“Shamed be ...”: Historicizing Shame in Medieval and Early Modern Courtly Ritual

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This essay explores the relationship between shame and honor in various texts and practices associated with medieval chivalry, and especially in The Order of the Garter. The meaning and significance of the motto of the Order—*Honi soit qui mal y pense*—is contested, but it emphasizes the close relationship between shame and honor in courtly society. The motto may not be an embedded coded reference to an unknown event; it may have been coined by Edward III to generate a sense of mystery appropriate to a courtly elite. An examination of selected literary texts (including Malory’s *Works* and Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part One*) and historical documents describing the ceremonial rituals of heraldic degradation and courtly shame suggests a remarkable continuity in the understanding of courtly shame between the medieval and the early modern period in England. This continuity is ignored by several recent commentators on shame, who unconsciously rehearse and repeat the abjection of the medieval past in contrast to the renaissance understanding of shame.

KEYWORDS: shame, Order of the Garter, Malory, Shakespeare, honor, chivalry, degradation, medieval, early modern literature

My text is brevity itself. The motto of the Order of the Garter—“*Honi soit qui mal y pense*” (“Shamed be he who thinks evil of it”)—is one of the most enduring and widely disseminated medieval texts, one of the oldest and most persistent traces of medieval court culture. It is still in active use today, not just in the rituals and insignia of the Order, itself the pre-eminent chivalric, military and diplomatic honor in England, and the oldest such order in Europe, but also in frequent use on royal and government documents (Britons travelling abroad, for example, bear the royal coat of arms and the motto of the Order on their passports); and in a range of playful, allusive, or parodic contexts. In the oldest and most popular account of the Order’s origins, the motto is spoken by the king, Edward III, as he attempts to shame those courtiers laughing at his gallant retrieval of a lady’s dropped garter. This account is much disputed, as we will see, and any medieval idea of

courtly or chivalric shame invoked by the motto in contemporary culture is now radically diluted, but this motto's long citational history constitutes a powerful and perhaps unique example of the different ways an emotion like courtly or public shame can be invoked and represented, talked about and cited, from the medieval period through modernity and into postmodernity. The motto's invocation of shame can be read as a kind of fault line in the long and proud history of the Order, along which it is possible to open up a number of inquiries into the dynamics between shame and honor in the textual traditions of medieval and post-medieval chivalry.

In this essay, I track some of the early stages in the motto's reception history, as late medieval and early modern writers respond to its oblique, conditional invocation of shame. I supplement this discussion with a consideration of a fifteenth-century text that is replete, even obsessed with the invocation of shame: Malory relies heavily on the rhetorical invocation of shame to establish a distinctive hierarchy of honor among his knights. I also examine some of the late medieval and early modern documents in the practical history of courtly shame, in the various ceremonies and rituals used to degrade knights, culminating in Falstaff's dismissal from the Order of the Garter in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part One*.

Many of these texts reveal substantial continuity between medieval and early modern ideas of courtly shame, and between the ways shame functions at an emotional, performative and ritual level. Such continuities have the potential to trouble some of the easiest and most persistent ideas about cultural change in this period. At the same time, however, the desire to signal their own historical and cultural difference from the medieval period leads many later writers to express a kind of second-order shame at some medieval accounts of courtly practices. At these moments, we find some of the most complex exchanges among shame, history, and writing, and I will suggest that the history of the Order reveals some paradigmatic strategies in the early modern construction of the "medieval."

One of the frameworks for my work here is the assumption that critical and historical responses to medieval textuality can assist us to read those texts in all their "craggy geography: oscillations, evasions, ambivalence and all," to quote Sheila Delany's evocative words from her ground-breaking essay on the *Manciple's Tale* ("Slaying Python," 59). This courageous essay was the first serious attempt to read Chaucer's poetry in the light of Cecily Chaumpaigne's accusation of *raptus*, and the first to reintroduce the question of authorial intent into a critical tradition that had become anesthetically formalist, too willing to bypass some of the less pleasant facts of the poet's life. It demonstrates the unblinking attention to text, history and ideology that marks all Delany's work. "Slaying Python" and other essays in *Writing Woman* had an enormous influence on my own thinking about medieval literature and the ideological structures through which we habitually read the texts of the past. This essay seeks to honor that inspiration in its attention to a series of medieval and early modern texts about men, women, and shame.

Shameful Origins: The Order of the Garter

The foundation of the Order of the Garter has been debated from the fourteenth century to the present. For many years, there was even uncertainty about the date of the Order's institution. The 1340s saw a flurry of chivalric activity in England, however, and this may account for some of the confusion. Froissart, for example, conflates the foundation of the Order with a tournament Edward III held in 1344, celebrating his triumphant campaign in Brittany in the previous year. Edward announced at this tournament that he planned to revive the Arthurian society of the Round Table at Windsor, complete with a new building housing a Round Table constructed to seat the prospective three hundred knights who would be members of his new society. Events in the ongoing war with France intervened, however, to delay this foundation. Although we have no direct record of the Order of the Garter's first meeting (indeed, the oldest Statutes date from 1415), the Wardrobe accounts offer rich and detailed testimony to the production of many garters on clothing, banners and ceremonial bedclothes between January 1347 and 1349, while Juliet Vale suggests the garter was being used as a decorative device from the beginning of the campaign to take Calais, in September 1346. With his bed of state decorated to match his robes of blue, "shimmering with gold embroidery and hundreds of silver-gilt buckles and pendants," she says the king "must have seemed not only the image of kingly splendour, but the very personification of his claim. The eye of the observer was assaulted with Edward's pugnacious assertion: 'Hony soit q' mal y pense'" (79–81).

Edward was soon distributing the Garter as the sign of the most pre-eminent order of chivalry. In Hugh Collins's reading of the surviving records, the most decisive date is August 6, 1348, when Edward issued letters patent outlining his plans to restructure the chapel at Windsor castle, with rededication to St George and the Blessed Virgin, and provision for twenty-four alms knights, twenty-four secular priests, and other officers, "suggesting that the college of St George was instituted as a complement to the order of the Garter" (13).

Less certain are the reasons behind the conjunction of motto, insignia, and Edward's motivation in designing and naming the Order, though there seems little doubt that his broad intentions were to celebrate his remarkable victories in France and to "galvanize" aristocratic support for the war (Collins, 20). Scholars, antiquarians, heralds, poets and novelists, however, have been ready and willing to speculate about the reasons for Edward's choice and the occasion that may have been its inspiration. A full account of the disputed history of the Order's origins lies beyond the scope of this essay (see Trigg, "Vulgar History"), though a brief summary will be useful here.

Polydore Vergil, in 1513, recorded and made famous the popular tradition whereby Edward converted a symbol of a lady's embarrassment or shame into England's pre-eminent chivalric honor. In this story, a woman, Edward's queen

or perhaps his mistress, had lost a garter from her leg while dancing. Silencing the laughter of the courtiers, Edward tied the garter around his own leg, and proclaimed, “Honi soit qui mal y pense,” promising to convert the garter into a sign of such honor that those then laughing at it would soon be honored to join its Order (Barber, 85). A number of variations on this story had been in circulation from the fifteenth century, especially in Europe—most notably in Joanot Martorell’s *Tirant lo Blanc*—though none can be traced back to fourteenth-century England. There is a suggestive parallel with the green girdle of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, similarly transformed from woman’s garment to heraldic sign, while the addition of the Garter motto to the single manuscript of the poem suggests that at least one reader, or writer, could see some kind of reference or analogue. The poem, however, does not answer the question about the historical origins of the Order (but see Cooke and Boulton; Carruthers, “Duke of Clarence”).

This story of the lady’s garter has enjoyed considerable currency, though it is frequently recounted only to be disputed. Peter Heylyn is scathing, in his *Cosmographie* of 1652, about Vergil’s explanation, dismissing the story as “a vain and idle Romance, derogatory both to the Founder, and the order” (321–22). Heylyn is adamant that the story is too “trifling” to be true, but his definition of it as a “Romance” is clearly designed to medievalize this popular tradition, to set it clearly in the past as an unreliable and fantastic invention. Heylyn was cited by Elias Ashmole in his influential history of the Garter (180), and by many other seventeenth-century writers, so that by 1724, John Anstis, Garter King of Arms, was drawing on a long tradition when he confidently described this and similar stories as “absurd” and “ridiculous,” as “romantick Fancies” (1: 62).

Since then, antiquarians, heralds and historians up till the present day have similarly resisted the idea that Edward could have founded so great an order of knighthood on an item or event so trivial, or, we may say, so shameful as a “wardrobe malfunction” of this kind. Accordingly, the Order’s recent official historians, Peter Begent and Hubert Chesshyre, quote Anstis with approval, saying it is better such stories be left in the dark” (15; also see Collins, 12).

This shameful story could not be repressed without being displaced by a more honorable account, however, and there thus arose an alternative explanation with a narrative history almost as long, though it has never seized the popular imagination. In this account, first appearing in Henry VIII’s *Liber Niger*, the “garter” is a small military strap that Edward elevated to prominence (possibly following the inspiration of Richard I), to celebrate his great victories in France; and the motto is a defiant challenge to any disputing his claim to the French throne (the garter’s colors are blue and gold, the colors of the *fleurs de lys* on the French coat-of-arms). The sixteenth-century Statutes are adamant that the Garter is tied on the leg of the knights as a sign of their brotherly companionship with one another. In the many accounts that privilege these military origins over the more popular courtly ones, from the sixteenth century through to the present, scholars take a distinct pleasure in telling the more romantic and amusing feminine story

and then displacing it with the “truer,” more historical and masculine one. In these alternative readings of the Garter, the military drive to conquer France is seen as the less shameful act, while this alternative derivation, from a tiny and unspecific “strap” is not seen as shameful at all, especially if it can replace the embarrassing female garter.¹ The English are not ashamed of pressing the royal claim to the French crown; but they are ashamed if their king shows a weakness towards women, or lets the conventions of courtly chivalry dictate military or heraldic policy. More recently, Richard Barber suggests that the garter resembles a miniature belt, reminiscent of the belt used in the investiture of a knight (87). The history of costume, moreover, casts doubt on the plausibility of the lady’s garter as the original sign, since women used tapes, rather than garters, to hold up their stockings, and the earliest visual representations of the Garter tend to show buckles that are certainly more reminiscent of straps and belts than undergarments.

The historical truth about Edward’s motivations, and the events which may have inspired his choice, are probably lost to us now, though recent work draws attention to the explanatory power of Vergil’s narrative and its analogues as a cultural or social myth of royal authority (see Jaeger). According to this less apologetic reading, it is precisely the triviality of the lady’s garment that permits the king’s social power to be displayed. The story thus dramatizes the king’s ability to rescue the social situation, to make meaning and value, and most importantly, to redistribute shame from the woman to the courtiers. I will consider the suggestive dynamics of this putative narrative scene more closely later on.

Returning to the question of origins, though, I propose a revisionary reading of the Garter motto. The absence of any contemporaneous account or any visual representation of the founding moment makes it seem likely that there was no single event, or garter, that inspired Edward to formulate this motto.² Rather, Edward may have chosen a phrase that was deliberately vague in its reference, either to mystify his purpose, or to initiate a kind of courtly guessing game. Such ambiguity is a frequent generic hallmark of heraldic mottoes, and the badges that often accompanied them. A. C. Fox-Davies comments on the badge: “It generally partook of the nature of what ancient writers would term ‘a quaint conceit,’ and much ingenuity seems to have been expended in devising badges and mottoes which should at the same time be distinctive and should equally be or convey an index or suggestion of the name and family of the owner” (450). Richard II’s badge of the White Hart is the most famous fourteenth-century example, while the Garter and its motto may represent an early instance of this kind of sign, though they do not seem to index any personal or familial identity.

Mottos and cryptic signs played an important role in fourteenth-century court culture, and Edward was fond of coining mottoes for occasional tournaments. The similarly elliptic motto, “It is as it is,” was, like that of the Garter, distributed liberally on clothes and ceremonial bedcovers in the 1340s (Newton, 42). Another motto, “Hay hay the wythe swan by goddes soule I am thy man,” demonstrates the ease with which the king could invoke the feminized world of romance for

the purposes of his Christmas games at Otford in 1348.³ This is also the king whose games and tournaments often involved dressing-up, as the Pope and his Cardinals, for example, in the Smithfield tournament of 1343 (Vale, 73).

Susan Crane draws attention to the enigmatic nature of many of the mottoes and badges of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries:

Some stories may be lost, but the enigmatic quality of most mottos suggests that personal devices were often deliberately occulted. Rather than simply proclaiming the bearer's identity, enigmatic signs work to mystify the aristocratic self by enlarging its signature but at the same time resisting close scrutiny. 17

Like the motto "jamais" of Charles VI (a deeply embedded reference to an Arthurian spiritual allegory), or "in my defens," adopted as late as 1475 by James III of Scotland, these two favorite mottoes of Edward ("It is as it is" and "Honi soit qui mal y pense") both invite more questions than they answer (Fradenburg, 179). They may well be, as Vale suggests, fragments or refrains of contemporary lyrics (65). They were certainly a crucial part of the rich textual and visual culture of the Edwardian tournament, where mottos, motifs, and colors for painting, textiles, clothes, and embroidery were often designed anew for separate occasions, although the specific allusions are often ephemeral, and now lost to us (65, 71). Crane comments, "Even as they assert control, these mottos preserve the empowering enigma characteristic of mottos: ... what 'it' and 'y' refer to is unspecified. Shame unto him who thinks ill of this garter? of this gesture? of this order? of this claim to France?" (222–23n).

It is possible to argue, then, that the elusiveness of the Garter motto is its primary meaning, rather than a coded and clouded reference to an original event of which we have lost all trace. On this reading, *Honi soit qui mal y pense* becomes a kind of small but powerful textual machine for generating explanations and etiological narratives.

This possibility allows us to speculate in a different way about the various explanatory accounts that circulate around the Garter story, and to focus on their competing explanations of Edward's motto, as much for what they tell us about how their authors conceptualize "shame" and "evil" as for their plausibility as historical narratives. This is my argumentative strategy, then: that the disputed history of the Garter, with all its variants, allows us to read the shameful history of "thinking evil" in response to the King's defiant challenge. Moreover, the fact that no explanations survive from the fourteenth century means that all such accounts are imaginative exercises in historical reconstruction, describing the motivations of the king at a distance of several generations at least. We would then explain the popularity of the story told by Martorell and Vergil through its attractive explanation of the reference to "shame." For fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers, the most obvious explanation was the transformation into court ritual of a contingent encounter between a king and a court lady; a woman's underclothes

becoming public property; a king being in love with a woman whose garter might be so “loose” (there is an obvious displacement from female sexuality onto the offending item here); and, finally, the king being so infatuated that he would allow this feminized encounter to influence military and royal policy.⁴ Later writers, however, for whom the courtly era belonged emphatically in the past, are certain that it would be an “evil” thing indeed, if this were the origin of the Order.

To compound the difficulties of identifying a single original event, however, two of the earliest literary references to the Order are not strictly concerned with shame at all. One of the earliest is found in the Middle English poem, *Wynnere and Wastoure* (which I suggest should be dated between 1352 and 1370), where the motto and its insignia appear amongst a number of enigmatic heraldic signs surrounding the King, who is called on to adjudicate the allegorical debate between the principles of expenditure and revenue-raising in his household economy.⁵ In this poem, the insignia of the garter, its colors of blue and gold, and its motto appear in rich embroidery all over the pavilion and the robes of the King. The motto appears in English, though, as “Hethyng haue the hathell that any harme thynkes.” “Hethying” (from Old Norse) is usually glossed as “contempt,” “scorn” or “hatred”; the word may have been chosen for its alliterative effect, but perhaps also as a weak misreading of “shame.” Perhaps this author, so loving in his praise of Edward, and so concerned with economic and political theory, was unable to think any shameful evil at all in association with him. Certainly there is no hint here of any courtly or feminine engagement: the context is purely masculine, military and civic.

There may even be a hint of instability in the motto itself. The English Wardrobe accounts are clear about the form of the French words, but Martorell’s extensive account, in the Catalan language, of the Order’s foundations, dating from the middle of the fifteenth century, gives the motto in a different form. Tirant lo Blanc’s companion, Diaphebus, recounts the story of the garter dropped by a court lady, Madresilva (in English, “Honeysuckle”) and worn by the King around his leg as a fetish object for four months, to the court’s dismay. Hearing of this, the King then announced his decision to found an Order, saying

“So the queen is disgruntled and my guests are displeased!”, and he said in French, “*Puni soit qui mal y pense*. Now I swear before God that I shall found a new knightly order upon this incident: a fraternity that shall be remembered as long as the world endures.”

He had the garter removed and would wear it no longer, though he still pined for it in secret.

85.121

Here, the injunction to shame is displaced by the much stronger reading: any who think ill will be *punished*, not shamed. The emotional and psychological register of

the entire story is pitched much higher. Instead of the casual occasion sketched by Vergil, this is a story of deep infatuation and attachment to the little item.

In its essential structure, though, across all versions, and whether its narrators endorse its historical truth or not, the story dramatizes the king's capacity to make meaning. Transferring the garter to his own body may be a risky act of cross-dressing, as Crane suggests (138); but it simultaneously emphasizes his power over his courtiers' desires and emotions, as well as their social behavior. As is often the case with shame, the emotion is induced, or is threatened, by a performative speech act, and in this aspect, the story is representative of many other invocations of shame in the courtly context. That is, ritual or public "shaming" often takes the form of this kind of verbal injunction (as we will see later amongst Malory's knights).

As a subjunctive, however—*Honi soit* ...—the motto's illocutionary effect is conditional.⁶ It is only if the initial terms are accepted, if the observers should indeed think something evil, that they are shamed. In its first performance in this contested narrative, when the king speaks, he does indeed "silence" his courtiers and stop their laughter: all the accounts of this story are quite clear about the immediate effect of his speech. The story enforces the authority of the king, and his power to make signs and symbols; to raise up a humble piece of women's underwear to a sign of such honor all those now laughing will want to wear it as a masculine blazon in the future. In the "real" world of the medieval court, the king cannot rescue a damsel or maiden from a giant or a dragon, but he *can* rescue her from the shame of homosocial mockery.

The sixteenth-century English translator of Vergil's *History* added an extra scene (BL Royal 18.c.viii, ix, fol. 193r) of the courtiers' "sport" with the garter, as they pick it up and toss it between them. He writes:

Amonge the ruder sorte the sayenge is as yet, that the Kinge on a time tooke upp from the grounde the gartere of the queene or som paramoure which she beefore hadd loste, and that divers of his Lordes standinge bie did pulle it in sonder in ieste or sport for the peaces therof as men are wonte sometime for a jeuill of small importance in somutche that the Kinge sayde unto them. Sirs the time shall shortlie comme when you shall attribute muche honor unto suche a Garteir, whearuppon he didd institute this order and so intituled it.

The addition of this kind of narrative detail is typical of later versions of the story, as I have shown elsewhere ("Vulgar History"): this translator dramatizes the means by which the woman's garter becomes a public object of lordly mockery.

In 1672, Elias Ashmole argued vehemently against the likelihood of the story, but could nevertheless see a structural parallel with another medieval Order:

it hath thus fared with other Orders of Soveraign Foundation; and an Amorous instead of Honorable Account of their Institution, hath by some been untruly

rendred.... Nor hath it hapned otherwise with the Order of the Golden Fleece, even that also hath met with the same fate; and the Institution reported to have risen from an effeminate ground: for it is said, that its Founder entring one morning into the Chamber of a most beautiful Lady of Bruges (generally esteemed his Mistress) found upon her Toilet, a Fleece of low Country Wooll; whence some of his Followers taking occasion of sport, as at a thing unusually seen in a Ladies Chamber, he (as is reported of King Edward the Third, upon such another occasion) vowed that such as made it the subject of their derision, should never be honored with a Collar of the Order therof, which he intended to establish, to express the love he bore that Lady.

180–81

Like the Garter narrative, this is a most suggestive story. What did the Founder, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, really see? Does the story embed a proscribed vision of the lady's pubic hair? Or is this a narrative of anxiety about the Duke's "low" tastes, in the courtiers' easy mockery of the Flemish woman and her reminder of the vibrant trade in wool and other commodities and of international finance in Bruges? Just as Edward elevates the humble garter, whatever its origins, into a formal heraldic sign, so does Philip, in this narrative, elevate the natural "country wooll" into the mythical Golden Fleece.

Ashmole recognizes the temptation of imputing an "effeminate" or, we might say, "feminized" origin to an "honorable institution." And yet the fact that he can oppose "amorous" to "honorable" confirms a definitive shift in the perception of courtly chivalry, in contrast to Martorell's detailed and celebratory account.

The power structure displayed here is significant. In both cases it is the king, the most socially powerful figure, who verbalizes the injunction to shame, before which his subordinates and his inferiors bow their heads, and blush. Most discussions of shame emphasize a combination of its social, cultural and psychological effects. Benjamin Kilborne compares Kierkegaard and Sartre on the topic, emphasizing the powerful relationship between shame and surveillance:

For Kierkegaard, self-consciousness and despair depend upon the notion that God is looking. For Sartre, they depend upon what one can know, imagine and feel of others, who are also looking. For Sartre, shame has three correlates: *I am ashamed of myself* in front of *others*. In order to be ashamed, I must feel (and be self-conscious about my feelings of) myself, the other, and myself as I view myself through what I imagine (and experience) to be the eyes of the other. In the final analysis, then, it may not make much difference who is looking on, whether God or Society. What matters is that there is a presence looking on in whose eyes one is being judged and before whom one can never fully be oneself.

In the case of the Garter, the story is less concerned with the courtiers' feelings of psychological shame, and more with the king's power to induce the shame effect.

Having himself just risen from the risky position of stooping to the floor, the king reasserts his power and authority over his courtiers in a single, powerful speech-act.

Most accounts of shame emphasize its capacity to divide the self from itself, to make one observe oneself from a distance, or to look forward to a reformed self. (This latter emphasis is part of a general move away from the traditional distinction between so-called “shame” and “guilt” cultures.) In the specialized context of court culture, however, whether in literary fictions or in medieval and early modern life, the subjectivity of the courtier, who must always be playing a part, is an uncertain quantity. In what sense could a courtier ever truly “be himself (or herself)”? And what would be the nature of this courtly, as opposed to psychological shame? We might argue, instead, that courtly shame is the pre-eminent, or extreme instance of this kind of performative shame, because it is always to a greater or lesser degree constituted by ritual or performative praxis. I do not mean to suggest that medieval and renaissance courtiers did not experience shame as a powerful emotion (court life was fraught, indeed, with the constant possibility of shame); rather, that the imaginative literature and the accounts of shame in this context do emphasize its performative and its ritual aspect, rather than its emotional impact.

The Performance of Shame

In the English romance text that is most closely linked with the Garter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, shame is strongly associated with its bodily affects. Blood “shoots” into the face of Arthur for shame when the Green Knight laughs at his court’s confusion (317); into Gawain’s when the Knight reveals the nature of the deception he has practised against him (2372); and again when he returns to Arthur’s court and shows him the girdle (2503–4). These are dramatic bodily performances of shame, but they also participate in a carefully organized social hierarchy. Arthur is initially shamed by the seemingly more powerful Green Knight, and the poem has to work hard to demonstrate both Arthur’s willingness to accept the challenge of the beheading game, as well as the great courtesy and humility of his nephew, to counter the Green Knight’s physical authority with the cultural authority of Camelot. When Bertilak reveals himself to Gawain, he has also revealed himself as an instrument of Morgan’s revenge; Gawain’s best chance of recovering equilibrium is to remove himself from that context. When he returns home, however, his King refuses to recognize his shame, and transforms the “lace” into a sign of social unity, just as the King in Vergil’s account exercises the same capacity to transfer or transform shame. All three examples indicate that the experience and bodily performance of shame are closely associated with social authority.

By contrast, on the second morning, the lady attempts to shame Gawain for his failure to speak words of love to him:

“Why! are 3e lewed, þat alle þe los weldez?
 Oþer elles 3e demen me to dille your dalyaunce to herken?
 For schame!” 1528–30

But her invocation of shame is powerless to affect the knight, since he enjoys the greater cultural authority, and is the acknowledged master of the courtly discourse in question. There is no hint that her words produce the bodily affect of shame Gawain experiences in the presence of the Green Knight or Arthur.

The richest source for the study of late medieval courtly shame, however, is the works of Sir Thomas Malory. In many senses, Malory's knights occupy a different world from Edward's court: less formalized, and less visually resplendent. This world is relentlessly nostalgic, rather than intensely fashionable. It has the advantage for the present discussion, however, of being a deeply conversational world, giving us a forceful picture of the way his knights invoke shame on each other in a range of contexts, from the most profound to the most ephemeral. These rhetorical performances play an important role in Malory's perpetual struggle to distribute honor correctly while also maintaining the narrative tension necessary to the courtly contest within the Arthurian court and in its engagements with those outside its circle. These strategies are not always successful or without contradiction, but they provide an important context for the Garter motto and its implications for the distribution of social authority.

When Malory's characters name the emotion (as they frequently do), it often takes the concentrated form of an intense verbal invocation of shame, targeted directly at a knight's "name," or courtly reputation. Shame, indeed, often takes priority over other considerations. When Balin kills the Lady of the Lake, Arthur's response suggests that the injustice of the action and the loss of the woman's life are less significant than the reputation of the court and the relationship between Arthur and his knights.

“Alas, for shame!” seyde the kynge. “Why have ye do so? Ye have shamed me and all my courte, for thys lady was a lady that I was much beholdynge to, and hyder she com under my sauffconduyghte. Therefore I shall never forgyff you that trespasse.” 1:66

Shame is regularly invoked in this fashion, as an important threat to chivalric identity, and to a knight's obligations to his oath, his kin, his King, and to women. Facing four knights, Sir Bleoberys “stoode in a dwere whethir he wolde turne other holde his way”;

Than he seyde to himselff, “I am a knyght of the Table Rounde, and rathir than I sholde shame myne othe and my bloode, I woll holde my way, whatsoever falle thereof.” 2:685

As Mark Lambert comments, in his illuminating discussion of shame and guilt in Malory, “The important thing is not one’s own knowledge of what one has done (the inner life is not very significant in Malory), but public recognition of one’s actions” (179). Thus the act of calling down shame is often the only form that “shaming” takes. Lancelot comes across Sir Pedyvere pursuing his wife and calls out, “‘Knyght, fye for shame, why wolte thou sle this lady? Shame unto the and all knyghtes!’” (1:284). When Pedyvere tricks Lancelot and kills his wife anyway, Lancelot says “Traytoure, thou haste shamed me for evir!” (1:285). As Andrew Lynch remarks, though, this last expression “turns out to be a great exaggeration. Very few events in Malory have permanent consequences, though many predictions of the kind are made” (12). These predictions often appear in aphoristic form—“knyghtes ons shamed recoverys hit never” (1:218)—while the knights often visit shame on each other “unto the worldys ende” (1:107; 2:913; 3:1171). Malory summarizes the distinction between the “inner life” and public reputation in his pithy pronouncement on Sir Segwardys, “he that hath a prevy hurte is loth to have a shame outewarde” (1:396).

On other occasions, shame is more lasting, or is visited more gravely, or physically, on a knight, though this often indicates uncourtly behavior on the part of the victor. The Red Knight in *The Tale of Gareth*, for example, has defeated forty knights who had come to rescue Dame Lyonesse, and has had their bodies hung up on trees, with their shields about their necks. “Truly,” says Gareth, disguised as Sir Bewmaynes,

“he may be well a good knyght, but he usyth shamefull customys, and hit is mervayle that he enduryth so longe, that none of the noble knyghtes of my lorde Arthurs have nat dalte with hym.”
1:320

There seems, indeed, to be an implicit hierarchy whereby the “good” knights are empowered to invoke shame on others in this kind of powerful proclamation, in a manner that matches closely the power structure in all the putative scenes of the Garter’s origin.

The truly shameful knights, those outside the Round Table, are more likely to inflict shame in this physical or embodied way, thus proving their own unworthiness. Gareth is keen to distinguish himself from such an accusation after the death of Sir Perarde, “for I lette the wete, I slew hym knyghtly and nat shamefully” (1.305). Malory takes every opportunity to make such distinctions and to define the hierarchies of knightly behavior. When Gawain has refused mercy on a knight, but killed his lady instead by accident, four of Arthur’s knights address him severely before delivering swift justice,

“Thou new made knyght, thou haste shamed thy knyghthode, for a knyght withoute mercy ys dishonoured. Also thou haste slayne a fayre lady to thy grete shame unto

the worldys ende, and doute the nat thou shalt have grete nede of mercy or thou
departe from us.” 1:107

This example, however, indicates how transient these rhetorical performances of shaming can be, since in spite of the knights' threat, this episode leaves no lasting stain on Gawain's character.

The most extreme form of shame in courtly culture of course is degradation, the formal humiliating and public dismissal from the order of knighthood. It is rare in Malory, because ethical or political differences are usually resolved through mortal combat. The case of Mellyagaunce is instructive here. Having first abducted Guenevere and then immediately and embarrassingly surrendered himself to her when Lancelot appears, he later discovers the bloody sheets in her chamber after Lancelot's wounded hand had stained them. They agree to fight, so that Lancelot may defend the queen's honor, but Mellyagaunce (having first tried to trap Lancelot so he will not have to fight him) quickly yields to him.

Than sir Launcelot bade hym, “Aryse, for shame, and perfourme thys batayle
with me to the utteraunce!”

“Nay,” seyde sir Mellyagaunce, “I woll never aryse untyll that ye take me as
yolden and recreaunte.” 3:1139

Lancelot insists on fighting, but Mellyagaunce will agree only as long the knights “disarm” his opponent (first his head, then left arm and left side), and then tie his left arm to his left side behind his back, so he cannot even carry a shield. Mellyagaunce runs toward him with his sword, but Lancelot “smote hym on the helmet such a buffett that the stroke carved the hed in two partyes” (3:1140).

Then, Malory says, “there was no more to do,” but Mellyagaunce's body is taken away and buried. It is a most abject and shameful death, that requires “no more” in the way of ceremony; the shame of the death is written on his tombstone, but is not enacted on the knight or his body with any ritual while he is alive. However, there is a curious mirroring of the ritual of shame, here. Lancelot's courageous disarming reflects medieval and early modern rituals of degradation, when a knight's sword and spurs are removed from him, while Mellyagaunce's shame is magnified in Lancelot's appropriation of the ritual. It is a strong measure of Malory's sympathetic investment in Lancelot's superiority that, when it is time for Lancelot to be humbled before the Grail and he must be despoiled of his knightly accoutrements, there is no human knight who can be the agent of his humiliation; returning to the cross outside the chapel, he simply “founde hys helme, hys swerde, and hys horse away” (2:895).

This brief discussion risks conflating many different forms of shame; in a fuller examination it would be important to distinguish between the different forms and degrees of masculine (and feminine) shame associated with rape, adultery, defeat

in battle or war, and the spiritual shaming of Arthur's court before the Grail, but I want to keep the emphasis on the rhetorical naming of shame in Malory's tales, as an important context for the comparatively playful invocation of shame in the Garter motto. The examples from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Malory confirm that the naming, or citation, of courtly shame is tied closely to the exercise of social power and authority. By contrast, Edward's motto appears startlingly oblique, the *reason* for shame conspicuously absent. How much more powerful a speech act it is, then, when the court can only guess what he may have in mind. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*: it is elliptic and playful, inviting etiological speculation, but its structure as courtly speech act reminds us of the absolute power of the speaker to apportion shame and honor.

Shame and Degradation

Beyond the world of fiction, romance, and even courtly play, in both medieval and early modern practice, the most extreme acts of shaming involved the dismissal from the order of knighthood and a more formal loss of status and insignia, in a humiliating reversal of the dubbing ceremony. There is no direct reference to such a ceremony in the various stories of the Order of the Garter, but the rituals of degradation are an important counterpoint to any ceremony of installation. A system of public honors requires its own system of shame, and we find a considerable degree of continuity between medieval and early modern practice in this regard.

According to William Segar, in *The Booke of Honour and Armes* (1590), the medieval practice was to bring the knight to judgment fully armed, and have prayers for the dead said over him.

At the end of euerie Psalme, they tooke from him one peece of his Armour. First, they tooke off his Helmet as that which defended his traiterous eyes, then his Gauntlet on the right side as that which covered a corrupt hand: then the Gauntlet of the left hand, as from a member consenting. And so by peecemeale dispoyled him of all his Armes, as well offensive as defensive, which one after another were throwne to the ground: and at the instant when every part of Armour was cast downe, the King of Armes first, and after him all the other Herehaults cried aloud, saying *This is the Helmet of a disloyall and miscreant Knight*.

Warm water was then thrown over the knight's face, "as though he were anew baptized," and he was renamed Traitor. Segar tells how Andrew Harclay's sword was broken over his head, in 1323, for treason with the Scots, while the Lancastrian Sir Ralph Grey was court-martialed for his resistance to Edward IV, and was sentenced to have his spurs struck from his heels by the cook, and his coat of arms torn from his body (Keen, 175–76). Moreover, another version of his coat of arms, "reversed," was to be worn to his death. The King eventually excused him from undergoing this formal degradation prior to his execution.

The earliest Garter statutes of 1415 make only veiled reference to any ceremony of dismissal, though in *Tirant lo Blanc* Martorell suggests that if a knight is ever degraded from the Order for turning his back on his enemies, “a scarecrow is dressed in his armour and christened with his name as part of the ceremony” (90.124); in another place, he suggests that a wooden effigy of the disgraced knight will be hung “in public view” (92.126). In 1553, under Edward VI, the Order’s statutes were completely reviewed and reformed, and reissued (Jefferson, 69). This version is the first to include a section on degradation.⁷ By this time, if not before, the degradation was effected by formal ceremony. First the Garter King of Arms was to read out the reasons for the degradation in St George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle. These varied at different times, but could include heresy, treason, flight from battle, and prodigality.

This being read, one of the Heralds deputed thereunto (a Ladder being raised to the backside of the convict Knights Stall, and he, in his Coat of Arms, placed there before hand) when Garter pronounceth the words, *Expelled and put from among the Arms*, etc. takes his Crest, and violently calls it down into the Choire, and after that his Banner and Sword, and when the Publication is read out, all the Officers of Arms spurn the Atchievements out of the Choire into the Body of the Church, first the Sword, then the Banner, and last of all the Crest, so out of the West-Door, thence to the Bridge, and over into the Ditch, and thus was it done at the degradation of Edward Duke of Buckingham the 8 of June, an. 13 H.8 (Ashmole, 662)

Amongst the knights who were degraded from the Order in this early period are the Duke of Norfolk in 1547, William Lord Paget and William Parr, Marquess of Northampton, in 1552, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in 1601, and Lord Cobham in 1604 (Begent and Chesshyre, 271–72).

But what is the relation between these rituals and the emotion of shame? Segar and other commentators are perfectly silent on the emotional effects of these public ceremonies, which are clearly constituted as severe disciplinary regimes. Given that many of these dismissals and degradations were brought about through political upheavals and differences, especially during the fifteenth-century English wars of succession (the dispute over who should be King, and thus the Sovereign of the Order), the “shame” of any such dismissal may have been registered at several removes from the emotional state analyzed in the literature of behavioral and developmental psychologists. Keen also mentions the specific charge of “breach of faith,” for which a knight could be stripped of his spurs, having “defaulted upon his chivalrous promise to pay a ransom (the fact that it was common practice to set prisoners free on parole to return home and raise ransom money made default relatively easy)” (175–76). Presumably, in such cases the feelings of personal shame were conditioned to some degree by financial expediency and the conventions of medieval warfare. Not infrequently, moreover, a degraded knight was restored to

the Order at a later date, and his achievements and stall plate restored, under a different political climate, for example.

One of the most famous cases was that of Sir John Falstaff, who was suspended temporarily from the Order of the Garter for having fled from the battle of Patay. Shakespeare dramatized this scene in *Henry VI, Part One*, though he made the English champion, Lord Talbot, the agent of Falstaff's shame, not the Duke of Bedford. Falstaff comes on stage announcing a letter from the Duke of Burgundy, and Talbot responds angrily:

TAL. Shame to the Duke of Burgundy and thee!
 I vow'd, base knight, when I did meet thee next,
 To tear the Garter from thy craven's leg, [*Plucks it off.*]
 Which I have done, because unworthily
 Thou was installed in that high degree. 4.1.13–17

Talbot explains to Prince Henry and others how Falstaff left the field of battle, resulting in the loss of twelve hundred men. He continues:

TAL. When first this Order was ordain'd, my lords,
 Knights of the Garter were of noble birth,
 Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
 Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
 Not fearing death nor shrinking for distress,
 But always resolute in most extremes.
 He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
 Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
 Profaning this most honourable Order,
 And should, if I were worthy to be judge,
 Be quite degraded, like a hedge-born swain
 That doth presume to boast of gentle blood.
 K. HEN. Stain to thy countrymen, thou hear'st thy doom!
 Be packing, therefore, thou that was a knight;
 Henceforth we banish thee on pain of death. 4.1.33–47

The degradation takes place in four stages. First, the invocation of shame: "Shame to the Duke of Burgundy and thee!"; next, the stripping of the Garter from Falstaff's leg; then, the account of his shameful behavior; and finally, the King's accession to this judgment, as he banishes the Knight. Falstaff simply exits at this point. Having been degraded, and shamed, he simply has nothing left to say.

The degradation involves the removal of the Garter,⁸ just as the ceremony of installation involved tying it on, as a sign of the brotherly companionship represented by membership of the Order. Shakespeare's substitution of Talbot for Bedford both increases the dramatic tension in this scene, and highlights the rhetorical and

social structure of shame that is remarkably similar to what we find in Malory. The dramatic tension is increased since Talbot is not only the greatest English fighter in this play, but the one who most exemplifies the qualities of chivalric honor, as we see in act 4, scenes 5 and 6, where Talbot and his son each try to persuade the other to flee from what will be certain defeat and death at the battle of Bordeaux. Shakespeare rings changes on the words “shame,” “stain,” “name” and finally in the end-of-line rhyme, “blame,” to reinforce the honor of the family.

TAL. Shall all thy mother's hopes lie in one tomb?
 JOHN. Ay, rather than I'll shame my mother's womb.
 TAL. Upon my blessing, I command thee go.
 JOHN. To fight I will, but not to fly the foe.
 TAL. Part of thy father may be sav'd in thee.
 JOHN. No part of him but will be sham'd in me.
 TAL. Thou never hadst renown, nor canst not lose it.
 JOHN. Yes, your renowned name: shall flight abuse it?
 TAL. Thy father's charge shall clear thee from that stain.
 JOHN. You cannot witness for me, being slain.
 If death be so apparent, then both fly.
 TAL. And leave my followers here to fight and die?
 My age was never tainted with such shame.
 JOHN. And shall my youth be guilty of such blame? 4.5.34–47

This scene provides a stark contrast with Talbot's earlier account of Falstaff's desertion in act 1. But the terms in which shame and reputation are debated here are very similar to Malory's understanding of the relation between shame, reputation or “renown,” and “name.” Talbot eschews the shame of desertion for himself, and his son has clearly internalized the same principle. Moreover, Talbot's own “name,” or reputation, is strong enough to withstand any shame visited on him by the French when he is their captive. Salisbury asks him how he was “entertain'd” by the French.

TAL. With scoffs and scorns and contumelious taunts.
 In open market-place produc'd they me
 To be a public spectacle to all;
 Here, said they, is the Terror of the French,
 The scarecrow that affrights our children so.
 Then broke I from the officers that led me,
 And with my nails digg'd stones out of the ground
 To hurl at the beholders of my shame.
 My grisly countenance made others fly;
 None durst come near me for fear of sudden death.
 In iron walls they deem'd me not secure;

So great fear of my name 'mongst them were spread
 That they suppos'd I could rend bars of steel
 And spurn in pieces posts of adamant.
 Wherefore a guard of chosen shot I had,
 That walk'd about me every minute-while;
 And if I did but stir out of my bed,
 Ready they were to shoot me to the heart. 1.4.38–55

Talbot undergoes the shaming ritual of public humiliation, but his spirited defiance and aggressive resistance signify clearly that he himself is not shamed, in any personal sense, by the French. These are merely the misfortunes of war; they have no effect on the reputation (“my name,” line 49) of the truly honorable knight. Just prior to this speech Talbot has been expressing his anger with the “treacherous Falstaff,” so that when he finally encounters the “craven” knight in act 4, Talbot has been clearly identified as the moral exemplar of honor, fully authorized both to pronounce shame on Falstaff and to remove his Garter.

Shameful histories

All the examples I have discussed here, from Edward’s playfully ambiguous motto through to Talbot’s proud defiance of shame, suggest that within the restricted field of medieval and early modern courtly and chivalric practice, there is a substantial degree of continuity. Chivalric and courtly shame is often ritualized and performative, embedded in anxieties about social and political hierarchy and public reputation rather than psychological inwardness as such. If there is a cultural shift in the reception of the Garter motto and its invocation of shame in the early modern period, it coincides not with the traditional juncture between a medieval and a renaissance or early modern sensibility, but with a historicizing, antiquarian shift away from chivalric culture and its easy slippages between the domains of sexuality and politics, towards a modern historical sense that medievalizes court culture as belonging to a romantic past. This is the moment of Peter Heylyn, confidently weighing up Polydore Vergil’s account of popular tradition (*fama vulgi*), and finding it wanting.

In spite of many recent studies that problematize the traditional easy opposition between medieval and renaissance culture, the popularity of such generalizations continues to cloud the study of historical emotions and affects. A recent book by Ewan Fernie, *Shame in Shakespeare*, is problematic in this regard. Like many who reject the simplicity of the opposition between shame culture and guilt culture, Fernie suggests that “Shame in history is a variable constant”: the expression and significance of shame differ according to other forms of cultural change (24). Fernie traces what has become a very familiar history of the self.

It has been a part of experience for as long as societies have had a concept of identity and individuals have had selves ... as the cultural configuration and value of the self changes through history, shame alters too, so that what is shameful in one epoch is not always so in the next, and the severity, depth and issue of the experience varies also. Less shame is found in *cultures with a debased view of the self*; it is in societies where individual integrity and dignity is prized most highly that corruption and disgrace are most lamented.

24; my italics

Medievalists will not be surprised by Fernie's next move in this chapter, "Shame before Shakespeare," which is to contrast the classical and the medieval senses of shame, as an important but contradictory inheritance for Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Whereas classical literature affords many "impressive and memorable" instances of shame (Menelaus and Achilles in *The Iliad*, Sophocles's *Ajax* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Euripides's *Heracles*), these examples show shame as the product of external circumstances rather than any internal fault. In contrast, "with the advent of Christianity shame is absorbed within, to the extent that human flesh itself becomes intrinsically shameful" (29). Fernie thus draws a very typical and simple equation between medieval culture and Christianity; most of his discussion of medieval shame focuses on the Crucifixion and the Expulsion from the Garden and on St. Augustine and St. Aquinas. Brief mention is made of Gawain's shame before the Green Knight as his confessor (though he does not discuss Gawain's return to Arthur's court and his reintegration into courtly society), and Lancelot's dismissal from the Grail, but Fernie's central point is to contrast the two concepts of shame (worldly classical shame and internalized Christian shame) inherited by Shakespeare.

The simplicity of Fernie's reading of medieval literature is almost painful (as is the implication that medieval culture is one with "a debased view of the self"). He characterizes King Arthur's "generous indifference to shame" in the matter of Guenevere and Lancelot as unthinkable to a renaissance nobleman: "Othello murders his wife at the mere suggestion of adultery" (42). *Prima facie*, it is hard to see quite why Arthur's subtle and strategic response to the affair should be seen as an example of a "debased" view of the self in relation to such an example of masculine nobility. By contrast, in my reading, Arthur's attempts to control events signify his cultural, social and political authority, albeit under extreme pressure on every side.

Fernie argues that medieval "secular shame" is, in effect, neutralized through the "convinced transcendentalism of an age that looks not to this world but the next" (42). Thus, Henryson "is able to ascribe Criseyde's whoredom to fate and largely excuse her"; an extraordinary flattening of the relationship between Chaucer's poem and Henryson's response. Most notable for my purposes, however, is his almost complete avoidance of medieval chivalric texts, although he does suggest that "the public aspect of shame has been exaggerated," defining shame as "paramountly shame in one's own eyes" (12). Malory's preoccupation with

shame as the obverse of courtly honor finds no place here, however, because Fernie is looking only for instances of internalized shame that would match those of an Othello or Hamlet. Yet the sense of shame as the constant threat to one's name, or reputation, is an emotion that drives much courtly literature, from Gawain to Malory and beyond.⁹

The evidence I have considered in this essay suggests, in fact, a substantial degree of continuity in the conceptualization of courtly shame between the medieval and early modern period. Fernie's reductive cultural teleology is tediously familiar to medievalists, but instead of rehearsing objections that should be equally tedious to early modernists, I want to use his example to suggest some reasons why these trajectories persist. In his model of Shakespearean and renaissance shame Fernie insists that one of its distinguishing features is that it almost invariably opens the way to personal reform: shame is "ultimately also a liberation from the illusions of pride into truth. Shakespearean shame turns out to be the way to relationship with the world outside the self" (1). Unlike classical shame, which ends in tragic death, Fernie proposes that renaissance shame is frequently a motive or starting-point for radical and dramatic rethinking in the "enhanced self-awareness" he says is a salient feature of the early modern period (54). If the renaissance subject of shame has an unenlightened past, we are only half a breath away from reading this as an allegory for the Renaissance itself, with its own unenlightened medieval past, ignorant or innocent of the full ameliorative effects of shame. Acts of writing the history of shame are thus intimately related to the ideology of periodization and to the perceptions of cultural difference between the medieval and the modern.

Noah Guynn defines "*proud* historical fictions" as "those that attempt to exclude shame by placing it at a temporal or ontological remove ... [and thus] enact through the very gesture of repression an inexorable return to shame" (112). This idea of a "proud" fiction seems to answer very precisely both to Ewan Fernie's account of medieval shame, and also to much of the historical discourse surrounding the Order of the Garter. From Peter Heylyn in the seventeenth century, through all the histories that quote the story of the lady's garter only to dismiss it as unworthy of the Order's greatness—all can be seen as "proud" fictions. They offer us a glimpse of the lady's underwear only to relegate it firmly to the margins of the official tradition, or dismiss it as a medieval romantic fantasy. While the Order is keen to minimize the shame that accrues to its origins, it is destined to repeat this kind of historical explanation over and over. Similarly, as long as the "medieval" is understood as the dark side of the "Renaissance," the history of shame and other emotions will be read according to traditional notions of cultural progression.

In his motto, Edward calls down shame on any who find evil, in a pronouncement that is easily comprehensible as a forceful act of the sovereignty at the heart of court culture. Yet in a curious conflation between these two abstract qualities, historians tend to find the most popular account of the moment of its first

pronouncement not so much evil, as itself shameful. The easiest solution is to “medievalize” the story as a romance, to historicize it and expel it as belonging to an earlier era.

The historical reception of the Garter motto supplements its more immediate linguistic and performative effects in significant ways, demonstrating the potential of tradition to confer both shame and honor, in the historiography of this powerful but enigmatic text. Just as the story about the lady who lost her garter is continuously retold, the effects, or the possibility, of shame continue to haunt the Order and its historians as a worrisome necessity. This should not surprise us: a system of courtly *honors*, like the Order of the Garter, still needs its obverse, in the idea of courtly or public shame, just as it must occasionally dismiss or degrade a knight, even if only temporarily. The last formal degradation from the Order was that of James Butler, Duke of Ormonde, in 1716, but the appointments of eight German Companions were rescinded in 1915, while Emperor Hirohito of Japan suffered the same fate in 1941, though he was restored to the Order in 1971 (Begent and Chesshyre, 277–78). In this way the Order demonstrates its meaningfulness as an ideological political affiliation. Such acts affirm that the Order’s statutes are not simply accretions of historical tradition; they embody meaningful rituals, and express the desires and wishes of its Sovereign.

Whether the Order was “really” founded around a woman’s garter or not, Vergil’s narrative continues to play an important role in the Order, as it forces its historians and apologists to negotiate the contradictory inheritance of medieval tradition, whose sometimes embarrassing content nevertheless offers an indisputably venerable authority. Even if modernists discount this tradition, they must still cite those early writers who took it seriously. For historians and cultural critics alike, the temptation to apportion shame to the past is almost irresistible.

Notes

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¹ The embarrassing garter, while it does draw attention to the concealed leg of the woman, and the privy of her underclothes, still needs to be distinguished from the more obviously embodied carnivalesque or grotesque body, or the incontinent or humoral bodies discussed by Paster.

² Leo Carruthers also raises this possibility, when he remarks that Vergil’s account “has the appearance of a later invention whose intention is to explain and justify the motto’s somewhat obscure words” (222). However, Carruthers also expounds on the identity and complex marital

history of the “Countess of Salisbury,” suggesting the popularity of the story may be due to a Lancastrian desire to slander the mother of Richard II, Joan of Kent. See Carruthers, “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*.”

³ For a comprehensive account of Edward’s tournaments, games and hastiludes, see Vale, 57–75 and Appendix 13, 175.

⁴ Edward’s long affair with Alice Perrers is rarely mentioned in the critical literature about the Garter but its legacy of gossip may be an important aspect of both the popularity of and the resistance to this story. The affair began much later than the period of the Order’s foundation, but there was much hostility regarding Alice’s perceived influence over the king.

- ⁵ See *Wynnere and Wastoure*, as well as Trigg, "Israel Gollancz's *Wynnere and Wastoure*." For an intriguing discussion of the merchants' and other heraldic signs, see D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession*.
- ⁶ As Eve Sedgwick argues, the expression "shame on you" has a similar resonance with many of J. L. Austin's admittedly troubled examples of illocutionary speech-acts. Following Silvan Tomkins's analysis of the shame affect, Sedgwick focuses on the bodily performance of shame as she develops her own theory of performativity, to argue that shame can be productive of a kind of identity, perhaps even a queer identity, where "fully being oneself," in Kilborne's sense, would always be problematic. "Shame is the affect that mantles the threshold
- between introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity and—performativity." Sedgwick, "Shame and Performativity," 213; see also Sedgwick's introduction, with Adam Frank, entitled "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold."
- ⁷ Begent and Chesshyre suggest that the formal removal of achievements (the sword, banner, and shield) was likely to date from the early fifteenth century (123).
- ⁸ In 1601 the Usher of the Black Rod similarly proceeded to the Tower of London, and "snatched" the Garter from the Earl of Essex (Strong, 74).
- ⁹ Loretta Wasserman draws out some important contrasts between Malory's and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*'s treatment of shame.

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