UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY


*Sir Eglamour of Artois* and Its Dramatic Possibilities


by


Lars Kenneth Hedlund


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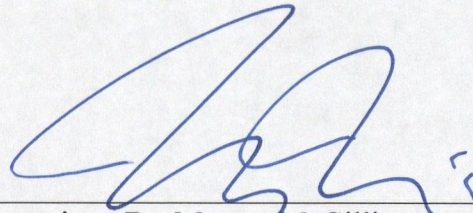
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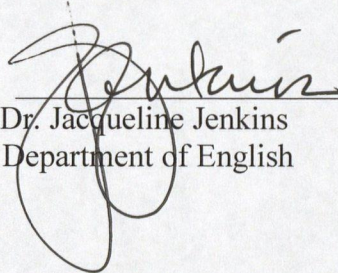

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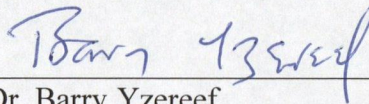
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "*Sir Eglamour of Artois* and Its Dramatic Possibilities" submitted by Lars Kenneth Hedlund in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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# Abstract

In this thesis I present evidence for the possibility that the Middle English poem *Sir Eglamour of Artois* was performed as a narrated drama in the fifteenth century. This suggestion is supported by a chronicle entry from the mid-fifteenth century where the chronicler, John Bale, describes a play of Eglamour and Degrebelle as having taken place at St. Albans abbey in the year 1443. Textual peculiarities, such as the exclusion of certain characters during important interactions, along with evidence of troupe performances and the use of narrators on stage in the Middle Ages, provide speculative ground for a reconstructed performance of *Eglamour,* where a narrator figure speaks the lines of the text while mimes perform the character roles. My reconstruction is not meant to be the definitive explanation of an obscure chronicle reference, but a model for rethinking how we approach the performance possibilities of non-dramatic texts.

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## Introduction

Despite the large number of Middle English romances that survive, not one is thought to have been staged as a play in the Middle Ages. Instead, medieval romances survive as poems and are considered to have been read privately, or performed by no more than a single minstrel. The lack of romance play texts seems odd given how popular romances seem to have been and how suitable many of their plots are for dramatic realization. One reference in a London town chronicle kept and recorded by John Bale, notes that in the years 1443-4 the "[i]tem this yer was at seint albons the last of Juyn a play of Eglemour and Degrebelle" (Flenley 117). This note has received attention from a few scholars, such as Ralph Flenley, but was not analysed in any depth until 1916 in an article by C. R. Baskerville. In his article, Baskerville argues that the "play of Eglemour and Degrebelle" Bale refers to must have been a play of the romance *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, which contains characters with the same names. Would the romance have been converted into a play text, though? Many of the plays that survive from medieval England were constructed from narratives, such as saints' plays, moral allegory and cycle drama.

The largest surviving body of Medieval drama in English is cycle drama. Cycle drama was a series of plays that were derived from a known narrative text. The Bible served as the main source for many of them, but there may have been other sources that contributed as well. The York cycle plays were based on episodes in the Bible, and were played at various stations throughout medieval York during Corpus Christi celebrations. Pamela King notes that "[t]he selection of episodes in the York play is remarkably similar to that in the surviving and other known English cycles. All of the events commonly included are taken from the first two of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, the four Gospels of the New Testament, and a variety of apocryphal texts embellishing the Gospels." (496). The cycle plays were, therefore, "an ingenious alternative to Bible reading for a mass, lay and probably

illiterate audience" (King 496).

There are a few examples from medieval drama where the conversion from narrative to staged play can be inferred from the surviving texts. Peter Happé suggests that the "sequence from Fall to Crucifixion" in the *Origo Mundi* is composed by an author "thoroughly familiar with the conventional [narrative] material"—the *South English Legendary,* the *Cursor Mundi,* and the *Northern Passion* (108). Even the sequence used for the death of Pilate episode seems to have had its origin in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (Happé 109). In the Middle English *Harrowing of Hell,* Karl Tamburr notes that the *Acts of Pilate* and *Christ's Descent into Hell* episodes share a close relationship with the *Gospel of Nicodemus*—too close to be a coincidence. Based on the author's organization of scenes, choice of speeches and encounters, and word for word transcriptions of the Latin A and B versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus,* Tamburr argues that "[i]t is quite clear that the playwright has shaped the narrative material from the Middle English metrical versions of *Nicodemus,* or perhaps directly from Latin A itself, into drama" (142). Authors of saints' plays also may have borrowed material from hagiographical narratives in the Middle Ages. Darryll Grantley notes that "[t]he motifs and characteristics . . . consistently found in non-dramatic hagiographical literature, are also to be found in varying measures in the drama that is derived from this tradition" (268).

It is probably the "motifs" and subject matter of these narratives that make the plays suitable for dramatic productions. Not all of the biblical episodes were transformed into drama, after all, maybe because their plots were not suitable for dramatic adaptation. One of the motifs of saints' plays, for example, that Grantley believes make hagiographical narratives suitable for staged drama, is the debate between saints and pagan tyrants that often occur in the genre (267-8). Grantley argues that the debates would create "dramatic dialogues of some force" and the eventual triumph of the saint (i.e. the victim) makes saints' lives an attractive genre (268). This motif is formulaic across other saints' lives and is what makes hagiographies "literature essentially for popular consumption" (Grantley 268). The same is

true of *Christ's Descent into Hell* in the *Harrowing of Hell*. Tamburr notes that *Christ's Descent into Hell* "focuses on the confrontation between Christ and Satan," where Christ triumphs over Satan and binds him in Hell until Doomsday. The triumph of the victim in these cases seems to make for interesting drama.

Romances share similarities with saints' plays and religious drama. First, they were 'popular,' or at least considered to be a popular genre with widespread appeal. The popularity of romances is understandably contentious, because the evidence is varied and often without context. In their introduction to *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, Raluca Radulescu and Cory Rushton declare that they will "judge 'popular' romances according to evidence of their widespread appeal in their own period (judged not just by numbers of copies, but through cross-references, evidence of readership and circulation)" (7). Part of the popularity of romances, though, may be due to the theme of victimhood and triumph they share with religious drama and saints' plays (although they need not follow the motifs exactly). In her book *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances*, Susan Wittig breaks down *King Horn* into its formulaic elements of "three discrete episode patterns": "*separation* through *betrayal*," "*separation* through *love*," and "the sequence which begins with the first *threatened marriage* and ends with the final *restoration*" (141, her emphasis). This formula is, in its most basic form, the triumph of the victim over the oppressor, with the restoration of order at the end of the trials. The romance of *Havelok the Dane* follows a similar pattern, where Havelok is deposed from his rightful place as king, rises from the depths, and eventually wins back his kingdom, thus moving through episodes of victimhood and triumph until the eventual restoration of order. If the triumph of the victim motif is what made other narratives suitable as drama, then *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* are suitable for staging as plays as well.

Despite the potential suitability of romance plots for dramatic performance, through, not one play text survives. There are a few ways to explain this fact. First, that romance play texts did exist, but

were lost. The lack of surviving saints' play texts may provide support for such a claim. Grantley argues that the "few extant early saints' plays in Britain constitute a tantalising sample of a largely lost dramatic genre which, to judge from the little evidence that is left to us, was exceptional in a number of ways" (287). The second possibility is that romances, as they exist today, were performed as dramatic pieces without alteration. This possibility could account for why there is such a strong narrative presence for romances, yet no play texts.

The performance of poems as dramatic plays was not an unheard of form of entertainment in the Middle Ages. Claire Sponsler, after looking through the *Records of Early English Drama*, was shocked to learn that no new Middle English play texts had been discovered in the archives. In her article "Drama in the Archives," she suggests that the reason for this might be because we are unsure of what to look for. Currently, scholars classify texts as drama only if they contain similar features to modern dramatic texts: a dramatis personae, no speech tags such as 'he said' or 'she said,' no extended narrative descriptions, and something resembling stage directions. The problem is that these classifications are our own, and are not necessarily the same ones medieval people made of their plays

Lydgate's mummings can help us expand our thinking about dramatic activity in the Middle Ages. They might also break down some of our biases about what could and could not be dramatic. The mummings survive as poems copied by the scribe John Shirley, who wrote each mumming's type of performance and where it was performed. Because of Shirley's notations, we know that each text was more than just a poem. Even texts that look nothing like a play could have been dramatically performed. Sponsler uses the mummings as indications that, although some texts may not look the part, we should never underestimate what could be performed as drama.

The poem *Sir Eglamour of Artois* (hereafter *Eglamour*) survives in four manuscript versions

dating to the early to mid-fifteenth century: British Library MS 2862 (hereafter S)[1], Lincoln Cathedral

Library MS 91 (A. 5. 2.) (L), British Library Cotton Caligula A. II (C), and Cambridge University

Library MS Ff. 2. 38 (F) (Richardson ix-xii). There are also seven print editions of the text, the latest

dated to around the mid-seventeenth century (Richardson xiii-xiv). All medieval versions of the poem

are approximately 1400 lines long and written in twelve line stanzas following the same aabccbaabccb

stanzaic structure. At first glance, there is no reason to assume that *Eglamour* was anything other than a

poem to a medieval audience. The reference by Bale is hard to ignore, though, and raises the question

whether *Eglamour* could have been a dramatic entertainment in the Middle Ages.

In order to determine whether or not *Eglamour* might have been a play, I have used

"rememorative reconstruction"—a term Paul Strohm coins in his Presidential Address to a congress of

the *New Chaucer Society*. Strohm notes that

> [b]ecause it is "rememorative," this activity seeks to respect the pastness or alterity of the past.
>
> Because it involves "reconstruction," it acknowledges the present as the necessary arena of its
>
> encounter. Accepting this activity as reconstructive in nature, we grant it a frankly imaginative
>
> element. To adopt a currently familiar terminology, no longer (with empirical history) do we
>
> regard the past as something we discover, but as something we construct . . . To the suggestion
>
> that "constructing" means "we construct anything we please," the answer must certainly be no.
>
> Inherent in the very idea of rememoration is a necessary hesitancy about co-opting the past into
>
> our own belief systems, quarrels, and fancies. (8-9)

Strohm's definition frames what a study like my own attempts to achieve. There is no past of *Eglamour*

left to "discover"—barring the discovery of a play-text. By respecting the past, and reconstructing with

the available resources, we can develop a sense of what the performance of *Eglamour* might have

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[1]    Each siglum is used by Richardson to refer to the version of *Eglamour* and not to the whole manuscript. I use them
similarly.

looked like.

"Rememorative reconstruction" is not without its difficulties. There is reasonable "hesitancy about co-opting the past into our own belief systems," because there is never a complete removal of bias or subjectivity. The nature of the historical evidence is fraught with its own difficulties of intention by the original composers as well. Strohm argues that,

> [h]owever pristine the form in which they [historical items] seem to reach us, these materials consist mainly of what might be called "sponsored survivals." I mean by this phrase to suggest that much of the evidence upon which we rely has been preserved for us by others who— prompted in some instances by the threatened extinction of memory and in other cases by the rise of scientific history—decided they should be archived and defended (10)

What was not "archived and defended" is lost. These pieces only survive because someone chose to record them. Our own approaches to the past, then, are also affected how those people from the past chose to keep their records. Bale's chronicle leaves the nature of the performance of Eglamour to speculation. Yet, his "sponsored" entry of "a play of Eglemour and Degrebelle" allows further investigation into *Eglamour*'s performance.

Intrigued by Bale's note, started down this path of research in a course by Jacqueline Jenkins, and convinced by Sponsler's suggestion that we need to rethink our approach to medieval drama, I have used available resources in the romance of *Eglamour* and surviving historical documents to infer how certain aspects of the poem could have been staged. In this thesis, I will draw attention to features and restrictions of the Thornton manuscript copy of *Eglamour,* and suggest how some of these may be best explained by a dramatic performance of the poem. My reasons for choosing the Thornton manuscript copy of *Eglamour* are the peculiar features the copy contains, which the other two copies do not, such as alternative versions of a few scenes and a different set of characters (all of which I will outline in chapter 1). As an exercise in Strohm's "rememorative reconstruction," these peculiarities

have allowed me to construct a possible staging of *Eglamour*—from the number of performers to possible props, from stage construction to the use of costuming, and the potential for doubled roles. My theory is that *Eglamour* could have been performed as a staged play by a troupe of no more than five performers during a festival in celebration of St. Alban's martyrdom. I also believe that the text could have been performed as a play with no alterations to the Thornton copy that survives to us today.

Chapter 1 begins with a summary of the poem. I also provide a more extensive analysis of the chronicle entry, a discussion of scholarship on the Thornton manuscript and Thornton's collecting habits, and a summary of the debates surrounding the performance of Middle English romances. The Thornton manuscript contains the copy of *Eglamour* that I believe could have been used for a dramatic performance. The research on the performance of Middle English romances might provide some insight into how to approach *Eglamour*'s possible performance through scholarship on minstrel activities.

In chapter 2, I compare *Eglamour* to other medieval English plays and suggest how *Eglamour* could have been staged using conventions already available in the Middle Ages. These conventions include doubled roles, the presence of the narrator on stage, and the performance of poems. The evidence for these practices is found in texts such as *Dame Sirith, Mankind,* the N-town *Mary Plays,* the Chester cycle drama, and other cycle plays performed in medieval Europe. Evidence for the dramatic performance of poetic pieces is shown in Lydgate's mummings.

Chapter 3 is the presentation of my research on *Eglamour*. In the chapter I focus on the evidence I have found within the text of *Eglamour* and explain what it means in terms of a dramatic performance. One feature of the text, doubled roles, suggest that poem could be performed by a small troupe of no more than five performers, four miming actors and a narrator. Another feature, the limited number of different settings in the poem, might suggest that the poem would need fairly simple staging to be performed successfully. All of my evidence comes from textual clues which, when paired with

other dramatic conventions of the Middle Ages, provides a suggestive estimate of what a play of *Eglamour* could have looked like.

## Chapter 1: Romances and their Performers

The Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91 redaction of *Sir Eglamour of Artois* opens with the main character, Sir Eglamour, in bed agonizing over his love for the Earl Pryncesamour's daughter Cristabelle. Eglamour confesses his love to his squire, who candidly notes that without money or land his plight is hopeless. The following day, Cristabelle notices Eglamour's absence and is sent by Pryncesamour to his bedchamber, where Eglamour tells her of his love. She assures him that she returns it, but her father Pryncesamour is unlikely to approve of their union. When Eglamour hunts the next day he is joined by Pryncesamour, whom he informs of his love for Cristabelle. Pryncesamour tells Eglamour that he will give him Cristabelle as a wife and the earldom of Artois if he completes three tasks, the first of which is to kill the prize hart of the giant Arrak. Eglamour agrees, is given two greyhounds and a sword by Cristabelle to help him in his quest, and hunts the hart (eventually killing it). Arrak, angry over the loss of his hart, confronts Eglamour and is killed. Eglamour returns to the Earl with the hart and Arrak's head. He is given a second task—to kill a boar in Sedoyne that no man can kill.

Eglamour travels to Sedoyne and finds the boar, which is surrounded by the bones and armour of over thirty men. Eglamour fights the boar for three full days, and on the fourth day he slays the boar. He is approached by the King of Sedoyne, who has watched the battle from afar, and is offered food and shelter as thanks. The King of Sedoyne also asks for Eglamour's aid against the giant Marrasse, Arrak's brother, who has been besieging the castle in an attempt to take the king's daughter Organata hostage. Marrasse returns from burying Arrak and discovers that his boar is dead. He continues to attack the King of Sedoyne's castle. Eglamour confronts Arrak and wins, and the King of Sedoyne offers him his kingdom and Organata's hand in marriage. Eglamour refuses both and takes only the boar's head as his prize. Along with the head, he is given a magical ring and horse. When he shows Pryncesamour the boar's head, Pryncesamour is surprised by his success and gives him the third and

final task—to kill a dragon in Rome.

Before Eglamour undertakes his final quest he asks for twelve weeks rest, during which he has sex with Cristabelle. After his rest, Eglamour travels to Rome and fights the dragon. He is badly wounded during the battle, but succeeds and completes his quest. The Emperor of Rome, Octoueane, watches the battle and collects the near-dead Eglamour from the battlefield. Eglamour is healed by the Emperor's daughter Dyateur, but does not recover for another twelve months. Meanwhile, in Artois, Cristabelle has given birth to Eglamour's child and word reaches Pryncesamour that the dragon is dead. Realizing that he will lose his earldom and daughter at Eglamour's return, Pryncesamour sends Cristabelle and her newborn child out to sea in a rudderless ship. While at sea, a griffon snatches the child from Cristabelle and carries it to Israel. The King of Israel discovers the baby while hunting, names it Degrebelle, and raises it as his own. Meanwhile, Cristabelle floats off to Egypt and is discovered on a beach by the King of Egypt, who takes her under his care.

After recovering from his wounds, Eglamour returns to Artois with the dragon's head. He is told by his fellow knights that Pryncesamour has sent Cristabelle and her child off to die at sea. Eglamour confronts Pryncesamour and demands the throne of Artois, which is rightfully his for completing the tasks. Eglamour gathers other knights and squires to aid him and Pryncesamour, fearing the repercussions of his actions, flees to a tower. Eglamour wins the earldom and immediately sets off to the Holy Land for fifteen years. Meanwhile, Degrebelle grows into a young man under the King of Israel's care and is in need of a wife. Word reaches Israel that the King of Egypt is holding a tournament for Cristabelle's hand in marriage. Degrebelle easily wins the tournament and nearly weds his mother, Cristabelle, but before he can do so she starts weeping at the sight of the griffon emblazoned on his surcoat. Cristabelle relates the story of her son being taken from her by a griffon at sea. She also explains that the baby was wrapped in a scarlet mantel and a gold girdle. The King of Israel realizes that the objects she mentions were wrapped around the baby he found. He has a squire

bring the items forward and Cristabelle and Degrebelle are reunited. Another tournament for Cristabelle's hand in marriage is planned, but the contestants must defeat Degrebelle to win her.

Eglamour, who is returning from his fifteen year hiatus in the Holy Land, learns of the tournament (although he is unaware that Cristabelle is the prize). He joins the tournament and quickly defeats the competition, including Degrebelle. Cristabelle goes to the field to congratulate her victor, and notices the emblem on his surcoat (a woman and a child on a ship). Eglamour relates the story of his wife and son's demise at sea, and Cristabelle recognizes him as Eglamour. She swoons and welcomes Eglamour, informing him that his son is Degrebelle. After the reunion, the King of Israel offers Degrebelle half of his land while the King of Sedoyne offers him Organata's hand in marriage. Eglamour requests that the wedding take place in Artois. Upon his return he learns that Pryncesamour has fallen out of his tower and broken his neck. The poem closes with the wedding of Degrebelle and Organata.

In the Early English Text Society edition of *Sir Eglamour of Artois,* Frances E. Richardson suggests that the medieval versions of *Eglamour* can be divided into groups based on textual variants. The major variations between the L, C, and F manuscript versions of the poem occur in their treatment of four scenes. There is an extended description of the dragon after Eglamour has killed it in C and F, which is missing from L. In her reunion with Eglamour, Cristabelle asks him his name in C and F, but in L she recognizes him by his emblem and story. At the end of the poem, the description of who travels to Artois for the wedding is shorter in C and F than it is in L. Finally, the marriage scene in C and F involves more of the characters and a bishop to perform the ceremony, whereas in L only a few characters are present. Richardson remarks that, "L seems to reflect [an author's original E] most faithfully in all but the last [i.e. the marriage], where both groups seem equally corrupt" (xv). Richardson's contention, though, relies too heavily on the presumption that the original poem is a perfect narrative. The expectation of a final wedding scene where all are characters are included is the

only way to explain why she thinks L, C, and F are corruptions. A sense of Richardson's reliance on a perfect original is further displayed in her remark that "[it] is hard to tell whether the division SL/CF is due to different archetypes or to corruption of a common original by one group (probably CF)" (xv). A corruption, however, can never be fully understood without the original.

In order to determine what the common original (E) might have looked like, Richardson groups S and L together to compare against C and F. Apart from the major variations, most other variations C and F share against L are dialect changes and sentence structure. Only 160 lines of S survive, though, so it is hard to get a sense of just how much of S might have agreed with L against C and F later in the poem. Richardson deems this small number of lines sufficient to claim that "S fairly often agrees with C, F, or CF against L and is therefore superior to the latter, although SL may have a common original distinct from that of CF" (xv). Most of the variations between L and CF occur after line $160^2$ though, so S cannot be given too much credit for superior readings. Richardson's reliance on the superiority of S and, less so, L has perhaps erroneously caused her to associate these manuscripts too closely with the author's original.

The production history of the Thornton manuscript is well known in comparison to most medieval manuscripts. The Thornton manuscript has been defined by scholars as a household manuscript—a manuscript composed by a patron for his/her own household from collected materials— as opposed to a professional manuscript composed in a scriptorium or by paid scribes. Since I believe the Thornton version of *Eglamour* contains features of a dramatic performance, and Robert Thornton was composing a manuscript for private reading, it is important to make a distinction between the Thornton collection and the texts within it.

The Thornton manuscript was compiled by Robert Thornton of East Newton sometime between 1420 and 1450 (Keiser 159). It is composed of devotional, romance, and medical texts along with

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[2]  For a detailed list of variations see pgs xiv-xvii of Richardson's edition.

miscellaneous fillers. Thornton probably collected his materials over a number of years before committing them to a single manuscript. He left many of the quires unbound and out in the open, presumably to wait for certain materials, which caused some discolouration (Finlayson 640). Scholars have used the discolouration to argue that Thornton had an organizational plan for his manuscript. The discolouration could also indicate that Thornton collected his material from circulating quires or oral sources, which might have taken longer to acquire before being bound together. Due to the diversity of its contents and the information we have about Robert Thornton, the Thornton manuscript has attracted a great deal of attention, especially from those interested in understanding how medieval people might have viewed the literary genre of their culture.

In his article "Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91: Life and Milieu of the Scribe," George R. Keiser tries to piece together the life and collecting habits of Robert Thornton using medieval Yorkshire documents. Keiser's aim is to understand Thornton's social connections through surviving documents, and determine what books they might have lent him to compile both Lincoln Cathedral Library MS. 91 and British Library Additional MS. 31042. He remarks that,

> information from Yorkshire wills certainly suggests that a man in Thornton's circumstances, wishing to put together such a book as the Lincoln MS., would have found it possible, especially over a period of several years, to gain access to texts without serious difficulty. Testamentary evidence indicates that several people with whom Thornton was acquainted did own books (166)

Thornton served as a witness in a number of land transactions and quitclaims. Presumably, Thornton would have known the people he witnessed for, and might have had access to their libraries. The surviving wills of the gentry suggest there were a number of manuscripts containing devotional material that Thornton may have been allowed to borrow. None of the wills Keiser cites list individual works contained in any given manuscript. Keiser notes that the bequeathed books are thematically

similar to the material Thornton collected. Unfortunately, the evidence is inconclusive.

The romances present a slightly different problem for Keiser than the devotional material. Keiser admits that "we find little evidence to suggest that Robert Thornton would have been able to obtain his romances as readily as he could have obtained devotional works" (174). He notes that wills mentioning romance books in English are rare, but there may be hope in "bequests of chronicles, such as the *Brut*" (174). There are a few surviving wills cited by Keiser that mention books which may have contained romances, but the evidence is scant. Keiser concludes that Thornton's contact with clergy, lawyers, and gentry "might well have provided his direct or indirect access to books from the libraries of clerics and educated laymen from York and rural Yorkshire" (177). It is possible, however, given the lack of evidence, that Thornton did not receive his romances from the clergy, gentry, or lawyers, but rather from circulating quires of gathered romances or from oral sources.

Thornton's organization of his romances might indicate the breadth of romances available to him, and where they came from. In his article "Reading Romances in their Manuscript: Lincoln Cathedral Manuscript 91 ('Thornton')," John Finlayson argues that Robert Thornton's organization of the Thornton manuscript's romances might tell us something about his understanding of romance sub-groups. These sub-groups "proceed from 'historical' or heroic, through heroic/adventure composites, and adventure-courtly love works, to end on . . . fantasy" (Finlayson 632). Finlayson groups the romances as follows: *Octavian* and *Isumbras*; *Tolous, Degrevant* and *Eglamour*; and *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Sir Perceval*. For example, *Octavian* and *Isumbras* would be part of a historical or heroic subgroup that "have so much in common [it] would seem to imply a deliberate act of identification and selection, rather than mere random collection" (649). Finlayson makes a similar argument for the other romances as well, which he believes might give some indication of Thornton's understanding of the romance genre and his ability to collect romances of the same type. Finlayson's identification of Thornton's sub-genres suggests substantial access to romance materials. Thornton would have been

unable to organize his manuscript into sub-genres if there had not been examples from each to choose from. If we consider that Thornton may have collected his romances over a longer period of time (Keiser gives a space of about 30 years), he might have been able to collect what was circulating with travellers to form these genre groups.

Not everyone is convinced that the Thornton manuscript follows a genre-defined arrangement. In his article "The Compiler in Action: Robert Thornton," John Thompson analyzes Thornton's organization of his materials to try to understand some of Thornton's motivations for compiling the manuscript. Based on physical evidence from the Thornton manuscript (removed leaves, filler items, re-folding), Thompson believes that "[we] must always suspect that Thornton's ability to decide on the order in which items appear in either of his MSS was restricted by the piecemeal way in which he received his various exemplars" (117). For example, Thompson takes Thornton's copying of *Previte* into an independent gathering as evidence that he may have received the item before he was sure of the overall organization, but did not want to pass up the opportunity of copying an important devotional item (118). If we follow Keiser's contention that Thornton could borrow all of the materials for his manuscript from people he knew whenever he chose, then it seems odd he would copy *Previte* independently. If he could choose when to copy it, presumably he would have planned it into the overall organization of his manuscript.

Thompson specifically takes issue with the idea that Thornton applied thematic organization to the romance section of the Thornton manuscript, and chose what to copy and when to copy it. Taking Thornton's organization of romances from *Octavian* to *Sir Eglamour*[3], for example, Thompson argues that

the purely physical evidence in Thornton's book provides us with no reliable indication of

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[3] This sequence starts with *Octavian* and includes *Sir Ysumbrace*, the *Earl of Toulous, Vita Sancta Christofori...*, *Sir Degrevant*, and *Sir Eglamour*.

whether Thornton copied this sequence [i.e. *Octavian* to *Sir Eglamour*] from a single source or from a variety of different exemplars. Similar short sequences of romances also occur in other medieval miscellanies, so Thornton's importance as a compiler of these texts may have been minimal, especially if we assume that clusters of ME romances occasionally circulated independently of other vernacular items, perhaps even in booklet form. (119)

The lack of a "reliable indication" of Thornton's sources throws into doubt his importance as a genre compiler. It is possible that the sub-genres Finlayson sees in the Thornton manuscript were already circulating together. The addition of *Vita Sancta Christofori* in a middle of Thornton's romances leads Thompson to suggest that "we must also admit the likelihood that Thornton was just as interested in filling up the remaining blank space in gathering G as he was in exercising a degree of medieval 'literary discrimination' when he commenced copying the *Vita Sancta Christofori* on f.122v" (119).

Thompson presents a different argument for Thornton's ability to collect materials. He suggests that Thornton relied more on circulated material or oral sources than the slowly, carefully collected material that Keiser and Finlayson argue for. From both Keiser and Thompson's arguments, however, there is still the sense that Thornton was collecting his material from various sources. Either circulating or borrowed, he collected his material instead of composing it himself. While we can never be sure of what Thornton did compose, if anything, Thompson does observe that Thornton's copying practices are apparent in his version of *Lyarde*. Thornton had ruled his pages for double columns and initially copied the longer single lines of *Lyarde* into them, until he abandoned his ruling in favour of single columns for the rest of the poem (120). If Thornton had written *Lyarde*, presumably he would have decided on the line length in a rough draft of the poem.

Thompson has also found evidence of Thornton refolding quires, removing leaves, and using filler items to complete his manuscript. Thornton refolded one of his quires, for example, to make room for *Eglamour*. Thompson notes that

[p]resumably faced with a shortage of paper, and with more than half of I remaining blank and the other half already containing a romance, Thornton simply had to refold his paper (stage 2) so that ff. 153-154 no longer formed the outer bifolium of the gathering but instead became the central bifolium. Thornton then copied the remainder of *Sir Eglamour* into I . . . Some supplementary MS evidence confirms the plausibility of this reconstruction of Thornton's unorthodox compiling methods. The grubby appearance of ff. 153v and 154r is certainly grubby enough to suggest that these leaves were for a time the worn outer leaves of a gathering which was rearranged as well as incorporated into Thornton's larger collection. (123)

The evidence that Thompson collects could indicate that Thornton was copying his material as it came to him, instead of picking each item carefully from a book collection or composing everything himself. It seems that Thornton was not expecting to receive *Eglamour* when he did, and did not have enough room to copy it without refolding. Thornton's refolding does not necessarily lead to this conclusion outright, but is possible that *Eglamour* came from a circulating booklet or oral source (something that he did not have a lot of time to plan for, instead of an item that he could borrow at will). When faced with the option to copy *Eglamour,* despite not being ready, he chose to copy it out rather than lose the opportunity and have to find it again.

Even though Thornton was composing a household manuscript not all of the materials the Thornton manuscript contains were composed for private reading. This is an important consideration to keep in mind with *Eglamour*, given Bale's chronicle entry. As a reminder, the chronicle entry notes that in the "[i]tem this yer was at seint albons the last of Juyn a play of Eglemour and Degrebelle" (Flenley 117). The "Eglemour and Degrebelle" in the entry must be referring to the Eglamour and Degrebelle characters in *Eglamour*. The question then becomes what text of *Eglamour* served as a source for this play at "seint albons," and what sort of playing space "seint albons" might have offered.

The first scholar, to my knowledge, to write on the possibility of *Eglamour*'s performance was

C.R. Baskervill. In his 1916 article "Some Evidence for Early Romantic Plays in England," Baskervill references the Eglamour chronicle entry along with another possible romance play entry by Bale: "Item the moneth of August was a play at Bermonsey of a knight cleped fflorence" (37). Baskervill is convinced that the play of Eglemour and Degrebelle must be some "version of the romance of *Sir Eglamour of Artois*," but is not sure what romance "fflorence" could be referring to[4]. Initially, Baskerville responds to Ralph Flenley, who argues that Bale's entries are not plays and suggests that

> [t]here is no record of the 'playing' of these romances in any of the other chronicles in the period; indeed the entry has a uniqueness of its kind. In 1409 there was a 'play' at Skinners' Well 'which lasted eight days, and was of matter from the creation of the world'...but this play was quite different in character from the romances mentioned by Bale, which strictly speaking were not plays at all (117).

Flenley fails to indicate why he thinks they "strictly speaking were not plays at all." The 1409 "play" Bale describes seems to be a religious drama of some sort, and can be thematically linked to cycle drama of the period. If anything, the reference to a religious "play" using the same terminology as the romance entries should suggest to us that the romances were plays, rather than "not plays at all," since we know that religious plays were common.

Baskervill believes that the reference to a "play of Eglemour" is to more than just a public reading of the poem. Baskerville says

> I see no reason why 'play' as used by Bale at this period should not be taken to refer to an actual dramatic performance. *Eglemour and Degrebelle* and *A knight cleped fflorence* were probably regular plays for midsummer festivals (40)

Baskervill later suggests that that Eglamour was specifically played at the "midsummer festival of St.

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[4] He speculates that "fflorence" may be referring to either Florence or Florent of *Octavian*, which is interesting given that *Octavian* survives in both Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91 (A. 5. 2.) and British Library Cotton Caligula A. II alongside *Eglamour*.

John and St. Peter and perhaps under the auspices of some church" (40). A festival of St. John or St. Peter is certainly possible, but a festival celebrating St. Alban seems more likely. In his second, concluding article Baskervill notes that, "[d]uring the Middle Ages, practically every church had its annual festival on the anniversary of the saint to whom the church was dedicated" ("Concluded" 95). If Bale is referring to St Albans, Hertfordshire, then the festival was likely the celebration of the martyrdom of St. Alban at the abbey of St. Albans (recently renamed St. Alban's Cathedral) on the day of his martyrdom, the 22$^{nd}$ of June ("Alban," Biddle). It seems more than mere coincidence that St. Alban's anniversary is at end of June, which is when the "play of Eglemour" is said to have taken place.

The town of St. Albans is approximately 20 miles from London ("on the main road north of London"—Freeman, 123) and therefore close enough to be recorded in a London chronicle. St. Albans was a significant town in medieval England. In his book *St. Albans: A History*, Mark Freeman notes that the town shares its origins with a roman settlement, and its abbey dates back to Anglo-Saxon England. He suggests that

> [w]e can be reasonably sure that there was a continuous, or almost continuous, Christian community on the hill overlooking Verulamium [,the roman name for St Albans], and that this evolved into a monastic settlement, based on Benedictine Rule, some time before the late eighth century (44)

Freeman bases his assertion on the archaeological evidence of the Roman town and the medieval histories written by Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris. The abbey of St. Alban survived well into the late Middle Ages, which makes it a possible playing space for *Eglamour*. The town of St Albans was also large enough to host events and attract visitors. Freeman says that "St Albans may have been the 15$^{th}$ largest town in England at this time [in the fifteenth century], and had 580 taxpayers." (123). It is possible, then, that a performance of *Eglamour* could have taken place as part of a festival in

celebration of St Alban, in St Albans, at the end of June in 1443-4.

Saints' festivals in the Middle Ages seem to have included several different types of entertainment. In Bristol, festivals celebrating saints mixed religious ceremony with other entertainment. Mark C. Pilkinton notes that the

St. Katherine's festival seems to have been especially complex; Ricart provides a detailed description of that day's ceremonial customs in 1478-9, when he describes how on St. Katherine's Eve, the mayor, sheriff, and their brethren processed to St Katherine's Chapel within Temple Church where they attended evensong and then processed to St Katherine's Hall where they were worshipfully received by the wardens and brethren of the Hall who provided them with spiced cake and wine. The mayor and his brethren then returned to their own homes where they were later visited at their doors by the St Katherine's players for a performance of some sort accompanied by drink and rewards to the players (xxvii-xxviii).

From the reference to "St. Katherine's players," it is possible that dramatic activity could be a part of saints' festivals in the Middle Ages. The players would presumably have provided entertainment during the day in celebration of St. Katherine, possibly dramatic, along with entertainment for the mayor and his brethren later on.

Other records from Bristol suggest that saints' day celebrations may have included more than religious entertainment. In celebration of St. Peter, at least one parish in Bristol "celebrated Robin Hood and the summer lord custom in May or June" (xxviii). In the Wiredrawers' and Pinmakers' account, Pilkinton also notes records from 1506-7 that call for "extensive payments for the celebration of Corpus Christi, Midsummer, and St Mary Magdalene's Day, including bearing the pageant, hiring minstrels, a lute player, and a harper" (xxvii). Pilkinton notes that the Bakers' Minutes from 1498-9 are surprisingly cryptic, but there are charges

for minstrels, whose services may or may not have been related to either of the two previously

mentioned festivals [St. Clement's day and a Midsummer festival]. . . In 1528-9 the Bakers paid

for minstrels at Midsummer and in 1531-2 they paid five minstrels but do not mention the

occasion of payment. (xxix)

Pilkinton also notes that wagons were not allowed on the city streets of Bristol, given the large

subterranean network underneath the city (xxix). So, whatever performances were taking place, they

are unlikely to have been cycle drama.

The diversity of performance types during saints' day festivals makes a case for the

performance of a romance during a festival of Saint Alban. The entertainments, whatever they were,

did not need to be thematically linked to Saint's lives; for the St. Peter festival in Bristol, there were

celebrations of Robin Hood. The record from the Wiredrawers and Pinmakers is also noteworthy, since

they paid for minstrels as well as lute players and harpers. If the minstrels were not the ones playing the

lutes and harps, then what were they playing? The Bakers also paid minstrels for unknown

entertainments during their midsummer festivals. Could they have been performing plays? It seems

plausible.

Even if saints' day festivals did feature dramatic performances by minstrels, there is still barely

any evidence from medieval England suggesting romances were performed as plays. Baskervill,

however, finds support for romance plays in European records. He mentions records from the

Netherlands and France that refer to romance and secular themed drama. These records refer to plays of

*Esmoreit, Gloriant,* and *Lanseloet* in the Netherlands as well as *Robin et Marion* and an *Estoire de*

*Griseldis* in France (42). Baskervill suggests that

the contact between the English people and the neighbouring peoples of continental Europe

must at least have been close enough to account for a common type of romantic drama as well

as for common ballad and story types. From the time of the Crusades until the Reformation, . . .

[m]embers of the clerical classes passed freely from one country to another, often residing for

long periods in countries other than their own; and travelling scholars and priests were not always unmindful of the joys of song, dance, and drama. For the upper and middle classes pilgrimages to foreign shrines afforded means of contact with other peoples. Minstrels, too, were more or less cosmopolitan. (42)

Travelling minstrels, scholars, priests, and tradesmen exchanged customs as they travelled. France and England shared numerous cultural practices in the Middle Ages in language, entertainment, and literature—a large proportion of the romances that survive in English are based on French sources. Romance drama too could have co-existed in both countries as another shared custom, perhaps brought over to England by travelling performers.

We should not consider the lack of surviving romance play texts in England as an indication that there were no dramatic performances of romances. In her introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre,* Alexandra F. Johnston suggests that understanding the evidence of dramatic activity in the Middle Ages is fraught with difficulty because of medieval people's conceptions of drama and dramatic texts. She argues that

> [n]early all medieval play-texts were ephemeral objects, scripted down for performance purposes only, and the idea of preserving plays in written form did not become common in Britain and Ireland until much later. If medieval plays did come to be written down for long-term preservation it was usually for reasons that had little to do with practical performance. (7-8)

If "the idea of preserving plays in written form" was a later convention, how many plays were lost from the time before? Her mention that their preservation had "little to do with practical performance" explains why so few play-texts survive. Why would a medieval dramatist copy out a play text if it was not needed for a performance? If they could rely on the memory of their actors, or their own memory, they could save money on costly vellum.

Claire Sponsler, in her article "Drama in the Archives: Recognizing Medieval Plays," questions "how we know a medieval play when we see one" (111). Sponsler notes that after all of the archival work done by the *Records of Early English Drama* (*REED*) team, there are no additions to the same handful of Middle English dramatic texts. She suggests that there are a number of reasons why no new play texts have been discovered:

> One reason for the lack of surviving scripts is that many early plays probably existed in forms that were bad candidates for preservation . . . Another reason is that dramatic texts were treated as ephemera, and were assumed to have fulfilled their cultural function once the performance was over . . . It is also possible, however, that more medieval plays have survived than we currently acknowledge and that they lie hidden within manuscripts that conceal their distinctively performative features. (113)

The first two suggestions are similar to those mentioned by Johnston. Medieval drama might not have been viewed as worth preserving except in special cases, and discarded. The third idea that medieval plays "lie hidden within [their] manuscripts," suggests that the form some medieval drama survives in is, to us, unrecognizable as drama.

Sponsler supports her suggestion with the "distinctly performative features" of John Lydgate's mummings. The mummings and entertainments are a series of one-off performance pieces preserved by the scribe John Shirley in Trinity College Cambridge MS R. 3. 20 (Nolan 169). The only poems described by Shirley specifically as mummings are the *Mumming of Eltham, Mumming at Windsor, Mumming for the Goldsmiths of London,* and the *Mumming for the Mercers of London.* They were not the only ones to make use of costuming, though. Shirley notes that the *Disguising at London* and the *Disguising at Hertford* were disguisings—entertainments that were mimed using costumes. The dramatic qualities of some of the other entertainments are less obvious. According to Shirley, *Bycorne and Chychevache* and *The Legend of St. George* were wall hangings or paintings with accompanying

recitation of the poem. The *Mumming at Bishopswood* and *Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in Oure Dayes* were ballads. Shirley describes *Henry VI's Triumphal Entry into London* and *A Procession of Corpus Christi* as ordinances, and there are no headnotes for the *Pageant of Knowledge* and *Mesure is Tresour*. Shirley's headnotes are the only surviving evidence that any of these poems were performed during special civic and regal occasions. At first glance, there would otherwise be little reason to suspect that the mummings were ever performed dramatically. Their dramatic nature, then, is arguably concealed by the form in which they survive.

Despite the fact that John Shirley preserved the mummings and identified them as such, his treatment of the mummings otherwise tends to their further concealment. Sponsler suggests that

> Shirley's glosses seem geared towards information that aids understanding of the written text rather than imaginative recreation of the performance; they are notes intended to enhance the reading experience, not to recapture a lost performance context. Finally, it is worth noting that the mummings were virtually indistinguishable in appearance from the poems that surround them...They look like what in Shirley's hands they have become: poetry designed for private reading. (121)

Sponsler further notes that "while internal evidence implies some sort of performance context [for the mummings], without Shirley's rubric few of these texts would today be identified as performances of any kind." (114). Shirley's practices are a double-edged sword. Because of Shirley's desire to retain the mummings as poems, we are given a rare glimpse at other types of medieval dramatic performance. The mummings open up the possibility that other dramatic texts exist in our current repertoire of manuscripts, even if they don't look the part. Conversely, we are left with an incomplete picture of what those dramatic performances were like. Shirley was interested in preserving for a reading audience, not for dramatic recreations. So, there is no way to know just how much Shirley left out of his descriptions or what the original performances looked like.

Shirley is important nonetheless. As Sponsler notes, the mummings "demonstrate that dramatic texts do not always signal their performativity. If Shirley had not used headnotes to identify the mummings as such, there would be little to suggest that they were anything other than non-dramatic poems" (122). We have Shirley to thank then that we have any information at all, and we now have useful models for tackling the performance histories of other medieval texts.

## Minstrel Oral Performances

The possible staged performance of romances stands against current beliefs about romance performance in the Middle Ages. Generally, scholars of romances tend to divide into two positions about how romances were composed and performed. In his introduction to the edited collection of essays *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, Ad Putter summarizes these positions as follows:

1. Popular romances are the improvised compositions of minstrels. They were recited orally at feasts and festivals, intended for the ears of ordinary folk, for the 'people' (whence the designation 'popular' romances).

2. So-called popular romances were composed and copied for the amusement and edification of the newly literate classes—not the lower orders, but the gentry and the prosperous middle classes who formed the market for the trade in vernacular books in the later medieval period. (3)

He defines these groups as "romantics" (the former) and "revisionists" (the latter).

The strongest support for the revisionist claim comes from the surviving manuscripts. Most of the surviving romances are contained in household collections, like the Thornton Manuscript, which contain a mixture of secular and religious material (Putter, 4; Finlayson 635). Other manuscripts containing selections of romances are arguably too large to be lugged around by a minstrel (Putter, 4;

Taylor "The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript," 44). The lack of evidence of minstrel recitals[5] from the manuscripts is not all that surprising, though. As Putter suggests:

> manuscripts were written and they were read; that they are not going to give us evidence of minstrel recitations or memorial composition was predictable from the start. And what might make us suspicious about some revisionist claims is the convenience with which things that lie beyond the scope of codicological evidence are declared never to have existed. (7)

Individual texts within each manuscript may contain traces of memorial transfer, as Murray McGillivray argues, but otherwise the manuscripts themselves do little to support the claim of minstrel recitation.

In his article "The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript," Taylor determines what manuscripts can tell us about minstrel performances practices. Taylor begins by arguing that the manuscripts that have traditionally been believed to belong to minstrels have been falsely assigned to them. The manuscripts scholars attribute to minstrels are usually too large, too richly illuminated, or in too good a condition to serve as travelling texts (44). He also challenges the "widespread assumption that there exists *somewhere* a body of . . . small, plain, battered, working texts that the minstrels are alleged to have carried with them on their travels" (43). Instead, Taylor looks for possible candidates in other manuscripts, rolls, and surviving sheets.

MS Douce 302 is a manuscript that is too large to be a travelling copy, but was owned by a minstrel; it is signed and was probably owned by the minstrel William Wyatt[6] (65). So, how would William Wyatt have used this manuscript in his practice? Taylor argues that "[b]ooks are heavy and fragile and can be stolen; a wise jongleur would leave his book at home when he took to the road and content himself with a handful of scrolls." (Taylor 49). This idea is an interesting way of rethinking

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[5] I take 'minstrel recital' to mean an oral performance of a romance poem by a single performer, with or without music.

[6] Taylor is unsure of whether William's last name is Wyatt or Vyott. I have chosen Wyatt for the sake of consistency.

what revisionists declare, "lie[s] beyond the scope of codicological evidence." A handful of scrolls would be much easier to manage, and the 'good copy' could be left at home for reference.

The assumption that minstrels would use battered travelling manuscripts stems from ideas that all minstrels were lowborn, poor, and only interested in material that they could perform. Taylor notes that "[s]ome minstrels led stable, prosperous, respectable lives, held considerable social rank, and took part in civic affairs. It is not that surprising to find a minstrel like Wyatt with literary tastes both pious and sophisticated" (73). A minstrel manuscript, then, could have contained any number of genres besides romances. More importantly, a minstrel might have been able to afford a richly illuminated manuscript. They were not confined to only owning battered manuscripts and performing for little gain.

In his conclusion, Taylor argues that there is simply not enough evidence to draw broad generalizations about minstrel practices. He notes that

> [o]n the one hand, the genuine working texts, those whose physical condition alone might allow us to ascribe them to performers with some confidence, would be least likely to survive . . . The number of possible examples that survive into this century is too small and their pattern of preservation too haphazard to form a useful sample of the minstrel repertoire. Even if we could identify them with confidence, we could not generalize from them . . . At the other extreme, collections such as Wyatt's demonstrate that minstrels did not live in a world of their own, hermetically sealed from other cultural interests of their time and limited to reading exclusively those texts that they might hope to perform. (73)

Minstrels were capable of filling any number of social positions, regardless of our assumptions. Taylor does not discount the possibility of minstrel oral performances either. He concludes that we do not have enough evidence to determine the roles minstrels filled, but that we should keep our minds open to all of the possibilities.

Taylor's caution is applicable to all aspects of minstrel performance. Recent romance scholars

have taken a more cautious approach to minstrel activities. The romantics have, after all, what Putter notes as the "difficult task of producing evidence for phenomena which are by their very nature ephemeral" (7). Without careful research, ephemeral evidence can easily lead to incorrect assumptions. Early romantics such as Thomas Percy in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, or E.K. Chambers in the late nineteenth to early twentieth, were less than careful. They "envisioned a glorious, unbroken history of the minstrel as the 'genuine successor' of Celtic bards and Germanic scalds, and 'a privileged character' in the Norman and English courts" (Shuffelton 51). More recent romantic scholars, such as John Southworth, Karl Reichl, and Michael Chesnutt continue to argue that there is some truth to Percy's portrayal of the minstrel performer. In Southworth's words, "the popular image, however inaccurate in detail, contains a kernel of truth which, in the final analysis, may prove more important than scholarly quibbles" (1).

In his article "Is There a Minstrel in the House?: Domestic Entertainment in Late Medieval England," George Shuffelton notes that this "romantic" desire for a popular minstrel figure comes from a nostalgia born well before even Thomas Percy's scholarship. Shuffelton argues that our view of minstrel performers is nuanced by writers in the Middle Ages, who were already starting to glorify minstrels as harbingers of good fortune. The author of MS Ashmole 61, for example, glorifies minstrels in the texts he copied as a sign of a thriving and generous household. Shuffelton suggests that the early nostalgia created by medieval writers affected the scholarship of Thomas Percy and those who followed.

The romantic claim of minstrel performance is not without support, although the early claims have had to be nuanced to account for new historical evidence. The romantics can still find support for minstrel romance recitals outside of the manuscripts that contain them. Putter cites two contemporary references, one from Robert Mannyng and another from William of Nassyngton, who reference minstrels and their practices in the Middle Ages. William of Nassyngton, for example, complains that

minstrels "make spekyng in mony a place / Of Octovian and Isanbrace / And of many other gestes" (qtd in Putter, 8). As for the surviving manuscripts, Putter believes that both minstrels and scribes were likely involved in the processes of romance writing. He argues "[r]omances passed easily from the hands of readers to the memories of minstrels or listeners, and from the oral recitations of minstrels or amateurs back into the writing of scribes" (13).

In their book *Jongleur,* William A. Quinn and Audley S. Hall argue that minstrels played a fairly dominant role in the creation of some romance texts. They present a statistical study of *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*, arguing that the former contains indications of oral improvisation while the latter does not:

> we assume that the manuscripts of *King Horn* represent (with only minor scribal errors) the romance as it was actually performed...Thus, rather than asserting that *Horn* did not meet one formal definition of the verse line (i.e., its metrical regularity as evident in *Havelok*), we suggest that its *jongleur* did not have this definition of the form that he would strive to maintain during an oral performance. (37)

Quinn and Hall argue that many of the recurring phrases and words are a set of stock groupings that jongleurs would memorize and use as they saw fit. These memorized groups form Quinn and Hall's statistical model of improvisation. They believe that *King Horn* was improvised by a minstrel rather than memorized, which they suggest is demonstrated by how often stock end-rhymes are used. Their model relies exclusively on the end-rhymes of each line, which they argue is all the jongleur would memorize in order to improvise an entire text.

There are problems with Quinn and Hall's argument. First, if a minstrel simply memorized the end-rhyme words and improvised the rest of the text, then the surviving manuscripts of *King Horn* would be different in everything but the rhyming words. Instead, Andrew Taylor notes that "[r]oughly eighty-five per cent of the lines in *King Horn* are common to at least two versions, varying only

slightly in their phraseology and rhymes," so a jongleur only memorizing the end of the line cannot be the case ("Fragmentation, Corruption, and Minstrel Narration," 47). Second, Quinn and Hall's theory relies on the assumption that the surviving manuscripts of *King Horn* were copied directly from performance, or are a witness to performance, by a jongleur. But one of the manuscripts that contains *King Horn*, MS Harley 2253, could also have been composed for, rather than from, recitation. In her article "Compilation and Purpose in MS Harley 2253," Susanna Fein suggests that the scribe had a very clear purpose "working as an artist—perhaps a better term is 'producer'—with an evident plan towards recitation, performance, and other practical use (such as preaching and counsel) in a multilingual and social setting" (68). The arguments by Taylor and Fein cast Quinn and Hall's theory into doubt, and make their model inconclusive when applied to other romances.

A multivalent approach to romance authorship is a better way of approaching the authorship of Middle English romances. In his 1959 article "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance," A.C. Baugh argues against considering oral improvisation as the main method of composing Middle English romances, and suggests that both scribes and minstrels played a role in the transmission of romances. Starting with Parry's analysis of the Homeric poems, Baugh traces what scholars have argued for as elements of oral improvisation. These elements are best summarized as

> the presence of stock expressions which fit a particular metrical need—the *formulas* in Milman
>
> Parry's terminology—and . . . the presence of certain descriptive or narrative elements, called
>
> *themes*, which in their repeated occurrences follow conventional patterns. (Baugh, 431)

Baugh surveys six Middle English romances[7] for "formulas" and "themes," and cites numerous examples of their existence. Instead of concluding that Middle English romances were composed through improvisation, however, he notes that two of the Middle English romances, *Guy of Warwick* and *Beves of Hampton*, closely follow their French sources. The closeness to their French sources

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[7] *King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Beves of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, Richard the Lion-hearted,* and *Athelston.*

implies that both of these romances were translated rather than orally improvised.

To account for elements of oral improvisation and direct translations in the same text, Baugh argues for shared authorship in the composition of Middle English romances. He says

> I do not suggest that we eliminate the scribe. Some manuscripts were copied and some copyists were careless. Not all the differences between one text and another reflect changes due to the reciter. I am only insisting that while some of these differences are such as can be accounted for by the familiar principles of hermeneutics, many others cannot. (439)

Shared authorship explains why a text would contain written and oral blunders. As Baugh notes, romances are unlikely to have been written by minstrels, but rather rewritten by minstrels who used them for oral performances (440). Both scribes and minstrels, then, might affect a text in a number of ways. Many of the copies that have survived to today, then, are likely to be an amalgamation of effort by various contributors.

One of the oral blunders that can be found in written copies are memorial transfers. McGillivray argues that there are textual clues that we can use to discover the role that memory played in the manuscript history of the romances. He notes that

> [m]emorial transfer, the movement of material from one part of a text to another part which is physically remote, but which is liable to confusion with it because of similarities of situation, content, or language, is a very secure indication that the entire text in which it occurs has at some stage of its transmission been committed to memory. (5)

McGillivray finds memorial transfers in each of the four romances he studies: *Floris and Blaucheflur, King Horn, The Seege of Troye,* and *Sir Orfeo.* In these four cases, it is plausible that a minstrel played some part in the textual history of the romance, whether these minstrels dictated their memorized text to a scribe, or copied it out themselves. The same may be true of other romances as well, and the tradition of minstrels memorizing texts and transmitting them to scribes may have continued

throughout the Middle Ages. The memorization of romances by minstrels certainly helps explain the lack of minstrel manuscripts, and also accounts for the textual peculiarities in the manuscripts that do survive.

A few scholars have looked to nuance the question of minstrel recital as more than the recitation of an entire poem. In his article "Fragmentation, Corruption, and Minstrel Narration: The Question of the Middle English Romances," Taylor discusses the problems minstrels may have faced with reciting long pieces of poetry for an audience and the public reception of minstrels in the Middle Ages (39). Whether a minstrel performed at a feast, a festival, a campfire, or a hall, Taylor believes that the minstrel would always have had to compete for attention:

> The would-be story-teller would have to compete with the full range of musical instruments, including trumpets and shawms, as well as the less culturally demanding entertainment provided by dancers, tumblers, magicians, and clowns . . . It is impossible to imagine anyone reciting a poem of any length or complexity in the midst of the cacophony which must have been produced by the famous *menestrellorum multitudo"* (55).

The liveliness of an event does not lend itself well to a long, drawn out performance. It is also possible that a performer may have read the poem aloud during a quieter part of the evening, after the more spectacular events had come to a close. Even then, Taylor draws attention to an idea that is not often considered: how would a minstrel perform at a festival while competing with other entertainments?

The answer: Taylor suggests that minstrels may have still recited romances, but only sections that were fitting to the occasion. A minstrel could memorize an entire romance, but would pick and choose sections according to audience and occasion:

> Whatever the *gestours*[8] were reciting, therefore, they cannot as a general rule, have been reciting the romances, or at least if they were, they must have been in the habit of doing

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[8] Taylor's chosen word for minstrel.

outrageous violence to their text. That, of course, is exactly the accusation made by numerous

medieval poets. Again and again the writers express their scorn for the popular entertainers, the

*scurrae, ludi, histriones, jongleurs, bordours, disours, gestours,* minstrels, and so forth who

steal and then corrupt their work, thus winning praise and rewards. (Taylor 58)

Taylor cites numerous examples of medieval poets and authors accusing performers of corrupting their

work: Froissart, Benoit de Sainte-Maure, Jean Lefebvre, Lambert d'Ardres, The Chandos Herald. The

passages Putter notes from Robert Mannyng and William of Nassyngton are similarly unhappy with the

way minstrels destroy their work. The surviving evidence of authors complaining about the minstrel art

certainly suggests that minstrels were actively reciting poems. Perhaps, they were doing more of the

rewriting that Baugh suggests, though, than reciting word for word.

Some minstrels may have owned lavish manuscripts. Others may have carried scrolls with

them, or simply memorized the poems they wished to recite. Their recitations altered the romances they

memorized enough to provoke the complaints of the authors that wrote them. Minstrels also were at

least partially involved in the process of preserving romances in manuscript copies, possibly by

working closely with scribes. We do not require a linear history of minstrel performance, from "Celtic

bards and Germanic scalds", to realize that minstrels were diverse performers in the Middle Ages. A

minstrel, as a type of performer, was capable of performing a wide variety of texts, likely in a variety

of ways. Would a minstrel, or more accurately a troupe of minstrels, have performed a romance play,

though?

## Players or Minstrels?

The records of minstrel and player performances in the Middle Ages are often unclear about

what types of performance each group was responsible for. James M. Gibson notes a few cases in the

Kent *Records of Early English Drama* where "the records do distinguish between . . . minstrels on the one hand and players on the other hand" (li). Gibson concedes a few sentences later, though, that

> [f]rom the distant perspective of several centuries the exact distinctions between . . . late medieval and early modern minstrels and players remain blurred. Players may have employed music in their plays; minstrels may have employed mimetic activity in their performances. There is usually no way of telling. (li)

Gibson also notes that there are a few payments to both players and minstrels together. As far as the Kent records seem to indicate, then, there is no real way to differentiate between players and minstrels.

Other REED editors have found the same evidence for minstrel and player activities. In Sussex, Louis notes that

> [t]he former term [minstrel] seems to imply more of a musical performance and the latter [player] more of a histrionic one although many of the performers undoubtedly made use of both talents, as possibly is implied by the wording of a payment to a minstrel for 'singing and playing' at a Brotherhood dinner in 1554-5 (xxxvii)

As Suzanne Westfall aptly notes

> any investigation of the role of minstrels in medieval and Renaissance society is fraught with problems, due to the tremendous quantity and varying quality of manuscript references to these performers. The most frustrating problem is, unfortunately, also the most fundamental: the confusion in terminology. Entertainers such as jesters, jugglers, acrobats, and poets were called 'minstrales', 'histriones', and 'ludentes' (63-4)

The best approach may be to stay away from either designation. Minstrels could have performed a romance play just as easily as players. The conflation of terminology in the Middle Ages suggests that medieval peoples did not distinguish between one type of performer over the other in a variety of contexts.

Certainly either players or minstrels could have performed a play of *Eglamour*. Minstrels are so firmly connected to the romance tradition that a troupe might have decided to dramatize a romance. Players on the other hand are more directly associated with dramatic performance. For the purpose of this thesis I will refer to performers of *Eglamour* as performers. Given the diversity of minstrel performance practices, however, there is no reason to assume that a troupe of minstrels could not stage a romance play—even if romances are not currently associated with medieval dramatic activity. In the next chapter, I will analyze a selection of dramatic plays from England and Europe, and suggest what they might tell us about how *Eglamour* may have been staged as a play.

## Chapter 2: Possible Analogous Texts to *Eglamour*

Although *Eglamour* contains none of the usual features of a dramatic script it is still possible that the romance, as we have it, was performed. In this chapter my aim is to investigate the possibility of *Eglamour*'s performance by examining various types of performance in the tradition of English drama, which might serve as useful models to compare *Eglamour* to. The plays I will focus on are *Dame Sirith, Mankind,* and a selection of Lydgate's mummings. There are three ways to account for the St. Albans performance record of *Eglamour,* if it in fact records a staged dramatic performance. First, the text of *Eglamour* might have been developed from a play script that does not survive, into the narrative form it exists in today. Second, the romance of Eglamour could have been adapted into a play script, which does not survive, from something similar to its current form. Finally, without major alteration, our surviving text of *Eglamour* could have been performed as a mumming or a narrated drama—a narrator figure would recite the narrative while figures silently acted out the parts on stage. The first and second possibilities must be admitted. It is true that a play text could have been written and lost. This chapter seeks to explore the possibility that the text of the romance *Eglamour* could have been performed without alterations, though, and I do not believe it is necessary to assume that any text other than the romance as we have it was used for the St. Albans performance.

My exploration of the possibilities of *Eglamour*'s performance begins with a look at how poetry might have been performed dramatically in the Middle Ages. There is evidence that medieval people thought that classical theatre included poetry, which was read aloud with accompanying mime. In her article "Theatre in the Middle Ages: Evidence from Dictionaries and Glosses," Mary H. Marshall attempts to understand how people in the Middle Ages viewed theatre (both classical and contemporary) by looking at glosses and dictionaries from the period. One of the most important medieval dictionaries (with over 1000 surviving manuscripts) is Isidore of Seville's encyclopaedic

*Etymologiae*, which was composed in the early Middle Ages (Marshall 8). Marshall suggests that "Isidore's information on the Roman theatre, his definitions of theatrical terms, formed the general basis of mediaeval knowledge on these subjects" (8). His influence spread beyond his own composition of *Etymologiae*, and many commentaries, glosses and glossaries reference Isidore as an authority on classical theatre (Marshall 18).

Isidore's understanding of the performance of roman fables might shed some light on how medieval peoples viewed the performance of poetry. In Isidore's description of fable performances, he "explained [mimes] as imitators of human affairs, expressing the fables (plays, 'fabulas') of poets with physical gestures. The author spoke the fable before they acted it, and the poets composed fables to be apt for expression by motion of the body" (Marshall 11). Joseph Jones also adds, in a separate article, that "Isidore seems to say . . . that a play, or a least an ancient play, was always recited by one person while mute actors gesticulated" (1). Isidore's writings on Roman theatre might even reflect medieval theatrical practice. Perhaps Isidore was basing his models on practices that were familiar to him—if poems were being performed with mimes during the medieval period, he may have assumed that the same was true of Roman theatre. Bruce Moore reminds us that

> [t]he belief that narrative passages vitiate the dramatic springs from a bias more modern than medieval. Throughout the medieval period there are plays which include narrator figures. At times, indeed, the narrator's is the only voice, while the actions are performed by mimes. This is the way most medieval writers understood the classical drama to have been performed, but it is also the dramatic mode of most of the Lydgate's mummings, of the civic pageants, of the *sermo semidrammatico*, and possibly the early Latin comedies. (156)

However Isidore was basing his model, we can infer from Isidore's influence that medieval peoples did not draw the same distinctions we do about the performance of poetry; they were unlikely to perceive a narrator as out of place on stage.

The use of a narrator figure was fairly widespread in continental drama. In his book *The Prologue in the Old French and Provençal Mystery*, David Carnahan notes that French mystery plays often employ a narrator in their opening prologues. He argues that this narrator figure (which he calls a 'prologuist') exists "for the purpose of fixing the attention of the audience, [and] of giving them an understanding of the plot" (7). The prologuist fills in details for the audience that are not explicit from the action and dialogue of the play. Modern theatre has more or less lost the need for a narrator on stage. Elaborate staging and props dissolve the need for setting descriptions. The audience's attention is already fixed on the performance, since most people are going out of their way to attend the play and are often paying for it. And, the plot is driven by character interaction, dialogue, and developed throughout the course of the play. Many elements that make the prologuist or narrator important in medieval drama are unnecessary and discarded in modern drama.

In continental medieval cycle drama, a narrator could promote the didactic and devotional elements of a play for the audience. In his article "Expositor Figures in Some Cycle Plays in French and German," Peter Happé suggests that the "Expositors"[9] position outside of the drama enables them to regulate pace and expression. In this respect their metatheatrical function is more pronounced. They remind the spectators that they are watching something artificial and something subject to contrivance and management" (46). The "artificial[ity]" of the play allows Expositors to draw a connection between biblical history and the medieval present. Once this connection was established, the Expositors could improve the "dramatic experience by adding layers of interpretation, worship, and doctrinal exegesis . . . [and urge] their listeners towards the emotional aspects of what was enacted and towards the practice of the faith" (Happé 67). A medieval dramatist, then, could use a narrator figure in his plays to ensure that the audience understood the significance of what was happening on stage, how the action related to biblical teaching, and how it reflected the audience's own devotional practices.

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[9] Happé's choice word for a narrator or prologuist figure.

A dramatist could also use a narrator figure to describe travelling scenes, when the setting or method of travel was too complicated to portray visually. Narrated travelling scenes could reduce the staging requirements by explaining a location rather than showing it. Travelling scenes could also allow actors to change props and costume as the audience's attention is fixed on the narrator and his description. In his article "Prompting the Action: The Prologue, the Messenger, and the Fool," Mario Longtin describes narrator-type figures in French mystery drama, called messengers, who narrated travelling scenes for the audience. A messenger is sent from imaginary location to location and, during his faux travels, he describes his travelling to the audience while explaining the setting and other narrative details.

The messenger of the French mysteries convinces the audience that the settings have changed. Longtin remarks that

> the role of the Messenger is the champion of geographical or spatial changes. He is sent from one location to another, moving freely where other characters are unable to move, and actually defining the spaces of the stage through his motions and words...Most of the time he stabilizes the reality of the location by telling the audience when he arrives at his destination, fixing the location by his words. (199)

The narrator helps with the suspension of disbelief as the audience imagines the characters and themselves being transported to a new location. This suspension of disbelief functions as a way of "using the evocative nature of language to solve potential technical problems [with staging]" (Longtin 198). If the messenger is able to "[fix] the location by his words," then there is no need to match it to the visual staging, which could have been costly and difficult to transport.

In English cycle drama, the N-Town *Mary Play*'s Contemplacio is a narrator who functions similarly to the expositors and messengers of continental cycle drama. In her book *Medieval English Drama,* Katie Normington says that

Contemplacio serves as a narrator and a device though which the audience can contemplate the meaning of the drama. His role is fundamental to this drama in many ways; his interjections link   scenes, connect epic time frames, and instruct and represent the audience when it needs guidance. He frequently shifts time forward in order to focus upon new aspects of Mary's life (107)

Contemplacio is a character who appears throughout the N-Town *Mary Play*, but never interacts with the performers[10]. He is the first and last speaker of the play, and introduces each episode of Mary's life. Contemplacio also controls time and space, and is able to transport the audience metaphorically to different dates in medieval Christian history. Contemplacio therefore moves freely where "other characters are unable to move," just as the Messenger did in the French cycle drama.

In the *Conversion of St. Paul*, the character Poeta is an expositor that is similar to Contemplacio, but different in a number of key ways. Peter Meredith notes that

Poeta's role is . . . like Contemplacio's. He remains incognito and contains the action by introducing and rounding off the play as well as appearing within the action to move it forward. Where Contemplacio stresses time, [however,] Poeta stresses skill. They are not, he says, rhetoricians (lines 355, 656-60); the real story is in the Bible, where the audience can read it (lines 10-11, 158-60, 352); the compiler has done his best, as he should, but he's open to correction (lines 356-59). (306)

The humility Poeta displays, Meredith concludes, "engages the audience, whereas Contemplacio's concern with time simply seems like worry" (306). Whether Poeta is a more effective expositor than Contemplacio or not is debatable, but he is just as important. The emphases Poeta stresses would have a different effect on the audience than the time-focused commentary by Contemplacio. He still drives

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[10] There is one speech, before the Parliament of Heaven, where Contemplacio does interact with other characters. Peter Meredith argues, however, that a scribe erroneously gave this speech to Contemplacio, because he was unsure of whom the actual speaker was (295).

the plot though, and seems to have been added by an author who wished to demonstrate his humility and ability to accept "correction."

Medieval dramatists used narrators in different ways, depending on the needs of their play and what they wished to portray to the audience. In the Chester cycle, David Mills notes that the 'Expositor' or 'Doctor' figure is integral to the flow and understanding of the Abraham, Balaam, Nativity, Temptation, and Prophets of Antichrist plays (311). He suggests that

> [i]n theatrical terms, the Expositor's interventions punctuate the action, privileging the larger thematic function. He stands between the performers of the historical action and the audience, objectifying the action to them and creating a meditative distance between audience and players within the close and intimate space of the street-theatre. (314)

Chester's Expositor is different from both Poeta and Contemplacio. Mills notes that the Chester plays take a more serious approach to the pastness of the biblical histories that they portray (311). Even then, while the Expositor is "stand[ing] between the performers of the historical action and the audience" he is also explaining the significance of actions on stage to the audience.

The Chester cycle also included mimed action, which the Expositor was in charge of relating to the audience. Mills notes that,

> the Expositor's interventions seem to cover an ongoing silent action on stage. In this case, his speech follows a stage direction which refers to the exchange of gifts: *Here they doe goe together, and Abraham dothe take the bred and wyne, and Melc. the laden horse* (line 112sd) and by the end of the speech, Lot and Melchysedeck and the gifts have evidently gone and God confronts Abraham: *Here God appeareth to Abraham and saythe* (line 144sd). (315)

Even cycle plays, then, could include mimed action and the narrator was in charge of making sure that the audience understood what was happening on stage. It makes sense to have a figure explaining the actions on stage, especially if they are silent; medieval dramatic performances were anything but quiet,

and spectators needed to compete with other spectators to see and hear a play (Normington 1).

The inclusion of figures like narrators, Expositors, Doctors, 'Poetas,' and 'Contemplacios' in English drama shows that narrators could function successfully in dramatic pieces. The presence of narration should not immediately disqualify other texts as non-dramatic. Dramatists used narrators for a variety of functions, and each served a different function depending on what the author wanted to convey to his audience.

If narrators could be used for cycle drama, they could be used in other drama. In his article "Narrative and Dialogue in Medieval Secular Drama," Peter Dronke argues that five narrative texts (two Latin, two English, and one Spanish) could have been performed as plays, with a different actor for each part, despite their inclusion of narration. The texts he examines are *Pamphilus, Ovidius puellarum, Dame Sirith,* the fragmentary *Interlude of the clerk and the girl,* and the *Querella.* Apart from all being texts that contain dialogue and narration, these five poems also share thematic similarities. They are all, in some part, about a man winning the love of a woman who shuns his advances (usually through the cunning of an old woman). Dronke argues that this theme seems to lend itself well to dramatic adaptation, and he uses evidence from each to "suggest how, in the question of performance, they illuminate one another" (99).

*Pamphilus* was described by a medieval observer of the play as performed by "more than on actor, and that the actors impersonated the characters by use of mime and gesture—even, if we recall his word *saltationes,* by movements of a dance-like kind" (100). Dronke supports this record with evidence from the text that it could have been performed by multiple actors, such as an erotic love scene between Pamphilus and Galatea that would have required more than one person on stage for the exchange. In *Ovidus puellarum,* Dronke concedes that evidence in the text for more than one performer is less decisive than *Pamphilus,* but still present. There is an exchange between the messenger and the poet-protagonist, for example, that might indicate multiple performers. There are also letters marking

different characters in the margins of the earliest extant manuscript: P for Puella and N for Nuncius (Dronke 104). Dronke notes, however, that "[e]vidently [these ascriptions] are not decisive: the letters may have been meant as indications for a single performer when to change voice and bearing (104).

The *Interlude between the Clerk and the Girl* has scholarly consensus about its status as a drama. The plot of the *Interlude* is similar to both *Dame Sirith* and *Pamphilus*. Other scholars have suggested that the *Interlude* is just a dramatic adaptation of *Dame Sirith*. Dronke argues that the *Interlude* is closer to the *Pamphilus* than *Dame Sirith*, though, and argues that

> everything in the surviving part of the *Interlude* is compatible with its being adapted from *Pamphilus*, and several moments in the wording and design seem to betray the *English* playwright's acquaintance with the Latin text. While he also knew *Dame Sirith*, I can find no sign in his text that he was planning to follow the *Sirith* plot: rather the contrary, since winning the love of a girl who is free to love implies a radically different kind of plot from winning a married woman's favours. Thus our earliest English material suggests to me traces of two distinct thirteenth-century plays, and not a fabliau version and a dramatized one of the same story. (116)

Dronke also uses the similarities between *Pamphilus* and the *Interlude* as evidence that medieval people viewed *Pamphilus* as a play and not a poem. Since I will provide a detailed analysis of *Dame Sirith* in this chapter, I will avoid summarizing Dronke's analysis of *Sirith*'s own dramatic qualities.

In *Querella* the lover "is not successful seducer but victim—victim of hopeless love, and, in terms of the composition, victim of his own dreams" (117). Dronke notes that where *Ovidus puellarum* was less convincingly dramatic, *Querella* is better executed in its transitions between narrative and dialogue. He notes that the scribe Lázaro, who copied out the manuscript *Querella* is contained in, even "added to the text his own imaginative stage-directions" (119). Dronke argues that

> [i]f we accept his [Lázaro's] sensitive interpretation, and envisage the words not only as spoken

by diverse characters but as enhanced by lute-music and mime, the *Querella* will have been a

courtly entertainment of exceptional artistry and élan. (119)

Dronke's evidence for *Querella*'s dramatic performance is based on his original statement that each

text "illuminate[s] one another" concerning performance. *Querella* contains large sections of pure

dialogue, like *Pamphilus*, and makes better use of the poet-protagonist figure than *Ovidus puellarum*. If

we are compelled to believe that both of those texts were dramatic, then it is not such a far stretch to

believe that *Querella* could be too—especially with Lázaro's stage directions.

Even if texts including narration could be dramatically performed, Dronke does not suggest that

all were meant to be. He warns that

> [it] is naturally right not to be over-credulous, not simply to assume without close investigation
>
> that any piece containing substantial dialogue must have been presented as a play. Yet at times
>
> it has seemed in the past as if scholarly agnosticism had turned aggressive, as if what mattered
>
> was to try [and] prove that even something which bore every mark of being a play . . . was not a
>
> play after all. (120)

Dronke's warnings are fair. The customs and practices of one culture do not necessarily transfer to

another, but they are informative. If a narrative text contains all hints of being dramatically performed,

we should be open to the possibility that it was. Whether the performance of Eglamour and Degrebelle

in 1443 may have been one such text is the investigation that makes up the rest of this study.

In order to explore the possibility that *Eglamour* was performed as narrated drama, I turn to

other dramatic practices that survive from Medieval England. I will discuss *Dame Sirith*, *Mankind*, and

a selection of John Lydgate's mummings. I will compare these texts to *Eglamour* to show how

*Eglamour* could have been performed.

**Dame Sirith**

The first text is *Dame Sirith,* a poem that was likely copied from a play script, given some of its peculiar features. *Dame Sirith* is a Middle English fabliau, 450 lines long, which is almost entirely composed of dialogue between the three characters Wilekin, Margery, and Dame Sirith. Wilekin falls in love with a married woman, Margery, who shuns his advances. Wilekin then turns to Dame Sirith for help. She tricks Margery into thinking that Wilekin will transform her into a dog if she does not give in to his advances. Wilekin wins Margery over and she agrees to sleep with him.

In their edited collection of *Early Middle English Verse and Prose* J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers say that *Dame Sirith* "would have been done not by three actors[11], but by a single minstrel who spoke all three parts, by means of changes in the voice and dress and of appropriate gestures" (78). They suggest that this was likely the case given that most of the poem is dialogue, there are a few narrative passages, and there are speech tags like 'he said' or 'she said.' For example, Margery's first line of speech contains a speech tag: "Welcome, so ich ever bide wenne, / *Quod this wif.*" (26-7, my emphasis). The speech tags are infrequent, however, and the poem contains character ascriptions in the margins to show who is speaking, which are noted by the letters C, V, F and T (Bennett and Smithers 78). T, which probably stood for thymelicus, is used to designate the narrator. Thymelicus is a medieval Latin word used by churchmen to "express their disapproval of mime-players, clowns, and actors (Dronke 110). By the second half of *Dame Sirith,* though, the scribe stops using these character ascriptions entirely. Bennett and Smithers take this disappearance as evidence that *Dame Sirith* was not performed as a play.

In his article "The Narrator in the Performance: Problems with Two Medieval 'Plays'," Bruce Moore discusses how the figure of the narrator functions in *Dame Sirith* and *The Harrowing of Hell*— texts "which commentators have been reluctant to describe as 'plays,' mainly because of the presence

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[11] They make no mention of how the dog would be represented, and have likely counted it as part of the mime act by the performer.

within them of narrators" (152).

Moore is not convinced by Bennett and Smithers' suggestion that a single performer would perform all of *Dame Sirith* with only costume and voice changes. He believes that this performance is well beyond the means of any single performer and argues that

> [t]he major argument against solo performance . . . is the presence within the text of clear cues for gestures which demand the presence of different actors—Dame Sirith points out to the Wife that she has Wilekin with her, and the Wife welcomes Wilekin with open arms. The dissuasions against the 'single minstrel' hypothesis continue: Wilekin orders Dame Sirith to leave so that he can get on with his love-making, and this makes dramatic sense only if there are different characters playing the different parts. (155)

These features of the text make it more than plausible that multiple performers would have performed *Dame Sirith*. A single performer would certainly have difficulty ordering himself to leave. A single performer would also need to have distinct voices for each character to avoid confusion; a feat that Moore believes is well beyond the "vocal legerdemain" of a medieval performer (154).

*Dame Sirith* may have also used a performing dog for a section of the poem, where Dame Sirith feeds the dog mustard to cause it to weep. As for the missing character ascriptions, Moore suggests that "[it] is feasible that a scribe who was not visualizing the text in dramatic terms gave up his speech ascriptions at this very point [when the dog appears]. Supporting this interpretation of the text is the fact that it is most corrupt where it is least dramatic" (155). The corruption Moore is referring to is the inclusion of a hypermetrical "hoe seiþ" at line 303, which is noted by Bennett and Smithers as an "otiose addition commonly made by scribes" (310). Moore believes, then, that "the manuscript therefore shows all the signs of a scribe attempting to clarify the text precisely because he fails to recognize its dramatic status" (155).

Based on Moore's analysis of *Dame Sirith* it seems likely that the poem was at first a dramatic

script that was superficially transformed into a poem. How much the editor added or removed is unclear, but fragments of evidence like the hypermetrical "hoe seiþ" suggest some minor form of adaptation. The lack of character ascriptions in the second half of the poem might also be indicative of an editor altering the text he was working with. With the narrative passages performed by an additional actor, *Dame Sirith* could have been staged by a small troupe of four performers—one for each character and the narrator.

There are some differences between *Eglamour* and *Dame Sirith* that need to be addressed before *Dame Sirith* can be compared. First, the speech tags included in *Eglamour* are metrically regular and there are no character ascriptions in the margins of the manuscripts. Of the speech tags that are missing, there are no clear distinctions between the *L* and *C* copies of *Eglamour*. In a survey of missing speech tags in *L* and *C,* for the first half of the poem *C* most often has a speech tag where L is missing one. For instance, line 55 of *C* reads "'3ys, sir,' he seyd, 'per ma fay," whereas *L* reads "'3a, maystir, per ma faye:." The same occurs at lines 175, 220, 232, 437, 467, 499, and 622. This discrepancy between *C* and *L* at first led me to believe that *L* might have been adapted from a dramatic script to a narrative, and *C* might have undergone a further scribal revision to improve its narrative quality. The inverse is true, however, in the latter half of the poem where *L* contains speech tags and *C* does not. Instances of this occur at lines 910, 988, 1000, 1045, 1174, and 1179. *Eglamour* is also a much longer poem than *Dame Sirith*, approximately 1450 lines as opposed to 450. The added length, in part, explains why *Eglamour* contains so much more narration than *Dame Sirith. Eglamour* is over 46% narration, with the remaining 54% as dialogue. In comparison, *Dame Sirith* is only 10% narration.

The qualities that *Dame Sirith* and *Eglamour* do share, though, might help us determine how performers of *Eglamour* could have performed the poem as a play. The fact that *Dame Sirith* includes a narrator figure supports the possibility that *Eglamour* could have also made use of a narrator figure on stage. The narrator introduces the characters and setting, describes the characters' travel from place to

place, and occasionally interjects his opinion. While a performance of *Eglamour* need not adopt these elements exactly, the narrative passages in *Dame Sirith* certainly help explain how performers could have used the narrative passages of the poem. Instead of assuming that the narrative passages were scrapped for a dramatic performance of *Eglamour*, it is plausible to assume that a narrator figure would have spoken them instead.

**Mankind**

*Mankind* is a medieval play-text that survives in MS V.a. 354 in the Folger Library Collection, Washington, DC, which includes the *Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom*—two additional medieval plays (Ashley 11). *Mankind* follows the 'rules' of what scholars have classically defined as elements of a dramatic text: the text is composed entirely of dialogue, there are no speech tags, characters are noted in the margins by letter ascriptions, and the dramatis personae lists seven characters. In her introduction to the TEAMS edition of *Mankind*, Kathleen Ashley also notes that "[b]oth scribes separate the speeches of different characters by a line across the page" (11).

Ashley lists a number of features of *Mankind* that can be attributed to its performance by a travelling troupe. These features are doubled roles, limited costumes and props, and limited staging requirements (1-2). The first feature, doubled roles, can be deduced from when each character appears on stage in *Mankind*. In his book *From Mankind to Marlowe*, David Bevington notes that "*Mankind . . . has a feasible cast for a strolling troupe, it probably employed doubling, it makes few demands of its easily improvised stage, and it uses only portable properties*" (18). Evidence for doubled roles is shown, for example, in the characters Mercy and Tityvillus who "are so employed that they never meet" (Bevington 17). The actor playing Tityvillus and Mercy could have donned a mask for the role of Tityvillus and played both roles (Twycross and Carpenter 243). Devil characters in other medieval plays had "head[s] of unusual size, which was probably represented by a large mask of some sort"

(Smart 23).

*Mankind* also requires a small number of props and costumes, which could be transported by a travelling troupe. Ashley suggests that the

> [p]rops called for are mundane and portable: a rosary, a flute, a spade, a writing implement and paper, a noose, fetters, a board, a bag of seed, a scourge for Mercy, a large-headed mask and a net for the devil, stolen goods, and several jackets of different lengths. (2)

Most of the items listed here are small such as "a rosary" and "a bag of seeds." These smaller props would make it possible for a travelling troupe to perform the play in multiple locations. A play that needed larger items for its performance would probably be performed in one location, since larger props would be more difficult to transport with a wagon or a horse.

A smaller, less elaborate stage also supports the theory that *Mankind* was performed by a travelling troupe. Ashley argues that *Mankind* was played either on a temporary stage or in the courtyard of an inn and "is a play whose appeal cuts across class lines and social categories and could therefore be produced in a wide variety of settings" (2). In his article "Aspects of the Staging of *Mankind*," Neville Denny says that "[t]he play can obviously be presented on the simplest of stages, having been structured along these lines deliberately, one imagines, so as to demand little more than a demarcated playing area and a few small props." (253). The simplest stage Denny considers is the floor. He argues that

> [t]he platform staged invoked by some scholars is hardly warranted, except in terms of (highly unlikely) outdoor performance and a much later playing date than we have evidence for accepting. Much of the action, indeed, would be impeded by its use . . . It seems to me much more likely . . . that the floor itself was used, [with] entries and exits—at least some of them— being through the actual throng of spectators. (261)

Whether the floor or a small stage was used, *Mankind* would not require a great deal of staging.

*Mankind* could, therefore, be put on by a small troupe in any location.

Denny does not believe, however, that a troupe of players would have performed *Mankind*. He argues that "[w]e have very little justification . . . for assuming the existence of a band of professional players in the first place, on tour in the provinces." (253). Yet, there was certainly no shortage of minstrels or players travelling in the Middle Ages, that might be available to perform a larger dramatic piece like *Mankind*. In the Kent volume of the *Records of Early English Drama* (*REED*), James M. Gibson notes that close to 1400 minstrels (or groups, where the records distinguish) received payments in Kent between the late-thirteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Gibson provides a graph that not only visually demonstrates the large number of minstrels paid for performances, but shows how many of them had patrons. He notes that

> the heyday of organized troupes of travelling minstrels came in the century between 1425 and 1525, with 61 per cent of all surviving payments to travelling minstrels falling during that period. The other significant aspect revealed by the surviving records of payments to minstrels in the monastic and borough accounts is the high percentage of minstrels travelling under the patronage of royalty and nobility. Overall, 78 per cent of the minstrels receiving payment in these accounts had patrons. (liii)

Seventy-eight percent is a surprisingly large number of minstrels travelling under patrons. And, in the case of *Mankind*, there is no reason to assume that troupes were in too short a supply to perform the play.

A patron of a travelling troupe, especially one performing dramatic pieces, could provide funds for both travelling and costumes. In her book *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels*, Susan Westfall notes that

> [n]oble patrons nurtured the artists who composed music and drama as well as those who performed them. Although their motives were not totally unselfish or exclusively philanthropic,

the aristocracy did provide their entertainers with several basic necessities. Chapels received

vestments and 'civilian' clothing, minstrels and players received livery and sometimes costumes

and instruments (205)

In return for being provided with amenities, patrons expected their travelling performers to "secure and

enlarge the power and prestige of the noble household through their loyalty and expert performance"

(Westfall 205). Patronage seems to have been advantageous to both patron and performer, and helped

each other in mutually beneficial ways.

As for the size of troupes, some records list the number of performers in each troupe. Troupe

size, for instance, can be inferred from the *Chamberlain's Accounts* of Rye:

> 1460-1
> Chamberlain's accounts
> f 84v* (31 August – 25 December 1460) (Payments and Expenses)
> ...
> Also given to minstrels of the earl of Warwick            20d
> Also paid in Thomas Kynge's house for the expenses of these four minstrels together with their
> four horses            27d
> ...
>
> 1461-2
> Chamberlain's accounts
> f 93v (18 April – 24 June 1462) (Expenses)
> ...
> Also given to six minstrels of the lord king as a gift            6s 8d
> Also paid on expenses for the said minstrels            7d
> ...
>
> 1464-5
> Chamberlain's accounts
> f108 (24 June – 24 August 1465) (Payments and Expenses)
> ...
> Also given to minstrels of the Lord Warwick on the morrow of the opening of the town's boxes
>            6s 8d
> Paid in all on expenses for the said four minstrels in food and wine            12d
> ...            (Sussex 245-8)

Westfall also provides a summary of troupe sizes in the appendix of her book. She collates troupe sizes

from a number of different records similar to the ones from Sussex, which mention the number of

performers in each troupe. For example, the Selby Abbey accounts from 1431-1532 have troupe sizes ranging from 2 to 7 performers, with the average falling somewhere between 3 to 5 performers (Westfall 210). In Henry VII's Chamber accounts 55.5% of the references refer to groups of 4 players (Westfall 210). At the end of the appendix Westfall averages the troupe size from all of the records she surveys, with the average troupe size being 3.39 performers. While *Mankind* doesn't fall exactly within the average, it is not at the extreme end of 7 or 8 players either. There is no reason to assume that a troupe of players did or did not perform *Mankind*, but either is possible.

If we compare *Eglamour* to *Mankind*, we can see how *Eglamour* may have been performed by a travelling troupe. I will discuss all of the following features in more detail in chapter 3. It is worth noting now, though, that these were conventions of *Mankind* and could have been borrowed. For example, the items listed in *Eglamour* are minimal (a money pouch, swords, clubs, helmets, spears, rings, torches, trumpets, a mantle, a girdle, and various masks) and could have been carried by a troupe as props. These items are no grander than Ashley's list for *Mankind*. The poem also seems to require a smaller stage, although it may have been grander than *Mankind's* possible use of the "floor." A performance of *Eglamour* may have also made use of doubled roles. All of these features, are theoretically within the means of a small troupe, and make *Eglamour*'s staging as a play possible.

## Lydgate's Mummings

Lydgate wrote his mummings in the "late 1420s and early 1430s, when he was at the peak of his career as a public poet" (Sponsler 1). Some mummings, like *Bycorne and Chychevache,* are described by John Shirley as performed "at the request of a werthy citesyn of London" (Sponsler 11). Others, like the *Disguising at Hertford,* were "putte to the Kyng holding his noble feest at Cristmasse," whereas *The Legend of St. George* was by "request of th'armorieres of London for th'onour of theyre brotherhoode and theyre feest of Saint George" (Lydgate 15). From these headnotes, it appears that

Lydgate's audiences were diverse and his mummings could appeal to a wide range of audiences.

Lydgate's mummings are important for understanding the diversity of medieval drama. Lydgate's mummings mix genres and different forms of drama into a unique type of performance. Glynne Wickham argues that Lydgate is responsible for making a new form of entertainment:

> Borrowing allegories from romance and scriptural sources, he [Lydgate] gave this folk-custom, involving disguise of the person, a literary frame. From the Miracle plays and Street Pageants he borrowed the idea of speaking actors, if he did not have them closer to hand among the minstrels already. From the Tournament he borrowed the Herald to present his characters and to explain their new significance. (207)

Lydgate may have been the first to combine these varying forms of entertainment into one, or he could have borrowed from a number of different practices in the Middle Ages. Whether mummings as diverse as Lydgate's existed before the early fifteenth century is unknown. Anything that came afterwards, though, may have been inspired by Lydgate's work.

It is possible that narrated dramas or mummings were at least a reasonably common practice in the Middle Ages even before Lydgate. The task of providing evidence of mummings similar to Lydgate's, though, is difficult, Mummings existed in a number of different forms, only one of which was dramatic. A folk mumming, for instance, involved masked men and women parading from door to door during Christmas, and playing dice and games with the homeowners (Twycross and Carpenter 83). Mummings for the courts, as dramatic entertainments, existed as court dances or masks, but the evidence of these entertainments is often from the Tudor period. John Harris suggests that scholars should look to the term disguising when trying to identify mumming practices in England, because it was adopted in place of 'mumming' in the courts. Disguisings, according to Harris, were court entertainments that involved masks, dances, and games, and included words spoken by actors.

The proclamation of 1418 in England against mumming practices gives a sense of why the term

"mumming" was dropped in court, and how it was viewed in relation to other dramatic practices. The proclamation of 1418 reads:

> No manner person, of what estate, degree or condition that ever he be, during this holy time of Christmas be so hardy in any wise to walk by night in any manner of mumming, plays, interludes, or any other disguisings with any feigned beards, painted visors, or deformed or coloured visages in any wise. (qtd. in Harris, 179)

It would seem that "mumming, plays, [and] interludes" are included together because they were viewed as similar. They all used costumes and were considered equally dangerous by authorities. Did mummings involve people putting on small plays though? Did plays and interludes involve mumming or mimed action? Unfortunately, neither is clear from the proclamation. They seem to me, though, to be included in the same category of entertainment.

One way to determine practices in the past is to look at current customs, and model after them. In his book *The English Mummers and Their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery*, Alan Brody suggests that

> [t]here is in England [today] . . . a seasonal performance in which we can still discern traces of that ancient mystery. The men's dramatic ceremonial, commonly known as the mummers' play, has roots which extend deep into a ritual past. On one night of the year the men of certain towns disguise themselves and form a troupe which visits certain pre-arranged stations. At each one the men perform a little play which, in spite of its historical permutations and variant versions from village to village, consists of a certain common cluster of actions (vii)

The three actions of a mummers' play are a 'Hero-combat sequence', the 'Sword-play sequence', and the 'Wooing ceremony' (Brody viii). If the practices of today's mummers do descend from the Middle Ages, we can infer that early mummings might have included the same sequences. These sequences are thematically similar to romance plots as well, which is intriguing.

If medieval folk mummings were similar to their modern counterparts, then the possibility remains that mummings other than Lydgate's included dramatic segments. Unfortunately, Lydgate's mummings offer no reward of clarification. Even though they are called mummings, Sponsler suggests that Lydgate's mummings should be thought of as "fitting into a broad generic category that included various combinations of music, spoken word, impersonation, gesture or action, and special effects" (7). Sponsler also suggests that "[m]any of the verses were apparently spoken by a presenter of some sort (sometimes described as a herald), presumably to accompany mimed action" (8). Suzanne Westfall suggests that Lydgate's mummings "[a]ll followed the same basic structure: a presenter read or spoke verses to explain the action which was mimed by the performers" (34). She supports her argument by noting that this mixture of mime and spoken word was the common structure of disguisings in the Tudor era, and that Shirley's headnotes often call for a presenter or herald (34-5).

*The Legend of St. George* is described by Shirley as "the devyse of a steyned halle of the lyf of Saint George ymagyned by Daun Johan the Munk of Bury Lydegate and made with the balades at the request of th'armorieres of London for th'onour of theyre brotherhoode and theyre feest of Saint George" (Lydgate 42). The text includes an additional headnote stating "The poete first declarethe:" before the text begins (Sponsler 42). This note by Shirley suggests that a single performer read the poem, whether it was Lydgate or someone else. No other note exists in the poem, so presumably it is the "poete" that begins the declaration and reads through the entirety of the poem. The inclusion of dialogue in the mumming is intriguing if that was the case. No other presenter is introduced and, given that the dialogue in the poem is always accompanied by a speech tag, there is no reason to assume lines were spoken by anyone but the poet.

*St. George* was more elaborately portrayed than just a recitation by a poet. The presenter begins the poem by stating:

O yee folk that heer present be,

Wheeche of this story shal have inspeccion,

Of Saint George yee may behold and see

His martirdome, and his passyoun (1-4)

The presenter's request that the audience "behold and see" St. George's martyrdom suggests something visual to accompany the oral recitation. Sponsler speculates that the request to "see" could have refered to both a mural and a mimed performance, the latter similar to a feast record in 1585 "of the armorers and brasiers where an armed boy representing St. George and a lady leading a lamb accompanied by drum and flute marched around the hall and gave a speech" (103). Murals may have been constructed for the guild, which they could keep on their walls, while the performance involved mimed action and costuming.

Textual evidence from the poem might indicate accompanying mime. Before speculating about how actions could have been portrayed in *The Legend of St. George*, however, it is worth looking at Lydgate's other mummings that contain a mixture of stage direction and textual instances of the actions. In *Bycorne and Chychevache,* for example, the stage direction can be deduced from the text. In this mumming, Shirley provides a stage direction that explains, "Thanne shal be ther purtrayhed a longe beest sklendre (slender) and lene (lean) with sharpe teethe and on his body nothing save skyn and boone (bone)" (13). This beast could have been costumed on stage any number of ways. Either way, it is clear what it should look like (slender, lean, and with sharp teeth). The section of poetry that follows, however, provides the same description as the stage direction:

Chychevache, this is my name,

Hungry, megre, sklendre, and lene,

To shewe my body I have gret shame,

For hunger I feele so gret teene (78-81)

Even without the stage direction there is a strong sense in the text of how the character appears. The

lines, perhaps spoken by the actor or at least the narrator, draw attention to the details that were given in the notes. Without the notes, it would still be possible to create a similar beast. We can approach similar sequences in other texts that are missing stage directions too, and try to deduce how the actions might have been performed.

The *Disguising at London* includes a similar sequence of stage direction and poetry as well. Shirley provides a stage direction that states, "*Nowe komethe here the first lady of foure, Dame Prudence*" (24). This note is useful because it suggests a new actor is brought on stage—in this case a performer playing Dame Prudence. If the stage direction had not been included, however, we could deduce from lines 139-140 that Dame Prudence had come on stage: "Loo, heer this lady in youre presence / Of poetis called is Dame Prudence." It is clear in lines 139-140 that the "lady in youre presence" has now come on stage. It would have been equally clear without Shirley's stage direction. Other texts that were dramatically performed might not include stage directions, but Lydgate's mummings show us what to look for.

Lines from the text of *The Legend of St. George* might indicate actions that could have been performed during the play. For instance, St. George asks a maiden to "Take thy girdell, and make therof a bande, / And leed this dragoun boldly in thyn hande" (111-112). A maiden could, as these lines were spoken, lead an actor masked as the dragon around the playing space. In another example, St. George "[p]ulled out a swerde and smote off [the dragon's] hed" (123). An actor playing St. George might smite a dragon mask off the performer's head.

Because the mummings do survive as poems, there is a more ground for speculation about how they might have been performed. By combining a number of different dramatic elements, Lydgate's mummings indicate that a play did not need to be like a modern drama to be performed as one in the Middle Ages. And, like *Eglamour,* are poems that are recorded as having been dramatically performed.

We can use Lydgate's mummings as a way of approaching actions in *Eglamour*, and what the

poem might tell us about how those actions were performed. For example, in *The Legend of St. George* St. George fights and beheads a dragon. *Eglamour* also contains a sequence where *Eglamour* fights a dragon and beheads it. If performers of *The Legend of St. George* could present the beheading of a dragon on stage, then performers of *Eglamour* could as well. Similar arguments proceed for all instances where characters take actions in *Eglamour*. Each could act as a pseudo stage direction.

The way both poems introduce dialogue is also worth touching on briefly. While the use of speech tags to introduce dialogue is not unique to poetry, or narratives, both *St. George* and *Eglamour* make use of them. For example, Lydgate introduces a speech by Saint George with "To hir he sayde, with debonayre cheer" (109). Similarly, the *Eglamour* poet states "Þan sayd þe knyght þat was so mylde" (*L* 85). The importance of this comparison is that if *The Legend of St. George* used speech tags and mimed action, then the speech tags of *Eglamour* would not need to be edited out for a performance, but could be left in and read by the narrator just as the poet seems to have read the sequences in the mumming.

Lydgate's mummings suggest that narrated drama was a possible dramatic form in the Middle Ages. They use a combination of costumed and mimed action to stage poems as plays. *Eglamour* could have employed the same conventions and contained a mixture of mimed actions and narrated poetry. *Dame Sirith, Mankind*, and Lydgate's mummings show the possible ways that *Eglamour* could have been performed in the Middle Ages using established conventions (mimed narration, doubled roles, limited props, and the presence of a narrator on stage). While not all of these conventions would need to be used, the fact that they existed means that they could have been. The argument for the dramatic performance of *Eglamour,* then, can be built on the framework provided by *Dame Sirith, Mankind*, and Lydgate's mummings. When this framework is combined with textual evidence, which is the topic of the next chapter, we get a better sense of what *Eglamour* might have looked like if it was performed as a play.

## Chapter 3: Performing the Thornton Manuscript Version of *Eglamour*

My chart in Appendix 1 lists the staging requirements of *Eglamour,* if it were to be performed as a play. It links scenes to the settings, prop requirements and characters on stage (with or without speaking roles) for each scene. I created each 'scene' by taking points in the narrative where the settings and characters change. For instance, at the start of the poem Eglamour is speaking to his squire about Cristabelle in his bedchamber: "Þat I myght hafe hir to my wyfe, / And reioyse hir all my lyfe, / To blysse þan ware I broghte." (*L* 106-8). Afterwards, the action changes from Eglamour and his squire to Cristabelle and Pryncesamour in the hall: "Appon þe morne þe mayden smalle / Byfore hir fadir ete in þe haulle / Amang þe beryns bryghte." (*L* 109-111). The shift in the poem at "Appon þe morne þe mayden smalle" begins the new scene. The narrator is talking about new characters and locations. I followed this formula throughout the poem and created Appendix 1 from the result.

Appendix 1 is divided into four columns. Column one indicates the line number where each scene starts. Column two lists the setting of each scene. Column three lists possible or necessary props for each scene. Column four is a list of characters in each scene, with speaking roles marked by an asterisk. The scenes marked by a *T* indicate sections of narrative that describe travelling between different areas or settings. My scene designations are not an attempt to determine the scenes in some lost dramatic script. They simply indicate the breaks or shifts in the poem where character and setting changes occur and which, if the poem as it exists was dramatically performed, would likely be accompanied by appropriate changes in character or setting on stage.

Along with the chart, Appendix 2 is graphical representation of scenes and characters in *Eglamour*. I have also included a smaller chart for each performer, to make the lack of overlapping appearances clearer. Appendix 2 shows which characters are present in each scene, and how their interactions overlap. Each gray section indicates a travelling scene, which would not necessarily

require the actors to be on stage. Throughout the entire poem it is striking that there are at most four characters present at the same time in any given scene. This is an odd feature if the poet had no special concern for cast limitations.

**The Performers**

*Figure 1: Characters in Eglamour*

| Scene (line #) | Setting | Characters |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (49) | Eglamour's bedchamber | Eglamour*, Squire* |
| 2 (109) | Hall | Cristabelle*, Squire*, Earl, knights# |
| 3 (136) | Eglamour's chamber | Cristabelle*, two maidens#, Squire*, Eglamour* |
| 4 (181) | Earl's chamber | Earl*, Cristabelle* |
| T (196) | River to field | Eglamour, Earl |
| 5 (205) | Field | Eglamour*, Earl* |
| 6 (247) | Cristabelle's chamber? | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| T (272) | Street to forest | Eglamour |
| 7 (283) | Forest | Eglamour*, Arrak* (the giant) |
| T (334) | Street to castle to court | Eglamour |
| 8 (338) | Earl's court | Eglamour*, Earl*, admirers# |
| T (358) | To a forest in Sedoyne | Eglamour |
| 9 (370) | Forest | Eglamour, the Boar |
| 10 (408) | Forest | King of Sedoyne*; men#, Squire*, Eglamour* |
| 11 (505) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Eglamour*, King of Sedoyne, Queen of Sedoyne*; Organata |
| 12 (533) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Eglamour, Marrasse* (the giant) |
| 13 (562) | Field | King of Sedoyne*, Eglamour*, Marrasse* |
| 14 (597) | Field | Eglamour*, King of Sedoyne*, Organata* |
| T (631) | From Sedoyne to Artois | Eglamour |
| 15 (643) | Cristabelle's chamber | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| 16 (650) | Earl's Hall | Eglamour*, Earl* |
| 17 (674) | Cristabelle's chamber | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| 18 (691) | Earl's Hall | Eglamour*, Earl* |

| 19 (709) | Cristabelle's chamber | Eglamour*, Cristabelle |
|---|---|---|
| T (718) | From Artois to Rome | Eglamour |
| 20 (724) | Field | Eglamour*, Dragon |
| 21 (751) | Tower | Emperor*, Eglamour, Dyateur |
| 22 (799) | Somewhere in Artois | Earl*, Cristabelle, baby Degrebelle |
| 23 (811) | Earl's court | Cristabelle*, baby Degrebelle, maidens#, Earl |
| T (831) | Cristabelle is out at sea until she reaches an island | Cristabelle*, baby Degrebelle |
| 24 (850) | Field | King of Israel*, baby Degrebelle |
| 25 (868) | King of Israel's Castle | King of Israel*, baby Degrebelle, Queen of Israel |
| T (881) | Cristabelle drifts off to Egypt | Cristabelle |
| 26 (892) | King of Egypt's Castle | King of Egypt*, Squire*, Cristabelle |
| 27 (925) | Chamber?[12] | King of Egypt*, Squire, Cristabelle* |
| T (952) | Rome to Artois | Eglamour |
| 28 (979) | Earl's Hall | Eglamour*, Squire*, Earl, Great Lords# |
| T (1011) | Artois to the Holy Land | Eglamour |
| 29 (1021) | King of Israel's court | King of Israel*, Degrebelle, Messenger* |
| T (1057) | Israel to Egypt | Degrebelle, Messenger |
| 30 (1063) | Beach? Dock? | Degrebelle, King of Egypt*, Messenger* |
| 31 (1075) | Dock to King of Egypt's hall | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, Knights# |
| 32 (1084) | King of Egypt's hall | Degrebelle, Knights#, King of Israel*, Cristabelle* |
| 33 (1111) | Field for tournament | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, Great Lords#*, Heralds#* |
| T (1138) | Field to Church | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, King of Israel, Cristabelle |
| 34 (1150) | Church | Cristabelle*, Degrebelle*, King of Israel*, Squire* |

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[12] Manuscript is damaged, but it seems likely she was taken to a chamber. The reading is taken from the corresponding lines in C, which reads: "The damysell, þat was so mylde, / Had so greet for here chylde / That sche was waxen hose. / To a chamber þey here lede; / Good mete þey here bede; / With good wyll sche with hem gose." (925-30). L likely had a similar reading since what survives resembles the lines from C: "This damsele þat w... / Scho had so w... / þat wele... / Into a... / Dyl... / A..." (925-30). Presumably "Into a..." is a variation of " To a chamber þey here lede," but this is only speculation.

| 35 (1186) | | Great Lords#*, Heralds#*, |
|---|---|---|
| T (1195) | The Holy Land to Egypt | Eglamour |
| T (1210) | Sedoyne to Egypt | King of Sedoyne, Knights# |
| 36 (1222) | Castle wall | Cristabelle*, Heralds* |
| 37 (1228) | Field | Degrebelle*, Eglamour*, Knights# |
| 38 (1270) | Field | Heralds#, Great Lords#*, Degrebelle*, Eglamour |
| *39 (1282) | Field | Eglamour*, Cristabelle*, Great Lords#, King of Israel*, King of Sedoyne* |
| T (1324)[13] | Egypt to Artois | Various people |
| 40 (1339) | Earl's Court | Earl, Eglamour, Messenger |
| 41 (1348) | Earl's Court | Eglamour, Degrebelle, Organata, King of Israel*, Emperor[14] |

Figure 1 shows that a narrated dramatization of *Eglamour* could be staged with only four performers plus a narrator. The roles appear to be best broken down as follows:

Performer 1: The Narrator

Performer 2: Eglamour, King of Egypt

Performer 3: Cristabelle, Dyateur, Organata, Queen of Sedoyne

Performer 4: Pryncesamour, Degrebelle, King of Sedoyne, Emperor

Performer 5: Squire, Messenger, Arrak, Marrasse, King of Israel, Dragon

This division of roles is based on the following guidelines. The characters doubled by a performer must not interact at any point during the poem. Roles that might require similar costuming, such as the female roles or the monster roles, are placed together. The roles also needed to be fairly evenly distributed, so that each performer would theoretically be on stage for most of the performance. All of these elements are visually represented in Appendix 2.

The first role, performed by Performer 1, is the narrator. The narrator is the most important role

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[13] This passage presents a few problems for determining which characters might be present, and will be analyzed separately.

[14] Actual inclusion in the feast is questionable, and will also be analyzed separately.

in a narrated dramatic performance of *Eglamour,* because he may have had to recite the entire poem from memory. Performer 2 could play both Eglamour and the King of Egypt because they never interact in the poem. Their combined roles would keep a performer on stage for almost all of the performance. Performer 3 could perform all of the female roles for ease of costuming. Performer 4 could perform Pryncesamour, Degrebelle, the King of Sedoyne, and the Emperor without overlap. Finally, Performer 5 could play most of the squire and messenger roles (with a few exceptions), the King of Israel, and the various monster roles.

The narrator functions in *Eglamour* similarly to the other narrator figures in chapter 2. *Eglamour* begins with what has been commonly viewed as a trope of medieval romances—a call for the audience to listen to the story being told. This speech could also play a role in the dramatic performance of the poem, however. The opening stanza allows a narrator to provide details of the story to the audience:

> Ihesu, þat is heuens Kyng,
>
> Gyff vs alle his blyssyng
>
> And beyld vs in his boure;
>
> And giff þam ioye þat will here
>
> Of eldirs þat before vs were,
>
> > þat lyued in grete honoure.
>
> I will ȝou telle of a knyghte
>
> Þat was bothe hardy and wyght,
>
> > And stythe in ilk a stoure:
>
> Whare dedis of armes were, fere or nere,
>
> Þe gre he wynnes wyth iornaye clere,
>
> > And euir in felde þe floure. (*L* 1-12)

The narrator in this passage acts as an intermediary between the audience and the world of the poem. The narrator asks us, the audience, to "here / Of eldirs þat before vs were," or more specifically hear of people that do not exist in this period of time. The opening stanza of *Eglamour* is a contextualizing tool for the narrator not only to bring the audience in, but also to explain the setting and place of the world being presented.

The early contextualizing by the narrator could also allow a troupe to present different exotic settings with few to no set changes. Just as Contemplacio in the N-Town *Mary plays* moves the audience across time and space, the narrator of *Eglamour* could describe Eglamour's travels to the audience for the same effect. For example, the narrator describes Eglamour's travels as he sets off towards Arrak's forest:

He tuke his leue and forthe he went,

His waye þan hase he tane.

An heghe strete he helde faste

Till þat he come till a forest—

Slyke sawe he neuir nane:

Wyth syprisse bowes lyes owte;

Þe wodd was walled alla abowte

And keruede of riche stone. (*L* 272-9)

Because this description of Eglamour's travels is given by the narrator, it could be imagined by an audience instead of being realistically staged. It would be technically difficult to represent a wood, "walled alla abowte [a]nd keruede of riche stone," with the limited resources of a travelling troupe. The presence of the narrator, though, obviates any technical problems of staging a walled forest. The narrator also details the character's travelling to the audience, which allows the performance to continue without the interruption of complicated scene changes or painted backdrops.

The narrator may have spoken the characters' lines as well. The assumption must be that he did, since *Eglamour* is riddled with speech tags. If the actors spoke their lines and the narrator all narration including speech tags, the speech tags would often interrupt speech. A narrated drama might not require the actors to speak their own lines, though, given that *The Legend of St. George* and *Bycorne and Chychevache* contain speech tags and they might have included mimed actions. If the narrator spoke the main characters' lines, then he likely spoke the lines of groups of people as well. For example, there are speeches in *Eglamour* by heralds and attendants who speak in unison. They would not be easy to costume or represent on stage, though. During the first tournament for Cristabelle's hand there are shouts by Great Lords and Heralds of Arms:

Gret lordis þay gun crye,

'What man es he þat es so hye,

   þat beris ȝone gryffone bryghte?'

Harawdis of armes gun þam telle,

'He es þe prynce of Iraelle—

   Bese warre, for he es wyghte!' (*L* 1117-1122)

It is theoretically possible that the other four performers mimed the Great Lords and the Heralds of Arms. It would be difficult, however, to represent a group of lords and a group of heralds with only a few performers. There are three ways to address this problem. Before this passage the performer playing Cristabelle is on stage and returns immediately afterwards. A performer could remove the Cristabelle costume for one scene and then put it right back on—a gap of 66 lines should provide enough time for the performer to do so. The performers may have also acted out a pseudo-chorus, like in early Roman theatre, where all of the performers could turn to the audience and speak in unison. The much simpler explanation, though, is that the narrator simply spoke or shouted these lines while the performers continued to mime their roles.

The narrator could solve many of the technical issues with performing *Eglamour* as a normal dramatic piece, where each actor says their own lines. He could tell the audience about the time, place, and setting of the poem in order to reduce the amount of staging required. He could also represent groups of people, and reduce the number of performers required to stage the play.

*Figure 2: Performer 2 Character Roles*
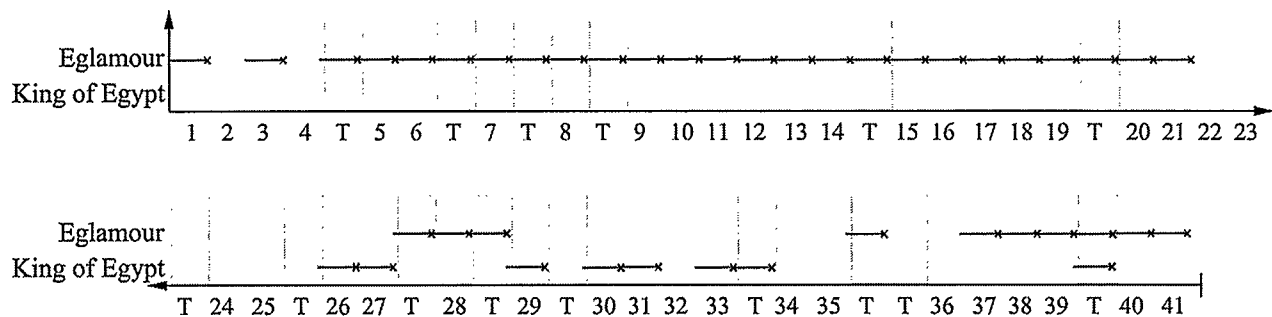


The first pair of doubled roles is Eglamour and the King of Egypt. Sir Eglamour is the protagonist of the poem and present through most, but not all, of the narrative. He is absent briefly during the trials of Degrebelle and Cristabelle. Usually the disappearance of a character during a narrative would be a normal occurrence in a poem. Characters drop in and out of the action frequently in modern novels, and we think nothing of it. There are a few odd narrative choices, however, that make disappearances in *Eglamour* unique. During Eglamour's absence of approximately 200 lines (after he banishes himself to the Holy Land) the King of Egypt is introduced into the story. The King of Egypt and Eglamour never meet. If there were no restrictions governing the text, such as a performance with a limited number of performers, the King of Egypt and Eglamour might have interacted at some point.

There are two places where they should logically have interacted and where the exclusion of either character is peculiar. The first occurs when Degrebelle defeats the King of Egypt in the first tournament for Cristabelle. When Cristabelle is taken to the chapel to be married to Degrebelle, the King of Egypt simply disappears. The King of Egypt has two particularly good reasons to be present;

he has been Cristabelle's governor since she arrived in Egypt, and he hosts the tournament. Surely, Cristabelle's governor would be present at the marriage that was a result of his tournament. The King of Egypt is also absent from the final wedding scene, even though he is invited by Eglamour to attend. Near the end of the poem the narrator says "Sir Eglamour prayed the kynges three / In Artasse at his weddynge to be, / His lykynge for to haue." (*L* 1324-6). The narrator continues to explain the various other people expected to attend and how they arrived, but suddenly shifts to a messenger explaining to Eglamour how Prycesamour fell from the tower and broke his neck. The narrator then says "And þus in Artasse are þay lent; / Eftir þe emperour they sent / To þat mangery so free." (*L* 1348-50). It is unclear to whom "þay" is referring. Even without knowing exactly who is present, and assuming that everyone who Eglamour asked has arrived, the King of Egypt has no speaking role during the wedding and is not specifically noted as present. Eglamour's presence is noted, though. If troupe size affected the number of characters on stage, the King of Egypt could have been excluded from the final scene in favour of Eglamour.

The roles of Eglamour and the King of Egypt would have  probably been costumed as well as mimed. Presumably the roles of Eglamour and the King of Egypt would require different costumes. For example, the role of Eglamour could easily be costumed with a tunic and some fake or dulled weapons. The narrative mentions a sword given to Eglamour by Cristabelle (*L* 256-6) and a helmet (*L* 427-8) early in the poem. The King of Egypt might be costumed with a crown and a larger tunic, which could be slipped over the Eglamour attire to allow for easy changes. False beards were also used in early drama and mummings, and could have been used for *Eglamour*. In 1386 there is a record from a Cambridge chronicle that describes a "Comedy with a pall or cloak, six visors, and six beards at the College of Michael-House" (Lancashire no. 435).

One costume change in particular might explain the odd disappearance of the King of Egypt from Degrebelle's earlier wedding to Cristabelle—after Eglamour returns from the Holy Land his tunic

bears "a schyp of gold, maste, and ore" (*C* 1289). In *L,* Cristabelle recognizes Eglamour by the emblem on his tunic in the second tournament. A tunic with this emblem, as a prop, might have had a strong resonance with an audience that was viewing the action as well as hearing it. They would recognize Eglamour through the performer playing him. A performer changing into the new tunic before the scene might require a more prolonged costume change. The absence of the King of Egypt from the first wedding could allow this change to take place, and might explain why he is missing from a scene that would normally require his presence. The sequence is different in *C,* though, where Eglamour is asked his name, making the surcoat unimportant.

### *Figure 3: Performer 3 Character Roles*
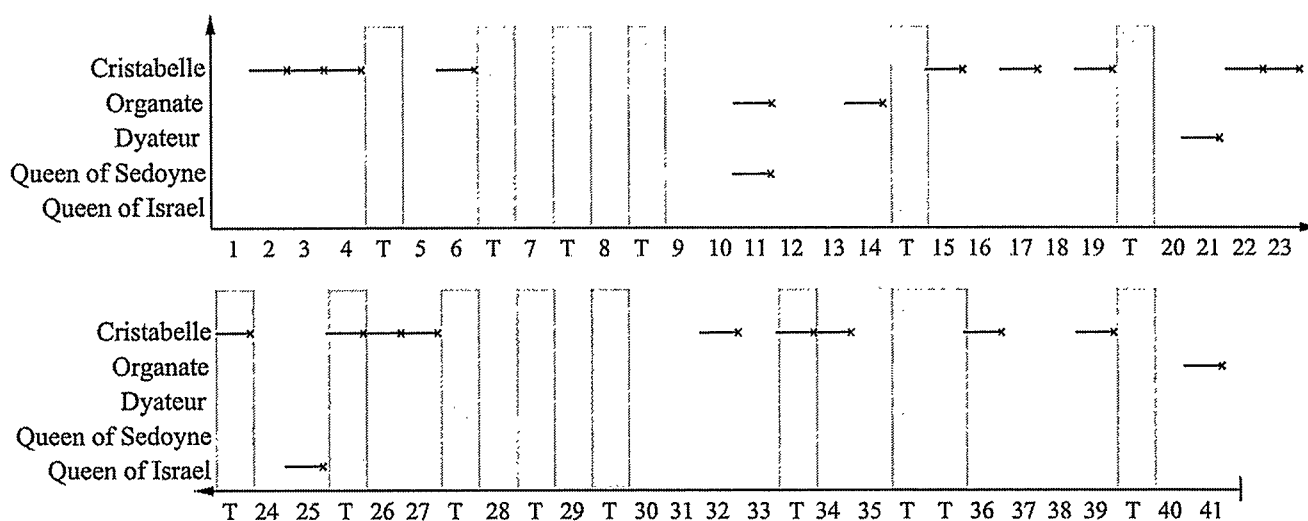


Costume changes also help explain the roles attributed to Performer 3, who could theoretically play Cristabelle, Organata, Dyateur, and the Queen of Sedoyne. As was the case of Performer 2, none of these characters interact with each other in the poem, despite good reasons for them to do so. An odd exclusion occurs at the end of poem in the final wedding scene. At the close of the poem only Eglamour, Degrebelle, Organata, and the King of Israel[15] are present. Cristabelle's absence from the

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[15] The Emperor might arguably be present as well, which I will address in my section on performer 4. It is my contention that he is not present.

final wedding scene is odd—more than the King of Egypt's absence from Cristabelle and Degrebelle's wedding. She has every logical reason to be present. Degrebelle is Cristabelle's son and one would expect her to attend his wedding. She was only just recently reunited with Eglamour too, and they have yet to be married. The final wedding is supposed to be a union of Eglamour and Cristabelle as well as Degrebelle and Organata, but Cristabelle is missing. Instead, the scene is limited to four characters and the narrator. The exclusion of Cristabelle seems best explained by positing a performance of *Eglamour* that had a limited number of performers. If Performer 3 plays both Cristabelle and Organata, then it makes sense that one of them is not present.

A complicated costume change for performer 3 occurs at line 799 when the narrative moves from Eglamour and Dyateur in Rome to Cristabelle in Artois. The scene would require a costume change from Dyateur to Cristabelle in a matter of lines. In the first section, Dyateur is caring for Eglamour in her bower:

> Hir name was Dyateur;
>
> Scho saued hym þare fra þe dede,
>
> And wyth hir handis scho helid his hede
>
> A tweluemoneth in hir bowre. (*L* 777-780)

Almost immediately afterwards, Cristabelle is being addressed by the Earl, who sentences her and her child to death:

> Lettirs come vnto Artas
>
> Þat þe worme of Ro[m]e dede was:
>
> A knyght appon hym slayne.
>
> So lange on lechyng gan he duelle
>
> A knafe childe had Cristabelle,
>
> Als whitt als wallis bane.

The erle hir fadir mad his avowe:

'Doghetir, to þe se shall þou... (*L* 799-806)

There are a few ways to approach this costume change in a performance. First, it is possible that the performer simply changes a small part of the costume, like a pendant or headpiece, quickly between scenes. Second, it is possible that Dyateur is only described by the narrator and not represented by a performer on stage. Cristabelle is addressed by the Earl so she must be present. I prefer the former explanation to the latter, since the change is minor and a performer should have represented Dyateur. The narrator's explanation, from "Lettirs" to "duelle," would also provide enough time if the only change was a small item.

Scene 11 presents a doubling problem that needs to be addressed. In this scene, the four characters on stage are Eglamour, Organata, the Queen of Sedoyne, and the King of Sedoyne. I have assigned the Queen of Sedoyne to Performer 3 because it is a female role. She only appears this one time in the entire poem, and there are a few ways to explain how this scene could have been performed. The Queen of Sedoyne has a speaking role, so she must be present:

The qwene sayd, 'So God scheld me fra blame,

What tyme þat þe geant comes hame

Now tydands get we here.'


Sir Eglamour, this nobill knyghte,

He was sett wyth þat dere wyghte

For þat he solde be blythe;

Men called that lady Organata (*L* 511-517)

Since the Queen of Sedoyne speaks in this scene and Organata does not, it is possible that Performer 3 would have played the Queen of Sedoyne and ignored the Organata role. It is also possible that

Performer 3 quickly switched out a small costume prop to differentiate between the two female roles. The better explanation, in my opinion, is that Performer 5, who is absent from this scene, performed the Queen of Sedoyne role. The only obstacle is that Performer 5 plays Marrasse in the next scene at line 533. Marrasse's role may have required more costuming and therefore more time, but it is still possible that the costume change would be quick enough to perform in a space of thirty-three lines.

*Figure 4: Performer 4 Character Roles*
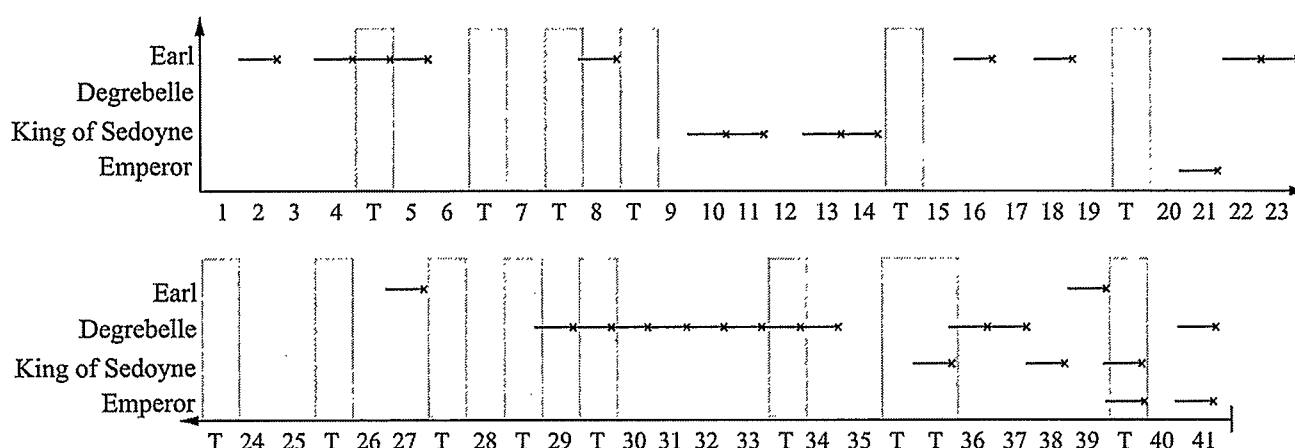


The next performer, Performer 4, might play the roles of the Earl, the King of Sedoyne, Degrebelle, and the Emperor. There are also odd exclusions with these roles that are best explained by a dramatic performance of *Eglamour*. After the second tournament for Cristabelle's hand, the King of Sedoyne tells Eglamour that Degrebelle may have his daughter, Organata, for his wife. It is odd that Degrebelle is not told or present during this exchange. His absence might be expected, though, because of the wound he received from Eglamour in the final tournament. The King of Sedoyne is Organata's father, and like the King of Egypt, we would expect him to be present at her wedding. He has only just offered Organata to Degrebelle, some 20 lines before the wedding scene, and is asked by Eglamour to attend, yet he is not present. If this scene is understood in performance terms, with a limited number of performers available for parts, this exclusion once again makes sense. Just as Cristabelle was absent because Organata is present, the King of Sedoyne must be absent because Degrebelle is present.

There is one problem with the roles given to Performer 4 that is not easily explained in a troupe of five performers. The narrator tells us that:

And þus in Artasse are þay lent;

Eftir þe emperour þay sent

To þat mangery so free. (*L* 1348-1350)

This mention of "þe emperour" by the narrator is difficult to explain, because Degrebelle is also present at the wedding, and the other performers are accounted for. It is also unclear to whom the narrator is referring, though. The Emperor of Rome, Octoueane, is never mentioned as attending the tournament and his sudden inclusion is unexpected. It is possible that the narrator is instead referring to the King of . Israel as an emperor, since he is the only monarch in the wedding scene and is from a foreign land. The Emperor of Rome certainly has no logical reason to be at the wedding, since the only character he is connected to is Eglamour. It is possible that this mention is a mere narrative detail not requiring a performer to represent the character on stage. Like the King of Egypt and the King of Sedoyne, Octoueane is not given any speech or even a direct mention during the wedding. The possibility that a sixth performer might have been required, though, must be admitted.

*Figure 5: Performer 5 Character Roles*
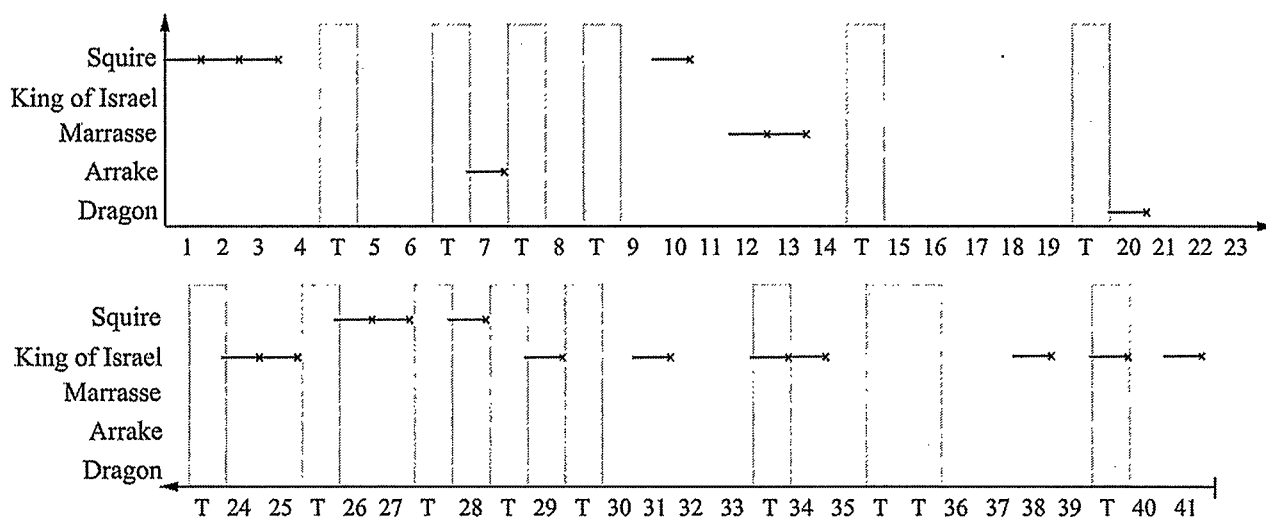
In some ways my Performer 5 is a 'catch-all' performer who could perform a number of smaller roles and a few major ones. Performer 5, however, cannot play all of the small roles, and some must be left to the other three performers. The best roles for Performer 5 are the various squire/messenger roles (with a few exceptions), the two giants, the dragon, the boar, and the King of Israel. The monster roles are all assigned to Performer 5 for ease of costuming. These roles would presumably be masked and the performer could just change the heads between roles.

An attachable head or mask is the best possible way to explain Performer 5's monster roles. The masking of roles occurred in medieval entertainments like Edward III's Christmas mummings. In the winter of 1347 Edward III staged mummings as holiday pastimes. In her book *Edward III and his Chivalry*, Juliet Vale notes that these pastimes included monsters parading through the court, which were costumed with "tunics or cloaks, and head cover of various kinds, sometimes with wings to match." (69). She also suggests that "[t]here appear to have been three different types of head-cover: *crestes, viseres,* and simply 'heads'. The last were perhaps pulled right over the wearer's own heads. Swans, peacocks and dragons fell into this category" (Vale 69).

After the various battle scenes, Eglamour always collects the head of the creature he has killed and places it on a lance or pike. In later plays of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this was a practice that occurred on stage. Bevington notes that

> [g]iants and ogres could be rendered simply with the help of a visor, such as Irksomeness in *Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* who enters "like a monster", having a visor for his head which is carried upon a sword after his defeat. (93)

While *Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* is not a medieval performance, its conventions could have been borrowed from medieval theatre. When Eglamour collects the heads of the various monsters he kills and places them on a pike, a mask could be a very useful stage prop to represent this.

Masking the monster heads would also allow Performer 5 to play the King of Israel and Squire,

without the audience associating him with a monster. Janette Dillon notes that

> [s]everal characters in medieval drama . . . would routinely have been played in masks, thus inhibiting a mode of engagement like empathy; and the widespread practice of doubling, which demanded that an audience accept a performer in two or more different roles, would also have served to inhibit any total immersion in the character's role. In any case, it is self-evident that empathy would be a totally misplaced audience response to a non-human figure like God the father or the devil (93)

Masking allowed a medieval actor to separate him or herself from a role. The performers might wish for the audience to empathize with the King of Israel, but certainly not Arrak or Marasse (whose defeat is a triumph for Eglamour).

Arrak and Marrasse are perhaps a little more difficult to stage due to their stature. The poet describes the giant Arrak as at least part man: "þat mad man" (L 325). This phrase might suggest someone of human stature, but with the face of a wild man. Yet, the giant is also more than just a man, and the narrator goes on to explain that "Men mett hym, als I saye, / On þe playne grownd þer he laye: / Feftene fotte and mare (L 329-30). There are two possible ways this larger stature (feftene fotte) might have been represented. First, the audience may have imagined the masked performer as giant-sized, and therefore the extra height might not have been necessary. Second, stilt-walkers may have been used in performances. In a record from 1576-7 the REED editors of the Cheshire volume refer to stilt walking that was used in a dramatic performance ("the ij shpertes for going vppon the Syltes") and argue that this record "suggests that the stilt walkers were costumed as play characters" (Baldwin, Clopper, and Mills, lxxx). Depending on how elaborate the performance was, then, an actor on stilts may have represented the giant.

A narrative difference between L and C might help explain how Performer 5 could have

costumed the dragon. In *C* 20 lines[16] are added/subtracted[17] that explain what happens to the dragon after Eglamour kills it. The additional 20 lines in *C* seem, to me, to be narrative details that would not be necessary in a performance:

> Thys ryche emperour of Rome
>
> Sent aftyr þe dragone,
>
>> That in þe feld was deed.
>
> Hys sydys were grene as any glas;
>
>> Hys hed as fyre was reed.
>
>
> When þey sawe þe hydowes best
>
> Mony awey þen ronne fest,
>
>> And from hym fled full sone.
>
> They metyd hym, forty fote and mo—
>
> Þe emperour commanded þey schuld hym do—
>
>> Hys wyll most nede be done.
>
> To Seynt Lawrans kyrke þey hym bare,
>
> And þer shall he lye euurmare,
>
>> To þe day of dome.
>
> When þe remeued þat fowly þyng
>
> Mony men fell in swonyng
>
>> For stynke þat from hym come. (*C* 781-798)

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[16]  Richardson's edition skips from 780 to 803 in L and leaves the space blank. This gap is not due to lost or corrupted lines, however, and is an editorial choice by Richardson to keep the two texts parallel.

[17]  Richardson dates L between 1430-40, but the folio of C with Eglamour is dated anywhere between 1411-1504. It is unclear which came first.

The representation of the dragon with a mask might explain why this section is not present in *L*. It would be difficult to mime a dragon lying on the ground with a foul stench. Maybe this scene is missing from L because it was a detail that could not be staged—an audience that saw a performer with a masked head might be confused by the additional explanation, since it would be hard imagine a man in a mask as a dead dragon "forty fote and mo".

Performer 5 may have also masked the boar and hart, although I have not assigned them as specific roles. Larger animals could have been represented by masked actors in the Middle Ages. Vale notes that at another Christmas festival of Edward III masks were used to represent lions and elephants (70). In their analysis of manuscript illuminations in Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fonds français 95 and Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, Twycross and Carpenter note that masks and costumes could represent stags:

> [t]he first shows a staff hobby-stag, the wearer's face peering out through a hole in the chest. . .
> The famous Bodley *Romance of Alexander* offers another hobby-stag, this time with two human
> back legs and a staff front leg. . . This manuscript also contains the well-known images of
> strings of maskers wearing animal heads over normal clothes. (33)

The masking of the animal roles by Performer 5 seems at least possible, then. Since Eglamour also collects the heads of the beasts that he kills, it is worth assuming that the animal masks might also be collected and displayed during the performance. These roles would also make the stage fights livelier; otherwise the actor playing Eglamour would be swinging his sword in empty space.

Performer 5 could also play most of the squire and messenger roles. There are a few messenger roles, however, that Performer 5 would be unable to play because of other role obligations. These roles could have fallen to whoever was available of the other performers. In the scenes where they occur not every performer is on stage. The first occurs in scene 29 of figure 1 (lines 1021-1057) when a messenger speaks to the King of Israel and Degrebelle. Since Performer 5 is also playing the King of

Israel in my assignment, the importance is given to the named roles, although the King of Israel could have theoretically been played by another performer as well. Performers 2 or 3 could easily play the messenger role, however, with little difficulty. Performer 2 is on stage as Eglamour, and could just remove his helmet or sword to perform the messenger role. He is on stage shortly beforehand, though, which could make for an awkward transition. The better explanation is that Performer 3 would remove his/her gown and whatever other props he used to play Cristabelle, since there is a larger gap before another female role is on stage. Another instance occurs at scene 34 (lines 1150-1186), when a squire is also on stage with the King of Israel. In this case, Performer 2 could play the squire, which is the only possibility since the other performers are accounted for.

**Props, Performing Animals and Costumes**

My discussion of props below describes what might/could have been used in a performance of *Eglamour*. These props were extrapolated from the text in the same way scholars have used references to objects in *Mankind* to determine its prop list. The few items include swords, a table, a bed, helmets, masks, pikes, a ring, a mantle, a girdle, trumpets, costumes and anything else a travelling troupe might logically transport. An exhaustive list of possible props is contained in the appropriate column of Appendix 1, but not all of the items would necessarily need to be present. A minimalist approach is best when considering a small troupe would have to travel with the props. I also discuss the possibility of animal performers and costume use in *Eglamour*.

*Figure 6: Props, Performing Animals and Costumes in Eglamour*

| Scene (line #) | Setting | Props |
|---|---|---|
| 1 (49) | Eglamour's bedchamber | Bed |
| 2 (109) | Hall | Table |
| 3 (136) | Eglamour's chamber | Bed, pouch of money |
| 4 (181) | Earl's chamber | |
| T (196) | River to field | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 (205) | Field | |
| 6 (247) | Cristabelle's chamber | Two hounds, a sword |
| T (272) | Street to forest | Gate, walls |
| 7 (283) | Forest | Horn, hart, hounds, club, sword |
| T (334) | Street to castle to court | Arrak's head |
| 8 (338) | Earl's court | Arrak's head |
| T (358) | To a forest in Sedoyne | |
| 9 (370) | Forest | Bright helmets, spear, sword, horse (which is killed) |
| 10 (408) | Forest | Sword, dead horse, bags, a helmet, meats, wine, white cloth |
| 11 (505) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Cart, boar's head, bath |
| 12 (533) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Boar's head, spear, sword, horse, helmet |
| 13 (562) | Field | Horse, helmet, sword |
| 14 (597) | Field | Bells, horse, gold ring |
| T (631) | From Sedoyne to Artois | Boar's head |
| 15 (643) | Cristabelle's chamber | |
| 16 (650) | Earl's Hall | Boar's head, Marrasse's head |
| 17 (674) | Cristabelle's chamber | Torches, bed |
| 18 (691) | Earl's Hall | |
| 19 (709) | Cristabelle's chamber | Gold ring |
| T (718) | From Artois to Rome | |
| 20 (724) | Field | Horse |
| 21 (751) | Tower | Bells |
| 22 (799) | Somewhere in Artois | |
| 23 (811) | Earl's court | Scarlet red mantle, ship |
| T (831) | Cristabelle is out at sea until she reaches an island | Ship, griffon? (takes away baby Degrebelle) |
| 24 (850) | Field | Scarlet red mantle, gold girdle |
| 25 (868) | King of Israel's Castle | |
| T (881) | Christabel drifts off to Egypt | Ship |
| 26 (892) | King of Egypt's Castle | |
| 27 (925) | Chamber | |
| T (952) | Rome to Artois | Dragon's head, spear |
| 28 (979) | Earl's Hall | Dragon's head |
| T (1011) | Artois to the Holy Land | |
| 29 (1021) | King of Israel's court | |
| T (1057) | Israel to Egypt | Ship |
| 30 (1063) | Beach? Dock? | |
| 31 (1075) | Dock to King of Egypt's hall | Trumpets |
| 32 (1084) | King of Egypt's hall | |
| 33 (1111) | Field for tournament | Trumpets, staff |
| T (1138) | Field to Church | |
| 34 (1150) | Church | Degrebelle's Heraldic arms (a griffon), Scarlet |

| | | red mantle, gold girdle, a coffer |
|---|---|---|
| 35 (1186) | | |
| T (1195) | The Holy Land to Egypt | |
| T (1210) | Sedoyne to Egypt | |
| 36 (1222) | Castle wall | |
| 37 (1228) | Field | Swords |
| 38 (1270) | Field | |
| 39 (1282) | Field | Eglamour's surcoat with his emblem |
| T (1324) | Egypt to Artois | |
| 40 (1339) | Earl's Court | |
| 41 (1348) | Earl's Court | |

## *Props*

The first prop mentioned in *Eglamour* is the bed that Eglamour is lying in. The bed could be represented by a bedroll, maybe laid on a table to make it easier for the audience to see the actor. A troupe would have probably already carried bedrolls to sleep on as they travelled, which could be repurposed for a performance. A troupe might have also carried weapons or war gear too, depending on their reasons for travelling. Suzanne Westfall notes that households a minstrel might stay in while travelling "would on occasion underwrite expenses for such supplies as horses, weapons, or war gear if the minstrels were on their master's business" (84). It might be a stretch to assume that real weapons would have been used in a play, but if troupes were already travelling with them, why not? Alternatively, a troupe could have carried blunted weapons for mimed stage fights.

There are also a number of instruments that would make useful props in *Eglamour*. Bells, trumpets, and a hunting horn might have been brought along to add to the performance. After Eglamour's fight with Marrasse in scene 14 and after he kills the dragon in scene 21 the text mentions processions ringing bells: "For ioye þat þe worme was slayn / Procession come hym agayne, / And swetly bellis þay rynge." (*L* 766-8). Other mentions of instruments may have livened up the performance, but none are particularly necessary.

Scene 10 raises the question of feasting in the romance. When the King of Sedoyne comes

across Eglamour and the dead boar, he rewards him with a small feast: "Dylecyous metis forthe þay broghte; / Þe Renyche wyne ne spared þay noghte; / Whitte clathis þare þay sperde." (*L* 454-6). While the performers could always have mimed the actions of feasting, whether or not they used actual food as props is uncertain. This scene could be mimed with or without food as props.

Some of the smaller items in the poem like the ring, girdle, and mantle appear more than once in the poem. A magical gold ring is given to Eglamour by Organata, and she tells him that while he wears it he "sall neuir be slayne" (*L* 621). Later on, Eglamour gives a ring (presumably the same one) to Cristabelle at line 715, and the same prop could be used in both instances. Degrebelle is wrapped in the mantle and girdle from when he is carried off as a baby. These items are essential to the plot of the poem and would have needed props to depict them. The first mention of the mantle is line 817, when Cristabelle wraps the baby Degrebelle in "a mantill of skarelett rede." After the baby Degrebelle is taken by the griffon, he is found by the King of Israel wrapped in the same mantle, and with a "golde gyrdill" (*L* 859). The mantle and girdle are particularly important later on in the poem, when Degrebelle and Cristabelle are nearly married at the end of the first tournament. Degrebelle wears a surcoat with a griffon on it, causing Cristabelle to weep for her lost son. When asked, she tells them that her son was carried away by a griffon, and was wrapped in a red mantle and a golden girdle. On hearing this news, the King of Israel asks one of his squires to fetch the items:

> He comand a sqwyere, þat was hende,
>
> Aftir þe cofire for to wende
>
> Þat þay were in layde.
>
> Þay tuk þam owte þan full rathe,
>
> The mantill and þe girdill bathe,
>
> Þat richely was graythede. (*L* 1162-7)

The girdle and mantle are essential in connecting Degrebelle with the lost child. The props could be

pulled out of the "cofire" on stage, would be recognized by the audience and, as with other recurring props used in other plays, like Desdemona's handkerchief in *Othello*, could be effectively used to create dramatic irony.

Some of the other props mentioned in *Eglamour* might not have been used in a production, though. The first is a cart in scene 11. While a cart would be useful for a travelling troupe, it is not necessary to the action. The text states "Aftir cartis þe kyng hase sent; / Onone hamwardes þay went" (*L* 505-6). Bevington suggests that "[l]ike the minstrels, the players traveled at first in groups of four or less, on foot, with packs or packhorses, and perhaps a wagon for the more prosperous." (12). If the performers did have a cart, then, they likely made use of it in this scene. If not, the narrator's words might be enough to imagine the action. None of the carts are essential to the scene, and are sent off ahead of the King of Sedoyne and Eglamour.

### Animals

Scene 6 requires two dogs, which raises the question of whether animals were used or not. The animals mentioned in the narrative at this point are two greyhounds that are given to Eglamour by Cristabelle: "'Sir, sen ȝe sall on huntynge fownde, / I sall ȝow gyffe twa gud grewhundis" (*L* 259-60). Animal performers might have been used to represent the two greyhounds. Performing dogs may have been used in plays such as *Dame Sirith*. There is also a point in *Dame Sirith* where Dame Sirith speaks to her dog and feeds it mustard and pepper to make its eyes water (a trick she uses to convince Margery that the dog was her daughter). To account for the dog, Richard Axton suggests that

> many medieval dialogue poems may have received a partially dramatic performance by a ventriloquist mime. But a solo performer of *Dame Sirith*, however skilful, could not have worked quite alone. In order to show the trick by which the bawd wins round the reluctant Margeri he needs the collaboration of a dog. (Axton 21)

The use of a performing dog is a necessary addition to *Dame Sirith*, or else the action and reaction of Dame Sirith feeding the dog mustard is meaningless (Axton 21). The dogs in *Eglamour*, however, play a rather small role and, unless the troupe was already travelling with dogs, there would be little reason to bring them along and pay for their upkeep just for a few scenes. Unlike the dog in *Dame Sirith*, no tricks are played with the dogs. In *Eglamour,* their only action is a hunting call.

Horses may have also been performers in *Eglamour.* Whether or not a troupe travelled with horses, in a performance of the poem they would be used minimally at best. Most of the travelling described by the narrator is done on foot, and the only horses mentioned are those used in battle by Eglamour. The horses in *Eglamour* die quickly in the battle scenes, though. In his fight with the boar, for example: "His nobill stede vndir hym he sloghe" (*L* 392). In his fight with Marrasse: "When þat his nobyll stede was dede" (*L* 587). And lastly, in the fight with the dragon: "He strake hym and his horse both / Vnto þe grounde so colde" (*L* 731-2). Given their quick demises, *Eglamour*'s horses would have to be imagined. Since the focus of the poem is Eglamour's ability to defeat his opponent on foot, it seems that the horses could be excluded in favour of Eglamour starting on foot. Maybe the Monty Python troupe is not so far off either, and the performer could mimic riding a horse instead of using a real one.

### Costumes

Costuming "could be central to both meaning and spectacular effect" in early drama (Dillon 99). Dillon notes that "costumes signified within the fiction . . . [and] continuity of costume was one way in which an audience recognised which character a given actor was playing." (99). Each character in *Eglamour*, then, would have needed a small piece of clothing that was significant to them. The non-human characters could be costumed with "[w]igs, masks, and conspicuously rich or grotesque costumes" to create a distance between the audience and the role (Dillon 99). For every other role,

Dillon suggests that

> costumes otherwise generally resemble the spectator's clothes. A change of costume may signal a temporary condition, such as readiness for bed (a nightcap) or a journey (boots), or a change of state (such as madness or sickness), or disguise. Clothing often needs to be read as a kind of shorthand for statements about the character. Occupation, social class, moral status could all be signalled through clothes. (99-100)

The costume did not need to be elaborate. For a female character, a wig or dress might have been enough for the audience to recognize the gender change if the actor was male. Monarchs may have had more detailed robes or a crown to represent their status and wealth.

For knights, heraldic emblems play an important role in *Eglamour;* they are used throughout the play to identify unidentified characters, such as Eglamour and Degrebelle. During the first wedding, Cristabelle recognizes Degrebelle as her son by his griffon emblem. In the second tournament, Cristabelle discovers Eglamour's identity by the ship on his surcoat. The importance of these emblems in the poem suggests that items like the surcoats would be effective props in a performance, where the performers could focus the audience's attention on the heraldic emblems for effect.

The cost of costumes may have been a problem for a travelling troupe. If a troupe was without a patron, the props and costumes would have to be inexpensive. Dillon notes that

> [c]ostumes or plays performed in Cambridge colleges were so valuable that they were stored in chests in the Master's living quarters or kept locked in the college tower with the silver; and John Rastell's suit against Henry Walton for costumes lent to him for safekeeping and not returned shows the value of costumes very clearly. Not only do the depositions list the value of each costume item by item, some costing over 20 shillings (£1) each, but they also reveal how many times the same material might be reworked into different costumes before finally disintegrating. (99)

A frugal troupe could have reworked the same items enough to reduce the cost. If they were performing plays with similar themes, they would not need to alter the costumes all that often. Troupes may have also rented clothing but, as Suzanne Westfall notes, it "would have decimated their profits, defeating the purpose of touring" (140).

The more likely explanation, given the prop and troupe-size requirements of *Eglamour*, seems to be that the troupe would have had a patron. Westfall notes that

> [s]ince the aspects of a play are as important as the rhetorical ones, a player's art would inspire neither awe nor profit if it did not somehow impress the audience. Poorly dressed players could not properly represent their patron, who was concerned with impressing local populations . . . Patronized troupes no doubt travelled with their own small, versatile, easily transportable stock of costumes donated by their patron from his own cast-off finery and from expendable stock in the household revels wardrobe. (139-40)

There were plenty of troupes travelling under patrons in the Middle Ages, and a performance for a Saint's Day festival seems too important to have been performed by a troupe barely making ends meet. If a patron was concerned with "impressing local populations," a Saint's day festival seems like the ideal place to do it. Since Bale did not elaborate on the details of the "play of Eglemour and Degrebelle" there is no way to definitively conclude that it was performed by a troupe with a patron. I think that a patron best explains how a troupe would fund the performance.

### Staging

The staging of *Eglamour* can be imagined with textual evidence and medieval staging practices. The poet presents scenes from far off lands, ships at sea, forest with giants, castles, bowers, and many other scenes that would need to be represented in the play (although not necessarily with backdrops and paintings).

The theoretical framework for medieval stagecraft is known as the *locus* and *platea* tradition. In

her book *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre,* Janette Dillon defines the *locus* and

*platea* as

> [t]he two terms [that] denote two interconnected ways of using space. While the place or *platea*
>
> is basically an open space, the *locus* can be literally a scaffold, but can also be any specifically
>
> demarcated space or architectural feature capable or being given representational meaning.
>
> Thus a door, an alcove, a scaffold, or a tent can represent a particular location, such as a house,
>
> a temple, a country, heaven or hell, or simply 'the place of (for example) Covetousness' (a
>
> conceptual rather than a properly physical space). (4)

The *locus* (or *loci* if there is more than one) is used to create the setting of the play. It is given meaning

by the props used and the explanations by the actors. The *locus,* therefore, frames the play and creates

the world that the action is taking place in. The *platea* is the actors' playing space. It is free of

representational meaning. The *platea* does not contribute to how the audience understands the *locus,*

but "can be recognized as performance rather than as the fiction it intermittently seeks to represent"

(Dillon 5).

The combined use of the *locus* and *platea* allows a certain amount of illusion and surrealism

into a play. In her article "Medieval English Theatre: Codes and Genres," Meg Twycross suggests that

> [t]he plays (in the Middle Ages) took over and transformed everyday space: in processional
>
> religious drama, the city streets; in liturgical drama, the churches; in the moral and other
>
> interludes, the great halls of households, educational establishments or civic guilds; in other
>
> drama, churchyards, inn-yards, market-places. The audience shares this space: close enough for
>
> direct eye-contact, to be harangued and solicited. (458)

The foreign spaces of *Eglamour* could be represented with different *loci.* By defining the *locus* first,

medieval performers could create a castle with a tent, turn a divider into a hall, make a masked man a

dragon, and transform a white English male into the King of Egypt. The *platea* would be the space that

the performers used to silently act out the piece, which they would share with the audience. A play of *Eglamour* would have transformed the courtyard of St. Albans into foreign kingdoms, with the illusion that this "everyday space" was grand and unique.

For fixed-place plays, place-and-scaffold staging was one type of staging in medieval England. Katie Normington describes it as a "*use* of space rather than a demarcation or design of space . . . Within this construction the place, or *platea*, is a general open space, while the scaffolds act as *loci*, and represent specific locations" (94). Place-and-scaffold was used in plays like *The Castle of Perseverance*, where scaffolds represented different locations and circled an open playing space. A drawing accompanying *The Castle of Perseverance* shows "five scaffolds arranged in a circle, in the middle of a *platea* is a scaffold representing the Castle, with a bed for Mankind underneath" (Normington 96). Other plays believed to employ place-and-scaffold staging are the "Digby *Mary Magdalen*, the N-Town passion plays and Mary Play, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament, The Killing of the Children* and *The Conversion of St. Paul*" (Twycross 46).

Place-and-scaffold staging did not need to be as elaborate as the drawing in *The Castle of Perseverance*. It could have been configured differently for each play. The N-town *Mary Play,* for example, "required multiple loci but is smaller in scale than the other two dramas [*The Castle of Perseverance* and the Digby *Mary Magdalene*]" (Normington 106). The Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* "calls for place-and-scaffold staging, with two scaffolds to represent the houses of merchants Aristorye and Jonathas respectively and a *platea*, a common ground space where meetings occurred between the two households" (132). Not all of the scaffolds were necessarily elaborate, either. In the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play, "[t]he scaffolds are referred to in a variety of terms throughout the play: here World calls it his 'tent', which Bevington in his edition of the text takes to refer to a curtained area on the scaffold, but which might well denote the whole scaffold" (Normington 104). From these examples, place-and-scaffold staging seems to have depended on the requirements of the

play. The only requirements seem to be that there were two or more *locus* and some sort of scaffold structure. Smaller plays may have used smaller structures, which may have been transportable.

Staging *Eglamour* would be relatively easy using place-and-scaffold staging, and only a few settings are mentioned in the poem. The settings include a bedchamber, a hall/court, a field, a forest, or a castle. To make *Eglamour* easier to perform a troupe could have constructed a stage with two *loci*: one with a castle or hall and the other with a bedchamber. The settings change back and forth so often in the narrative that it makes sense for the stage to have at least two loci. A scaffold constructed to represent a castle hall could be one *locus*. It would function as both castle and hall since all of the halls in *Eglamour* are contained in castles. If the scaffold represented both, it would save time and cost and be a reasonable size. The other *locus* could have been a scaffold meant to represent a bedchamber. Perhaps this *locus* was constructed by placing a tarp over a scaffold, like the tent in *Mary Magdalene*. For example, in the first scene at line 49 Eglamour is in bed pining for Cristabelle "[i]n chambir whare þay ryste." After he discusses the matter with his squire the scene changes to Pryncesamour and Cristabelle "in þe haulle / Amang þe beryns bryghte" (*L* 110-1). When Pryncesamour notices Eglamour's absence he asks Cristabelle "[t]o his chambir for to ga," and the scene quickly shifts back to Eglamour in his bedchamber(*L* 137). It would be logical for the troupe to have both the chamber and the hall as *loci* on stage. The performers, then, could walk between the two *loci* without needing to change the setting.

The forest and field could have been represented using the green-space surrounding St. Albans instead of scaffolds. The surviving abbey in St. Albans contains a field and a smattering of trees today, which may have been the case in the Middle Ages as well. Only the castle, hall, and chamber, then, would need to be represented on stage. As long as the scaffold was capable of "being given representational meaning," there is an endless number of possible ways a troupe may have constructed their scaffolds to fit the play.

While there is no way to conclude that *Eglamour* was staged one way or another, I have presented a few possible ways the poem could be staged. I have tried to imagine a scenario where the number of performers, props, and locus used as few resources as possible. With these requirements in mind, though, it is easy to see how *Eglamour* might have been staged. Even with the simplest explanations, the poem is easy to adapt to the requirements of a troupe. A play of *Eglamour* may have been grander than my assumptions. It may also have been much less grand. What is important, though, is that it is possible to explain *Eglamour*'s possible staging using current theories about medieval stagecraft and performance requirements. Whether it required less or more than what I have accounted for is left to conjecture.

# Conclusion

Strohm's idea of rememorative reconstruction is worth recalling to clarify what I hope to achieve in my study. I have used historical records and textual evidence to imagine a possible staging of *Sir Eglamour of Artois*. Strohm reminds us that the past is not something "we discover, but [is] something we construct" (Strohm 9). In the case of *Eglamour*, there is little left to discover and my argument involves a great deal of conjecture about what the various pieces of evidence might mean. Rememorative reconstruction is not meant to provide a definitive answer to a problem, though. It is a tool to keep us thinking about all possibilities, and always questioning how we approach documents and records so far removed from our own time.

Based on the historical and textual evidence I have gathered, I have argued that it is possible that the Thornton manuscript edition of *Eglamour* was dramatically performed as a narrated drama. Given the odd character disappearances that occur without explanation, the author may have limited the text to the requirements of a small troupe of four actors plus a narrator. Even if the original author of the romance was not involved in creating these limitations, rewriting and adaptation of the romance by minstrels or scribes could have left us with the redaction of the text that Thornton copied into his manuscript. The limitations that exist in the Thornton *Eglamour* make it possible for a small troupe to perform the poem as a narrated play; the lack of interaction between some characters suggests that the character roles of *Eglamour* could be doubled; the limited number of props and simple staging requirements suggest that a troupe would not have needed substantial resources to successfully stage the romances as a play. The survival of Bale's chronicle adds depth to my reconstruction of *Eglamour*, not unquestionable proof. At St. Alban's abbey in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, a place-and-scaffold stage may have been erected in the courtyard of the abbey, and the narrated drama could have been a part of the entertainments of the saint's festival.

Plays surviving from England and the continent help broaden the scope of the kinds of drama troupes were capable of performing in the Middle Ages. *Mankind* shows us that a small troupe could use doubled roles to stage more than one character. Lydgate's mummings demonstrate that narrative poems could be accompanied by mimed dramatic performance. The presence and usefulness of a narrator on stage is evidenced in early English cycle plays. A narrator could maintain "a meditative distance" between biblical history and medieval devotion, like the Expositor in the Chester plays. A narrator could emphasize the humility of the author, as Poeta does in the *Conversion of St. Paul*. A narrator could also help keep time in a play, and transport the audience to certain moments in biblical history as Contemplacio does. On the continent, narrator figures in French mystery drama were able to establish the limits of the stage and setting through their words, and made it easier to stage the plays without elaborate settings or backdrops. In *Dame Sirith*, if it was indeed a performance by several performers, the narrator could make the staging of the play easier to manage, by explaining travelling scenes and narrating a short back-story.

In the possible performance of *Eglamour*, a narrator would be most responsible for a successful performance. He would need to establish the histories of the characters for the audience, introduce new characters, provide plot information, explain the travelling of the characters and the hardships they face, and explain the actions on stage. The narrator, I posit, would be in charge of memorizing the entire poem, and reciting both the narrative and each character's lines for the mimes to perform. These tasks fall within the limits of current theories on medieval performers. Scholars who argue for the minstrel recitation of romances already assume that medieval minstrels would have committed an entire romance to memory. The addition of mimes might, if anything, make the romance easier for a narrator to recite. If there were performers to represent the characters, a single performer would not be expected to alter his voice or clothing for each role. Mimes could enhance romances in any number of ways, not least of which would be the entertainment value of the performance.

One of Taylor's arguments against the oral performance of romances by minstrels during public events is that a long narrative poem would seem boring in comparison to other entertainments provided by jugglers, acrobats, and musicians. Yet, if we add mimes to the mix, a romance recitation would have been far more entertaining than a single-performer recitation. Mimes in Lydgate's mummings, for example, seem to have turned poems into dramatic spectacles. The inclusion of the slender, fanged beast in *Bycorne and Chychevache* or the dragon in *The Legend of St. George* could have been exciting to see. And the mumming entertainments of Edward III's court, too, used costume and disguise for spectacle. The addition of mimes could make romances exciting enough to keep the attention of the audience, and more visually interesting to an easily distracted crowd. In the case of *Eglamour*, Eglamour battles two giants, a boar and a dragon, all of which could be visually spectacular with the use of masks and costume. The tournament and battle scenes divide the poem into fairly even sections of story and action as well, which would have been practical in keeping the interest of a distracted crowd.

Yet, despite all the possible ways to perform *Eglamour*, there is still a troubling lack of evidence for the existence of romance plays in medieval England. The explanation of why this evidence does not exist may come down to loss—the loss of play scripts, the loss of records, the loss of evidence. A better way to approach the problem, though, is by rethinking how we define a dramatic tradition we know very little about. There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done in order to determine how poems could have been performed in the Middle Ages, and I have only scratched the surface of the possibilities.

The best place to turn for more evidence, as Sponsler reminds us, is to the poems themselves. Perhaps the reason that the *REED* team has not uncovered any romance play texts from medieval England is that there are none; none of the type scholars have assumed to be the only kind of text to qualify as drama, one with speeches, stage directions, a dramatis personae, and narrative content.

Romance texts themselves are all that survive, but we need to think more about how they were performed and whether or not the single minstrel theory holds up to close scrutiny for all of them. I have no doubt that at least some romances were read aloud or recited from memory by a single minstrel—there is enough evidence in the records to support that idea. I also believe, however, that some romances may have been performed more elaborately, and that mimes may not have been an uncommon addition.

*Eglamour* was not the only romance that may have been dramatically performed. Bale lists one other romance play, whose text is unknown. If the text had survived, it would be worth looking at to determine whether it shares any features with *Eglamour*. It is of course possible that we might still recover the lost text of a "knight cleped fflorence"—*The Book of Margery Kempe* shows us that it is never too late to uncover new manuscripts—but for now we must be content with our luck in having at least one record matched by an extant text in *Eglamour*.

*Eglamour* and the "knight cleped fflorence" should not be the only romances scrutinized with an eye for performance, however. Other romances can be scoured for the same features I have found in *Eglamour*. We can search for sections of text that would be confusing to an audience if only performed by a single minstrel. Or, a romance could require so few props and so little staging that it is plausible it was put on as a show for a crowd. There are other features not present in *Eglamour* that might indicate a dramatic performance as well, anything from frequently missing or hypermetrical speech tags, to requests that the audience see as well as listen to the performance before them.

The most useful resources we have are the texts of the romances themselves. We may find evidence of dramatic activities no one thought possible before. I hope I have shown that medieval texts should be re-evaluated for their potential to be performed dramatically. We may yet uncover a new manuscript containing romance plays, in which case we will need to re-evaluate our approach and develop new techniques. Until that day comes, however, we will not do justice to the texts that survive,

unless we consider all of the possible ways they could relate to staged performances, including the possibility that some of them may have been performed as narrated mimed drama.

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**Appendix 1: Complete Chart of Scenes, Settings, Props and Character Interactions in *Eglamour***

| Scene (line #) | Setting | Props | Characters |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 (49) | Eglamour's bedchamber | Bed | Eglamour*, Squire* |
| 2 (109) | Hall | Table | Cristabelle*, Squire*, Earl, knights# |
| 3 (136) | Eglamour's chamber | Bed, pouch of money | Cristabelle*, two maidens#, Squire*, Eglamour* |
| 4 (181) | Earl's chamber | | Earl*, Cristabelle* |
| T (196) | River to field | | Eglamour, Earl |
| 5 (205) | Field | | Eglamour*, Earl* |
| 6 (247) | Cristabelle's chamber? | Two hounds, a sword | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| T (272) | Street to forest | Gate, walls | Eglamour |
| 7 (283) | Forest | Horn, hart, hounds, club, sword | Eglamour*, Arrak* (the giant) |
| T (334) | Street to castle to court | Arrak's head | Eglamour |
| 8 (338) | Earl's court | Arrak's head | Eglamour*, Earl*, admirers# |
| T (358) | To a forest in Sedoyne | | Eglamour |
| 9 (370) | Forest | Bright helmets, spear, sword, horse (which is killed) | Eglamour, the Boar |
| 10 (408) | Forest | Sword, dead horse, bags, a helmet, meats, wine, white cloth | King of Sedoyne*; men#, Squire*, Eglamour* |
| 11 (505) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Cart, boar's head, bath | Eglamour*, King of Sedoyne, Queen of Sedoyne*; Organata |
| 12 (533) | King of Sedoyne's Castle | Boar's head, spear, sword, horse, helmet | Eglamour, Marrasse* (the giant) |
| 13 (562) | Field | Horse, helmet, sword | King of Sedoyne*, Eglamour*, Marrasse* |
| 14 (597) | Field | Bells, horse, gold ring | Eglamour*, King of Sedoyne*, Organata* |
| T (631) | From Sedoyne to Artois | Boar's head | Eglamour |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 (643) | Cristabelle's chamber | | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| 16 (650) | Earl's Hall | Boar's head, Marrasse's head | Eglamour*, Earl* |
| 17 (674) | Cristabelle's chamber | Torches, bed | Eglamour*, Cristabelle* |
| 18 (691) | Earl's Hall | | Eglamour*, Earl* |
| 19 (709) | Cristabelle's chamber | Gold ring | Eglamour*, Cristabelle |
| T (718) | From Artois to Rome | | Eglamour |
| 20 (724) | Field | Horse | Eglamour*, Dragon |
| 21 (751) | Tower | Bells | Emperor*, Eglamour, Dyateur |
| 22 (799) | Somewhere in Artois | | Earl*, Cristabelle, baby Degrebelle |
| 23 (811) | Earl's court | Scarlet red mantle, ship | Cristabelle*, baby Degrebelle, maidens#, Earl |
| T (831) | Cristabelle is out at sea until she reaches an island | Ship, griffon? (takes away baby Degrebelle) | Cristabelle*, baby Degrebelle |
| 24 (850) | Field | Scarlet red mantle, gold girdle | King of Israel*, baby Degrebelle |
| 25 (868) | King of Israel's Castle | | King of Israel*, baby Degrebelle, Queen of Israel |
| T (881) | Cristabelle drifts off to Egypt | Ship | Cristabelle |
| 26 (892) | King of Egypt's Castle | | King of Egypt*, Squire*, Cristabelle |
| 27 (925) | Chamber?[18] | | King of Egypt*, Squire, Cristabelle* |
| T (952) | Rome to Artois | Dragon's head, spear | Eglamour |
| 28 (979) | Earl's Hall | Dragon's head | Eglamour*, Squire*, Earl, Great Lords# |
| T (1011) | Artois to the Holy Land | | Eglamour |

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[18] Manuscript is damaged, but it seems likely she was taken to a chamber. The reading is taken from the corresponding lines in C, which reads: "The damysell, þat was so mylde, / Had so greet for here chylde / That sche was waxen hose. / To a chamber þey here lede; / Good mete þey here bede; / With good wyll sche with hem gose." (925-30). L likely had a similar reading since what survives resembles the lines from C: "This damsele þat w... / Scho had so w... / þat wele... / Into a... / Dyl... / A..." (925-30). Presumably "Into a..." is a variation of " To a chamber þey here lede," but this is only speculation.

| 29 (1021) | King of Israel's court | | King of Israel*, Degrebelle, Messenger* |
|---|---|---|---|
| T (1057) | Israel to Egypt | Ship | Degrebelle, Messenger |
| 30 (1063) | Beach? Dock? | | Degrebelle, King of Egypt*, Messenger* |
| 31 (1075) | Dock to King of Egypt's hall | Trumpets | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, Knights# |
| 32 (1084) | King of Egypt's hall | | Degrebelle, Knights#, King of Israel*, Cristabelle* |
| 33 (1111) | Field for tournament | Trumpets, staff | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, Great Lords#*, Heralds#* |
| T (1138) | Field to Church | | Degrebelle, King of Egypt, King of Israel, Cristabelle |
| 34 (1150) | Church | Degrebelle's Heraldic arms (a griffon), Scarlet red mantle, gold girdle, a coffer | Cristabelle*, Degrebelle*, King of Israel*, Squire* |
| 35 (1186) | | | Great Lords#*, Heralds#*, |
| T (1195) | The Holy Land to Egypt | | Eglamour |
| T (1210) | Sedoyne to Egypt | | King of Sedoyne, Knights# |
| 36 (1222) | Castle wall | | Cristabelle*, Heralds* |
| 37 (1228) | Field | Swords | Degrebelle*, Eglamour*, Knights# |
| 38 (1270) | Field | | Heralds#, Great Lords#*, Degrebelle*, Eglamour |
| *39 (1282) | Field | Eglamour's surcoat with his emblem | Eglamour*, Cristabelle*, Great Lords#, King of Israel*, King of Sedoyne* |
| T (1324)[19] | Egypt to Artois | | Various people |
| 40 (1339) | Earl's Court | | Earl, Eglamour, |

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[19] This passage presents a few problems for determining which characters might be present, and will be analyzed separately.

| | | | Messenger |
|---|---|---|---|
| 41 (1348) | Earl's Court | | Eglamour, Degrebelle, Organata, King of Israel*, Emperor[20] |

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[20] Actual appearance at the wedding is questionable and will be analyzed separately.

# Appendix 2: Character Interaction in *Eglamour*