her suitor. He sought to serve her at the same time as conquer her. This conquest was long and difficult, all the more so as the lady was generally of a higher rank, often married, sometimes haughty and capricious. The question most debated by modern criticism is whether or not the poet’s (or the knight’s) true goal was possession of the woman’s body, and thus the sexual act. Among the troubadours of the southern regions of the French realm, that seems to have been the case; the body is omnipresent and the erotic dimension undeniable. In this regard, red is very much the color of *amour*. Among the *travessiers* of the northern realm and the *Minnesänger* of the Germanic countries, intentions are less clear, the lady less carnal and more distant. Ultimately the reader sometimes has the impression that the poet is in love with love, that he desires only desire; the hope of possible happiness is enough to make him happy. Here, the emblematic color of love is no longer red but green.

Indeed green is the color of hope in the West and has been for a long time. In Rome in the late Empire, newborns were sometimes swaddled in green to wish them long lives.42 But it was in the Middle Ages that this important symbolic dimension of the color green—which survives to our day—came into its own. Marriagable young women, as we have said, frequently wore green dresses or a piece of green clothing. The famous green hat that the “Catherinees” wear for the Feast of Saint Catherine, November 25, finds its distant origin here. But when the hope of finding a husband was finally realized, green clothing for young women then took on another meaning: awaiting a happy event. In effect, and especially in the late Middle Ages, green became the color for pregnant women. For example, Saint Elizabeth, pregnant with the future John the Baptist, sometimes wears a green dress in mural paintings and miniatures. Moreover, saints were not the only ones destined for green when they were expecting; ordinary women wore it as well. The painting by Jan Van Eyck traditionally titled *The Arnolfini Wedding* (c. 1435)—one of the most famous paintings in the entire history of painting—shows a pregnant young woman dressed in a vast and splendid green dress, symbolic of her state.

All the same, the late Middle Ages invented nothing in the matter. Two centuries earlier, green was already the color of hope for maternity; Saint Louis’s chroniclers and biographers tell us that in 1238–1239, in order to conceive his first child, hopefully a son, the king of France forced himself to sleep for several consecutive nights in “the green bedroom” of the *Ile de la Cité* palace with his young wife, Marguerite de Provence. We do not know what that “green bedroom” was exactly, but we know that it was located not far from the present-day Sainte-Chapelle (not yet built then), and we can guess that it was painted with foliage and greenery, motifs then in fashion in secular decor.43