mercy “distanced [him] from his king, who kills, and orders killing, of defeated civilians of both sexes and all ages, without mercy” (197). The virtue of being merciful, however, especially to those who are weak, unarmed, or who yielded is an important aspect of chivalry. In this regard, Craig Taylor states that “the association of the ideal of knighthood with mercy ... was an important counter to the concept of vengeance and righteous anger” (Introduction 7). Therefore, the virtue of mercy is an essential quality controlling and moderating the knight and directing him to refrain from using unnecessary or excessive violence. The contrast between Richard and the two English knights in terms of their treatment of war prisoners exposes Richard’s monstrosity and his deficient understanding of mercy based arbitrarily on his momentary feelings and personal profit. Hence, the introduction of the two knights to the text functions as the preferred way of conquest within the crusading scheme and directly opposes Richard’s performances that hinder the crusading campaign by his excessive violence and ferocity.

Especially the interpolated sections of *Richard Coer de Lyon* reconfigure King Richard and show him as a monstrous character who enjoys performing excessive violence. Richard's refusal to recognise and mend his conduct leads to performances that constantly fall short of the requirements of a knight. As a result, Richard is alienated even from the English in an effort to impute the monstrous performances of mass murder and cannibalism solely on him. His alienation is underlined by Akbari who states that while the English return safely back home, "within the confines of the romance, Richard's return 'homward to Yngeland' (7204) is followed immediately by his death ('he was schot, allas' (7207)" ("Hunger" 212). Apart from the historical reality of this event, Richard's death is narratively necessary because "[i]f Richard were allowed to remain in England, particularly in his original unreformed state, he would wreak havoc and terrorize the population" (210). His death is functional in terms of removing the threat of potential harm to England.

On the other hand, Guy and Gowther are allowed back to their countries. After beating Colbrond, Guy visits Felice for the last time by concealing himself as a beggar (280: 1-11). Then, in a forest near Warwick, he finds a hermitage where the resident monk has recently passed away so that Guy settles down to live as a hermit (282: 6-12). He completely reverses his previously monstrous way of life by renouncing arms and fighting altogether. His solitary life in the hermitage helps him avoid people that can persuade him to exert some form of violence on others for reasons right or wrong. Guy is now reconciled with God and dies as a reformed man shriven of his sins. His active life as a knight is now curbed by the passive devotion to God. As for Gowther, he restores the political, social, economic, and religious stability of his homeland by pairing off his mother with the steward of his land. Moreover, he constructs an abbey as a reminder and compensation for his previously monstrous conducts against the Church.

Gowther's eventual sign of forgiveness in the romance is facilitated by the mute princess of the Emperor. She is the only witness to Gowther's achievements on the battlefield and every day she "waschyd hor [the dogs'] mowthus cleyn with wyn / And putte a lofe in tho ton" (446-47) to feed Gowther. The Princess' compassionate act initiates the final process of Gowther's reformation. As Jeffrey Cohen aptly observes, "the bread, wine, and 'flesch' she sends to him have their analogs in the Eucharist, where 'lofe' and 'wyn' become a body, the 'flesch' and blood of Christ" ("Gowther Among the Dogs" 233). Unlike Richard's mother, Gowther performs the ritual of the Eucharist to become one with Christ and the Christian community altogether. The performance also instigates the secret relationship between Gowther and the Princess.

One factor that may have triggered Gowther and the Princess' affection for one another is their shared monstrosity of excess and deficiency regarding their mouths. Similar to Gowther whose mouth is the source of his monstrosity, the Princess can also be deemed monstrous because of her apparent lack of speech. As Karl Steel illustrates the medieval perception of humanity was not associated solely with reason "but [with] rational speech. Determining whether a thing was human, then, was not visible, embodied, simultaneous process, but one that was auditory, disembodied, and temporal" (306). Hence, it can be inferred that western perception of humanity is characterised by rationality as well as the ability to communicate through rational speech patterns so that the inability to produce meaningful sentences was seen as a deformity that dehumanises the subject. Although there are no apparent attempts of exclusion, the Princess' reluctance in attending the court entertainments and her empathy towards outcasts such as Gowther underline her undisclosed feelings of alienation.

Gowther and the Princess' shared monstrosity is resolved simultaneously by God's intervention on the third day of the battle. Gowther receives a spear wound from a Saracen while protecting the Emperor. The Princess witnesses this and "For sorro fell owt of hur toure" (637) and dies. Soon after, the Pope is sent for to direct the Princess' funeral. On the third day, however, in a manner that calls to mind Christ's ascension, she awakens miraculously without her speech impairment and announces that Gowther is forgiven: "My lord of heyvon gretys the well, / And forgyffeus the thi syn yche a dell, / And grantys the tho blys" (661-63). This miraculous resurrection shows the essential mutability of the physical body via religious identity as Christianity rectifies the muteness of the Princess. The remaining traces of Gowther's demonic paternity are shriven off by the Pope's declaration that "Now art thu Goddus chyld; / The thar not dowt tho warlocke wyld" (673-74). The citational performance of the Pope destroys the effect of Gowther's demonic father and his reformation is completed by adopting the Holy Father instead. Thereby, performative compliance to Christianity removes physical and internal monstrosity.

Evidently, Gowther's reorientation is brought about by restraining the various tenets of his excess that make him monstrous. Accordingly, his violence towards women is boarded up through his marriage to the Princess. His unrestricted sexuality is curbed and is now normalised and sanctioned through marriage. In addition, the couple's reproductive capabilities are possibly extracted or not utilised. As Oswald asserts, "[t]he monstrous body of Gowther is the result of this dangerous anxiety, but in his body, the problem of heirlessness is never resolved. Gowther and his wife never conceive a child. The poet wants to make doubly sure that Gowther's monstrosity is excised from both body and community" (193-94). His excessive hostility

towards the Church is also resolved by adopting Christianity and building an abbey in which he is buried with his wife. Their legacy symbolises the hope for reformation through wilful subjection to God's will. Accordingly, their graves attract people that have been cast out from society because of their corporeal and cultural alterity and become instruments of correction, normalisation, and reformation for others:

For he garus tho blynd to see
 And tho dompe to speyke, pardé,
 And makus tho crokyd right,
 And gyffus to tho mad hor wytte,
 And mony odur meracullus yette,
 Thoro tho grace of God allmyght. (739-44)

Physical and cultural mutability of *Gowther* and the Princess problematises the rigid perception of monstrous identity ascribed to various groups or individuals based on their physical or cultural alterity.

2. 3. Conclusion

In this chapter, it is argued that the monstrous Saracen identity is a fragile construction. The malleable precepts that emphasise the monstrosity of the Saracens can also be found in the behaviours of the knights that fight at the borders in the East. It is observed that there is an essential fluidity between monstrosity and chivalry. It is this fluidity that redeems Guy and *Gowther* in their respective romances, *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Gowther*. Accordingly, Guy and *Gowther* redirect their uncontrolled violence to a meritorious purpose to restrain and diminish their monstrosity deriving from excessive violence. This is especially achieved by their willingness to go through penance. Penitential suffering illustrates the previously monstrous aspects of the knights and allows compensation by performing acts that are meritorious to themselves, institutions, or the crusading cause of Christianity in nature. On the contrary, Richard remains a monster throughout the text not because of the rigidity of monstrosity but because of his refusal to change. Accordingly, the romances suggest that monstrous identity is essentially not a matter of being, but of becoming. As argued above, this fluidity is reinforced by the performative compliance to the behavioural, cultural, religious, dietary, and linguistic norms of the West.

CHAPTER III

COURTEOUS MONSTERS IN *SIR GAWAIN AND THE CARL OF CARLISLE*, *THE WEDDING OF SIR GAWAIN AND DAME RAGNELLE*, AND *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT*

This chapter defines monstrosity as a temporary state that subjects become due to their performance(s) that either threaten the physical integrity of others or violate norms purported to maintain order in a society. It is a state of becoming which is intrinsically bound to normality. Normality is, too, a cultural construct which refers to the most common way of acting or moderation in a particular society (Davis 24). In this interdependent relationship, monstrosity always implies the subversion of the normal so that it is distinguished through excess or lack of qualities that harm the integrity of normality. In Arthurian romances, normality is framed by the regulating codes of chivalry. Accordingly, this chapter argues that in *Sir Gawain, Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* the knights and their enemies are in fluid states of becoming monstrous or chivalrous through their behaviours during their encounters with each other. The fluidity between chivalrous and monstrous identities in the romances results from the performative nature of these culturally constructed identities. Hence, chivalrous or monstrous identity is seen as not an ontological category someone is but an epistemological category someone represents through reiterations of the collection of tangible and intangible signifiers that validate the subject's coming into being within a particular discursive system. The Arthurian knights become figures of monstrosity through excessive, deficient, or deviant behaviours that pose threat or harm to the integrity of the established values of the normative chivalric society.

In the first section, somatic divergences of the knights' adversaries in *Sir Gawain, Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* are demonstrated to be not the essential constituent of monstrosity. In contrast, the romances are critical of the immediate association of physical deformity with monstrosity as each romance undermines the Arthurian knights' initial treatment of the physically deformed as figures of menace, mystery, and revulsion. The physical divergence is further trivialised by emphasising the malleability of divergent bodies into normative bodies through behavioural conformity to the norms of chivalry. Therefore, it is argued that analysing monstrosity through the lens of behavioural conformity or nonconformity to the chivalric norms presents a better understanding of what constitutes a monstrous or chivalrous identity. In the second section, encounters between the knights and the monstrous others at the borders are analysed from the perspective of this performative understanding of monstrosity and chivalry. Accordingly, the romances demonstrate that stereotypically assigned characteristics and behaviours of the knights and the "monstrous" others become porous at these contact zones of

encounters. This fluidity is illustrated by instances of encounter where the Arthurian knights become monstrous by failing to follow through with the ideals that are established by themselves, thereby alienating themselves from their cultural norms through monstrous actions. On the other hand, the knights may be reciprocated with virtues that are not customarily attributed to their adversaries.

In this regard, monstrous identity has four major defining aspects. Firstly, monstrous identity in this study is strictly related to chivalrous identity in order to be comprehensible. Their interdependent nature for definition underlines the intricate relationship between the two. Of course, not everything that is not chivalrous is monstrous. In this regard, as a second aspect, monstrous identity in all its forms is always firmly associated with evil that results in undeserved or unnecessary harm or violation. Monstrosity is related to harm because harm is understood as an agentic state that has immediate and corruptive ramifications for the sufferer, be it individual or societal. Harm, in this respect, relates to any performance by an agent that inflicts damage to the physical integrity of an individual or disrupts the written or unwritten set of rules regulating conduct in a particular society. In this chapter, the chivalric code is treated as the regulating principle that mediates societal relationships in the abovementioned Arthurian romances. Hence, violation of the chivalric code is monstrous because it poses immediate harm to the complex web of religious, political, economic, and societal ties that encompass and regulate every stratum of the feudal world. Thirdly, monstrous identity is a border phenomenon because only the cross-cultural spaces offer grounds for testing the otherwise enclosed identities of chivalry and monstrosity. Accordingly, monstrous acts are produced at these contact points where the knights and their enemies contend for discursive domination over one another. In *Carl of Carlisle*, *Sir Gawain*, and *The Wedding*, the knights come across alien value systems at the Northern borders of Scotland and Wales. Therefore, traversals of the knights and “monsters” between the borders of the known and the unknown engender confrontation and monstrosity proves to be an endless negotiation of power in the construction of chivalrous and monstrous identities in these romances. Lastly, during the encounters of the knights and their opponents, the two parties are in a fluid condition of potentiality whereby their subsequent performance determines the value of their actions. Therefore, monstrosity is not a permanent state of being resulting from the physical difference of a subject but it is a temporary state of becoming as a result of discursive practices and performances. These discursive practices and performance legitimise normativity positioned against a range of differences that are perceived as monstrous. Therefore, in this study, monster is not someone who is physically different from normative physiology of the West, s/he is an agent who is the source of undeserved harm to her/his society by acts that transgress the established conventions. The fluid and performative nature of

monstrosity is pertinent to the selected romances' larger concern of the treatment of others. Within the context of border incursions that facilitate subsequent confrontation of superiority, summaries of the romances in question are provided as follows.

Sir Gawain begins with an incursion of a gigantic Green Knight to the Arthurian court during Christmas festivities. A massive green figure challenges the Arthurian court to an exchange of blows. The knights' hesitance is mocked by the Green Knight. Angered by the accusations, Arthur steps up but Gawain stops him and volunteers instead. Gawain severs the head of the Green Knight who picks up his own head and reminds Gawain that he will be waiting to deal a similar blow precisely a year later at the Green Chapel. Seasons change and Gawain readies himself to set out and find the Green Chapel. His travels lead him to the harsh terrains of the Welsh border. At a low point in his journey, a castle appears before him. He decides to seek lodging in the mysterious castle where he is welcomed by a hospitable household named Bertilak. During his stay, Gawain is offered another game, this time exchange of gifts in which Bertilak and Gawain are expected to exchange their winnings. For three days, Gawain is hard-pressed by the lady of the house and receives kisses at an increasing rate whereas Bertilak hunts a deer, a boar, and a fox in the forest. At night, they exchange the gifts but on the third day, Gawain does not give the green girdle he has received from the lady to the lord because it protects the one who wears it. The next day, Gawain departs for the Green Chapel where he meets his opponent. The Green Knight feigns striking two times and only gives a scratch on the third. He later claims that the third one is for Gawain's dishonesty in hiding the girdle. He reveals himself to be Bertilak and is in fact guided by Morgan Le Faye to test the Arthurian court. Gawain takes it very harshly on himself and claims to wear the girdle as a token of his failure. In the end, Gawain returns to the Arthurian court where he is received very gladly. The whole court decides to wear similar green girdles to display solidarity.

Similarly, *Carl of Carlisle* concerns itself with the traversals of various boundaries. The romance starts with a hunting expedition of Arthur and his party to the unchartered Inglewood forest. Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin are lost due to the mist and the trio decides to seek lodging at the castle of the Carl who is reputed to mistreat his guests. Kay even offers a forced entry if they are denied. Upon their entry, the trio of knights sees that the Carl is a giant who denies any reverence to chivalric courtesy but states that he can only offer Carl's courtesy. During their stay, the Carl tests the knights three times. In the first test, Baldwin and Kay put the foal outside the barn because they do not think that it is appropriate for a foal to remain beside their horses. Yet, Gawain takes the foal inside the barn. As a result, Baldwin and Kay receive buffets from the Carl, and Gawain is commended. In the second test, the Carl asks Gawain to throw a spear

at him. Gawain accepts and throws the spear and the Carl ducks just in time. The third test involves the Carl's wife. He asks Gawain to embrace and kiss his wife. Gawain obeys but the Carl stops them just as Gawain goes a little too far. The Carl rewards Gawain because of his obedience and summons his daughter to play in their room until morning. The next day, the Carl reveals that he has been under a spell that would not be broken until a guest is fully obedient to him. He rewards the knights and entrusts his daughter to Gawain. The Carl also invites Arthur to have a feast with him. Arthur comes with his court members and knights the Carl. Gawain marries the Carl's daughter in the end.

Likewise, *The Wedding* features a hunting expedition in the Inglewood forest. Arthur is ambushed by a former knight, Sir Gromer Sommer Joure who claims that Arthur has wronged him. Arthur escapes death by pleading that he is unarmed. Sir Gromer lets Arthur go on condition that he will return in a year with an answer about what women want the most. Arthur tells Gawain about the incident and they separate to find answers to no avail. Then, Arthur comes upon an ugly woman, Dame Ragnelle, who claims to know the answer and will tell Arthur only if Arthur will allow her to marry Gawain. Arthur tells Dame Ragnelle's proposal to Gawain and Gawain immediately accepts. Dame Ragnelle reveals that the answer is sovereignty. Arthur tells the answer to Sir Gromer and saves himself. Ragnelle is brought to court and demands a lavish wedding. Gawain complies with her demands. During the wedding, everyone is disgusted by her looks and lack of table manners. At the wedding bed, Dame Ragnelle asks Gawain if he would like to see her beautiful during the day or night. Gawain leaves the decision to her and unwittingly lifts the curse on Dame Ragnelle so that she is now always beautiful. They have a son and remain married for five years until Ragnelle's death.

The selected romances are narratives of fluid identities constructed within the border spaces in the North. Besides the spatial fluidity, these romances are encapsulated by temporal fluidity as well. Accordingly, in the romances, the constant flux of time generates a sense of change and movement that brings about the entanglement of the knights and their adversaries. The one-year temporal contract binds Gawain and Arthur to their respective adversaries in *Sir Gawain* and *The Wedding*; the setting of the sun in *Carl of Carlisle* necessitates Gawain's party's eventual encounter with the Carl. These encounters, in turn, facilitate the clash of different values. The examples of temporal fluidity abound in the romances. In *Sir Gawain*, the cyclical pattern of time – change of four seasons – suggests the broad themes of life and death, and constant regeneration. Upon this cycle, historical time dating as far back as the Trojan war is superimposed and this historical time also connects the alternative and fictional Arthurian timeline. The existence of multiple time frames shatters the linearity and singularity of time but

instead presents an understanding of it that is multiple and simultaneous. Moreover, the temptation scenes in the third Fitt in *Sir Gawain* are narrated with “the hunting activities going on at the same time. Against the very nature of the narration, we are plunged into two events happening simultaneously. The Gawain-poet is one of the first poets in English to handle the difficult problem of simultaneity in narration” (Bloomfield 18). Moreover, temporal thresholds occupy significant turning points in the romances. In this regard, John M. Ganim observes that in *Sir Gawain*

The *Gawain* poet loves to draw out the moods of the edges of the day, dawn and dusk. Similarly, he concentrates his significant actions at the edges of the year, the ‘Nwe Yr’ when the two tests occur. His much-admired passage on the turn of the seasons is compelling not simply because of the static descriptions of summer, fall, winter, and spring, but because we see the seasons in flux, turning into one another, and the poetry’s achievement lies in its suggestion of gradation and change. His imagination is drawn toward blocks that face each other: years, days, nights, opponents, as if the interface between them could bring out some truth that one or the other alone might not possess. (377)

Ganim’s observation about the flux of time that gives rise to the concentration of the action at the edges of temporal time frames is also valid for *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*. In these romances, the passing of time is employed as a catalyst for generating different emotions and amalgamation of important story arches.

For instance, the one-year-contract between Sir Gawain and the Green Knight creates a sense of impending doom which is heightened by the rapid change of seasons that reflects the sombre fate Gawain is prepared to meet: “And þus 3irnez þe 3ere in 3isterdayez mony, / And wynter wyndez a3ayn, as þe worlde askez, / no fage,” (528-30). In *The Wedding*, however, a similar agreement between Arthur and Sir Gromer provides an element of urgency to the knights’ task of finding the right answer for the question regarding women’s want: “I [Arthur] have butt a monethe to my day sett;” (216), “Then within five or six days / The Kyng must nedys goo his ways” (378-79). On the other hand, the marriage between Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle is treated in a similar manner to *Sir Gawain*. Accordingly, in *The Wedding* the dreaded marriage by the Arthurian court approaches swiftly: “The daye was comyn the daye shold be; / Therof the ladyes had great pitey” (566-67). The solemn reception of the event is heightened by the portrayals of women crying their hearts out for Gawain’s unlucky fate (544).

Moreover, temporal borders within the romances are breached and joined together to reinforce unity. In this respect, Dame Ragnelle’s curse which constricts her to be beautiful either during the day or the night is abolished by Gawain’s concession to yield sovereignty and agency to

Dame Ragnelle. In turn, the mutual concession between the seemingly incorrigible pair demolishes the rigid boundaries that confine Ragnelle's beauty to a specific temporal frame. In *Carl of Carlisle*, however, narrative unity is achieved by the temporal flux of three distinct periods of the day that follows one another in quick succession. Accordingly, the romance begins with a morning hunt of Arthur's entourage until dusk at which point Gawain's party is lost in Inglewood (1-138). Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin spend the night in the castle of the reputedly monstrous Carl who fastidiously tests the moral worth of the knights until dawn (139-516). At dawn, the trio departs to invite Arthur to the Carl's castle to initiate the Carl to the Round Table (517-660).

Consequently, the spatio-temporal and conceptual boundaries in these romances are significant as they function as in-between spaces facilitating encounters with the other. As Homi Bhabha states, these "borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual" (Introduction 3). In this regard, the three romances in this chapter underline mostly the positive outcomes of the acculturation process; the Carl is knighted, Dame Ragnelle marries Gawain, amity is established with Bertilak. Still, the transgressions of the enclosed spaces in these romances always generate different forms of tension which demonstrate ultimately the untenable nature of these constructed binaries such as chivalric and monstrous, inside and outside, private and public, culture and nature, masculine and feminine. Accordingly, it will first be demonstrated that despite their physical divergences, which are essentially mutable too, the adversaries that the knights encounter carry fluid markers of chivalrous and monstrous identities on their bodies. Then, the performative nature of monstrous and chivalrous identities will be illustrated through the instances of encounters between the knights and their adversaries at the contact points in the selected romances.

3. 1. Fluid Representations of the Green Knight, the Carl, and Dame Ragnelle

Inspection of the physically divergent characters in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* reveals the untenability of their permanent exclusion to monstrosity. Similar to the Saracens in the previous chapter, the ostensible threat of the Carl, the Green Knight, and Dame Ragnelle is first emphasised via their corporeal alterity. As Robert Olsen and Karin Olsen demonstrate, medieval people tend to associate physical divergence from the standards of European human disposition as an immediate and explicit manifestation of moral deviance (Introduction 8-9). Accordingly, physical differences between the Saracens and the knights in the selected crusade romances of the previous chapter are mostly utilised, albeit unsuccessfully, to reinforce their monstrosity. However, in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* that

are set in the Northern regions of Britain, the physical difference of the outsiders from the Arthurian court is employed for an adverse effect. In these romances, physical differences are used to criticise the Arthurian knights' immediate tendency to associate monstrous behaviour with those whose physical attributes are different from the normative standards of beauty.²¹ The knights' initial feelings such as dread or disgust due to the physical alterity of the Green Knight, the Carl, and Dame Ragnelle underline the moral shallowness of the Arthurian knights. Physical excess, deviance, or deficiency from the normative standards are not the essential constituents of monstrosity in these romances. As will be shown below, these romances dissociate monstrous behaviour from physical alterity. Therefore, the traditionally clear-cut distinction between the knights and their adversaries who are identified as monstrous is blurred. This is because both the knights and their adversaries perform monstrous and chivalrous actions in these romances. Moreover, Dame Ragnelle's, the Carl's, and the Green Knight's mutable bodies reinforce this fluidity. Thus, it is argued that the rigid boundaries between the knights and the monstrous others due to their corporeal difference collapse. The romances mislead the knights and the audiences at the same time by evoking a potential monstrosity in terms of physical difference. Hence, in the three romances, immediate attention is accorded to the corporeal difference of these others during their encounters with the Arthurian knights. Accordingly, the romances' emphasis on the physical divergence of the Green Knight, the Carl, and Dame Ragnelle will first be illustrated to stress the knights' immediate feelings of wonder, intimidation, terror, anxiety, and disgust.

²¹ The normative standards of male and female beauty included common qualities such as fair complexion, moderation in physical and facial proportions, and overall cleanliness. In the Latin texts of the Western Europe from the twelfth century onwards descriptive pattern of "the beautiful woman", "the handsome youth" and "ugly human beings" began to emerge (Specht 129). Claudio Da Soller in "Beauty, Evolution, and Medieval Literature" traces the classic medieval texts such as Mathieu de Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* (late 12th c.), Geoffroi de Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (13th c.) and *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi* (13th c.) and provides detailed tables for the standards of female beauty. Accordingly, ideal female beauty requires small heads; white, rosy, and smooth face; blonde or black hair that is soft, curly and long; white and bright forehead; large and blue, green or black eyes; small, well-shaped and round ears, nose and mouth; white teeth; red lips; white and long neck; high shoulders; slender hands and fingers; small and round breasts; slim waist; rounded hips; small legs; white and arched feet; white and hairless skin; slender and well-proportioned body shape (104-05). Ideal male physique is suggested in the description of Sir Myrthe in the translation of Chaucer's *The Romaunt of the Rose* (1360s). He is described as having "fair" (817) skin, "ful long and high" (817) body; round face (819) and well-shaped feet (821); "metely outh and yen greye" (822); nose "by mesure wrought ful right" (823) and a curly "heer, and eek ful bright" (824); broad "shuldris" (825) and a small waist (826). On the other hand, ugliness similar to physical deformity is closely related to the ideals of male and female beauty. It only becomes meaningful via qualities that are in opposition to ideals of male and female beauty.

When the Green Knight comes to the court of King Arthur in *Sir Gawain*, particular attention is given to the Green Knight's gigantic but proportionate figure. It is through his figure that the Green Knight is identified as monstrous. The first reaction he receives from the Arthurian court, however, is wonder and amazement:

On þe most on þ molde on mesure hyghe;
 Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
 And his lynes and his lymes so longe and so grete,
 Half etayn in erde I hope þat he were, (137-40)

As is clear from the extract, the Green Knight is almost the size of a half-giant, but the narrator is careful to note that he is not disproportionate: "And alle his fetures folzande, in forme þathe hade, / ful clene" (145-46). His size may exceed the usual proportions of humans but overall harmony is marked in his stately figure. Therefore, as Greg Walker points out, the Green Knight maintains in himself the "unsettling mixture of the monstrous and the decorous, the chivalrous and civilised and their barbarous, incomprehensible, opposites" (94). The marvellous sight of his huge but proportionate body looms large over the surprised crowd of knights upon his incursion into the Arthurian court and the knights are appalled by his green "hwe men hade, / Set in his semblaunt sene;" (147-48). Except for his fiery red eyes (304) and occasional gold trims on his and his horse's garments (158-89), the Green Knight and his giant horse are entirely coated in green: "Wel gay watz þis gome gered in grene, / And þe here of his hed of his horse swete" (179-80).

The narrator takes particular delight in describing the minute details of this wonderful being that contains mixed cultural signifiers. Likewise, the Arthurian knights are all dumbfounded by the marvel before their eyes: "For fele sellyez had þay sen, bot such neuer are; / Forþi for fantoum and fayryze þe folk þere hit demed" (239-40). Hence, the immediate response of the Arthurian court is amazement and fascination so much so that when the Green Knight inquires about the "gouernour" (225) of their brethren, it is received with "a swoghe sylence" (243). Nevertheless, the narrator interferes to remark that this silence is not "for doute, / But sum for cor cortaysye" (246-47) for their king to speak first. Therefore, the Green Knight's huge demeanour is certainly intimidating and fearsome as he is also described as "aglich," (136) indicating "that he is 'fearsome' or 'terrible' (Ashton 41). Yet, the first impression of the court towards the intruder is dread and wonder. The Green Knight's fear-inducing difference can be accounted for in terms of Sigmund Freud's concept of "the uncanny". Freud dwells on the concept in his 1919 article entitled "Das Unheimliche" where, he regards the uncanny as an experience that is "in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old – established in the mind that has been

estranged only by the process of repression” (Freud 241). This familiarity of a phenomenon that is at the same time strange evokes “dread and creeping horror” (219) in the subject. This can be experienced by the subject’s coming across with death and dead bodies, dismembered bodies or bodily organs or when s/he ascribes evil motives to another person (244). In this regard, in the romance, the Green Knight’s corporeal divergence evokes the feelings uncanny. This is especially the case when the Green Knight later on takes up his severed head and addresses them: “Moni on of hym had doute, / Bi þat his resounz were redde” (442-43). The talking head leaves the court in shock and terror as the knights wonder what has transpired after the departure of the Green Knight with his head tucked under his arm.

Similarly, the excessively large body of the Carl in *Carl of Carlisle* is contrived by the narrator to impart a similar effect of the uncanny. During their first encounter at the Carl’s castle, the trio of knights is overwhelmed by the Carl’s physical disposition which is truly gigantic in physical proportions: “He was two tayllors yardus a brede/ ... Nine taylloris yerdus he was hyghtht / And therto leggus longe and wyghtht” (257, 259-60). He has a broad face (250), a large mouth (253), his legs are “thicker” (264) and his arms and fingers are “gret” (265-66). The knights watch in awe of the Carl drinking from “a cope of golde - / Nine gallons hit gane holde” (292-93). The Carl’s invocation of awe, danger, and threat in Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin is caused by the Carl’s huge disposition which indicates “superior strength; which translates into the power advantage in confrontations” (Gilmore 176). Indeed, the Carl’s physical disposition leaves no room for moderation. His gigantism is reinforced by a wild temperament suggested via the host of four wild animals, a bull, a boar, a bear, and a lion, which create an atmosphere of danger and threat (224-36). According to Radula Radulescu, descriptions of the household animals in the bestiary tradition are suggestive of the Carl’s wild personality: “All of them are bold, ferocious animals, whose descriptions induce terror” (63). Furthermore, the Carl’s abode near Inglewood and his mastery of the wild animals underline the Carl’s sovereignty over nature and wildlife around the region to which Arthur (un)wittingly endeavours to extend his royal authority by hunting expeditions at the beginning of the romance (29-123). The negotiation of power in this contentious space, however, seems to suggest that the desire of expansion may not be as easy as it seems: “In the Carl’s domain, Arthur’s knights find themselves as much prey as hunters” (Taylor 188). In describing the Carl, the narrator heightens the sense of dread by emphasising his countenance, “He *semyd* a dredfull man” (249, emphasis added). As the narrator’s remark suggests, the Carl seems like a menacing figure. However, he will turn out to be a reasonable man in the end as it will be revealed that he is compelled to act in this way because of a spell. Still, at this stage, the Carl poses “a more immediate and obvious threat than the Green Knight, an adversarial figure rather than a puzzling one” (Ashton 42). Stripped off of the marvellous

element of the Green Knight, the Carl's physical excess conveys the threat of physical danger. In this regard, he is more akin to Sir Gromer Somer Joure in *The Wedding* who is described as a "full strong" knight with "great myghte" (52) and intends to kill Arthur by entrapping him in Inglewood during a hunting session in that romance. Hence, the two conform to Freud's concept of the uncanny due to their corporeal divergence that leads to their being associated with malicious intent while at the same time being strangely familiar.

Apart from the emotions of marvel and danger, physical divergence may sometimes generate abhorrence. In this respect, Arthur's encounter with Dame Ragnelle in *The Wedding* is an illustration of corporeal divergence that invokes the feeling of revulsion. In Dame Ragnelle's introduction to the romance, the narrator reserves particular attention to her bodily excess as if to repulse not only Arthur but also the reader. She is described as having a "red" (231) face and a "mowithe wyde" (232); her "yalowe" (232) teeth protrude "her lypes" (235); she bears a hunch "upon her bak" (237). Mary Leech refers to Ragnelle's body as the "misshapen and sagging body of the Bahktinian grotesque" which has the tendency to demonstrate "what is usually hidden in the body – its interior – and in so doing challenges the boundaries of the body and the society from which that body emerges" (214). Every aspect of her physical body is designed to subvert the ideal proportions of feminine beauty in the romance tradition. Thus, contrary to the unattainable, slender, and contained body of the classical romance heroine, Dame Ragnelle's grotesque body is exposed, sagging, and revealing. Accordingly, she is represented as having a "snotyd" nose (231), "chekys syde as wemens hippes" (236), and "Hangygn pappys to be an hors lode" (241).

Moreover, her transgressive body bestows upon her a powerful feminine agency to infringe upon the patriarchal feudal norms because she uses "her status as a loathsome creature to bypass assigned gender roles and wields it as a weapon" (Beamer 43) to fulfil her sexual desires by marrying Gawain. Her corporeal difference grants her the necessary sovereignty to perform a femininity outside the traditional female role of the damsel in distress. On the other end of the spectrum concerning romance women types, there is also the temptress figure. Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain* bypasses the traditional roles through her sovereign agency. Lady Bertilak will be discussed in detail below but suffice it here to say that Lady Bertilak's beauty as opposed to Dame Ragnelle's ugliness determines the knights' approach to these ladies. Still, undeterred by her own foul composure, Ragnelle lusts after Gawain. Her desire brings about the eventual possibility of union between the seemingly obnoxious Dame Ragnelle and good-looking Gawain. Noël Carroll calls such an incongruity or "impurity" which "involves a conflict between two or more standing cultural categories" as "*categorical contradictoriness*" (137,

emphasis original). For him, the resulting combination may rouse powerful feelings such as disgust, horror, and fascination which are duly reflected by Arthur:

‘Alas!’ he seyde; ‘Nowe woo is me
That I shold cause Gawen to wed the,
For he wol be lothe to saye naye.
So foule a Lady as ye ar nowe one
Sawe I nevere in my lyfe on ground gone;
I nott whate I do may.’ (303-08)

In this regard, Carroll’s notion of “categorical contradictoriness” borders on Kristeva’s definition of the abject which she describes as something that “disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). Between the boundaries of what one defines as subject, or the self and the object, or the other, there are composite pieces that once belonged to the subject which has since then been rejected. These liminal pieces cause the disintegration of boundaries between what is inside and outside, self and other. In this regard, Dame Ragnelle’s running nose (231), protruding yellow teeth (232, 235-36), and hunched back (237) are images of abjection that intrude upon the boundaries of the normative body. As a result, the abject body of Dame Ragnelle invokes “great shame” (515) in Arthur during her procession into the court. Similarly, “Alle the contraye had wonder greatt / Fro when she com, that foule unswete;” (521-22) and all the ladies “in her bower, / And wept for Sir Gawen” (543-44).

The reactions of the Arthurian court indicate the superficial association of moral worth with physical beauty. This association was concomitant with the popular notion in the Middle Ages which was reflected in “courtesy books, as well as lyrics and romance” (Donnelly 328). In these books, it was put forward that “marriageable women should have a seemly countenance, fair face, and good manners. Beauty and nobility undeniably went hand-in-hand” (Donnelly 328). In this regard, the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain*, the Carl in *Carl of Carlisle*, and Dame Ragnelle in *The Wedding* problematise the constructed norms of the Middle Ages and the Arthurian court. Accordingly, the association of corporal alterity with an evil predisposition and the ensuing alienation perpetuated by individual and social preconceptions of physical difference are denounced.

Moreover, the romances actually blur the boundaries between the knights and the others by decorating their transgressive bodies with recognisable tokens of the aristocratic culture. Accordingly, the Green Knight is dressed with rich garments clad in green which signal conformity to the Arthurian court’s sense of fashion. As Bella Millett points out, the Green

Knight's neatly trimmed and rich clothes offer a "cluster of signs" that puzzle the Arthurian knights (138). Accordingly, the contradicting signs of his divergent corporeality and the clothing choice that is similar to the Arthurian standards stresses this fluidity of signs on his body. As Susan Crane observes, "costume is an important aspect of performance" (166). The Green Knight's overall disposition enables him to move freely "between monstrousness and manliness, threat and restraint, wildness and ornament, strangeness and familiarity" (Crane 166). As Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" indicates, this ambiguity produces "symbols of culture" with "no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (55). In this respect, the Green Knight's cross-cultural body – divergent body in fashionable clothes – highlights the unsustainability of distinct and enclosed identities. As a result, during the Arthurian court's first encounter with the Green Knight, the "collage of different cultural stereotypes" encoded in the Green Knight's body signals a "border culture" between a "metropolitan court and the provincial ... court" (Knight 264). His body becomes a site for showcasing the permeability of identities performed through material and immaterial signs such as clothing, weapons, language, and conduct. Therefore, despite his divergent body he cannot be completely removed from the Arthurian culture, thereby becoming a hybrid, a chimera of conflicting cultural signs harbouring in his body.

On the other hand, Gawain's second encounter with the Green Knight/Bertilak at the Castle of Hautdesert suggests the vague aspects of performative identities such as chivalry by foregrounding its potential for exploitation. As Erving Goffman elucidates, in social interactions, despite the tendency to expect "consistency between appearance and manner;" it is only natural to find discrepancies between the two (15). In this respect, erasure of the Green Knight's somatic divergence enables him and his household to become indistinguishable from the Arthurian court via performative compliance to the norms of aristocratic life. Accordingly, the Hautdesert court "cultivate[s] courtly demeanour and speech, display[s] the aristocratic virtues of generosity and munificence, ... love to sing, dance and share[s] in the delights of feasting ... jest and pleasantry" (Bergner 410). Naturally, Gawain does not sense any hostility or possible harm from those that physically conform to the normative standards of courtly disposition and culture. However, his stay and conduct at the Hautdesert Castle actually play the decisive role for his subsequent fate. In this instance, the performative nature of cultural identities always carries in itself the danger of imitation for an ulterior motive or hidden agenda as in the case of the Green Knight/Bertilak's ultimate test of truth for Gawain. In this study, it is essential to consider the consequential harm or benefit of the performance to categorise an action as monstrous or chivalrous. From this perspective, the Bertilak household's "*almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 122, emphasis original) performance of hospitality carries much

more danger than Gawain and Green Knight's first encounter in the Arthurian court. Yet, the consequential damage to Gawain's dishonesty at the end is actually meritorious in terms of alerting Gawain to recognise his lacking chivalric virtues. Therefore, the implicit danger never actualises and the performance does not become monstrous.

Similar to the Green Knight, Dame Ragnelle carries a host of mixed cultural signs on her body that establish her fluid portrayal. She is, at first, described as riding "a palfray was gay begon, / With gold beset and many a precious stone" (246-47). Despite her grotesque body, her wealth is suggested through her wedding dress which costs more than "thre thowsand mark" (592) and is "fresher than Dame Gaynour" (591). Moreover, she introduces herself as "Dame Ragnelle" (319) and calls herself "a Lady" (317) during her first encounter with King Arthur. In this respect, this romance is unique among its contemporary versions because it "is the only one of the three versions in which the hag is named. She is not only named; her station is made known almost immediately" (Donnelly 328).²² Her naming and noble status in addition to her agency that trespasses the patriarchal feudal norms underline her importance in the poem despite her initial portrayal as a marginal figure. In this regard, Thomas Hahn states that "[t]hrough her relations with the various male characters – her kinship with Gromer, her compact with Arthur, her union with Gawain – Ragnelle literally holds the poem together, for she is their link with each other" (43). It is Ragnelle that provides the answer to Arthur's plight; it is she that subjugates Arthur to impose her wish to marry Gawain; it is she that reconciles her brother, Sir Gromer, with the Arthurian court.

Ragnelle's connections and agency enable her the necessary freedom to transgress the strict restrictions of the patriarchal feudal system. She moves literally and metaphorically from the margins/Inglewood to the centre/Arthurian court through the course of the romance. Moreover, her mobility exposes the actual permeability of the professed borders of femininity and masculinity through performance. Her agency undermines the traditionally passive gender roles that are imputed to women in the Middle Ages. Her transgressive nature "endows her with a deep ambiguity, enmeshing both attraction and revulsion, fatal danger and life-giving knowledge" (Hahn 42). This ambiguity is further highlighted by her subversion of the table manners during her wedding feast despite her self-proclaimed status as a lady. Daine Bornstein conducts substantial research on feminine behavioural codes in the Middle Ages in her book *The Lady in the Tower* (1983). Accordingly, the conduct books such as *Chastoiement des dames* (Late 13th c.) written by Robert of Blois advise women to "not eat or drink too much. ... When

²² Ragnelle's noble status is suggested as she introduces herself as "The kings dowhter of Cizile" (1841) in John Gower's "The Tale of Florent." However, Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" or *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* do not refer to her name or her status.

drinking, she [a woman] should wipe her mouth so as not to get grease on the cup. She should not get her hands greasy” (59-60). Moderation and gentility are the presiding manners that should be observed during meals and feasts. However, Ragnelle’s description suggests her animal-like qualities. Accordingly, she has nails that are “long ynchys thre” (607), she eats with her hands and she has a gluttonous appetite: “She ete as moche as six that ther wore; / That mervaylyd many a man ... / Therwith she breke her mete ungoodly” (605-06, 608). The ghastly sight of her manner of devouring meat transgresses the conventional etiquette as a result of which she is left alone in the court: “Therefore she ete alone” (609). Her table manners, for Susan Carter, can be contrasted with Chaucer’s Prioress who “exemplified well-performed femininity in her fastidious care [sic] avoidance of morsels falling from her lips, drops on her breast, or grease rings in her drink” (39n30). In this regard, the court’s lack of compassion for and their manifest disapproval of a relatively harmless act of bad table manners that leads them to isolate Ragnelle during her wedding day exposes the conceited and superficial standards of the court members.

Moreover, her courteous manners after her subsequent transformation into a beautiful lady suggest the possibility of a feigned performance during the wedding feast like the Green Knight/Bertilak testing the limits of the court’s and Gawain’s tolerance. Gawain, on the other hand, outshines the rest of the court. His unwavering loyalty to Arthur and trustworthiness to fulfil his promises are indicated by his statement: ““Syr, I am redy of that I you hyghte, / Alle forwards to fulfyller”” (*The Wedding* 534-35). In addition, Gawain is careful not to offend Dame Ragnelle for her deformed disposition and bad table manners, which is duly commended by Ragnelle: ““For thy sake I wold I were a fayre woman, / For thou art of so good wylle”” (537-38). This remark is also a subtle foreshadowing of her eventual transformation at the end of the romance. Hence, the wedding scene functions as an in-between space where the polarities between the Arthurian world and Dame Ragnelle are manifested. As Bhabha asserts, “[t]he concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the *name* of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation” (50-51). In this regard, the aggression generated by Dame Ragnelle’s bad table manners and the Arthurian court’s subsequent disavowal of her are consequences of this conflict of supremacy. Gawain, on the other hand, plays a reconciliatory role between Dame Ragnelle and the Arthurian court. His role indicates the possibility of eventual harmony between the two.

Likewise, the Carl is portrayed as a wealthy, regional, non-noble figure who has enough resources to live bountifully like a powerful lord (291, 421-22). Correspondingly, he is depicted

as a mysterious and ambiguous figure who has contradictory identity markers. He is a giant but he has a wife and a daughter who resemble the usual descriptions of romance fair ladies. Accordingly, the wife has “Her armus small, her mydyll gent, / Her yghen grey, her browus bente; / Of curttesy sche was perfette” (364-66); the daughter is described as “feyr and bright” (417). He keeps wild animals at his castle that insinuate the wild nature of the Carl, yet he decorously provides drinks and meals in gold cups and plates (609-10) and has “Trompettys trompid” (613) before meals as befitting a noble. He proclaims to Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin that he dislikes chivalric courtesy: “For her no corttesy thou schalt have” (277). On the other hand, he seems to contrive an intricate plot to join the Arthurian court as the lord around “[t]he contré of Carelyle” (629). The plot includes the Carl’s initiative to direct Gawain to spend a night with his daughter (475-80); he bids Gawain to take her with him as a wife (565); he asks Gawain to bring Arthur to feast with him (589-90).

The Carl’s incorporation into the Arthurian court is significant in terms of chivalry’s perception as “an ethic [which] was at once Christian and martial and aristocratic. Its elitist social and martial overtones undoubtedly contributed much to its enduring force, at least as much as the Christian sanction that it had acquired in an earlier age” (Keen, *Nobles* 117). Thereby, the Carl’s entry at the end of the romance regardless of his divergent corporeality and lower status undermines hereditary connection between chivalry and noble birth. In this regard, *Carl of Carlisle* echoes an alternative body of thought on chivalry expressed by Ramon Llull in his famous treatise called *Book of the Order of Chivalry* (13th c.). Llull refers to the performative nature of chivalry by referring to the knights’ duty of becoming instruments of social welfare, beneficence, and justice. They might be “maid knyghtis of þe most persones” or be given the “moost noble beeste / and the beste / the most noble armures,” (18-19) on the outside. However, “gif þow be wikit, þow art enemy of cheualry and art contrary to his commandmentis & honouris” (18). In this regard, Llull’s treatise is in line with *Carl of Carlisle*, *The Wedding*, and *Sir Gawain* in terms of suggesting that virtuous and meritorious behaviour is chivalric while wicked and harmful behaviour is monstrous. Sean Pollack observes that “[c]hivalry as a complex set of codes was under continual negotiation, redefinition, and scrutiny, but the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in England saw an increase in literary productions that actually debated the meaning of chivalry” (18). *Carl of Carlisle* is one of those texts that questions the ancestral relationship between chivalry and monstrosity. The romance foregrounds chivalry and monstrosity as discursive constructs intelligible through performances of merit and wickedness. The Carl formulates an altruistic moral code that bypasses chivalric courtesy as the presiding quality for social relations of the nobility. He has a low opinion of courtesy because it garners pretentious behaviour which eliminates the virtue of truth. He associates courtesy with dishonest

flattery. He clearly believes that flattery is used for personal interest. For instance, when the trio of knights comes to the Carl's castle, they kneel before the Carl courteously in the hope of receiving a lodging for the night and not to anger this reputedly monstrous figure. However, prior to this scene, Kay actually considers beating the Carl and breaking into his castle against the Carl's will: "He schall be bette that he schall stynke, / And agenst his wyll be thar" (161-62). Therefore, the Carl is right in his own way not to be affected by the hypocrisy of their graceful gesture and bids them to "stond upe anon" (273). For him, courteous behaviour is ambiguous in terms of its potential for trickery and the impossibility of determining the authenticity of the performance in question.

For the Carl, courtesy contains in itself the potential for monstrosity because basing social relationships on the virtue of courtesy alone undermines the sustainability of social bonds because of its ambiguous nature that may very well be harmful in the long run. In turn, his formulation of courtesy is based on mutual and immediate beneficence for the involved parties which produces salutary and tangible outcomes. Hence, when the trio of knights visits his house, the Carl declares that "For her no corttessy thou schalt have, / But carllus corttessy" (277-78). As Lindsay observes, the Carl assumes this "socially beneficial code of conduct [because] it allows for social mobility and mutually satisfactory relationship for anyone who has a desire ... to participate in the chivalrous community" (405). Therefore, the Carl provides lodging for the knights because they need it, and curiously, the Carl also needs it because he is struck by a curse to slay those guests that do not obey him: "But he wolde do my byddyngge bowne, / He schulde be slayne and layde adowne" (523-24). Similarly, the Carl's entry into the chivalric community comes about as a mutually beneficial and rational "political bargain between two classes of society, the nobility, and the commoners. It expresses a commitment by each party to respect the other's rights and thereby to restore order" (Brandsen 299). The harmony between the "monstrous" Carl and the Arthurian court is facilitated through the fluid representation of identity. Accordingly, the Carl promises to "forsake my [his] wyckyd lawys; / Ther schall no mo men her be slawe, iwys" (541-42).

One final aspect that makes the Green Knight, the Carl, and Dame Ragnelle fluid in terms of their identities is the mutability of their divergent bodies. As will be explained below, the plasticity of their bodies enables these characters to transform into normative bodies of romance heroes and heroines. In this respect, Bynum demonstrates the medieval interest in mutable corporeality especially after the twelfth century by focusing on various texts and authors among whom Gerald of Wales is an example. In his works, Gerald identifies "varieties of *mutation* (inner and outer, nature or substance and appearance, illusion and transformation,

metamorphosis and hybrid) [which] figure in major discussions by his contemporaries” (Bynum, Introduction 18, emphasis original). For Bynum, medieval preoccupation with change and transformation was reflected “in imaginative literature, theology, the visual arts, and natural philosophy” (Introduction, 21). Likewise, in *The Wedding, Carl of Carlisle*, and *Sir Gawain*, transformation occupies a crucial place in terms of consolidating the unification between the outsiders and the Arthurian court. As Bhabha underlines, “[c]ultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other” (52). In this regard, monstrosity and chivalry produce during the encounters of the knights and their opponents. Accordingly, the monstrous characters’ psychological growths, cultural approximations, and character developments are reflected through corporeal approximation to the normative standards. Meanwhile, the Arthurian characters adopt signs and behavioural patterns received from their initial adversaries. Thereby, the two seemingly distinct parties at first harmonise with one another at the end of the romances and maintain a fluid mixture of cultural signs.

For example, despite her desire for sovereignty, Ragnelle’s subsequent declaration of obedience may seem at first like a contradiction. Indeed, at the end, Ragnelle expresses that she “shal be obaysaunt; / To God above I [she] shalle itt warraunt, / And nevere with you to debate” (784-86). However, the actual concession “is not one in which either Gawain or Dame Ragnelle wields all control; it is rather an exchange of sovereignty in one case for sovereignty in another, and as such it is an image of the social bargain” (Ramsey 207). Indeed, sovereignty is not complete freedom of one from another but a healthy equilibrium established by being respectful to individual spheres of authority and expertise. In addition, as Ramsey suggests, the mutual concession between the partners is a good solution to establish harmony which is reflected on the social level (207). Accordingly, King Arthur restitutes the lands that Sir Gromer claims to have been unrightfully robbed of (814-15) in exchange for Gromer’s obedience and service as a vassal.

A similar form of reconciliation occurs for the Carl in *Carl of Carlisle*. He is received as a member of the Arthurian circle as soon as the spell that forces him to slay anyone who does not obey him during their stay at his castle is broken (520-22). His entry into the Arthurian court regardless of his physical divergence underlines the insignificance of physical conformity in terms of maintaining a chivalric identity. However, it is also important to note that the primary source of this study, the A text (c. 1400) lacks one extra test conducted by the Carl which is present in the B text and is mostly dated around 1650 due to linguistic evidence (Pollack 10). According to this version, “Gawain courteously accedes to the Carl’s request for beheading, which breaks the spell that had bound him to ‘carllus corttessy’ (line 278) and transforms him to

a gentle knight” (Hahn 81). In this version, similar to Dame Ragnelle in *The Wedding*, the monstrous Carl actually belongs to the Arthurian society. Therefore, his estrangement is a temporary disruption that is corrected by carrying out a specific performance of courtesy that is beneficial in terms of reinvigorating social relations. Still, the two versions of the Carl’s story offer a similar take on the representation of monstrosity from different angles: monstrosity is based primarily on consequentially harmful acts while chivalry is based on beneficial acts. The Carl’s reception to the court is a confirmation of this notion by the Arthurian circle. The consequential reconciliation indicates that performative compliance to chivalric norms enables the traversal from monstrous identity to chivalrous one.

Similar to Dame Ragnelle and the seventeenth-century version of the Carl, the Green Knight has a plastic body that allows him to transform through magic. He reveals himself to be a regional baron (2445) who shares an aristocratic culture. The fact that Gawain or the Arthurian court do not recognise Bertilak demonstrates that his dominion is outside Arthur’s jurisdiction but still his two personas as the Green Knight and the amicable host certainly are not “outsider[s] to the sophisticated world of the international court culture” (Thomas 99). In the end, Bertilak explains to Gawain that it is Morgan le Faye “Ho wayne me þis wonder your wyttez to reue” (2459). Similar to *The Wedding* and *Carl of Carlisle*, divergent corporality in *Sir Gawain* is utilised to confront the knights with a seemingly alien value system. Accordingly, the knights are “menaced by a potent, enigmatic Other who directly or indirectly interrogates their ideology, usually through some kind of test” (Wright 656). Gawain is put to test for his chivalric virtues. His ultimate failure prompts him to keep the green girdle as “a token of vntrawþe” (2509). The green girdle’s proclivity to different ways of interpretation will be analysed in the second section. However, suffice it here to suggest that re-appropriation of the meaning of the green girdle by different characters underlines the essential fluidity of cultural signs. This factor highlights the difficulty of maintaining a stable and fixed identity through embodied markers of performance.

As is mentioned above, physical alterity is further trivialised by the malleable aspects of these characters’ bodies. Hence, the corporal divergence of these characters is not enough to render them monstrous. In this context, a framework of consequential harm or merit through performance provides a fluid but better understanding of monstrous or chivalrous identity. Gawain affirms this at the end of *Sir Gawain*: “For mon may hyden his harme, bot vnhap ne may hit, / For þer hit onez is tached twynne wil hit neuer” (2511-12). Gawain realises that whatever the intentions, it is your actions that define your identity, and once a monstrous act is committed, it is almost impossible to undo it or reverse its consequences. Therefore, subscribing

to a set of moral values is important but it is more important to abide by these values. Accordingly, in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, difference in physical disposition is trivialised. Instead, subscribing to a code of ethics that looks after the welfare of the society in general irrespective of social standing or physical disposition is enforced.

3. 2. Traversals of the Fluid Borders in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*

In this section, the performative and fluid nature of monstrous and chivalrous identities will be demonstrated via the instances of encounters between the knights and their opponents in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding*. Monsters populate the conceptual and geographical borderlines of the humanly possible, intersecting the known world and the imaginary world. Monsters are largely border phenomena freely traversing both sides. The eventual infringement, however, facilitates interaction through which identities are tested and negotiated; material and immaterial signifiers are exchanged. In romances, the attributed qualities of the knights are tested through performative compliance to their assigned social roles during these transgressions which necessitate coming into contact and conglomeration with the monstrous other. Accordingly, the Arthurian court and the woodlands in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, which are perceived to be distinctive from one another, are, in fact, permeable. The spatial transgressions in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, underline the untenable nature of binaries. Accordingly, in the romances' respective liminal spaces, there is the inevitable entanglement of distinct identities. The apparently distinct identities of the knights are interlocked with those perceived as monstrous. The consequential fluidity of monstrosity and chivalry via performance is demonstrated through the knights' actions.

As stated above, monstrosity is intricately bound to the concept of moral action in terms of its excess, lack, or divergence that inflict undeserved harm. In *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, the morality is taken to be the chivalric virtues represented in the chivalric code that governs the life of the knights. Moreover, the presiding element that regulates the chivalric code is measure. As David Moses illustrates, “[t]he hallmark of knightliness is *measure*, inward restraint, imposed by individual reason, which results in a virtuous life” (34 emphasis original). In this regard, the principle of measure acts as a conceptual border that contains and constrains the agent from breaching these moral borders. However, encounters with the other in these romances always threaten the principle of measure.

In *Sir Gawain*, the Arthurian court and its ideals are enclosed within the safe space of their court. However, the borders between the ideal knighthood and the others are very fragile. This

state of fragility is invoked from the very beginning of *Sir Gawain* which resonates throughout the romance. For instance, the romance starts with the destruction of the walls of Troy and how the Greeks managed to infiltrate the city through the bulwarks which are “brittened and brent to brondez and askez” (2). The narrator is quick to state that these city walls are actually breached from the inside with the help of Aeneas, who “Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe” (4). Hence, the narrator illustrates the vulnerability of Troy despite its enclosed walls due to internal acts that render the walls permissible. In this regard, Aeneas performs a monstrous act because his treachery causes an explicit harm and destruction to his people. Moreover, the narrator’s employment of the “marked oxymoron [about Aeneas], highlighted by alliteration, obliges us at least to consider the rather baffling range of perspectives involved in treachery’s being characterized as ‘true,’ a problematic concept which anticipates the mixture of ‘trawþe’ and treachery which Gawain will discover in his own nature” (141). As the downfall of Troy by the treachery of Aeneas exemplifies, building borders against monstrosity does not stop its intrusion because the potential of monstrosity is always present in the normative self as well.

In this regard, the Green Knight’s visit to the Arthurian court also illustrates the permeability between the borders. The Green Knight clearly acts as an instrument of breach as his incursion challenges the Arthurian court and reveals its monstrous aspects. During the Christmas festivities in *Sir Gawain*, Arthurian knights gather around the great hall at Camelot, which, according to Ashton “represents a civilized, contained, masculine space” (102). Their jollity is underlined by their performances of “rych reuel” (40), and “court caroles” (42). However, their unbridled festive mood within this enclosed safe space is breached by the Green Knight who “hales in at þe halle dor” (136). His address to the court immediately questions the chivalric pride of these knights: “‘Wher is’, he sayd, / þe gouernour of þis gyng? Gladly I wolde / se þat segg in syȝt, and with hymself speke” (224-26). Then, he mocks the knights’ prowess and capabilities as he calls them “berdlez chylder” (280). The knights’ shocked silence to the intruder’s ongoing taunts is consolidated by the lack of response to the Green Knight’s invitation of the knights to a Christmas game that he describes as “a strok for an oþer” (287). In exchange, he claims to bestow the axe he brought as a gift after the game (283-95). The Green Knight’s peaceful intentions of coming for not a “fyȝt” but a “Chystemas gomen” (279, 283) are signified by the holly bob that he has in his other hand. According to Burrow, holly bob “is obviously associated with the Christmas feast and with the preservation of life through the dead season ... [holly bob] is a sign of friendly intentions or ‘peace’” (*Sir Gawain* 16). However, the Green Knight’s incursion does not produce a conventional chivalric response from the Arthurian court.

The knights' lack of response upon the Green Knight's first address to the court is understandable as the narrator implies that the knights wait for their lord to speak out of courtesy: "I deem hit not al for doute, / Bot sum for cortaysye – / Bot let hym [King Arthur] þat al schulde loute" (246-48). However, once the Green Knight's offer of a game that has potentially dangerous consequences for their king is revealed, the Arthurian knights' reticence contradicts the heroic culture that chivalric masculinity conventionally garners, especially for challenges, adventures, or games of prowess. As W. T. H. Jackson underlines the knights "should be at all times physically brave, ready to undertake even the most hazardous adventure at any odds if asked to do so by his liege lord, his lady, or any person too weak to defend himself – or more often, herself (88). In fact, prior to the Green Knight's arrival, Arthur refuses to eat before listening to an "auenturus þyng an vncouþe tale, / Of sum mayn meruayle, þat he myȝt trawe" (93-94). Now that a marvel intrudes upon the knights, however, the knights' silent passivity exposes major defects in their chivalric constitution. The narrator implies their timidity with the following description: "If he hem stowned vpon first, stiller were þanne / Alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hyȝ and þe loȝe" (301-02). However, the pentangle on the renowned shield of Gawain, which "appears to be defining the ideal of an all-purpose Christian knight" (Burlin 12), explicitly states that one of the five virtues of chivalry is "felaȝschyp" (652). Fellowship refers to the brotherly affection or friendship among the Arthurian knights. The poet's enumeration of it as a chivalric virtue reminds the reader of the supposed solidarity of the knights against the challenges that concern the Round Table. The lack of response to the Green Knight's Christmas game presents a crowd of knights in disunity and an apparent disregard for the welfare of their brethren.

The Green Knight's psychological warfare with his taunts and domineering presence seems to work on the knights. The knights' hesitation in such a situation is a sign of their wavering loyalty to their king as a liege, and their own prowess as knights. Normally, the knights are obligated to protect their liege when his life is in jeopardy, which is duly indicated by Gawain's speech when he rises for the challenge later on: "Bot for as much as ȝ ear myn em I am only to prayse, / No bounté bot your blod I in my bode knowe; / And syþen note is so nys þat noȝt hit yow falles" (356-58). Gawain's carefully structured humble speech underlines his life's worthlessness compared to Arthur. The Green Knight also cunningly sets the knights' loyalty to their liege against their own wellbeing, and their initial silence at least indicates the general favour for the latter for a brief moment. As Nikoleta Nemečková aptly observes, the virtue "of loyalty and the lack of it introduced at the beginning of the poem in the tale about the origins of Britain resurfaces and brings with it the question of whether the poet implies that Camelot is aiming towards the same destiny as the fallen" city of Troy (59). This is because

letting Arthur volunteer for a challenge without establishing the exact details is too dangerous for the welfare of the state. Therefore, the knights' consequential inaction has the potential of monstrosity because the absence of any volunteers threatens to harm the organisational structure of the feudal society as it puts the king in jeopardy and by extension the whole of the kingdom.

Furthermore, the knights' silence is in turn tied to the knights' lack of confidence in their prowess against the half-giant Green Knight. Prowess, or skilfulness in battles, is another chivalric quality that is often expected of the knights to maintain the established order and balance of power when the table is turned in the favour of the aggressor. On this aspect, Kaeuper underlines the importance of the virtue: "Knightly prowess must be brought to bear against a local tyrant, or against the inhabitants of a castle who practice an odious custom in place of the straightforward hospitality endlessly recounted and praised" (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 103). Therefore, the knights' reticence in taking up the challenge is a deficiency that is befittingly mocked by the Green Knight: "Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes, / ... Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table / Ouerwalt with a worde of on wyȝes speche," (311, 313-14). The Green Knight provocatively reprimands the knights by pointing out the incongruity between their "renoun" and the reality at hand. By deliberately emphasising their silence, he questions their loyalty to their king, professed virtues, and physical prowess to damage their chivalric identity.

Fully conscious of the implications of the Green Knight's challenge, Arthur is filled with "scham" (317) and "wroth" due to an apparent lack of response from his vassals. He comes forward as the contender but his prickled pride leads him to mistakenly perceive that the exchange game will be conducted with an axe: "Now hatz Arthure his axe, and þe halme grypez, / And sturnely sturez hit aboute, þat stryke with hit þoȝt" (330-31). Arthur's aggression is manifested by the swirling motion he makes with the axe as if to strike the Green Knight while he readies himself. The choice of the axe as the new addition to the game is accepted silently by the Green Knight who "Wyth sturne schere þer he stod he stroked his berde, / And wyth a countenance dryȝe he droȝ down his cote," (334-35). According to Robert Rouse, Arthur's performance of aggression with the axe "reveals the anxiety that lies at the heart of chivalric identity: that public reputation is all, and that this reputation is a fragile construction that relies on the continual performance of chivalric deeds" ("Historical Context" 20). However, in this case, the desire to maintain the chivalric reputation of the Arthurian court imperils another chivalric virtue, that is, candid hospitality to one that expresses his coming in peace. As Finlayson underlines, in courtly romances, the "arrival at a castle during the quest for adventure and the giving and receiving of hospitality are significant in the scope they give for the display

of courtoisie” (“Definitions” 56). Courtesy is a social grace that the knights need to recourse to when receiving strangers with respect and hospitality. In comparison to Arthur’s court, Bertilak’s court later in the romance could boast a finer hospitality because during the Green Knight’s reception, Arthur “is almost rude and certainly high-handed, since the unarmed Green Knight has said nothing about fighting and, in fact, carries the holly branches of peace” (ll. 206, 265). On the other hand, Gawain, armed to the teeth, is accepted as a guest and the modest court is delighted to have him (ll. 916-19)” (Moorman 167). Of course, the courteous treatment of Gawain is revealed to be a delicately planned strategy by the Bertilak household so as to test Gawain’s loyalty to his chivalric principles. This prospect once again sheds light on the fact that ritualised performances have the tendency of hiding the true feelings of the agent because during social interactions, “if people are to appear convincing in these roles, they [only] need to observe the corporeal rules which govern particular encounters” (Shilling 73). As indicated in the previous section, hospitality as a codified rule also contains within itself the possibility of dishonesty and misdirection for an ulterior motive.

The dichotomy between dishonesty disguised in politeness and coarse honesty is the dominating idea during the Arthurian knights’ encounter with the Green Knight. Indeed, the Green Knight’s entrance is not courteous, and he certainly lacks decorous speech. Still, he frankly expresses his first impression of the court and states that his visit is actually for a Christmas game (283) that Arthur inadvertently wishes for (90-99). On the other hand, despite the initial courteous welcome (251-55), the court is quick to violate the rules of hospitality. They reciprocate the Green Knight’s invitation for a game in a disproportionate manner: the game does not in fact require an axe; the terms do not necessitate that the blow must be deadly. Thus, Gawain’s subsequent “choice reflects his inherent inclination to opt for violence and death. The following scene in which the court members kick the Green Knight’s severed head like a ball too hints at the court’s familiarity with violence and gruesome sights” (Nemečková 54). The narrator depicts this gruesome scene in an indirect manner as if to tone down the brutality of the spectacle: “Þat fele hit foyned with her fete, þere hit forth roled” (428). Therefore, the Green Knight’s overall reception by the Arthurian court blurs the boundaries between the knight’s chivalry and the outsider’s monstrosity because the execution of excessive and unnecessary violence that threatens the physical integrity of an (un)welcome guest is monstrous.

It is also noteworthy that Gawain enters the bargain just after the terms and the choice of weapon are determined. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain Gawain’s real motives in his humble speech in which he claims, “I am the wakkest, I wot, and of wyt feeblest” (354). It is indeed as much a very humble and decorous speech as it is clever. Thus, according to the

structure of the speech, if Gawain follows through with the quest, “then the Round Table stands to gain the greatest possible honour ... and the least dishonour if he fails” (Burrow, “Honour and Shame” 122). Moreover, Gawain insists on the public declaration of the “forwards” (378) of the “couenaunt” (393) set by the Green Knight, which affirms that Gawain will receive his blow from the Green Knight alone (378-97). Thus, Gawain makes sure to prevent any possible beneficiaries of the Green Knight to see through the covenant in his place since the public citational performance of the conditions has a binding effect as it is sworn by their “traweþe” (394). This point is also concurred by Derek Pearsall who stresses that Gawain may “undercut the famously courteous speech in which he takes upon himself the challenge in place of Arthur, and rather make it seem like a piece of hypocritical flattery and opportunism” (252). For this reason, his humble speech and generous offer to replace his uncle may derive from the implicit knowledge that if he manages to kill the Green Knight with a single blow, there will not be another round to receive one. This outcome is also teased by the Green Knight: “And if I spende no speche, þenne spedez þou þe better, / For þou may leng in þy londe and layt no fyrre – bot slokes!” (410-11).

Believing that all odds are in his favour, Gawain does not restrain himself and harms an armless challenger whose only transgression is to taunt the Arthurian court. By decapitating the Green Knight, Gawain commits a monstrous act but the irony is that the Green Knight does not die and instead picks up his severed head and charges Gawain to find him to receive “Such a dunt as þou hatz dalt – disserued þou habbez” (452). Despite the Green Knight’s supernatural disposition, Gawain does not take into consideration that there could be more that the Green Knight might have kept to himself in their agreement. This is also foul play on the Green Knight’s part but ultimately Gawain’s aggression seals his own fate. As Cohen illustrates, the knight’s “beheading of the giant and the public display of the gory trophy” is a conventional romance narrative trope (*Of Giants* 72). The Green Knight’s picking up his own head in a similar manner is a clever subversion of this trope. It also indicates the Green Knight’s implicit moral victory against the knights. Now, as the Green Knight’s proclamation suggests, if Gawain had given him a mild tap on the neck, he would get a similar one but now that he severed the Green Knight’s head, he should expect nothing less next year. Moreover, with the speech Gawain has previously given, he binds not only his “traweþe” but the truthfulness of the whole Round Table to fulfil the bargain. Thus, his failure becomes all the more dramatic and monstrous.

Therefore, monstrosity is closely related to the truth of chivalry since violation of truth harms the integrity of chivalry, transforming it into a disordered ideology without any framing

principle to hold on to. Indeed, the word “truth” is frequently invoked in *Sir Gawain*. Two exchange games are centred around it as they test Gawain’s resolve to carry out the terms that are expected of him. Moreover, the endless knot of the pentangle as a whole on Gawain’s shield is referred to as a “bytoknyng of trawþe” (626). The pentangle as a whole is significant in terms of its uninterrupted pattern that signifies the interrelatedness of each chivalric virtue with one another. Accordingly, truth is taken to be the presiding virtue that holds chivalry together. Failure of truth signifies a harm to this uninterrupted pattern, hence the collapse of chivalry altogether. According to the *OED*, the oldest meaning of the word is “[t]he character of being, or disposition to be, true to a person, principle, cause, etc.; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, constancy, steadfast allegiance” (“truth,” def. 1a). J. A. Burrow also puts forward extensive research concerning the possible denotations of the word in the fourteenth century that contributes to the overall themes of the romance. For him, the first of the three related meanings that sprang up in the fourteenth century refers to faith “which [was] regarded as a kind of loyalty or fidelity to God” (qtd. in Burrow, *Sir Gawain* 43); the second one relates to the “disposition to speak or act truly or without deceit” (qtd. in Burrow, *Sir Gawain* 43); the third meaning is a wider sense of the second one: “honesty, uprightness, righteousness, virtue, integrity” (qtd. in Burrow, *Sir Gawain* 43). Therefore, the “trawþe” in the romance does not only refer to being loyal to people or promises, but also having faith in God, not being deceitful, and being virtuous.

From this perspective, Gawain enters into a verbal bond that is perceived as *fait accompli* since the nature of a covenant indicates a “promise to do something in the future, generally something noble or daring” (Murphy 106). As can be understood from the covenants in *Sir Gawain*, the verbal bond is regarded as a principle for regulating the social relations between the involved parties. In the romance world of *Sir Gawain*, “kept promises tend to order human existence. . . . they order or control the chaos of unchecked impulse” (Bachman 498). Hence, violation of the verbal bond as a social agreement is a violation of the essence of humanity and social relations, thereby succumbing the society into arbitrariness and instability where monstrosity develops. Knights, who are the symbolic guardians of chivalric values, are especially required to follow through such covenants as they put their honour on the line. Truth and its violation also play an important role in the romances of *The Wedding* and *Carl of Carlisle*. For example, Arthur’s violation of his oath to Sir Gromer Somer Joure in *The Wedding* in the light of “trawþe” reveals a fine line between monstrosity and chivalry. The act is a clear indication of how easy it is to commit monstrous actions by simply neglecting chivalric values as argued in detail below.

Monstrosity is also a matter of spatial breaching of the boundaries performed by the Arthurian knights. In *Sir Gawain, Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, woodlands play important roles in terms of providing the necessary contact points for knights and their enemies to encounter each other. In this regard, Inglewood, which is an uncharted woodland “located in the middle of the Anglo-Scottish marches” (Jansen 26), is one of the settings for *The Wedding* and *Carl of Carlisle*. Similarly, Gawain departs from Camelot and “progresses northward into Wales, then on into the wicked wilderness of Wirral” (Randall 487) in *Sir Gawain*. Unknown geographies like woodlands and wildernesses in these romances “imply an absence of culture within them, seeming almost to invite the conqueror’s apparently civilizing impulse” (Ingham 118). Accordingly, the Arthurian knights’ hunting expeditions or traversals around these uncharted territories such as Inglewood and Wirral are demonstrations of power. Moreover, hunting in these places reflects the desire for domination since hunting as a royal sport can be taken as the importation of royal authority to these woodlands. As Azime Pekşen Yakar illustrates, woodlands and “forests are recurrent spaces in Arthurian romances, and they are ideologically constructed spaces” (37). They figure as commonplace sites for the contestation of power between the knights and their enemies. Traditionally seen as hostile, uncultivated, open-wilderness that renders the knights vulnerable to attacks, woodlands are frequently understood as dangerous spaces diametrically opposed to the enclosed and safe space of the court.²³ In this regard, Naomi Reed Kline demonstrates the perception of nature in general: “In the Middle Ages, nature was feared; the uncontrollable wilderness or barren loomed frightening against the security of the enclosed” (182).

Likewise, the woodlands in *Sir Gawain, Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, at first seem to reinforce this idea of ominousness that emanates from their archetypal primitivity. Accordingly, in *The Wedding*, the unarmed Arthur is ambushed by Sir Gromer in Inglewood and is threatened to be killed: “Thou [Arthur] hast me done wrong many a yere / And woefully I shall quytte the here;” (54-55). In *Carl of Carlisle*, Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin are lost because of the engulfing mist in the same woodland and decide to stay at the castle of a reputedly monstrous carl in the

²³ In this study, the term woodland is used instead of forest to refer to densely wooded areas that are not under the king’s control. In medieval England, there is a slight but important difference between woodlands and forests. Especially after the Norman invasion, kings introduced forest laws that aimed at “protecting the deer for hunting, and they designated as royal forests, subject to forest law, areas suited for this purpose” (Birrell 78). These royal forests included not only trees but also “other types of rural spaces ... [such as] whole villages, manors, swamps, meadows, and arable fields” (Sandidge 391). There is an amount of control of the king and feudal laws in forest which is defined as a “territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest, chase and warren, to rest and abide there in the safe protection of the King, for his delight and pleasure” (Griffin 453). On the other hand, woodlands are places that are not chartered by the king, hence are not subject to any form of regulation or rules. Inglewood is also woodland that “is uncharted” (Robson 91) so that the use of woodland is more appropriate.

woodland instead of spending the night out in the open (151). In *Sir Gawain*, Gawain's quest leads him to the woodlands of Wirral where he encounters and battles various beasts and wildlings aiming to harm him:

Sumwhyle wyth wormez he werrez, and with wolues als,
Sumwhyle wyth wodwos, þat woned in þe knarrez,
Boþe with bullez and berez, and borez oþerquyle,
And etaynez, þat hym aneledede of þe heʒe felle. (720-23)

However, a closer look at the encounters in the woodlands indicates that the woodlands are not places of clearly defined identities, but interstitial spaces where the identities are fluid, multiple, and entangled with one another. They are actually composite sites in which, as Robert Pogue Harrison aptly observes,

the law of identity and the principle of noncontradiction go astray ... and how certain conventional distinctions collapse when the scene shifts from the ordinary world to the forests outside its domain. The profane suddenly becomes sacred. The outlaw becomes the guardian of higher justice. A virtuous knight turns into a wild man. ... Or the law of gender is confused. Be it religious, political, psychological, or even logical, the forests, it seems, unsettle its stability. (63)

Therefore, the woodland is not in opposition to the court but stands in apposition retaining the locus of freedom for potential multiplicity, subversion, and inversion. It is not a place where the knight encounters acts of monstrosity from those physically or morally deformed, but sometimes the roles may shift dramatically and the knight may find himself to be monstrous via his performance. Accordingly, the knights' encounters with their adversaries in the woodlands demonstrate this fluidity.

In this context, *The Wedding* begins in Inglewood with Sir Gromer's ambush of Arthur because he seeks personal revenge on him. As Lee Ramsey observes, Sir Gromer is at first presented as "the traditional monstrous churl by his great strength and by his rude address to King Arthur" (205). However, as it is quickly revealed during his exchange with Arthur, Sir Gromer is not the only one whose behaviour is monstrous. Sir Gromer declares himself to be actually a disenfranchised knight whose lands have been unfairly confiscated and conferred upon Gawain by Arthur (55-60). The eventual restitution of Sir Gromer's lands at the end of the romance (814), Arthur's evasion of addressing Sir Gromer's accusations, and Sir Gromer's resolve to kill Arthur for the professed error prove that the allegation is most probably true. Warren Brown conducts extensive research on the unjust seizure of properties and lands by the church, landowners, or the regional lords from each other during the Middle Ages and demonstrates the

repercussions of such acts in various literary pieces including the romance (Introduction 1-29). Accordingly, from a legal perspective, confiscation of a land by a king is an act that violates the inheritance rights of an individual. Arthur could not “distribute estates and titles at his whim to whomever he wished Beginning in the twelfth century *ius commune* [common law] protected an individual’s rights to hold property so that a king could not expropriate property arbitrarily” (Forste-Grupp 109). Therefore, Arthur’s performance is monstrous in that it imposes devastating economic harm to Sir Gromer by taking away his identity, rights, properties, and status within the community without a justifiable reason. As a result, Sir Gromer becomes an outcast, which is why he also seeks refuge and redefinition of his identity in the fluid space of the unchartered woodlands of Inglewood.

Moreover, the woodland is probably the only possible way for Sir Gromer to contact Arthur without any obstructions or diplomatic complicity. As indicated above, Inglewood with its potential for liberty is close to Bhabha’s definition of an in-between space that “entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Introduction 5). It is this interstitial space that enables Sir Gromer to carry out his plan to kill Arthur. It is also in this space that the monstrous tendencies of Arthur are suggested during his conversation with Sir Gromer. In this regard, Arthur expects his adversary to abide by the rules of chivalry as a former knight: “Shame thou shalt have to sle me in veneré, / Thou armyd and I clothyd butt in grene, perdé” (82-83). Accordingly, Arthur trusts Sir Gromer’s sensibility to respect the custom of sparing an unarmed knight that asks mercy. As expected, Sir Gromer offers an alternative solution to Arthur’s predicament; he releases Arthur on condition that he “kepe alle thing in close” (111) and within one year, he asks him to bring the information concerning “whate wemen love best in feld and town” (90).

Although Arthur ensures to keep the covenant in private, he immediately discloses his plight to Gawain (152-72). It is clear that when the chivalric rules do not work for his advantage, Arthur does not see any harm in violating them. However, verbal bonds figure as important indicators of moral character in terms of adherence to the virtue of truth. As Collen Donnelly observes, the romance repeatedly features “performative speech acts (promises and warnings) which, by their very utterance, accomplish the very act to which they refer” (330). It is through such performative acts and their completion or dismissal that a character performs or avoids monstrosity. In this regard, other than the contract between Arthur and Sir Gromer, there are two more covenants: Sir Gawain promises to help Arthur search for the right answer (186-88); Dame Ragnelle also promises to reveal the answer of what women want if “[t]hou [Arthur] must graunt me a knight to wed: / His name is Sir Gawen. / And such covaunant I wolle make the,”

(280-82). During their exchange with Arthur, she describes herself as a woman “[t]hat never yet begyld man” (320) which demonstrates the value she places on the virtue of being truthful. Her truthfulness is immediately proven as Ragnelle reveals the answer that women want sovereignty: “desyren of men above alle maner thyng / To have the sovereynté, withoute lesyng” (422-23). Sir Gawain has also promised to marry Dame Ragnelle even if there is a slim chance that her answer is true. Subsequently, he follows through his promise after Ragnelle’s answer proves to be true. Thus, the promise is used to prove Gawain’s unwavering loyalty to Arthur: “‘I shalle wed her and wed her again, / Thowghe she were a fend; / ... Or ells were nott I your frende” (343-44, 346).

Therefore, out of the four characters, Arthur is the only one that violates the conditions of verbal bonds for his personal benefit. Arthur justifies himself to Gawain on the grounds that: “He wold have slayn me ther withoute mercy - / And that me was fulle lothe” (165-66). His desperate attempt to evade death and buy more time resembles the same defect Gawain has in his decision to accept the green girdle from the lady in *Sir Gawain* because the Green Knight similarly comments on Gawain’s love of life after it is his turn to strike: “Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame” (2368). Hence, Arthur’s resort to trickery in *The Wedding* is similar to Gawain’s blemish of his truth and piety by taking “refuge in superstition and a false confession” (Hopkins, *Sinful Knights* 206) in *Sir Gawain*, as discussed below. For this reason, Arthur’s violation of his verbal bond and his confession to Gawain in *The Wedding* cannot be solely taken as a minor error that facilitates the acquisition of the traditional quest trope that moves plot of *The Wedding* forward. This is because despite Gawain’s enthusiasm to help, Gawain effectively does not provide much assistance to Arthur’s discovery of the answer. During their search for the right answer to no avail (184-225), it is Arthur in Inglewood who comes across with Dame Ragnelle. It is also Arthur who accedes to Dame Ragnelle’s proposal to marry Gawain in exchange for the answer he seeks without obtaining Gawain’s prior consent, which is a further indication of Arthur’s selfish nature: “‘Alas!’ he [Arthur] sayd; ‘Nowe woo is me / That I shold cause Gawen to wed the, / For he wol be lothe to saye naye” (303-05). Moreover, Arthur is also aware of the moral gravity of violating a verbal bond as he declares to Gawain: “Alas! My worshypp [honour] therfor is nowe gone” (162). Due to these enumerated reasons, Arthur’s violation does not serve any purpose other than to underline his dubious character.²⁴ Among these interactions, however, Inglewood as a site functions as the instigating place of

²⁴ For Margaret Robson, the Northern romances are highly political pieces that reflect national tensions which lead to a favorable presentation of Gawain because of his Scottishness while Arthur is “presented as inadequate” and “in every sense ... craven” (87-88). See also McClune 125. On Gawain’s Scottishness see, Cory J. Rushton Mapstone 109-19; Martin B. Schictman 234-47.

Arthur's plight but also contains the solution to their problem. Hence, Inglewood as an in-between ambiguous space contains in itself the two potentialities of merit and harm.

Similarly, Inglewood is central to the romance of *Carl of Carlisle* as it subverts the preconceptions of monstrosity by displaying the monstrous performances of the Arthurian knights. The fluidity of monstrous and chivalrous performances is demonstrated through three tests that the Carl gives to Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin during their stay with him in Inglewood. Accordingly, the romance opens with a description of Arthur and his party killing "Fife hundred der" (113) during a hunting excursion in Inglewood. Even for the standards of exaggeration often found in the romances, killing "so many deer, both male and female, is definitely contrary to traditional hunting practices", so it becomes a monstrous act that demonstrates "a hostile incursion not only on the rights of local landowners but also against the [deer] population in general" (Pollack 16). Hence, the hunting excursion of the Arthurian court marks their hostile attitude, unrestraint violence, and selfishness and renders them monstrous.

The performances of the knights during the tests prepared by the Carl are of similar kind, too. Inglewood is home to the reputedly monstrous Carl whose castle is fashioned in the likeness of an aristocratic court and is "A lyttyll her ner honde" (141). Lost in Inglewood and unable to find their way back, Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin decide to take refuge in Carl's castle for the night. However, Baldwin states that the Carl famously beats his guests until they are dead (148-50). It is through the Carl that Inglewood as a woodland presents an immediate danger and threat to the knights. Yet, the rest of the romance proves that Carl is a virtuous man who does not like false appearances but instead values goodwill and honesty which he terms "carllus corttessy" (278). The Carl's formulation of an altruistic moral code favours brutal honesty instead of slyness disguised as polite manners. In this respect, two opposing aspects of the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain* can be recalled in *Carl of Carlisle*: The Carl's overall straightforward attitude is reminiscent of the Green Knight's honest but vulgar manners in the Arthurian court; Kay's rejected suggestion for a forceful entry into the Carl's castle resembles the Green Knight's forceful entry to the Arthurian court.

Despite the rejection of Kay's idea, he still retains hostility as he threatens the porter to use the "kyngus keyis" (203) which is "a metaphorical expression for forcing the door open with weapons" (Pollack 17). The threat of a forceful entry to a house where you expect safe lodging for the night is a clear violation of chivalric courtesy. Moreover, the act would be monstrous because invasion in any form necessitates the performer's enforced insertion of what is deliberately wanted outside, thereby disrupting the boundaries between what is permissible and impermissible. Kay's suggestion of forceful entry based on royal authority hints at Kay's

misperception of Inglewood as part of Arthur's area of jurisdiction which brings a sense of entitlement that even justifies the use of violence to break into the castle:

And yeyf he be never so stoute,
 We woll hym bette all abowt
 And make his beggyng bar.
 Suche as he brewythe, seche schall he drenke;
 He schall be bette that he schall stynke,
 And agenst his wyll be thar.' (157-62)

Clearly, Kay is involved, even if only in theory, in monstrous behaviour. It is monstrous of him to contemplate unnecessary and undeserved violence on the King's subjects, and use royal authority for personal profit. Of course, Kay's hostility is eventually counterbalanced by Gawain's sensibility but the suggestion and the following reactions "set up contrasts between Baldwin's apprehensive uncertainty, Kay's haughty sense of the rights of lordship, and Gawain's unwavering courtesy" (Hahn 81). These characteristics surface and help develop a sense of performative monstrosity in the tests that the Carl has prepared for the knights. The Carl's three tests during the trio's stay at the castle are about the appropriate choice the knights should make. Their choices either bring personal profit or communal harm and impact borders in terms of inclusion and exclusion, submission, and defiance.

The first test of the Carl shows how fluid monstrous and chivalrous identities can be through choices that are meritorious or harmful in nature. It involves the test of charity. After the initial offering of drinks, the knights go out to check on their horses one by one. Baldwin's response is monstrous as he notices right beside his horse, "A lyttyll folle stod hem bye" (302) and decides to put the foal away. Baldwin justifies his decision by stating that "Thow schalt not be fello wytt my palfray / Whyll I am beschope in londe" (305-06). Removal of the foal solely because it does not deserve to stay beside Baldwin's horse is a clear sign of vanity. The act demonstrates Baldwin's undeserved contempt and disregard for the Carl's possessions. Baldwin's explanation that he is a bishop makes matters even worse since vanity is one of the worst sins for the people in general. Moreover, Baldwin does not even understand the vain nature of his actions and he openly tells the Carl that he is the one that has removed the foal from its place (309). In response, the Carl declares that "Therfor a bofett thou schalt have," (310). Despite Baldwin's objections on the grounds that he is "a Clarke of ordors hyghe" (313), he cannot escape from a buffet on the head that knocks him unconscious (316-18). Kay also proves to be monstrous in his attitude to the foal. He, too, proceeds to isolate the foal: "Out att the dor he drof hym out / And on the backe yafe hym a clout" (322-23). Immediately, the Carl emerges and calls Kay "Evyll-taught" (328), and smacks him down. The Carl's description of the knights as "Evyll-

taught” (328) highlights the constructed nature of evil. Clearly, the monstrosity of Baldwin and Kay is acquired and performative. The epithet also “implies his [the Carl’s] frustrations with Arthur as their apparent ‘teacher’” (Taylor 189).

The monstrosity performed by Baldwin and Kay constitutes in the fact that they clearly have high opinions of themselves and show particular disregard for anyone and anything that they think is beneath their social status. As Lindsay argues, “using chivalry to build beneficial relationships, Kay and Baldwin assume that their noble status excuses them from interacting harmoniously with those outside the noble world. They seem to view themselves as innately chivalrous but under no obligation to exercise that chivalry beyond noble circles” (410). On the other hand, Gawain’s attitude towards the foal is different from his fellow knights. Gawain adopts a protective and helpful approach when he notices the foal. Realising that “the foll had stond in rayne” (346) he brings it into the stable and uses “his manttelle of grene” (348) to cover it. His performance does not prioritise anyone or anything at the expense of others but assumes an inclusive approach that benefits everyone. At this moment, the Carl’s familiarity with traditional courteous behaviour is clear as he secretly watches Gawain and “thankyd hym full curteslye” (353) for his considerate performance.

Baldwin and Kay’s monstrous behaviours are persistent at the feast later on. Baldwin considers himself to be the most honourable guest and takes the first seat without any invitation, and Kay “sett on the tother syde / Agenst the Carllus wife so full of pryde” (362). Upon seating himself beside the lady of the house, Kay even lusts after her and bewails that “‘Alas,’ thought Key, ‘thou Lady fre, / That thou schuldyst this ipereschde be / Wytte seche a foulle wegtht!’” (373-75). Kay’s discreet comment is a manifestation of his unrestrained lechery and rampant discourtesy. Annoyed by Kay’s discourtesy, the Carl’s reprimands him: “‘Sytt styll, ... and eete thy mette / Thow thinkost mor then thou darst speke,’” (376-77). As Taylor argues, “the Carl equates them [Kay and Baldwin] with beasts ... much as he told his whelps shortly before to ‘Ly style, hard yn’ (241)” (197). The two knights’ indulgence in their animalistic urges is a clear indicator of their monstrosity which is contrasted with Gawain’s good manners as he waits in the hall until receiving an invitation to the table (380-81).

The Carl’s second test reveals the relational nature of monstrosity. It involves a test of obedience to the host. Accordingly, the Carl asks Gawain to throw a spear at him: “take a sper in thy honde / And at the bottredor goo take thy passe / And hit me evyn in the face;” (384-86). The Carl’s test is certainly unusual and Gawain’s compliance with the request may seem monstrous because of the immediate harm the performance poses to the Carl. Moreover, the Carl’s suggestion is reminiscent of the Green Knight’s proposal for an exchange of blows in *Sir*

Gawain. In that instance, Gawain's compliance is treated as monstrous because of its immediate harm. However, in this case, Gawain is not the host who should take the initiative to prevent the occasion to be unpleasant but is just a guest who should trust his host's sensibility and do as his host asks. Gawain's perceptiveness is aptly commended by Wright who states that "Gawain's excellence consists ... in his Odyssean ethical relativism, his ability to recognize and adopt whatever code of conduct best suits the circumstances" (657). Gawain is distinguished from Baldwin and Kay because he understands that they are confronted with an alien and strange code of conduct that they need to adapt performatively. On the other hand, Baldwin and Kay respond with traditional rigidity that incapacitates them from establishing harmonious relationships. Accordingly, when Gawain hurls the spear, the Carl calmly bows down "his hede, that syre, / Tyll he hade geve his dentte" (395-96) and thanks Gawain for abiding by his request (401). Hence, Gawain avoids committing monstrosity in the second test, too. Still, the narrator is careful to suggest the eagerness Gawain displays, "Syr Gawenn was a glade mann wytt that" (391); and the ferocity of his hurl: "He yafe the ston wall seche a rappe / That the goode sper all tobrake" (397-98). Unlike his friends, however, Gawain channels the wildness within to a safer outlet of throwing the spear that does not harm anyone.

The third test is, too, about obedience to the host. It tests Gawain's virtue of restraint. It is designed as a classical bedroom temptation scene that can also be found in *Sir Gawain*. However, the test is designed more crudely and it becomes a vulgar parody of the one present in *Sir Gawain*. The Carl is in complete control of the process and seems to get a voyeuristic delight (455-68). Accordingly, Sir Gawain is "unarmyde" (452) and is asked to "take my [the Carl's] wife in thi armus tweyne / And kys her in my syghte" (455-56). Previously, Gawain has successfully displayed restraint on matters of courtesy, but now "the passions of the flesh ... are at stake" and he fails miserably "as he seems to have succumbed to his fleshly desires both in his adoring/lustful gaze at the Carl's wife and subsequent unbridled enthusiasm for the awkward test of getting into bed with her" (Radulescu 67). Gawain readily accepts the request: "'Syr, thi byddyng schall be doune, / Sertaynly in dede, / Kyll or sley, or laye adoune'" (458-60). He fulfils the third test by obeying the Carl's request again but he could not restrain his lust for sexual intercourse with the Carl's wife. The Carl has to intervene by adopting the usual manner he assumes while addressing his animals: "When Gawen wolde have doun the prevey far, / Then seyde the Carle, 'Whoo ther! / That game I the forbade'" (466-68). In this instance, Gawain is also reduced to the status of the Carl's animals because of his temporary lapse into his animalistic urges. His lust threatens to harm the good name of the Carl's wife, which would be monstrous if not for the Carl's intrusion. Still, the Carl appreciates Gawain's efforts and in consolation gives his blessing to visit his daughter's room, "And play togedor all this nyght"

(486). For Taylor, this is “a cannily Arthurian move” on the Carl’s side because [h]aving baited the knight with sex through his wife, the Carl now hopes Gawain will proffer a new line of carls ripened with the blood of both the borderlands and Arthur’s centralized regime” (198). The Carl’s eventual entry into the Arthurian society demonstrates the validity of his scheme. Moreover, his entry also underlines the insignificance of divergent disposition in terms of being accepted into the Arthurian court.

As is clear by now, choices that result in harm or benefit create ethical borders of exclusion and inclusion, obedience and disobedience, vanity and charity, restraint and unrestraint, and permissibility and impermissibility. The tests in *Carl of Carlisle* are about the relative fluidity of these borders and how easy it is for the knights to commit monstrous acts. Still, tension is naturally generated by the pressure of the two opposing forces struggling for dominance at these conceptual and geographical borders. Therefore, encounters at these borders have the potential to go awry and lead to performances that are monstrous, wrong, and out of the ordinary because of the borders’ status as “‘in between,’ gaps or middle places symbolizing exchange and encounter, facilitating translation and mutation” (Uebel, “Unthinking the Monster” 265). As the castle of the Carl and his household suggest, borders are fluid spaces that function as contact points for the multiplicity of different identities and cultures. The resultant encounters produce conflicts because differences play important roles during these encounters which are unavoidably carried over to performative interactions as evident in the tests in *Carl of Carlisle*.

Bertilak’s castle in *Sir Gawain* also stands at one of these in-between spaces of contact points. The castle literally is part of the peripheral wilderness in the North as it suddenly appears out of nowhere among the thick branches: “Er he watz war in þe wod of a won in a mote, / Abof a lounde, on a lawe, loken vnder boʒez /... A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyʒt aʒte” (764-65, 767). The castle functions as a place that contains a mixture and subversion of different cultures in itself. As Bhabha argues, at these intersections of culture “meanings and values are (mis)read or signs are misappropriated” (50). This is also what Gawain experiences during his visit to the Bertilak’s castle in *Sir Gawain*. Hence, Gawain has to try and re-appropriate his conduct to get around during his stay. At the end, however, he realises how inflexible the chivalric code is constructed, and how he is doomed to fail because of this.

Bertilak’s castle at first strikes the reader as a familiar court that offers temporary relief from the harsh weather conditions and helps Gawain temporarily keep his mind from his impending doom. As Dieter Mehl asserts, the castle of Bertilak “corresponds to the merry atmosphere at Arthur’s court, and both stand in pointed contrast to the lonely winter landscape Gawain has to pass through” (139). Indeed, Bertilak’s court offers a cosy atmosphere, leisure, and merry-

making that recall the festivities in the Arthurian court but a closer inspection discloses the differences between the Arthurian court and the regional court of Bertilak. Unlike the Arthurian court which “suggest[s] the constructedness of the English metropolitan court” (R. Knight 265), Bertilak’s castle and the residents are hardly separate from nature. The castle is surrounded by a thick forest in which Bertilak enjoys hunting. Still, the narrator describes “Bertilak as caring for his land and monitoring the wildlife; ... contrasted with Arthur’s indoor-focused court” (Martinez 114). This is evident from the narrator’s comment that killing a male deer in the close season is considered a crime (1156-57). Hence, the Bertilak’s court offers an atmosphere of multiplicity and fluidity of identity that balances the codified courtly manners and a genuine love of nature.

Furthermore, the Arthurian court is represented as celebrating “an ethos and mode of existence which are *exclusive*, permanent, and immutable. The behaviour of its members is entirely appropriate to these festivities and is of a typical, aristocratic, traditional and equally intransitory quality” (Bergner 405). The court is made up entirely of only knights and ladies. The unchanging nature of the court is suggested by the portrayals of its members who are described in eternal “glaum ande gle” (46) and who spend their lives “With all þe mete and þe mirþe þat men couþe avyse” (50). On the other hand, the Bertilak household is portrayed as containing bifurcated social groups existing in coterminous heterogeneity such as landlords, priests, gatekeepers, servants, and hunters (785-925). The peaceful coexistence of a multiplicity of identities suggests the desired harmony between different estates. Still, odd figures such as the mysterious old lady inheres that the regional court has more than meets the eye and it “is a place of *unexpressed truths*, of intentionally disguised events and realities” (Bergner 411). Accordingly, the generous hospitality, the exchange of gifts, and Lady Bertilak’s advances are all revealed to be contrived by Morgan le Faye who “wonder your wyttez to reue, / For to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dyze” (2459-60). Furthermore, the identity revelations of Bertilak/Green Knight (2445) and Morgan le Faye (2446) at the end reinforce the ambiguity present in Bertilak’s court which harbours a sense of eeriness, threat, and danger under the welcoming and hospitable façade. Ad Putter offers a notable take on the dynamics between the host and the guest, hospitality, and hostility by diving into the etymologies of these words: “The Latin word *hospes*, meaning both ‘guest and host’ and ‘stranger’, a word derived through **hosti-pes* from the word *hostis* (enemy), suggests the age-old uncertainties and the dramatic potential inherent in the guest-host relationship” (*Sir Gawain* 84, emphasis original). Hence, the dichotomy between candid hospitality and courteous dishonesty is employed in the two courts – Arthurian and regional – of *Sir Gawain*. The incongruity between appearance and reality presents Bertilak’s court as a place of multiplicity, ambivalence, and fluidity against the

professed homogeneity of the Arthurian court. For this reason, Bertilak's court is more like an inversion of the Arthurian court situated in this interstitial space on the Northern borders. Hence, the Bertilak's court becomes a space in which the traditional roles are subverted, binaries undermined, dualities smoothed out. Accordingly, the spatial and conceptual fluidity of the Bertilak's court brings the Arthurian chivalric code as a cultural construct under scrutiny by contrasting different perceptions of chivalry based on piety/truth and courtly love.

Gawain's and, by extension, the Arthurian courts' chivalric ideals are represented via the pentangle on Gawain's shield which is touched upon in detail by the narrator during Gawain's arming scene before he departs from the Arthurian court (566-666). The narrator takes particular care to articulate all of the details of the shield and their symbolic meanings. The pentangle on the shield is "depaynt of pure golde hwez" (620) on a red field (619). For Burrow, gold is "of biblical origin, [and] signifies the righteous man ... [and figures] as a mark of excellence, both to the exterior and to the interior man" (*Sir Gawain* 40). Correspondingly, the narrator describes Gawain "as golde pured, / voided of vche vylany, with vertuez ennoured / in more" (633-35). The famous star shape "haldez fyue poyntez / And vche lyne vmbelappez and loukez in oþer" (627-28) form an "endeles knot" (630). The unbroken line that forms the figure is the star sign of "Salamon" (625) which is a "bytoknyng of trawþe" (626). Hence, truth as a virtue in all its suggested meanings constitutes the essence of chivalry that hold the chivalric virtues together. The pentangle is made up of five sets of fives which are "fyue wyttez" (640), "fyue fyngrs" (641), "fyue woundez" (642), "fyue joyez" (646) and five virtues of chivalry, namely, "fraunchyse" (651), "felaʒschyp" (651), "clannes" (652), "cortaysye" (652) and "pité" (653). As demonstrated by Andrea Hopkins, the first four of the five sets of fives are set in the context of Christian doctrines:

Medieval readers would have been familiar with the discourses in many vernacular penitential handbooks on how the penitent should prepare himself for confession by examining the ways in which he has sinned. Typically, he would begin by asking himself if he had committed any of the seven deadly sins; then he should discover whether he has sinned in any of his five senses, which covers a whole range of offences. Gawain, we are informed, does not sin in any of these ways. The fact that he has never failed in his five fingers may mean that his hands have never led him into sin; or it may mean that he was good at fighting. The five wounds of Christ are a familiar subject of devotional literature: here Gawain has total faith in the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice for his salvation; and he derives all his fortitude from contemplation of the Five Joys of Mary. (*Sinful Knights* 212).

Therefore, concepts and rituals borrowed from devotional literature imply the devoutness of Gawain. Apart from these four sets of fives, Gawain's piety and chastity are particularly reinforced by his personal commitment to Mary, which leads him to carry an image of her on the inside of his shield (649). As it stands, the narrator's description of Arthurian chivalry "is one of optimistic idealism" and Gawain is the "flawless reflector of the ideals of Camelot" (Burrow, *Sir Gawain* 50). The shield's unadorned elegance, however, stands in stark contrast to the rest of Gawain's "clothing and armor [which] are described in the most worldly terms – they are of costly silk, of bright fur, of well-worked and highly polished steel adorned with gold. His helmet, the last garment he puts on ... has a silk cover embroidered with the best gem and encircled with costly diamonds" (Howard 426). In this way, the shield as a symbolic protective border is already breached since Gawain is portrayed in an armour that prioritises worldly goods that ultimately suggest Gawain's proclivity to monstrosity.

Accordingly, Gawain is received by Bertilak's household whose perception of chivalry is starkly different in that they *seem* to be motivated by a set of chivalric ideals that foreground eloquent speech and *fin'amor* that "broȝt blysse into boure with bountees hor awen –" (1519). The clash of different perceptions of chivalry is suggested from the very beginning of Gawain's reception. Upon learning Gawain's identity, the hosts are overjoyed to have such a reputed knight at their house (920). Gawain's reputation, however, is not what Gawain actually praises himself for in this romance. The Hautdesert's perception of Gawain is an informed reputation deriving from French romances in which Gawain is popularly known "as a seducer of hosts' wives as well as of his ability to talk himself out of touchy situations through his 'cortaysye'" (Matthewson 24).²⁵ In parallel to this fact, the Bertilak household does not pay any attention to the five sets of virtues enumerated in detail on Gawain's shield but they demand to be instructed on the subtleties of conversation: "Now schal we semlych se sleȝtez of þewez / And þe teccheles terms of talkyng noble," (916-17). As James Heffernan illustrates, the "sleȝtez of þewez" is an ambiguous expression that can be translated as "'fine points of conduct' but which might also be called tricks or sleights of conduct, tricks of the courtier's trade" (108). Thereby,

²⁵ Gawain's reputation as a courtly lover is a deliberate reference to Gawain's promiscuity in the French romances (Matthewson 23-24; Pearsall 254). Different regions and periods presented different and sometimes contradictory representation of Gawain. For example, Gawain is presented as a tribal and somewhat monstrous representation in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) where "he refuses to grant mercy to a defeated knight, a refusal that ends with his accidental killing of the knight's lady" (McClune 117). On the other hand, due to his Scottish roots, in the romances of the Northern group he is portrayed as an *almost* unblemished knight in comparison to "Arthur who, when faced with any challenge, is reduced to hiding behind the figure of Gawain" (Robson 87).

eloquence for the court is regarded as one of the primary skills of the knights who, according to them, can hide their true intentions and subvert situations to their advantage through courteous speech. As suggested above, however, the skill makes it impossible for people to discern honesty or truth from dishonesty. Therefore, courteous speech undermines the presiding virtue of truth and makes the knight prone to monstrosity if not supported with good intention and action. Gawain's eloquent and humble speech to take up the quest at the Arthurian court is an example of such "sleȝtez of þewez" (916) because it is almost impossible to determine if Gawain takes up the challenge to establish his place within the court or to protect his king.

At this point in the romance, Gawain is confronted by not a conventional battle of prowess against a traditional enemy but by a psychological one in which he has to defend his chivalric precepts. Ultimately, however, Gawain's identity is also breached and he is also proven monstrous because of his performative failure in following his chivalric ideals. Within the context of truth, Lady Bertilak serves as an unconventional type of enemy who effectively performs "sleȝtez of þewez" during her exchange with Sir Gawain to persuade him to take the green girdle. Moreover, as suggested above, she undermines the traditional gender roles via her performance of masculine-style seduction attempts for three consecutive days in Gawain's bedroom. In this way, she disrespects the conceptual and geographical boundaries like a monster. Accordingly, in the figure of Lady Bertilak, the conceptual, as well as geographical boundaries are again breached; every morning she slides into Gawain's private and enclosed bedchamber and forces Gawain into an unavoidable negotiation of different perceptions of chivalry. Unlike the traditionally passive feminine figures of the Arthurian court, Lady Bertilak is portrayed as an agentic and enticing courtly lady whose sexual advances become ever harder to be parried by Gawain: "Þus hym frayned þat fre, and fondet hym ofte, / For to haf wonnen hym to woȝe, what-so scho þoȝt ellez; / Bot he defended hym so fayr þat no faut semed" (1549-51). Evidently, the sexual tension of their conversation and the psychological conflicts are aptly suggested by the battle terminology. In parallel, the bed, which is traditionally associated with rest and relaxation, becomes a battleground in which Gawain has to be ever-alert and hard-pressed to defend his ideals.

Therefore, in the bedroom scenes, Gawain actually encounters a more complex type of enemy, one whose outer disposition perfectly conforms to the normative standards of a beautiful woman but whose sovereign agency circumvents the cultural roles appertained to women in the Middle Ages. Despite being the wife of a seemingly respectable husband, she assumes the role of a temptress figure and, in fact, she far outreaches the typical temptresses in the romances in terms of her performative breach of customary gender roles. Hence, instead of Gawain, "it is she who

assumes the role of the lover and in so doing turns courtly conventions on their head” (Bergner 411). The traditional roles are reversed and Gawain is now reduced to a passive position of being wooed. Accordingly, Lady Bertilak takes it upon herself to enter Gawain’s bedchamber. She offers to be Gawain’s servant: “Your seruaunt be, and schale” (1240). In the first day, she tries to seduce Gawain by positioning “herself above him in a literal, woman-on-top manoeuvre vilified in medieval thinking as a feminine perversion” (Ashton 105). In the second day, she chides Gawain for his reluctance in saying “sum tokenez of trweluf craftes” (1527) and invites him for a “game” (1532) which is “a word whose meaning range ... from polite diversion to sexual intercourse” (Heffernan 109). Despite the playful atmosphere, their banter implicates serious consequences. As Carolyn Dinshaw alludes, “in a world in which identity is constituted by the performance of acts precisely coded according to normative configurations of gender and desire,” the reversal of roles undermines the precepts that chivalric world is set upon (212). Moreover, her non-normative portrayal as an active woman violates the social and romance conventions but at the same time, Lady Bertilak’s manifest dominance stresses the performative fluidity of these cultural and gender norms.

Gawain’s precursory reputation for “luf-talkyng” (927) has an important function in terms of cornering him to this difficult position that he finds himself in. For three days, he is increasingly treated like a type of knight he does not identify himself to be. As has been stated above, Arthurian knights are sensitive to their public reputation, and Gawain also becomes the prisoner of people’s perception of him. In this respect, Jill Mann posits that Gawain is fuelled by a relentless concern that “he should match his reputation: he is sensitive to any suggestion that he is falling short of it” (“Price and Value” 308). This sense of anxiety is evident during the lady’s reproach of Gawain’s lack of enthusiasm in reciprocating her advances. Beforehand, Gawain persistently denies that “I be not now he þat 3e of spoken” (1242). Nevertheless, when the lady feigns giving up and concludes that he is indeed not “Gawan, hit gotz in mynde.” (1293), he immediately responds with much consternation: ‘Querfore?’ quop þe freke, and freschly he askez” (1293-94). It is clear that Gawain is terrified of falling short of people’s expectations and he accedes to kissing the lady: “I schal kysse at your comaundement, as a knyzt fallez, / And fire, lest he displese yow, so plede hit no more” (1303-04). Gawain is easily manipulated mainly because the Bertilak household understands that “[k]nighthood is a performance ... and Gawain is always *in production* in this poem: his reputation has preceded him to Bertilak’s castle; ... when he is not acting like the reputed Gawain, that he is not, after all, Gawain. When his active role is usurped by the lady here, when he is not *doing*, he has no proper, courtly masculine identity” (Dinshaw 213). It is psychological warfare that the Lady wages on Gawain

and Gawain is clearly on the defensive and losing side, doing his very best to counter the lady's skill of eloquent speech.

As a result, Gawain is forced to find a balance between what he regards himself to be and how he is expected to behave. On the first night of his stay, he courteously offers his service to Bertilak in exchange for his generous hospitality: "As I am halden þerto, in hyȝe and in loȝe / bi riȝt" (1040-41). Similarly, unsuspecting of any possibility of exploitation, he entreats the ladies to receive him as "her seruaunt sothly" (976) as befitting a courtly lover that he is taken to be. Gawain's bipartite obligation to Bertilak and the ladies of the house, however, is duly exploited in the romance with an exchange of winnings game whose conditions are again recited and acknowledged via verbal bond: "'Bi God,' quoth Gawayn þe gode, 'I grant þertylle,'" (1110). Gawain unwittingly binds his service to the ladies and the lord of the household at the same time. In this regard, the romance approximates to one of the popular moral dilemmas that the Arthurian romance poses for the knight, which is "a conflict between two kinds of honor – between the necessity to bear himself as a true knight and win all battles and the necessity to maintain a disguise as a less worthy person, between the desire to serve a lady as her true lover and the desire to seek for adventures" (Jackson 91). Similar to Lancelot in *Lancelot ou le Chevalier de la charrette* (c. 1176-81) and Yvain in *Yvain ou le Chevalier au lion* (c. 1180), Gawain feels the weight of responsibility constricting him from three sides: He is bound to Mary for preserving his "clannes", to the lady for keeping his "cortaysye", and to Bertilak for retaining his "trawþe."

It is these constrictions that bind Gawain to a passive role and eventually to a monstrous condition. In contrast, "the Green Knight/Bertilak and his wife always initiate the games they play with Gawain and then keep the initiative. In addition, they know what is at stake, while Gawain does not" (Anderson 347). From a knight who takes the initiative to acquire the quest from Arthur, and actively traverses dangerous terrains, Gawain is now reduced to state of complaisance, unaware of the intricate plot acted upon him. Accordingly, Gawain accedes to Bertilak's incessant "exhortations to rest while he [Bertilak] himself rides to the hounds. He presses him to lie in bed, although hunting would have been, in the light of contemporary handbooks, the universally recognized preparation for combat" and the most aristocratic sport in the Middle Ages" (Thiébaux 75). As a result, an unconventional situation occurs in which Bertilak's active pursuit of game is contrasted by Gawain who "in gay bed lygez, / Lurkkez quyl þe daylyȝt lemed on þe woves" (1179-80). Once again, Bertilak's castle as an in-between space blurs the boundaries between the inside and outside, nature and culture, femininity and

masculinity, and monstrosity and chivalry. Thus, Gawain's passivity puts him in an awkward condition that renders him open to manipulation to divert him from his ideals.

Surprisingly, however, at the beginning of his stay at the castle, Gawain is very quick to adapt his manners and even employs "tricks of the courtier" to carefully navigate through the interplay with the lady of the house. For instance, when he realises the lady's entry into his room on the first morning of his stay, he feigns sleep to see what the lady is up to: "Þe lede lay lurked a ful longe quyle, / Compast in his conscience to quat þat cace myȝt / Meue oþer amount" (1195-97). Only after Gawain is sure that she will not leave until he wakes up, he pretends to rouse from sleep: "Þen he wakenede, and wroth, and to hir warde torned, / And vnlooked his yȝe-lyddez, and let as hym wondered, / And sayned hym, as bi his saȝe þe sauer to worthe" (1200-02). The discrepancy between internal emotions and outward performance of Gawain gradually increases in severity from this moment onwards so that this incongruity between his professed identity and his performative deviance becomes the sign of his divergence from his ideals of chivalric virtues such as truth, thereby becoming a monstrous figure.

The gradual transformation and the chipping away of Gawain's resolve are also suggested by the deliberate choice of hunted animals – deer, boar, and fox – whose worth in terms of hunting games gradually decrease (Savage 1-2). Moreover, the interconnection of the hunts with the temptation scenes is reinforced through the transition "from one setting to the other usually within the span of a single sentence: conjunctions such as *And*, *Whyle*, and *Bot* emphasize parallelism" (Yamamoto 129, emphasis original). The quick transitions reinforce the tension inside the bedchamber where Gawain is also pursued and hunted down by the lady who threatens, albeit in jest, to "bynde yow in your bedde" (1211) and each day receives kisses at an increasing rate. In addition, the narrator gives particular attention to the dismemberment of the hunted animals. Accordingly, the deer are butchered properly to the contemporary manuals to suggest collective entrapment of a worthy game; the boar is handled roughly and less ceremoniously to imply the decreased worth; the fox is skinned as if to suggest the actual transparency behind Gawain's professed honesty in the third day (Henry 190-93).

The butchering of animals' bodies each day reflects the careful disintegration process of Gawain's chivalric identity and his increasing proclivity to monstrosity. Gawain's internal battle with monstrosity is illustrated in the animals hunted each day. The hunted animals signify various characteristics "which Gawain must conquer – timidity, ferocity, and cunning" (Howard 432). Gawain actually overcomes timidity and ferocity through the virtues of "clannes" and "cortaysye" in the first two days but succumbs to cunning. Gawain's behaviours and thought processes are mirrored in the fox figure during his exchange with the Lady. The fox is referred

to as “þef [thief]” (1725) by the hunting group and “Renaude” (1916) or “Reynarde” (1920) by the narrator. These epithets are not idle since, by the end of the day, Gawain will be the holder of an article that rightfully belongs to Bertilak, and Reynard is an anthropomorphic, petty trickster fox figure in the continental beast epic tradition.²⁶ The stories in this tradition commonly “satirized the church and nobility of the time and repeatedly showed that the tricky Reynard could outwit more powerful and confident opponents” (Delasara 100). The narrator’s incorporation of Reynard suggests the possibility of escape because the informed audience “who is familiar with the Reynardian tradition does not expect the wily fox to die” (Özgün 51). Accordingly, for the first time during the hunting of animals, the narrator switches from the third person to the first person probably because of the fox’s anthropomorphic condition. The fox believes that he can outwit the hunters’ dogs: “Went haf wylt of þe wode with wylez fro þe houndes” (1711). The fox’s way of thinking parallels Gawain’s during his acceptance of the green girdle so that Gawain is now reduced to a non-human status in terms of his rational process as Gawain and the fox are convinced that they can outmatch their opponents through the performance of trickery. Nevertheless, after Gawain receives the girdle, Reynard, who manages to outsmart every opponent in his tales, is shown to be dead, and his soul departs from his body (1916-17). The departure of the fox’s soul reflects the disintegration of Gawain’s chivalrous identity via his monstrous act of receiving the girdle.

Accordingly, Gawain performs monstrosity precisely when he violates the virtue of truth by accepting the green girdle after the revelation of its alleged magical properties. At first, Gawain rejects the offer of a gold ring as a love token from the Lady by stating that ““I wil no giftez, for Gode, my gay, at þis tyme; / I haf none yow to norne, ne noȝt wyl I take”” (1822-23). Yet, the protective potential of the girdle prompts Gawain to think that this might be the only way out of his approaching predicament: “When he acheued to þe chapel his chek for to fech, / Myȝt he haf slypped to be vnslayn, þe *sleȝt* were *noble*” (1857-58, emphasis added). At this moment, Gawain’s description of his deceitful way of conduct as “noble” demonstrates how much he has actually moved away from his ideals. Before his departure, Gawain is shown to submit himself to God and the ensuing fate with full confidence:

þe knȝt mad ay god chere,
And sayde, ‘Quat schuld I wonde?’

²⁶ Reynard is the name of an anthropomorphic fox figure whose tradition sprang up “in Ghent in 1149 or thereabouts (Varty, Introduction xiii). The tradition started in Latin but quickly spread to vernacular languages such Dutch, French and English. Mostly known as *Roman de Renart*, the collection of stories is made up of short narratives which “degenerated into tired recycling of material and crude slapstick” (Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard* 2). The stories are mainly satiric in tone and aim to demonstrate the sinful condition of those holding important offices such as clergy in the Middle Ages.

Of destines derf and dere
 What may mon do bot fonde? (561-65)

At the beginning, in front of the sorrowful Arthurian court, Gawain embraces his fate with good cheer and resolves to do his best against such a fate and leave the rest to God. Therefore, the acceptance of the green girdle is monstrous in that the act severs the steadfast trust Gawain has put in God and the fate he has prepared for Gawain in lieu of the belief that he can take his fate into his own hands by magic and superstition. His acceptance plays a fundamental role in his monstrosity because his stable identity which is based on a fixed sign explained in detail by the narrator and encased on his shield is now replaced by another more ambiguous and fluid sign, that is, the green girdle. As Ralph Hanna points out, once Gawain accepts the girdle, “he has denied his identity as previously constituted, has ceased to be the knight of trawþe. His world becomes filled with the possibility of mistake, illusion, or magic, a place where values lack that clarity they had before” (298).

In contrast to the fixity of the meaning of the pentangle on Gawain’s shield, the green girdle is an ambivalent symbol. Stephen Trigg presents a detailed summary of the ascribed meanings to the girdle. Accordingly, it is first seen as a luxurious belt. Then, its magical properties are revealed by the Lady. Gawain’s acceptance of this female item enables it to transform into the male dress code, and Gawain’s wrapping it around his waist suggests sexual conquest. After Gawain learns his mistake, he throws it down and curses it as a token of temptation. Then, he picks it up again and wears it as a sign of his failure. The Arthurian court, however, receives Gawain’s mistake as a mere trifle and wears it as a sign of honour and solidarity (2507). Therefore, the girdle as an identity marker cannot be mapped or located by any stable reference point which now suits Gawain’s disintegrated condition. Befittingly, in the second arming scene before Gawain’s departure for the Green Chapel, the pentangle is not mentioned anymore but the girdle comes to the foreground: “Ȝet laft he not þe lace, þe ladies gifte, / Þat forgat not Gawayn for gode of hymselfen” (2030-31). Gawain continues to carry the pentangle but now his bounded chivalric identity is mixed with open-ended, fluid, and ever-changing qualities pertaining to the green girdle, aspects that recall the attributed qualities of the so-called monsters.

Therefore, when Gawain utters a similar word of trust to God upon the guide’s suggestion of escape before arriving at the Chapel: “Þaȝe he [the Green Knight] be a sturn knape / ... Ful wel con Dryȝtyn schape / His seruantez for to saue” (2136, 2138-39), his honesty is gravely marred by his previous performance of accepting the girdle. Consequently, there emerges a gap between reality and the linguistic signs that express that reality. This ambiguity of meaning is

also reinforced by the guide's description of the Green Knight as a ferocious monster: "Þat he ne dynges hym to deþe with dynt of his honde; / For he is a mon methles, and mercy non vses, / For be hit chorle oþer chaplain þat bi þe chapel rydes" (2105-07). However, his words will turn out to be nothing more than a final trial for testing Gawain's resolve. Similarly, the Lady also speaks "the language of slyzt": verbal tricks. When she begs Gawain to hide her gift from everyone and in particular to hide it 'faithfully' (lelly) from her lord, she is asking him to betray his compact with his host in order to be 'lel,' or loyal and faithful, to her' (Hafferman 110). It is as if the words and their referents no longer match and become topsy-turvy and fluid, which makes it impossible to communicate properly. Moreover, when Gawain indeed does not bestow the green girdle to Bertilak on that evening, he performs another monstrous act by violating the established terms of their covenant (1941).

Moreover, Gawain does another monstrous deed upon receiving the girdle; despite his decision to resort to magic via the girdle, he visits a priest to seek "absolucioun he on þe segge calles; / And he [the priest] asoyled hym surely and sette hym so clene" (1882-83). According to Burrow, Gawain commits a mortal sin by submitting a false confession which "must be seen as invalid – not a remedy, but a symptom of his fall from grace" (*Sir Gawain* 109).²⁷ Gawain's monstrous condition is signified by two extra indicators. The wild weather on his last night reflects his troubled subconscious: "Þe leude listened ful wel þat leþ in his bedde / Þaþ he lowkez his liddez, ful lyttel he sleses" (2006-07). In addition, probably because of his guilt-stricken subconscious, and as a sign of his subtle estrangement from Christianity, Gawain cannot sleep. He also neglects his habit of hearing the Mass which he has observed every day during his stay at the castle. Hence, when Gawain comes to the presence of the Green Knight at the Green Chapel, the narrator has already laid minute details about Gawain's failure. Therefore, when the Green Knight explains that the three strikes are actually connected with the three-day exchange of gifts, Gawain as well as the audience become aware of the intricate web of connections spreading throughout the poem. It becomes clear that, unlike the four fitts that seem to place strict narrative divisions, the poem is a unified whole that is structured with delicate numerical patterns of twos (two courts, New Year's days, confessions, beheading scenes), threes (three temptations, hunts, kisses, strokes of axe), and fives (Pentangle and its five sets of fives). The complex interconnection of each element underlines the relational dependency of

²⁷ Scholarship is actually divided on Gawain's confession and whether it is a mortal sin or venial sin. P. J. C. Field opposes J. A. Burrow's argument of Gawain's mortal sin by arguing Gawain's sin as venial because ultimately "the confessor should judge the degree of responsibility of the sinner, as well as the gravity of the act in itself" ("Rereading" 263). In this case, the Green Knight/Bertilak's candid forgiveness signals the triviality of the sin. Still, by committing a sinful action, Gawain harms the integrity of chivalric principles, and becomes temporarily monstrous nonetheless.

one to the other for meaning. Hence, violation of one virtue brings about the collapse of the ideal since the code is founded on a very rigid and idealistic precepts.

The dreaded confrontation with the Green Knight ends in affectionate terms, especially on the Green Knight's side, which heightens the shame Gawain feels for his ultimate failure of truth. From the intimidating monster who is deemed to be not constricted by any form of moral code, the Green Knight actually is transformed into a merciful figure who "plays the paternal part toward the younger man, testing, chiding, loving. In his function as hunter, teacher, corrector, and confessor, he can be compared to the allegorical 'veneur-confessour' of the *Livre de Seyntz Medicines*" (Thiébaux 475). Indeed, during their last encounter, the Green Knight is in complete control of the situation and playfully toys with Gawain when it is his turn to strike, and joyously stops Gawain from attacking him upon receiving the third strike: "Bolde burne, on þis bent be not so gryndel" (2338). Nevertheless, instead of the façade of courteous hospitality in the Bertilak court, the Green Knight in his physically divergent form is honest and straightforward in terms of explaining Gawain's fault in keeping the girdle (2354-61), his real identity (2445), the identity and overall plan of Morgan le Faye (2446-66). Thereby, Bertilak/the Green Knight duality emphasises the dissociation of non/normative disposition from monstrosity or chivalry. As cultural constructs, chivalry and monstrosity are performative and the agent comes into being by reiterating the established patterns within a particular cultural discourse. It is perfectly normal to divert from such an idealistic code of manners as chivalry. Bertilak is conscious of this fact when he explains the reason for his compassion, "Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, and lewté yow wonted; / Bot þat watz for no wyllyde werke, ne wowing nauþer, / Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lesse I yow blame" (2366-68).

The performative aspect of monstrosity is once again reinforced via Gawain who at first sees himself as yet another victim of beguiling women recorded in the misogynistic tradition. However, as Bonnie Lander remarks, Gawain fails to realise that baseless attack on women harms the overall reputation of women and undermines the reverence that needs to be shown to them according to the principles of chivalry (54-55). It is an impulsive behaviour resulting from the inherent "schome" (2372) Gawain feels due to the reproach of his intended trick but he soon comes to terms with his monstrous performances. Accordingly, Gawain decides to carry the girdle appropriating its meaning as a "syngne of my surfet [excess]" (2433). In line with this study's definition of monstrosity, Gawain now defines his failure as excess and violation of the accepted chivalric norms. He understands that it is actually the deeds that define one's identity, not the professed ideals without performatively complying with them: "For mon may hyden his harme, bot vnhap ne may hit, / For þer hit onez is tachched twynne wil hit neuer" (2511-12).

His previous perception concerning the strict division between good and bad, chivalrous and monstrous, moral and immoral is blurred now. It is because of perceiving this essential fluidity through performance that Gawain is now much gloomier than his peers and his earlier self. The narrator is also on the side of Gawain because, despite the Arthurian court's belief that Gawain is too hard on himself, the reinvocation of the fall of Troy at the end hints at the performance of deceit yet by another knight, Lancelot, who will instigate the downfall of the Arthurian court in the future.

3. 3. Conclusion

In this chapter, it is demonstrated that the knights and their professed enemies in *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* are in fluid states of becoming monstrous or chivalrous through their encounters at the borders. Their subscription to each category is re-negotiated by analysing their actions that may or may not pose harm to their societies. At first, the superficiality of corporeal divergence is emphasised through the characters of the Carl, Dame Ragnelle and the Green Knight. Their physical differences that evoke various feelings of wonder and revulsion is shown to be the failings of the knight's deficient adherence to chivalric virtues. In the second section, the encounters between the knights and their enemies are analysed through the lens of monstrosity as performance. Accordingly, it is argued that the traditional characteristics that have been bestowed on the knights and their enemies become porous at the borders, and the knights may also become sources of monstrosity by diverting from the code of ethics that is aimed to restrain and regulate their impulses. Hence, it is observed that analysing the individual encounters between the knights and their enemies foregrounds a better result in terms of perceiving them as monstrous or chivalrous.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the emergent fluidity between the chivalrous and monstrous identities is analysed through the lens of a methodological framework that relies on various academic fields including monster studies, performance studies, and postcolonial studies. Accordingly, this framework indicates that monstrosity is a composite category and a monster is a being whose performance of transgressive acts inflicts various forms of undeserved harm to others or the society in general. In this way, the monsters' border-crossing nature is suggested via transgressive performances that enforce undeserved harm. Contrary to the generic definition of the monster that vilifies physical divergence, the rather modern perception of monstrosity based on the consequential merit or harm of performance as a frame of reference provides a better understanding of monstrosity.

This study claims that in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century romances, respectively, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, monstrosity is performative. It is performed in the encounters between the knights and their enemies. Therefore, in these romances, monstrosity is essentially fluid, and the knights and their enemies are positioned in fluid states of becoming monstrous or chivalrous. Accordingly, the traditional demarcation of monstrous and chivalrous identities is not tenable. This is because, in the romances, chivalry as a regulative code of ethos is contrived to regulate the feudal society for the better. Those negative and harmful qualities that fall outside of this presiding code are attributed to others who are pushed to the realm of monstrosity. However, the untenability of this process of exclusion is demonstrated by the knights' instantaneous performances in the romances. Accordingly, the so-called distinct identities of the knights and their enemies are put to test via border encounters which blur the differences between these identities and make them as superficial and mutable. This is concomitant with the monster's general characteristic that it cannot be contained within enclosed spaces forever as it is shown to always breach these attempted borders. From this perspective, this study's perspective of monstrosity that is performatively fluid is in line with the monster's elusive nature.

This fluidity of monstrosity is employed to criticise the performances of the knights. For example, in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther* the knights' uncontrolled violence towards their own societies and their internal feuds become objects of criticism. In *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* the knights' ill-treatment of others based on physical differences demonstrates their shallow standards of virtues. In this regard, the romances in this study are informed by the immediate issues that interest English society. The applicability of this disembodied definition that dissociates monstrosity from its physical tie

stresses the romance's capability of addressing serious problems of corporeal, religious, racial, social vilification, and exclusion. This is facilitated by a certain degree of elasticity attributed to the characters, which, in turn, yields to a more in-depth characterisation. Hence, the romances in this study do not become essentialist texts that present encounters and the subsequent confrontation between chivalrous and monstrous, the good and the bad, right and wrong. Instead, the fluidity and complexity of the monstrous characters problematise the easy correlation between physical divergence and monstrosity and address ethical problems such as individual and societal harm and exclusionary treatment of others as the real source of monstrosity.

The fluidity of monstrosity enables the possibility of change, reformation, and sometimes eventual harmony with the other. Within this context, in the second chapter, the possibility of change of a person's character is suggested through penance in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther*. In the beginning, Guy, Richard, and Gowther become monstrous figures, in spite of their knighthood, through violence towards their society. However, Guy in *Guy of Warwick* and Gowther in *Sir Gowther* prove through their performances that monstrous behaviour can actually be mended. Penance, as performative compliance to a set of prescribed actions, plays an important role in terms of amending Guy and Sir Gowther's previously monstrous way of life and enforcing reformation. On the other hand, Richard does not go through a similar process of recognition and remains a monster until the very end.

As argued in the third chapter, the permeability of monstrous identity can take the form of "upward mobility". In *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, the Arthurian court and their values are challenged by outsiders whose physical appearance groups them as monstrous. In that sense, the Green Knight, Dame Ragnelle, and the Carl are illustrative of the performativity of monstrosity. It is observed that during their encounters, often the knights' adherence to their chivalric principles is found lacking. Instead, the Green Knight, Dame Ragnelle, and the Carl are the ones who instruct the Arthurian knights in chivalric principles. The Green Knight, defined as a monster because of his gigantic green body, teaches Sir Gawain the virtue of truth. The Carl underlines the virtue of obedience. Dame Ragnelle stresses the domestic liberty of women. Thereby, it is evident that monsterised others also have intrinsic value that can contribute to the changing norms of society through their performances that undermine their alleged monstrosity. Their eventual assimilations into the Arthurian court especially in *Carl of Carlisle* and *The Wedding* signal the desire for harmony between different estates. The knights in these romances also experience change. They are not the same person

upon taking their quests. They understand their monstrous aspects and come to terms with their fallacies.

In this study, monstrosity is a border phenomenon with two distinct geographical borders of England as its locus of investigation. The first one is the Eastern borders of the crusading campaign. The second one is the Scottish and Welsh borders in the North. The romances in these two chapters assume different approaches in their treatment of the designated monstrous others during and after their interactions. In the romances of the second chapter, *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, and *Sir Gowther*, despite their political, cultural, and habitual affinities, there is little meaningful interaction between the knights and their Saracen opponents (Guy's fight as the champion of Triamour is an exceptional case which is mostly mediated by another Christian, Earl Jonas, a prisoner to Triamour). The two sides' communications with each other occur frequently against the backdrop of battles, duels, sieges, or peace negotiations. This aspect reflects the unending conflict between the two sides. In this regard, religious differences and historical enmity in the Middle Ages as cultural factors play important roles in terms of sustaining this conflict. Therefore, in *Guy of Warwick* and *Richard Coer de Lyon*, there are few and far between portrayals of the Saracens who are somewhat shown as honourable. The shared attributes between the knights are enforced mostly to suggest that Guy, Richard, and Sir Gowther are as monstrous as the Saracens. Hence, the encounters at the borders mostly engender more conflicts that facilitate the rigorous process of establishing superiority over one another. As a result, a prominent tendency of exclusion still remains between the knights and their Saracen enemies. Monsterisation largely operates through the attribution of internal qualities to the Eastern other and legitimisation of the knights' monstrous tendencies by directing their violence to a safer outlet.

On the other hand, the romances that are set at the Northern borders, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding*, assume a didactic approach via monstrous others. The encounters take place between the knights who are familiar with but violate some of the chivalric codes and their opponents who are not necessarily always monstrous. Cultural and religious affinity plays a significant role in the characters' reciprocation with each other. Therefore, the encounters still retain a threat to the life of the knights but the conflicts are not resolved through chivalric prowess in battles. Instead, these romances introduce a series of tests that examine the knights' conduct and show their performances to be monstrous. Accordingly, they expose certain monstrous aspects of the knights which are corrected at the end. In this regard, the romances set at the Northern border offer an inclusive approach to the social problems of othering at hand

rather than being the object of engendering more problems with the other through the employment of excessive violence as observed in the second chapter.

In this regard, this study limits its locus to two geographical borders that are far removed from each other. Therefore, the treatment of the monstrous other and conclusions derived from such interactions differ in each chapter. In this regard, further studies might be conducted at different borders that may yield completely different results. Further study might be conducted on geographical borders such as villages/towns and their periphery; forests and open areas; lands and sea; lands and air. In addition, temporal borders that are suggested in the third chapter such as seasons, months, days and their constant cycle with each other generate a different cycle of monsters. For example, liminal monsters of day and night such as vampires, moon and sun such as werewolves; and important liminal seasons of the day such as All Hallows' Day in the Middle Ages are still topics of a new inquiry. Other borders may include monsters at the margins of the manuscripts, monsters on medieval maps, monsters of all types of physical deformities, and their incorporation as court entertainments in the Middle Ages.

In this regard, other than the theories used in this study, monsters always yield themselves to various critical theories such as posthumanism, transhumanism, new materialism, and psychoanalysis. In this study, an understanding of monstrosity that relies on performativity and fluidity is provided. The analysis of performative, fluid monstrosity in *Guy of Warwick*, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Sir Gowther*, *Sir Gawain*, *Carl of Carlisle*, and *The Wedding* has yielded important discussions in terms of its behavioural and cultural context. Monstrosity's performative nature has enabled its dynamic and sometimes elusive nature so that the enemy of the knights do not become cardboard characters that facilitate the glory of the knights. On the contrary, the encounters between the two reveal the complex entanglement between the two. This is underlined by the famous aphorism of Freidrich Nietzsche who states that "[w]hoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself. And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back into you" (69). The selected romances destabilise the privileged relationship between the normative self and the monstrous other by foregrounding no moral high ground between the two.

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APPENDIX 1. ORIGINALITY REPORT



HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 07/07/2022

Tez Başlığı : "Ötekiyi Canvarlaştır(ma): Orta İngilizce Romanlarında Performans Olarak Canavarlık"

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana Bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 131 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 07/07/2022 tarihinde şahsım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 5 'tür.

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- 2- Kaynakça hariç
- 3- Alıntılar hariç
- 4- Alıntılar dâhil
- 5- 5 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

07/07/2022

Adı Soyadı: Ulaş özgün

Öğrenci No: N15141954

Anabilim Dalı: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Programı: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Statüsü: Doktora Bütünleşik Dr.

DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.

(Prof. Dr. Huriye Reis)



**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Ph.D. DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT**

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT**

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1. Approval and Declaration sections excluded
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3. Quotes excluded
4. Quotes included
5. Match size up to 5 words excluded

I declare that I have carefully read Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences Guidelines for Obtaining and Using Thesis Originality Reports; that according to the maximum similarity index values specified in the Guidelines, my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

07/07/2022

Name Surname: Ulaş Özgün
Student No: N15141954
Department: English Language and Literature
Program: English Language and Literature
Status: Ph.D. Combined MA/ Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

(Prof. Dr. Huriye Reis)

APPENDIX 2. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM



**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU**

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA**

Tarih: 07/07/2022

Tez Başlığı / Konu: Ötekiyi Canvarlaştır(ma): Orta İngilizce Romanlarında Performans Olarak Canavarlık

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Adı Soyadı: Ulaş Özgün

Öğrenci No: N15141954

Anabilim Dalı: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Programı: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Statüsü: Y.Lisans Doktora Bütünleşik Dr.

DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.

Prof. Dr. Huriye Reis

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**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK**

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY**

Date: 07/07/2022

Thesis Title / Topic: (De)monstrating the Other: Monstrosity as Performance in Middle English Romances

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

Name Surname: Ulaş Özgün
Student No: N15141954
Department: English Language and Literature
Program: English Language and Literature
Status: Masters Ph.D. Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Prof. Dr. Huriye Reis