

Book of Abstracts

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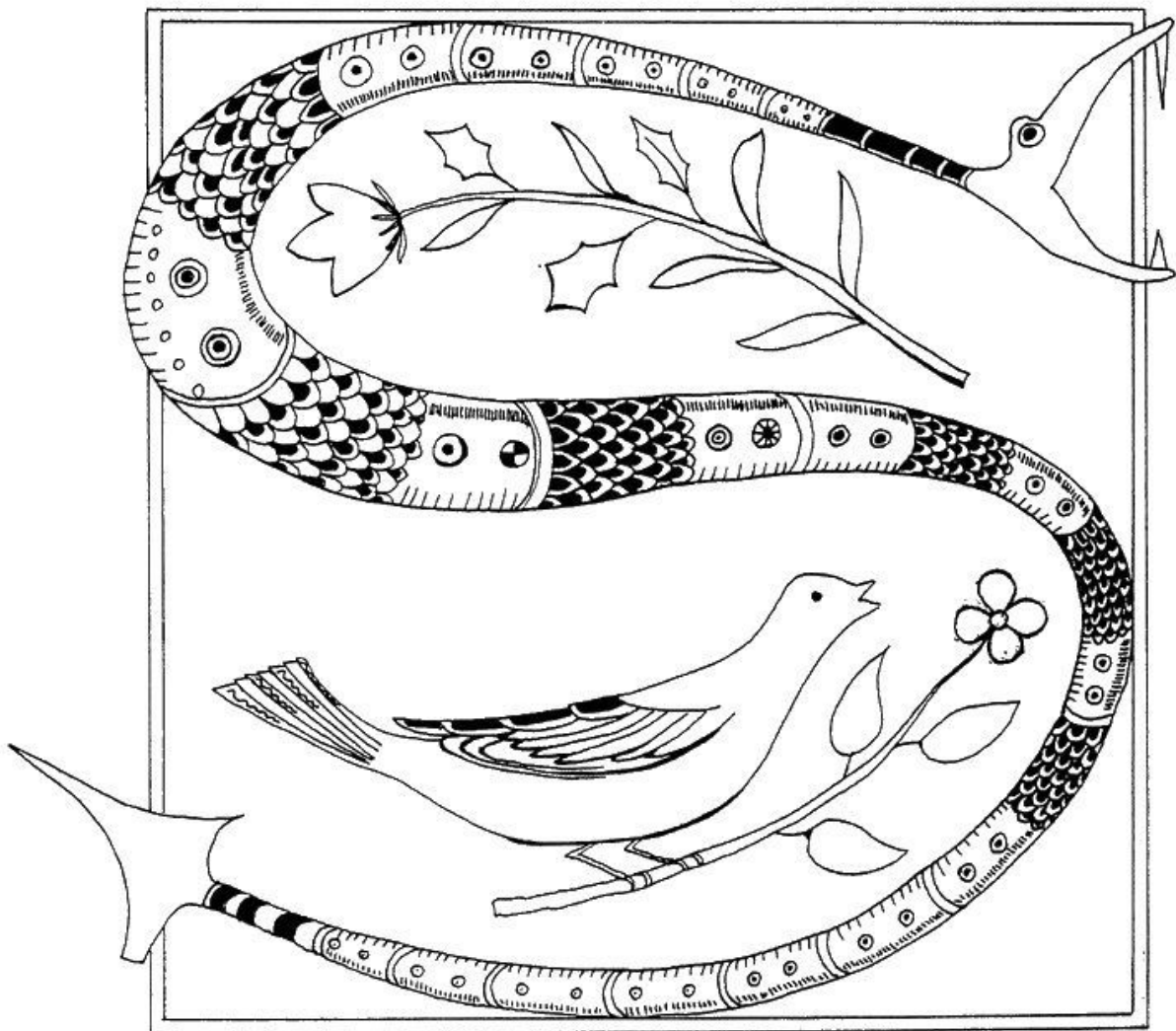


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Full papers





Symbolic numbers in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* revisited

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at analyzing the presence of certain symbolic numbers in the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Borrof, 1967; in Abrams, 1993⁶: 202-254), as well as their function. Before the analysis of these numbers, information will be provided about the poem itself, its historical context and other key concepts for the theoretical framework of the paper, such as “numerology”, as well as a summary of some of the main findings concerning numbers 2 and 3.

Although attention was already paid to those figures (Casas Pedrosa, 2007), the numbers under study now are four (e.g. the number of days that the feast at Bertilak's castle lasted), five (for example, connected with the pentangle and its strong religious connotations), fifteen (for instance, the duration in days of Arthur's feast), and twenty-five (the square of a “perfect” number and the date when Christ was born in December, according to the *Holy Bible*), among others.

Once again, readers may realise that the choice of some numbers in some passages of the poem was not done at random, but rather is the result of a more complex process. Thus the author could have carefully selected these numbers because they were meaningful, that is to say, they could be used throughout the poem to play a given role. Therefore, they could reinforce a given idea, illustrate a concept by providing an example, underline a fact, remind readers of another event they could be familiar with due to its presence in oral tradition, etc.

Finally, this analysis will allow us to draw a number of conclusions such as the fact that the above-mentioned numbers are not simple ones, but were considered to be symbolic. Thus, the poet would have chosen them for giving cohesion to its structure, among other reasons.



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