CHAUCER AND THE NATURE OF CHIVALRIC IDEAS

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ABSTRACT

Chivalry was the dominant secular ideal of Chaucer's time and the nature of his interest in it has naturally been the subject of conjecture. Most judgments, however, have been based on an insufficient understanding of the historical background. In fact both historical and literary approaches to the topic of chivalry generally have tended to oversimplify the complex of ideas and practices associated with the term. This dissertation therefore re-examines the scope of chivalric theory and practice as a necessary preliminary to a scrutiny of Chaucer's concern with the concept.

The study concludes that chivalric ideas always had an importance disproportionate to the comparatively modest practical significance of actual knights and knighthood. The centrality of these ideas cannot therefore be judged by their relation to historical actualities. Their purpose was not restricted to providing a pattern of conduct for knights, nor were they in any way autonomous of medieval thought generally. The figure of the mounted warrior, thrust into prominence by early medieval military and social developments, became the focus for an accumulation of ideas and myths, and especially for theories about the use of force and of temporal power and secular life generally.

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special attention is paid within this broad hypothesis to th
role of love in chivalric ideas. While fighting for love
appears to have been of negligible importance as a factor
in practical knightly motivation, writers of discursive
or specifically chivalric treatises either condemned it
outright or approved of it only if it was morally irreproachable
and led to the cultivation of chivalric virtues for their
own sake. Fighting to gain a woman's love provides a common
plot structure in the romances, but these romances usually
cited as justifying a definition of chivalry in amatory terms
in fact do no such thing. On the basis of analyses of
several important romances, especially Gottfried's Tristan,
Chrétien's Lancelot, the Prose Lancelot, Wolfram's Parzival,
the Morte Darthur of Malory, and Gawain and the Green Knight,
this dissertation concludes that there was a central chivalric
tradition which viewed the pursuit of love as an inversion of
the knight's responsibilities to God and society.

Chaucer's knights do not reflect contemporary social
realities but rather this broader symbolic potential. A study
of the significance of the crusade in the late Middle Ages
reveals that even the Knight of the General Prologue is
mainly an emblem of right spiritual orientation rather than
an endorsement of a specifically knightly duty or of contemporary
crusade projects. The traditional polarity between love-
service and true Christian knighthood underlies the portrait
of the Knight and the Squire. As an embodiment of the duty

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of spiritual warfare the Knight is not just the specialised figure he appears to be. Moreover in his tale he presents in Theseus a knight who maintains the structure of society as faithfully as he himself has defended the Church, while Arcite and Palamon, like the Squire, represent a subversion of proper knightly functions. The "Knight's Tale" sets all secular power, of which knighthood is the emblem, in a transcendental perspective.

In other of the Canterbury Tales chivalric references are important, though not because of any interplay between knightly and non-knightly social classes. Characters such as the Wife of Bath, the Merchant and the Franklin are to be judged partly by the inadequacy of their notions of chivalry in relation to the symbolism established by the contrast between Knight and Squire. The conflict of love and knighthood also furthers our understanding of Troilus, in which the hero is shown to choose an inappropriate kind of chivalry; in addition the theme is prominent in some of the minor poems, especially the "Complaint of Mars".

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in Chaucer's poetry. A brief acquaintance with the secondary
materials on this subject and on that of chivalry generally
convinced me that any useful contribution to the original
topic would require a fairly systematic look at the whole
subject of chivalry and knighthood. Such a task is centri-
fugal, leading towards a variety of literary and historical
materials which often bear only a problematic relation to
each other. As a result this study may appear at times to
lack a consistent unity of focus. In fact it concerns itself
with three main subjects: the development of the idea of chivalry,
and its relation to practical historical processes; the connection
between chivalry and love in fictional and non-fictional
medieval literature; and Chaucer's use of the tradition of
chivalric ideas. That these three subjects are all necessarily
connected to each other I hope I have shown in the course of
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AnM	Annuale Mediaevale
BD	The Book of the Duchess
CA	Confessio Amantis
CFMA	Classiques Français du Moyen Age
ChauR	Chaucer Review
CM	"Complaint of Mars"
CT	Canterbury Tales
DA	Dissertation Abstracts
DAI	Dissertation Abstracts International
E&S	Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association
EETS	Early English Text Society, original series
EETS e.s.	Early English Text Society, extra series
FMLS	Forum for Modern Language Studies
GP	General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales
HF	The House of Fame
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
LGW	Legend of Good Women
MAE	Medium Ævum
MED	The Middle English Dictionary, ed. H. Kurath, S. M. Kuhn, J. Reidy (Ann Arbor, 1954–)
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLQ	Modern Language Quarterly
MLR	Modern Language Review
MO	Mirour de l'Omme
MP	Modern Philology
MS	Mediaeval Studies
N&Q	Notes and Queries
NM	Neuphilologische Mitteilungen
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina

PLL	Papers on Language and Literature
PQ	Philological Quarterly
PP	Piers Plowman
RES	Review of English Studies
S&A	Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
SP	Studies in Philology
TC	Troilus and Criseyde
TSE	Tulane Studies in English
TSL	Tennessee Studies in Literature
TSLL	Texas Studies in Literature and Language
UTQ	University of Toronto Quarterly
VC	Vox Clamantis
ZDA	Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum

CHIVALRY AND CHAUCERIAN SCHOLARSHIP

The figure of the knight occupies a salient position in most readers' experience of Chaucer's poetry. In the English-speaking world the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales contains what is probably the most widely known medieval account of the idea of chivalry. One standard critical introduction to Chaucer refers to his "continuing absorption" in ideas of knighthood.[1] Another declares that "the whole body of his work...is the great document of courtly and knightly values in this period."[2] Another writer has claimed that "to Chaucer, chivalry was a religion", and urged that "one of the chief bases of our judgment of Chaucer henceforth should be his attitude towards chivalry, since there is nothing, perhaps, that he loved more."[3] Despite these comments, the usefulness of the concept of chivalry in Chaucer studies remains unclear. It is a subject often relegated to preliminary discussions of the social context of the poetry. Chaucer, we are told, lived in an 'age of chivalry', and his writing was in some way conditioned by this dominant social ethos, though precisely how is not usually explained. Chivalry, it is sometimes implied, was a sort of hothouse atmosphere in which certain unexceptionable virtues achieved an exotic extravagance of growth—an ambience which the reader must penetrate, but which is not actually a subject of thematic concern in the works themselves.

More detailed studies have been relatively few, and
have come to conflicting conclusions which I shall refer to
shortly. Some of these studies contain what I believe to be
erroneous readings of Chaucer, but a more prevalent (though
of course connected) failing is a tendency to oversimplify
the historical materials they invoke and the manner in which
they can be applied to the poetry. Few critics display an
awareness of the scope of the literary and historical problems
raised by the very concept of chivalry, or have taken into
account recent approaches to those problems. These are
necessary starting points, for in this aspect of Chaucer's work
the historical background has often been declared important
without being more than superficially examined.

The reluctance to consider the subject of Chaucer and
chivalry in more than a very general way has resulted perhaps
from the assumption of a strong contrast between Chaucer and
other writers of his time, particularly the authors of
chivalric romances. Chivalry was a matter of fanciful idealism
and romance, this objection might run, and Chaucer was more
interested in the real world; it was a matter of extravagant
heroics, tainted with popular absurdity, while Chaucer preferred
the unheroic, even the anti-heroic: the knight in his private
rather than public capacity, the lover rather than the fighter.
According to Anna Billings, for example, Chaucer "appreciated
the picturesque features of chivalry, and admired the nobler
qualities of knighthood...but he did not care to sing of arms,

chivalric or heroic." G.G. Coulton commented that "the litera-
ture of chivalry...seems to have touched Chaucer comparatively
little: he scarcely mentions it but in more or less open
derision." F. Warre Cornish declared that Chaucer "found his
true expression first after his visit to Italy, where he became
acquainted with a literature that had all human life for its
material, not a worn-out cycle of imaginary adventure. And so,
though he writes of knights and ladies, he does not properly
belong to the poetry of chivalry." More recently we find Brewer's
assertion that "the romantic reverence of what was in some
respects the adolescent ideal of chivalry finds almost no place
in Chaucer. He must have accepted it, when a full grown man,
as part of the normal pattern of life. It may well have
delighted him as a youth, but no story of truly Arthurian
adventure figures in his poetry."[4]

The element of truth in these ideas need not be compromised
by an insistence that it is false to equate chivalry with the
appeal of the popular romances, or to think that Chaucer's
interest in real people could be independent of an interest
in their ideals or delusions. As Huizinga argued of medieval
culture generally, the historian could only discard the idea
of chivalry "if, to understand the spirit of an age, it sufficed
to know its real and hidden forces and not its illusions, its
fancies and its errors. But for the history of civilisation
every delusion or opinion of an epoch has the value of an
important fact."[5]

In fact Chaucer's concern with chivalry appears initially
to demand attention on the basis of both the subject matter of
his poetry and the historical circumstances of its composition.
Knights and knightly activities play a conspicuous part in
many of the works, and unless we are prepared to accept this
fact unquestioningly as a standard feature of medieval literature
a number of questions arise which have not so far been convincingly
answered. Why, for instance, is the Knight of the General
Prologue described almost entirely in terms of his crusading
activities? What precisely is the contrast between the Knight
and his son, and is it a significant one for the rest of Chaucer's
work? How do the "bourgeois" characters react to the Knight
and his profession? Why is the Wife of Bath the only pilgrim
to tell an Arthurian story? Why are January and Arveragus
(or for that matter the Physician's Virginius) described as
knights? Is it appropriate to view Troilus, or Antony, or
Mars, as knights in medieval terms? The list of questions
could of course be considerably extended.

The historical plausibility of the subject results
from the widespread assumption that ideas of chivalry and
knighthood were closely involved with significant social
and political developments of Chaucer's time. Various
aspects of chivalry in the later Middle Ages have been thought
to reflect such phenomena as the decline of feudalism, the
rise of money and of the merchant classes, or the decay of the
medieval synthesis of temporal and spiritual power which
found its most perfect expression in the crusades and the

neo-monastic crusading orders. It has been customary to
think of the fourteenth century--the century of the suppression
of the Templars, the Great Schism and the start of the Hundred
Years War--as the period in which royal and national priorities
decisively prevailed over those of the Church and of Christen-
dom as a whole. Chivalry has often been regarded as a casualty
of such changes in social and political (as well as military)
realities. Consequently a writer's attitude towards chivalry
might be expected to reflect attitudes towards such social
changes more generally.

That such shifting perspectives would have interested
Chaucer deeply is probable in view of the subtlety and scope
of his social comedy, and his debt to the traditional
literature of social classes. Moreover no one was better
placed than he, with his experience of the court and of
European diplomacy, to observe such historical developments
as there were. It is also possible that Chaucer's ambiguous
background made him especially aware of the social connotations
of knighthood, and the minutiae of distinctions of rank.
The ex-soldier and courtier was also a product of that merchant
class whose increasing wealth marked a shift of power in the
country, and whose aspirations to greater political participation
may perhaps be discerned in the careers of Chaucer himself
and of his son. D. S. Brewer has called him "the new man,
the literate layman who was not a clerk, the courtier who was
not a knight"--a man of mixed origins despite his high social
position.[6] In addition it is likely that those of his audience

who were knights---some primarily warriors, others not warriors
at all---would have listened to such passages as the description
of one of their order with a lively awareness of social and
military implications and a keen ear for topical allusion.

There is then a plausible case for the idea that an
understanding of chivalry in Chaucer's work would contribute
to our sense of his attitude, so often enigmatic, towards the
age he lived in. Ultimately, however, such an expectation is
not, I believe, likely to be fulfilled. Our main hope must be
that a historical approach to the subject will illuminate
contentious areas of the interpretation of his poetry, by
indicating the kind of ideas and preoccupations that Chaucer
may have assumed in his audience. Such results nevertheless
depend on an adequate grasp of the relevant historical materials,
and these are complex. The range of ideas and activities which
invoked the name of chivalry may be suggested by analogy with,
a similarly dominant ideal of our own culture, such as liberalism.
Faced with this complexity, literary critics have drawn
somewhat erratically and often simplistically on the findings
of historical investigations.

It is somewhat misleading however to think in terms of
a literary text and a historical context when dealing with
this particular subject. Chivalry cuts across the usual
demarcations of scholarly concern. Historians of various
areas of medieval life can tell us about its practical aspects,
whether military, social, political or religious, but usually

insist on regarding it as a literary phenomenon as much as
a historical one. As a result the literary historian is
left in considerable doubt as to which kinds of historical
materials about chivalry are relevant to his task, and how
they can be justly related to literary works. This study will
attempt to locate the contextual materials that are most
illuminating in dealing with chivalry in Chaucer's poetry.

Such materials as prove eventually to be not strictly
relevant may nevertheless at times be usefully pointed out.
In the case of writers (such as Flaubert or Virginia Woolf)
who were in deliberate revolt against established notions
of the aspects of humanity that writers ought to concern
themselves with, we need to identify the kinds of subject matter
that the authors were not writing about in order to see the
full significance of those kinds that were in fact chosen.
Even where there was no obvious revolt, as in the case of
Jane Austen, we may wish to locate the interest of a writer's
work partly by a process of eliminating the kinds of interest
that are not appealed to. This will perhaps explain why I
shall discuss the historical background to certain features
of Chaucer's poetry while anticipating some ultimately
negative conclusions about its direct applicability. Some
aspects of the poetry which invite historical speculation
may prove more responsive to consideration in terms which
might be called symbolic. There may be little correlation
between the significance of chivalry and knighthood when
considered as internal features of a work of art and the

significance of equivalent phenomena in the world outside
the fiction. Before dealing with the historical background
directly, however, I wish to consider some of the issues
raised by existing Chaucer scholarship.

Discussions of chivalry in Chaucer are scattered
throughout critical commentary on individual characters,
tales and poems. The most convenient starting point is
perhaps with the Knight of the General Prologue, in whose
portrait, it is often assumed, we find the essence of
Chaucer's thought on the whole matter. A great deal of
energy and ingenuity has been expended on the search for a
real-life original of the Knight, and on the related question
of whether he is a 'real', 'typical' or 'ideal' figure.[7]
The search has been unsuccessful in its primary aim, although
it has established that there were many people who followed
a career similar in certain selective respects to that
described in the Prologue's list of campaigns, and who had
among their contemporaries a reputation for prowess and worthiness.[8]

This is not a very helpful conclusion. It might provide
a basis for distinguishing the Knight from Guy of Warwick (if
such a distinction were not immediately apparent), but
deciding whether or not a character is typical of Chaucer's
own society can at best be a rough starting point for a con-
sideration of the artistic choices that produced the selectivity
of the description. Moreover, as we shall see, the typical
knight of the time is a very problematic figure, perhaps even

more difficult to identify precisely than the ideal knight.
J. M. Manly side-stepped these problems when he concluded,
in an influential essay, that the portrait is of "a figure
at once realistic and typical of the noble and adventurous
idealists of his day."[9] But, we might ask, how typical were
such idealists, and how many of their characteristic attributes
and activities are omitted from Chaucer's account? Such a
description as Manly's blurs rather than makes distinctions.

Apart from the already noted tendency to distinguish
Chaucer from other medieval writers (especially romancers)
by his supposed interest in mimetic realism, other factors
may have motivated the attempts to establish the 'realism' of
the Knight's portrait. One such factor is the common histor-
ical attitude which puts particular emphasis on the discrep-
ancies between the loftiness of chivalric ideals and the brutal
realities of medieval warfare. Writers, such as Froissart,
who often appear unaware of these discrepancies have sometimes
been harshly treated by modern historians, and in fact Basil
Cottle has taken Chaucer to task in much the same way. Of
the description of the tournament in the "Knight's Tale"
he writes: "a poet such as Chaucer should have seen beyond--
and seen through--this costly tinsel to its awful implications
for his own generation. The fight that follows is not ugly
enough...."[10]

Many commentators have of course assumed that Chaucer's
portrait of the Knight reveals an interest in an ideal rather

than in an historical reality without seeing this as a limitation. But several critics have claimed a special historical significance in Chaucer's handling of the assumed contrast between ideal and real chivalric behaviour. Two basic but overlapping approaches may be distinguished here: one view claims that the Knight's primary significance lies in the fact that he was for Chaucer's contemporaries an anachronistic figure, with a somewhat outmoded set of values; the other approach, which I shall deal with later on, regards the Knight's portrait as a condemnation of current chivalric degeneracy. Both attitudes reveal the influence of another commonplace from the histories of chivalry, that of the supposed decline of chivalry. The development of chivalry has often been seen as an evolution from barbarism through a 'golden age' to decadence and decline; despite the inadequacies of this idea (which I shall discuss later), the decline of chivalry during the fourteenth century has retained its orthodox status in literary history.

The best-known application of this theory to Chaucer is that of Manly, who argued that knights were rather an anachronism by the time Chaucer was writing, their military functions displaced by changing conditions of warfare, and their ideals challenged by the unsympathetic commercial values of an increasingly powerful middle class. According to Manly's essentially non-evaluative view, the interest of the virtues exemplified by the Knight lies in their exotic appeal as aspects of an already doomed idealism--an idealism that is intense precisely because it is a lost cause. This

exoticism also accounts for the long list of place-names from
the borders of Christendom included in the portrait.[11]

It would be difficult to find evidence for this
assumption of thorough-going fourteenth-century nostalgia,
since the commonest medieval attitude towards social change
is to see it as a degeneracy to be denounced and reformed.
Nevertheless, many critics have accepted Manly's assumption
that Chaucer's attitude was one of moral detachment towards
a fascinating anachronism, often claiming support for the
idea in the tale the Knight tells. Edward Foster, for
example, describes the Knight as "amiably anachronistic",
the exponent of romantic ideals which, "though necessary,
are artificial and vulnerable." His "rusted and spattered
armor is the perfect emblem of the way reality intrudes on
his ideals but cannot destroy them." The impressionable
narrator of the Prologue "admires him to the point of
exaggerating his Christian exploits beyond all possibility."[12]

Foster is not alone in his assumption that the
"Knight's Tale" in some sense embodies the spirit of chivalry,
and that therefore any elements incongruous with what he
assumes to be this spirit are to be interpreted as satiric
references to chivalry generally. But like a number of other
commentators on the tale, Foster does not identify the spirit
of chivalry more precisely than as a sense of stylised
courtliness, apparently very vulnerable to bathos. Paul
Thurston agrees that "chivalry was fading into the past in
Chaucer's day", and claims that Chaucer's response was to write,

in the "Knight's Tale", "a satire of cherished chivalric
traditions." Thurston explains that "implicit in the poem...
is the delightfully humorous satire that, for the perceptive
reader, effectively exposes the Knight's exaggerated, naively
serious interpretation of his material for what it is. From
such a point of view, the poem has been demonstrated to be
a superb satire of the conventions of the chivalric code
as they are displayed by Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye, and the
events their emotional involvements give rise to...All
concerned, including the Knight, guilelessly believe that
the dictates of sometimes fatuously artificial convention
are inviolable 'natural' laws and involuntary expressions of
the sublime instincts peculiar to those of noble birth."[13]

Some critics have taken further this suggestion of
Chaucer's critical view of chivalry, claiming that Chaucer
actually disapproves of the Knight and the chivalric world
he stands for. According to Dean Ebner the Knight is the
incarnation of worldliness: "Here is not an austere and
pious saint turning from the grimness of warfare to seek
spiritual solace...but an ambitious man of the world
engaged in the active life of seeking glory, power, fame,
and profit from the holy wars against the Infidels. He
has come...to pay his respects to the god of stable pros-
perity." He is "a man whose own continued successes have
caused him to dodge, at least for the present, the imminent
and tragic reversals of affluence and the pride of life."[14]

For Charles Mitchell the Knight and his entourage represent
an attack on the falsity of the whole idea of chivalry,
conveyed through historical and structural ironies in the
Prologue. The Knight is "worthy" only in the sense of having
courtly manners and martial efficiency; his worldly motives
in crusading are shown by his association with the sack of
Alexandria and other plundering raids, and by his willingness
to fight as a mercenary for an infidel.[15]

The main problem with most of these opinions is that
although they claim chivalry was in decline, or anachronistic,
or that Chaucer was satirising it, they do not explain clearly
what they assume chivalry was. This is not however true of
Vincent Dimarco's argument (in a recent unpublished dissertation)
that the Knight embodies a discredited form of chivalry while
the Squire represents a more desirable alternative.[16] Dimarco's
basic historical assumption is that by Chaucer's time the
crusading ideal was in disrepute, and certain aspects of
chivalry along with it. Men were more interested in coexistence
with Islam in order to exploit the commerce and explore the
learning of the East.

The Knight, he argues, is an ironic anachronism,
"attempting to perform the obligations of the original
crusading ethic among thieves and scoundrels." Chaucer's
audience would have realised that the expeditions the Knight
has been associated with were cynically motivated, ill-planned
and ultimately abortive. The failure of Peter of Cyprus to

obtain substantial support in the West for these expeditions
indicates that his activities were viewed as "the treacherous
upsetting of relatively prolonged harmonious relations between
east and west in a world apparently reconciled to some form
of peaceful coexistence." Peter himself, we are assured, was
widely known to have spent his last years in ignominious
debauchery. As for the Teutonic Knights, with whom the Knight
has also campaigned, Dimarco claims that they were widely
condemned for unscrupulous territorial greed, and attributes to
Chaucer's audience the unlikely awareness that there is an
"inherent contradiction in a national and political order
engaged in supposedly spiritual occupation." No longer
could "the crusade command the fervid interest of anyone in
tune with the times."[17]

According to Dimarco it is the Squire who is the
representative of the new age, and the key to this realisation
lies in his tale, which describes an embassy to the Mongol
Cambyuskan (Uzbek Khan) from "the kyng of Arabe and of Inde",
whom Dimarco identifies as the sultan of the Egyptian Mamluks.
Crusade propagandists in the West had long advocated an alliance
with the Mongols (who were thought to be in many ways like
Christians) against the Moslems. The Squire has thus, we are
told, identified the precise historical moment at which, with
the conversion of Cambyuskan to Islam and the consequent alliance
between the Mongols and the Mamluks, all prospects of Christian
crusading success came to an end. "As a student of the 14th

century crusades", Dimarco writes, Chaucer "must have realised" the strategic significance of this development.[18]

The Squire turns instead to those aspects of the East which excited the eager curiosity rather than the crusading hostility of the West: its magic, romance and science. The gift of the mirror, for instance, recalls such legends as that of the magic lighthouse at Alexandria: "beneath a seemingly romantic, imaginary, and apparently fantastic surface there exists a substructure of historical, scientific and realistic fact brought to bear on the west from the eastern enemies of Christendom." The magic gifts "are all linked to scientific and quasi-scientific origins and processes...The Squire, as an intelligent, cosmopolitan, and relatively sophisticated young man, is familiar and enthusiastic about these new strains of political realities and scientific discoveries and speculations."[19]

This argument is complemented by the hypothesis that chivalry was originally feudal in nature but bifurcated into religious and courtly (or "amatory") traditions, represented by the Knight and the Squire respectively. The normal preference of the chivalric manuals for religious forms is misleading, claims Dimarco, since they were written by clerics, whose ideas are "commonly not supported in the literature." Consequently we are asked to see the Knight's superficially positive qualities as ambivalent when set against more inclusive and satisfactory amatory equivalents of them. His "trouthe" for instance is not so impressive as that

of Troilus; his "honour", like that of Theseus, is based on
fame and martial prowess rather than the firmer basis on
which the honour of Palamon and Arcite is founded: a man's
"service in love, both to his lady and to his brother in arms."
The Knight's "curteisie" is contrasted with the combination
of feudal and amatory courtesy displayed, according to Dimarco,
by Gawain in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: "That romantic
courtesy in this poem is ultimately found not inimical to the
practice of the virtue in its more spiritual formulation
offers a strong rebuttal from a poem contemporary with Chaucer
to any argument that denigrates the 'curteisie' embodied in the
Squire."[20]

The "Squire's Tale", for Dimarco, is a redefinition of
chivalry in a romantic direction, revealing the "limitations
of any concept of knighthood devoid of love-service of the
kind most clearly typified by the Squire of the General Prologue."
The "Knight's Tale", accordingly, describes Theseus's rite de
passage to true knighthood; his martial prowess is humanised
by his recognition of "social chivalry".[21]

Historical substantiation is conspicuously absent
from this exuberant argument, alternately ingenious and perverse,
at crucial points. No solid evidence that the crusading
principle was discredited is offered (though enough is known
of the disreputable behaviour of many crusaders) or for the
assertion that amatory activities were widely considered an
appropriate part of chivalric behaviour. But if it serves no

other purpose, Dimarco's contribution directs attention to
the kind of evidence which is available to support or refute
these claims, and to the resulting question of whether these
are matters that Chaucer really shows a concern with.

The argument, however, has a further significance in
sharing with some other recent opinions (shortly to be discussed)
the assumption of a conflict between religious and amatory
chivalry. This is an important crux for Chaucer studies--a
fact that has often been obscured by scholars who assume that
chivalry was a monolithic system of values. Chivalry and
love have always been in some way connected in the literature
on the subject ("chivalric love" and "courtly love" are often
used synonymously), and it has long been recognised that
Chaucer's knights are, on the whole, more visible as lovers
than as fighters. Dimarco is by no means the first to suggest
that this reflects the nature of Chaucer's main concern with
chivalry.

Muriel Bowden's discussion of the subject, for instance,
is based on the belief that "concepts of love had become an
inherent part of the larger concept of chivalry by the late
Middle Ages", and that "love affairs grew to be as important
as the fighting for Church and State." In her view appearances
of the themes of 'courtly love', keeping one's "trouthe",
and even "gentilesse", as well as any mention of knightly rank
and activities, are all indications of Chaucer's absorption in
the subject of chivalry. Troilus and Criseyde, for example,
is chivalric primarily in that it deals with courtly love,

although, "other aspects of chivalry besides courtly love
appear...The portraits of Troilus and Diomede, and of [Hector]
are knightly in character." The "Squire's Tale" only
qualifies as chivalric because the theme of courtly love
is introduced in the tercelet's faithlessness: "Through the
negation of the tenets of courtly love, there is at least some
emphasis on one department of chivalry."

Chaucer's interest in knighthood, Miss Bowden claims,
is shown even by such details as the mention of chivalric
characters in the "Monk's Tale", or the occasional references
to them in the "Man of Law's Tale", where "the significance
for us lies in the fact that there is any chivalric reference
at all in a narrative devoted to the religious and philosophical
aspects of fortitude." The same point is made about the
"Manciple's Tale", the subject itself of which "is, of course,
not chivalric in any way, but Chaucer's world caused the brief
inclusion of the formalised, chivalric phrases."[22]

These comments suggest on Chaucer's part either a
compulsive and arbitrary introduction of chivalric matters,
or a somewhat casual use of obvious local colour. Yet
Miss Bowden claims that in the 'Thopas' "we are constantly
reminded...that Chaucer lived in a world where chivalry and
the implications of chivalry were of great and daily importance."[23]
She does not, however, consider that it was in any way a
controversial subject; possible discrepancies between
courtly love and the values of the Knight of the General
Prologue are discounted by a claim that is in all respects

dubious:

> [In the fourteenth century] the devotion to
> the fair lady...had disappeared from actuality
> to some extent, although not from the literature
> of the period. Consequently, when Chaucer
> writes of his knight as a "real" person on a
> pilgrimage, love affairs are omitted as being as
> inappropriate as they would be in actuality, and
> the Knight appears to us as a flesh-and-blood
> figure for all his chivalric "perfections". In
> some of the Tales, however, where the knight is
> intended to represent the fictional, there is a
> decorous blend of ethics and love-affair.[24]

In actuality then chivalric love-affairs are "inappropriate",

but in fiction they seem to comprise something very like the

essence of knighthood.

On the basis of this problematic interpretation of the

concept Miss Bowden confers the ethical approval of the

chivalric code on some of Chaucer's rather questionable

characters. She comments, for example, that although the

'Wife of Bath's Tale' "has little to do with knighthood...

the chivalric enters...when the queen and her ladies beseech

the king to spare the life of the young man...thus giving

Arthur the chivalric opportunity to accede to their prayers."

We are asked to believe that in this tale and in that of the

Franklin the "choice of 'gentilesse' as the limiting subject

seems to be because of Chaucer's own absorption in chivalric

matters."[25]

It is in the "Franklin's Tale", according to Miss

Bowden, that chivalric idealism is most fully displayed.

Arveragus is a perfect knight whose upholding of his wife's

'trouthe' is "plainly chivalric", as is Aurelius's response:

"the keeping of one's word, the chivalric dictum that 'he
that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not,
though it were to his own hindrance...shall never fail", is the
great fusing element of the "Franklin's Tale"."[26]   But the
idea is not of course primarily a "chivalric dictum".   The
choice of quotation (from Psalm 15) suggests the obvious
objection that such a quality (even if not, as in this tale,
distinctly ambiguous due to its context) does not require the
support of chivalry in order to be recognised as an important
virtue, and that the appearance of such a universal virtue
does not in itself make a case for the thematic importance
of chivalry in the tale.   An account of chivalry in Chaucer
which attempts to make the subject mean so much ends up by
explaining very little.

   The idea that chivalry for Chaucer was largely a matter
of courtly love has been challenged in various ways.   Charles
Moorman, for instance, assumes that Chaucer was in revolt
against such an association of ideas.   While accepting the
idea that the heyday of chivalry was past, Moorman sees the
Knight of the Prologue as the embodiment of values which have
superseded the chivalry of courtly love, and thus the
representative of a new rather than an obsolete ideal.   The
extravagant bullies of history and of the chansons de geste,
and the courtly lovers of the romances, have been dispossessed
by a figure of philosophical temperance, embodying "the
bourgeois ideals of marriage and natural gentilesse, concepts
alien to the traditional practices of chivalry":

> In his Knight Chaucer has defined a new concept
> of chivalry for a new age, a chivalry stripped
> of its immorality and criminal violence, and
> ready to stand in the midst of the new mercantil-
> ism as a symbol of the conservative values that
> Chaucer everywhere praises.[27]

This polarity between the old and new (or false and

true) kinds of chivalry is continued, according to Moorman,

in such tales as those of the Wife of Bath and the Franklin,

where knights are persuaded to reject the old chivalry of

arrogant aristocracy and courtly love, while the "Squire's

Tale" and the "Tale of Sir Thopas" satirise the extravagances

and mannerisms which have no part in the new chivalry. Moorman

is working with only the most generalised kind of historical

context, but it is worth noting that despite his unlikely

conclusions he agrees with Miss Bowden in closely linking

traditional chivalric ideas with courtly love.

This last assumption was not in fact seriously

questioned in Chaucer studies until the appearance of recent

discussions of the Squire and his relationship to the Knight.

Previously critics felt obliged to regard both the Knight

and the Squire as exemplars of chivalry, and it is understandable

that their accounts of the concept remained vague or confused.

W. H. Schofield, for instance, approved of the Squire, and

like Miss Bowden claimed that since courtly love was part of

the chivalric code its frequent appearance indicated the

extent to which Chaucer saw life in chivalric terms. Yet he

also argued that the Knight, comparable in his austerity to

the Parson, indicates a rejection by Chaucer of contemporary

chivalric extravagance, and a desire for a return to the true religious nature of chivalry.[28]

Some later opinions, however, while sharing Schofield's opinion of the Knight, discern in the Squire a kind of chivalry which Chaucer disapproved of. John V. Fleming, for example, asserts that the Squire's qualities are "characteristic of fol amour not of Christian chivalry", and that his portrait "continues the ironic contrast of the old chivalry with the new."[29] The tale the Squire tells, once regarded as an embodiment of chivalric positives, has also fallen on evil days, several critics in recent years having seen its chaotic organisation and incongruities as Chaucer's oblique comment on the Squire's values.[30] Thomas Hatton has argued that the tales of the Knight and the Squire represent a consistent exposition of the contrast between their tellers—a contrast, that is, between worthy and unworthy knighthood.[31]

The idea that Chaucer wished to attack a certain kind of chivalry and praise an alternative kind often seeks support in the theory (already mentioned) of the 'decline' of chivalry—although the assumption that Chaucer was pointing out the degeneracy of contemporary knighthood is rather different from the theory of the Knight's anachronism, as proposed by Manly and others, in that it assumes a moral advocacy of some sort of traditional chivalric ideas. But both theories share some of the same historical assumptions—in particular the idea that the practical functions of chivalry were by Chaucer's time less important than its external

pageantry and show. Judith Herz combines both approaches
in her comments on the Knight. On the one hand, there is
"something unreal about his character...He seems to belong
to some golden past." On the other she claims that "Chaucer
felt the ethical imperatives of chivalry at the same time as
he observed all too clearly the degeneration of the practice
from his vantage at court." The only positive qualities left
to chivalry in the fourteenth century, she concludes, were
"gesture and flourish".[32]

This last assumption is used by several critics to
explain the apparent 'revival' of chivalry in Edward III's
reign. Froissart believed that the mid-century saw chivalric
activity, at least in England, at its apogee. Even Schofield
conceded that in one sense Edward's reign saw "the halcyon
days of English knighthood". Modern commentary on the
literature of the time has widely regarded this activity as
merely a symptom of decadence. The splendour of the epoch was,
in Ten Brink's phrase, an "Indian summer to the age of chivalry":
"The spirit of chivalry no longer formed a fundamental
element, but only an ornament of life—-an ornament, indeed,
which was made much of, and which was looked upon with a
sentiment partaking of enthusiasm."[33]

There is not complete agreement on the way this
supposed hollowness was regarded by Chaucer. Some critics
who see the Knight as a rebuke to contemporary degeneracy
prefer to emphasise Edward's days of triumph and point to
the contrasting atmosphere at the court of Richard II. The

degeneracy that concerned Chaucer is thus restricted to a
mainly English phenomenon of the last three decades of the
century, a view that accords with Froissart's lament at the
condition of English chivalry on his return to England in 1395.[34]

D. W. Robertson thus suggests that the Knight's
portrait is intended to serve as a reminder of the days of
success against France before the decline in English fortunes
set in in 1369, and notes that military reverses such as the
Despenser expedition of 1383 (in which, we are probably
supposed to imagine, the Squire took part) were widely blamed
on the degenerate character of the English knights.[35] It
is difficult to imagine the Knight as a direct embodiment
of national victory in a war whose campaigns are conspicuously
absent from his <u>curriculum vitae</u>. Hatton, however, makes
a similar suggestion, adding that the portrait of the Squire
may be a direct admonition to Richard on his courtiers'
extravagance.[36]

Stanley J. Kahrl seems to combine the idea of a
general decadence of chivalry in the century as a whole with
the notion that Richard's reign offered specific examples
of such decadence. Kahrl sees the formlessness and pointless
exoticism of the "Squire's Tale" as an attack on its teller,
and on the decadence of chivalric practice. With the crusades
virtually defunct, he argues, chivalry at Richard II's court
became an elaborate game, imitative of romances, finding
its own debased form of crusade in the Despenser expedition.
Kahrl also maintains that one of the main causes of this decline

was the extension of knighthood to the bourgeoisie.[37]

The theory that Chaucer was criticising the knights
of the time is most fully stated by Hatton in an unpublished
dissertation, and his findings deserve summarising here.[38]
Largely from the evidence of the chivalric manuals he concludes
that medieval knighthood had an accepted threefold function:
defence of the realm, maintenance of the internal order of
society (often symbolised by the protection of orphans and
widows), and defence of the Church. On each of these counts,
he claims, knights in the late fourteenth century were falling
critically and visibly short of their duties.[39]

Concerning the defence of the realm, Hatton argues
that the Anglo-French war had displayed the inadequacy of the
feudal levy (with which knighthood was closely associated) as
a method of military organisation, and demonstrated the need
for permanent professional armies. In addition the knights
were tactically obsolescent in battle, not only because of
their equipment but also because of their individualistic
conception of honour and consequent lack of discipline.
Traditional notions of chivalric honour were being sacrificed
to military expediency in such matters as strategic deception
in war.[40] On contemporary disregard of the second duty, that
of maintaining internal order, Hatton's evidence is much more
limited, but the strong point of his argument lies in his
attempt to establish the urgency and importance in Chaucer's
time of the third duty, a knight's obligation to defend the
Church--especially by going on crusade.

According to Hatton, the Knight's career as recorded

in the General Prologue indicates Chaucer's insistence on
the religious nature of chivalry and especially on the duty
of crusading. In particular it reflects his concern about
the threatening situation in the East, and his support for
the crusade plans of Philippe de Mézières, which had attracted
much support at the French and English courts (including
that of John of Gaunt and Sir Lewis Clifford). Mézières
had been chancellor to Peter of Cyprus, the leader of
several of the expeditions mentioned in the Prologue. The
plans for defending Christendom and reconquering the Holy
Land which he tirelessly advocated included the formation of
a special chivalric order, the Order of the Passion of Christ,
and an end to the Anglo-French war so that the combatants
might collaborate in the enterprise.[41] It is with this
objective in mind, Hatton claims, that Chaucer omitted
merely nationalist victories from the career of his ideal
knight.[42] By contrast the Squire, who is "a serious departure
from the chivalric ideal represented by the Knight", depicts
the East in his tale as a place of exotic and concupiscent
attractiveness.

The argument is continued with claims of contemporary
chivalric references in some of the tales. The "Knight's
Tale" diagnoses chivalry's corruption and shows how it can
be restored to moral health. Theseus, by his maintenance of
the social and political order and his understanding of the
key problems of fortune and providence, personifies the

ideal from which contemporary knights, represented by
Palamon and Arcite, have fallen away. The problem with this
reading is that there is no compelling reason for seeing the
meaning of the tale as specifically applicable to contemporary
chivalry rather than to human behaviour generally, since the
virtues and vices the tale deals with are not thus restricted.

Hatton however goes further, and states that though the
tale is not an allegory it contains elements intended to
suggest the current political situation. The conflict between
Arcite and Palamon recalls the warfare of England and France;
the countries, like the knights, have become enemies through
desire for possession, whereas they should unite against
the common enemy of Christianity.[43] The case for such an
allusion is inconclusive; are we to assume, for example, that
Palamon and Arcite should unite against their "common enemy"
Theseus? Hatton also proposes that the war between Athens
and Thebes is in part a reference to the Anglo-French war
(noting that Athens and Thebes are used to refer to England
and France in Lydgate's Siege of Thebes), though here again
there is no suggestion in the tale itself that the war is
an internecine one which should be halted in order that the
combatants can be united against a common enemy. He also
claims that, just as the death of Arcite makes possible the
alliance of the two cities through marriage, the death of
Richard II's wife, Anne, opened the possibility of an alliance
between England and France through the marriage of Richard

to Isabella.[44] These claims remain at best dubious, and
Chaucer appears to elude one more attempt to see in his work
a comment on the Hundred Years War.[45]

    Hatton proceeds to an analysis of the "Monk's Tale"
from which he concludes that the Monk's attitude towards
temporal lordship represents a specific attack on the kind of
knighthood represented by the Knight, who accordingly interrupts
him. The "Wife of Bath's Tale" is also a comment on the
nature of chivalry, according to Hatton, who sees it as a
study of the 'blindness' that results from a total surrender
to concupiscence. What is not successfully explained, however,
is why the tale is applicable to one specific estate of
society more than to another.[46]

    The significance of Hatton's argument in its entirety
lies primarily in its firm attempt at a definition of
fourteenth-century chivalric values, and its rejection of any
intrinsic connection between chivalry and love. As a reading
of Chaucer, however, it is not totally convincing. The most
effective of Hatton's analyses are those of the "Wife of Bath's
Tale" and the "Franklin's Tale", and do not derive much
extra import from the premise that the tales are discussions
of chivalry; nor do the analyses depend to any significant
extent on the prior establishment of chivalric conventions.
On the other hand, when Hatton makes a case for direct
historical allusion the evidence in Chaucer is less than
compelling. Even on his firmest ground—the discussion of the
crusades and the Knight of the Prologue—we are left with a

distinct sense that Chaucer does not tell us enough to
determine whether he was expressing specific approval of
the exploits of Peter of Cyprus and the plans of Philippe
de Mézières.

The most recent contribution to the subject is that
of Jill Mann in an important book on the literary background
of the pilgrims.[47] She also discusses the Knight of the
Prologue in the tradition of ascetic crusading chivalry, but
comes to different conclusions from Hatton's about the
significance of Chaucer's choice. Whereas Hatton assumes that
there was one central scheme of chivalric idealism, all
divergences from which were interpreted as degeneracy, Mrs.
Mann discerns a variety of emphases within the chivalric
tradition; chivalric ideals, she claims, did not always
include asceticism or exclude amatory activities. Chaucer
makes one choice from among these possibilities by portraying
his Knight as a miles Christianus, and further refines that
choice by emphasising the austere crusading function of the
role rather than the task of staying at home and defending
the poor and punishing wrong-doers--a duty equally stressed,
Mrs. Mann reveals, in literature outlining the duties of the
various estates of society. Langland, by contrast, she claims,
"does not put forward the knight's duty to campaign against
the heathen, because he sees too clearly the demands of
his role in a social structure at home." The career of
Chaucer's Knight indicates the "absence of such a sense of
social structure in the general ethic of the Prologue",

in that "the relevance of his profession to the lives of the
rest is not made clear":

> If we examine the Knight's portrait closely,
> we see that the immediate ends of his profession-
> al activities are undefined. Is their aim
> conversion of the heathen? or their extermination,
> to make way for the permanent occupation of the
> Holy Land by Christians? The Knight's role, as
> it is described in his portrait, is merely to
> fight, win, and move on. One might say that his
> campaigns have a religious <u>character</u>, but not a
> religious <u>aim</u>.[48]

Mrs. Mann's comments are part of her wider argument
that the characters in the Prologue are either representatives
of a specialised professional world and thus distanced from the
reader and his direct judgements, or else figures from tradition-
al estates satire presented without the traditional pejorative
descriptive details or vituperation. In this scheme, the
Knight falls into the former category, the Squire into the
latter. Although the Squire represents a frequently satirised
figure in the estates literature, the usual "moral reaction"
is opposed by the "sensuous" details of his description.
Moreover he has his own kind of idealism: Mrs. Mann asserts
that "the desire to win the favour of a lady is one important
motivation attributed to the knight in medieval literature."
Such a motivation, though frequently attacked, is, she claims,
appropriate to the Squire's "youth and 'lustiness'--it is
part of his 'estate' in another of its aspects, and thus
takes on a <u>relative</u> validity in the absence of any <u>system</u>
of ethics which would lead us to prefer [either the Knight or
the Squire] to the other. The only criterion applied is the

way in which each measures up to his chosen ideal." She
concludes that "admiration of the Knight's ascetic ideal of
chivalry does not mean, within the Prologue's terms, rejection
of that of his son."[49] The historical materials which Mrs.
Mann uses to reach this judgment are, however, rather
selective. I hope to show that the traditional literature
of chivalry is not so relative in its judgments as she assumes.

This survey of the major scholarship on the subject
reveals a considerable range of divergent opinions. Chaucer's
attitude towards chivalry has been variously construed as a
concern for contemporary degeneracy, zeal for chivalry's crusading
function, nostalgia for a doomed ideal, irony towards an
outmoded institution, mockery of artificial aristocratic
values, preoccupation with the ennobling effects of love,
hostility towards hypocritical greed, and relativistic contemplation
of an arbitrary idealism. There is also a variety of opinions
among critics of Chaucer on what chivalry itself was. Some
imply that its nature is obvious and self-explanatory; others
accept the virtues of the Knight of the Prologue as its
defining characteristics; for yet others it is a vague
idealism incorporating both Knight and Squire. It is, according
to taste, a veneer covering a brutal reality (but no less
believed in for all that), a code of love, a pattern for the
courtly life of the nobly born, the habitual mode of thought
of a professional military class, or a set of specific
ecclesiastically-sanctioned social duties.

We can identify amidst this confusion a number of
historical factors which require clarification. We must
ask whether knighthood was perceived to be in a state of
irrevocable decline or anachronism by any of Chaucer's
contemporaries, and whether they had grounds for such a
supposition. Other questions involve the ways in which love
and noble birth were linked to the idea of knighthood, and
the attitudes to the crusades and the knight's duty to under-
take them which were current at the end of the fourteenth
century. These inevitably become broader concerns at some
point. We need to find out, for example, whether it is
possible to identify in the concept of chivalry a coherent,
homogeneous ethical code, a mainstream of idealism; if not, we
must determine the relative status of the various interlinked
motifs that form the whole complex of ideas and practices
associated with the concept.

Unfortunately it is not possible to consider the
importance and significance of the various chivalric
imperatives without an awareness of the different levels
and planes on which they existed. We are dealing with, amongst
other things, a set of military skills, a system of rules
for the conduct of war, a system of military and administrative
obligations in society, a social and religious institution,
an estate or class, a code of nobility, a notion of just and
honourable behaviour, a literary tradition, a body of
religious teaching, a store of homiletic commonplaces,
a central cultural symbolism. Deciding how relevant
these various areas are to Chaucer's writing also involves

a consideration of the relationship between facts and
ideals, since changes in the practical nature of knight-
hood do not appear to have affected in any direct way the
allegiance commanded by chivalric ideals.

In addition we must make more than purely historical
distinctions if we are not to oversimplify the relationship
between life and literature. As I have already suggested,
some of the historical contexts which are proposed in order
to elucidate Chaucer's meaning may be ambivalent because the
poet was more interested in the 'internal' literary relations
of his characters as symbols than in their 'external'
references as quasi-historical figures. An examination of
the precedents for the literary use of knights will also
therefore find its place in this study. We must search
for such help as history can give, but the conditions on
which we can use it are ultimately literary ones, prescribed
by the poet.

II

KNIGHTS AND KNIGHTHOOD

1. Introduction

The varied career of chivalry as a subject of
historical interest goes back at least as far as the
Romantic movement, which found in it a focus for its
enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, resulting not only in
profuse literary and artistic treatments but also in
considerable antiquarian effort.[1] Some nineteenth-
century historians were also drawn to the subject by
the assumption of its continuity with their own code
of gentlemanly behaviour. They saw in chivalry an important
root of their own century's idea of civilisation, and
evidence of man's capacity to progress by setting for
himself ideals of conduct, even though such ideals were
impossible to attain completely.

Other approaches to medieval history placed less
importance on chivalry and took a less sympathetic view
of its ethical aspects. They looked to the past for
materialist determining factors rather than avowed ideals,
or searched for signs of the emergence of democracy
rather than for the elaboration of an aristocratic code,
and pointed out the great discrepancies between chivalric
ideals and the actual conditions of medieval life and

warfare. Some traditional heroes were re-evaluated as
men whose excesses were only occasionally tempered by
a code which in turn was often used to mask their real
motives.[2] Thomas Arnold protested that "If I were called
upon to name what spirit of evil predominantly deserved the
name of Anti-Christ, I should name the spirit of chivalry--
the more detestable for the very guise of 'Archangel ruined'
which has made it so seductive to the most generous spirits--
but to me so hateful, because it is in direct opposition
to the impartial justice of the Gospel, and its comprehensive
feeling of equal brotherhood, and because it so fostered a
sense of honour rather than a sense of duty."[3]

Such findings made chivalry's relationship to the
mainstream of medieval historical study problematic. Some
writers accepted it as primarily a poetic fiction to be
explored in literature and other areas in which man's
imagination was free to express itself; others attempted to
trace the evolution of both ideals and practices while
insisting on the discrepancies between the two. Meanwhile
the chivalric ideal itself tended to be regarded as a
satisfactorily unified composite. Gautier produced a
chivalric 'decalogue' of religious and feudal 'commandments'.
Commentators evidently believed that the honour of the
warrior and the pride of nobility, inspired by both religion
and love, produced a fairly homogeneous code of conduct, which
encouraged the idealisation of women in social life and scruples

about warfare in times of combat. Failures to maintain
this synthesis were interpreted as departures from the ideal.[4]

In more recent times, although the assumption of
a synthesis has survived to some extent, studies have
tended to emphasise the differences between the various
aspects of the chivalric tradition--aspects which under
special conditions produced unique amalgamations. The
separation of real and ideal has been supplemented by
other distinctions, of which the most common is probably
a three-part division of chivalry into feudal, religious
and 'romantic' branches. Of these the first and, to a
lesser extent, the second have remained within the normal
province of the social and political historian, for whom
the knight as warrior and knighthood as an institution
are important in the development of feudalism, nobility and
military organisation. 'Romantic' (courtly, or amatory)
aspects, meanwhile, have usually been treated separately
as subjects of literary and related study. H. O. Taylor,
for example, dealt with fictional (romantic) chivalry as
a later and separate development in romances and chronicles
of historical (feudal and Christian) chivalry. Gustave Cohen
implicitly divided his treatment of the subject into the
three parts I have mentioned, while Sidney Painter did so
explicitly.[5]

It is apparent that the concept of chivalry has led
a very precarious existence among modern historians, liable
at any moment to break up into semi-autonomous parts with

questionable relationships to each other. A revival of
interest in the history of cultural attitudes, however,
has revised somewhat the earlier dismissive view of chivalry.
Since Huizinga's famous defence of the study of man's
actions in the context of his beliefs, delusions and 'games',
the usefulness of a rigid separation of 'ideal' chivalry from
'real' has been challenged several times. Arno Borst asks,
"Basis und Überau, durchschneidet diese Scheidelinie nicht
gerade die Lebensader des Mittelalters, zumindest die des
mittelalterlichen Rittertums?" Daniel Rocher has defended
the idea of the interdependence of social history and literature
in studies of the subject, despite the indiscriminate use
of literary sources by nineteenth-century historians.[6]

Recent study of chivalric ideas has not, however,
produced a new coherence; instead it has continued the
process of fragmentation, finding basic conflicts between
the various chivalric imperatives and discovering, in Rocher's
words, "l'étonnante hétérogénéité, dans le temps, dans l'espace,
et même dans un seul moment et un seul espace, des phénomènes
recouverts par un unique mot."[7] Various attempts to categorise
chivalric values as homogeneous and monolithic have proved
unsatisfactory.[8] E. R. Curtius concluded that "The particular
charm of the chivalric ethos consists precisely in fluctuation
between many ideals, some of them closely related, some
diametrically opposed. The possibility of this free
interplay, of freedom to move within a rich and manifold

world of values, must have been an inner stimulus to the
courtly poets."[9] J. Bumke, who has traced the process
by which the traditional view of chivalry as a composite
has been replaced by a series of questions about how chivalry's
seemingly irreconcilable aspects relate to each other, comes
close to concluding that chivalry as a recognisable entity
never existed.[10] Rocher stresses the shifting combinations
of qualities presented in literature as chivalric, but does
not go so far as Bumke, concluding that chivalry's main
reality lies in its "aspects spirituels" and its literary
embodiments, each individual writer forming his own synthesis
from the antinomies and alternatives offered by the whole
tradition.[11] Painter suggests that while the three "sets of
chivalric ideas" he identifies "were irreconcilable as a whole,
one could easily choose elements from each to form a consistent
composite idea."[12]

Uncertainty thus characterises attitudes towards the
question of whether there was one or many concepts of chivalry,
and also towards the question of the relationship of chivalric
ideals to historical realities. Equally problematic is a
third question which has largely preoccupied historians of
the subject--that of chivalry's decline and demise.[13]
The assumption of the decadence of chivalry in the late
Middle Ages has long been a commonplace.[14] Evolutionary
schemes, complete with golden ages and periods of decadence,
have long been notorious in a wide variety of fields for
their tendency to encourage oversimplifications of historical

processes. In the case of chivalry verification has proved particularly difficult. For Gautier the decline started with the Arthurian romances; Kilgour's "first and heroic age" of chivalry is confined to the era of the first three crusades. In so far as the gap between knightly conduct and chivalric ideals does not appear to have changed significantly throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whatever else did, the golden age of chivalry may be claimed as a myth. The degeneracy of contemporary soldiers was castigated as vigorously in the twelfth century as in the fourteenth. Yet the idea of decadence has survived the inadequacies of the hypothesis of a heyday of chivalry. While it is sensible to assume that there were historical processes as a result of which chivalry as an identifiable dominant social ethic disappeared or was commuted, we must beware of oversimplifying how and when this occurred.

There are daunting problems in confronting these three main historical problems, not the least of which is the necessity of scrutinising modern myths about a subject which even in the Middle Ages was an intangible blend of mythology, ideology, and more pragmatic considerations. My main assertion will be that chivalry was always primarily a conceptual and imaginative phenomenon, in that its existence as a complex of ideas and images was autonomous of practical considerations; it was never sufficiently simple a formulation to be matched comprehensibly against actual conduct. This

explains why historians have had such problems relating
the ideal to the real, why arguments about the decline
of chivalry (the widening divergence of the real from the
ideal) have been so misleading, and why attempts to define
the ideas of chivalry so problematic. As a result of its
appeal to the imagination (in the modern sense of that
term), chivalry could unite heterogeneous elements under its
nominal patronage--practical and ideological considerations,
discrepant ideas--while at the same time, I shall argue,
maintaining some sense of clear positives.

Chivalry is thus a subject which spans the
realms of action and of literature (for in both the role
of imaginative concepts is important), though its more intense
affiliation is with the latter. I will therefore start with
a brief survey of the historical process from which chivalry
may be said to have sprung--the rise of the mounted warrior
to a position of military and hence social dominance. This
process has been fairly well charted and I shall rely mainly
on secondary materials. But I will stress that to understand
the further stage--the development and predominance of chivalric
ideas--we cannot rely on factual developments. We must
turn instead to the way in which the figure of the knight
caught the medieval imagination, and this requires a close
look at a variety of primary materials.

So loosely defined were the concepts of chivalry
and knighthood that almost all medieval writings on warfare

are to some extent relevant here. Many are translations
or adaptations of the fourth-century Roman writer Vegetius,
and contain discussions of military supply, tactics and
fortification as well as of the recruitment, training and
duties of soldiers. Other works concentrate on the conditions
under which wars are just or legal, and on the laws of war,
adapted from Roman jurists. Important evidence about chivalry
as a practical code of conduct is to be derived from laws
on such issues as payment of ransom. Many so-called chivalric
manuals deal directly with the duties and appropriate
qualities of knights, or the religious symbolism of their
equipment. In addition, a large number of discursive treatments
of the subject of chivalry exist in works of a more general
nature, including sermons, treatises, satirical and allegorical
poems, and the various forms of 'estates' literature. Many
useful sources are not of course primarily expository. Ideas
and preconceptions about knighthood are found in that spectrum
of narrative works which range from the avowedly historical
to the clearly fictional, including chronicles, 'biographies'
of chivalric heroes, chansons de geste, and romances. Also
instructive are the numerous metaphorical references to knights
dispersed throughout medieval literature.

2. The Real Knight

The early history of the knight involves two roughly
parallel historical developments: the rise of the mounted
soldier to military dominance, and the growth of feudalism.

The theory linking these two developments was formulated
by Heinrich Brunner in the late nineteenth century. Brunner
concluded that the hegemony of the mounted rather than the
foot soldier dated from the first half of the eighth century,
and that the confiscation of Church lands at that time by
Charles Martel to distribute as fiefs to his followers (the
virtual beginning of feudalism, despite earlier neo-feudal
customs) was motivated by the need for cavalry. The thesis has
survived attacks from various directions; in terms of the
development of both mounted combat and feudalism the events
of the eighth century have been found to be crucial.[15]

The reason for this change, as Lynn White has convincingly
argued, was the Frankish discovery of the military potential
of the stirrup, which had come originally from the East:
"While semi-feudal relationships and institutions had long
been scattered thickly over the civilised world, it was the
Franks alone...who fully grasped the possibilities inherent
in the stirrup and created in terms of it a new type of
warfare supported by a novel structure of society which
we call feudalism."[16] Until that time the dominance of
the footsoldier, established by the Romans, had prevailed
in the West, though the role of cavalry had gradually
increased in response to the frequent challenges and
periodic successes of mounted troops. The innovations
which the stirrup made possible--the heavy lance held in
rest rather than thrown, and the large heavy shield--turned
the cavalry charge into a formidable tactical weapon, and,

in combination with the already-established superior mobility
of the horseman to and from battles, decisively changed the
balance of military technology in favour of heavily armed
cavalry.[17]

The cost of the new kind of warfare was, however, enor-
mous. Horses were expensive (and expensive to keep) and so
were the armour and equipment required to take full advantage of
the opportunities the horse offered. Furthermore, over the
centuries, the knight's armour (and eventually that of his
horse) became more and more elaborate and heavier, and the
horses required to bear this weight larger and stronger.
The maintenance of a cavalry force required that a ruler
endow a number of his subjects with considerable amounts
of land in the form of fiefs held in return for military
service, or else that he maintain them in his household.
Gradually the former method became the most usual. Supported
in this way, a man was enabled not only to afford the
equipment but also to develop the physical condition and
professional skills required for the new kind of fighting.
Understandably the possession of this equipment and the skill
to use it bestowed a special military esprit de corps,
sharply differentiating the horsemen from those who
fought on foot.

More than esprit de corps was involved, however, for
in this social arrangement lay the seeds of the concept of
a hereditary noble class. In the aftermath of the collapse
of the Carolingian state, military vassalage came to be regarded

as the most privileged of the relations of dependency between a man and his lord.[18] The military vassal became a tenant with a considerable degree of independence. Through sub-infeudation (the process by which a vassal in turn granted part of his fief to someone else in return for military service), a scale of greater and lesser vassals came into existence, both giving and receiving homage. Gradually a military fief came to be regarded as something that could be inherited, though at first only by someone who could perform the required military service. Thus in the eleventh and twelfth centuries throughout Europe the holders of fiefs came to be regarded as a hereditary noble class. Such in very simplified form is the process by which knights achieved their dominant social rank. The whole subject of chivalry is really no more than that of these two basic developments and their practical and ideological accretions.

The most obvious of these accretions were the knighting ceremony and the idea of an order of knighthood. The ceremony was a revival of the ancient Germanic initiation of all youths who were free men into full membership in society by the delivery of arms. The emergence in feudal times of a professional military class, with a sense of its exclusive identity, created the need for a formal mark of admission into that class, though restricted now to a small sector of society only.[19] In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the custom came to be known as the making of a knight and to be considered necessary for recognition as such. No longer was

knighthood simply the capacity to fight on horseback with
full equipment, but the membership, through initiation, of
an exclusive body, regarded as a divinely-instituted order
of society. What started off as a simple ceremony soon
became an occasion for elaborate ritual, although knights
continued to be dubbed simply (and cheaply) on the battlefield.
Religious ritual in particular came to play an important part,
indicating that knighthood was thought of as an order in the
same sense as the priesthood was. Specific orders of knighthood
developed from the main order just as those of the priesthood
had done. The order of knighthood was thus presented with
a role in society as the secular arm of the Church.

The crucial question, however, is why the various
accretions of chivalry and knighthood attached themselves to
the basic figure of the knight. Was the practical significance
of the mounted warrior of such overwhelming importance that
it should stand as symbol of the central secular idealism of
several centuries? Why did the fact of knighthood remain
so closely associated with the state of nobility that the
noble class should continue to see itself as in the first
place a class of knights? Let us consider first the question
of the knight's continuing military significance.

The knight's theoretical supremacy in medieval
battles was in several respects illusory. Cavalry were not
always used as mounted troops, but were frequently dismounted
to fight, especially in the later Middle Ages. Nor did
they at any time completely displace footsoldiers, who

continued to be essential as archers and in supporting
and defensive roles in medieval battles, though often
poorly equipped and trained. (William at Hastings had
bowmen and heavily-armed infantry as well as cavalry.)[20.]
Knights represented only one element--the most fully-
equipped--in most medieval armies, and were frequently
used primarily as officers in command of mounted or unmounted
troops. Despite the picture presented by Froissart, the
preponderant part of the typical army of the Hundred Years
War did not consist of knights at all.[21] A cavalry charge
was always a very risky operation requiring special conditions,
and numerous battles were lost because of its rash or premature
employment. Sometimes each side would attempt to provoke the
other into making the first charge, and if neither side
responded the confrontation often ended without battle
actually being joined.[22]

Moreover the importance of battles generally in the
Middle Ages was not great in comparison to that of siege-
warfare.[23] There were decisive battles of course, but
territory was won or lost largely according to the fate of
besieged fortresses, a fate usually settled by treachery,
blockade, or wider strategic or diplomatic manoeuvres--less
often by assault or by any fighting in which mounted knights
could use their particular advantages. The main achievements
of medieval military technology were consequently in the area
of fortification, and the stronger the castles became the
less important were pitched battles. The defensive tactics

of the French in the later fourteenth century, which largely
confined English expeditions to ravaging the countryside,
only emphasised a long-standing feature of warfare. The
crusading orders in Palestine had sat impregnable in their
fortresses long after they dared risk pitched battle with
the forces encircling their small enclaves.

However the knight always had his part to play as
a devastating offensive weapon under the right conditions, and
consequently every army tried to obtain a body of heavy cavalry.
The theory that the knights of the Hundred Years War were a
mere liability in battle, stubbornly clinging to a suicidal
chivalric code despite the new supremacy of the longbow,
proves to be untenable. The knights who fought in the armies
of Edward III were the most fully equipped of the body of
mounted soldiers known loosely as men-at-arms. Most of this
body consisted of lightly armed horsemen and hobelars, while
the knights provided an officer corps. Normally they fought
on foot, using their horses for pursuit or retreat.[24] Although
there was a significant rise in the importance of infantry and
archers in this century, English armies had for a long time
been composed of mounted and unmounted troops and archers.
Knights had long realised that they were vulnerable to
archery, and had developed forces of archers, although a
general European taboo against the use of the bow by knights
themselves remained in force.[25] In the combination that
proved so effective at Crécy and Poitiers the English knights
played an important complementary part to that of the archers.

What the French disasters in those two battles showed was not that knights were finished, but that the normal process of continuing tactical adjustment was not being properly carried out. The fault was remedied in the latter part of the century. Not only knights, but armies in general, had to be used in carefully controlled ways. Knights did not suddenly meet their doom at the hands of archery in the mid-fourteenth century. We should note that the widespread use of the cross-bow in the later tenth century was itself a response to the rise of the armoured knight.[26] Furthermore, the kind of reckless, undisciplined, individualistic striving for personal glory rather than collective success, which typified the behaviour of some knights in battle, was an evil long denounced, and was not seen as the inevitable behaviour of knights. The need for strategy and for the tempering of boldness with prudence and intelligence was constantly emphasised in the chivalric manuals.[27] Oman's complete contempt for the tactics of the knights was not altogether justified. "When the enemy came into sight", he wrote, "nothing could restrain the western knights...The enemy who possessed even a rudimentary system of tactics could hardly fail to be successful against such armies...The most ordinary precautions...were considered instances of surpassing military skill."[28] Oman attributed the typical disregard of tactics by medieval commanders to "the primitive state of the military art"; Keen more convincingly points out that battle was regarded as an appeal to the judgment of God. Every

precaution must be taken to ensure that the scales of
divine justice were not weighted by men.[29]

    That the knights could nevertheless adapt their
methods of combat according to circumstances was demonstrated
by some of the crusade armies, which learnt from their
enemies the importance of strategy and the importance of
archery and infantry. The crusades acted as a testing-ground
for new military tactics, especially with regard to fortification.
Properly handled, crusade armies could represent a very
practical and disciplined fighting unit. The Gesta Regis
Ricardi provides examples of Richard I's attention to tactics,
and recounts his strenuous efforts to gather as many archers
as possible at Acre before beginning his campaign against
Saladin.[30] J. F. Verbruggen asserts that the knights themselves
habitually fought in groups as shock-combat troops, placing
great stress on maintaining formation when charging. Lynn
White points out that the carefully coordinated battle tactics
of the Franks, with cavalry and infantry giving mutual support,
aroused the notice of Islamic writers.[31]

    English kings in the fourteenth century continued
to seek knights as well as the foot-soldiers who vastly
outnumbered them in battle. Moreover the increasing incidence
of payment in English armies does not indicate, as some have
claimed, that the knights found no place in a new military
professionalism.[32] The use of paid troops in English
armies had coexisted with the system of levies for two hundred
years by Edward III's reign.

The limitations of the knight's military significance were obvious even in the twelfth century, and the degree to which that situation changed in the fourteenth century has been greatly exaggerated. Yet the knight came to stand not only as the archetype of the fighter or soldier but also as the representative (as we shall see) of all secular authority. This phenomenon is clearly not explained adequately by the knight's practical military importance; nor is it accounted for by the rise of knights to a more general social dominance as a noble class--a subject to which I now return.

The military function had been instrumental in determining the idea of nobility in Europe, but once that nobility was established its connection with knighthood and with military capacity naturally became weaker. At one stage the inheritance of a military fief was dependent on the heir's being knighted (and a knighted younger son might take precedence in this respect over an unknighted elder one), but pride of birth gradually eclipsed such requirements, as social stratification became more rigid.[33] Fiefs were eventually inherited by people who had no personal military capacity, while others decided to avoid the expensive initiation ceremony of knighthood, involving the purchase of ever more costly equipment. Noble rank no longer depended on the fact or capacity of knighthood.

On the other hand, there were attempts from the twelfth century onwards, never completely successful, to make knighthood itself a right which could only be inherited. The

would-be knight had to prove that he was descended from knights. The Templars, for example, who had always distinguished between those who joined the order as knights and those who joined as serjeants, laid down specific qualifications of birth for this distinction in the mid-thirteenth century: a candidate admitted as a knight must not only have been knighted, but must be a knight's son or the descendant of knights on his father's side.[34] Knighthood as an arbiter of social importance had thus tended to become significant not so much in itself but as an ancillary indicator of something more crucial--nobility.

Nevertheless, knighthood's symbolic significance, in isolation from the practical distinctions, was great. Pride of descent found its expression pre-eminently in heraldry, which originated as a method of identifying fully-armed men in tournaments, and chivalric literature stressed the links between chivalry and noble birth. Moreover the noble continued to see himself as first and foremost a fighting man, and conversely fighting was thought of as a noble occupation. The discrepancies between the practical importance of knighthood in social and military matters and its symbolic significance are even more marked in England, where developments diverged somewhat from those on the continent and therefore require separate consideration.

3. English Developments

The system of feudal military service was introduced into England at the Conquest, when William I specified a number

of trained and equipped mounted soldiers to be provided for
the King's use by each of his principal vassals, including
bishops and abbots. These knights were identified simply
by their military equipment and obligation rather than by
membership of an order, tenure of land, or social and religious
duties, and they represented only the highest level in a
hierarchy of military obligations.[35] Sub-infeudation proved
the most successful method of meeting the obligations of the
principal vassals, especially for the Church, despite attempts
to stop the process. Consequently by the end of the twelfth
century the knight was usually a tenant, though sometimes only
of a fraction of a knight's fee (the amount of land originally
granted by the king in exchange for the service of one knight).
By this time also, in accordance with the process described
above, the knight's distinctive mark was his having been
received into the 'order', which was probably the general
practice for those who held land by knight-service.[36]

The process of sub-infeudation and the break-up of
tenements obscured the original legal obligations of
knight-service or made them almost impossible to enforce.[37]
The easiest way to resolve this situation was to provide
for the possibility of converting these obligations into
money payments. In addition the feudal levy proved unable
to produce an adequately flexible body of troops in sufficient
numbers, especially for foreign wars. It was supplemented by
a national militia of shire levies (a continuation to some

extent of the Anglo-Saxon 'fyrd'), money fiefs, and especially
--from the twelfth century on--by the employment of paid troops
on an indenture basis.[38] These troops were paid for by scutage,
a tax introduced by Henry II which could be substituted for
the fulfilment of knight-service obligations.[39] Sub-infeudation,
the inadequacy of the feudal levy, and commutation of knight-
service were not, however, exclusively English developments.
By the end of the twelfth century the King of France was
also largely dependent on paid troops, though in his case this
was partly because power was less centralised than it was
in England, and therefore his control over his vassals less
certain.[40]

By paying scutage and neglecting to be knighted a man
could still inherit his fief while avoiding both the costly
purchase of knightly arms and the liability for onerous
military and civil duties. Consequently English kings were
faced with constant shortages of trained and equipped knights
even for paid military duty, and of knights in the shires
to undertake increasingly complex judicial and representative
responsibilities. They therefore had recourse periodically
throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to a
measure known as distraint of knighthood.[41]

Distraint by-passed the system of feudal obligations,
and with varying degrees of success compelled men holding
land of a certain value (often fixed at twenty pounds a
year) to become knights and thus render themselves liable
directly to the king for civil and military duties (the latter

usually for pay).[42] The obligation to knighthood thus became
one step in a series of military obligations based on
property qualifications rather than feudal duty, since
people with less property had graduated obligations to
service in the national militia and possession of the
required military equipment. Distraint was also used to
raise revenue from those who preferred to pay fines for
'respite' of knighthood rather than become knights.[43]
Continuing shortages of knights made distraint a more or
less permanent feature of fourteenth-century life, but it
was never a very successful policy, and the provision of
cavalry came to depend largely on financial contracts under
which individual barons supplied troops of mounted men-at-arms.[44]

In effect a property qualification became the main
ground for this form of public service, through the symbolic
intermediary of knighthood. Kings like Edward I and Edward III
fostered the glamour and sense of social exclusiveness of
knighthood through chivalric sentiment and pageantry
(two-hundred-sixty-seven knights were made with great
ceremony at the knighting of the future Edward II in 1306),
but they pursued at the same time a strict policy of distraint.[45]
For a fourteenth-century Englishman the practical reality
of knighthood would frequently have been that of a prosaic
legal duty, not dependent on birth or conferring taxation
privileges (as was usually the case in France), and to be
avoided if possible. As such it did not become the focal
point for the formation of a hereditary noble class

as it did in France and Germany.[46] Frequently the term
'knight' was used only as an approximation for men with a
certain amount of property. The order for the poll-tax of
1379 referred to "each baron and banneret or knight who is
able to spend as much as a baron" and "each bachelor and
each squire who ought, by statute, to be a knight."[47]

Who then were the actual knights of Chaucer's
England, and what kind of bond between them can the theoretical
fraternity of dubbed knights have provided? Knighthood embraced
the King and most of the higher nobility, as well as a body of
professional soldiers, many of them retained by the barons and
the King (notably the knights of the royal household, who
provided the organisational core of the royal army), and men
of the shires, whose landed wealth varied greatly. These
latter in many cases had virtually no military capacity (though
some of the famous mercenary captains of the Hundred Years
War came from among them) and were not clearly differentiated
from the larger body of small but substantial landowners
who came to be known as the gentry.[48]

Men joined the heterogeneous ranks of the knights
as a result either of following the tradition of their fathers,
or as a reward for royal service--military or civil--or
through distraint. Their numbers were small, though impossible
to determine precisely, and the number available for military
service even smaller. Denholm-Young tentatively estimates
a norm of approximately three thousand "potential knights"

in the late thirteenth century—less than half of whom
were dubbed knights, and only about five hundred available
at any one time for military service—in a total population
of between two and three million.[49]

It seems unlikely that these men can have had
much sense of a common identity. Their distance from the
chivalric stereotype is clear from the fact that the majority
of fourteenth-century English knights were in fact civilians
with time-consuming duties in the counties as landlords
and administrators. These responsibilities included
jury service on the grand assize (and in some cases on the
petty assize), holding their own manorial courts, the investi-
gation of details of lawsuits—especially those relating to
the ownership of land, police duties imposed in accordance
with the oath of keeping the peace, holding Commissions of
Array to raise troops, and service in other miscellaneous
ways as the agents of the central government. They were
turned to as sheriffs, stewards, escheators, constables
of castles, and as the representatives of shires in parliament.[50]

Despite distraint, continuing shortages compelled
the king's officers to recruit for these duties men of
substance who were not knights at all (such as Chaucer),
thus further diminishing the practical importance of knighthood
as a distinguishing mark, and furthering the process whereby
men of substance found that they did not need to be formally
knighted in order to achieve status and wield influence.

The fact that formal knighthood was frequently dispensed with as a qualification for jobs which were nominally the preserve of knights is particularly clear in the case of knights of the shire, or representatives to parliament. From the late thirteenth century, and throughout the fourteenth, the sheriffs were constantly directed to obtain real, or 'belted' knights, but of the knights of the shires in the parliaments of Edward II possibly as many as half were not belted knights.[51] By the end of Edward III's reign this discrepancy was officially recognised, and it was ordained that sergeants or esquires were to be 'regarded' as knights when in parliament. The writs of 1444 specified the selection of "notable Knyghtes of the same Shires for the which they shall be chosen; other ellys such notable Squiers, Gentilmen of birth, of the same Shires as be able to be Knyghtes."[52]

Inevitably the county knights were merging into the larger and looser class of gentry, a tendency which was matched by a blurring of distinctions between knights and wealthy townsmen. The voting record of the shire knights in parliament (though, as we have seen, not all of these were knighted) indicates that they did not pursue a policy independent of that of the burgesses of the cities and boroughs.[53] Merchants often came from land-owning families, and merchants of course could become knights, not only by distraint but also as a reward for royal support.[54]

Prominent London burgesses, such as Pulteney, Philipot and
John Chaucer's fellow-vinter Picard—men without any kind
of military capacity—were knighted by the king as a reward
for political support. Froissart describes with approval
the knighting of the mayor (Walworth) and two citizens
(Standish and Brembre) during the confrontation with the
leaders of the Peasants' Revolt at Smithfield.[55] Citizens
of London were accustomed to consider themselves the
equivalent of tenants-in-chief of the crown, and aldermen's
wives gave themselves the same title as the wives of knights,
a practice to which Chaucer alludes.[56] Even within the
chivalric world itself, the old distinction between knights
and squires (according to which the squire was a candidate for
knighthood serving a novitiate) had little currency in
fourteenth-century England.[57] Even in the custom-bound
world of the tournament the importance of formal admission
into the order was waning. Squires were as prominent as
knights in the famous Combat of the Thirty between French
and other knights in 1350.[58]

Nevertheless there remained a sense of a dominant
social caste, though not a closed one, connected in some
way with chivalry and gentility. Knighthood itself was
not, however, an especially important indicator of social
demarcation in this respect; more significant was the
possession of armorial bearings. Coat-armour was associated
with pride in noble or gentle birth; yet, as with knighthood,
the reality of the matter did not always justify this association.

By the fourteenth century it was not uncommon for burgesses
(and cities, and associations of merchants and craftsmen)
to possess coats of arms. Traditionally the heralds required
arms to have been held for four generations before gentility
was assumed, but in practice the recognition of arms was
regarded as an immediate social distinction.[59]

We should not therefore think of the 'chivalric class'
in England as a well-defined social stratum, suscribing-- as
Gervase Mathew argues--to the ideals of "amour courtois",
and clearly distinguished from those below them who had
aspirations to some pride of property or status but not to
coat-armour.[60] This lack of rigidity applies even more to
the actual members of the order of knighthood. Being a
knight did not necessarily signify anything more in practical
terms than the possession of land worth a certain amount a
year, whereas elsewhere in Europe the knight was technically
a noble, and knighthood was consequently more closely
identified with the process of stratification of classes that
took place in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries on
the continent. The English kings were not alone in attempting
to make the knighting ceremony obligatory for those entitled
to it, nor were Englishmen unique in seeking to avoid the
expense involved. The important distinction between England
and the rest of Europe, however, lay in the criterion by
which eligibility for knighthood was determined. The difference
between a property qualification and a hereditary right is
crucial. The idea that a knight became déclassé by any

divergence from the noble life in making his living was
not encouraged by English practice. As Huizinga has argued,
the more extravagant formalisations of chivalry as a code
of pride and honour required the atmosphere of a closed, and
even threatened, social class.[61]

Although England was thus in some respects a special
case, the discrepancy between the practical importance of
knights as knights and the dominance of the concept of chivalry
was a universal phenomenon. The ubiquitous administrative
tasks of knights clearly did not account for their mystique
any more than their military value or their acquisition of
nobility did, at least in that period of their history which
we are accustomed to think of as their heyday. In the
emerging feudal system the military importance of the heavily
armed horseman was a highly influential factor in the
structuring of society; but this importance does not in
itself account for the flowering of ideas around the idea
of the knight from the eleventh century on. A man did
not need to be knighted in order to be a proficient warrior,
or to be a warrior in order to carry out the normal judicial
tasks. Moreover the chivalric figures from real life who
appear to have appealed most strongly to the imaginations
of their contemporaries and of later generations--the knights
errant, mercenaries, robber-knights, professional tourneyers,
and many of the crusaders--were rarely more than persons who
had been displaced from the prominent social positions

conventionally occupied by knights owing to a failure to
inherit land.

The only activities over which the knights could
really be said to have any sort of monopoly were the tournament
and the joust. Although, as I have noted, knights and squires
eventually competed together, this was the result of the
blurring of the distinction between knights and those who,
having the right to be knighted, were carrying on the
traditional martial pursuits of the knight, rather than
between knights and the rest of society. The tournament
as a sphere of knightly activity, however, presents a
rather special case. It was not in itself a complete social
activity or function, but an imitation of, or training
for, another--war. The popularity of tournaments does
not indicate the practical importance of knights (in fact
the tournaments that sometimes took place during truces
or protracted sieges often demonstrated how little their
skills were actually required in wartime) but the urge to
create a real embodiment, otherwise lacking, of the knight's
symbolic importance.

It is to those symbolic possibilties, to the world of
ideas and images rather than of historical institutions, that we
must look for chivalry's centre of gravity. Discrepancies
between the practical realities and the conceptual existence
of knighthood are evident from almost all medieval writing
on the subject of chivalry, and there is no need to look as

far as the romances, many of which have long been recognised
as existing in a world almost totally detached from social
reality, in order to discern them. These discrepancies
are much more radical than the terms 'ideal' and 'real' convey,
since these terms suggest that both aspects exist in the same
plane—in which the real can aspire to the ideal. To use
these terms is to imply that the one level invites a comparison
with the other, that idealism is an expression of the possibilities
of reality and is intended to influence reality, and that
reality can be measured against idealism. But in fact the
ideology of knighthood involves much more than simply a
list of virtues and accomplishments to guide the aspirations
of knights, and seems rarely to have been bound by a considera-
tion of practical situations.

4. The Primacy of Ideas

We may note in the first instance that medieval
accounts of the origins of knighthood bore no relation to
its actual history. They were directed by a sense of
symbolic appropriateness rather than by antiquarian concern.
The order of knighthood was regarded either as having existed,
as a result of divine ordering, since the beginning of the
world, or as an institution of classical origin. The chronicler
Jean Molinet, for example, claimed that it originated with
the host of God's angels, and in particular from the triumph
of the archangel Michael—the first great feat of chivalric
prowess.[62] Ramon Lull wrote that when the world first

turned to corruption and injustice one man in each thousand
was chosen for his strength, bravery, nobility and so on,
as a 'miles', or knight, and given a horse, armour, a squire,
and lordship over men.[63] Honoré Bonet's attempt at etymology
derived the word 'miles' from the gathering of one thousand
horsemen by Romulus at the founding of Rome, and Gower
asserted that the knight's duty to guard the rights of the
people had been ordained by Romulus and Remus.[64]

Chivalry in something like its medieval form was
assumed to have always existed in all places. Claims for
the founding of knightly orders were made on behalf of such
varied figures as the Emperor Constantine, Prester John,
Clovis and Charlemagne, besides of course Arthur. The Nine
Worthies were all visualised as medieval knights, and were
even assigned appropriate heraldic devices.[65] Christine de
Pisan, in her works on chivalry and military strategy,
assumed a continuity between Hector and Alexander and the early
fifteenth-century French knights she was addressing.[66] Lull
turned to Judas Maccabeus for an example of knightly prudence,
and to Alexander for one of largesse.[67]

These historical assumptions of the writers of
treatises are not noticeably different from those of poets
and romancers. An account of the origins of knighthood
very similar to that of Lull is found in the Lady of the
Lake's discourse on chivalry in the Prose _Lancelot_.[68] At the
beginning of _Cligés_, Chrétien de Troyes claims that Greece,

Rome and now France have in turn held pre-eminence in chivalry.[69] The numerous romances based on classical stories usually regard their main characters as knights, and imply that knighthood involves special values of some kind. In Piers Plowman Holy church claims that

> Dauid by hus daies dobbede knyʒtes,
> And dude hem swerye on here swerde to serue truthe euere.
> Whanne god by-gan heuene in that grete blysse,
> He made knyʒtes in hus court creatures ten...[70]

Froissart in Méliador refers to "Acilles, qui de renom/ Passoit tous aultres chevaliers."[71] These are of course predictable findings to some extent since the typical medieval attitude towards consistency of geographical and historical setting is an oblivious disregard of the anachronistic or incongruous, although it has been claimed that traces of a new antiquarian concern are discernible in the visual art of the fourteenth century.[72]

This perspective on the history of chivalry was reflected in the normal terminology. The Latin word usually translated as 'knight' or 'chevalier' was miles, and whereas the words for 'knight' acquired a fairly precise meaning in medieval social and military affairs, they continued to be used to refer to any kind of soldiers of Biblical and ancient times. The explanation sometimes offered is that all pre-medieval uses of the word miles were mistakenly assumed to refer to knights in the medieval sense.[73] But such a mistake, continuing for centuries, hardly seems likely in view of the absence from Roman and Biblical writings of the

special military and social characteristics of medieval knighthood. It is surely unlikely that the translators of the Wyclif Bible believed that the "knyʒtis" who obeyed the centurion or who scourged Jesus were anything but common soldiers.[74]

A more plausible explanation is that since the knight was conceptually the archetype of the warrior, writers, when not referring to contemporary and therefore familiar affairs, did not bother to make distinctions between different kinds of soldiers. In addition, any historical sense was blurred by the belief that knighthood, like the other orders of society, had been permanently instituted by God.[75] The assumption that knighthood as an order had always existed, and the tendency to regard the knight as the embodiment of the military function in society, together explain why Roman writings on warfare and military law, for example, were acceptable as contributions towards the definition of knighthood. Jurists appeared to believe that in a legal sense chivalry originated with Roman military law, and courts of chivalry therefore saw themselves as the successors of the Roman _magistri militum_.[76]

The same preconceptions which led to the projection of knighthood into the distant past resulted in the survival of the ideology of chivalry well into the sixteenth century. The estates of society were permanently ordained and therefore basically unchangeable. As A. B. Ferguson notes, medieval commentators "considered the conduct of man to be the only

source of social change that lies within the scope of man's
understanding."[77] Social changes which revealed a discrepancy
between the conduct of men and the duties of their estate
were assumed to be the result of moral decay. Chivalric
ideas therefore retained their dominance long past the
time of Chaucer. This survival has, however, usually been
seen as a false and hollow continuation of mere outward
trappings. The excesses of Burgundian chivalry especially,
and the growth of elaborate pageantry around the tournament
and joust, have been widely commented on in this way.[78]
But it is not always recognised that the _ideas_ of chivalry were
still taken very seriously. From a study of "anti-chivalric
satire" in English literature of the late Middle Ages, Robert
Kindrick has concluded that even in the fifteenth century
the ideals of chivalry (as opposed to its professed exponents)
were not attacked.[79] The appeal of Malory's romances, in
Ferguson's words, reflected a concern for "the rehabilitation
of chivalry as a moral and intellectual system for the
regeneration of the ruling class and through them of their
sadly disturbed country."[80] Caxton's translation of Ramon
Lull's popular book on chivalry was a serious attempt at
the social and moral education of the gentry rather than
an appeal to antiquarianism.

This is not to suggest that in the late Middle Ages
the moral basis of chivalry was distilled from the discarded
debris of chivalric practice. Since knighthood was essentially
symbolic no such process was required. The pacific landowner
and county magistrate, who was himself perhaps knighted,

still regarded a knight basically as a warrior with horse and
armour. Caxton, in an afterword to his translation of Lull,
urged Richard III to hold periodic jousts "to thende that
euery knyght shold haue hors and harneys/ and also the vse and
craft of a knyght",[81] even though by this time the joust had
lost all contact with the realities of warfare. The fifteenth
century was the time of the greatest popularity of the
chivalric manuals, and few concessions were made to changing
social or military conditions in the many translations and
adaptations.[82] Caxton's translation of Lull urges knights to
challenge traitors to combat since the true knight cannot lose
in such a contest.[83] His translation of Jacobus de Cessolis
declares that "A knyghts vertue and myght is not knowen but
by his fightynge...And thus is hit of euery man the more
vailliant/ the more honoured...And what is a knyght worth
wyth oute hors and armes/ certaynly nothynge more than on of
the peple or lasse pauenture."[84] Such sentiments, if taken
literally, were quite out of place in late fifteenth-century
England; yet Caxton, though he had no scruples about slight
modification of his source at times, did not feel obliged to
adapt his original. The continuing dependence of the idea of
knighthood on its association with practical knightly exercises
is shown to some extent by the difficulties that were caused by
Richard II's lack of interest in such things. Henry of Lancaster
was an obvious foil to him in this respect, and, according to
Froissart, fostered popular rumours of Richard's illegitimacy on the
grounds of his failure to inherit the martial prowess of his father,

the Black Prince.[85]

The primacy of the _idea_ of knighthood and its
relative independence of empirical facts are shown not
only by its theoretical changelessness but also by its
relation to estates literature. The simplest and most
common division of society was that of the three estates:
those who fight, those who pray (or teach), and those who
labour.[86] In the first of these classes must necessarily
be included all forms of secular authority, from the king down
to the humblest magistrate, as well as all forms of nobility
and all professional soldiers. There were of course a large
number of works of estates literature in which the diversity
of social activity was more accurately represented, but
they did not supersede the idea of the three estates.[87] As
we have seen, actual knights could not claim a monopoly of
any of the various branches of temporal power, and yet
knighthood itself could stand as the representative of
all such power. The explanation of the institution of
knighthood as a necessary response to the entry of corruption
and sin into the world is identical with one of the standard
explanations of the origin of all forms of secular authority.[88]
Wyclif divided the membership of the Church into three
groups--preachers, defenders and labourers--describing the
defenders as "lordes and knyghtis, and oþer men of armes";
but later in the same treatise he referred to the same groups
as "prestis, and gentil men, and laboreres of þe worlde."
The implication is that secular authority is to be conceived

primarily in military terms: the chief duty of "gentil men"
is to defend God's law by power of the world.[89]

The simple threefold division underlies the most
basic medieval model of political economy. The common people
work the land and support the knights, who in turn defend
them against attack and make sure that they fulfil their
tasks. "Out of regard for the public safety", declared John
of Salisbury, knights "are not permitted to be in want."[90]
The knight maintains his military efficiency by pastimes
such as hunts and jousts or tournaments.[91] The knight in
this social model, as in the basic idea of the three estates,
is in effect more than a military figure. This is evident
in Piers Plowman, where the knight's power is as much civil
as military in threatening Waster with the stocks (C,IX,163).
It is clear from Piers's address to him that in this context he
represents all worldly authority; the qualities that are
desirable in him (justice, impartiality, mercy and humility,
for example) are the same as those which medieval kings
were constantly advised to cultivate (C,IX,36-44). The
knight is given the traditional advice that "Thauh he be
here thyn vnderling in heuene, paraunter,/He worth rather
receyued and reuerentloker sette". By contrast, Bonet offers
the king advice traditionally given to knights about keeping
his body fit.[92] The knight's failure in Piers to force
Waster to work represents a general breakdown of authority.
(In a similar fashion here the ploughman is emblematic of all
those who work, but though the symbolism is common enough it

does not match in scope or elaboration the medieval concern
with the symbolism of the knight.) The knight as symbol of
secular authority appears also in Trevisa's _Dialogus inter
militem et clericum_, where the question of the temporal
power of the church is discussed as a dispute between a knight
and a priest.[93]

The ability of the knight to stand for the whole of
a third part of society is reflected in the theoretical
equality of members of the order of knighthood. As Gustave
Cohen has remarked, there was a surprising absence in a
densely hierarchical society of grades and hierarchies of
knighthood (apart from the loose distinction of military
rank between knights banneret and the rest, who were sometimes
called knights bachelor): "l'écuyer devient d'un coup chevalier
total et complet, ne devant aux aînés que le respect qu'on
a pour l'âge et, en tant que chevalier, ne sentant l'égal du
Roi."[94] This equality had no real basis in an actual power
structure but resulted from the ability of every person
involved in governing to see himself as performing the
duties of a knight.

This ability reflected basic medieval ideas about the
purpose of government and secular authority, as Ferguson has
explained. The business of government was conceived to be
primarily protective: to keep the peace by defending the weak
against oppression and to see that justice was done—in
fact by protecting legal rights to keep men free from physical
restraints on their ability to achieve their main purpose,

a virtuous and righteous life. Government was not thought
of as a creative force, co-ordinating or shaping social
change. It had a duty to maintain the status quo. To
set right an injustice was to restore the divinely-ordained
equilibrium of society. The smooth functioning of society's
groups and hierarchies was dependent on individual men acting
as they should, not on adjustments to the essential nature of
those groups.[95]

Moreover government was not seen as a collective
institution but as a group of people acting individually.
The medieval mind habitually regarded social organisation in
terms of personal relationships, and no clear distinction
was made between a man's public and private capacities.[96]
As a result anyone involved in government, at however prosaic
a level, was able to consider himself as performing the task
of defending those who could not defend themselves--the Church,
widows, orphans--as surely as if he had set out fully armed
on horseback to do so.[97] In this way, as Ferguson argues,
chivalric idealism was maintained as a political ideal for
a governing class no longer exclusively knights, and when
knights had lost most of their original military function.[98]
It is in this symbolic sense that we must interpret the
insistence of medieval writers on the idea that knighthood
as an order is ultimately responsible for the whole security
of the social organism.[99]

Just as knighthood frequently symbolised secular power
generally (while maintaining theoretically its specifically

military attributes), it was also associated by writers
on chivalry with nobility and a rigid social class much more
closely than the facts of the matter warranted. Naturally,
the closer connection between nobility and knighthood in
France and Germany influenced ideas in England, where it
had much less basis in social reality. The heroes of the
English romances predictably followed their French originals
in being almost invariably of noble birth, although this
was not always heavily insisted upon.[100] Nevertheless, other
phenomena cannot be explained simply in terms of continental
influence. Caxton considerably heightened Lull's original
statement that a knight should be nobly born, and the granting
of knighthood to people not of gentle birth was a subject
which frequently incurred the disapproval generally levelled
at attempts by people to change their estate.[101] The author
of a poem denouncing the times of Edward II complains that the
degeneracy of knighthood is partly accountable to the fact
that knights are now "i-gadered/Of unkynde blod,/And thei
shendeth the order/That schuld be hende and god."[102] Langland
attacked the fact that "sopers and here sones for seluer han
be knyghtes" and that monks and nuns "Han mad here kyn
knyghtes and knyghtfees purchased" as part of a general on-
slaught on people who move out of their ordained place in
society (PP,C,VI,63-79). As we have seen, however, the
flexibility of the social scale was well established by the
fourteenth century, and knighthood was usually a retro-
spective acknowledgement (often resisted) of social status

rather than a determinant of that status. The necessary
connection between noble birth and knighthood was an aspect
of chivalric mythology not born out by the social realities.

The disregard of these social realities by writers
on chivalry may be further demonstrated by the existence of
two contrasting emphases in discussions of the knightly
virtues. On the one hand we see the influence of the
assumption that knights belonged to a noble class accustomed
to a life of formalised luxury. On the other we find
prescriptions for knightly life which are utterly opposed
to habits of luxury or the customs of an exclusive noble
caste.

Among examples of the first kind we may note that
the Chandos Herald described the knightly virtues of the
Black Prince not only in terms of courage, prowess, and so
on, but also in terms of "franchise", "bounté", "largesce"
and "curtoisie".[103] Froissart was equally fond of recording
instances of such virtues in knightly conduct.[104] Geoffroi
de Charny, a French knight who died carrying the oriflamme
at Poitiers, recommended that knights should not neglect
"de jouer de jouster, de parler, de dancer et de chanter en
compaignie de dames et de damoiseles".[105] Geoffroi approved
also of a moderate concern with dressing well, and Lull
declared that a knight is "oblyged and bounden...to honoure
his body in beyng well cladde and nobly".[106] Holychurch
asserts that knights "shoulde nat faste ne for-bere sherte;/

Bote feithfullich defende and fyȝte for truthe" (PP,C,II,
99-100), and elsewhere we are told that "made neuere kyng
knyght bote he hadde catel to spene,/As by-fel for a knyght
other fond hym for hus strengthe" (C,XIV,108-11). Conscience,
in the morality play Mundus et Infans, tells the knight
Manhode that, though he may not serve the seven deadly sins,
he may go "arayde honestly...In all maner of degre", and may
have "sportynge of playe".[107]

For the opposite viewpoint we do not need for the
moment to turn to any specifically clerical expressions of
asceticism, but we may simply point to the way in which the
recommendations of Vegetius on the recruitment and training
of Roman soldiers were incorporated into many of the chivalric
writings.[108] Vegetius stressed the need for discipline,
thorough training, and the proper selection of recruits. He
was concerned with the degenerating effects on Roman military
discipline of idleness and easy living, and advised that
recruits, while being if possible "of reputable families and
unexceptionable manners", should be taken not from the
"effeminate professions" but from the peasantry and from such
occupations as smiths, carpenters, butchers and huntsmen.[109]

John of Salisbury used Vegetius extensively in the
sixth book of the Policraticus. The military profession, he
insisted, should be drawn primarily from the agricultural
workers, from men who were used to hardship rather than to
good living and luxury.[110] By the twelfth century the social

significance of knighthood had become somewhat incompatible
with the idea that knights should be drawn from this sector
of the population, yet it is quite clear that John was
thinking of knighthood in its medieval form in suggesting
this procedure. He stresses the parallel between priest
and knight, the importance of the oath to defend the Church,
the symbolism of the belt and of the dedication of the sword
on the altar. Nor was he by any means an exception in this
respect: Christine de Pisan invoked Vegetius as an authority
on the training of knights, and Bonet declared that peasants
made better soldiers to fight the tough Saracens than the
soft-living and vain French knights.[111] In another work he
lamented that "the chivalry of today is by no means of the
valour of former times, for according to the old laws, knights
ate beans and bacon and coarse meats; they lay hard and wore
harness most of the time; they dwelt outside cities and liked
the air of the open country and willingly kept the field; and
they did not usually dispute as to which was the best wine
but drank clear water, because they could endure all hardship
and labour."[112] Writers continued to admonish the nobility
as if their primary task were to remain in a state of
constant physical readiness for an arduous campaign, and made
small allowance for the transformation of knights into a
hereditary noble class. William Worcester still stressed
spartan rather than 'courtly' values for knights in the
fifteenth-century Boke of Noblesse.[113]

The discrepancy here between the qualities appropriate to the knight as symbol of nobility and those appropriate to him when seen exclusively as a soldier exemplifies the conflicting demands placed upon the idea of chivalry. The reason why chivalry was subject to such competing demands is that as a central symbol of secular power and its proper use it attracted the attention of various hypotheses about the function and possibilities of secular power and temporal goods. This appears to me to be the key to an understanding of the growth and elaboration of chivalric ideas, and I want now to attempt some general conclusions about this process.

5. The Nature of Chivalric Ideas

We should, I believe, regard knighthood as the focus of sometimes conflicting imperatives, many of which were not innately concerned with military affairs but reflected wider concerns about worldly power. Chivalric idealism could be a means both for the encouragement of warlike capacity and enthusiasm and of attempts to control and moderate natural aggression; it could embody supra-national religious obligations as well as national and patriotic ones; it was the focus for the expression of both aesthetic and ascetic approaches to manners. Many of the documents of chivalry should therefore be seen not as contributions to a distinct professional code, or as patterns for the creation of the perfect knight, but as aspects of wider debates about such matters as war, power,

fame and love. The notion of chivalry represents an attempt
to hold these various ideas and impulses in equilibrium, and
to maintain a consensus view of them.

The elements of the rough synthesis upon which chivalry
thus conferred its emblem of the armed and mounted knight
were not, however, merely ideological. The concept was able
to accommodate matters practical, didactic and symbolic at
a variety of levels. At the practical end of the scale we
find the idea embodied in a professional military fraternity
requiring ceremonial admission, and in a number of laws or
professional regulations governing such matters as the
honouring of safe-conducts and the ransoming of prisoners
of knightly rank. At rather different levels chivalry
could stand for the idea of a hereditary noble class, the
entire military function of society, or the whole hierarchy
of secular authority. At a yet more rarified level we find
knighthood as a metaphor for the individual's struggle
against sin.

The accumulation in this form of these ideas would
appear to have been the result of the temporary and fortuitous
prominence into which the heavily armed cavalryman was thrust
by the political and military circumstances of the early
Middle Ages. The figure of the knight proved so resonant
an image for medieval culture that it came to stand as an
emblem of features of society which were connected to the
original warrior function in a variety of ways ranging from

the direct to the oblique. The actual knight of history was less important than the penumbra of associations which took him as their symbol, and which were conceived of figuratively in terms of the original fighter on horseback. These associations or 'myths' naturally achieved a considerable independence of the reality which had begotten them, but there continued to be numerous interpenetrations of the real and mythical aspects, and there is no possibility of drawing a rigid division between them. Where for instance, if such a division were to be made, would we place the idea of the 'order' of knighthood, or the practice of the joust? Nevertheless, we may at least claim that from the time of the growth of the knighting ceremony the symbolism of knighthood was largely autonomous of practical historical developments.

I am thus suggesting here a latitudinarian interpretation of the ideas associated with the concept of chivalry. We do not need to decide whether chivalry was in essence a moral code--a value system intended to modify behaviour-- or a rationalising of practical needs, for it was indeed both. It was a process by which Christian and moral values were applied to an existing practical situation in order to control the behaviour of soldiers and rulers, and it was also-- among other things--the expression of the need of a social élite for a code which would identify their shared values and dignify their common aspirations.

Let us consider some examples of the phenomena which I have been referring to. In the first place, the dignity accorded to chivalry represented a social recognition of the need for secular authority to be supported by the capacity for physical force. Thus the chief knightly virtue must always be prowess, for unless the knight is first a successful warrior he is nothing. "To rule well", wrote the thirteenth-century jurist, Henry de Bracton, at the very beginning of his famous treatise on English law, "a king requires two things, arms and laws, that by them both times of war and of peace may rightly be ordered. For each stands in need of the other, that the achievement of arms be conserved by the laws , the laws themselves preserved by the support of arms."[114] Such recognition, however, placed the knight in a very exposed position, and attracted towards him all the qualifications which medieval writers expressed about the use of force. As John Barnie notes, "one of the ironies of the chivalric ideal is that its noblest virtues contain in potentia the very vices it strove to overcome."[115] In his less acceptable manifestations the knight represented a total worldliness, fighting and seeking fame and riches entirely for their own sake. Both Church and society had therefore to establish a compromise between encouragement and control in their attitudes towards professional soldiers. They needed to glorify the capacity for efficient homicide while deploring the act itself or the necessity for it. The knight was urged

to develop his prowess as a warrior but warned that the
demonstration of that prowess might involve him in mortal
sin. Chivalry conferred great dignity and prestige on the
profession of arms, and through it on secular authority
generally, but at the same time tried to make it subservient
to social and religious needs and modify its practical
proceedings.

Thus we find continual equivocation on the subject
of the dignity and sanctity of the knight's occupation.
According to Piers Plowman's 'pardon', for instance,

> Kynges and knyghtes that holy kirke defenden,
> And ryghtfulliche in reames ruelen the comune,
> Han pardon thorw purgatorie to passy ful lyghtliche,
> With patriarkes and prophetes in paradyse to sitte. (C,X,9-12)

But Scripture is not so sure about this:

> 'I nel nouȝt scorne', quod Scripture 'but-if
>   scryueynes lye;
> Kynghod ne knyȝthod by nauȝt I can awayte,
> Helpeth nouȝt to heuenward one heres ende...' (B,X,332-4)[116]

Christine de Pisan, in a book on knighthood, glossed the sixth
commandment in a way that appears to sanction only judicial
execution or killing in self-defence--a very limiting code
for an actual knight.[117] Knights were encouraged to seek
renown, and were traditionally accorded the right to a modicum
of worldly wealth as a precaution against their resorting to
brigandage; but with privilege, as Gower pointed out, came
responsibility:

> Les chivalers et l'escuiers,
> Qui sont as armes costummers,
> S'ils bien facent leur dueté,
> Sur tous les autres seculers

> Sont a louer, car leur mestiers
> Du siecle est le plus honouré
> De prouesce et de renomée:
> Mais autrement en leur degré,
> En cas q'ils soiont baratiers,
> Lors serront ils ly plus blamé
> Par tout le siecle et diffamé
> Et des privés et d'estrangiers.   (MO, 23989-24000)

The reservations that piety placed on the active knightly life are clear from the <u>Livre de seyntz medicines</u> of the first duke of Lancaster, a celebrated participant in tournaments.[118]   Another distinguished soldier, Sir John Clanvowe, wrote that

> The world holds them worshipful that are great
> warriors and fighters, and destroy and win and waste
> many lands; and gives much good to them that have
> enough and spend outrageously in mete and drink...
> living in easy sloth &c. And also the world worships
> them much that will be venged proudly and dispitously
> of every wrong that is said or done to them. And of
> such folks men make books and songs and read and sing
> of them for to hold the memory of their deeds the
> longer here upon earth... But...God...deems them
> right shameful.[119]

Wyclif asked why a butcher should not be praised more than a knight who kills many men.[120] The reductive view of military prowess was often presented through the story of Alexander's capture and condemnation of a pirate. The pirate informs him that the only difference between his own activities and those of Alexander himself lies in the scale of the operations.[121]

It is in this perspective that we should understand the continual denunciations throughout the Middle Ages of the faults of the knights. Some of these denunciations are also expressions of a general asceticism, and many show the influence of homiletic tradition. Classic statements such as

that of Peter of Blois in the twelfth century were still
the staple material of homilists in the fourteenth.[122]
Ruth Mohl claims that typical accounts of the faults of
knights changed significantly from the twelfth to the
fourteenth centuries, with an increased stress in the later
period on their pride and covetousness.[123] However, the
consistency with which knights were charged with essentially
the same faults during this period seems to me a more prominent
feature of the accounts.

Little in these attacks appears to have been owed
to empirical observation. Sometimes the denunciations
seem to have been direct responses to contemporary events,
but the reasons given for, say, a recent military defeat
were traditional and not usually based on any attempt to
deal with the practical and unique causes of events. Owst
cites an early fourteenth-century preacher who saw in the
victories of the Scots over the English "the fulfilment of a
certain prophecy concerning the sin of 'varietas vestium'
which would inevitably bring national disaster in its train."[124]
Complaints against knights composed only one element in the
conventional attacks on venality and wickedness in all parts
of society, but the knight's position as obvious symbol of
worldliness was especially prominent.

All the vices involving misuse of physical power and
of the goods of the world were regularly ascribed to the knights.
Occasional concessions were made to the need for knights to
maintain their worldly estate with suitable clothing and

possessions, but they were routinely condemned for sins of luxury in food and apparel. France, personified as a speaker in a fifteenth-century English translation of Chartier's _Quadrilogue Invectif_, laments that "agid pompis rootid and noryshed in delices" have "made softe the courages" of French knights.[125] The author of _A Poem on the Times of Edward II_ complains that knights no longer wear "clothes/ I-schape in dewe manere", but are "disgysed/ So diverselych i-dy3t,/That no man may know/A mynstrel from a kny3t...Thei beth desgysed as turmentours/I-come fro clerks pleye".[126]

Judgments on their performance as fighters were even less charitable. They oppressed the poor, were cruel and homicidal, rejected military discipline, attacked rather than defended the Church, and were slothful and cowardly. They refused to go on crusades or fight in defence of their people, sitting in their castles while the peasants' lands were wasted, yet were braggarts: "lions in the halls and hares in the field"--a phrase which became proverbial.[127] Their vices were declared to be as harmful as the external attacks of enemies. They urged war, but only out of covetousness. Their pride and concern with vain-glory knew no bounds in the view of the moralists. The formula of denunciation varied little, and in one respect there was virtually no variety of opinion at all: contemporary knights--whether contemporaries of Jacques de Vitry in the twelfth century or of Alain Chartier in the

early fifteenth---were degenerate compared to the knights
of previous times.[128]

These contributions to chivalric literature are
aspects of more general attacks on worldliness. Some other
contributions should be seen in the context of medieval
attempts to identify the proper use of physical force. The
Augustinian formula with which the Church had relinquished
its originally pacifist stance was that war is necessary
and just when it is fought to establish peace.[129] The
Middle Ages inherited this premise, and medieval inquiries
into the subject took the form primarily of attempts to
refine this position and to lay down conditions for recog-
nising a war as legal. Aquinas, for example, declared that
war is just if it is declared by the public authority
of the state, if it has a just cause, and if the intention
of those who go to fight is right.[130] Significantly such
attempts were very often included in the so-called chivalric
handbooks such as those of Bonet and Christine de Pisan.
Bonet's Tree of Battles, for instance, is essentially a
book on the laws of war; although the question of the
just war is only approached directly at the beginning of
Part IV, it is of thematic concern throughout the treatment of
more specific issues.[131]

The attempt to work out a practical legal theory of
the just war was in fact the most crucial aspect of what
came to be recognised as an international law of arms based
originally on Roman law. The law of arms was visualised as

a code of chivalry---it was in fact the nearest that chivalric
ideas came to being codified--and its enforcement was depend-
ent on the concept of chivalric honour. The law was seen as
a series of contractual obligations incurred by the oath
sworn by the knight on being knighted. The deprivation of
honour remained its main legal sanction, and the laws theoretic-
ally applied only to those who had been knighted. Cases
were heard before kings and commanders and in specially
constituted courts such as the English High Court of Chivalry.
The _ius_ _armorum_ concerned itself with such matters as the
conduct of sieges, the distribution of the spoils of war,
the treatment of prisoners, ransom payments, the status of
non-combatants, and the negotiation and observance of truces.[132]
The laws and their interpretation in many cases frankly
recognised the mercenary and expediential motivation of
knights, but there is no evidence that this made them any
less recognisably an integral part of chivalric ideology. As
Keen points out:

> Just because ransoms were often excessive, we
> need not suppose that the rules of honour which
> controlled the relation of prisoner and master
> were hypocritical and a mere cloak for profiteer-
> ing. The man of honour did not mean for a
> medieval soldier an ideal human being, but a
> person of a particular social status and calling
> who kept on the right side of certain technical
> rules. These rules were general; idealism lay
> beyond them in the realm of personal choice.
> They merely set the limits within which the
> individual decided how far he would sacrifice
> ideals to a profit in cash.[133]

The laws of war show the capacity of chivalry to absorb
what were ultimately a series of trade regulations for

professional warriors into the general context of its
idealism. But they also show how specifically chivalric
duties grew out of a wider concern to set warfare on a
regular moral and legal basis. None of the laws about
individual aspects of warfare could exist independently
of the question of the just war. Wars declared unjust
had no legal status, and fighting that took place in them
could claim no moral or legal sanction.[134]

Chivalry's function as a convenient focus for con-
flicting attitudes to warfare emerges also from the history
of writings about the tournament, the most essentially
knightly activity of all. The tournament acquired its own
impetus as an independent activity, serving a variety of
functions besides its original one of practice for warfare--
as sport and recreation, source of revenue and renown for
successful participants, and as a meeting place for members
of a particular social stratum.[135] But for both secular and
ecclesiastical authorities, and for writers on chivalry, the
tournament had to be set in a social and moral context.

The history of attempts to regulate or prohibit
tournaments reflects the fact that knights had to be encouraged
to develop prowess and the willingness to fight, and to
be reproved for not doing so, and yet had also to be
constantly restrained from fighting and made to recognise
only certain motives for doing so as valid. The tournament
served as a kind of epitome for knighthood in a state of
partial disengagement from social utility; attempts to prevent

it from becoming an autonomous activity, and to insist on
its subservience to other considerations, were representative
of similar pressures on the whole concept of knighthood.
Since the tournaments frequently involved severe injury and
death they could be justified only if they were considered
necessary to the maintenance of a knight's essential skills;
otherwise, as examples of aggression and warfare divorced
from religious or social considerations, they were anathema
to the Church and often to kings as well.

The Church soon decided that the evils of tournaments
outweighed their usefulness, and the first of a succession
of prohibitions was announced at the Council of Clermont
in 1130. From then on the tournament became the object of
vitriolic clerical attacks. It became commonplace to assert
that participation in tournaments involved committing all of
the seven deadly sins.[136]Knights who died in them were theoretic-
ally denied Church burial. In the early fourteenth century,
however, compromises were made by the Church; John XXII,
for example, lifted the ban in 1316 in an attempt to procure
experienced knights for a crusade.[137]

A late thirteenth-century sermon by Humbert of Romans
affords insight into the Church's dilemma. Humbert conceded that
although tournaments were forbidden by law "there are some
things there to be wholly reprobated, some to be tolerated,
and some to be approved." Those who ruin themselves through
the extravagance of tournaments are of course condemned, as
are those who seek revenge or gain or "the vain renown of

valour", or who go to frequent brothels. But Humbert is
prepared to tolerate those who attend tournaments in order
to acquire skill in arms and thus be the better fitted
for the defence of justice; and he distinctly approves of
the fact that "sometimes at tournaments knights urge one
another to use in the service of the Cross and of God the
powers hitherto put to the service of vanity. This certainly
makes tournaments commendable. Some too take care to avoid
folk of evil fame and jesters, and to keep away from evil
actions and the occasions of unchastity."[138]

A story told by the Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach
also reveals the Church's ambivalent attitude. Caesarius
declares that engaging in tournaments involves two mortal
sins, pride (in that it is done for worldly glory) and
disobedience (to the Church). Yet he also recounts an
incident in the life of Walter de Birbeck, a distinguished
jouster and a devotee of the Virgin. On his way to a tourna-
ment Walter turns aside to hear the Mass of the Virgin, thus
missing the tournament. On approaching the field, however,
he finds himself acclaimed as the victor and awarded the
prize. The Virgin has sent a shape like his into the
tournament to display marvellous skills.[139]

Secular authorities also had problems with tournaments.
They were often wasteful of manpower, and Edward I strictly
outlawed them in 1299 as part of his preparation for the
invasion of Scotland. For long periods in thirteenth-century
England there were attempts to prohibit them because they

provided a meeting place for discontented barons and thus
fostered opposition to the king. Richard I, however, introduced
a licensing system and appears to have used them to develop an
efficient force of knights. Those people who called for the
re-institution of tournaments which approximated more closely
to actual considerations of warfare, and in which real
military skills could be acquired, believed that tournaments
could serve a useful function. Geoffroi de Charny evidently
considered both joust and tournament an important part of
the knight's military preparations.[140]

The centrality of the tournament is significant in
another way for my hypothesis about the nature of chivalric
ideas, for it directs our attention back to my statement
that some of those ideas can be seen as the accumulation
of myths around the figure of the historical knight. The
development of the tournament provides an indication of
the fundamental role of the imagination in chivalry, for
it was always an imitation of something, even when it had
a function as a preparation for war. It was initially an
imitation of battle, and from its obscure origins to the rapid
growth of its popularity in the twelfth century and beyond,
it had always a basic sense of unreality--even in its most
uncontrolled form before the use of blunted weapons became
normal. The early tournaments were of course very like battles,
but they were battles arranged in such a way that knights
were virtually the only combatants, and in circumstances
ideally suited to their manner of fighting. Even at this

stage the tournament was an artificial attempt to create
a situation where the knight was indeed the supreme and
exclusive form of soldier—in fact to create a practical
situation to match the myth. D. S. Brewer remarks of the
tournament that it was "in very conception a work of art".[141]

The element of artifice was made fully explicit
in England as early as 1232, when the first 'Round Table'
was arranged—a social festivity which included tourneys
and jousts in imitation of Arthurian romance.[142] Motifs
from Arthurian and other romances continued to be used
in tournaments for the next three centuries, adding another
dimension to the basic principle of imitation underlying
tournaments generally.[143] This development, along with
the tendency for tournaments to become social occasions,
and the increasing concentration on the individualistic
game-like joust, was an exploitation of the innate qualities
of the tournament rather than a perversion of them.

The mimetic function of the tournament is only
one example of the way in which the figure of the knight
attracted what I have, for want of a better word, called
'myths'. Warfare itself was carried on and reported with a
profusion of seemingly artificial and stylised elements.
The tendency of Froissart and other chroniclers to describe
medieval battles as a series of joust-like encounters
between the foremost knights on each side has been often
commented on, though in the case of Froissart the tendency
has been exaggerated, as may be seen by comparing his account

of the battle of Crécy with that of the Chandos Herald.[144]
The imaginative projection involved was made possible
partly by the personal sense in which all warfare was
regarded. Public and national causes were essentially
personal ones, and the refusal of a claimed fortress to
surrender was seen as an affront to the personal dignity
of the prince who claimed it.[145] It was not only chroniclers
who envisaged war physically and theoretically in personal
terms. Kings often proposed that the issues of battle be
decided by a single combat between the two leaders. Such
offers were naturally normally refused, but the important
point is that they were considered entirely appropriate.[146]

The chroniclers have been much abused for naïvety
or venality in reporting that chivalric heroes waged war
with extraordinary ethical scrupulousness--an idea which
also appears to have been part of the self-image of the
participants. Indeed the contradictions between the laudatory
descriptions of individual knights and the cruelty of many of
their recorded deeds are numerous. Huizinga commented:

> This illusion of society based on chivalry
> curiously clashed with the reality of things.
> The chroniclers themselves, in describing the
> history of their time, tell us far more of
> covetousness, of cruelty, of cool calculation,
> of well-understood self-interest, and of diplomatic
> subtlety, than of chivalry. None the less, all,
> as a rule, profess to write in honour of chivalry,
> which is the stay of the world.[147]

The best known example of such clashes in the chronicle histories
appears to be the discrepancy between Froissart's usual
adulatory attitude towards the Black Prince and his account

of the Prince's savage slaughter of the people of Limoges
after its capture.[148] There is a similar contrast in the
Chandos Herald's life of the Prince between his eulogy of
the Prince (and his insistence on pity as a chivalric virtue)
and his comment that on the Crécy campaign the English, to
amuse themselves, "Mistrent tout en feu et à flame./Là firent
mainte veuf dame/Et maint povre enfant orphanyn."[149]

But the chroniclers' lack of concern with these
contradictions is understandable if we acknowledge that their
primary focus was on the myth rather than the reality. Froissart
did not see himself primarily as a war historian but as a
herald whose duty was to set down for posterity an account
of great feats of arms:

> Affin que li grant fait d'armes qui par les guerres
> de Franche et d'Engleterre sont avenu, soient
> notablement registré et mis en mémore perpétuel,
> par quoy li bon y puissent prendre exemple, je me
> voeil ensonnier de les mettre en prose.[150]

Like many other chroniclers, including the anonymous biographer
of Marshal Boucicaut, Froissart considered his task to be
that of providing exemplary patterns of behaviour for other
people. He was more interested at times in showing how
people should behave than how they actually did. It is in
this light that we should view the historical distortions
of the chronicles. The Chandos Herald, for example, does not
mention archers at all in his account of the battle of Crécy, since
he was more interested in implying that the English victory
was the result of the Black Prince's feats of arms.[151]

Despite the view of H. O. Taylor (and others) that

these characteristics in the writings of Froissart and
his contemporaries exemplify "a certain emptying of the
spirit of chivalry...an expansion of form and ceremony,
while life was departing",[152] it is clear that the ability
of the chivalric myth to prevail over historical actualities
was not merely a late medieval development. William Marshal,
the famous twelfth-century English knight, amassed a fortune
through the frankly commercial exploitation of his phenomenal
success in tournaments, and yet insisted that his only aim
was to become a perfect knight. In his funeral sermon, according
to his medieval biographer, he was referred to by Stephen
Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the best knight who
ever lived, even though at the time he lay under excommunication
for plundering the Church.[153]

The concept of the chivalric hero was a stereotype
which covered a multitude of sins, to judge from the success of
Cuvelier's laudatory chronicle-biography of the fourteenth-
century French commander, Bertrand du Guesclin. A critic as
abrasive as Deschamps could add Du Guesclin's name to those
of the Nine Worthies, claiming that he surpassed even the
ancient models of knighthood. Yet Froissart, of whom one
might have expected a certain professional cynicism, was
surprised by this praise, and according to the more recent
opinion of Edouard Perroy Du Guesclin was "a mediocre captain,
incapable of winning a battle or being successful in a siege
of any scope, just good enough to put new life into the bands
of pillaging routiers who recognised their master in him,
swollen with self-importance and at the same time punctilious

about chivalric honour...".[154]

The purpose of this discussion of chivalric 'myths'--
such as that by which successful opportunists might be
metamorphosed into examples of knightly perfection--is to
put forward a hypothesis about the nature of chivalric ideas
rather than to give a complete account of them. Little so far
has been said about chivalry as an aspect of ideas about love
or about the definition of the knight's task in specifically
religious terms. The former subject is not of great importance
in specifically historical (as opposed to literary) terms,
but will be discussed at length later (see below, Chapter IV).
The latter however comprises perhaps the most important
element in the whole ideology of chivalry and will be considered
briefly here. As with other aspects of the subject mentioned
so far, we shall find that the symbolic importance of the
knight's religious duties was considerably greater than their
practical scope.

6. Knighthood and the Church

Although I have argued that chivalry was a focus for
the statement of broad concerns about worldly and military
power, I am not claiming that chivalric ideas developed through
the imposition of external demands on a purely professional
code. Chivalry in any recognisable sense did not exist
independently of the ideas generated around the figure of the
knight. In stressing the importance of religious ideas about
chivalry, I am not therefore suggesting that the Church, as

is sometimes claimed, made a deliberate attempt, as a concerted policy, to exert control over an already fully-fledged secular and feudal institution in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. "The Church", writes one commentator, "with its usual perspicacity and subtlety, managed to infiltrate the institutions of secular chivalry, and since religious ideals were able to modify certain chivalric ideals, in theory if not always in practice, a type of religious commitment must be considered one aspect of the code of chivalry."[155] Such an interpretation of events probably underestimates the organic nature of medieval culture. The Church's attitude towards the knight was only one facet of its ancient and continuing concern about the relationship of worldly and spiritual power and of its ongoing attempts to suppress warfare.[156] The Church's desire to define the duties of the soldier was as inevitable as the soldier's wish to regard his function as divinely sanctioned. The religious view of secular authority and military power was restated in terms of the special vocation of the knight—both by attacking the faults of knights (as we have seen) and by setting out positive alternatives.

That defence of the Church was a central duty of knighthood was agreed by all medieval writers. Lull, for instance, declared that the first duty of a knight was "to mayntane and deffende the holy feyth catholyque".[157] John of Salisbury saw this as the time-honoured duty of soldiers, the oath of knighthood being only a continuation of the Roman practice of taking a military oath. Whether a soldier

had taken an oath only to a prince or had taken no oath
at all, he was bound by a tacit oath to God in the first
instance. Thus the office of the knights is "to defend the
Church, to assail infidelity, to venerate the priesthood,
to protect the poor from injuries, to pacify the province,
to pour out their blood for their brothers...".

The main medieval elaboration of this idea is present
already in rudimentary form in John's discussion. Comparing
the priest and the knight, he declared that "the former are
called by the tongue of the pontiff to the service of the
altar and the care of the Church. The latter are chosen
for the defence of the commonwealth by the tongue of the leader."
The unsworn soldier is like an unordained priest: "the soldier
of arms not less than the spiritual soldiery is bound by
the requirements of its official duties to the sacred service
and worship of God."[158] The parallel between priest and
knight, the order of priesthood and that of knighthood, and
between the sacrament of ordination and the knighting ceremony,
.became quickly one of the commonplaces of chivalric writing.
Clerks and knights, Lull declared, were the two most honourable
offices God has ordained.[159]

This parallel is reflected most obviously in the way
in which the knighting ceremony frequently became a liturgical
ritual in church.[160] The central significance of this is
indicated in Froissart's account of how an English squire,
Henry Crystede, was sent to prepare for knighthood four Irish
kings who had paid homage to Richard II. When the kings asked

Crystede what was wrong with the knighthood they already had,
he characterised the new form they were to receive by saying
that it would be conferred in church.[161] A further parallel
between priest and knight was established by the common practice
of comparing the knight's arms to the vestments of a priest.
Just as these vestments were traditionally given an allegorical
significance, each item of the knight's arms and equipment
was ascribed a specific spiritual meaning.

The arms were interpreted in a large number of different
ways, varying mainly with the ingeniousness of the writer,
but Lull's account may be taken as typical. The sword represents
the cross, its two edges indicating prowess and justice. The
spear signifies truth, and its point, strength. The pennant
stands for fearlessness and the helmet for dread of shame.
The hauberk is a defence against vice, while the leg harness
represents the knight's duty to punish malefactors "upon
the wayes". His spurs urge him to swiftness and diligence,
his gorget, or neck-armour, to obedience to his lord and his
order. His mace is for courage, his misericorde (or dagger)
for his trust in God rather than just in arms. The shield
signifies his office in relation to prince and people; the
gauntlets represent his duty to lift up his hands to God in
thankfulness for victory, rather than in false oaths or
evil actions.

Lull then turns to the horse. The saddle is the
"surete" of the knight's courage, and the horse itself its
"noblesse", being seen on high from a distance. The bridle

indicates the restraint and temperance of his words and actions, and the reins signify that the knight is led where the order of chivalry leads him. The tester, or horse's head-armour, proclaims that "lyke as the hede of an hors goth to fore the knyght, Ryght soo ought Reason goo to fore all that a knyght doth." The horse's armour recalls the knight's temporal goods, which he should take care of since "pouerte causeth a man to thynke barates, falsetees and traysons". As the knight's coat takes the strokes aimed at him, so the knight stands before other men in the endurance of "travail". The coat of arms represents his reputation, and lastly his banner declares his duty to maintain the honour of his lord and land.[162] The close association between the knight's arms and the priest's vestments is confirmed by examples of analogues which work in the reverse direction. Honorius Augustodunensis, for instance, discusses priestly vestments and activities as if they were arms and armour: the sandals are like soldiers' leggings, the hood is a helmet, the word of God acts as a sword, and so on.[163]

The knight's duty to defend the Church was supported and elaborated at length through ideas of this kind. But although in general terms the duty was clear and undisputed, its practical implications were not so obvious. We have already noted that there was really no specific niche in the practical working of society that required a member of the order of knighthood to fill it, though a large number of people in medieval society could conceive of their roles

symbolically in terms of the duties of knighthood. There
was really no place outside the romances for the sort of
all-purpose policeman that the knight was theoretically
supposed to be. In a similar fashion there were no full-
time positions within society for professional defenders of
the Church.

The obligation was nonetheless invoked to cover
financial support of the Church by the nobility and the gentry.
John of Gaunt, for example, saw his generous patronage of monks
and friars in terms of defence of the Church.[164] A fifteenth-
century letter by Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, to the
Prior of Durham describes an attempt to persuade Sir William
Bowes to play a part in the "gode supportacion of ye conuent
of Seynt Cuthbert...we saying unto him yat sethen he hadde
taken vpon heym yordre of knighthode he was ye more bounden
be ye right of ye said ordre to mainteine and sustene ye right
of holy kirke...".[165] But financial support was the duty of
all people towards the Church, according to their means, and
not a specifically knightly duty or activity. Translated
into practical terms the main religious obligation of the
knight became that of going on crusade.

The Church's constant reminders of this obligation
were motivated by real and practical concerns. The need to
protect Christendom from pagans (and heretics) was at times
urgent, and the desire to recover and defend the Holy Land
always intense. Crusades also were thought to divert soldiers
from exercising their disruptive influence in European society.

Many churchmen at the time of the First Crusade believed
that energies directed toward a holy war would no longer be
expended evilly in civil conflict. Gower's suggestion that
if men want to fight they should go and fight the Saracens was
a common one, even in earlier times.[166]

Yet the most marked feature of the majority of attempts
to urge kings and knights to take the cross, and of laments
that they were not willing to do so, was that they were
divorced from any detailed consideration of specific objectives.
When an objective was stated it was normally that of recovering
the Holy Land, which was not always the most urgent task. In
the late fourteenth century, for example, the expulsion of the
Turks from the Balkans was a far more pressing need. A typical
complaint is that of the fourteenth-century author already
quoted several times:

> Thei schuld to the Holy Lond
> To make ther a rees:
> Thei schuld into the Holy Lond
> And preve ther her myt,
> And help to wreke Jhesum Christ.[167]

There was nevertheless in certain places a great deal of
discussion of the proper ends and means of the crusades (see
below, Section III, 5), but much of it was extremely critical
of the simple idea of a military onslaught on the infidels.
The basic attitudes towards the crusades that emerged in the
later Middle Ages involved considerable reservations on the
use of force. Yet in most chivalric writings the idea of the
crusade remained an absolute positive. Lull declared that
"Knyghtes ben acustomed by the feyth that they haue gone in to
the londe ouer the see in pylgremage/And there proue theyr

strength and chyualry ageynst the enemyes of the Crosse/and
ben martirs yf they doye/For they fyghte for tenhaunce the
holy feyth catholyk."[168]

It appears that in specifically chivalric contexts the
abstract idea of the crusade was important in isolation from
its practical desirability. In the idea, at any rate, the
enormous stress on the religious role of the knight could find
specific embodiment, whether or not a crusade was really viable.
A knight could always vow to go on a crusade, whereas it was
not easy to envisage his general social and ecclesiastical
obligations in terms of a plan for immediate action. Even
the crusade could not in practice represent a permanent and
organic function in society. It was, of course, institutionalised
in the crusading orders of knighthood, which unlike the order
of knighthood itself had clear practical functions, at least
for a time.[169] Those functions were, however, outside society
in its normal European form. Joining a crusading order was
usually a total commitment, not reconcilable with the task of
carrying out social duties at home. Yet so potent an idea was
the crusade for Christian social theory that it became
enshrined as a permanent duty of knighthood, and its aegis
was extended to such wars as that against the Albigensian
heretics in the early thirteenth century, and to many of
the essentially national struggles during the Great Schism.

The crusade was able to embody personal and public
spiritual duties, the need for the unity of Christendom, and
the whole concept of the Church militant. It was too compelling

an idea to be compromised by pragmatic considerations. As
with other aspects of chivalric ideology, it continued to
be important long after its practical feasibility had become
negligible. One of the commissions with which Columbus set
out on his westward voyages was that of discussing with the
Great Khan the possibility of an alliance of Mongols and
Christians against Islam. On his third voyage he speculated
on the possibility of using the wealth of the "Terrestrial
Paradise" he had discovered to finance a crusade to recover
the Holy Land.[170]

Documents connected with the crusade were, however,
very important in the creation of chivalric ideas, whatever the
limitations of the practice of crusading. Urban II was
responsible for a significant part of the dignity accorded
the knight's office in promising a plenary indulgence to
those who should be killed in the First Crusade.[171] One of
the most celebrated accounts of Christian chivalry, Bernard of
Clairvaux's treatise addressed to the Templars, was in effect
an apologia for the recently founded crusading orders.[172]
Bernard described a 'new warfare', and laid down the requirements
for the "milites Christi" who were to fight it, replacing
the old knights, whom he described as knights more of the
devil than of God. He rehearsed the arguments justifying
warfare in the service of God, and military service as a
divine vocation, advocating to the new order a blend of
austere Cistercian monasticism with knighthood. Yet even
though Bernard was addressing men who were already putting his

ideas into practice to some extent, he said little about what the New Knighthood should actually do apart from fighting the enemies of God. By contrast he had a great deal to say about the qualities and attitudes it was desirable for knights to have. Even in this practical context knighthood remained for Bernard primarily a state of mind, a metaphor for the Christian life.

We find, therefore, that religious conceptions of the knight's role also support my general conclusion that in practical historical terms knighthood, per se, did not have any real function in the working of society. Individual knights did, of course, have a variety of functions, and knighthood was in some fashion associated with such tangible distinctions as military capacity, feudal tenure, nobility, ownership of land, and so on—but as a supernumerary status. As an order it attracted a range of advice as to what a knight should be—qualities which we have come to think of as comprising the 'code' of chivalry, exemplifying ideals of military, religious, social and governmental conduct—but it did not in any specific sense define what a knight should do.

7. Conclusion

The central identity of chivalry is then to be located in its ideas and symbols rather than its duties. Auerbach, in a discussion of Chrétien de Troyes, noted that in the fictional world of his romances knighthood "serves no political function; it serves no practical reality at all; it has become absolute. It no longer has any purpose but that of self-realisa-.

tion."[173] I wish to suggest that something like this is true
of knighthood even in its more solidly historical contexts.
Knighthood signifies involvement in the world, an involvement
which can take many forms depending upon the process of 'self-
realisation' which is chosen. The literature of chivalry is
therefore the expression of ideas about temporal power, its
uses and its possibilities.

My final examples of this are from two morality plays.
In Mundus et Infans, the acceptance of the protagonist (Infans)
into full participation in the world's affairs is signified
by his being knighted by Mundus and re-named 'Manhode':

> And here I dubbe the a knyght,—
> And haunte alwaye to chyualry!
> I gyue the grace and also beaute,
> Gold and Syluer, gret plente,
> Of the wronge to make the ryght...
>
> I gyue the a swerde and also strength and myght
> In batayle boldly to bere the well.

Mundus of course wants to put a specific construction on this
knighthood, persuading Manhode to become the vassal of the
seven kings or deadly sins, who serve Mundus. But Conscience
interprets knighthood differently: "Conscyence clere ye knowe
ryght nought,/And this longeth to a knyght." Making a smooth
transition from knighthood as symbol to its place in the estates
of society, Conscience further insists that

> Ye must, Manhode, with all your myght
> Mayntayne Holy Chyrches ryght,
> For this longeth to a knyght
> Playnly in euery place.[174]

This suggestion that the knight can either remain on the level
of worldliness or transcend it is reinforced by a similar

incident in <u>The Castle of Perseverance.</u> Humanum Genus is enfeoffed

by Mundus, and declares:

> Þou feffyst me wyth fen and felde
> And hye hall, be holtys and hyll.
> In werldly wele my wytte I welde...
>
> I am kene as a knyt.
> Whoso ageyn þe Werld wyl speke
> Mankynde schal on hyn be wreke,
> In stronge presun I schal hym steke,
> Be it wronge or ryth.[175]

The knight personified and amplified the effective

engagement of the free man in the concerns of the world.

He embodied the possibilities of order and justice in society,

of the security of the Church in the world, and of personal

distinction for the individual. His role as the representative

of one of the three estates was, unlike that of the clergy,

a worldly one, and yet not circumscribed like that of those who

in their various ways provided for the physical sustenance of

society. Statements about chivalry are, therefore, as I have

already claimed, statements about the right use of worldly

power. As such they are not tied to specific historical

circumstances, for they embrace all the paradoxical demands

upon worldly power that the medieval world imposed. Power is

necessary, and yet must be rejected as an end in itself. The

ability to fight must be fostered, and yet fighting must be

anathematised. Victory must be striven for, and yet is awarded

by God without reference to the relative strengths of the

antagonists. The knight requires strength, nobility, material

goods, and the incitement of honour; yet he must be warned

against oppression, pride, vainglory and luxury. We may conclude,

prosaically enough, that chivalry was a focus for the conflict of two basic imperatives: a desire for the full exploitation of the world's possibilities, and an insistence that all such possibilities be viewed _sub specie aeternitatis_.

These conclusions help to explain why the central characters of so many medieval fictions are knights, but they do not justify any bland view of the knight as a neutral all-purpose protagonist. For all its paradoxes and complexities knighthood remained to some extent a recognisable entity. The choice of a particular emphasis from among the possibilities of the concept tended to call to mind alternative knightly roles and ideas. Many fictional works exploit implicitly or explicitly the potential conflict between different aspects of chivalry. More generally, however, the world of chivalry, which a writer could invoke simply by making his protagonist a knight, offered advantages of scope and scale. As a general embodiment of man's opportunity to wield power, authority and wealth (without necessarily being tied to a specific context within which these attributes must be exercised), the knight could be a figure distinctly larger than life. His versatility arose from his role as a dominant element in secular society (directing attention towards the proper working of that society) and also his ability to transcend such social questions and take on a broadly symbolic significance.

How does this help us understand Chaucer's writings about knights, to which I shall shortly return? In the first place, my conclusions about the nature of chivalry lead us to

expect that writings (of whatever kind) about knights will
quite probably be more concerned with chivalry's symbolic
potential than with actual political, military or social affairs.
The heavy stress on contemporary historical developments which
I noted in my discussion of Chaucerian scholarship (ch. I, above)
is therefore perhaps an unprofitable line of enquiry. Secondly,
my conclusions alert us to the possibility that the portrayal
of knights by Chaucer and by the narrators whom he creates
comprises an important way in which he presents the reader with
conflicting views of worldly involvement and also discriminates
between those views. My first task will therefore be to decide
whether Chaucer presents his knights in such a way as to
draw our attention to a real social and historical context.
Are his knights rooted in fourteenth-century English life?
If, as I believe, they are on the whole not, what is the
matrix of functions and activities within which we see them,
and how does it relate to the tradition of chivalric commentary?

III

CHAUCER'S KNIGHTS: PRELIMINARY DISTINCTIONS

1. Minor Works and 'Troilus and Criseyde'

The appropriateness of regarding Chaucer's knights as
knights in a historical, medieval sense has been largely
unconsidered in critical commentary. For medieval writers, as
I have indicated (see above, Section II, 4), the order of
knighthood embraced classical and biblical as well as more
recent heroes. There is therefore nothing intrinsically
remarkable about Chaucer's referring to, say, Troilus as a
knight--any more than there is about his calling the Trojan
council a "parlement" (TC, IV, 143). Nevertheless, most
readers are likely to regard the knighthood of Troilus and
that of the Knight of the General Prologue in rather different
lights, and for reasons which have a certain validity. In this
respect, the difference between them lies mainly in the extent
to which their primary activities appear to be specifically
knightly ones in a historical sense. I have suggested that
there are considerable problems involved in the identification
of specifically knightly activities in terms of historical
practice. Yet I have, I believe, sufficiently outlined the
identity of the knights of history, and the activities which
were considered their obligation or prerogative, for us to
make an assessment of how far Chaucer invites us to place in
this context the various characters whom he calls knights. I

shall start with a brief look at some of the knights of the minor poems.

The anonymous bereaved "man in blak" of The Book of the Duchess is a "wonder wel-farynge knyght", and is referred to as a knight three times in all (452, 529, 1179). The dreamer clearly regards him as so much his superior in rank that he must be approached with a solemnity that is distinctly comic, and he is surprised to find the knight quite an unassuming fellow:

Loo! how goodly spak thys knyght,
As hit had be another wyght. (529-30)

But all we hear of the knight's activities is that he has been a lover. He has successfully persuaded his lady to "holde me for hir knyght" without having had to produce evidence of traditional knightly accomplishments, for the lady has no time for "such knakkes smale" as persuading her admirers to go on crusades to win renown for her sake. She would not

sende men into Walakye,
To Pruyse, and into Tartarye,
To Alysaundre, ne into Turkye,
And byd hym faste anoon that he
Goo hoodles to the Drye Se
And come hom by the Carrenar,
And seye 'Sir, be now ryght war
That I may of yow here seyn
Worshyp, or that ye come ageyn!' (1024-32)

The knight has chosen love "to my firste craft" and frequented dances in pursuit of that choice. He exists only as a lover, and other possibilities of the knightly life (such as crusading) are mentioned only as ancillary to that role.

In The Parliament of Fowls knighthood appears as a qualification for love and an indicator of noble birth. The

representative of the birds of prey declares that the formel
eagle should be mated with him who is

<div align="center">the worthieste</div>

Of knyghthod, and lengest had used it,
Most of estat, of blod the gentilleste (548-50)

—where "lengest had used it" presumably refers to the number
of knights in the suitors' pedigrees rather than to their ages.
The practical knightly activities of the eagles are alluded
to only in the reference to their eagerness to fight for the
mate they desire.

Arcite, the false knight in the Anelida and Arcite,
also functions mainly as a lover. He is Anelida's own knight,
and the nature of his knighthood seems to be in some way
defined by its repeated association with his mistress, who
hides nothing from "her knyght" (117) and sends a letter to
"her Theban knyght, Arcite" (210), addressing him as "myn
hertes lif, my knyght" (223). Arcite is a "lusty knyght"
(an ambiguous epithet which Chaucer frequently uses in this
kind of context) but despite the recent political upheavals in
his city his only military exploits mentioned are those incurred
in the service of the stern lady who "sent him now to londe,
now to shippe" (194), and for whom he abandons the gentle
Anelida. Much the same situation prevails in the "Complaint
of Mars", where the god who claims patronage over all "hardy
knyghtes of renoun" lies in thrall to Venus and his own
frustration. Mars's personal status as a "worthy knyght" and
"welle" of knighthood is dwelt on, and even the items of his
"hevy armure" detailed, but his knighthood finds no other

sphere of activity than the bedchamber.[1]

The 'heroes' of the Legend of Good Women include several knights. Antony is Cleopatra's knight, loved for his "chyvalrye" (607-8, 634), and in his willingness to fight for her there is also a hint of the more general social duties of a knight:

> Hym roughte nat in armes for to sterve
> In the defence of hyre and of hire ryght. (605-6)

The implications of this however remain primarily amatory, and although it has been pointed out that the description of the battle of Actium has much in common with contemporary accounts of sea-fights, there is no consistent use in the legend of details that would provide a specifically historical context for Antony's knighthood.[2] Aeneas, who is also described as a knight, hunts and engages in various knightly exercises, but these are all apparently undertaken as part of his courtship of Dido (1272-4).

Aeneas displays his martial skills entirely in the furtherance of a love affair, but Jason, who is "a famous knyght of gentilesse" and "ful of renome", is not seen in arms at all (1404, 1513). When he sets out on the quest for the fleece he is described as "lusty of corage" but the full point of this description is not clear until Hercules remarks to Hypsipyle on the pleasure in store for his wife:

> for swich a lusty lyf
> She shulde lede with this lusty knyght! (1541-2)

It is entirely appropriate therefore that he should be able to "stynten his batayle" and win the fleece, acquiring falsely in the process "a name ryght as a conquerour", by

intriguing with a woman and promising, "as trewe knyght",
to wed her (1646-50, 1635-6). Jason's chivalric honour, like
his knightly skill, is lavished entirely on the craft of love.

In the "Legend of Lucrece", in which both Collatine and
Tarquin are referred to as knights, we are told that one
aspect of Tarquin's offence is that it is a breach of chivalric
duty:

> Tarquinius, that art a kynges eyr,
> And sholdest, as by lynage and by ryght,
> Don as a lord and as a verray knyght,
> Whi hastow don dispit to chivalrye?
> Whi hastow don this lady vilanye? (1819-23)

The obligations of a "verray knyght" are however left somewhat
ambiguous. Is Chaucer referring to a recognised duty of
knights to protect women, or to a breach of amatory etiquette
in Tarquin's approach to the wrong woman in the wrong way?[3]
The last knight of the Legend is Theseus, who tells Ariadne
that he is "a kynges sone, and ek a knyght" (2055), a formula
which impresses her and which she repeats to herself,
astonished that such a person should be her "servaunt in
so low degre". The ideas she appears to associate with his
rank initially are straightforwardly military, and she prays
God to

> sende yow grace of herte and sleyghte also,
> Yow to defende, and knyghtly slen youre fo. (2084-5)

But, as with Jason's exploit, the narrator appears less interested
in whether the deed was "knyghtly" than with the fact that it
was done according to the instructions of the heroine.

One does not of course expect to find lengthy descriptions
of chivalric prowess in an ironic legendary of the 'martyrs' of

love. But we may note that in all the poems so far mentioned references to knights appear primarily in the context of love rather than in that of historical activities of a specifically knightly character. In some cases the references seem casual or honorific, but most of the others, especially those in the "Complaint of Mars", are too insistent to be considered as such.

Troilus and Criseyde offers a wider scope for social background--and thus for placing references to knights in an identifiable social setting--than the poems already considered, but there has been considerable disagreement about the nature of that background. As John McCall has pointed out, persuasive cases have been made both for the idea that Chaucer 'medievalised' his sources and for the idea that he 'classicised' them. Other critics, in McCall's words, "have concluded that Chaucer purposefully created two perspectives, medieval and ancient", for a double effect of both vivid nearness and historical distance.[4] Little emphasis has been placed by scholars on historical aspects of knighthood in the work, though D. W. Robertson asserts that the poem reflects Chaucer's concern about "the manifest decay of English chivalry".[5] Moorman goes so far as to claim that traditional knightly occupations are almost absent, and that the two lovers are primarily man and woman rather than knight and lady. "Except that courtly love is peculiar to a leisured courtly society and restricted by the chivalric code", he comments, "the major characters of the poem need not have been knights and ladies at all."[6]

Nonetheless, in many respects Troilus appears to be a
recognisable medieval figure--a knight banneret, or knight of
sufficient military experience and social rank to have a
number of knights under his banner and command (I, 183-4; II, 1248-9).
His description on returning from battle in Book Two makes
clear that his designation as a knight is not simply a convenient
label:

> This Troilus sat on his baye steede,
> Al armed, save his hed, ful richely;
> And wownded was his hors, and gan to blede,
> On which he rood a pas ful softely...
> So lik a man of armes and a knyght
> He was to seen, fulfilled of heigh prowesse;
> For bothe he hadde a body and a myght
> To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse...
> His helm tohewen was in twenty places,
> That by a tyssew heng his bak byhynde;
> His sheeld todasshed was with swerdes and maces,
> In which men myght many an arwe fynde
> That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde...
> <div align="right">(II, 624-7, 631-4, 638-42)</div>

In times of truce Troilus hunts and hawks just like Froissart's
knights (III, 1779-81; V, 65), and he has been successful in
"torney marcial" (IV, 1669). The actual descriptions of
battle (for example, IV, 43-6) do not specify any exclusive form
of combat, but truces and safe-conducts are arranged, and
prisoners ransomed, in a thoroughly medieval manner (IV, 57-60,
139-40).

Troilus is second to none "In durryng don that longeth
to a knyght" (V, 837), and we hear intermittent reports of his
prowess in the field. After Pandarus persuades him that his
love is not hopeless he 'plays the lion' in the field, and
invites comparison with Hector, of whom Pandarus comments:

> In al this world ther nys a bettre knyght
> Than he, that is of worthynesse welle. (II, 177-8)

The comparison with Hector in prowess reveals, however, a
marked contrast between the two knights in other respects.
Whereas Hector fights for Troy, Troilus fights primarily for
love, and---as I shall argue later (see below, Section VI, 5)---
this materially affects our judgment of his status as a knight.
At any rate the poem is clearly concerned primarily with
his behaviour in love rather than in arms, and his fighting
always takes place offstage, as it were, the narrator appearing
to disclaim any great interest in it:

> And if I hadde ytaken for to write
> The armes of this ilke worthi man,
> Than wolde ich of his batailles endite;
> But for that I to writen first bigan
> Of his love, I have seyd as I kan,---
> His worthi dedes, whoso list hem heere,
> Rede Dares, he kan telle hem alle ifeere. (V, 1765-71)

The point is not just that Chaucer wanted to write a love
story rather than an epic.[7] He took care to emphasise the
fact of Troilus's knightly rank and to make periodic reference
to its martial implications, while nevertheless setting the
love story firmly in the foreground. One effect of this is
to displace the lack of interest in details of battle from
the author to Troilus himself; it is the latter who chooses
to be first and foremost a lover, and to use his knighthood and
prowess as a springboard to amatory success.

2. "The Knight's Tale"

The usefulness of looking at the references to knights
in Troilus in the context of the historical 'institution' of
knighthood is considerably qualified by this predominating
concern with love. We might expect the Canterbury Tales, however,

to be more fertile ground for this approach in view of the
ostensible setting of their framework. The Knight of the
pilgrimage at any rate, as Moorman has remarked, seems to be
firmly related to a contemporary historical situation in a way
that none of Chaucer's other knights is.[8] This supposition
is, I shall argue, ultimately more misleading than illuminating;
but for the moment I wish to by-pass the Knight and Squire of
the General Prologue, returning to them after a consideration
of those tales in which knights play a prominent part. In turn-
ing first to the "Knight's Tale", however, it is necessary to
observe that the assumption of the Knight's historical solid-
ity has considerably affected attitudes towards those aspects
of his tale with which I am concerned.

Many critics have agreed with William Frost that
"such a tale is clearly suited to the Knight of Chaucer's
prologue who tells it, a man of high rank, wide travel, and
ingenuous loyalty to the ideas of his class and age."[9] On
this basis commentators have often discerned in the tale
evidence of the Knight's presumed familiarity with fourteenth-
century chivalric life. D. S. Brewer has described the tale as
a crucial document for the "knightly values" of the period.
According to Muriel Bowden, Chaucer presented "a chivalric
picture of medieval life" in place of the "classical epic and
love story" of his source. Stuart Robertson claimed that
Chaucer's version of the story is more "realistic" than that of
Boccaccio, and drew several parallels between incidents
described by Froissart and episodes in the tale. Schofield

remarked on the "realistic" presentation of chivalry in the
tale, and commented that it is "one of the best pictures we have
of English courtly life in the fourteenth century". The
Knight's professional interests, claims Paul Thurston, lead
him to digress into details such as those concerning the
preparations for the tournament.[10]

Nonetheless, others have remarked on contrasting
features of the tale's setting. Peter Beidler sees the tale
as "pure romance", at variance with the serious business of
the Knight's crusades, while Judith Herz perceives a conflict
within the tale itself between the artificial structure of
romance and the insistent "realism" which the narrator's own
experience leads him to introduce. According to Robert Haller,
Chaucer opted for the setting and style of classical epic,
deliberately rejecting the style and typical subject matter
of romances and lays. Taking this approach further, David
Benson asserts that Chaucer was concerned not only to replace
romance characteristics with epic ones, but to create through
deliberate archaising a convincing pagan and classical setting,
in order to reflect the pre-Christian origins of chivalry and a
pagan, ultimately tragic view of man.[11]

There is a considerable degree of confusion here, and--
as far as the subject of chivalry is concerned--a great deal
of generalisation based on the interpretation of very selective
details. One of Thurston's comments may be taken as an example
of the difficulties involved in the use of historical evidence.
He argues that Theseus's refusal of ransom to Palamon and

Arcite, and the conditions in which they are detained (quite unlike the luxury described by Boccaccio), run counter to contemporary pronouncements on the treatment of prisoners, and therefore indicate comic impracticalities in the code of chivalry to which Thurston assumes Theseus and the narrator ostensibly subscribe.[12] It is not altogether clear that this conclusion is justified even if we accept the relevance of contemporary custom, but the admissibility of such evidence is problematic.[13] It seems likely, as V. A. Kolve has suggested in an unpublished paper, that Chaucer's insistence on the agony of the two knights in prison is intended to be primarily thematic and metaphorical in its effect: their state of mind cuts them off from the considerations which can ameliorate life in what Theseus calls "this foule prisoun of this lyf" (I, 3061). When Arcite is released from prison he complains that "Now is my prisoun worse than biforn" (1224). Their chains are to some extent of their own forging.

Evidence of the kind Thurston invokes can only be considered relevant, one may suggest, if Chaucer gives us sufficient reason for seeing a continuity between the world of the tale and the wider world of historical reference. Such continuity can only be established by a fairly consistent build-up of references to appropriate historical circumstances. Stuart Robertson expressed the view that Chaucer does in fact do this, and pointed especially to the tournament, which he called "very characteristic of the century".[14] A recent study by Bruce Cowgill, however, has shown that in the account

of the tournament Chaucer created a unique blend by mixing
elements of separate contemporary practices and merging them
with archaic customs. In particular, aspects of the old,
anarchic, mêlée-style tourney have been combined with the
tighter procedural rules of the contemporary judicial duel
in a totally unhistorical manner.[15]

If the argument that medieval chivalric practices are
accurately described in the tale is open to attack, however,
so is the opposite view that the Knight is at pains to
describe classical rather than medieval military scenes.
David Benson's argument to this effect is particularly
unconvincing in its evidence.[16] Chaucer appears to have
felt free to dispense with any strict historical consistency,
but he also seems to have had a definite purpose in his choice
of descriptive detail--whether devising his own or following
either the classical or the medieval possibilities suggested
by his sources. In the case of the references to knighthood
in the "Knight's Tale", at least, this assumption appears
justified. Chaucer makes clear in his first reference to
Theseus as a knight that the term means more than merely a
warrior. Theseus swears "his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,"
that he will avenge the wrongs done to the suppliant women
by Creon, whom he later kills "manly as a knyght"--complementing
moral with physical worth (959, 987). At other points in
the tale it is evident that an oath sworn on a man's knighthood
is a very solemn one (see 1612, 1855). Arcite and Palamon
are of course also knights, both bearing the same coat-armour,
but whereas Theseus's knighthood has been mentioned only in

association with martial prowess and social obligation (the restoration of legal rights to the oppressed), theirs becomes almost immediately linked with love. Wounded on the battle-field, they recover only to be 'wounded' by Emily (1096-7, 1115-8, 1564-8). This event immediately raises an important question of knightly obligation, a discussion of which will help to clarify the way in which Chaucer uses contemporary chivalric details in the poem.

The relationship of sworn brotherhood and mutual help that Palamon invokes, emphatically and at length (1129-51), is clearly intended to recall the medieval practice of brotherhood in arms, as M. H. Keen points out.[17] The oath has been sworn on their knighthood, and Palamon claims that Arcite is therefore "ybounden as a knyght" to help him. In real life such relationships were certainly taken seriously--regarded not as mere extravagances but as legal contracts enforceable in courts of law. Arcite and Palamon have made a "seurete" and a "bond"; if either one stands in the way of the other he incurs public dishonour. The normal conditions of such agreements involved mutual military aid, the equal sharing of all gains of war, contribution to the brother's ransom if he were taken prisoner, and assistance in lawsuits, although it was often assumed in addition that, in Keen's words, "a brother in arms was a person on whom one ought to be able to rely for assistance in the discharge of intimate family and personal concerns." The only normal exception to such agreements was that a brother in arms was not obliged to

undertake actions which would involve a breach of his
obligation to his liege lord. By contrast, the oath which the
Theban knights have sworn is primarily, though not totally,
concerned with love:

> Neither of us in love to hyndre oother,
> Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother;
> But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
> In every cas, as I shal forthren thee. (1135-8)

Arcite does not deny the content of the oath, but he claims the
right of desavouer on the curious grounds that love supersedes
even an oath that he has made specifically about love.

The point of the reference to brotherhood in arms is
surely to demonstrate, by the introduction in somewhat altered
form of an idea from contemporary chivalric practice, the
failure of the two knights to exercise over their passions the
control to which they are theoretically pledged. In addition,
the mutation of the substance of the oath from the area of
fighting to that of love emphasises the association of their
knighthood with their roles as lovers. Arcite fears Palamon
may be successful with Emily in his absence because he is "a
knyght, a worthy and an able" (1241)--able, presumably, in matters
of love--and when he lies on his deathbed he recommends Palamon
to Emily as an ideal "servaunt", citing his qualities of "trouthe,
honour, knyghthede", among others (2786-95). Although Palamon
is the knight of Venus, and Arcite that of Mars, both have the
same basically sexual motivation. Arcite's appeal to Mars is
to "thilke hoote fir" in which the god "whilom brendest for
desir". His prayer is thus primarily to Mars the lover rather

than the warrior (2333-4). As Robert Haller points out, the
struggle between the two knights recalls that of the Thebans
Polynices and Eteocles, with the pointed difference that it is
a woman rather than political control that they are fighting
over.[18] Similarly, the motive of those who participate in
the tournament in support of the two lovers is a desire to
fight "For love and for encrees of chivalrye" (2184).

Thus although knighthood, in medieval terms, is clearly
of some significance in the poem, the knightly status of Arcite
and Palamon is associated primarily with their behaviour as
lovers rather than with their social or military function.
Moreover, in the descriptions of military activities we do not
find any attempt at historical definition or consistency. The
arms and armour are of eclectic variety. The Knight does not
expect his audience to find familiar the equipment of the
participants in the tournament: "Ther maystow seen devisynge
of harneys/So unkouth and so riche..." (2496-7). They are
armed "Everych after his opinioun" (2126-7), and the stress is
on diversity:

> Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
> And in a brestplate and a light gypoun;
> And som wol have a paire plates large;
> And som wol have a Pruce sheeld or a targe;
> Some wol ben armed on his legges weel,
> And have an ax, and som a mace of steel. (I, 2119-24)

In keeping with this, the kings Lycurgus and Emetreus present
an outlandish and bizarre appearance, the former clad in a
bearskin and the latter surrounded with lions and leopards.

Actual details of this kind are selected not with a
view to mimetic realism but according to broader rhetorical

purposes. In the account of the duel between Arcite and
Palamon in the woods, for instance, the absence of any
elaborate or precise description of the knights' arming or
manner of fighting allows the uncontrolled violence of the
meeting to be the predominant impression. Palamon and Arcite
fight like lions and tigers, and formalities are almost
completely dispensed with. Theseus is shocked at the unofficial
and unsupervised nature of their fight, and by implication its
detachment from broader social forms and considerations. The
entry of order into the scene is signalled by a reference to
formal chivalric procedure. As Neilson noted, Theseus's cry of
"Hoo!" is that prescribed for separating the combatants in a
judicial duel, according to regulations governing such occasions
drawn up for Richard II by the Duke of Gloucester, Constable of
England.[19]

Theseus objects that they are fighting "Withouten juge
or oother officere,/As it were in a lystes roially" (1712-3).
Medieval authorities were agreed that the judicial duel should
be used only as a last resort. Gloucester's ordinance laid
down that cases should first be pleaded in court, and only when
the issue cannot be decided there may the constable enjoin battle
in his role "as vecarie generall under God and the kynge".[20]
Bonet objected to all trials by combat as attempts to test God's
justice, claiming that often "the man who had right on his side
has, notwithstanding this, lost the battle"; but he added that
if men did persist in them they must at least fight in enclosed
lists and in the presence of their lord.[21] Chaucer gives us no

encouragement to introduce the question of the justification of judicial duels into a consideration of this episode (though Theseus's attitude appears to have something in common with that of Bonet), and in any case a struggle between rival lovers does not, according to any of the authorities, qualify as a subject for a judicial duel.[22] But through Theseus's brief remarks he presents the anarchic behaviour of the two knights in terms of contemporary chivalric law.

In similar fashion, when dealing with the tournament, Chaucer allows thematic concerns to override any intentions of providing an accurate picture of current chivalric life. The tournament must be sufficiently structured to represent the way in which Theseus contains dangerous and disruptive passions and renders them fairly harmless. But it must also be sufficiently violent and turbulent to allow those passions to work themselves out and to reveal their original strength and urgency.[23] Theseus's last-minute decision that certain deadly weapons shall not be allowed, and that only one charge may be made with a pointed lance, and that prisoners shall not be killed, helps to fulfil both these aims, but at a sacrifice of contemporary historical plausibility (2537-53). The duke is seen to set significant, though not overly restrictive, limits to the ultimate ferocity of the contest, and at the same time we are made to realise the seriousness of the problem which the tournament is designed to solve: here are two hundred knights eager to participate in what was to have been a battle to the death, and for no real cause at all.

The crowd is delighted at what they regard as a sign
of Theseus's especial benevolence; yet in historical terms it
would be fantastic if such regulations had not been imposed.
Even in the undisciplined twelfth-century mêlées the aim of the
participants was to capture opposing knights and take their
horses and armour rather than to kill them. Fatalities were
fairly common, but they were either accidental or the result
of the degeneration of the occasion into serious fighting.
Men who were suspected of having arranged fatal 'accidents'
for the purpose of revenge or private quarrel came close to
public dishonour.[24] Tourneys à outrance, in which normal
weapons of war were allowed rather than blunted points, were
not literally fought to the death. Even the most primitive
tournaments had refuges for each side and rules outlawing
foul or dangerous blows. In England, tournament regulations
were codified in the mid-thirteenth-century Statuta Armorum,
which allowed the use only of blunted weapons.

A further element in Theseus's tournament would have
appeared anachronistically violent to informed fourteenth-cen-
tury listeners. We are told that one of the knights is
captured by twenty opponents,

> And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
> And eke his steede dryven forth with staves
> With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves. (2726-8)

This recalls the anarchic and scandalous scenes such as those
at Rochester in 1251, when footsoldiers attacked fleeing knights
with sticks and clubs. The turbulence of the knights' attend-
ants had become a problem; the Statuta Armorum curbed the

participation of non-knightly forces, and prohibited the
kind of incident that Chaucer describes here.[25] Theseus's
tournament is clearly not in any historical sense 'realistic'.
Consequently it provides no basis for deciding such issues
as what Chaucer thought about the justification of tournaments
in his own day, despite Muriel Bowden's comment that the
account indicates Chaucer's "interest in and approval of
royal tournaments".[26]

This lack of concern with historical precision indicates
that Chaucer made little effort to match the quasi-historical
background of the Knight with a tale of similar milieu. Neverthe-
less the tale establishes a framework of chivalric references,
and though Palamon and Arcite are lovers and fight mainly for
love, more specifically knightly activities (in historical
terms) are presented through the role of Theseus. On the whole,
however, there seems to be little more evidence here than in
Troilus of any direct continuity between Chaucer's portrayal
of knights and any hypothetical concern he may have had with
contemporary chivalric practice. If the "Knight's Tale" was
to some extent addressed specifically to the knights of Chaucer's
England, as some commentators have claimed, it was not in any
straightforward way.

3. The Wife, the Merchant, the Franklin,
and "The Tale of Sir Thopas"

Other of the Canterbury Tales offer equally intriguing
prospects in the search for Chaucer's involvement with the
chivalry of his day. The Wife of Bath contributes an Arthurian

story, while both the Franklin, who has been a knight of the

shire, and the Merchant tell stories about knights. Chaucer

himself offers a fragment of chivalric story in popular

style.

The Wife of Bath is a woman of substance, a cloth-maker,

and therefore connected with the wool-trade on which England's

prosperity in this century rested. It is naturally tempting

to see her as a representative of a rising 'bourgeoisie', and

Dorothy Colmer has claimed that she and the Franklin embody

two alternative responses of the nouveau riche towards the

chivalric class. Whereas the Franklin wishes to ape the

"gentilesse" of his erstwhile social superiors, the Wife

defiantly wants to break down the barriers of courtly privilege.

Her refusal to accept "auctoritee" is, in this view, a general

protest against social privilege, and the hag's discourse

in her tale is a demand from "the representative of belligerent

individualism among the less privileged classes, who is making

this case against knightly pretensions and the whole idea of

hereditary rank".[27] This neatly schematic view does not

accord well with my conclusions about social mobility in

Chaucer's England. The Wife is unlikely to have found herself

barred by birth from such social importance as she desired; her

ambitions are vigorous but petty, apparently concerned mainly

with questions of parochial precedence (I, 449-52). Moreover,

the protest in her "preamble of a tale" is specifically

against the authority of clerks and husbands. As we have

seen, there is little evidence elsewhere of conflict between

'courtly' and 'bourgeois' classes in English society of
the time, and the hag's remarks on "gentilesse" are of a
totally conventional kind.[28]

If the Wife did indeed intend a comment on the knights
or temporal authorities of her own day she could hardly
have chosen a more oblique way of doing it than by invoking
the imaginatively autonomous world of the Arthurian tradition.
The choice is a conspicuous one, since a fabliau would seem
more immediately appropriate to her boisterous and coarse sense
of humour. The possible reasons for the Arthurian setting will
be discussed later (see below, section VI, 7); at the moment
I wish merely to point out how once again in this tale the
reader is given little chance to make direct connections
between the chivalric story and the realities of contemporary
knighthood. The knight in the tale has no explicit role in
the defence or administration of society. Apart from hawking,
his only activities are those arising from his sexual proclivities.
His quest to avoid retribution for his crime of rape requires
no specifically knightly qualities, and involves no consideration
of the social or religious role of knighthood. The hag
mockingly implies that the reputation of the Round Table centres
on the sexual virility of its knights rather than on
traditional chivalric virtues:

> Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?
> Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?
> Is every knyght of his so dangerous? (III, 1088-90)

The reluctant husband's knighthood seems to be a qualification
for love rather than for any of the duties which a knight

personally known to the Wife of Bath would have been
expected to carry out. Even the ostensible comparison
at the start of the tale between old Britain and modern
England turns out to be a sly joke at the expense of the
mendicants.

It might perhaps be argued that the protagonist of the
"Wife of Bath's Tale" is a knight simply because Chaucer
decided to retain the Arthurian setting of many of his
possible sources. No such explanation, however, can be
applied to the tale told by the Merchant. The Clerk has
just recounted a story about a ruler in Lombardy who is
not once referred to as a knight; but the Merchant's
Lombard is at once characterised as a "worthy knyght",
though in his main source, Deschamps' Miroir de Mariage,
there is no indication that Franc Vouloir, the equivalent
character to January, is to be regarded as a knight. Nor
is the central figure a knight in any of the published
analogues.[29]

Since the Merchant's story is probably intended to
seem partly autobiographical, a merchant would be the obvious
choice for a central character.[30] But the narrator disclaims
any intention of revealing more about his "owene soore", and
the substitution of a knight may represent his attempt to
disguise the autobiographical elements. And yet, as Paul Olson
has pointed out, the choice of a Lombard connects January
with merchants rather than knights in the eyes of the pilgrims.
The Lombards whom they would probably have met would have been

bankers and merchants who bought wool in England for
manufacture abroad.[31] Italians engaged in commerce were
generally known in England as Lombards. The bankers
were disliked as usurers, and Gower declared that he would
not die in the sin of usury for all the treasure of Pavia,
January's home town.[32] Moreover, English commercial interests
wanted to see both the financing and the manufacturing sectors
of the wool trade in native hands, and Lombards were consequently
very unpopular at this time with the Londoners, who periodically
denounced them as traitors, spies and sexual deviants. Gower
accused them of cheating the English and putting the native
merchants in their bondage. They arrive in England poor,
he declared, but soon become rich.[33] Olson concludes that
Chaucer's Merchant is creating an alter ego whom his audience
can hate as a foreigner; he is thus distracting attention
away from himself, and—one might perhaps add—expressing in
a psychologically acceptable way his self-contempt.

Why then does the Merchant risk allowing his audience
to miss the point of his topical allusion by making January
a knight? There is, after all, nothing which connects
January to these trade rivalries except the one reference to
Lombardy. Olson's answer is that he is not meant to be seen
as a knight at all in the English sense, but as one of the
Italian "commercial aristocracy composed of those whom
merchant wealth had given rank".[34] However there is little
evidence that Chaucer intended his audience to make such
an assumption. Although no rigid division existed in practice

between the class to which most English knights belonged
and that which included prosperous merchants, the two
'professions' were theoretically quite distinct.

Peter Beidler suggests that the reference to Lombardy
may be intended as a mockery of the unchivalric nature of
January's knighthood, for which he has no obvious qualifications;
the mercantile associations of the place may indicate that
he has bought his way into the nobility. Beidler finds an
analogue of sorts to the "Merchant's Tale" in a French fabliau,
Berenger au long cul, in which a Lombard money-lender's
son is knighted and given a noble wife by a nobleman as
payment for a debt. In response to his wife's taunts that
he does no knightly deeds, the newly-made knight rides out and
smashes his weapons against trees, returning with accounts
of his exploits. His wife follows him on one of these
expeditions, disguised as a knight, and challenges him. He
pleads to be excused from fighting her, whereupon she humiliates
him in the fashion of Alisoun of Oxford and cuckolds him with
a real knight. The fabliau claims that hardy knights are not
to be found in Lombardy.[35]

A more general reason for thinking that a tale told by
a merchant about a knight may have had significant social
resonances has been suggested by Gardiner Stillwell. He notes
that the terms of approval used by contemporary merchants
for their fellows were rather different from the usual chivalric
virtues; instead they praised—in one formulation from the
guild ordinances—"viri honorabiles, discreti, circumspecti,

probi, honesti". Stillwell claims that Chaucer was greatly
interested in the ethos of the business man, a figure who
was ignored by the romancers and condemned for avarice by
the homilists.[36]

The "Merchant's Tale" itself does not, however, present
a portrait of either a chivalric or a mercantile world which
in any obvious way directs attention to the realities of
contemporary English (or for that matter Italian) society.
January is several times referred to as a knight, and
his worthiness, wisdom, honour and nobility in that capacity
are mentioned with various degrees of irony.[37] His conventional
chivalric retinue includes a squire who "carf biforn the
knyght ful many a day", and he follows the forms at least of
an aristocratic way of life, from which the Merchant appears
to dissociate himself in his comment on May's confinement:

> So longe hath Mayus in hir chambre abyden,
> As custume is unto thise nobles alle. (IV, 1888-9)

May's ironically-praised "franchise" towards Damyan is a
quality associated with the noble life, and January's role as
a noble or ruler is emphasised by the scenes in which he seeks
the advice of his brothers, Placebo and Justinus. Placebo
advises his brother of his great experience in these affairs
with "lordes of ful heigh estaat", having been "a court-man"
all his life. The theme introduced here, of the ruler's
need to seek and be guided by the right kind of advice, and
the courtier's duty to give honest rather than welcome counsel,
runs right through the Canterbury Tales, and appears to have

been a major concern of writers of the time.[38]

It is of course appropriate to January's knighthood
that he should be by implication a ruler, but as such he is
not embedded in any social structure; his rank is expressed
only in his luxurious style of living and in his amorousness.
Like Palamon, he is a knight of Venus:

> And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
> For Januarie was bicome hir knyght. (IV, 1723-4)

Within the tale, his knighthood is circumscribed by his role
as May's lover, and the only acts of prowess he glories in
are his dubiously received labours in bed. Despite the
superficial likelihood of contemporary social reference in
the poem, a pertinent social background is not given. If January
is mocked as an armchair-knight, as Beidler suggests, we lack
any explanation of how he should be putting his knightly
obligations into practice.

The _locus classicus_ for attempts to discern a comic
interplay of bourgeois and chivalric values in the Tales is
the "Franklin's Tale". The view of R. K. Root, later supported
by Kittredge, that the Franklin is a parvenu and social climber
has achieved a certain orthodoxy, despite occasional protests.
Thus Lumiansky sees the poem as an awkward attempt by a
bourgeois gentleman to affect the style and subject matter
of courtly romance: a solidly practical man with aspirations
to nobility makes an incongruous attempt to combine marriage
and courtly love under the banner of "gentilesse"—a construction
of the term which the Host contemptuously rejects.[39] According
to the rather similar view of Alfred David, the Franklin is

attempting to pay a compliment, as a member of an important
emerging class, to the Knight and the Squire. But his version
of the old chivalric values is a bloodless one; the stormy
passions of chivalric love are reduced to staid relationships
in a bourgeois world which is reasonable, contractual and
vaguely democratic.[40] Russell Peck sees the Franklin as a
middle-class entrepreneur aspiring to greatness, and thus
taken in by what he conceives to be the "gentilesse" of the
Squire's nonsensical tale: "For him chivalry is a dream of a
sublime life which he can never possess, but which he clutches
at because his society upholds the illusions and vanities
of its outward forms, even though the heart (for middle-class
freeholders, at least) is dead."[41] Haller assumes that not
only does the Franklin want to prove himself a "gentil wight"
like the Squire, but he also has chosen a meretricious model
in accordance with the fact that the Franklin's own sole
qualification for gentility is self-indulgence.[42]

Harry Berger takes a more sympathetic view of the Frank-
lin's social theories, arguing that his admiration of chivalry
is modified by an awareness that chivalric imperatives must
be modified by new social demands. The Franklin is a
counterweight to the tendency of the Knight and Squire to
indulge in "a nostalgia for ideals which are decayed or missing
in the present time". This element of escapism in chivalry
—exemplified in the tale by Arveragus's extended absence in
search of renown—ignores the social obligations symbolised
by home and marriage: "The Franklin makes it clear that the

demands of the chivalric life and ethos, which seem to have
for him the patina of the golden age, conflict with the demands
of the more routine and bourgeois _trouthe_ of marriage."
According to Berger, the knight's concern with his honour
must be sacrificed "in the interest of a socially-directed
trouthe" (though one might object that this is hardly what
Arveragus does). The Franklin is attempting to "convert the
'olde gentil' lay into a parable touching on problems of
contemporary interest---the transfer of the old ideals of
knighthood to clerkly and commercial enterprises. If the
private and aristocratic idyll is to be justified it must
be capable of translation into some more mundane and practical
sphere of public activity."[43]

Another analysis of the contemporary social implications
of the tale is provided by Roy Pearcy's study of the relations
between knights and "worthy vavasours" in the romances. In
this latter context vavasours are usually home-loving landowners
whose function is to offer hospitality to knights errant.
Though providing a sharp contrast to the aristocratic and
idealistic knights, they had originally a community of
interest with them. But according to Pearcy the "incompatibility
between traditional courtly-chivalric ideals and the realities
of late medieval social life" led to a split between the
knights and vavasours of literature. Under the influence of
real social developments, the integrated society portrayed in
the romances gave way to the presentation of conflicting
social interests characteristic of the fabliaux, where the
vavasours are satirised for materialistic values inconsistent

with aristocratic courtesy and 'franchise'. Against this background Pearcy, perhaps over-ingeniously, sees the Franklin as adopting the attitude of the romances--claiming inclusion as a vavasour in the chivalric world of the Squire--while the Host adopts the attitude of the fabliaux and rejects his presumptuousness: "Chaucer's Franklin is not the literal exemplar of the rising middle class, looking confidently to the future for its chance to infiltrate the ranks of the aristocracy, but the figural representative of an age wistfully asserting spiritual allegiance with an antique chivalric world whose values are rapidly becoming anachronistic." Nevertheless the Franklin does not succeed, for his courtly story is "infused with bourgeois sentimentality" and betrays a "rationalistic and common-sense vision".[44]

These views all assume that the Franklin is excluded from the chivalric world. G. H. Gerould, however, protested against the assumption of his inferior social status, noting that contemporary references to franklins indicate that they were usually not just free men or freeholders (as the name literally means) but landowners of very substantial social position, distinguished from knights only by titular rank rather than by tenure or wealth.[45] Gerould's assertion is corroborated by the evidence of Bracton's use of the term 'vavasour' in listing the ranks constituting the secular power structure of society. First come "imperatores, reges, et principes", and below them "duces, comites et barones, magnates sive vavasores, et milites, et etiam liberi et vilani".

Vavasours are mentioned before knights again in the specific treatment of the king's officers: "others are called vavasours, men of great dignity. A vavasour cannot be better defined than a vessel selected for strength, that is 'vas sortitum ad valitudinem'. Also under the king are knights, that is persons chosen for the exercising of military duties, that they may fight with the king and those mentioned above."[46]

Chaucer's Franklin has held a variety of important administrative positions, having been lord of the sessions, knight of the shire, and sheriff, as well as carrying out undefined duties as a "contour".[47] In fact he should be seen as at least equivalent to a knight with respect to social position. As a man of landed wealth he would have been frequently liable to be distrained to knighthood (see above, section II, 3). Far from seeking the distinction, he has in fact probably declined it, and at a cost. He has, however, carried out those duties in the counties for which knights were specified and desired, and his avoidance of the titular distinction can not therefore be ascribed to a desire to escape the ensuing civil obligations. Despite his non-feudal appearance he is more closely involved with the texture of society, and in some respects a more typical 'knight' of his time, than is the actual Knight in the group of pilgrims.

About the comparative nobility of the Franklin and the Knight Chaucer does not give us any information, and we are consequently left with a choice of regarding the Franklin either as a civil counterpart to the military Knight, or as a man who is differentiated from him (in social terms) primarily

on the technical grounds that he has not been knighted.
There are of course other contrasts, such as that between
the Knight's austere and the Franklin's luxurious ways of
living, but it is not immediately apparent that the question
of knighthood is relevant to them. It is possible that Chaucer
was expressing a preference for some forms of knightly
activity over others. But notions that he condemned or
applauded the Franklin (and presumably himself) for not
becoming a knight, or that he believed that all men of
equivalent knightly rank should have military capacity or
that all knights of the shire should be belted knights, are
not substantiated by any evidence we have.

Certainly the tale itself does not make any direct
allusions to the milieu in which the Franklin exercised his
particular version of the knightly role. His story is
once again that of a knight, his lady, and a squire. The
chivalric setting is distanced by place and time, and also
by the reference to an archaic literary form, but Arveragus
is still a knight in a recognisable sense. He has a public
reputation to shield, and is a warrior for whom fighting is
a profession rather than an occasional necessity; he goes
off for two years "To seke in armes worshipe and honour".
But his success in this venture is quite nominal, and the only
effect of it which we see is its implied stimulus to his
role as a lover:

> Arveragus, with heele and greet honour,
> As he that was of chivalrie the flour,
> Is comen hoom, and othere worthy men.
> O blisful artow now, thou Dorigen,
> That hast thy lusty housbonde in thyne armes,

The fresshe knyght, the worthy man of armes... (V,1087-92)

It is Arveragus the lover with whom the poem is most concerned: "Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne/ To serve a lady..." (730-1). His exploits--"many a labour, many a greet emprise" (732)--are wrought for this lady. His knighthood is pledged only as a guarantee of uxorious domestic conduct; his "degree" appears to demand only that he give the appearance of ruling his wife's conduct. The only evidence the Franklin offers for the worthiness and wisdom of "this wise, worthy knyght" is his promise, in order to "lyve in ese", to obey his wife (745-8, 787-8).

As a squire, Aurelius too is part of the chivalric world, and the clerk shows him scenes of hunting and jousting in his magic show. But he also is essentially a lover. Of his accomplishments we see only those which may best be displayed at a dance. Like Arveragus he exists in a world removed from mundane professional realities. The social implications of his decision to show that a squire can "doon a gentil dede/As wel as kan a knyght" are not clear. Is Aurelius a squire in the sense (archaic by Chaucer's time) of following a novitiate leading to full knighthood, or is he, like the Franklin, an unknighted man of equivalent status to a knight? The third member of this obscure parallel to the three estates is a clerk, presumably a scholar. The social context that would encourage us to find here a discussion of social rank is excluded.

The "Tale of Thopas", like the "Franklin's Tale", is

an obvious place to look for the nature of Chaucer's concern
with chivalry. Kervyn de Lettenhove, in his introduction
to Froissart, pronounced it a satirical attack on the decadence
of English chivalry. Charles Moorman sees in it a burlesque
of "the extravagances, though not...the ideals, of chivalry",
indicating Chaucer's impatience with chivalric mannerisms. The
bourgeois elements in the poem convince Walter Scheps that it
was Chaucer's intention to satirise burgher notions of knighthood,
and Lilian Winstanley argued that the tale reflects the con-
temptuous attitude of the French and English aristocracy
to the military efforts of the Flemish bourgeoisie.[48] The
inadequacy of the evidence for this latter view has however
been demonstrated by W. W. Lawrence, who explained the presence
of the bourgeois details in an ostensibly chivalric setting
as a parody of the homely details found in many of the
Middle English romances.[49] This theory is greatly strengthened
by the large number of parallels of this kind between the
"Thopas" and the English romances found by Laura Hibbard Loomis,
who noted that these romances were often intended for simple
uneducated audiences, and that they frequently substituted
plebeian for courtly details in descriptions of noble life.[50]
It seems likely, however, that Chaucer was not making a
wholesale attack on the English romances, but merely
mocking the bizarre and tiresome aspects of the inferior ones.

The identification of the object of the satire as a
literary rather than historical one does not leave much scope
for the detection of references to Chaucer's society, whether

knightly or otherwise. But we may note that Thopas's
shortcomings are as much a matter of his ludicrous behaviour
as a lover as they are of his failures as a knight--his
questionable courage and his general lack of chivalric style.
His aspirations to be a lover (and those of his biographer
to describe him as one) are as basic to his motivation as
his pretensions to be a hero. "Ful many a mayde" yearns
for him, but his chastity is such that women "were bet to
slepe" than "moorne for hym paramour". Nevertheless the knight,
prone to sudden objectless fits of "love-longynge", "pryked
as he were wood" at the sound of a song-thrush. Thopas
considers no earthly woman worthy to be his mate, and inspired
by an erotic dream his directionless journey turns into a quest
"An elf-queene for t'espye". When he actually blunders on
the "queene of Fayerye", however, and is in imminent danger
of having to realise his unchaste daydreams, he is obliged
to postpone the combat for her in order to return for his
armour. Having been ignominiously driven off with stones
without even seeing his "lemman", he commands his men to
celebrate his forthcoming fight against a giant with three
heads (or so he claims),

> For paramour and jolitee
> Of oon that shoon ful brighte. (VII, 843-44)

Of course Thopas is not properly a character at all, but
we are probably intended to see beneath this posturing a
sexual timidity which he cloaks with avowals of chastity and
of disdain for worldly women, and compensates for with
ferocious "prikyng" and fantasies about succubi and elf-queens.[51]

The "Thopas" thus continues that association of the knight
and the lover which is a constantly recurring motif in the
Canterbury Tales, as in Chaucer's other works.

An attempt to analyse Chaucer's concern with chivalry
must recognise that knighthood as it actually existed as a
practical element in Chaucer's society is—in those parts
of his work so far examined—largely absent. The social realities
are almost completely excluded even from those works where
contemporary references of such a kind would seem most
plausible. Chaucer's knights, as we see them, are overwhelmingly
lovers, or men who fight for love, rather than men undertaking
public duties, whether military or civil. They exist for the
most part without definite ties to the society in which
they hold their rank; an organic relationship of mutual
dependence with other estates is rarely suggested or specified.

This situation is not altogether surprising in view
of my conclusions about the nature of knighthood and its lack
of a clearly defined social role. The historical realities
were not necessarily significant factors in determining its
ideological influence or weight. Predictably, Chaucer's use
of the thematic possibilities of chivalry is not primarily
mimetic in method but, as I hope to show, symbolic—in the
sense that knighthood and attitudes towards it are key indicators
of the nature of his characters in a wider perspective than
the merely military, social or chivalric. To understand
how this works we shall need to know more about the relation
of chivalry to love, and the significance for chivalric ideas of

the role of knightly lover that Chaucer so often portrays.
But before pursuing this line of investigation I must turn
back to the General Prologue and the figures of the Knight
and Squire, who appear in some respects to offer an exception
to these conclusions about Chaucer's lack of interest in the
knights of history.

4.   The Knight of the General Prologue

Apart from some description of his personal qualities
and appearance,all that we know of the life of the Knight of
the General Prologue is contained in the list cf the campaigns
against the infidels in which he has participated. (I, 51-66).
The names mentioned there have been found to refer to a
mixture of well known engagements, such as the sack of
Alexandria, and obscure events, such as the fighting at
"Tramyssene" or the involvement with "the lord of Palatye",
both of which have puzzled investigators.[52]   There appears to
be a deliberate vagueness in the reference to· "many a noble
armee", and a curious combination of the vague and the precise
in the line, "At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene".   The
names of the campaigns are given in a markedly unsystematic
order, bearing little relation to the three groups (Spain
and North Africa; the expeditions of Peter of Cyprus in the
east Mediterranean; campaigns of the Teutonic Order) into which
Manly and Bowden have sorted them.   The attack on Alexandria
is separated from Peter of Cyprus's other raids on Satalye
(Adalia) and Lyeys by the mention of Prussian, Spanish
and Moroccan enterprises.

The result is the establishment of an undoubtedly historical background without any great stress on details or systematic presentation. The narrator gives us a dominant impression but only a smattering of the details. For the narrator the most important feature of this impression appears to be the Knight's invincibility, but for the reader an equally crucial recognition, as has often been remarked on, is the exclusive preoccupation of the Knight with crusading. The most salient attempts to identify the historical significance of this fact have already been discussed (see above, chapter I). For Thomas Hatton it represents a gesture of enthusiastic support on Chaucer's part for the idea of an Anglo-French crusade---to repulse the Ottomans and to recover the Holy Land-- and in particular for the plans of Philippe de Mézières. Vincent Dinarco, on the other hand, argues that the Lusignan campaigns were sordid failures, reflecting no credit on the participants, that the activities of the Teutonic Knights were manifestly unchristian, and that the crusade idea itself was in disrepute. There is little doubt that in one respect Dimarco is right. Whatever may have been Lusignan's own idealism, the motives of most of his followers appear to have been distinctly materialistic. The sack of Alexandria in 1365 was a monumental and pointless piece of vandalism, so poorly planned and sustained that the city had to be abandoned within a week of being taken. Lyeys was also hastily abandoned soon after its capture, and Satalye, though held for twelve years, was eventually retaken by pagans in 1373.[53] It has indeed been

widely accepted that crusades were frequently mere plundering
expeditions for a large number of the people taking part,
that they were often ill-organised and strategically inept,
and that the original conceptions of the crusade's special
religious status were perverted (and publicly recognised to be
so) in some of the later military expeditions which were
dignified by the same title.[54]

Nonetheless, the public repute of the crusades did not
necessarily reflect these realities. The capture of Alexandria
was received—at least for a time, and except in Venice—
as a great victory, and inspired Machaut to write a long
celebratory poem, La Prise d'Alexandrie. The failure to
hold it was blamed not on Pierre but on his followers.[55] The
crusade of Genoese, French and English under Louis de Bourbon
in 1390 achieved nothing but a treaty enhancing the mercantile
interests of Genoa, yet Louis returned to a hero's welcome
in Europe, as a victor over the infidel.[56] The Duke of Nevers,
having led a crusade to ignominious defeat at Nicopolis in
1396, was received in triumph in the courts of the West.[57]
There are therefore good reasons for thinking that the state
of informed opinion in Chaucer's time about Pierre de Lusignan's
campaigns might have been ambivalent and divided, just as
the Teutonic knights were at various times both condemned for
ruthlessness and applauded as models of Christian discipline.
Pierre's last years were dissolute and tyrannous, as Dimarco
points out, but news of his death was generally received
with grief.[58] Outside Cyprus, the only open attacks on Pierre's

crusading activities came from the Venetians and Genoese,
whose lucrative trade with the East his expeditions disrupted.[59]

The Knight's reputation, however, does not hang merely
on his connection with the Lusignan campaigns. Chaucer's
account of his activities mentions not only occasions which
appear to us now to have been failures, but also those—such
as the expulsion of the Moors from Algeciras—which were
undoubted successes, as well as events which seem too vague
or obscure to have carried any public stigma. The inclusion
of references to Spain, North Africa, eastern Europe, and the
eastern Mediterranean suggests the whole geographical scope
of the crusading effort, and not merely a part of it. The
overall effect of this, and of its unsystematic presentation,
is that of a very extensive career, not dependent for its
worth on the evaluation of any one element of it. The Knight's
status is linked with that of the entire crusading effort, not
with the success of individual campaigns. The judgment that the
Knight was compromised by this association, on the grounds that
popular response to the idea of the crusade generally was
unfavourable, invites scrutiny, and I wish therefore to
trace briefly the status of the crusade in the Middle Ages.
We shall find evidence that the practical aims and conduct of
the crusades were indeed the object of some criticism. But
more significantly we shall discover that, as I have already
suggested (see above, section II, 6), the idea of the crusade
could remain an important moral positive despite these
qualifications. The symbolic force of the Knight's career may

not therefore be vulnerable to practical, historical scrutiny.

5. Attitudes Towards the Crusades

Atiya has insisted that the crusade represented "one of the vital forces in European politics" for a full two centuries after the fall of Acre in 1291.[60] Despite the numerous factors which weakened the practical feasibility of further crusading enterprise, the cause of regaining the Holy Land was kept alive during this period by continuous propagandising. A vast amount of theorising examined the most effective way of accomplishing this objective, and it was generally agreed by writers of the fourteenth century that a number of factors would have to be co-ordinated. There must be peace between England and France, an alliance must be sought with the Tatars, and all the military-religious orders united. Alternative routes and logistical approaches were vigorously canvassed.[61]

At the same time the ultimate success of even the most carefully planned crusade was thought to be dependent on the piety of those who participated, and even on the general reform of Christendom. Pierre Dubois, who offered advice on crusading to both Philip the Fair and Edward I of England, set forward a conventional list of prerequisites which included factors of obvious practical relevance (such as the need for permanent colonists in the East, and the amalgamation of the military orders) and some far less obviously so: Church temporalities were to be reformed, papal property transferred to France, and corruption in legal procedures eliminated.[62]

Against this background the treatises of Philippe de Mézières are revealed as traditional and largely unoriginal. His Order of the Passion, his preoccupation with the need for peace between England and France, his plan of attack, his stress on discipline, order and austerity, and on the importance of spiritual reform as an aspect of crusade preparation, all reflect what had become standard attitudes. The enthusiasm for Mézières' order which Hatton attributes to some of Chaucer's friends required only an approval of the basic idea of the crusade in its normal fourteenth-century idealistic garb.[63]

Along with the formulation of theories as to <u>how</u> the Holy Land was to be recovered, however, a debate was developing over the purpose and justification of crusades. The usual rationale for the employment of force against Islam contended that the lands to be recovered rightfully belonged to Christ, who had been robbed of them.[64] A crusade was a defence of God in his own land, authorised by God himself. Islam, on the other hand, was itself condemned for its use of force rather than rational disputation in conversion; this was thought to demonstrate the errors of its belief, and to indicate that it would die, as it had lived, by the sword. Most crusade propagandists show little recognition of any inconsistency here.[65] The problem of Islam was, however, too great to result only in such straightforward attitudes. R. W. Southern has claimed that "the existence of Islam was the most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom"[66]; its continued worldly success was a puzzle and a torment, usually explained as a punishment for

the sins of Christians. The doctrine that evil was permitted only that good might come of it encouraged men to see paganism as a stimulus to spiritual regeneration, and as a rebuke to the divisions and apparent impotence of Christendom.[67]

Not all medieval men, however, agreed that the crusade was the best way of overcoming the errors of Islam. Already by the twelfth century two contrasting responses were apparent, placing the idea of the crusade in a somewhat ambivalent position. Straightforward hostility to Islam had resulted in, and been in turn exacerbated by, the First Crusade. This hostility usually involved derision and gross distortion of Moslem beliefs, which were supposed to include polytheism, the worship of idols, licentiousness, and the encouragement of 'unnatural' sexual practices. This attitude continued to flourish throughout the Middle Ages in some of the romances, where the pagans are often portrayed as ferocious idolaters, as stupid as they are wicked, furiously beating their idols in defeat and bestially cruel in victory.[68]

However, the West also had to admire Islam's scholars, philosophers and scientists as the main inheritors of the achievements of Greece, and in the twelfth century a vast amount of Arabic learning was translated into Latin.[69] In addition, men like William of Malmesbury and Peter the Venerable began serious study of Islamic beliefs, and under the auspices of the latter a collection of Moslem writings, including the Koran, was translated at Toledo in the mid-twelfth century. Peter held the pioneering view that the Moslems were intended

to participate in salvation like other gentiles, and in writing a summary and a refutation of Islamic doctrine he appealed to the precedent of patristic disputations with heretics.[70] Greater knowledge of Moslem doctrine encouraged the idea that the religion could be destroyed by intellectual refutation and missionary effort rather than by force, and that the distance between Islam and Christianity was not so great as had been imagined. This notion was strengthened by the account given by a Flemish Franciscan, William of Rubroek, of his debate with Nestorian Christians, Moslems and Buddhists at the court of the Great Khan in 1254.[71]

The appearance of the Mongols in the thirteenth century added a disturbing and unpredictable factor to the situation. At first there were theories that the Mongols were actually Christians; when this proved fallacious, it was hoped that they would at least prove to be God's instruments for the destruction of Islam, or that the Mongols and the Moslems could be played off against each other. Alliances between Christendom and the Mongols against the Moslems were hoped for, and an important aspect of such hopes was the task of making Christianity more convincing than Islam to the Mongols. More generally, however, Christendom came to realise that it was vastly out-numbered in the world, and that all its plans, whether for conquest or for conversion, had been on far too small a scale. Prevailing attitudes thus varied between a sense of the importance of missionary work and that of the necessity or possibility of military action, according to the way

that the unstable situation in the East was perceived in the West.
Times of great optimism about the ease of converting the pagans,
or about the imminent destruction of Islam by the Mongols,
alternated with periods when the problem was seen as an urgent
military one (especially when the Mongols appeared to be
turning to Islam) and the fanatical denunciations and
distorted images of the infidels reappeared.[72]

Warfare and missionary work were not, however, always
seen as incompatible approaches. Conversion by conquest was
a practice which dated from the early days of Christianity,
though it had always had its critics.[73] Although it was not
the aim of the First Crusade to convert the infidel, later
crusades were theoretically committed to the enterprise. An
example of the double approach is the proposal of Oliverius
Scholasticus of Cologne to the Sultan of Egypt in the early
thirteenth century that he allow Christian missionaries to
preach to his people. Oliverius warned that if this were not
allowed the Church would not hesitate to use force to achieve
its ends. Jacques de Vitry declared that the threat of
attack was the most efficacious way of converting the Saracens.
Raymond Pennafort, who provided Chaucer with one of the
sources of the "Parson's Tale", theoretically objected to the
idea of forced worship but was nevertheless an enthusiastic
advocate of the crusade.[74] A combination of force and persuasion
was suggested by propagandists like Humbert of Romans and Ramon
Lull, who in his Liber de Fine referred to the necessity of
employing both the 'gladium spirituale' and the 'gladium corporale'.

Lull's proposed crusading order included both knights and preaching brethren, and Mézières' Order of the Passion was to have parallel lay and ecclesiastical hierarchies.[75] In most of such schemes, however, conversion was given a distinctly subordinate priority. Owing to the assumption of Moslem obduracy, conversion was seen as really feasible only after territorial conquest.

Nevertheless, not all advocates of missionary enterprise believed that crusades were an indispensable aid to their work; some insisted that the use of force was incompatible with persuasion. Peter the Venerable, though he did not oppose the crusades, was not an uncritical supporter. He was an early advocate, though not a very explicit one, of converting rather than exterminating the infidel, and wrote to St. Bernard that "Ecclesia non habet gladium. Christus illum abstulit cum Petro dixit, 'Converte gladium in vaginam. Omnis qui acceperit gladium, gladio peribit'".[76]

Roger Bacon's opposition to crusades, by contrast, was quite explicit; he condemned the brutality of the Teutonic Knights, and claimed that they deliberately prevented the conversion of the pagans:

> ...there is no doubt but that all nations of
> unbelievers beyond Germany would have been
> converted long since but for the violence
> of the Teutonic Knights, because the race
> of pagans was frequently ready to receive
> the faith in peace after preaching. But
> the Teutonic Knights are unwilling to keep
> peace, because they wish to subdue those
> peoples and reduce them to slavery, and
> with subtle arguments many years ago deceived
> the Roman Church. The former fact is known,
> otherwise I should not state the latter.

In the same passage he summed up the case against the use of force:

> ...the Greeks and the Rutheni and many other
> schismatics likewise grow hardened in error
> because the truth is not preached to them in
> their tongue; and the Saracens likewise and
> the Pagans and the Tartars, and the other
> unbelievers throughout the whole world. Nor
> does war avail against them, since the Church
> is sometimes brought to confusion in the wars
> of Christians, as often happens beyond sea and
> especially in the last army, namely, that of
> the king of France, as all the world knows;
> and if Christians do conquer other lands, there
> is no one to defend the lands occupied. Nor
> are unbelievers converted in this way, but they
> are slain and sent to hell. The survivors of
> the wars and their sons are angered more and
> more against the Christian faith because of
> those wars, and are infinitely removed from the
> faith of Christ, and are inflamed to do Christians
> all possible evils. Hence the Saracens for this
> reason in many parts of the world cannot be
> converted; and especially is this the case beyond
> sea and in Prussia and in the lands bordering
> on Germany, because the Templars and Hospitallers
> and Teutonic Knights hinder greatly the conversion
> of unbelievers, owing to the wars that they are
> always stirring up and because they wish to
> have complete sway...Moreover, the faith did not
> enter into this world by force of arms but through
> the simplicity of preaching, as is clear. And we
> have frequently heard and we are certain that
> many, although they were imperfectly acquainted
> with languages and had weak interpreters, yet
> made great progress by preaching and converted
> countless numbers to the Christian faith. Oh,
> how we should consider this matter and fear lest
> God may hold the Latins responsible because they
> neglect the preaching of the faith. For Christians
> are few, and the whole broad world is occupied by
> unbelievers; and there is no one to show them
> the truth.[77]

Probably the most influential opposition of the thirteenth

century to the crusades came from the Dominican missionary,

William of Tripoli, in his De Statu Saracenorum.[78] This

treatise is an attempt to explain that the historical and

theological connections between Christianity and Islam provide

a basis for the conversion of the Moslems, and a plea to the Pope

to send missionaries rather than soldiers for this purpose.
Such ideas were common among missionaries in the Latin kingdoms
of the Holy Land, who found that crusades disturbed the friendly
relations with the Moslems necessary for successful proselytis-
ing.[79]

The case for missions rather than warfare was urged
also by Langland in the next century. Like William of
Tripoli, he stressed the similarities between Islam and
Christianity. Anima explains:

> For Sarasenes han somwhat semynge to owre bileue,
> For thei loue and bileue in o persone almiȝty;
> And we, lered and lewede in on god bileueth.
>
> And sith that this Sarasenes scribes, and Iuwes
> Han a lippe of owre byleue the liȝtloker, me thynketh,
> Thei shulde torne, who so trauaille wolde to teche hem
> of the trinite. (B, XV, 386-8, 492-4)

Since they have been misled by Mohammed, the Church has a clear
duty to remedy the situation, but the Pope instead "with moneye
menteyneth men to werren vp-on cristine", and the absentee
bishops _in partibus infidelium_ make no missionary attempts:

> Holy men, as ich hope thorw help of the holy gost,
> Sholde conuerten hem to Crist and Cristendom to take.
> Alas! that men so longe on Makamede by-leyuen,
> So meny prelates to preche as the pope maketh,
> Of Nazareth, of Nynyve of Neptalym, of Damaske,
> That thei ne wendeth the wey as holy writ biddeth,
> _Ite in universum mundum_ sutthe ȝe wilneth the name
> To be prelates, and preche the passion of Iesus...
>
> Now sytthe that these Sarrasyns and al-so the Iewes
> Conne the ferste clause of oure by-leyue _Credo in deum patrem_,
> Prelates and preestes sholde preoue, yf thei myȝhte,
> Lere hem lytulum and lytulum _et in Iesum Christum, filium eius_
> Til thei couthe speke and spelle _et in spiritum sanctum_...[80]
> (C, XVIII, 185-92, 317-21)

Pacifist dissent from the crusades was sufficiently
widespread to lead Humbert of Romans to attempt to buttress the

official position of the Church. He tried to refute the
claim that war against the infidels was inconsistent with
Christianity. Pacifism, he argued, had been enjoined on
the Church when it was without secular power, but in the
changed situation it must defend itself with the sword.[81]
No one was in fact challenging the Church's right to defend
itself, but Humbert was attempting to invoke this principle
to justify the crusades, which were not at first sight defensive
in purpose. Aquinas was ambiguous on the validity of this
argument, declaring that it was not right to attempt to compel
unbelievers (as opposed to heretics or apostates) to believe,
but justifiable to make war against them "so that they do not
hinder the faith, by their blasphemies, or by their evil
persuasions, or even by their open persecutions."[82] This
does not explain whether the existence of the blasphemies was
in itself to be taken as a hindrance to the faith. Humbert
of Romans presumably thought it was; he demanded whether
those whose Koran blasphemed God did not deserve death, and
claimed that since they rejected all instruction the Saracens
clearly should be destroyed.[83]

The inappropriateness and futility of trying to force
belief on pagans through warfare was widely recognised in the
late Middle Ages, despite qualified approval of crusades.
Bonet condemned the granting of indulgences for general wars
against Saracens; Sir Gilbert Hay in the fifteenth century
decided that "faith sulde nocht be compellit be fors", but
that wars to recover the Holy Land or against unbelievers who

"mak ony molestacioun to cristyn that is in thair jurisdictioun"
were justified.[84] Southern ventures the opinion that "probably
the majority of men of intellect since the thirteenth century"
had rejected war as a solution to the problem of Islam.[85]

The numerous crusading expeditions that did in fact
set out in the fourteenth century achieved minor and short-
lived successes at best. Latin Christendom was not united
in its support of these efforts, the Italian maritime cities,
for example, on whom the crusaders depended for sea-power,
following independent economic interests of their own. Even
among the crusaders themselves strategic objectives were
sometimes unclear. The expedition humiliated at Nicopolis had
set out to aid King Sigismund of Hungary against the Turks,
but the crusaders insisted on a disastrous abandonment of
defensive positions because they had decided to attempt
the conquest of the Holy Land.[86]

The resilience of the idea of the crusade in the
fourteenth century, in the face of these theoretical and
practical falterings, lay partly in its usefulness in the
internal affairs of Christendom. The wish that Christians would
stop fighting among themselves and start fighting the infidels
had become a common formula for deploring wars within Europe.[87]
Dante's oblique attacks on the Papacy for the continuing
power of Islam and the failure to recover the Holy Land, and
his onslaught on Boniface VIII for allowing the loss of Acre
while preaching crusades against Christians, resulted from
a desire to chastise Christendom more than from a direct concern

with the problem of the East.[88] By Dante's time, Sir
Maurice Powicke comments, although "some regarded the
crusade as folly and many regarded it with indifference,...
it had come in the course of time to give meaning to public
life and to justify public policy, so that the idea of it was
accepted as a matter of course."[89] In the next century Wyclif
followed Dante in using the crusades to attack the Pope, though
in a rather different way. He warned against considering
crusades lawful just because they were approved by the papacy,
and considered such wars as no different in status from the
wars between Christian nations in the West. He declared that
the spirit of Islam was to be found as much among the leaders of the
Church as among Moslems; the Church, he concluded, should set
its own house in order before trying to destroy Islam.[90]

The idea of the crusade was a valuable symbol of the
need for the regeneration of Christendom and the pacification
of Europe. Southern notes that according to a story current
in fifteenth-century England the pagans proclaimed three reasons
for not accepting conversion: "firstly, the diversity and
contradiction of opinion among Christians in various sects and
on various subjects; secondly, the evil lives of the Christians;
and thirdly, the ill-faith of the Christians, and especially
the Venetians and Genoese".[91] Jean Gerson, who made many
references in his sermons to the obligation of knights to go on
a crusade, demonstrated his yet greater concern with European
affairs by telling the court of France, during preparations for
the Nicopolis crusade, that ending the Schism would be an act
more pleasing to God and more worthy of fame than the defeat of

the Saracens in battle.[92]

From this survey we can conclude that there was a prominent tradition of thought which rejected the military approach to the problem of the pagans. We cannot assume that practical crusade plans were unanimously either applauded or condemned by Chaucer's contemporaries. The practical implications of Chaucer's crusading knight must therefore remain unclear. We must reject as unsubstantiated Hatton's claim that Chaucer could rely on his audience to see in his presentation of an ideal knight as a crusader an endorsement of current crusade plans. Nevertheless it is clear that the crusade remained an important symbol of Christian duty on an individual and collective basis. The Knight of the General Prologue is a fully positive figure no doubt, but I suggest that his crusade activities contribute in a symbolic rather than a practical way to the positive effect: they indicate a right spiritual orientation which is quite independent of practical achievements. That it was possible for the crusader to be a positive symbol in this way even for those who opposed or were equivocal towards actual crusades is clear from the example of Chaucer's friend Gower, whose attitude to the crusade I shall now briefly examine.

6. Gower on the Crusades

In book three of the Confessio (concerned with Wrath), Amans asks whether the strictures of his confessor, Genius, against war also apply to the crusades:

> To passe over the grete See
> To werre and sle the Sarazin,
> Is that the lawe? (CA, III, 2488-90)

the bishops and those of Bacon on the killing of Saracens:

> And forto slen the hethen alle,
> I not what good ther mihte falle,
> So mochel blod thogh ther be schad.
> This finde I writen, hou Crist bad
> That noman other scholde sle.
> What scholde I winne over the Se,
> If I mi lady loste at hom?
> Bot passe thei the salte fom,
> To whom Crist bad thei scholden preche
> To all the world and his feith teche:
> Bot now thei rucken in here nest
> And resten as hem liketh best
> In all the swetnesse of delices.
> Thus thei defenden ous the vices,
> And sitte hemselven al amidde;
> To slen and feihten thei ous bidde
> Hem whom thei scholde, as the bok seith,
> Converten unto Cristes feith.
> Bot hierof have I gret mervaile,
> Hou thei wol bidde me travaile:
> A Sarazin if I sle schal,
> I sle the Soule forth withal,
> And that was nevere Cristes lore.   (IV, 1659-81)

Genius is caught in a contradictory position, but it
is not here that Gower himself is inconsistent. Genius is
right in his original condemnation of the crusade, and no
attempt is made to counter his arguments; but he is wrong
in his later advocacy of it, where he starts from a false premise
about the primary importance of love. To understand this we need to
recognise that the Confessio is a working out of the incompa-
tibility of carnal and divine love, culminating in the eighth
book where Genius recommends the lover to seek spiritual love,
and Cupid withdraws the fiery lance from his heart. By looking
in the mirror which Venus gives him the Lover realises at last
his true state; Reason, hearing that "loves rage was aweie",
comes to him and makes him "sobre and hol ynowh". Advised
by Venus to leave her service and go "ther vertu moral duelleth",
he is able at last to be absolved by Genius (VIII, 2792-940).

The Confessor rejects the legality of crusades of this kind on the basis of the teaching of Christ and the example of the apostles, and adds that they are in any case counter-productive:

> To preche and soffre for the feith,
> That have I herd the gospell seith;
> Bot forto slee, that hiere I noght.
> Crist with his oghne deth hath boght
> Alle othre men, and made hem fre,
> In tokne of parfit charite;
> And after that he tawhte himselve,
> Whan he was ded, these othre tuelve
> Of hise Apostles wente aboute
> The holi feith to prechen oute,
> Whereof the deth in sondri place
> Thei soffre, and so god his grace
> The feith of Crist hath mad aryse:
> Bot if thei wolde in other wise
> Be werre have broght in the creance,
> It hadde yit stonde in balance.
> And that mai proven in the dede;
> For what man the Croniques rede,
> Fro ferst that holi cherche hath weyved
> To preche, and that the swerd received,
> Wherof the werres ben begonne,
> A gret partie of that was wonne
> To Cristes feith stant now miswent:
> Godd do therof amendement,
> So as he wot what is the beste.   (III, 2489-2515)

In the next book, on Sloth, Genius shifts his position. He is talking about the labours a man should do for love of a woman: the lover should go overseas to fight to win the praise of heralds and ensure that "tidinge of his worthinesse" reaches his lady (IV, 1608-44). He must venture

> Somtime over the grete Se:
> So that be londe and ek be Schipe
> He mot travaile for worschipe
> And make manye hastyf rodes,
> Somtime in Prus, somtime in Rodes,
> And somtime into Tartarie.   (IV, 1626-31)

When the lover is put to shrift on the question of his idleness in this matter, he turns Genius's own arguments in the previous book against him, paraphrasing also the comments of Langland on

The lover's sins turn out to have been offences against
reason and divine love, caused by his commitment to
carnal love.[93]

In the case of the discussion of the crusade,
Genius's function appears to be to point out to Amans
that if he wants to be a servant of Venus (which he should
not be) he had better go on a crusade motivated by the
desire to win fame and love. The apparent inconsistency
in his position is picked up by his pupil, and the implica-
tion is that Genius's original condemnation of the crusades
is to be upheld. Going on a crusade for fame and love
only compounds the offence. In the Mirour de l'Omme
Gower attacks these two worldly motives, for going on
such expeditions:

> O chivaler, je t'en dirray,
> Tu qui travailles a l'essay
> Devers Espruce et Tartarie.
> La cause dont tu vas ne say,
> Trois causes t'en diviseray,
> Les deux ne valont une alie:
> La primere est, si j'ensi die
> De ma prouesce enorguillie,
> 'Pour loos avoir je passeray';
> Ou autrement, 'C'est pour m'amye,
> Dont puiss avoir sa druerie,
> Et pour ce je travailleray'. (MO, 23893-904)

Gower's position on the conquest of pagans,
when fully stated, is clearly one of opposition. Yet
in a number of instances he makes brief references
in support of the crusades, and John Fisher even implies
that his support of them was unequivocal.[94] The
Vox Clamantis, for example, claims that Christ

is heir to the Holy Land through his mother's line of
descent, and scornfully remarks that if Christ wishes to lay
claim to his property he will have to do so himself, since
Christians are too busy fighting each other to evict the
pagan intruders who pay no tribute:

> Nos neque persona neque res repetendo mouemus
> Bella viris istis, lex ibi nostra silet:
> Non ibi bulla monet, ibi nec sentencia lata
> Aggrauat, aut gladius prelia noster agit:
> Que sua sunt Christus ibi, si vult, vendicet ipse,
> Proque sua bellum proprietate ferat.
> Nos ita longinquis non frangimus ocia guerris,
> It neque pro Cristi dote legatus ibi;
> Set magis in fratres, signat quos vnda renatos,
> Pro mundi rebus publica bella damus. (VC, III, 657-666)

In Praise of Peace laments the wars which have perpetuated the
Schism and suggests another outlet for the aggression of the
knights:

> And if men scholde algate wex wrothe,
> The Sarazins, whiche unto Crist be lothe,
> Let men ben armed ayein hem to fighte;
> So mai the knyht his dede of armes righte. (249-252)

Support for crusading is found also in the Mirour, where, as I
have mentioned, Gower opposes crusading when it is done to win
praise for prowess or the "druerie" of the beloved, but declares
that the third motive is a worthy one—the service of God:

> Ainz est par cause de celluy
> Par qui tous bons sont remery
> Solonc l'estat que chascun vaille.
> Ton dieu, q'a toy prouesce baille,
> Drois est q'au primer commencaille
> Devant tous autres soit servi;
> Car chivaler q'ensi se taille
> Pour son loer dieus apparaille
> L'onour terrin, le ciel auci. (MO, 23956-64)

The emphasis in these passages, however, is not on the crusades
themselves but on either the internal affairs of Christendom

or the motives of individual knights. In the <u>Vox</u> and
<u>In Praise of Peace</u> Gower uses conventional formulas about
the crusade to attack wars between Christians, while in
the <u>Mirour</u> he is concerned with the motives rather than
the actions of those who go on crusade. In this context
crusading is a sign of spiritual worthiness, and Gower is
quite happy to accept Godfrey of Bouillon, the hero of
the bloody capture of Jerusalem, as one of the exemplars of
perfect knighthood: strong and virtuous, "vers dieu et vers
le siecle auci" (<u>MO</u>, 23869-80).

The reason for this discrepancy was that Gower in-
herited the perfect knight and the crusader as symbols of
the proper use of authority in society and of spiritual
excellence, while being himself of a pacifist turn of mind.
His handling of the crusade motif is in fact only one
aspect of a broader duality in his work, between insistence
on the one hand that it is a knight's job to fight, and
denunciation of warfare on the other.

The <u>Mirour</u> contains a good example of the former
idea, in the form of an attack on knights who refuse to
fight, or who stay at home to prey on their neighbours while
others are seeking honour in France, Lombardy or Spain. Dis-
regarding to some extent the social realities of his day,
Gower insists on regarding the pursuit of civil duties as
an abnegation of knightly responsibility, inspired only by
greed. He considers that the knight's legal functions at
inquests and assizes are seen only as opportunities to take

bribes and seize lands. Knights who <u>do</u> fight, however,
should be free from civil duties and should receive great
privileges, including exemption from the normal sanctions
of the law.[95] The apparent insistence here on the virtue of
seeking honour in France, which can only be a reference to
the Hundred Years War, is reinforced by a comment that might
be taken as a condemnation of men like Chaucer's Knight:
knights should not go abroad to seek honour in arms when
their own country is engaged in a war with its neighbour:

> O chivaler qui vas longtein
> En terre estrange et quiers soulein
> Loenge d'armes, ce sachietz,
> Si ton paiis et ton prochein
> Ait guerre en soy, tout est en vein
> L'onour, qant tu t'es eslongez
> De ton paiis et estrangez:
> Car cil qui laist ses duetés,
> Et ne voet faire son certein,
> Ainz fait ses propres volentés,
> N'est resoun qu'il soit honourés,
> Combien qu'il soit du forte mein. (MO, 24061-72)

Since the knight's function in the divinely ordained
estates of society is to fight, fight he must. But when
Gower moves on to a consideration of the warrior in the
broader perspective of society as a whole a distinct contrast
is observable. He does not explicitly contradict himself,
but emphasis and tone are quite different: everyone now
wants to be a warrior, he claims, to the impairment of
justice in the country. The priest leaves the sacrament
and the labourer the plough: "Tous vont as armes travailler",
and everything is disrupted by war, to the destruction of
Holy Church. Wars are prolonged and opportunities for peace

ignored; Christians behave so cruelly that they cannot claim to believe in God. Knights and squires, among others, are the evildoers through whom the rest of the world has been caught up in madness (MO, 24073-180).

In the Confessio war is more formally condemned. The lover has asked about homicide, and has been informed that in war a man is permitted to kill, if necessary, in defence of "Himself, his hous and ek his lond". He then solicits judgment on "hem that dedly werres seche/In worldes cause and scheden blod" (CA, III, 2235-44). In reply, Genius invokes not the knight's duty to fight, but the injunctions of both the Old and New Testaments, as well as of nature, in favour of peace. The blessings of peace are contrasted with the evils of war. Those who initiate wars, he claims, find no worldly "winnynge", and if they do it in hopes of "hevene mede" they are probably disappointed there too:

> of such a grace
> I can noght speke, and natheles
> Crist hath comanded love and pes,
> And who that worcheth the revers,
> I trowe his mede is ful divers. (CA, III, 2286-90)

The recommendation in the Mirour that knights should be winning honour in France does not accord very satisfactorily with this condemnation of wars in "worldes cause".[96]

The duality revealed in Gower's comments on crusades and national wars, and the mixed nature of the crusade's reception by thinking men, strongly support the notion that the figure of the crusader, like that of the knight generally, commanded a symbolic affirmation which did not always extend to practical considerations. If, in isolation, ability

and willingness to fight indicated that knights were not
evading their duties, then their taking the cross represented
a right spiritual condition. They were in the most obvious
manner fighting for God and the Church, a fact which was not
effaced for most people, it seems, by any disapproval they
might feel for this manner of treating pagans. Moreover,
as we shall see, the figure of the Christian knight was a
powerful symbol at a variety of levels for the ideal Christian
life.

7. Chaucer's 'Miles Christi'

It is in this context, rather than in that of the
actual crusades and crusade projects of Chaucer's time, that
it is most helpful to set the Knight of the pilgrimage.
"Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre", remarks the narrator,
and goes on to list wars conducted by a probable variety of
temporal lords--and at least one knightly order--but without
any reference to a lord to whom the Knight might have been
feudally bound. The line is often assumed to refer to a
secular lord and secular wars, but Humbert of Romans
enumerates feudal service to God as a prime reason why
the nobility should espouse the cause of the crusade. The
noble holds his power ultimately from his liege lord, God,
and must give military service for the fief which he holds of
him. Kings held their power directly and solely from God,
and Throop cites several examples of poets telling kings
such as Louis VII and Louis IX that they should do service for
their tenure by taking the cross. One poem goes so far as

to suggest that a king who did not crusade was abandoning
his lord in battle and should therefore lose his fief.[97]

On the pilgrimage itself the Knight sustains the role
of miles Christi not explicitly but by upholding an appropriate
attitude towards the things of this world. As the representative
of temporal power and possession—subordinated to spiritual
ends—he tells a tale which, as some commentators have pointed
out, is both a study of the right conduct of the ruler and
an exemplification of the need to view the events and possibilities
of worldly life in the perspective of a Boethian providence.
As the foremost figure of temporal power, he intervenes to
restore peace between the Host and the Pardoner, though
Hatton's argument that he demonstrates the knight's duty
to save the Church from those who would emasculate it,
however corrupt the actual state of the Church, is perhaps
rather forced.[98] The Host has, after all, disclaimed any
intention of further "pleye" with the Pardoner, and the
Pardoner himself represents a much greater threat to the
integrity of the Church than men like the Host, for all
their superficial profanity.

The Knight's other appearance is his interruption of
the Monk, which has been variously interpreted since Malone
attacked him for his discourtesy and philistine literary
tastes.[99] Dean Ebner argues that the Knight's impatience
results from his high position as a conqueror on Fortune's
wheel, and his optimistic and active temperament; he is a
man "whose own continued successes have caused him to dodge,

at least for the present, the imminent and tragic reversals
of affluence and the pride of life".[100]   This view involves
misreadings of the tales of both Knight and Monk. As R. E.
Kaske has pointed out, the Monk is in many respects a
parody of knighthood; his view of Fortune is quite inadequate
in the Boethian terms which the "Knight's Tale" has invoked,
whereas stories of "joye and greet solaas", such as the Knight
calls for, can at least give "a true account of simple good
fortune", and may also "represent with a greater degree of
poetic truth the reality of an ordered and ultimately
beneficent universe".[101]   The "Monk's Tale" itself, Hatton
argues, though promising stories of "popes, emperours, or
kynges", pointedly focuses on knights in an attempt by the
Monk to 'quit' the Knight.[102]   This is not altogether
convincing. The brief history of Pierre de Lusignan does
indeed refer to his "chivalrie", and we are told in a
commonplace phrase that Alexander "was of knyghthod and of
fredom flour"; Caesar, through his "knyghthod", kills the
followers of Pompey, who "of the orient hadde al the chivalrie"
--but these are allusions to simple military capacity as
much as to the institution of knighthood.[103]   However,
Hatton analyses well the way in which the Monk's simplistic
approach makes the exercise of temporal lordship meaningless
and the process of listening to the fate of rulers a totally
unprofitable one. His conclusion that the Monk has denied
the function of knights is ultimately justified since, as we
have seen, the knight is emblematic of rulership and the

wielding of secular power.[104]

Once the pre-eminent importance of the Knight's
motivation rather than his actions is established, the
most important feature of the contrast between him and the
Squire is naturally to be sought in their different motives.
The latter has fought well "In hope to stonden in his lady
grace". Like so many others among Chaucer's knightly
characters the Squire is first and foremost a "lovyere",
who loved "So hoote" that he regularly stayed up all night.
Besides fighting in France he has displayed his specifically
knightly skills in the joust, which several critics have
linked with his amorousness.[105] Aeneas jousts as part of
his knightly service to Dido; Arveragus jousts on returning
to the arms of Dorigen; Aurelius is shown an illusion of
"knyghtes justing in a playn" just before he is made to
imagine himself dancing with his beloved; Troilus expresses
through the joust his joy at the consummation of his love;
the drunken and bawdy Cook is invited by the Manciple
to "justen atte fan"; and the venereal passions about to be
expended in Theseus's tournament are celebrated the previous
day "in Venus heigh servyse" by jousting and dancing.[106]

As an aspect of chivalric life the Squire's tendencies
have come recently under attack. Hatton and others have seen
the Knight and Squire as being sharply opposed, representing
worthy and unworthy manifestations of chivalry respectively.[107]
Yet a man as familiar with the historical background to
chivalry as Kervyn de Lettenhove could describe him as

"parfait modèle des écuyers comme son père était le modèle des chevaliers".[108] For the moment we may simply remark the clear contrast between the Knight's quasi-feudal service to God and the Squire's service of his lady, and the extraordinarily salient position in which it is placed, at the very opening of the tales. I hope to show that the contrast is a crucial one for a large number of medieval writings, imaginative and otherwise, on chivalric subjects, and is also a key to the theme of knighthood in the Canterbury Tales and others of Chaucer's works. The topic of chivalry in the tales emerges as the exploration of contrasting kinds of knighthood and their symbolic connotations rather than the juxtaposition of knightly and non-knightly social viewpoints.

A full understanding of the significance of the contrast, however, and of the connotations of the alternatives represented by the Knight and the Squire, requires a return to the ideological background of chivalry to examine the precedents for the Squire's interpretation of the knightly role. We shall find that love comprised by no means the positive element of chivalry that many modern commentators have assumed it was.

IV

THE CHIVALRY OF LOVE

1. _Love as an Aspect of Chivalric Ideology_

The knight's role as lover is entrenched in the cultural
imagination of later generations. "Chivalry", writes W. A.
Nitze, "...was a social institution based on the relation-
ship between the sexes." Auerbach commented that, at least
in the romances, love is "an essential and obligatory ingredient
of knightly perfection". "Le but le plus ordinaire des
prouesses chevaleresques", noted Albert Pauphilet, "est, comme
on sait, la conquête de l'amour."[1] It comes therefore as an
initial surprise to find the subject largely neglected in
medieval writings on chivalry. The neglect is not confined
to clerical treatises: the Lady of the Lake, for example,
has nothing to say about love in her exposition of the duties
of knighthood in the Prose _Lancelot_.[2] Malory is similarly
silent on this point in Arthur's declaration of the duties
of the knights of the Round Table.[3] In addition none of the
knight's practical functions required or presupposed the
participation of women.

The romantic legacy is not of course entirely
deceptive. At an imaginative and symbolic level the knight
as lover represents an important and recurrent motif, and
not only in works of fiction. In view of the importance

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of knighthood as an epitome of secularity this is scarcely
surprising. No reference to specifically medieval ideas is
needed to explain the centrality of romantic love in any
exploration of the possibilities of worldly fulfilment.
Studies of chivalry, however, have tended to treat love as a
separate and partly autonomous branch of chivalric ideology,
existing in sharp contrast to many of the ideas referred
to in my discussion of the subject so far. 'Romantic'
chivalry has been seen as a chronological development of
a feudal and Christian institution, as a fictional counterpart
to the chivalry of history, as a symptom of chivalric
decadence, as an indicator of a shift in literary taste from
epic to romance, and even as a special geographical
development.[4] In some accounts, of course, these factors overlap.

I have argued that interpretations of chivalry
which separate 'imaginative' aspects from the 'central'
embodiments underestimate the way in which knighthood and
chivalry, from their earliest conceptual existence, were of
a primarily symbolic and figurative importance. The imaginative
elements should be considered as integral parts of a concept
which was gradually expanded and elaborated, and which assimilated
—and found itself the focus for—external ideas. The great
interest in love as a literary theme in the twelfth century,
and the increasing importance of the concept of courtesy in
society, especially with regard to the treatment of women, were
naturally reflected in chivalry, especially since one of its
functions was to provide the nobility with a pattern

of conduct. In practical terms the inclusion of love within
the penumbra of chivalric associations gave rise eventually
to the idea that a knight might have a 'lady' to whom he
would dedicate his acts of valour. Geoffrey of Monmouth,
describing the beginnings of coat-armour, notes that women
sometimes wore the colours of their knight, but would not
love any who had not been tested in combat three times. This
practice, he declared, made the women more chaste and the
men more worthy:

> Ad tantum etenim statum dignitatis britannia
> tunc reducta erat quod coma luxu ornamentorum
> facecia incolarum cetera regna excellebat.
> Quicumque uero famosus probitate miles in eadem
> erat unius coloris uestibus atque armis utebatur,
> facete etiam mulieres consimilia indumenta habentes.
> Nullius amorem habere dignabantur nisi tercio in
> milicia probatus esset. Efficiebantur ergo caste
> & meliores & milites pro amore illarum probiores...[5]

In the majority of cases this fashion probably
lacked any important practical dimension. The extent to
which actual knights felt that the service of a lady
represented a significant part of their motivation in engaging
in knightly activities is entirely dubious. The life of
a professional military knight was on the whole a matter-of-fact
business, as Keen's researches have shown, blending economic
factors with personal duty and a certain optional element of
idealism.[6] Crusades depended for knightly manpower largely
on piety and economic need, which led landless knights to
seek fiefs or simply wages overseas. Throop concludes that
"there is nothing in vernacular poetry to substantiate the
statement that women urged men to go on crusades as a proof

of love. On the contrary, it is clear that women opposed the taking of the cross." Understandably, there are a number of crusade lyrics in which the knight or his lady lament the separation caused by a crusade, express their sense of being torn between duty to God and love for each other, or even reproach God for calling away the knight.[7] Admittedly, many examples of acts of courtesy by knights towards women in the course of warfare are mentioned by the chroniclers (along with acts of barbarity), but such acts were enjoined on knights by their original vows to defend the helpless, and need not be seen as manifestations of a special kind of chivalric obligation. The knight's duty to champion distressed women remains recognisably a part of broad chivalric obligation even when it has somewhat the appearance of a cult, as in Boucicaut's order of the Dame blanche de l'écu vert, the main function of which was to provide champions for women in need.

Significantly, the only area of practical knightly activity which appears to have been influenced by the idea of fighting to win the praise of a lady is the tournament, where the various excrescences and artifices of chivalry could be expressed practically in a world fairly insulated from the pressures of reality. By the time of William Marshal in the twelfth century, tournaments had been sufficiently formalised to be occasionally watched by ladies, who might present prizes.[8] This was a natural part of the development of the tournament into a social spectacle rather than a

merely military occasion. Monmouth ascribes to women a
prominent role in the development of the tournament: "Mox
milites simulachrum proelii sciendo equestrem ludum componunt,
mulieres in edituo murorum aspicientes in furiales amoris
flammas ioci irritant."[9] The role of amorous passion in
the proceedings, however, would seem to have been severely
limited in view of Monmouth's remark (already quoted) about
the way such interaction increased the ladies' chastity.
In the sporting atmosphere of the tourney, such exuberance
could have full rein, and such gestures as the wearing of
favours be indulged in a not altogether serious way. Froissart,
for example, describes how the sixty knights who jousted
against all comers at Smithfield in 1390 were each led from
the Tower of London on a silver chain by a lady.[10]

It is hardly to be believed, however, that knights
often participated in tournaments for the sake of ladies.
The French squire who, according to Froissart, challenged
a group of Englishmen at the siege of Thori-en-Biausse to
joust for the love of their ladies, was no doubt primarily
interested in exercise; the ladies are not heard of again.[11]
Moreover, such activities were often viewed in a reductive
way. Ruth Harvey describes an Italian manuscript illumination
in which the female spectators at a tournament are portrayed
raising their skirts to display their bodies to the combatants.[12]
In Handlyng Synne, Robert Mannyng of Brunne attacked the
practice of knights fighting for women in tournaments as

mere folly and lechery:

> ȝyt ys here dame lecherye
> Of here cumþ alle here maystrye.
> Many tymes, for wymmen sake,
> Knyghteys tournamentys make,
> And whan he wendyþ to þe tournament
> She sendyþ hym sum pryuy present,
> And byt hym do for hys lemman
> Yn vasshelage alle þat he kan
> So ys he bete þere, for here love,
> þat he ne may sytte hys hors aboue,
> þat peraventure yn alle hys lyue
> Shall he neuer aftyr þryue.[13]

Turning from chivalric practice to theory, we find
little justification for the idea of a separate chivalry of
love, and little support for those who, like J. A. Symonds,
would summarise chivalric idealism as the service of "Dieu
et ma Dame".[14] Naturally love had no part in the monastic
ideals of knighthood enjoined on the Templars by St. Bernard,
though Bernard probably did not anticipate all knights living
monastic lives. The homiletic tradition represented by
Jacques de Vitry and Peter of Blois, and carried on in
fourteenth-century England by men like Bromyard and Rypon,
denounced the general luxury and indulgence of knights, but
did not pay any exceptional degree of attention to love or
lechery. Oppression and greed were the offences of authority
which caused the preachers, and the poor for whom they often
spoke, the greatest affront.[15] John of Salisbury attacked
lasciviousness only as part of the general softness and
delicacy of the soldiers of his time.[16] Lull emphasised
lechery and avarice as the two sins knights were most prone
to, but not in terms which would indicate that knights had

any extraordinary reputation for sexual conquest: "To requyre foly of the wyf of a knyȝt/ ne tenclyne her to wickednesse/ is not the honour of a knyght."[17]

Some later writers show more awareness of dalliance as a knightly preoccupation, but are hardly sympathetic. Wyclif declared that the knights and gentry were especially "smyttid wiþ lecchorie...as if þei holde hit bot a gamen, one to lye by oþers wife", and provided an unflattering explanation of the belief that love might lead to an increase of martial prowess: "ffor, as philosoforis seyn, bothe mon and beestis ben pure batelouse in time of þis dede; and men bi þis fals luf ben made pure hardy to assayle hor enmyes, by foly þat ledes hom."[18] Henry de Bracton considered unchastity one of the things that knights were specifically ordained to fight against. He explains the practice of a king giving sword-belts to his officers with the comment, "Belts gird the loins of such that they may guard themselves from the luxury of wantonness, for the wanton and unchaste are abominable before God."[19]

The advice of Christine de Pisan to the young knight is to avoid lechery and love: "Of Venus in no wise make thi goddesse". Conversely, in Le Livre du duc des vrais amans, Christine warns women not to participate in romantic relations with knights for the sake of inspiring them to valorous deeds. A married noblewoman about to enter into an affair with a duke is counselled on the dangers of such a proceeding: men say that they are serving their ladies when they fight, but in

fact they are serving themselves by winning honour and renown, while their ladies' reputations are ruined. Nevertheless a temperate acquaintance with Cupid—in the form of a knight's love for a "wise, wurschipfull lady"—is said in the _Othea_ to be permissible.[20]

Geoffroy de la Tour Landry, a fourteenth-century knight banneret, addressed himself to the subject in a popular book written for the education of his daughters.[21] His comments are cast in the form of a debate between himself and his wife, in which the wife's arguments, which are longer and more cogent, are clearly intended to represent the writer's point of view. The knight declares that a lady may have paramours under certain circumstances, both for her own gaiety and for the sake of her lover, who "is the better therefore, and more gay and Joly; and also the more encouraged to excercyse hymself more ofte in armes". The wife dismisses this as the common sophistry of men who want to seduce women, the "sport and esbatement of lordes and of felawes". The real motives of men who take up arms, she argues, is "for to drawe unto them the grace and vayne glory of the world". She concedes that a woman may love and take some pleasure in love, but that it should not master her and lead her into "somme fowle and shamefull delyte". The knight reiterates that a man can become a good and valiant knight through love, and that a man of low degree can be thus "enhanced". His wife replies that a knight may love a lady "by worshyp and honoure only", but that physical embraces are forbidden. Elsewhere in the book (ch. 23) the knight warns his daughters

against involvement with persuasive but faithless knights,
and tells a story about Boucicaut to illustrate his point.

Kilgour regards this as a provincial and naively
pious point of view in its opposition to what he takes to
be the central,'courtly' tradition of chivalry.[22] But the
moderate conclusion of the Chevalier's discussion, which
recognises the secularity of the knight's occupation, and seeks
to guide him into a right approach to love rather than simply
to denounce lechery, is not really at variance with the
sentiment of other works of the time which are decidedly
not provincial or abnormally pious. Geoffroi de Charny,
for example, believed that the love of a woman might well be
a stimulus to knightly endeavour, and he lists it among other
knightly motives; ultimately, however, the idea is stringently
qualified.

As an example of the beneficent power of love he
presents the case of knights who are "en leur commencement
si nice que il ne cognoissent mie la grant honneur qu'il
pourroient acquérir pour les fais d'armes", but who instead
"mettent leur cuer en amer par amours". Their ladies,
however, "ne les veulent mie laisser séjourner, ne perdre
leur temps d'avoir tel honneur, comme d'onneur d'armes".
They therefore send them off to acquire honour, perform
noble deeds, and win praise—"et les très-bonnes dames aussi
qui ainsi les ont fais et par qui ils se sont fais".[23]
Similarly, Geoffroi asserts that by participation in
various kinds of social recreation knights learn the basis
of the honour they must seek:

Car en teles compaignies et telx gieux et
esbatemens prennent les bonnes gens d'armes
leurs bons commencemens que regars et désir,
amour, pensée et souvenir, gayeté de cuer et
joliveté de corps les met en la voie de
l'encommencement à ceulx qui onques n'en
auroient eu cognoissance de faire et parfaire
les grans biens et honnours dont li bon se
sont fais.[24]

Love is in effect advantageous for the knight only
when it leads him to seek honour. Honourable love is
"li droit estat de ceulx qui cel honour veulent acquérir",
but Geoffroi warns that love must be compatible with the
guarding of the knight's honour and "bons estas", and
especially of the lady's honour. The knight should not
boast of his love, for "la plus secrète amour est la plus
joïeuse et la plus durable et la plus loyale", yet the
woman's honour will become the greater in accordance with
the increasing worthiness of the knight she has inspired.
In the case of dishonourable love, by contrast, "le chaitif
maleureux" prefers to remain with the sensual delights of
his loved one rather than campaign. This kind of love
"ne puet rien valoir, ne durer longuement, que les dames
ne s'en repentent et retraient d'une part, et li chaitifs
de droicte honte". An honourable love, on the other hand,
is one in which the knight overcomes dangers and seeks
renown not in order to attract the lady, but "pour lequel
haut honnour ils pensent à desservir d'avoir l'amour de
leurs dames". Knights should love their souls and their
honour much more than their bodies, and any concessions to
the gratification of the body will make them unfit for service,

depriving them of endurance and of courage, since they will
be afraid to die.[25]

Geoffroi de Charny thus presents in terms of honour
the same distinction between chaste (or married) and con-
cupiscent love as is made by the Chevalier de la Tour Landry.
A similar contrast appears in the chronicle life of Boucicaut.
Besides entertaining ladies with his versatile social accomplish-
ments, the Marshal, according to his biographer, was inspired
by the love of his lady to win many jousts and tournaments,
for love promotes courage and "le desir de l'honnorable
poursuite chevalereuse".[26] Boucicaut is no ascetic in the
chronicle, but his love is definitely a chaste one. Only
a certain kind of love, the chronicler declares, will inspire
valour and lead the knight to live an altogether better life:
it must be based on honour, and its object must be a model
of virtue, worthy of being loved. Boucicaut, in undertaking
feats of arms and reforming his manners, is inspired by a
desire to be worthy of his beloved rather than to make
himself more physically desirable. When he has proved
himself worthy he marries her. Theirs is not a concupiscent
love, for such a love cannot last, and renders a man unfit
for knightly duties.[27]

In Froissart's chronicles, however, this clear
distinction between worthy and unworthy love is not apparent.
Instead we occasionally find simple affirmations of love's
desirability as far as knights are concerned. Sir Eustace

d'Aubrecicourt, Froissart claims, was inspired to deeds of
prowess by the love of a woman, and the success of a
French knight, Sir Regnault de Roye, at the famous jousts
held by Boucicaut at St. Inglevert is ascribed partly to the
fact that he "amoit par amours belle dame joeune et frisque,
dont en tous estas son affaire valoit grandement mieulx."
Edward III's infatuation with the Countess of Salisbury is
said to be a good thing for the realm, since it is likely to
promote the king's gaiety and martial vigour--making him more
amiable to his friends and more formidable to his foes--and
to lead to more jousting and feasting.[28]

There is perhaps something not altogether serious
about these courtier-like complimentary flourishes. But
there is no mistaking the serious tone of one of the severest
critics of fighting for love, John Gower, who attacked the
notion in each of his three major works. The Confessio,
though indirect in method, is as conclusively negative on
the subject as the other two. The subject is discussed in
the section on Sloth, which includes Genius's argument
that taking up arms is an integral part of the lover's
task. The lover, as I have already noted, challenges
Genius, and the subsequent dialogue deserves further
scrutiny here. The lover concludes that, though he would "fle
thurghout the Sky" if his lady should bid him, he will not
put any faith in the effectiveness of fighting per se. It
would certainly be foolish, he continues, to lose one's chance
of love by going on a foreign expedition (CA, IV, 1683-1770).

The Confessor then attempts to support his original assertion with arguments and examples, but in the process leads himself into various absurdities.

Attempting to answer the lover's objection that Achilles rejected war in favour of love, he declares that

> Whan that knyhthode schal be werred,
> Lust mai noght thanne be preferred;
> The bedd mot thanne be forsake
> And Schield and spere on honde take.   (IV, 1805-8)

This, however, is only a restatement of the traditional distinction between self-indulgence and the demands of war, setting love and fighting in opposition rather than linking them. In support of this position, Genius tells how Ulysses was obliged to leave his wife and go off to Troy: "For betre it were honour to winne/Than love" (IV, 1867-8). Protesilaus preferred "to deien as a knyht" at Troy than to listen to the blandishments of his wife and stay ignobly at home. Saul went to his death in battle despite Samuel's prophecy. These stories clearly do not support in any way the Confessor's original ostensible argument that the lover should take up arms in order to win his lady. As he himself declares, the knights fought for their honour, while their women attempted to dissuade them from fighting:

> Lo, thus upon the worldes fame
> Knyhtode hath evere yit be set.   (IV, 1932-3)

Genius continues to move away from his original assertion about the desirability of fighting to further love in his subsequent consideration of the education of Achilles,

from which he concludes

> That the corage of hardiesce
> Is of knythode the prouesce. (IV, 2015-6)

He has seemingly abandoned his argument that love is the

inspiration of prowess in favour of the more reasonable

one that 'hardiesce' is its foundation. But he attempts

to return to his original theme by claiming that love is at

least the proper reward of prowess. Here he fares no better

in his choice of illustrations: Lancelot's love destroys a

whole kingdom (IV, 2035), and Hercules wins Deianeira by

fighting Achelous, only to be killed by the poisoned shirt

she sends him.[29] Penthesilea, in a comic inversion of roles,

comes armed to Troy,

> The love of Hector forto sieke
> And for thonour of armes eke, (IV, 2141-2)

but fails in the former objective, while in the latter case her

venture ends in her death at the hands of Pyrrhus. Philemenis

fares somewhat better when he comes to the aid of Troy, being

eventually paid a yearly tribute of three maidens from the

Amazons; but receiving women as spoils of war is surely

no more than a parody of the idea of being rewarded for

deeds of arms with love.

Genius moves nonetheless to his conclusion:

> The wommen loven worthinesse
> Of manhode and of gentilesse. (IV, 2197-8)

Since he is obliged to define "gentilesse" in terms of

virtue (2204 ff.), his argument becomes a general warning

against sloth rather than a specific defence of deeds of arms.

The Confessor does not give up, however, and concludes doggedly:

> For ever yit it hath be so,
> That love honeste in sondri weie
> Profiteth, for it doth aweie
> The vice and as the boke sein,
> It makth curteis of the vilein,
> And to the couard hardiesce
> It yifth, so that verrai prouesse
> Is caused upon loves reule
> To him that can manhode reule.   (IV, 2296-304)

This is a carefully qualified conclusion, bearing little resemblance to Genius's original point, which he has been implicitly obliged to abandon; "love honeste" is a beneficent force in the sense that a woman who loves "worthiness/ Of manhode and of gentilesse" (in the sense of virtue) may inspire a knight "that can manhode reule" with "hardiesce" and "prouesse" to prove worthy and virtuous rather than remaining in idleness.[30]

The <u>Mirour</u> also attacks those who say they are fighting for love:

> 'C'est pour m'amye,
> Dont puiss avoir sa druerie,
> Et pour ce je travailleray.'   (<u>MO</u>, 23902-4)

Good will come only from "la prouesce q'est divine"; even if you conquer the heart of your beloved your reward is but vanity,

> Car huy es en prosperité
> Et l'endemain tout est failliz.   (23951-2)

This position is greatly expanded in the fifth book of <u>Vox Clamantis</u>, where Gower affirms the traditional functions of knighthood in society, stresses the necessity of its allegiance to God and the common good, and deplores its present greed and sloth. These latter failings, however, are

seen mainly in terms of the knights' propensity to lust
after women. This complaint dominates all others, and is
sustained for over five hundred lines (V, 19-556).

A conqueror, Gower declares, is without honour if a
woman's love can in turn conquer him, and if Venus directs
his endeavours. Woman is a fight that a knight cannot win;
to escape captivity he must avoid her. Love is a source of
endless conflicts—"egra salus, vexata quies, pius error/
Bellica pax, vulnus dulce" (53-4):

> Infatuata scola reddens magis infatuatum
> Discipulum, cuius mens studet inde magis.   (V, 77-8)
>
> (A fatuous school turning out an even more fatuous
> pupil, whose mind applies itself the more diligently
> as a result.)[31]

The power of a beautiful woman is overwhelming; love cannot
be conquered, and the wounds a knight receives from it are
dishonourable and incurable. Almost every knight, Gower claims,
is now a slave to love, while the rest seek the world's praise.
A knight will give up everything that Nature or God has
given him—"Corpus, res, animam" (V, 264)—for the sake of
love, and then reproach Fortune for his lack of reward:

> Cum vicisse putet miles sibi vim mulieris,
> Hec et amore pio cuncta petita fauet,
> Vincitur ipse magis tunc quando magis superesse
> Se putat, et mulier victa revincit eum.   (V, 275-8)
>
> (When a knight thinks he has vanquished a woman's
> power, and with tender affection she grants every-
> thing he has asked, then he himself is thoroughly
> defeated, just when he thinks he is thoroughly
> victorious, and the conquered woman reconquers him.)

Gower concedes that the chaste love of a good woman
brings great benefits: "her noble husband dwells revered within

his gates...If knighthood were worthy, then the husband
would prepare himself for his ventures together with his
wife" (V, 303, 479-80). As in the Confessio he makes clear
ultimately that the worthy knight deserves the love of a
good woman. The contrast between good and bad women--and
hence right and wrong love--is seen in terms of that
between Rachel and Leah:

> Non valet hic dignus amplexibus esse Rachelis,
> Inclita quem Martis arma beare negant:
> Que speciosa viro tali concedit amorem,
> Errat et ignorat quid sit amoris honor.
> Lya magis feda pro coniuge congruit immo
> Tali, qui minime gesta valoris habet:
> Tales ad Lyam redeant et eam sibi iungant,
> Lya sit hic pauidus, qui nequit esse Rachel.
> Nullus ametur homo qui non est dignus amore,
> Sit set amoris egens qui negat eius onus:
> Non sine sollicito septenni temporis actu
> Captus amore Iacob colla Rachelis habet.   (V, 523-34)

> (The man whom Mars' glorious feats of arms do not
> delight cannot be worthy of Rachel's embraces. The
> handsome woman who yields her love to such a man
> makes a mistake, and does not know what honorable
> love is. Rather, the infamous Leah is more suitable
> for such a husband as has little use for deeds
> of valour. Let such men go to Leah and attach
> her to themselves; let the the timid fellow who
> cannot be Rachel's be Leah's. Let no man be loved
> who is unworthy of love, and let the man lack love
> who refuses its responsibility. When Jacob was
> smitten with love, he did not possess Rachel's
> embraces without the anxious labor of seven years'
> time.)

Gower's attitude to the subject of knighthood
and love, though generally disapproving, thus does allow
a certain scope to chaste love in the knight's achievement
of worthiness. But to read the passages in only a literal
sense is to miss a great deal of the point that is made. In
view of the evils of oppression and injustice that Gower

elsewhere catalogues in his remarks on knights, we are
presumably not intended to suppose that this most private of
vices (in social terms) is the main problem of the entire
estate, as the Vox seems to suggest. Gower does not go
into details about how the knight's subjection by love
practically affects his social duties, since the abuse of
love has wider implications than the merely practical.
Fisher points out the significance of the claim, made in
the last book of the Vox, that adulterous love has disrupted
social relations and overturned law and justice:

> For here adulterous, carnal love is taken as the
> principal reflection of selfish, temporal love
> (cupiditas, if one will, although the term is not
> mentioned), which brings all suffering into the
> world, and contrasts with selfless, divine love
> (caritas, again not so named), which leads to
> personal salvation, social justice, unity and
> peace.[32]

Fisher also notes that the expected discussion of lechery
in book VII is replaced by a 'digression' on the education
of a prince, which indicates that we are to see lechery as
emblematic of more than merely sexual failings.[33] We may
compare this to Christine de Pisan's allegorisation of Othea's
advice to Hector. Hector has been warned not to be subject
to Cupid, and Christine interprets this to mean that he
should not be bound to the things of this world.[34] Such a
habit of mind explains why Bishop Brinton, preaching at the
funeral of the Black Prince, attributed England's lack of
success in war to unchastity in high places.[35]

The comments of Gower on the incompatibility between

concupiscent love and knighthood are thus supported by a
traditional dichotomy between the two concepts. His is
no lone voice crying its opposition to the association of
ideas. On the evidence so far considered, therefore, we
find little justification for the common assumption that
love was an important aspect of chivalric ideas. Three main
attitudes are discernible in discursive writings: routine
condemnations of lechery, attacks on sensual love as tending
to negate the important knightly functions, and concessions
that an honourable love can help to influence a knight to
attain moral and physical worthiness--as long as the latter
is regarded as an end in itself rather than simply as a
means to the enjoyment of love. Such a finding cannot,
however, be considered conclusive, since it has commonly
been supposed that the erotic aspect of chivalry, necessarily
restricted in real life and in the writings of moralists,
achieved fuller expression in the romances. Since my approach
to chivalry stresses that its imaginative and symbolic
elements are as essential as any other, I shall consider
the romances in the same sort of perspective as the other
relevant materials, such as treatises, handbooks or chronicles.

     There is a further reason for examining the idea that
the romances present an account of chivalry radically
different from that of more sober sources. The idea of
chivalry has been often closely associated with the controversial
concept of 'courtly love', in Chaucerian criticism and elsewhere.
One of the two documents which are probably cited more often

than any others in support of the notion of courtly love
generally is a chivalric romance, Chrétien de Troyes'
Chevalier de la Charrette.[36] A study of the whole subject
of courtly love, however, is obviously beyond the scope of
this work. The romances that I will look at will be approached
from the specific perspective of chivalry, and I will attempt
to determine what they indicate about chivalry's assimilative
capacity with respect to love. In the case of some very
celebrated romances, which have been the object of enormously
complex and detailed studies, this selective interest may
seem to lead to a rather cavalier treatment. Nevertheless,
there are, I believe, some broad critical distinctions
bearing on the subject of chivalry which can with justice
be made. I shall start by looking at a selection of mostly
English romances which display a variety of attitudes towards
love.

2. Miscellaneous Romances

From a study of the Middle English romances Margaret
Gist concluded that "contrary to the somewhat generally
accepted and sentimentalised belief that woman was the
essential, the dominating influence in the chivalric age...
the romances show that she was a domestic creature, at best
a means to man's comfort and sexual satisfaction." Bruce
McCully agreed that the English romances generally place
little emphasis on women's influence over knights, and
Kurt Lippman denied the importance of passionate love in the
English literature of chivalry.[37] The sentiment of the author

of the _Sowdone of Babylone_, that

> he was neuere gode werryour
> That cowde not loue a-ryght:
> For loue hath made many a conquerour
> And many a worthy knighte,[38]

--a statement which, as we have seen, is somewhat ambiguous
in view of the distinction often made about what it is to
"loue a-ryght"-- is rare in the English romances.

The motif of a knight fighting in order to win a
lady is not in itself at all uncommon in romances, but it
normally functions in some way as a structuring device
rather than as a subject of thematic significance. Beves of
Hampton, for example, whose wanderings and combats range all
over Europe, surrenders early on in his romance to the amatory
advances of Josian, the daughter of the Saracen king who
has brought him up.[39] Periodically throughout the rest of
his career he is obliged to fight in her rescue or defence,
but he likes fighting more than anything else, and romantic
feelings are not usually dominant in his mind. Josian
is frequently abandoned to great hardships and at one point
Beves, having won another lady in a tournament, non-committally
decides to wait before transferring his allegiance to her in
case Josian (who has been imprisoned by an enemy) turns up
again. Josian's role is to provide Beves with a periodic
cause for vengeance, since his struggles are often initiated
by a fresh outrage inflicted on her. But the affair is not
conducted in the foreground of the story, and the romance does
not close with their final reunion.

Sir Eglamour of Artois is fairly tightly structured around the process by which the knight wins his lord's daughter; the romance consists of a series of adventures by which Eglamour eventually succeeds in being united with Christabelle.[40] But the hero's only real quality is prowess, and though a certain loyalty to his lady is necessary to sustain the plot it is not really emphasised as an element in Eglamour's motivation after his initial labours. Ipomadon similarly focuses almost continuously on the hero's struggle to win his lady--a beautiful heiress who has decided to bestow herself only on the knight of greatest prowess in Christendom, and with whom Ipomadon falls in love without seeing her. But, as with Eglamour, the amorous aspects of the romance remain on the level of plot structure.[41]

In Sir Degrevant, which describes a feud between land-lords of neighbouring English estates, the hero's falling in love with and eventual marriage to his enemy's daughter represents primarily the process by which the feud is ended and reconciliation solemnised. Degrevant's marriage is no more than a natural stage in his career, which we continue to follow until his wife dies and he goes off to an honourable death in the Holy Land.[42] The hero of Sir Launfal is chosen to be the lover of the faery Tryamour, but his virtues--preeminently largesse, as well as the obligatory prowess--are seemingly not important in gaining this privilege. Launfal's affair with Tryamour is significant not primarily for its erotic nature either, but as a quasi-divine intervention

by which the distressed Launfal, who has bankrupted himself
by his generosity and then been rejected by the Round Table
knights whom he had patronised, is restored to a position of
wealth. He is thus enabled to snub with impunity the immoral
Guinevere and, by implication, the whole ethos of the court.[43]

Some other romances, of course, like Sir Orfeo or
Floris and Blaunchflour, are in an independent sense love
stories, but in the few random examples I have mentioned
the passion of the chivalric heroes is merely a premise
which requires them to carry out certain tasks. Prowess is
juxtaposed with love, and both capacities exist independently
of each other, the heroes succeeding in their romantic
objectives because they are already invincible fighters.
We are given the sense that the knights deployed their
powers in a number of varied fields of activity, but that
the romancer has chosen to concentrate on that part of their
career in which they obtained wives. The implications of
the juxtaposition of love and prowess are not examined—a
fact which does not surprise us in what are basically tales
of adventure.

The use of love as a plot-structure for knightly
adventure is carried to absurd extremes in Froissart's long
romance, Méliador, where we are given a portrait of knightly
activity almost completely in terms of the winning of ladies
as a reward for martial prowess. The exclusion of other factors
makes this in fact an unusual romance, despite its imitative
nature in many other respects. But Froissart does not seem

concerned to do more than provide himself with an excuse for
writing a romance, and one hesitates to say more of _Méliador_
than that it reveals how standard a plot-formula the motif
of a knight fighting to obtain a lady had become.

The romance tells how Hermondine, daughter of the
King of Scotland, evades an unwelcome offer of marriage by
vowing to marry the knight of Arthur's court who proves most
valiant in a five-year quest. The poem is an account of this
quest, an obvious analogue to that of the Grail, with an
amatory purpose substituted for the religious one. We follow
the separate but interlinked adventures of various knights
embarked on the quest, who like the Grail knights come to be
seen as a fraternity--"les chevaliers de la quête". But it is
not of course really a quest for anything. The knights simply
aim to prove themselves valiant in a vacuum, where with one or
two exceptions they are not even provided with wrongs to
right or just causes to defend. There is no purpose to
their wanderings, which are punctuated by attendance at a
series of tournaments arranged especially for the furtherance
of the quest, like fixtures in a sports league schedule.

Eventually the quest itself becomes superfluous.
Méliador, the eventual winner, is admitted to clandestine
nocturnal meetings with the princess long before the outcome
of the contest is officially decided; his sister, Phénonée,
who has promised herself to the runner-up, having fallen
in love with one of the quest knights, has to persuade other
knights to challenge him (the combat ends in grievous wounds for

the challengers) so that he can be said to have won her by deeds of arms.[44] In the whole process there is no suggestion that knightly worthiness or skill has any other purpose than this.

There are, however, instances in which a knight's choice of the service of a lady as his first priority is given thematic significance and criticised. Guy of Warwick provides a good example.[45] Guy falls pathetically in love with Felice, his lord's daughter, who eventually softens towards him so far as to bid him go and win fame as a knight. This he does, and on his return Felice accepts him as "her knyght", but will not marry him in case he falls into sloth and she ceases to be for him an inspiration to perform great deeds of chivalry. Guy is forced to go abroad again despite the pleadings of his lord, his parents (whom he will not see again) and others. Once more he is universally successful, and only slightly reproaches Felice in his mind when some of his comrades are killed in an ambush laid for him by a man jealous of his success. After great adventures in which he always proves invincible, Guy eventually returns to marry her. After the marriage comes the moment of truth. On realising that all his killing has been for a woman's sake rather than God's, he abandons his wife and sets out for the Holy Land as a palmer. When he returns to defend the kingdom against the Danish giant Colbrand he fights in disguise, since he now cares nothing for fame. Finding Felice engaged in acts of charity and devotion, he retires to a hermitage

and they are reunited just before death.

The change in Guy from the service of love to the service of God is not presented merely as a development that is appropriate to his age, or as the result of weakness, disaster or the imminence of death. It is surely to confirm this impression that Guy fights his greatest battle *after* he has renounced love and fame. The earlier decision of Felice to enforce further service conflicts with more important loyalties; love-service as the exclusive object of the knight's activity is condemned by reference to both religious and social alternatives.

A satirical approach to the motif of the knight as lover is found in the thirteenth-century French chantefable, Aucassin et Nicolette. The youth Aucassin will not participate in knightly activities because he is in love, but consents eventually to fight in his father's war. Dreaming of Nicolette, he allows his horse to gallop straight towards the enemy and is easily captured. The practical consideration that he will thus be deprived of his mistress's sight enables him to fight free of his captors--a comic and reductive version of the idea that love makes a man valorous.[46] The lovers continue to find themselves at odds with the world's intransigence. A herd-boy treats with literal-minded scorn the transparent metaphor of a lost greyhound in which Aucassin describes his loss of Nicolette. Aucassin's love proves a distinct handicap in practical matters. He thinks so hard of Nicolette that he falls off his large horse and injures his

shoulder. Reunited at last, the lovers sail to Torelore,
a land of Rabelaisian oddity where everything--especially
the behaviour of the sexes--is inverted: the King gives
birth, while the Queen leads the army--in a battle fought
with apples, eggs and cheese. It is a suitable destination
for a couple who represent individually and together so
many inversions. The roles of knight and lover are here
clearly portrayed as incompatible.

It is not my intention to deny that love as a
motive for knightly deeds is a commonplace in the English and
French romances, but to argue that where it is more than
a mere plot-formula it is usually the object of qualification
or condemnation. Arguments to the contrary have however
been advanced, claiming that love was both mainspring and
object of the energies of knighthood in literature from the
twelfth century onwards. The stories most often seized
upon in support of this position are those associated with the
figures of Lancelot and Tristan--seemingly the most complete
examples of both chivalry's identification with love and the
right to love outside marriage. "As long as love-loyalty
was preserved", comments Margaret Gist, "the code apparently
excused disloyalty, equivocation, falsehood, deceit and
treachery in other relationships."[47]

Lancelot and Tristan, notes Heinrich Zimmer, "were
heroes of the same mettle, cursed and blessed by the destiny
of the same forbidden passion, each spellbound by the wife of
his liege."[48] The two knights were certainly closely linked

in the medieval mind, and the Lancelot legend in fact
developed to some extent from that of Tristan.[49] In
literary accounts the two pairs of lovers sustained a
symbiotic relationship with each other; in Malory, for instance,
as in the French Prose Tristan, the two knights display an
awareness of a special relationship between themselves, and
each couple looks to the other for justification and precedent.
Isolde makes the parallel explicit, declaring that "there
be within this londe but four lovers". When Tristram and Isolde
escape to England, Lancelot invites them to live at his castle
of Joyous Gard, and after the open breach between Arthur and
Lancelot, Bors advises the latter to follow Tristram's example
and take Guinevere there. The horn that tests wifely chastity,
which Lamorak sends to Mark to test Isolde, was originally
sent by Morgan le Fay to Arthur to test Guinevere.[50]

Many of the romances in which the two figures appear
are complex in their perspectives on the protagonists. But
outside romance they appear to have drawn fairly straight-
forward condemnation. We find Tristan in the Inferno, along
with Paolo and Francesca of Rimini, who were drawn to sin
while reading "di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse".[51] Gower's
Traitié isolates the two knights as examples of folly:

> Comunes sont la cronique et l'istoire
> De Lancelot et Tristrans ensement;
> Enqore naint lour sotie en memoire,
> Pour essampler les autres du present. (XV, 1-4)

But an equally important emphasis is that in Gower's marginal
summary, which states that both men are pre-eminent examples
of extreme suffering in a foolish cause: "Amantes ambo predicti

magno infortunii dolore dies suos extremos clauserunt."
For all the complexity of imaginative responses demanded
by the romances, I believe that Gower's judgment is essentially
that of most of the romances dealing with the figures of
Tristan and Lancelot. I shall turn first to the stories of
Tristan and Isolt, whose love affair, according to W. T. H.
Jackson, was throughout the Middle Ages "regarded as sinful
and destructive".[52] F. P. Pickering notes that the story of
Tristan is depicted in the tapestries of the Cistercian convent
at Wienhausen; it was a story which came to be regarded as
a useful embodiment of a serious moral warning.[53]

3. Tristan

Joseph Bédier has argued that all the earliest extant
versions of the Tristan story came from a common archetype
through an unknown number of intermediaries.[54] The attitude
of the archetype towards the love of Tristan and Isolt was
probably highly critical. Frederick Whitehead suggests that
it "depicted a world where crude violence and low subterfuge
prevailed, and where love at its highest was a criminal
infatuation and at its lowest an overmastering lust."[55]
The earliest surviving versions are fragments by 'Beroul'
(possibly Norman), Thomas (probably Anglo-Norman), and the
German, Eilhart von Oberg, all probably written in the
second half of the twelfth century. Marie de France wrote
a Tristan episode, and Chrétien de Troyes declares at the
beginning of Cligés that he produced a version of the story,

now lost. In the early thirteenth century came Gottfried
von Strassburg's poem and the French prose versions, which
resulted in Italian and Spanish prose redactions and that of
Malory. There is also a Norse Tristrams Saga and a late
thirteenth-century Middle English poem, Sir Tristrem.[56]

The remains of Eilhart von Oberg's work suggest that he
was attempting to show a great knight corrupted by an uncontroll-
able passion.[57] For Eilhart, love and knighthood appear to
have been a mutually destructive combination. Tristan is
a great knight initially, daring and formidable in his
pursuit of honour, but these qualities make him vulnerable to
degradation in love. He satisfies his love only at the
expense of his knightly honour, and his efforts to restore
his honour involve rejection of Isolt. Governal, his tutor and
friend, is the perfect foil--sensible, rational and stable.[58]

In Beroul's poem, however, the conflict between love
and chivalry is not really explored.[59] The lovers are not
condemned; indeed the poet is ostensibly their strong
partisan, bitterly condemning the attempts of Mark's barons
to stop the queen's adultery. God, he claims, endorses the
lovers as strongly as he does. A. Varvaro comments that
"religious and moral considerations are almost totally foreign
to Beroul's outlook on life, which tends towards evaluation
in completely human, material and social terms."[60] A poem
totally lacking in moral considerations, especially with such
a subject, is an anarchic prospect, and Varvaro's formulation
is perhaps an elaborate way of saying that the poem lacks any

coherent viewpoint at all, apart from its simple approbation of
the hero and heroine, and its applause of the various expedients
by which they stave off disaster. Isolt is often seen as a
cunning and deceitful wife, but she appears never to be troubled
by problems of conscience or conflicts of loyalty. When
the lovers repent, and tell Ogrin the hermit that they wish to
give up their life of sin, we sense the development of a moral
dimension. But Tristan and the hermit immediately start
scheming a deceitful way of setting matters to rights, based
on the assumption that no one will dare to incur a combat with
the renowned knight by publicly doubting his word (lines 2351 ff.).
The emergent moral perspective dissolves, and the repentence
of the lovers--despite the dramatic nature of their initial
remorse--turns out to be short-lived.

So many considerations are pointedly ignored by the
narrator's partiality that it is possible that the whole
love story is ironically conceived, but the evidence is hardly
convincing. Indeed it is not clear how far this version is
sufficiently individualised for us to expect in it evidence
of a unifying and controlling intelligence. The lack of a
moral perspective is matched by the inconsistencies of the
plot. The love affair carries on after the potion's effect
has supposedly worn off (2161 ff.); we are not told why
Mark finds the lovers sleeping with a naked sword between them;
one of the three barons is killed by Tristan in the forest of
Morrois but reappears later; Arthur's knights vow vengeance
on the three barons, but no more is heard of the matter; and

finally there is an entirely irrelevant episode in which it
is revealed that Mark has horse's ears. That part of the
appeal of the Tristan legend probably lay in straightforward
sympathy with the lovers is indicated not only by Beroul's
version but also by the Middle English Sir Tristrem, which
covers much the same ground as the archetype with great speed
and abruptness, and without a hint that Tristrem is anything
more or less than a hero.[61] The moral issues inherent in the
raw material of the story are avoided; as in Beroul's version,
the endorsement of the lovers does not arise from a context
within which the implications of their actions are examined or
the relative weight of their conflicting loyalties assessed.

The long prose romances, which were enormously
popular and comprised the standard version of the story from
the thirteenth century on, set the love affair in the midst
of the wider world of society at large, including Arthur's
realm as well as that of Mark.[62] The central focus is shifted
from the lovers towards the knightly career of Tristan. On the
one hand, sympathy for the lovers is made easier for the reader.
The pair fall in love before drinking the potion, and Isolt's
marriage to Mark is shown to be entirely inappropriate. In the
Italian Tavola Ritonda Tristan and Isolt are even forced to
marry before returning to Cornwall. Mark is represented as
malicious, cowardly and treacherous. He sends Tristan to
Ireland to fetch Isolt only in order to have him killed, and
in most versions it is he who murders Tristan. Loyalty to such
a man is hardly feasible.

Yet on the other hand the love is still clearly
seen as ultimately destructive in the prose versions, not
only of the lovers themselves but of the social world around
them. Innocent people are constantly engulfed in the disasters
it causes, and the corruption spreads until it embraces
the whole Arthurian world, which is destroyed through the
connected and analogous affair of Lancelot and Guinevere.
Arthur and his knights, in giving their whole-hearted
support to Tristan in his struggle against Mark, reveal
the assumptions that will eventually annihilate them.
As far as chivalry is concerned, the prose versions contain
a warning against immoderate passion. Like Lancelot, Tristan
is a knight of enormous worth, flawed by a failure to control
a love which is initially beneficent. He becomes enslaved
by his senses, and cannot succeed in the Grail quest. The
revelation of his fallibility in the sphere of love is
surely part of the point of the episode in which, after he
has fallen in love with Isolt, he is Mark's successful rival
for the adulterous love of the beautiful wife of Seguradés.[63]

The poems of Gottfried von Strassburg and his source
Thomas of Britain (the most substantial fragment of which
supplies the ending lacking in Gottfried's work) are usually
assumed to have introduced a new 'courtly' dimension to the
Tristan story, fully exploiting the possibility of sympathy
for the lovers, and elevating love to a level of meaning
that makes the conflict with feudal loyalty, chivalric duty,
and marital fidelity poignant but ultimately irrelevant.[64]

Modern interpretations of Gottfried's poem generally assume
that the kind of love he presents is essentially positive.
According to some commentators the human love of Tristan
and Isolt is a symbol and figuring of divine love; in
other views the poem sets up an ethic of love which is
distinctly anti-Christian.[65] The former idea, which rescued
the poem from the moral disapproval of the nineteenth century,
is well represented by W. T. H. Jackson's claim that the love
of Tristan and Isolt is "a reflection in human terms of the bond
between the mystic and his God". Gottfried wanted "to describe
what seemed to him to be the most exalted of human experiences
and in doing so he used the only possible terms, those of
Christian mysticism."[66] Clearly, then, it is to Gottfried's
undisputed masterpiece, unknown although it probably was in
fourteenth-century England, that we should look for a handling
of the Tristan story by a major poet, and for the strongest
evidence that Tristan, in his capacity as a lover, could be a
positive figure--in both specifically chivalric and more general
contexts.

Obvious difficulties--in the form of medieval social
and religious ideas--are, of course, raised by the assumption
that Gottfried's intention was the exaltaion of an adulterous
and disloyal love. Jackson, however, claims that the poem
is "a unique attempt to portray the overwhelming power of love
and the essential incompatibility between it and the society
in which Gottfried's contemporaries lived". That society,
Jackson claims, degraded marriage and envied love. The lovers

must therefore retreat to the Minnegrotte to find happiness,
since "only away from society can true love flourish". The
fact that love forces them into deceit and criminality is a
criticism of society; truth to each other forces them to
deceive others. Moreover, their love stands in opposition also
to the absurd and discredited "courtly concept of extramarital
love", because it is equally intense on both sides. The whole
society presupposed by the "courtly romance" (as exemplified
by Chrétien's works) is rejected because it cannot accommodate
the absolute nature of this love affair. The "edele herzen",
whom Gottfried claims in his prologue to be writing for,
are thus not necessarily a courtly audience, but people
"capable of comprehending the Tristan experience...who have
suffered and can understand."

In turn, Jackson continues, Gottfried rejects yet another
facet of contemporary society, chivalry. Tristan is an "artist-
hero" rather than a knightly one, never having to fight for
Isolt (in Gottfried's poem) but winning her largely through
the Orpheus-like power of his music. He arrives at Mark's
court celebrated for aesthetic rather than military accomplish-
ments, and his education is distinctly bookish. Jackson also
emphasises Gottfried's "categorical refusal" to describe
the swertleite, or knighting ceremony.[67] Ruth Kunzer likewise
finds here "substantial irony directed against the rituals
of chivalry in general". To emphasise his "aesthetic distance
and ironic detachment from all chivalric conventions and
activities", the narrator "chooses the very ceremony that

ordinarily is devoted to the glorification of chivalry".[68]
Madeleine P. Cosman writes that "Gottfried's Tristan is
singular among medieval knights. Many of his actions and
statements in the enfance and later violate the basic components
of courtly romance. Indeed, some of the knight's adventures
are inversions of chivalric conduct, which hardly can be
fortuitous...For Tristan the man of learning, and for Tristan
the artist knight, learning is the better part of valor."[69]

There is of course little doubt that the Tristan,
like the Troilus, is essentially about a love affair
rather than a military career, though Tristan is quite
definitely a knight. The priority of love as a centre of
interest does not, however, necessarily indicate an intended
denigration of the military aspects of knighthood or knightly
romance. The ironies and inconsistencies of the poem may, I
believe, be more satisfactorily accounted for if we realise that
the effect of most of them is to qualify the love affair
itself rather than to discredit external reference points such
as chivalry or society (either in its repressive or courtly
aspects). The reader is bound to feel an imaginative
empathy for the lovers' plight, but Gottfried does not intend
that such a response be given a free rein. The implications
for chivalry of Gottfried's poem are not, I shall argue,
radically different in the end from those of Eilhart's
poem or the prose tradition.

From the start of the work, the emphasis is on the
suffering and torment of love; this book, the narrator claims

ambiguously, may give a lover some respite from his sorrow.[70]

He goes on to praise the ennobling and enriching nature of

love:

> ez liebet liebe und edelt muot,
> ez staetet triuwe und tugendet leben. (174-5)

Without love no one attains worth or reputation, yet people are

rarely prepared to put up with a small amount of suffering

for the sake of love's great delights (176-205). This powerful

and intricately rhetorical passage, ending in a flourish

of eucharistic imagery--the lovers are dead but their story

is the bread of life (233-40)--is nevertheless scathingly

ironic in view of later events. The suffering of the lovers

vastly outweighs their joy, and they are led into manifest

degradations.

The story proper begins with an account of Tristan's

parents Riwalin and Blanscheflur, whose career is a foreshadow-

ing and epitome of that of their son. When they fall in love

the poet informs us that Riwalin is caught in love like a bird

trapped and struggling on a limed twig.[71] He had no idea that

love was such keen sorrow, "daz herzliebe waere/so nahe gende

ein swaere" (916-7), and his laughter turns to sadness;

Blanscheflur is also in continual torment.[72] As soon as

their love is consummated Riwalin is summoned away--the

first of many separations of lovers in the poem--and Blanscheflur

reproaches love as a deceiver: it is mere pain, it lures us

to lasting sorrow (1391-415). She finds herself with child,

and the pair decide to elope to Riwalin's country, revealing

the essentially lawless nature of their passion; there is, after

all, no reason why a man of Riwalin's rank should not have
asked for the hand of a king's sister, and no impediment
is mentioned. Riwalin is killed in battle shortly after
his return home, and Blanscheflur dies in childbirth.
The child is entrusted to Riwalin's marshal, and baptised
Tristan owing to the sorrow (tristitia) of his conception
and of his birth (1989-2020). The love of his parents has
brought about their death, and his life too will be sorrowful,
ending in bitterness because of love.

Tristan's introduction to Mark's court as a huntsman
initiates the traditional association of the hunt with
sexuality that runs throughout the story.[73] Tristan finds
Mark's huntsmen butchering a hart, and, scandalised at their
ignorance of the formal courtly procedure for cutting up the
beast, takes over the task himself with a display of
elaborate terminology, which the chief huntsman receives with
amused but impressed irony (2786 ff.). The significance of
the episode is underlined with a pun. Tristan proves himself
an expert in elaborate ways of anatomising the "hirz", but the
process is essentially the same as that conducted in plain
fashion by the huntsmen; analogously the casuistry of love never
quite disguises the simple fact of adultery in Tristan's
relations with Isolt. He becomes Mark's chief huntsman:
"iuwer jäger und iuwer dienestman" (3373)—a fatal combination.

His initiation in the latter of these two capacities
is solemnised by his knighting ceremony. Gottfried's
refusal to describe it in detail seems to be a matter of

literary taste rather than of any antipathy to chivalric
forms. He implies that such occasions have come to provide
a standard opportunity for literary set-pieces, and in an
excursus he casts a critical eye over contemporary poets.
The part of the ceremony which is, however, described is
Tristan's vow. He promises to be modest, straightforward
and truthful:

> wis diemuet und wis unbetrogen,
> wis warhaft und wis wolgezogen. (5027-8)

The only mention of women is that he should honour and love all
women ("er' unde minne elliu wip", 5032).

As Mark's knight he is now solemnly pledged to truth;
as his 'huntsman' he will be condemned to perpetual deceit
and scarcely relieved sorrow. His first great task as a
knight is to defend the realm against Morold the Irish champion.
But in the process his fatal preoccupation reasserts itself
in the form of a poisoned wound in the thigh, which will not
heal and starts to stink. Since the wound can only be healed
by Isolt's mother, the Queen of Ireland, she presumably
produced the poison, just as later on she provides the 'poison'
of the love-potion. Love of a certain kind in the poem is a
poison and a wound. Rivalin is wounded by a spear when he
falls in love with Blanscheflur (1134), and the suffering
caused by his wound is only temporarily assuaged by their
sexual union. Tristan similarly seeks a source of merely
temporary healing, and ultimately his attempt to cure his
'wound' is counter-productive to say the least. The wound
in the thigh, the groin, or the loins is of course traditionally

associated with sensual love and lechery.[74]

As yet, however, Tristan's wound only indicates a proclivity rather than accomplished fact. After being healed in Ireland, he returns praising Isolt's beauty. Her beauty does not at this point eclipse that of others; in fact it makes other women beautiful, and glorifies all womankind (8298-304). This is recognisably the legitimate kind of inspiration that a knight may derive from honourable and disinterested love, and of which Geoffroi de Charny and Boucicaut approved. Later on, by contrast, love of Isolt makes Tristan unable to consummate his marriage with Isolt of the White Hands.

Another foreshadowing of his eventual enslavement by passion occurs on Tristan's return to Ireland to woo Isolt for Mark. He kills the dragon whose slayer is to be rewarded with her hand, but provides an omen of his fatal weakness by thrusting the fiery tongue which he has cut off into his bosom. He succumbs to the fumes and almost dies, surrendering to the very destructive powers which he has vanquished, just as he is to fail at the apparent moment of success in his task of bringing Mark a bride. Isolt finds him unconscious, "ir leben unde ir tot,/ir wunne unde ir ungemach" (9376-7).

The potion itself brings sorrow, anguish and death: "ez was diu wernde swaere,/diu endelose herzenot,/von der si beide lagen tot" (11678-80). Brangaene tells them that "diz tranc is iuwer beider tot!" (11710). Tristan struggles in the snare like Riwalin, and Isolt is also on the limed branch

(11755-9, 11796-805). They become love's huntsmen, setting
snares for each other (11934-8).[75] Love fights against
and defeats honour and loyalty ("ere" and "triuwe", 11750-76);
it turns honey to gall, sweetness to sourness, and the world
upside down (11885-93). Again there is special emphasis on
suffering: life is a burden (11973), the lovers suffer "wunder-
lichem leide", they are dying of love (12114-5). The nature of
the kind of love that the potion brings could hardly be
made more explicit.

As Jackson comments, the potion "hands them over to
the tyranny of the senses, and this tyranny is so powerful
that it brushes from its path all considerations of honor
and loyalty." Yet the betrayal of loyalty, he claims, is
excused because they "act under compulsion and this compulsion
is symbolized by the Minnetrank."[76] In the early versions of
the story, admittedly, the potion is a magic cause of the
love, and can be regarded to some degree as an external
agent. Gottfried's use of the device has stirred great
debate, but the most convincing view is surely that expressed
by August Closs: "With Gottfried the love potion is no longer
reason and excuse...It is a poetic symbol."[77] Myrrha Lot-
Borodine also sees the love-philtre as symbolic, though in
a more positive way than Gottfried is likely to have intended.
In the poems of Gottfried and Thomas, she declares, "le 'boire'
est élevé a la dignité d'un pur symbole, le symbole de la
noble Minna. Tristan et Iseut s'aiment 'parce que c'est lui,
parce que c'est elle'. C'est bien le plus haut chant de l'amour

terrestre, sans artifice ni fard, de l'amour qui n'est plus
un obscur instinct, mais un besoin profond et nostalgique de
tout l'être humain."[78] Riwalin needed no potion, and as we
have seen the event that Tristan's drinking symbolises is
foreshadowed in his earlier history.

In any case, ideas of blame and excuse are hardly
adequate to the event: the lovers have drunk their death, and
evil is the inevitable result.[79] They are forced to abandon
"triuwe", or fidelity, without which no joy is possible.
Gottfried stresses the importance of this virtue in his
excursus on love, but the insistence has a significant
ironic dimension, since it is made clear that fidelity
to each other cannot, for the lovers, take the place of their
wider loyalties:

> wir buwen die minne
> mit gegelleten sinne,
> mit valsche und mit akust
> und suochen danne an ir die lust
> des libes unde des herzen:
> sone birt si niuwan smerzen,
> unguot und unfruht unde unart... (12241-7)

> (We cultivate love with guile and deceit and with minds
> as bitter as gall, and we then seek joy of body and
> soul in her! But, instead, she bears only pain and
> evil and poison-berries and weeds.)[80]

On the other hand steadfast friendship ("der staete friundes
muot") will bring forth joy in the end (12273-9); the fate
of Tristan and Isolt assures us, however, that their particular
kind of steadfastness is not of this happier sort.

Tristan has sacrificed honour and loyalty, but he wins
a temporary victory over love in bringing Isolt to Mark (12511-30).

Nevertheless, as Gottfried remarks, love teaches honest
minds to practise perfidy: "alsus so leret minne/durnahtecliche
sinne/ze valsche sin verflizzen" (12451-3). Brangaene sacrifices
her virginity in Mark's bed to sustain the pretence, and
Isolt's reaction to her loyalty is to try to have her killed
in case she should betray her. Previously, when she had
Tristan at her mercy in Ireland, and had found that he was the
killer of her uncle, Isolt had found herself unable to murder
him due to her womanly feelings, her "sueze wipheit" (10241-60).
We notice now a change in her homicidal capacities under the
'ennobling' influence of love. Then she would not kill her
enemy; now the "mortraete" is ready to kill not only the
faithful and self-sacrificing Brangaene, but even the
two squires whom she has hired to do the deed--until they
reveal that Brangaene is not dead after all. At the points of
the assassins' swords Brangaene has refused to betray her
mistress. The episode dramatically shows that nothing will
be allowed to stand in the way of Isolt's love; all other
considerations are to be swept aside. In addition Gottfried
points out that the lovers trade dishonestly on the close
kinship between Mark and Tristan to disguise their intimacy
from the rest of the court   (13001 ff.).

Not everyone, however, is deceived. Mark's chief
steward, Marjodo, tells Mark of his suspicions; the dwarf
Melot brings a more sophisticated hand to the work of detection,
and a trap is set. Mark hides in a tree, having pretended
to go away, while the lovers hold an assignation below. Tristan
and Isolt are quick-witted enough to turn the situation

to their advantage, but the pretensions of their affair to
romantic dignity are severely damaged in the process. The
fabliau-like nature of the scene--with Isolt as the cunning,
deceiving wife, and Mark as the foolish, duped husband---is
not as fully exploited here as in Beroul's version, where
Isolt thoroughly enjoys the performance and boasts of her
ingenuity, but it is still prominent.[81] Like Chaucer's January,
Mark is easily deceived, here and elsewhere, because he is
blinded by lust to the truth behind the pretences. For
each of the characters involved, this episode is demeaning.

Gottfried then condemns the deceit and treachery
of Marjodo and Melot in setting this trap and in scheming
further for the exposure of the lovers (15051-120). The
condemnation is heavily ironic, since we have just seen the
deceit and treachery of Tristan and Isolt, who are pointedly
omitted from a condemnation of vices which they share and
actions which they have initiated. As Ruth Kunzer concludes,
"the very harsh treatment of the barons...by the narrator,
who hardly ever fails to point out that, despite their
underhand methods, the courtiers do tell the truth, implies
irony in its exaggeration".[82] Not only do they tell the truth,
but despite their tainted motives they have every reason to try
to stop the adultery of their queen. In this case, as in that
of Guinevere, courtiers--whatever their motives--are carrying
out that responsibility to proffer a ruler unwelcome advice
which the moralists unanimously regarded as being their
vital duty.

The further test of the flour on the flour leads to

the episode in which Isolt is obliged to swear an oath of her
fidelity, and then undergo an ordeal to establish the veracity
of her oath. The scene is carefully built up. Isolt prays
to God and fasts, while at the same time preparing a trick
which presumes very far, as Gottfried drily remarks, on God's
"hövescheit" or courtesy (15548 ff.). By giving away gold
and silver she tries to bribe God to overlook her "waren
schulde" (15647 ff.). The pretence of piety is reflected in
Tristan's turning up for the event disguised as a pilgrim;
in Eilhart his scarlet clothes underneath his pilgrim's
garb are revealed when he falls down with Isolt. Isolt is
able to swear that no man has lain in her arms but Mark and
the poor pilgrim (Tristan) who has just carried her ashore
and fallen to the ground with her in the process. Gottfried
emphasises the queen's scantiness of clothing--displaying
her sensuality as well as her vulnerability--as she takes
hold of the hot iron and is not burned. This accounts for her
ability to impose on Mark, but how does she deceive God?
Gottfried explains:

> da wart wol goffenbaeret
> und al der werlt bewaeret
> daz der vil tugenthafte Krist
> wintschaffen alse ein ermel ist:
>
> er'st allen herzen bereit,
> ze durnähte und ze trügeheit.
> ist ez ernest, ist ez spil,
> er ist ie, swie so man wil. (15737-40, 15745-8).
>
> (Thus it was made manifest and confirmed to all
> the world that Christ in His great virtue is pliant
> as a windblown sleeve...He is at the beck of every
> heart for honest deeds or fraud. Be it deadly
> earnest or a game, He is just as you would have Him.)

The assumption that Gottfried is here being ironic has
generally superseded the notion that he is being blasphemous.
The main irony is directed against the lovers, who believe
that they can deceive, or at least bribe, even God; but
the episode also probably represents an attack on the whole
business of ordeals, which the Lateran Council in 1215 forbade
the clergy to consecrate.[83]

Tristan and Isolt are nevertheless eventually banished
from the court. The anarchic nature of their passion drives
them into the wilderness. In Beroul's story they live,
suitably, by hunting in a forest, where Tristan becomes
so wild an outlaw that people are afraid to enter it.
Gottfried sends them instead to a cavern, a _Minnegrotte_,
set in wild country on a savage mountainside. It is a _locus
amoenus_, and the cave's amenities and proportions are
allegorised like those of a church. The description has
evoked a vast amount of commentary, much of it seeing the
passage as Gottfried's exposition of a 'religion' of love.[84]
Jackson, for instance, sees this as the high point of the
love affair, where the tyranny of the senses imposed by the
potion is transcended, and the symbolic possibilities of
love made clear. Sensual love submits to mystical in this
shrine: "only those who have achieved complete sacrifice to
Christian love can enjoy its delights". The lovers experience
"the ecstasy of the Christian soul yearning for the heavenly
Bridegroom". Sensuality, of course, continues to dog their
steps, but the love-grotto offers a glimpse of their final

apotheosis: "only by death can...the lovers be re-united in mystic love, freed from all grossness and carnal attraction".[85]

If we look at the details of the allegory of the cave, however, we find that they reinforce the ironies that Gottfried has built up around the relationship. The cavern's roundness, for example, represents the "einvalte" of love--its simplicity, and lack of guile and treachery; its even and white walls symbolise "durnahte", or integrity; one of the bars of the door signifies love's purity and chastity ("die kusche und die reine"). These qualities are clearly at odds with those demonstrated by the lovers. At the same time the lovers' sententiousness is mocked by the erotic nature of some of the details of the cave. As Ruth Kunzer observes, there are some suggestive remarks about locks and keys, and references to sexual organs and copulation; the grotto is "a dreamland of erotic fantasies".[86] The poet emphasises the element of fantasy by remarking that the grotto brings King Arthur's knights to do homage a thousand times a day, and deflates the fantasy by humorously noting that although some people think ordinary food is still required in such a situation he himself doesn't believe any such thing (16913 ff.). The moral of the earthly paradise is underlined by the activities of its occupants, who pass the time telling stories of those who have been ruined by love (Phyllis, Canacea, Dido, 17191-203), and in hunting.

It is fittingly a result of Mark's lack of success as a 'hunter' that he finds the Minnegrotte. He loses the track of an extraordinary white hart in the wilderness around the

cave. Tristan anticipates discovery and tricks the King
by placing a naked sword between him and the 'white hart'
Isolt.[87] His deceit could not succeed, however, unless
abetted by Mark's lust. After much prevarication Mark
persuades himself of the innocence of the scene before him
because, as he gazes on his wife, he is ravished by her
loveliness and blinded to the truth (17536 ff.). A sunbeam
shines on her face, and her mouth burns red like a glowing
coal—arousing in the onlooker the flames of lust as his
eyes devour her whole body. Mark's paradoxical assumption
that the love he is looking at is a spiritual one is the
final reductive element in the scene. If we are to accept
the quasi-religious interpretation of the love-cave we must
accept Gottfried's ironic invitation to look at the situation
through the eyes of Mark.

The question of the lovers' deceit is clearly a
crucial one to an understanding of Gottfried's irony. He
tempts us to acquit Tristan and Isolt on the grounds that
Mark has deceived himself, not they him, since he is blind
(17757-67). His blindness is explained by reference to the
old proverb that love blinds both eyes and mind:

> diu blintheit der minnen
> diu blendet uze und innen,
> si blendet ougen unde sin. (17745-7)

But the obvious implication is that Tristan and Isolt suffer
a much more desperate case of the same blindness. Gottfried
launches into one of his cynical passages of ironic urbane
casuistry: the wife is not to blame if the husband will not

see her misconduct through blindness (17790-2). The weakness
of this argument is then pointed up by a contradiction.
He denounces surveillance ("huote")—the opposite of
blindness—by the husband, since this only provokes women
to sin. Eve sinned because of a prohibition, and almost
all women are basically like her in this respect. The man
is therefore responsible for his wife's delinquency whether
he ignores it or tries to stop it. Yet the narrator recognises
that some women are virtuous—they have "maze", or moderation—
and he praises them at great length (17990-18118).

How Isolt measures up to this standard is seen when
Mark recalls the lovers to court. He consults his counsellors,
and Gottfried praises them for their wisdom in telling him
exactly what he wants to hear—that Tristan and Isolt should
be invited back (17673-6). In this way the irony of the
poet's previous vilification of the advisers who tell the
King unpleasant truths is revealed. The lovers are glad to
return from an illusory and unsatisfactory experience; we are
told that they return for the sake of God and of their place
in society. Yet almost their first act shows complete
disregard for both these latter considerations, and also
demonstrates Isolt's total lack of "maze". She is one of
the Eves rather than one of the virtuous women. In the
noonday sun she has a magnificent bed set up in an orchard,
summons Tristan, and sleeps with him there. Inevitably they
are discovered, and Tristan is forced to flee abroad. The lovers

have once again re-enacted the fall, and are driven out of
paradise. The parallel is made explicit; Tristan has eaten
his death:

> tete er rehte als Adam tete:
> das obez, daz ime sin Eve bot,
> daz nam er und az it ir den tot. (18166-8)

From here on, suffering and pain become the absolutely
dominant elements of the love experience. Gottfried's narrative
breaks off in the middle of Tristan's hesitant and deceitful
wooing of a new Isolt--Isolt of the White Hands, but Thomas
takes up the story with their marriage. Tristan is in anguish,
wishing to free himself from suffering, yet only further
enmeshing himself by this move.[88] He has become so accustomed
to evil, says Thomas, that he has lost all moral bearings and
cannot do anything but wickedness (285 ff.). Tristan is
marrying Isolt primarily because her name reminds him of
his previous love, and that love claims another sacrifice of
truth and loyalty both in his disingenuous wooing and in
his inability to consummate the marriage. All four people--
Mark, Tristan, and the two Isolts--are in great torment, and
none of them has any joy.

Eventually Tristan returns to Cornwall, along with
Caerdin, the brother of his new wife. Isolt and Tristan
persuade Brangaene to make another sacrifice and take
Caerdin this time as her lover. Afterwards Brangaene,
loyal up to this point, turns for a time against the lovers
and denounces Isolt's breaking of her oath to her husband,
her perjury and her generally hardened attitude towards

sinning. Isolt, she declares, has disgraced her ancestry, her friends and her lord; if she had any concern for honour she would leave her wickedness (1510-70). Brangaene's revolt is not entirely wholehearted, but it is significant, for she has known the whole history of their relationship, and all its possible mitigating circumstances. It was indeed she who mistakenly administered the potion. She has participated actively in the lovers' ruses, yet ultimately she too is shocked by their unscrupulousness.

To evade Mark's re-awakened vigilance Tristan disguises himself as a wretched leper, adding another image--that of disease and contagion--to the symbolic presentation of passionate love (1773 ff.). The degradation and abasement of his condition is not, even at a literal level, simply a disguise, for he has been genuinely enfeebled by the suffering and hardship which he bewails (1868-86). Metaphorically, however, Tristan's pretence of leprosy is an important pointer to the nature of his degradation. Saul Brody has studied the way in which leprosy was generally seen as an indication of moral as well as physical corruption in the Middle Ages (and indeed at other times). The affliction of Amiloun in _Amis and Amiloun_ and of Cresseid in Henryson's _Testament of Cresseid_ are examples of a common phenomenon in medieval literature--the punishment of sin by leprosy.[89] In particular lepers were thought to be possessed of inordinate sexual desire, and in the poems of Eilhart and Beroul Mark is persuaded to hand over his guilty wife to a band of lepers as a retribution

more terrible than burning. Beroul has the leader of the lepers tell Mark that they are so lustful that no woman on earth could endure their attentions for a single day (1195-7). The punishment fits the crime: Isolt will die by the licentiousness she has lived by, and will thus realise the horribleness of her own sin (1214-5).

Tristan's deliberate assumption of the disguise of the leper in Thomas's version (as well as in Beroul's and Eilhart's) focuses these resonances and perhaps reinforces our sense of his wilful persistence in evil. Beroul makes the connection between his disguise and his sexual activities quite clear. Tristan turns up at the scene of the ordeal disguised, according to Isolt's instructions, as a leper, and is questioned by Mark about his disease. He tells the King that his leprosy comes from committing adultery with a noblewoman whose lord was a leper, and that he has suffered from the disease for three years (which is approximately the amount of time that has elapsed since the potion was drunk). Only one woman, he says, surpasses this noblewoman in beauty, and that is Isolt, who dresses just like her (3759-76). The explanation reflects the belief of medieval physicians that leprosy was sometimes transmitted venereally,[90] but it also asks us to see lust as a loathsome contagion. The inclusion of Mark in the chain of corruption is partly crude jesting at his expense, but has also a serious point. As we saw in the treatment of the love-grotto by Gottfried, Mark is as great a sufferer from this affliction as anyone. The implication

is that the lustfulness of the lovers would be reproachable
even if it did not involve manifold breaches of faith, since
even in Mark, Isolt's legitimate lover, surrender to passion
involves blindness and 'disease'.[91]

Tristan's final agonizing wound comes from a poisoned
spear through his loins ("par mi la luingne", 2319), and
like the earlier one it will not heal, but starts to stink.
He sends for Isolt to heal it, but this of course she cannot
ultimately be expected to do, since his love for her, with
its attendant suffering, is identified with the wound itself.
The description of his pain combines the physical effect of
the wound with the mental anguish resulting from Isolt's
absence. Ever since his encounter with Morold, Tristan's
attempts to cure himself through Isolt have merely inflamed
his wound. Now he believes that he needs the succour of
her lips ("par buche", 2478), but the true remedy is hinted
at by the supposition of his neglected wife that he is going
to forsake the world and become a monk; in reality he is
arranging for a secret message to be taken to Isolt (2373-4).
A little later he himself unconsciously stumbles on the truth,
asking Caerdin to tell Isolt that if God does not attend to his
sickness he will die:

> mustrez li le mal que jo ai:
> se Deu n'en pense, jon murrai. (2545-6)

Gottfried's and Thomas's narratives are consistently
ironic. The kind of love that Tristan and Isolt indulge is
shown as a poison, a wound, a snare, a disease; it is incompatible

with the virtues of truth, honour, honesty, loyalty, and friend-
ship. Yet the tone is not that of the moralist any more
than is the method. Neither poet is concerned to pronounce
the love affair wrong so much as he is to reveal
it as unprofitable. The reader enters into the intensity of
the lovers' experience only to find that it consists of almost
unrelieved sorrow, of folly in the first instance rather than
sin.

As far as the implications of these findings for chivalry
are concerned, we may conclude that at no point does Gottfried
claim that Tristan's behaviour as a lover is appropriate to
his status as a knight. His love is a departure from all
social norms, and these are not rejected in favour of an
alternative system of values. Among the positive values
from which Tristan departs chivalry is clearly to be included.
Although the poem does not explicitly attempt to define a
right concept of chivalry, the qualities which Tristan
rejects are periodically seen in terms of his knightly and
feudal obligations. His involvement with Isolt is a rejection
of the obligations of his worldly position as a knight, and
his knightly rank thus serves to illuminate more intensely
the fact that he has to make a series of critical choices about
the use of his social and temporal power, and to decide
whether to use that power for the maintenance of the social
and divine order, as knighthood demands, or for its confusion.

From Tristan we move to Lancelot, the other great
knightly lover of medieval literature, to pursue the question

of whether love is to be seen as a significant element of chivalric obligation. I want to consider especially the portraits of Lancelot in Chrétien de Troyes' Lancelot (Le Chevalier de la Charrette), in the Vulgate Cycle, and in Malory's Morte Darthur. But before turning directly to the Charrette, it will be convenient here to mention briefly some others of Chrétien's romances in which relationships between knights and women are depicted, since they provide further reasons for thinking that the traditional reading of the Charrette as praise of a knight's subjection to women is mistaken.

4. Chrétien de Troyes

Chrétien's Cligés is to some extent modelled on the Tristan story, to which it makes explicit references, although its chronological relationship to the version with which it appears most closely connected, that of Thomas, has not been finally settled.[92] The story of Cligés' parents, Alexandre and Soredamors, parallels in many respects that of Riwalin and Blanscheflur, but at the critical moment their suffering is relieved by the Queen's sane advice that they marry. Any love, she says, that causes torment is worse than hate. She compares love to a building that requires a firm foundation: in order that it be not merely a temporary gratification it requires the honourable foundation of marriage. The same dangers beset Cligés in his love for his uncle's wife Fénice, which he dares not express, and which is described as a festering wound.[93]

Fénice recognises the analogy with the situation
of Tristan and Isolt, but rejects the course of action it
suggests. She would rather be dismembered, she says, than
have her relationship with Cligés compared to that of Tristan
and Isolt,

> Don tantes folies dit l'an,
> Que honte m'est a raconter.
> Je ne me porroie acorder
> A la vie qu'Iseuz mena.
> Amors an li trop vilena,
> Car ses cors fu a deus rantiers
> Et ses cuers fu a l'un antiers. (3148-54)

She tells Cligés of her love, and of her refusal to adopt the
dishonourable solution of Isolt. He suggests elopement to
Britain, comparing such an act (ironically, of course, from
Chrétien's point of view) with the abduction of Helen by Paris.
Fénice firmly declines, with an appeal to St. Paul and a
third disparaging reference to Isolt. After they had gone,
she claims, people would regard her as wanton, him as mad,
and their love as evil:

> Ja avuec vos einsi n'irai,
> Que lors seroit par tot le monde
> Aussi come d'Yseut la blonde
> Et de Tristan de nos parlé,
> Quant nos an seriiens alé
> Et ci et la, totes et tuit
> Blasmeroient nostre deduit. (5310-6)

Cligés and Fénice are clearly intended to be an
improvement on the earlier lovers. Cligés has already been
compared to Tristan (as hunter and fighter) in a passage which
explains that he surpassed Narcissus (and, by implication,
Tristan as well) in being distinguished by wisdom as well as
other natural endowments.[94] The two stories share other

similarities of plot. There is, for example, a love potion
of sorts, prepared by Thessala--Fénice's confidante, and the
equivalent of Brangaene, but which is beneficial rather than
harmful in its effect. It preserves the heroine's virginity
by supplying her husband with amorous pleasures in his sleep.
This deceit appears to have the acceptable function of
containing the evil initiated by Alis's treachery. Yet
Fénice's scrupulousness about avoiding the example of Isolt is
somewhat selective: her objection is that she will not give
herself to two men, and moreover she must not be thought
to have done so. Her refusal to elope is therefore based
on the conviction that people will not believe she had remained
a virgin in her husband's bed, whereas she contentedly accepts
a plan which preserves her reputation even though it involves
a relationship which is technically as adulterous as Isolt's.
Everybody is made to think that she has died, and she goes
to live with Cligés in hiding. This isolation, however, is
unsatisfactory; the scene in which a young hunter stumbles on
the lovers asleep in a naked embrace in a garden is strongly
reminiscent of the Tristan legend. The lovers have fallen
into the situation of their notorious predecessors. Fénice,
for all her care, has not understood the real point of the
Tristan story.[95] Fortunately Alis dies of chagrin--possibly
a comic equivalent of Tristan's dying of love--and they are
able to marry.

The depreciation of a love which is indulged in
defiance of other obligations is also the theme of Erec et
Enide. But here the temptations of love are contrasted more

specifically with chivalric obligations. Marriage offers the
lovers the chance of a chaste and innocent love, but Erec
lapses into a total absorption with his wife which is seen
in terms of sloth and sensuality because of his complete
neglect of deeds of arms. He stays in bed frequently till
noon (an astonishingly late hour for one of Chrétien's knights),
and his friends reproach him behind his back for cowardice and
recreancy.[96]

Enide finally reveals to him the scorn and shame
which his reputation has suffered. Erec's prompt reformation,
however, takes him to the opposite and equally unbalanced
extreme. His asceticism asserts itself as hatred of his wife,
which, as Tom Artin points out, is in Pauline terms hatred of
himself.[97] A series of encounters, in which he recovers
his sense of a moral purpose in arms and realises the important
supporting role of Enide's devotion, leads him eventually
to a sense of the right use of love. His achievement of this
equilibrium is signalled in his culminating adventure of the
Joie de la Cort, where he defeats Mabinograin, and thus
releases him from imprisonment in a beautiful garden walled
by air. Mabinograin has in effect been responsible for
his own imprisonment, having earlier promised his lady, out
of love for her, to do anything she asked (6002-31). She
commanded him to remain in the garden until defeated by a
knight. The irony is neatly pointed, for as long as Mabinograin
remains enthralled by his lady willingly his own strength will
be turned against him and used for destructive purposes. The

greater his prowess, the more sure will be his prison. For Erec as well the episode indicates his final release from enslavement to passion.

In Cligés and Erec the knight in love becomes a vehicle for exploring the achievement of a right balance in attitude towards passion and worldly comforts. To some extent this applies also to Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lyon), in which the knightly protagonist takes a wife, but leaves her to seek renewed honour in arms. When he fails to return to her by the allotted time, she renounces him and he goes mad with remorse. Gradually he recovers, and through a series of deeds of arms motivated by charity makes himself worthy to be reinstated by his wife. At one level this progression, like that of Erec, leads to the establishing of an equilibrium between the demands of active pursuit of social duty and those of domestic love, in which both slothful sensuality and the autonomous pursuit of military fame are rejected.

But such an account does not do justice to the symbolism of the romance, as Maxwell Luria's view suggests:

> The adventure of the fountain is...a symbolic baptism followed by a beatific vision of salvation. Yvain's career can be summarised as follows: after successfully sustaining the trial of the fountain and acquiring the spiritual or moral regeneration of its waters...there is a backsliding, then a recovery of spiritual status through the purgative adventures which constitute the body of the romance, and finally the reconciliation with Laudine, which signalizes and caps that recovery.[98]

Tom Artin has developed this reading in an analysis which is sensitive to Chrétien's preference for multivalent symbolism

rather than strict allegory.[99] Yvain's progress is at one level sacramental: he receives baptism at the fountain, circumcision at the entry to Laudine's castle (where his horse is cut in half by the portcullis, and where he is given the spiritual power of the ring), undergoes penance in the forest, after which he receives the eucharistic unleavened bread from the hermit, and confirmation at the hands of the damsels at the castle of Pesme Avanture. At the same time, Artin reveals, the romance traces the supersession of the Old Law by the New. The unregenerate <u>vilain</u> points the way to the baptismal fount (though he does not understand its significance: the cup he describes as iron turns out to be gold), and Yvain's final battle is on behalf of the younger of two sisters who has been cheated by the elder out of her share of the inheritance. The elder sister is championed by the worldly Gawain, while the younger searches for forty days for her champion, the knight of the lion. When Gawain and Yvain realise whom they are fighting they refuse to fight any more, whereupon Arthur forces the elder sister to acknowledge the younger's claim. In reality, this shows, there is no conflict, for the New Law fulfils and continues the Old.

Yvain's own development, Artin's argument continues, is from being a knight whose chief quality is worldly pride-- he aims to be the most famous knight of Arthur's court, yet the essential quality of the court is embodied by the foolish and unregenerate Kay--to being a knight of Christ. The visit of Arthur's court to Laudine's castle represents Yvain's moment of

greatest triumph in the worldly sphere, but also his spiritual
nadir. His subsequent compliance with Gawain's suggestion of
setting off for a year of tourneying, and his complete
preoccupation in this activity, are a natural extension of
the choice of worldly glory which his tenuous marriage represents.
His madness, in which he runs wild and savage in the woods,
recalls the behaviour of Tristan and Lancelot.[100] Besides
discipline and penance, Yvain's spiritual rehabilitation involves
undertaking a progressively more demanding sequence of good
works, based on charity rather than pride, with the help of
a lion, which probably represents Christ.[101] Yvain defends
Lunete (identified with the Church) against her three enemies
(the world, the flesh, and the devil), and reconciles the
worldly and spiritual aspects of knighthood by turning
back to his wife Laudine, to win, in recovering her, what
has become now the right kind of praise and honour.[102]

The knight's concern with love is here made the
basis for a discussion of man's conflicting allegiances in
the widest possible terms. The effect is very different
from that of Geoffroi de Charny's fairly pragmatic consideration
of the effects on the knight of honourable or dishonourable love,
but both approaches share a common assumption about love's
ambivalent possibilities. In both Erec and Yvain love is an
area of experience which can only with great difficulty be
reconciled with the duties of knighthood. As an autonomous
activity it has a disastrous effect on knightly capacity.

Chrétien's treatment of the knight as lover in these

romances has, however, been somewhat overshadowed by the reputation of Lancelot, or Le Chevalier de la Charrette, which is often considered to be a positive portrayal of knightly obligation in terms of total acceptance of the amorous service of a lady. The romance inspired Gaston Paris to introduce the term amour courtois into the jargon of medievalists.[103] Sidney Painter claimed that it "presented the doctrines of courtly love in their most extreme form. It taught that no obligation however sacred should stand in the way of love." A. Micha has called it an "exacte illustration du code courtois". William Dodd commented that under Chrétien's hands, especially in the Charrette, "the Arthurian romances became the representatives par excellence of the chivalrous and courtly ideal of twelfth-century society." In an essay originally published in 1927, Myrrha Lot-Borodine declared that "Tout le monde est d'accord aujourd'hui pour reconnaître que le Conte de la Charrette de Chrétien de Troyes représente une forme de sentiment jusqu'ici inconnue dans notre vieux roman: le culte de la dame."[104]

Many commentators have reconciled this view with the different tendencies of the other works by claiming that Chrétien was not following his own wishes in the Charrette, but those of the Countess of Champagne, at whose request he claims to have undertaken the work. She supplied the "matiere et san", he says, and he is trying to be faithful to "sa painne et s'antancion".[105] Recently, however, this explanation has come under attack.[106] Ironic readings of the work, bringing it

into line with the other romances, have been suggested.
W. T. H. Jackson claims that both Cligés and Charrette
"illustrate the total collapse of the courtly concept of
extra-marital love", and Jerome Mandel comments that "In
placing the courtly love relationship first and foremost,
Lancelot reveals unconcern for the very essence of medieval
society: order---especially as that order is manifest in the
multitude of relationships upon which the society existed."[107]
Among the most important of those relationships were those
which were often thought of in terms of the obligations of
chivalry, and I wish to suggest that Lancelot's behaviour
as a lover is a deliberate inversion of his proper duty as a
knight.

The court of Arthur is, in the Lancelot as in Yvain,
a repository of false values, embodied again most signally
by Kay. In face of the challenge of Meleagant, Arthur allows
Kay to be the decisive influence on events, first sending
the Queen to persuade Kay to change his mind about leaving the
court---with the monstrous instruction that she should prostrate
herself before him if necessary, which she does (127), and
then acquiescing in the Queen's pledge that he will grant
whatever Kay asks (170-2).[108] Arthur's folly in letting
Guinevere go after the strange knight---with Kay of all people---
is compounded by his neglecting to follow them, until Gawain
eventually is moved to rebuke him and insist on immediate
pursuit (228 ff.).

Gawain is thus established as a voice of reason; by
contrast Lancelot, whom we now meet, is obviously obsessed and

irrational. Lancelot appears from nowhere, unidentified and
incognito, asks Gawain for one of his horses, and leaps on one
of them without any of the preliminaries of inspection which
the narrator evidently considers to be normal in such cases:

> N'ala pas querant le meillor,
> Ne le plus bel ne le greignor. (293-4)

Riding furiously away without thanking his benefactor, he is
almost immediately involved in an apparently profitless combat.
Gawain finds his horse dead; it is the second horse Lancelot
has killed that day.

Lancelot's next move is to mount the cart used for
dragging criminals through the streets prior to stripping
them of legal rights and honour. The dwarf who drives
it exacts this concession as the price he must pay for the
information that will enable him to follow the Queen.
Lancelot hesitates before mounting, and his hesitation is
caused by "reisons", which opposes "amors" and urges him to
do nothing "Don il et honte ne reproche" (369-73). Lancelot
thus ignores reason, but Gawain calls his act "mout grant
folie", a judgment which derives an added authority from its
echo of the "mout grant anfance" which he has just attributed
to Arthur (393, 228). Robertson comments that the implication
of Lancelot's decision is that he "will join Guinevere
in Gorre through shameless criminal action", and David Shirt
agrees that Chrétien's emphasis on the centrality of the
episode of the cart is crucial in showing the illicit nature
of Lancelot's mission, its "dubious" morality, and the treasonable
breach of feudal duty that his love involves him in.[109]

At their lodging that night, Lancelot insists on
sleeping in a forbidden bed, though he is warned that the
bed has not been prepared for him. He is in fact sleeping in
a king's bed:

> Bien fust a oés un roi metables
> Li covertoirs qui fu for lui. (514-5)

Lancelot has insisted on exposing himself to temptation with
the King's wife, and the result is a flaming lance which falls--
aiming "parmi les flans" (521), but only wounding his side--
and sets his bed on fire. The flames are those of lust, and
the wound we are already familiar with.[110]

Lancelot is prompt and stubborn in folly such as this,
but seemingly paralysed at other times. The retrieval of
Guinevere is itself a laudable object, but his passion is seen
to be a hindrance rather than a help in attaining it. The next
morning, for example, he watches at a window and sees the
Queen led in a funeral procession by her abductor. He merely
gazes, unable to act, until she disappears, whereupon he
would have thrown himself from the window to his death had
Gawain not restrained him (569 ff.). His love not only unfits
him for chivalric activity, but leads him close to the sin of
despair and suicide. Indeed, passionate love is so often
associated with suicidal thoughts and loss of identity in
the poem that we appear to be asked to see it as an act of
voluntary self-annihilation.

A humorous version of this process occurs after
Lancelot has parted from Gawain and rides on his way alone.

His preoccupation on "une sole" is so great that he is
oblivious even of his own identity. He is totally lost,
having surrendered his reason:

> Et ses pansers est de tel guise
> Que lui mëismes an oblie,
> Ne set s'il est ou s'il n'est mie,
> Ne ne li manbre de son non,
> Ne set s'il est armez ou non,
> Ne set ou va, ne set don vient.   (718-23)

His horse, the unreasoning part of him, bears him along
without his guidance, and seeing a ford in which to drink
heads towards it fast. A knight guarding the ford warns
Lancelot three times not to cross, but he remains in a
trance until knocked off his horse by the knight. Love has
certainly not made him a more formidable warrior, and when fight-
ing with the knight of the ford he realises with chagrin his
martial inefficiency,

> Quant il est ja si anpiriez
> Qu'il pert ses cos et le jor gaste.   (886-7)

The consciousness that love has incapacitated him
afflicts him again at the house of the damsel who offers
him hospitality in return for his promise to lie with her.
She stages a graphic, pretended rape by the men of her own
household, and Lancelot, summoned by her cries, and observing
the number of her attackers, once more hesitates. "Deus,
que porrai je feire?" he exclaims, incredulous at his own
cowardice when engaged on "si grant afeire" as the quest for
Guinevere. He accuses himself of having the heart of a hare,
and is so ashamed of himself that again he wishes for death:

> Mout an ai le cuer triste et noir:
> Or an ai honte, or an ai duel,

> Tel que je morroie mon vuel
> Quant je ai tant demoré ci.   (1120-3)

Finally he persuades himself to risk an honourable death
rather than endure a life of shame; but for twenty-nine
lines he has had to goad himself into action in a situation
which should call forth an immediate chivalric response in
any knight.

The incident of the comb provides further opportunity
for reversals of this kind. On being told that the comb he
has found is Guinevere's, Lancelot is so overcome that he
appears to be about to fall off his horse, until the damsel
dismounts and runs to him "Por lui sotenir et secorre" (1452).
Covered in shame he chides her, and turns to adoration of the
Queen's hair as if it were a relic, regarding it in specifically
religious terms: he needs no other help but this hair, not
even that of St. Martin and St. James (1488-90). But the kind
of help which the hair, and the love for which it stands, can
give him is soon demonstrated again. Lancelot has agreed to
undertake the protection of the damsel, and this is a serious
responsibility since, according to the custom of the country,
a knight who captures a woman from another knight can do what
he pleases with her "Sanz honte et sanz blasme" (1328). Now
the damsel sees a knight approaching who desires her but whom
she hates. Lancelot is still preoccupied and unconcerned (1548-
1552), and allows the newcomer to make impertinent remarks to
the damsel and to begin to lead her away by the bridle before
he is recalled to some extent to his duty. The matter is not

ultimately settled by Lancelot, but by the intervention of the
intruding knight's father.

Guinevere appears to be something of a handicap in
practical affairs even when Lancelot finally reaches Gorre and
fights with her abductor Meleagant. The Queen's maid, realising
that Lancelot is fighting only for the Queen, and not for "cele
autre jant menue" (the other prisoners in the land, whose
release depends on his victory), calls his attention to the
Queen's presence in a tower. His response is to gaze on her,
turning his back on his opponent and neglecting to defend
himself properly. This antic almost loses him the fight until
he is rebuked by the same maid, who recalls that he used to
represent "toz le biens/Et tote la proesce" (3710-1). Lancelot's
mortification is by now a familiar response:

> Ce tient a honte et a grant let
> Lanceloz tant que il s'an het. (3722-3)

When he turns his attention once more to the combat his fury
arises partly from "amors" and partly from "häine morteus"
(3743). Meanwhile Guinevere has done nothing to aid her knight,
and her only act, as Diverres points out, is to save Meleagant
from defeat by stopping the fight at Bademagu's request, thus
opening the way to future evils.[111]

Guinevere's famous rejection of Lancelot shocks the
courteous Bademagu, but Lancelot himself continues to behave
in the automaton-like way which has characterised his activity
while under the Queen's influence. Like a "fin amant"--Chrétien's
actual phrase--he replies: "Ne je n'os demander por quoi"
(3980, 3982). The Queen's response is put into context by the

similarity between it and the churlish reaction of Kay to his rescuer, on being visited next by Lancelot. "Con m'as honi", exclaims the seneschal immediately, envying Lancelot's success, and the reproach emphasises that the folly of Kay, and of the court where his values are allowed to reign, is still dominant (4025).

When Guinevere hears of Lancelot's supposed death she reproaches herself for her folly, villainy and cruelty, declaring that she alone is responsible. She wishes to kill herself, and regrets that she did not sleep with him before his death (4177-262). The point is not, as Diverres assumes, that Chrétien is merely reproaching the lovers for a breach of the mesure expected in fin' amors. Lancelot is indeed a fin amant (though Chrétien does not appear to recognise any public currency in the concept), and as such he gets just what he might expect; indeed he makes no complaint at his treatment, for anarchic behaviour answers to no logic. The kind of illegitimate passion involved is incapable of reconciliation with mesure, a concept which would undercut the basic nature of the relationship.

The lovers rush from one extreme to another. Guinevere's lament at her previous folly is only a new aberration, and the effect of her grief is to spread a report which reaches Lancelot as the news of her death. His response is even more extravagant than hers, and in a comically grotesque episode he tries to hang himself by falling off his horse with his belt around his neck when none of his captors is looking. Then,

hearing that the report is false, he experiences a joy which
is a hundred thousand times as strong as his previous grief.
In a cooler moment he defends his decision to commit the
"forfez", or crime, of stepping into the cart on the grounds
that love sanctions anything:

> Qu'an ne porroit dire de boche
> Rien qui de par amors venist,
> Que a reproche apartenist. (4374-6)

> Car sanz faille mout an amande
> Qui fet ce qu'amors li comande,
> Et tot est pardonable chose. (4411-3)

There can be no compromise with <u>mesure</u> in an attitude like this.

The idolatrous nature of Lancelot's passion, which has
been revealed in the incident of the comb, is more fully
expressed in the scene in which he spends the night in Guinevere's
bed. He kneels at her bedside as at the shrine of a saint,
and bows "Con s'il fust devant un autel" on departing (4760-1,
4734-6). As Robertson points out, the essential character of
their 'sacramental' deed is admitted by the Queen when she
declares that the falsely accused Kay would not commit such an
offence against courtesy and loyalty as he is accused of by
Meleagant.[112] Kay himself is shocked at the thought of such a
wrong "vers mon seignor". An act capable of arousing the
righteous indignation of such a man as we have seen Kay to be,
and one which the Queen declares that even he could not
commit, is infamous indeed. The oath which Lancelot swears
before his duel with Meleagant over the issue only compounds
the fault. It is an equivocal oath like that of Tristan (which
it is supposed to recall)--technically true, but intended to

deceive. As with Tristan, the accuser's motives are at least partly malicious, but the moral character of the deed itself and of the abuse of the sacred oath remains clear.[113]

At the tournament at Nouauz, which Lancelot attends while technically a prisoner, his ignoble submissiveness and Guinevere's caprice are dramatically demonstrated. She orders him to behave like a coward, and, as Diverres comments, persists in her command long after her initial purpose in ascertaining the disguised knight's identity has been served.[114] She enjoys her power over him and her ability to destroy, according to her whim, a reputation. Since society puts a high price on such things in the world of the poem, she is in effect undermining the structure of society. This process is also evident in Guinevere's enjoyment of hearing the other women express their desire to marry Lancelot. The tournament has been arranged in order to provide husbands for these court ladies, but so successful is Lancelot in the field eventually that the ladies declare that they will marry no man but him. His presence there, drawn by Guinevere, and his prior but secret attachment, are thus seen to be sabotaging the social harmony represented by the match-making process. Guinevere's attitude is consistently frivolous and self-centred in the face of such priorities.

Lancelot must return from the tournament directly to his prison, in accordance with his promise. As in the case of Mabinograin there is an element of voluntary submission in his imprisonment. It is Lancelot's bondage to his mistress which

gives thematic point to his confinement by Meleagant. The
tournament marks Lancelot's climactic enthraldom to the
Queen, and his captivity is significantly made more severe on
his return. This is surely the reason for Guinevere's apparent
lack of objection to his physical imprisonment. No one at the
court knows what has become of Lancelot, but the Queen makes
no move whatever to rescue him, to effect his rescue by
others or to share her knowledge of his presence at the
tournament—even after Meleagant has arrived at Arthur's court
and denounced Lancelot's non-appearance as cowardice.

The last part of the poem, written by Godefroi de
Leigni, shows Lancelot's recovery and implied renunciation of
Guinevere. Cross and Nitze deny the significance of this
"banal" completion, claiming that Godefroi's responsibility
for it disqualifies it from serious attention. The "real"
romance, they argue, closes with Guinevere's "complete
enthralment" of Lancelot.[115] Yet Godefroi states that he wrote
with the full consent of Chrétien—"par le buen gre/Crestiien
qui le comança" (7128-9). The only argument for disallowing
the conclusion is that it does not accord with the older view
of the poem as wholehearted praise of adulterous love, but I
have argued that such a view is inconsistent even with the
earlier part of the poem.

In this last section Lancelot is eventually rescued
from captivity by Meleagant's sister, who searches a long time
before finding the formidable tower in which he languishes.
This lady is not a newcomer to the poem, and her role as

Lancelot's saviour is a natural development of her earlier
appearance, when she promised to return the favour he had
shown her. His complaint, which she overhears (6488 ff.),
contains no mention at all of Guinevere. He reproaches himself
for his trust in fortune, which has so deceived him, and turns
instead to "sainte Croiz, sainz Esperiz" (6501). He looks not
to Guinevere for practical hopes of rescue, but to Gawain, who
is strongly associated in the romance with reason.

Lancelot's commitment of his affairs entirely to this
damsel (6607 ff.) allows no scope for any residual passion for
the Queen, and contrasts with his previous exclusion of ties
to other women on the grounds of prior attachment. This new
alliance is very different from the old one:

> Tot le renovele et repere,
> Tot le remue et tot le change. (6688-9)

Since this comment comes immediately after she has bathed him,
it is perhaps not far-fetched to find echoes here of baptism.
For his recovery, Lancelot declares, thanks are due "solemant/
A Deu et a vos" (6702-3). Moreover, the lady is not possessive.
She immediately agrees to his desire to go to Arthur's court
to meet his obligations, for she wishes above all, unlike
Guinevere, "vostre enor et vostre bien" (6720) in the public
as well as the private sphere. They commend each other to God
on parting. This new allegiance, unlike that to the Queen,
involves no conflict between love and chivalric honour. Lancelot
is indeed returning to the court rather than to Guinevere, and
the romance ends with his victory over Meleagant. The Queen,

meanwhile, is obliged to conquer her "rage" and "folie" with "reisons", and make the best of it (6864-7).

The condemnation of Lancelot's adulterous love comprises, however, only part of his significance as a character in the romance. He has another function which is developed concurrently with his adoration of the Queen. The land of Gorre, where Arthur's subjects are held captive, has been generally identified with an original Celtic otherworld in source studies, and several commentators have pointed out that in this Christian version Lancelot's journey there offers a striking parallel to Christ's descent into Hell as described in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.[116] The comparison of Christ's redemption of humanity from mortality with a knight's rescue of his lady is a common one in medieval literature (see section V, 4, below); the heroes of Erec and Yvain similarly take on characteristics which evoke comparison with those of Christ. Erec undergoes apparent death and then 'resurrection' at the castle of Limors. Yvain's fight to save Lunete from death, and his rescue of the three hundred maidens in the castle of Pesme Avanture, contain references to Christ's salvation of man from mortality and Hell. We do not need the hermits of the Grail romances to interpret such episodes for us. The maidens are the inheritors of original sin, for the king of the island of "Puceles" (presumably innocence) has been forced to send them as tribute as a consequence of an ancient act of folly.[117]

Lancelot's career as a Christ-figure in this way appears to begin with the cart: the acceptance of a criminal's shame

recalls the crucifixion, and his hesitation to do so reminds

us of the anguish in Gethsemane.[118] The shame of the episode

is constantly used as a taunt against Lancelot's pretensions to

rescue the Queen. The knight who defends the "passage des

pierres" deplores his audacity:

> Vasaus, grant hardemant
> As fet, et mout ies fos näis
> Quant antrez ies an cest päis.
> Ja hon ça venir ne dëust,
> Qui an charrete esté ëust,
> Ne ja Deus jöir ne t'an doint.   (2226-31)

The reaction is comparable to that referred to by St. Paul:

> For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after
> wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews
> a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But
> unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ
> the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:22-4)

Later Lancelot enters a church, and after praying undergoes

symbolic resurrection by lifting the lid of a tomb, which turns

out to be his own. The inscription on the tomb declares that he

who achieves this feat will set free all the people who are

held captive in the land of Gorre. Lancelot's host later

explains that anyone may enter the land, but no one may leave

it, and that one of the conditions of the captivity is that,

as soon as one person succeeds in escaping, all the prisoners

will be free to leave. The parallel with Christ's conquest of

death is quite obvious.

The panic of the devils at the approach of Christ in

the Harrowing of Hell is matched by the alarm of the indigenous

inhabitants of Gorre at the news of the knight's arrival (2301

ff.). The captive people of Logres, on the other hand, are

overjoyed when Lancelot is introduced to them in Messianic terms

as the man

> Qui nos gitera toz d'essil
> Et de la grant malëurté
> Ou nos avons lonc tans esté.   (2426-8)

They clamour to provide their deliverer with lodging, quarrelling among themselves for the privilege, and we are reminded of the throngs which surrounded Jesus. Lancelot rebukes them: "Li plus sages de vos est fos" (2486: compare 1 Cor. 1:18 ff.), and tells them that he will take the desire to offer him honourable accommodation for the deed (2490-502: compare Matt. 25:35-40). An equivalent to the temptation of Christ is to be found in the offer of the hostile unknown knight to ferry Lancelot across the river "legieremant et soef" in his boat, thus avoiding the ordeal of the sword bridge (which none has ever yet survived), if he will promise to put himself in his power (2640-9).

The sword bridge itself, which Lancelot must cross to reach the castle where Guinevere is held, provides another reminder of the crucifixion—in this case the physical anguish rather than the shame. He entrusts himself to God, and receives wounds in the hands and feet (3098-9, 3120). At the same time the ordeal is reminiscent of the incarnation, for Chrétien tells us that Lancelot did a "mout estrange mervoille" in taking off his armour and exposing his bare feet and hands to the sword's edge. After the successful completion of his task, he is offered "l'oignemant as trois Maries" by Bademagu to heal his wounds (3374). The reference, as Foerster's note points out, is to the ointment brought by women to Christ's tomb after the resurrection (Mark 16:1).

At the combat in which Guinevere is actually won, the
captive people of Logres gather as if for a liturgical occasion:

> Qu'aussi con por öir les ogres
> Vont au mostier a feste anvel
> A Pantecoste ou a Noel.   (3534-6)

The reference to the coming of God at Pentecost and Christmas
is matched by the mention of the maidens who have fasted,
"alé nuz piez et an langes", for three days, which is presumably
intended to recall the preparations for Easter (3540-7). With
this combat the clear religious allusions seem to end, but the
drama of salvation is not over with Christ's resurrection, and
Meleagant is still free to work havoc in the world, though a
date for a final reckoning has been set. The determined might
find, in Lancelot's absence and final triumphant return, an
anticipation of the apocalypse, but such a reading depends more
heavily on the assumption of continuity of this allegorical
kind in the romance than on any convincing references in the
text. We may as easily see the rest of the poem as portraying
the continuation of the conflict at the level of the individual
human soul and its choice of alternative allegiances.

These two basic lines of development--that of Lancelot
the foolish lover, and Lancelot the redeemer--exist side by
side, sharing the common goal of the Queen's rescue, but
having otherwise only a few implicit interconnections.
Lancelot's visit to the church, for example, occurs shortly after
his adoration of the Queen's hair as if it were a saint's relic;
the wounds on his hands caused by his bending the bars to break
into the Queen's bedchamber are likely to recall the wounds

received at the sword bridge. In the case of the cart, however,
Lancelot's two roles involve contradictory interpretations of
the same action.

The curious double focus is in part responsible for the
lack of cohesion that some critics have found in the poem.
Adler considers the references to the Harrowing of Hell to
comprise a "playful allusion", symptomatic of a confusion of
sacred and profane in the romance. The mixture of "des thèmes
courtois" and "des thèmes sacrés", concludes Fowler, presented
Chrétien with problems which he could not solve, and he
consequently left the romance unfinished. Joan M. Ferrante, in
a stimulating essay whose conclusions about satirical and
burlesque elements in the poem coincide with my own at certain
points, claims that Chrétien "cannot hide his dissatisfaction
with his own work and refuses to finish it". R. S. Loomis, who
sees the Charrette as a "caricature" of "the religion of love...
the extravagances, the posturings, of certain knightly
practitioners of fin amor", approaches the difficulties of the
poem through the source studies, and concludes--in the
traditional manner of such approaches--that the poem "is largely
a patchwork of ancient and incongruous elements, and Chrétien
did not succeed in reducing them to harmony and coherence."[119]

The trouble with this view in the context of my analysis
is that both patterns of significance which I have discussed
are so prominent in the poem that to reject any meaningful
relation between them is to convict Chrétien of artistic
incompetence of a degree unwarranted by his other works. A

solution to the problem has been suggested by Robertson, who
calls Lancelot "an inverted Redeemer", the purpose of the
religious imagery in the poem being "to make the significance
of Lancelot's misdeeds apparent and to emphasize the extent of
the inversion to which a submission of the reason to the
sensuality may lead." D. D. R. Owen somewhat similarly sees
Lancelot as an absurd hero who is burlesqued by undergoing a
parodic version of the religious events.[120] Neither view,
however, quite does justice to the extraordinary duality of
Lancelot's career; both formulations seem to me to underestimate
the importance of the religious allusions, seeing them as having
a strictly supporting function, whereas they are sufficiently
prominent to claim parity with the love story. In fact, of
course, both dimensions of the poem are love stories, and the
deeply ambivalent nature of the quest for Guinevere is explored
in terms of two different kinds of love.

As in Erec, the protagonist's standing fluctuates from
a nadir which finds him ensnared by sensuality to a zenith in
which he takes on Christ-like attributes. But in the ambitious
structure of the Charrette the linear development from the one
state to the other is superseded by a parallel or contrapuntal
process, and the ambivalent possibilities of Lancelot's activities
are developed simultaneously. The unworthiness of his passion
for Guinevere as a motive for knightly endeavour is revealed
by contrast with the right kind of inspiration, which is the
example of Christ's exploits on behalf of those he loves.
Lancelot moves between the poles of sensual and spiritual

knighthood in an almost constant double focus. At certain
points, as in his mounting of the cart, we are aware that the
action must be judged in more than one way according to its
purpose and motivation. The episode of the cart asserts the right
use of chivalric honour as a deterrent to shameful actions,
but also its limitations as revealed by Christ's choice of
worldly shame rather than glory. Similarly, Gawain's role
reveals the duality of human reason. Its necessity as a guide
is shown in relation to Lancelot the lover, but its inability
to stand comparison with the mind of God is clear from Gawain's
failure to negotiate the bridge under the water (leading into
Gorre) and his consequent need of rescue.

Fowler and others may indeed be right in thinking that
Chrétien was not ultimately satisfied with the complexities of
this striking formal experiment, though to me it appears largely
successful. Certainly my reading involves setting aside normal
assumptions about character consistency and development, but
that is true also of other of Chrétien's poems and of romances
by other writers. Artin cites the example of Laudine in Yvain
as an example of Chrétien's lack of concern with strict
allegorical correspondences: marriage with her must symbolise
for the hero something quite different at the end of the poem
from what it does at the beginning. "It is characteristic of
Chrétien's style", writes Artin, "that the moral 'value' of a
character often shifts between poles of meaning, while the
meaning of the narrative as a whole remains consistent."[121]
The spirit not the letter dominates, and the allegorical aspects

of the romances make up in power and resonance what they lack
in neatness.

Far from describing the knight's task as the unquestioning
service of a lady, Chrétien's Lancelot rejects that notion in
favour of an alternative idea of knighthood as an imitation of
Christ. This polarity is common and underlies a large number
of literary treatments of chivalry. In the practical lives of
knights love may not have had a significant place, but in
chivalric literature the relationship between love and knighthood
is often of great symbolic importance as a way of identifying
desirable and undesirable chivalric objectives. I hope to have
shown here that one does not need to go to the Conte du Graal
of Chrétien or the later Grail stories to find this dichotomy.
Nevertheless, in later Arthurian writings the duality between
amatory and religious loyalties evident in Chrétien's Lancelot
is more fully presented, and deserves some attention here for
two main reasons. In the first place the Arthurian stories,
with the exception of those dealing specifically with the Grail,
are still generally assumed to embody an ideal of chivalry
based on love-service. The assumption is self-perpetuating,
for in turn critics assert that since the romances exalt
chivalry they must be praising knightly service of a lady.
In the second place, I wish to establish the centrality and
extent of the tradition by which love was seen as essentially
destructive of chivalric enterprise. The most prominent
embodiment of such enterprise was the fictional institution
of the Round Table, and in pursuing this study of Lancelot
into the two most famous prose compilations of Arthurian stories,

the French Prose _Lancelot_ and Malory's _Morte Darthur_, we find
his fortunes as a lover intimately bound up with those of the
Round Table as a whole. The fate of chivalry's most magnificent
creation hangs upon the private erotic conduct of its most
celebrated knight.

5. The Prose 'Lancelot'

The dichotomy between amatory and religious loyalties
which I have noted in the _Charrette_ is considerably more
conspicuous in the prose collection known as the Vulgate Cycle,
which embraces both the religious sublimity of the Grail quest
and the desperate passion of Lancelot and Guinevere. Commentary
has tended to divorce these apparent extremes on the grounds
of incompatibility, assuming for some reason that the love
interest is more truly representative of the appeal of these
stories than the concern with religion. The Grail element in the
Arthurian romances is often written off as a mere clerical
curiosity, an aberration in the history of chivalric idealism.
W. W. Lawrence tells us that "we are not to look, then, in the
legends of the Holy Grail for the more realistic side of
chivalry", which he sees largely in terms of love, "but rather
for its more fantastic manifestations."[122] The Vulgate _Queste
del Saint Graal_, according to Richard Barber, "stands alone in
the romances as a deliberate attempt to bend the power of
chivalry to new ends, the Church's ends".[123] About the same
work P. E. Tucker comments that "in the process of giving
significance to the Grail romance the French author almost

completely destroys the original life of the material and its persons".[124] D. S. Brewer claims that the Grail values are quite antithetical to those of chivalry:

> The intention of the Grail stories is to denigrate the chivalric life of the knight-errant and to exalt its complete opposite, the virginal, ascetic, meditative, untravelled life of the monk. The authors...used the chivalric myths to deny chivalric values. They wrote a serious allegorical parody of worldly chivalry to exemplify the unworldly life of the spirit...The Grail stories were apparently as successful as the other Arthurian stories in French prose in the thirteenth century, partly because of their literary art, and, partly, no doubt, because their audience, unlike their authors, were able to believe in both the chivalric virtues and in spiritual virtues.[125]

The inadequacy of these views, in so far as they bear on the subject of chivalry, lies to a large extent in their assumption of a chivalric 'essence', in relation to which other developments using the name of chivalry are to be seen as an intrusion, a decadence, or a fantasy. As I have argued, however (above, section II, 5), chivalry existed as a series of linked ideas responding to a variety of medieval impulses and needs—practical, theoretical and imaginative—and was from the beginning characterised by imaginative flexibility. One of the more basic needs chivalry reflected was that of reconciling the necessity of military power with the pacific behaviour enjoined by Christian dogma. The Grail stories no more represent an expression of anti-chivalric sentiment, therefore, than do any of the other aspects of chivalry which resulted from this need, such as the liturgical forms of the knighting ceremony, or—more pertinently—the Templar ideal expressed in the Ad Milites Templi of St. Bernard, with whose Cistercian order the Vulgate

Queste was probably closely connected. Indeed, Myrrha Lot-Borodine declared that "l'idée chevaleresque, essentiellement médiévale, a trouvé son expression la plus parfaite en s'incarnant dans le Christ-chevalier-Galaad."[126]

The Grail quest and the crusades, which must surely be seen as a central factor in any assessment of knightly obligation, share a common impulse. The historical relationship between them is not clear, but arguments that the Grail legend's popularity resulted in part from the lack of crusading success have been advanced.[127] In Wolfram's _Parzival_ the Grail is served by a group of knights, sworn to chastity, who are atoning for their sins, and who are referred to as "templeise"—a probable reference to the role of the Templars as protectors of the holy places.[128] Furthermore, as Edmund Reiss comments, the Grail quest's prominence is not entirely a matter of its relation to chivalry, since it functioned "as a type for all sorts of medieval journeys".[129] Such a theme was bound to transcend ultimately all worldly concerns. But the Grail theme transcended the worldly aspects of chivalric idealism only in the sense that it placed them in a transcendental perspective (as did all religious thought); it did not, as Brewer seems to think, deny them all significance.

In fact the elaboration of chivalric ideas in the direction of religious symbolism was a steady and straightforward process compared with chivalry's relationship to love, which, as we have seen, was very problematic. There is certainly a better case for regarding a concern with love as 'anti-chivalric' than for setting up a polarity between chivalry and religious

symbolism---however homiletic a form the latter took. But the
knight, as I have emphasised, stands at the node of conflicting
possibilities of worldly fulfilment, and love, in all its forms,
is clearly one of those possibilities. In worldly terms, for
example, Lancelot---in the Vulgate Cycle and in Malory---is the
most complete knight of all, and it is therefore appropriate
that he should be a lover, and that his love should be extreme
in several ways just as his prowess is. But it is also appropriate
that his worldly love is disastrous in its consequences and
is ultimately abandoned. As Wilfred Guerin has observed, "since
the Round Table is a society flourishing in the midst of medieval
Christianity, its characteristics are steadily seen against the
backdrop of otherworldly philosophy where the function of man is
to aspire to an eternal reward."[130]

The association of knighthood and Christian mysticism
evidently came more naturally to medieval writers than to some
of their modern interpreters. It was this combination in
Chrétien's Conte du Graal (Perceval), whether or not partly
fortuitous in its creation, and from whatever sources it came,
which made this poem one of the most seminal works of imaginative
literature of the Middle Ages. The debate about the thoroughness
of explicit Christian reference in Chrétien's treatment of the
Grail theme does not, however, concern us here, since the point
I am making about the fecundity of the idea is amply illustrated
by the continuations of the poem by later hands, and the
profusion of subsequent Grail works.[131] These latter not only
reworked the story found partially in Chrétien, but offered

various explanations of what the Grail actually was, and extended its history back to the time of Christ. In such works as Robert de Boron's _Joseph d'Arimathie_ and the _Estoire del Saint Graal_ (an addition to the Vulgate Cycle, similarly dealing with the early history of the Grail) the Grail theme parts company from knightly adventure and moves in the direction of pure hagiography, though Robert makes Joseph of Arimathea a sort of knight banneret in the service of Pilate, and supplies pedigrees for the eventual Grail knights. But these additions are ancillary to the main story, which remains a series of distinctly chivalric exploits in the most significant versions, as well as an expression of sublime religious experience.

Once the legitimacy of the Grail story in the context of chivalric romance is granted, the implications for the subject of knighthood of the patterns of events described in the Prose _Lancelot_ and the _Morte Darthur_ are comparatively straight-forward. What Ferdinand Lot called "la simplicité du plan, la pureté générale des lignes," speak very largely for themselves, despite the complexities of the source studies, the uncertainties about compositional unity, and the labyrinthine nature of the individual lines of the narrative.[132] The story tells how the most splendid secular institution the world has ever seen is subjected to a test of its spiritual worthiness and found wanting; it is brought to destruction shortly thereafter by a series of malicious actions initiated by the illicit love of that institution's most complete representative, who has suffered conspicuous failure in the spiritual test and who

survives in penitence the passing of the Arthurian society.

The story thus encapsulated sets up a polarity between two kinds of love, represented by Lancelot's involvement with Guinevere and Galahad's participation in the vision of divine love. To recognise this polarity we do not have to assume that all men are expected to be Galahads, or that Lancelot's love displays no positive aspects at any time; we must, however, accept that Galahad represents a standard of perfection against which all men are ultimately to be judged, and to which all men should aspire. The ambivalent possibilities of Lancelot's love for the Queen must in the end be assessed according to the fruits of that love, which are physical and spiritual death. The adulterous love affair which dominates the whole course of the action is seen to lead to worldly disaster, while the Grail quest sets both this and the more generalised worldliness of Arthur's court in the perspective of man's spiritual goal. In chivalric terms the polarity is between a concept of knighthood which is defined in basically religious terms and one which takes its inspiration from—and finds its end in—amorousness. The validity of such an overall view depends to a large degree on the integral nature of the whole story. The relationship of Lancelot and Guinevere cannot be viewed in isolation in either the French or the English versions of the story, but must be seen against the background of the Grail quest and the final catastrophe. In pursuing this argument, I shall draw upon evidence from both the Prose <u>Lancelot</u> and the <u>Morte Darthur</u>; special features of Malory's treatment will be discussed in a

separate following section.

Lot has convincingly argued for the unity and single authorship of the _Lancelot_ proper (Sommer, vols. III-V), rejecting the idea that the ambiguous attitude towards Lancelot and Guinevere is evidence of dual authorship. He also argued for the unity of the whole Prose _Lancelot_, and though his claim for single authorship of the whole work has not been accepted, the unified design of its three 'branches' (the _Lancelot_ proper, _Queste del Saint Graal_, _Mort Artu_) is now recognised. The work, he maintains, "n'est pas une mosaïque d'où l'on pourrait avec adresse enlever des cubes pour les remplacer par d'autres, c'est une sparterie ou une tapisserie: si l'on tente d'y pratiquer une coupure, tout part en morceaux." Micha agrees that "Le _Lancelot-Graal_ est à prendre en bloc... Cette oeuvre présente bien l'histoire d'un monde, de son apogée à sa ruine, l'histoire d'un amour, de sa naissance au renoncement final."[133] Since the three parts were probably the work of different authors, this cohesion has been explained (by Albert Pauphilet and others) as the result of revision by later contributors or (by Jean Frappier) as the overall conception of an 'architect', who probably wrote the _Lancelot_ proper but only supervised the composition of the other two parts "dans le cadre d'un plan général établi à l'avance".[134] Frappier comments that the three works form "a unified structure, bound together by preparations and prognostics on the one hand and backward references on the other."[135]

The apparent difficulty involved in finding a unity of

theme in the three sections of the Prose _Lancelot_ is stated

by Lot. It concerns almost exclusively the love affair of

Lancelot:

> Entre la _Quête_ et le _Lancelot_ la divergence d'esprit
> est éclatante: ici l'esprit mystique, là l'esprit
> chevaleresque; c'est le jour et la nuit et tous les
> critiques s'accordent sur cette opposition...Le côté
> choquant, scabreux, du _Lancelot_, c'est l'adultère du
> héros avec la reine Guenièvre. Loin de glisser sur ces
> amours peu édifiantes le roman semble parfois s'y
> complaire...L'auteur semble même excuser les coupables
> en invoquant la force de la passion...Quel contraste
> avec les parties 'mystiques'! L'_Estoire_ et la _Quête_
> sont un hymne en l'honneur de la chasteté...[136]

There is an antinomy here, claims Lot, which is inherent in

medieval thought. The commitment to the world which is

represented by the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is positive

until viewed in the spiritual light of the _Queste_. Besides, the

love at first involves only "un péché d'intention" and is

therefore not condemned. Furthermore, it does at least inspire

Lancelot to the virtue of fidelity (to Guinevere): "Source de

péchés, l'amour est aussi un bienfait et peut être une vertu...

La constance purifie, jusqu'à un certain point, l'amour même

coupable." By the third volume of the _Lancelot_ proper

(Sommer, V: the so-called _Agravain_), however, "la conduite

de Lancelot est flétrie en des termes dont la grossière vigueur

ne le cède en rien à celle de la _Quête_ ou de l'_Estoire_."[137]

Frappier supports this hypothesis of a gradual evolution and

crystallisation of attitude:

> ...a 'double esprit', to use Lot's phrase, a shifting
> attitude, is characteristic of the _Lancelot_ proper and
> becomes more conspicuous as the advent of Galaad draws
> near. At first it would seem that love of woman, even
> when it involved adultery, deceit, and disloyalty, was
> the source of all good; the author's sympathy seems to

> be wholly with the lovers and their go-between
> Galehaut. This attitude gives way more and more
> to the doctrine that adulterous love is sin and the
> cause of calamity, but until we reach the _Queste_ there
> is ambiguity...Perhaps this gradual annunciation, which
> in the form of a romance led from an Old Testament to a
> New Evangel of chivalry, implied fluctuations, but it[138]
> proceeded none the less from a majestic conception...

The "ambiguity" that Frappier mentions has remained for
many critics an implicit approval of Lancelot's love. Myrrha
Lot-Borodine remarked that in the _Lancelot_ proper "la beauté de
la dame est, conformément aux lois du canon courtois, la source
même des vertus chevaleresques."[139] Such an attitude is
particularly common among those working in English studies, who
usually approach the Vulgate Cycle through Malory. The dominant
trend in criticism of Malory has been to assert that he
de-emphasised both the religious zeal of the _Queste_ and the
'approval' of the adulterous affair in the _Lancelot_ proper.
Thus P. E. Tucker argues that Malory rejected "the intimate
connexion of love and chivalry" in his French sources, and even
Charles Moorman, who argues that Malory's use of the Grail
story is essentially consonant with that of the _Queste_, assumes
that the French _Lancelot_ proper regards "courtly love as a part
of the chivalric code".[140] It is a reminder of the limitations
of the comparative methods which have dominated Malory criticism
to find that commentators on the English version have assumed
a dramatic discrepancy between the French _Lancelot_ and _Queste_
while critics of the French cycle have been establishing the
essential continuity of the two works.

In fact a stronger case than Lot's could be made for the
theory that the _Lancelot_ proper presents an attitude towards

love that is consistent with that of the Queste. At the very beginning of the romance we learn that Lancelot was originally baptised Galahad: he "auoit non lancelos en sournon, mais il auoit non en baptesme galahos".[141] As has often been pointed out, this is a foreshadowing of the arrival of the perfect knight Galahad, Lancelot's son, in the Queste, where Lancelot's supersession by Galahad is explained as a figure of the displacement of the Old Law by the New. Lancelot is then a reminder of Adam, originally spotless--as indicated by his baptismal name--but soon to fall, to repent, to fall again, and finally through sustained penance to regain the blissful seat through the second Adam who comes after him.

Lancelot himself learns that he will be thus surpassed when, several hundred pages after the account of his birth, he finds himself deprived of his normal invincibility. He is unable to perform the exploit of opening a tomb, and a voice announces to him that success in this venture, as in that of the Grail, is closed to him, although he is a great knight, "pour lez crueus pechies et lez ors dont tez cors est envenimes" (IV, 176: 27-8). Lancelot will not much longer be the world's best knight, for a greater is to come, whose strength lies precisely where Lancelot is weak. He is told this again, by a hermit, on an occasion when his capacity for achieving exploits is once more shown to be limited. The hermit dismisses him with the words: "mais vous y aues failli pour lez grans pechies dont vous estes souspris" (V, 248:27-8). In his vision at the Grail castle--still in the Lancelot proper--Bors (Bohort) is told that Lancelot will

not achieve the quest because of the frailty of his loins: "toutes lez boines uertus qui en lui deussent estre sont mortes par le foiblece de ses rains"(V, 301:33-4).

These incidents foreshadow Lancelot's eventual development, but we must also deal with the more immediate and obvious effects of the love which proves so ominous. As I have mentioned, Lancelot's mentor, the Lady of the Lake, makes no reference at all to love in her instructions to Lancelot about the duties of a knight, which she defines essentially as the protection of the Church and of the helpless (III, 114-5). Yet Lancelot is not simply a knight, for he is also Adam, and in an important sense the representative of fallen humanity. He embodies the full potential of man but also his inevitable weakness. Lancelot must be a lover not because he is a knight but because Christian virtue involves a discrimination between appropriate and inappropriate kinds of love. Lancelot's love must convey both its positive potential and the positive aspects of his character which it elicits, while at the same time showing its ultimately sinful and evil nature. Lancelot must remind us of the glory of the unfallen Adam as well as of the depths of his ignominy.

Thus although the effect of love is shown in chivalric terms as the inspiration or otherwise of knightly prowess, larger issues are really at stake. The knight's choice of carnal over divine love is emblematic of the whole human failure. In order that Lancelot's love shall be able to do this it must convincingly answer our sense of the scope of human capacity for nobility

as well as baseness. The affair is seen in various contrasting perspectives--of fidelity and breach of faith, of honour and shame, of magnanimity and selfishness, humility and jealousy. Nobility, romance and happiness jostle with madness, lust, comedy, destruction and sin. But the relationship is far from being a mean and sordid one; C. S. Lewis's comments on Malory's exaltation of Lancelot apply also to the Prose Lancelot's treatment of wholeheartedly worldly love:

> If you want to show that one sort of achievement is inferior to, even incommensurable with, another, then of course the more splendid (in its own kind) your specimen is, the more impressive its failure (in another kind) will be. Every word said in praise of Lancelot as a good knight 'of a sinful man'--as the bravest, most courteous, most faithful in his love, but not seriously hitherto attempting that perfection of chastity and all other virtues which the Christian law demands of the knight, in his own fashion, no less than of the contemplative--serves all the more to drive home the moral of the whole story, makes it all the clearer that with the Quest we have entered a region where even what is best and greatest by the common standards of the world 'falls into abatement and low price'.[142]

There are two aspects of Lancelot's behaviour which might be seen as positive results of his love for Guinevere--his constancy to her, and the excellence of his knightly prowess. Though both of these aspects are subject to the qualifications which Lewis suggests, they are also questionable in themselves, without reference to the test represented by the Grail quest and its foreshadowings.

In the former case, that of Lancelot's fidelity, we should note that, as with Tristan, constancy in love is poor compensation for the betrayal of a prior allegiance to his lord.

The difference in tone between his relationship with Guinevere
and that with Arthur is especially noticeable in the Mort Artu
through the contrast between Guinevere's hysterical jealousy
on the flimsiest evidence of Lancelot's infidelity (his wearing
the sleeve of the damsel of Escalot at the Winchester tournament)
and Arthur's sustained attempt to believe in Lancelot's
honourableness until presented with conclusive evidence to the
contrary. On the other question--that of Lancelot's knightly
attainments--there seems no reason to deny a modicum of truth
to his proclamations (for example, V, 183:39 ff.) that the love
of the Queen is responsible for much of his success. Even in his
penitential mood in the Queste Lancelot maintains to his
confessor that it was Guinevere who gave him gold to distribute
among poor knights and for whose love "j'ai faites les granz
proeces dont toz li mondes parole".[143] As Lot notes, "le héros
ne cesse de proclamer que sans cet amour il ne serait capable
d'aucun exploit, qu'il ne serait rien; et, chaque fois qu'il
s'imagine n'être plus aimé, sa prouesse l'abandonne et il
'forsenne'."[144] The Lady of the Lake, in urging Guinevere to
return Lancelot's love, finds distinctly mitigating circum-
stances in the "folie" of their liaison:

> Car il ne vaut riens ne nule riens ne prise enuers
> vous, ne li pecies del siecle ne puet estre menes sans
> folie. Mais moult a grant raison de sa folie que raison
> i troeue & honor, & se vous folie poes trouer en vos
> amors, ceste folie est a honerer sor toutes autres. Car
> vous ames le seignor & la flor de tot cest monde, si vous
> poes de ce vanter que onques mais dame ne pot faire ce
> que vous poes. Car vous estes compaigne au plus preudome
> & dame au millor cheualier du monde. (III, 418:33-9)

This positive aspect is, however, periodically undercut.

The element of "folie" looms progressively larger. In the Queste a priest insists that his great deeds were performed by that residue of his God-given virtues which had not been destroyed by his lust (126:25-7). More generally, we become aware that Lancelot is often doing the right things for the wrong reason. The obligations of knighthood as the Lady of the Lake originally expounded them have their own justification in terms of religious and social duty. But instead of confronting them steadily Lancelot attaches them to the unstable and wildly fluctuating condition of his love affair, which subjects him to fits of despair and even madness when as a knight he is of little use to anyone. Guinevere's influence is thus not at all consistent in its effects, and from a martial point of view incapacitates him as much as inspiring him to great deeds of arms. Thought, sound or sight of the Queen usually sends him into a state of absorption in which he is oblivious to all around him. A knight who rouses him from one of these states exclaims: "Deable denfer vous font dame regarder" (III, 201:20-1). A little later, hearing the Queen's voice, Lancelot gazes on her and lets his horse go where it will. The horse jumps into a river, gets out of its depth, and Lancelot nearly drowns. He is eventually rescued by Yvain, but still gazing on Guinevere again abandons control of the animal until another knight, Daguenet, seizes his bridle and leads him to the Queen. Even now he is still in a trance, able to speak hardly a word, and incapable of keeping hold of his lance. Yvain is compelled to restore his lance, lead him to

a ford in the river, and set him on his way (III, 203-5).

At the battle with the Saxons and Irish, Lancelot is again overcome at the sight of Guinevere, and her capricious orders to him interfere with the tactical requirements of the situation (III, 407-9). Much later, disguised in red armour, Lancelot carries the day against the Round Table knights at a tournament at Camelot until suddenly he sees the Queen. His strength immediately drains away, he drops his sword, and he becomes as if dead. If Baudemagus had not caught him in his arms he would have fallen from his horse. When in bed with Guinevere afterwards, Lancelot admits that it was the sight of her beauty which had unmanned him. Guinevere at this point (though not later) is concerned that her effect on him may be detrimental to his prowess, but Lancelot insists, contrary to the facts just recounted, that her influence can only be beneficial (V, 176, 183-4). At times Guinevere's influence does appear genuinely beneficial. In the battle between Galehaut and Arthur, for example, Lancelot singlehandedly achieves victory for Arthur because Guinevere has requested him to fight (III, 236 ff.). But the service of a lady is nevertheless a somewhat capricious reason for decisively influencing the outcome of such a momentous occasion, with fifty thousand men involved altogether.

Guinevere in fact is shown to be more conscious than Lancelot of the realities of their situation, and as a result his protestations cannot be taken at face value. When the Queen learns of Lancelot's failure to approach the tomb, mentioned

above, and of the prophecy that he would be unable to achieve
the Grail quest, she is grieved that their love is responsible,
especially since he is otherwise the best knight in the world:
"Et ore laves perdu par lassamblee de nous ii. Si me uenist
miex ce me samble que onques ne fuisse nee que par moi
remansissent tant de biens comme il en remandront" (V, 193:15-7).
Lancelot reproves her and claims he owes everything to her
influence (V, 193:18-25), but the partial truth in his words
is outweighed by the perception of his lady. Throughout the
work, in fact, the idea that love can be justified in this way
is set up only to be severely qualified. In the Mort Artu, for
example, Lancelot's success at the tournament at Winchester is
automatically attributed by the rest of the court to the
power of his love for the woman whose sleeve he wears as a
favour; but a little later Bors's discourse to the Queen
presents a very different perspective. Every "preudome qui
longuement amast par amours" has eventually been dishonoured:
Absalom, Solomon, Samson, Hector, Achilles, Tristan.[145]

I wish to pass over for the moment the condemnation
of this kind of love in the Queste, which will be discussed
separately later (see below, section V, 1), and to note that
in the last section of the Prose Lancelot, the Mort Artu, we
find a sharpening of the focus and an acceleration of the
destructive effects of the liaison. That the Grail adventure
cannot be separated from the rest of the story is emphasised
both in the events preceding the Queste and in those which
immediately follow it. In the Lancelot proper Bors receives

at the Grail castle an allegorical revelation of the destruction
of Arthur and the Round Table (V, 300), and after the quest is
over Arthur vainly attempts to recreate the glory of the
Table by holding the Winchester tournament (Mort Artu, p. 3).
Lancelot relapses into sin with Guinevere in less than a month,
and he also acts now with total lack of discretion, "si folement",
in contrast to his previous behaviour. Discovery is inevitable,
and Lancelot's two serious wounds are warnings of the approaching
nemesis.

The first wound, at the tournament, is significantly
at the hands of his counsellor, Bors, and whereas knights are
normally healed of such wounds with great rapidity in the
romance, this wound takes a great deal of time. At one point
Lancelot is close to death. In imagery that as we have seen
is conventional in such situations, the wound is compared to
that of a hunted animal who has been shot in the heart (43:24).
The second wound sustains this image, for Lancelot is hit in
the thigh ("par mi la cuisse") by the King's huntsmen, who
were aiming at a stag. The shot was not a complete failure
("li cox n'ala pas del tout a faute", 79:36-7), as the author
drily remarks.[146]

But if Lancelot is at his lowest point here, so is
Guinevere, in her violent reaction to the rumour of his
involvement with the lady of Escalot. We are told that she
wants him dead, that she hates him violently—more so than
she has ever loved him. As Mme. Lot-Borodine remarks,
Guinevere "a perdu sa belle assurance ancienne, son intangible

fierté, et ses défauts, la jalousie, le caprice et le despotisme, se sont accentués avec les années."[147] The strife and jealousy caused here by the love affair foreshadow its larger disruptive effect to come. Guinevere laments that for love of Lancelot she has shamed "le plus preudome del monde" (32:26-7). Her despairing comment is intended as a reproach to Lancelot's apparent faithlessness, but in this context rebounds strongly on her own behaviour towards the "preudome" Arthur: "Ha! Dex", she cries, "qui esprovera mes loiauté en nul chevalier ne en nul home, quant desloiauté s'est herbergiee el meilleur de touz les bons?" (32:27-30).

From the low point of the discovery of the affair, the lovers move slowly upwards towards their eventual moral renaissance after the final dissolution of the Round Table. After discovery, Lancelot is consistently magnanimous towards Arthur and Gawain. He puts Guinevere's honour above his own desire and sends her back to Arthur, declaring that he would do so even if it involved his own death (pp. 152, 154-5). He blesses his enemies on leaving England, and spares Gawain when he is in his power; his love for those who mortally hate him dumbfounds Arthur and Bors (pp. 163, 185-6, 189, 191, 202). This attitude is, however, occasionally punctuated by a regressive and defiant insistence that he is innocent both of dishonouring Guinevere and of the deaths of Agravain and his companions, who had entrapped him. We have been shown the factual falseness of this claim, and its lack of substance is emphasised in the method by which Lancelot attempts to support it: he offers to

fight anyone who challenges his word, blatantly appealing to his recognised superiority to all other knights in combat (pp. 140-1, 158). Quite different is his later stance, when he implicitly confesses his guilt in offering to appease Gawain by going barefoot as a penitent pilgrim for ten years, "nuz piez et en langes, touz seus, sanz compaignie, en essill". Gawain has in effect offered him a judicial duel—a right Lancelot had previously vehemently claimed. He now renounces it, however, even offering to become Gawain's vassal (pp. 190-1).

The final gesture, of course, is the total renunciation of the world after the death of Arthur. Lancelot finally achieves what he had been unable to sustain during and after the Grail quest, in which—as Lot points out—a special reverence is shown for hermits who are ex-knights.[148] Lancelot joins a surrogate Round Table of spirituality and penance under the leadership of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and becomes a priest. The story thus ends on a note of collective rather than merely personal piety, emphasising the fact that the story of the death of Arthur demonstrates not just the evils which accumulate from the sins of individuals, but the necessary transience of all worldly glory. As Gower wrote in In Praise of Peace:

> See Charlemeine, Godefroi, Arthus,
> Fulfild of werre and of mortalite.
> Here fame abit, bot al is vanite;
> For deth, which hath the werres under fote,
> Hath mad an ende of which ther is no bote. (283-7)

On the night before the final disaster Arthur dreams that he is at the top of Fortune's wheel, about to be dashed down (Mort Artu, pp. 226-7).

Lancelot's rejection of the world is not merely an automatic response to the fact that there is nothing now for him to live for. It is a continuation of the movement he unsuccessfully strove for earlier on, and therefore a final resolution of the subject of the Queste. In the English stanzaic Morte Arthur and in Malory his choice is made more positive by the inclusion of a last meeting with Guinevere at which he rejects her advice to marry and return to the secular world. He is also shown being tempted once more to return to the embraces of the Queen by asking for a last kiss, which she, insisting on complete abstinence, denies.[149] Similarly, Guinevere's penance, which Whitehead considers "dry and perfunctory" in the Mort Artu, is not a result of finding that she has no further function in the world.[150] She enters a nunnery and wants to be admitted to the vow of the order even before the battle between Arthur and Mordred has taken place. Involvement with either of the two contenders--or with Lancelot-- represents for her a return to a state of worldly participation which has enmeshed her in sin (Mort Artu, pp. 218-9)

The whole structure of the huge romance leads us ultimately to this renunciation, and we must therefore reject Myrrha Lot-Borodine's analysis of the unity of the work in terms which minimise its importance:

> La chevalerie 'terrienne' mène en ligne droite à la
> chevalerie 'célestienne', et l'amour de la créature,
> après de longs errements, à l'amour du créateur...Le
> dualisme qui semblait scinder en deux l'oeuvre, en
> apparence contradictoire, et qui en est la base même,
> aboutit donc à une unité harmonieuse, à une haute synthèse
> ...Dans l'économie générale de l'ouvrage, tous deux se

retrouvent à des doses à peu près égales; la balance
penche tantôt d'un côté, tantôt de l'autre, mais
finalement, d'après la loi secrète qui la dirige, elle
incline vers le triomphe du ciel, emportant toute la
terre dans son élan.[151]

About the responsibility of the love of Lancelot and
Guinevere for the downfall of the Round Table there has been
much disagreement, particularly among critics of Malory.
Commenting on the Mort Artu, Frappier stresses the "rapport
de cause à effet" by which "c'est bien la passion coupable des
amants et la découverte de l'adultère qui déclenchent la
catastrophe finale où s'engloutira le monde arthurien."[152]
But Whitehead declares that "far from condemning Lancelot, the
Mort Artu extols him...the conduct of Lancelot is justified not
only in his own eyes but in those of the author...he behaves
in every respect as a chivalrous knight should." Instead,
Agravain, Mordred and Gawain are the people to blame.[153]
Applying this idea to Malory, R. T. Davies declares that until
Agravain's interference the affair was satisfactory.[154] Brewer
somewhat disingenuously buries the love affair in a series of
less obvious causes of the disaster: "the tragedy has multiple
causes: among them, Arthur's own fault in begetting Mordred,
Mordred's and Agravain's malice, Lancelot's pride, his adultery
with Guinevere, and so forth."[155] According to Stephen J.
Miko, Lancelot and Guinevere are at most victims or instruments,
rather than causes, of the downfall, which represents rather
the destruction of order (symbolised by chivalry) in face of
the irresistible forces of a chaotic fate.[156] C. S. Lewis,
however, remarked that the failure of Lancelot, the Round Table's

"highest specimen", is the failure of the entire institution:
"on it and him, as the result of his illicit love, the
prophecies begin to be fulfilled", even though these prophecies
are "worked out through a tangle of human motives".[157]

There are, of course, circumstances in all versions of
the death of Arthur which enable the reader to bring to the
plight of the lovers an imaginative empathy. Agravain is
spiteful and malicious, though Malory gives him a quite
unexceptionable basis for his action: "hit ys shamefully
suffird of us all that we shulde suffir so noble a kynge as kynge
Arthur ys to be shamed" (1161:21-3). Gawain, while slow to
anger, becomes obsessively implacable. Arthur, in failing to
take effective action at an early stage, or to control Gawain,
and in his general indecisiveness, to some extent also invites
his fate. The Mort Artu several times refers to his folly in
failing to get Lancelot's aid before attacking Mordred, and
his weakness is even more evident in the stanzaic Morte
Arthur. In the latter, moreover, Gawain directly blames his
brother Agravain for the train of events leading to the
disaster; but the narrator seems unwilling to endorse him,
since he leaves the question open:

> He that by-ganne thys wrechyd playe,
> What wondyr thoughe he had grete synne. (2212-3)

Malory's Arthur also blames Agravain and Mordred for his
troubles (1184:8-11), but this is another symptom of the
blindness which had for so long refused to see the misconduct
of his wife.

The question of the responsibility of the love affair for the downfall of Arthur's world does not in the end require the arbitration of any narrator. The actions of Lancelot and Guinevere are confessions in themselves. In the Mort Artu Lancelot offers Gawain an indirect expression of guilt, and in the stanzaic Morte Arthur (lines 3638-77) Guinevere declares that she and Lancelot have been the cause of all this war and death. In Malory's account she declares: "Thorow thys same man and me hath all thys warre be wrought ...for thorow oure love that we have loved togydir is my moste noble lorde slayne" (1252:8-11). After her death, Lancelot says: "by my defaute and myn orgule and my pryde...they were bothe layed ful lowe" (1256:33-4). Agravain is indeed warned of the consequences of his intended action of telling Arthur about his wife's infidelity; but so is Lancelot warned by Bors of the consequences of his action: his persistence in going to Guinevere on the fatal night involves the risk of war, and "shall wratth us all".[158] In private Bors and Hector curse the liaison, predicting that it will lead to a great war between Arthur and Lancelot's kin (Mort Artu, p. 83).

In this perspective Agravain is simply an agent who compounds the effect of human weakness, as is Morgan when she manoeuvres Arthur into seeing the pictures Lancelot has painted of his affair with Guinevere while Morgan's prisoner (Mort Artu, pp.61-65). Lastly we may note that although the actual destruction of the Round Table comes about as a result of Mordred's rebellion, Mordred's

action in attempting to obtain Guinevere parodies the
dishonourable aspects of Lancelot's relationship with her.
Arthur tells Mordred to look after Guinevere "ausi loiaument
com hons liges doit garder la feme son seignor" (Mort Artu, p.
166). Mordred's breach of this injunction reminds us that
Lancelot's offence is technically the same.

The disastrous possibilities of love for the world
of chivalry and order were, I conclude, a central element
in the meaning of the story of Arthur. In so far as Lancelot
is the hero of the story, his development is not complete
until he has rejected the service of love in favour of that
of God. Objection may be taken to these conclusions, however,
especially with reference to Malory, on the grounds that I
have tended to conflate the various versions of the story in
my discussion without sufficiently distinguishing their
individual characteristics. Consequently some specific
attention needs to be paid to the relevant issues raised by
the lively critical debate of the last two decades about
Malory's divergence or otherwise from his sources.

6. Malory

Recent commentary on Malory's view of the central
love story has been largely concerned to support or refute
Vinaver's contention that in exalting Lancelot's stature he
condoned his adulterous love, and that in writing several
discrete romances rather than one continuous one he detached
the Grail quest from its context and prevented it from

providing a moral perspective on the rest of the events
described. In addition Vinaver claims that Malory 'secular-
ised' the Grail story as he found it in the Vulgate Cycle:
"where the French monks attempted a moral tale of sinful
knights, he saw the earthly beauty and the undying charm of
Arthur's kingdom...He relentlessly cut out the theological
comments of the Queste, and said nothing that could arouse
a suspicion of the sinful nature of knighthood...; by omission,
Malory defends Lancelot's character and the 'noble order' of
chivalry." The Grail itself "is neither a mystic symbol nor
yet a sign set up to confound a sinful world", and its quest
becomes merely "a pageant full of strange adventures".
Those occasions on which Malory chose to follow the original
religious purpose of his source Vinaver ascribes to his lack of
understanding of the Vulgate Queste's intentions.[159]

.Vinaver does not here define what he means by
chivalry, but it is clear that he identifies chivalry with the
behaviour of Lancelot. Chivalry is for Vinaver a secular
institution and Lancelot is its chief representative; the
failure of Lancelot means the rejection of chivalry. This
is a common attitude, but an inadequate one. Chivalry was
not just an ideal of secular magnificence or a practical
code of military conduct. It was capable of taking on a
variety of emphases, and one of the most important of these
was religious zeal, as exemplified by the Grail quest and the
figure of Galahad. Malory's Morte Darthur does not reject
the concept of chivalry any more than it rejects the importance

of the Grail quest. Instead it redefines what chivalry
should be. The point is well made by Lewis's comments on
the "Tale of the Sankgreall": "The recall is not from knight-
hood to the cloister, but from knighthood as it has come to
be (full of 'sin and wickedness') to knighthood as it was
intended to be, grounded in 'patience and humility'."[160]

As far as Malory's treatment of the Grail story itself
is concerned, Vinaver's claim does have a limited validity.
In comparison with the Vulgate _Queste_, Malory's account puts
less emphasis on the mystical and homiletic elements; but this
does not justify us in seeing his intentions as materially
different from those of his source. Malory did not envisage
his reader as someone who had a copy of the author's source
beside him for constant reference, thus placing a disproportion-
ate stress on variations between the two versions. Consequently,
as Charles Moorman has insisted, those things that Malory
retained are as important as those he changed, and his book
must ultimately be interpreted, unless we are to regard it
merely as a translation, according to the disposition of its
own internal parts.[161]

In the case of the Grail story, Vinaver himself admits
that Malory "lets the story speak for itself", and that "taken
as it stands, his _Tale of the Sankgreall_ still preserves the
essential characteristics of its source."[162] Moorman convincingly
argues that in fact Malory "always preserves the core of the
French book's doctrinal statements, no matter how great his
deletions...The dreams of the knights retain their essential

religious significance in Malory, but they do not retain
their original function as excuses for homiletics."[163]
It should also be noted that Malory is by no means always
averse to monkish homiletics, as the episodes of the Castle
of the Maidens and Gawain's dream, among others, reveal
(Works, pp. 892, 947-8). Lewis concedes that Malory's
treatment of the Grail story is "ethical, as against mystical",
but warns that "we must not say 'ethical, as against religious',
for the ethical and the attempted ethical response, when
prompted by a vision, purged by confession and penance,
supported and corrected at every turn by voices, miracles,
and spiritual counsels, is precisely the religious as it
most commonly appears in secular vocations."[164]

The tide of scholarly opinion appears to have turned
decisively against any straightforward acceptance of Vinaver's
denial of the unity of the Morte Darthur in recent years,
and there are now few advocates of the idea that Lancelot's
career as Guinevere's lover or Arthur's knight can be considered
in isolation from his failure in the Grail quest. Lancelot
is the finest knight in the Round Table's terms--his healing
of Sir Urry is a kind of secular equivalent of Galahad's
healing of the maimed king--and his failure is indicative of
the ultimate failure of the whole society. The Round Table
originally created by Merlin is a symbol of perfection--
"for men sholde by the Rounde Table undirstonde the rowndenes
signyfyed by ryght" (906:16-17)--but the men who are called to

its membership prove when tested not to be able to live up
to this perfection.[165]

As in the Prose Lancelot, the failure is symbolised
primarily by Lancelot's affair with Guinevere. In Lumiansky's
words, "an intentional general pattern of progressive
development for this adulterous relationship runs through the
book as a whole, and...this pattern should be regarded as a
pivotal factor in the collapse of the Round Table."[166] It is
not only Lancelot's sexual misconduct which brings about the
collapse. After Mordred has been begotten incestuously by
Arthur (himself illegitimate) on Morgawse, Merlin tells the
King that "God ys displesed with you, for ye have lyene by
youre syster and on hir ye have gotyn a childe that shall
destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme" (44:17-19).
The inauspicious nature of the deed is shown almost immediately
by Arthur's re-enactment of the massacre of the innocents
in an unsuccessful attempt to eliminate Mordred (p55). "Lechery,
used in a very inclusive sense," comments Moorman, "is made
the main sin of the Round Table."[167]

Lancelot is nevertheless Malory's protagonist,
and remains so during the quest, even though he cannot be the
Grail Knight. Brewer claims that he is "in no way perverted
or corrupt", but the fact remains that he is excluded from a
certain level of achievement because of his sin.[168] He is
told during the quest that "as longe as ye were knyght of
erthly knyghthode ye were the moste mervayloust man of the worlde
...thou haste nat thy pere of ony erthly synfull man"; but

now he is "sette amonge the knyghtis of hevynly adventures"
he must expect reverses (933-4). This kind of praise does
not whitewash Lancelot. As Moorman comments, "Malory does
not in the least ignore Launcelot's sin; he deepens it by
having the hermits hold up before Launcelot a picture of
his potential greatness, a greatness which, were it not for
sin, might have saved the Round Table civilisation."[169]

Just as objections have been raised to the idea that
the Grail quest is an integral part of the rest of the romance,
some critics have rejected the relevance of Malory's ending.
Brewer complains that "the invocation of transcendent values"
fails to deal with the issues raised by the previous life of
the court; the "saintliness" of Lancelot and Guinevere "repudiates
not only their past vices but their past virtues too".[170]
Stephen Miko accuses Malory of "trying to tie up loose ends
by a resort to religion"; the lovers' guilt and their choice
of the monastic life "are more escapes than they are tragic
recognitions".[171] We must however remember that Malory is
not suggesting that all life should be lived in this way.
Lancelot and Guinevere are doing penance for the fact that
they have lived up to this point in a way that has ignored
"transcendent values". Though all human life involves sin,
some lives do so more than others, and their love has consistently
declined to acknowledge any considerations outside itself,
whether temporal or spiritual.

The chivalric romance as a genre is able to focus
this issue with particular intensity, since knighthood involves

an initial commitment to secularity, thus forcing the author

to close the gap between this commitment and transcendent

obligations. The tale of knightly adventure must either

remain on the level of pure action or it must seek to place

the knight's worldly involvement in a wider context; hence

the day of reckoning for Arthur and his followers.

A different objection comes from Whitehead, who detects

a basic falsity in the tone of the ending, claiming that in

the final interview between the lovers Lancelot makes clear

that he would like to take advantage of Arthur's death to

reclaim Guinevere--an "indecent" proposal which has a "strangely

profane impression". In addition, Guinevere's religious

objection to this plan amounts to a "brazen assurance" of her

salvation; Malory emphasises not the pair's religious feelings

but "the power of human affection and the remembrance of the

past".[172]

But Guinevere's "brazen" tone is also, I believe, that

of religious faith, and if the note of self-abasement is

missing the passage gains strength from its almost liturgical

impersonality:

> And yet I truste, thorow Goddis grace and thorow
> Hys Passion of Hys woundis wyde, that aftir my
> deth I may have a syght of the blyssed face of
> Cryste Jesu, and on Doomesday to sytte on Hys
> ryght syde; for as synfull as ever I was, now
> ar seyntes in hevyn. (1252:13-17)

The explanatory last point is in medieval terms simply true,

and conveys the grounds of her hopes--and those which Lancelot

too may take hold of. As for Lancelot, his feelings are never

as explicit or crude as Whitehead suggests. The power of
the scene depends upon our realisation that Lancelot involuntarily
still yearns for Guinevere, and that his renunciation is not
without pain. As always, the Queen's attitude appears to be
maintained with less internal struggle than that which Lancelot
is condemned to experience. Wilfred Guerin concludes that
"Malory heightens the degree of holiness in the last years
of both Lancelot and Guinevere"; his "transpositions of the
source material for the deaths of the lovers seem to stress
the characters' spiritual orientation."[173]

Once again in this work love is seen to have a much
greater thematic importance than can be discussed in purely
chivalric terms. But Malory does use the chivalric context
to reinforce our sense of the tragic deviation of Lancelot's
love. Arthur, in the early days, sets out the duties of the
Round Table and cautions his knights "that no man take no
batayles in a wrongefull quarell for no love ne for no
worldis goodes. So unto thys were all knyghtis sworne of the
Table Rounde, both olde and younge, and every yere so were they
sworne at the hyghe feste of Pentecoste" (120:23-7). But
Lancelot eventually is forced to fight in a wrongful quarrel
for Guinevere; the wholeness of the chivalric imperative is
destroyed, and Lancelot must as a point of honour rescue
Guinevere from being burnt even though he is in the wrong.
Bors advises him "that ye knyghtly rescow her; for and ye ded
ony other wyse all the worlde wolde speke you shame to the
worldis ende...whether ye ded ryght othir wronge, hit ys now

youre parte to holde wyth the quene" (1171:28-32). Knightly
honour has irreconcilably parted company from moral virtue.
But Bors's advice surely does not mean, as some critics have
suggested, that honour should come before virtue, or that
both Guinevere and Arthur have always had equally valid claims
to Lancelot's allegiance. Bors's refusal to judge seems to
me primarily a matter of tact and friendship.

Earlier on, Lancelot himself had stated the incompatibility
of love and knighthood:

> And as for to sey to take my plesaunce with
> peramours, that woll I refuse: in prencipall
> for drede of God, for knyghtes that bene ad-
> ventures sholde nat be advoutrers nothir lech-
> erous, for than they be nat happy nother for-
> tunate unto the werrys; for other they shall be
> overcom with a sympler knyght than they be hem-
> self, other ellys they shall sle by unhappe and
> hir cursednesse bettir men than they be hemself.
> And so who that usyth peramours shall be unhappy,
> and all thynge unhappy that is aboute them. (270:32-271:4)

The speech is prophetic in a specific as well as a general
sense, for Lancelot slays "by unhappe and hir cursednesse"
the gentle Gareth while rescuing Guinevere. This action is
not only crucial, through Gawain's response to it, to the
working out of the disaster, but has significant thematic
implications. The "Tale of Gareth" is a story of a love
which survives the dangers of too consuming a passion.
Lynet restrains dame Lyonesse from going to Gareth's bed
until their relationship culminates satisfactorily in
marriage. Moorman notes that Gareth's story is strategically

placed between the beginnings of the ultimately destructive
Lancelot-Guinevere relationship and the actual adultery of
the "Tale of Tristram".[174]

Nevertheless, critics who argue that love had no
part ultimately in Malory's conception of chivalry are in
a distinct minority.[175] Others prefer to believe that he was
firmly of two minds on the subject. "The love betweeen
Lancelot and Guenevere", writes Brewer, "is represented as
in itself good...Gentleness, service, unselfishness, kindness,
faithfulness (stability), all these are the distinguishing
marks of true love, which is natural, formed in men and women
by God, and so virtuous. Thus it is clear that Lancelot's
love for Guenevere is in itself virtuous...[though it] is
also criminal."[176] Whitehead, pointing out the conflict between
Lancelot's role as vassal and that of lover of his overlord's
wife, claimed that "it seems that we are meant to admire him
in both of these incompatible roles".[177]

C. S. Lewis declared that Malory was following the
"double doctrine" of Andreas Capellanus or Chaucer's Troilus:
"Malory has no doubt at all that Launcelot is to be condemned--
by the highest standards and in the long run; that Corbenic
is above Camelot--in the long run. But this is quite
compatible with his praise of Camelot (that is, of love and
Guenevere) in other passages." He tried to account for
this by explaining that "the apparent inconsistency results
from the fact that the medieval writers are using a triple
scale of values where their modern critics are using only

a double one...Malory has a three-storeyed mind--a scale of bad-good-best (Mark, Launcelot, Galahad) which, if read backwards, becomes of course good-bad-worst. It will be seen that the middle term may appear sometimes as 'good' and sometimes as 'bad' without any inconsistency."[178] This is ingenious but ultimately casuistical. Lewis's terms become merely comparative ones; Lancelot's goodness is established by his superiority to, say, Mark--a comparison which hardly establishes any valid goodness. There is, however, as Lewis admits, an absolute standard, and that is provided by Galahad and the Grail quest--in relation to which Lancelot is 'bad'.

A crucial piece of evidence for the argument that Malory approved of the love of Lancelot and Guinevere is the famous passage at the beginning of the episode of the Knight of the Cart on the "lusty moneth of May", when "wyse lovers callyth to their mynde olde jantylnes and olde servyse":

> For, lyke as wynter rasure dothe allway arace and deface grene summer, so faryth hit by unstable love in man and woman, for in many persones there ys no stabilité: for we may se all day, for a lytyll blaste of wyntres rasure, anone we shall deface and lay aparte trew love, for lytyll or nowght, that coste muche thynge. Thys ys no wysedome nother no stabylité, but hit ys fyeblenes of nature and grete disworshyp, whosomever usyth thys.
> Therefore, lyke as May moneth flowryth and floryshyth in every mannes gardyne, so in lyke wyse lat every man of worshyp florysh hys herte in thys worlde: firste unto God, and nexte unto the joy of them that he promysed hys feythe unto; for there was never worshypfull man nor worshypfull woman but they loved one bettir than another; and worshyp in armys may never be foyled. But firste reserve the honoure to God, and secundely thy quarell muste com of thy lady. And such I calle vertuouse

love.

    But nowadayes men can nat love sevennyght
but they muste have all their desyres. That love
may nat endure by reson, for where they bethe
sone accorded and hasty, heete sone keelyth.
And ryght so faryth the love nowadayes, sone
hote sone colde. Thys ys no stabylyte. But the
olde love was nat so. For men and women coude
love togydirs seven yerys, and no lycoures lustis
was betwyxte them, and than was love trouthe and
faythefulnes. And so in lyke wyse was used such
love in kynge Arthurs dayes.
    Wherefore I lykken love nowadayes unto sommer
and wynter: for, lyke as the tone ys colde and the
othir ys hote, so faryth love nowadayes. And
therefore all ye that be lovers, calle unto youre
remembraunce the monethe of May, lyke as ded quene
Gwenyver, for whom I make here a lytyll mencion,
that whyle she lyved she was a trew lover, and
therefor she had a good ende. (1119:14-1120:15)

At one level we are presented here with the same distinction

between "vertuouse" love, constant and chaste, and "unstable",

concupiscent love that we saw in the work of Geoffroi de

Charny and the Boucicaut chronicler among others. May is the

time for man to "florysh hys herte in thys worlde", but May

has other possibilities too: "thys season hit befelle in

the moneth of May a grete angur and unhappe that stynted

nat tylle the floure of chyvalry of alle the worlde was

destroyed and slayne" (1161:6-8). In addition, May-day

is Mordred's birthday (p.55).

The main problem with the quoted passage, however,

lies in deciding how this distinction applies to the knights

and ladies of "kynge Arthurs dayes", when virtuous love

apparently prevailed, and in particular to Guinevere, the

reference to whom is so tantalisingly ambiguous. The terms of

Malory's description of true love seem to exclude Lancelot and

Guinevere, who do not, as Moorman insists, "reserve the honoure to God". Moreover, Lancelot's besetting sin is instability, the quality used here to categorise unworthy love. Moorman shows that Malory "changed a great many of the Lancelot passages in order to demonstrate in action Lancelot's instability", in which respect he is contrasted particularly with Bors.[179] Stability in this context is more than simply a personality trait; Wilfred Guerin has noted that almost all the passages referring to Lancelot's instability indicate the precariousness of his commitment to chastity and virtue, with particular reference to his tendency to 'turn again' to Guinevere.[180]

In addition, Lancelot and Guinevere do not appear to be the people Malory was thinking of who "coude love togydirs seven yerys, and no lycoures lustis was betwyxte them". On the contrary they habitually post with considerable dexterity to adulterous sheets, despite Malory's famous refusal to say whether they were actually "abed other at other maner of disportis" when surprised by Agravain (1165:11-12). Why then does Malory declare that Guinevere was "a trew lover" and "had a good ende", since her end is good primarily as a result of her rejection of her disastrous 'true' love? R. T. Davies is plainly puzzled, and can only suggest that "perhaps he means that in the eyes of God loyalty in sin is better than disloyalty" —a despairing shot indeed.[181]

The best answer, I believe, has been provided by

Elizabeth Pochoda's comments on the reference to Guinevere

in the passage:

> Her adulterous relationship with Lancelot, as
> we have seen, is unstable; but by virtue of its
> best aspects, her admiration of Lancelot's finest
> qualities and her faithfulness to him, she will
> be capable of spiritual stability and understanding
> in the end. Here Malory's additions demonstrate
> that the reassertion of the best aspects of the
> Arthurian ideal combined with the spiritual under-
> standing which should have defined it in the
> first place enable the members of the fellowship
> to make a good end.[182]

In this way Malory suggests once again the great potential that

is abused in the Lancelot-Guinevere relationship, and prepares

for the eventually successful though tardy employment of

this potential. Elizabeth Pochoda's broader argument also

seems to me to explain the insistence in the passage on the

contrast between "the olde love" and "love nowadayes", which

does not seem altogether appropriate since the main example

of "olde love" in the work is the unstable one of Lancelot and

Guinevere. She claims that Malory wanted to use Arthur's court

as a political ideal to rebuke his 'degenerate' contemporaries,

but that, in view of its spiritual and political failure, the

Round Table had to be seen as a warning as well as an ideal.[183]

Hence the past is extolled at the expense of the present,

while at the same time that sector of the past most intensively

examined is found wanting by the standards Malory sets up to

judge the present.

Malory's treatment of the Arthurian story, I believe,

offers us the same contrast between worthy and unworthy motives

of knightly activity as the other versions discussed. Such

a finding appears to incur the censure of George Economou, who in a recent essay objects to "criticism which interprets representations of earthly love in medieval poetry as sinful", and argues that "the conflict in man's will concerning his sexual conduct was not simply whether to love or not to love—a choice between earthly and divine loves—it was also a choice between two kinds of earthly love."[184] This is of course true, and has been clearly implied in much of the material included in my survey of chivalric love. My disagreement with Economou's essay concerns the appropriateness of his examples of 'good' earthly lovers—notably Tristan and Troilus. However, in establishing that evidence for regarding love as a positive element of chivalric idealism is decidedly meagre, I have dealt with a number of profoundly influential works which <u>do</u> set up a fairly stark choice between earthly and divine love, and express this alternative in terms of a choice between the kind of chivalry which will endure and that which must perish. This does not indicate that the authors of those works saw no valid function for earthly love, but that they found in chivalry a powerful symbol for distinguishing between desirable and undesirable forms of worldly involvement.

Before turning back to Chaucer's treatment of knightly love I wish to pursue further the dichotomy between amatory and spiritual knighthood by examining more closely the latter element, since the polarity seems to me important for an understanding of Chaucer, as I shall later explain. As well

as prescribing the duties of a knight, religious concepts of
knighthood comprised an important symbol for the Christian
life generally. I shall start by returning to the Grail
quest, since this motif was responsible for the pre-eminent
literary expressions of chivalry's spiritual dimension,
and in particular to the Queste del Saint Graal, the second
of the three parts of the Prose Lancelot.

<center>V</center>

CHIVALRY AND RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM

1. The 'Queste del Saint Graal'

In one sense the Queste does not appear to be a work
about chivalry at all. As Albert Pauphilet declared, "sous
l'apparence chevaleresque c'est la grande aventure de l'homme
qui est ici exposée: c'est un tableau de la vie chrétienne."[1]
We might, however, re-word this by saying that in the Queste
the symbolic possibilities of knighthood are obviously more
important than its referential or mimetic aspects. But we cannot
then conclude that because the work has little to say about
practical knighthood it has little to do with chivalry as a
whole. Practical relevance is only one of many standards by
which we might judge the importance of chivalric ideas. More
significant to a consideration of the Queste del Saint Graal
is the pervasiveness of the symbolic habit which made
knighthood a figure for "la vie chrétienne". Since chivalry,
as I have insisted, displayed a perfect ease in assimilating
non-practical ideas, we must beware of the tendency to
evaluate the power of chivalric ideas in terms of their proximity
to pragmatic realities.

It is this latter tendency which has led to the common
assumption, mentioned in the previous chapter, that the Grail
stories represent an attack on the central features of chivalry.

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The _Queste_ has been assumed to carry that attack to its
furthest limits, while Wolfram von Eschenbach's _Parzival_,
by contrast, is normally seen as a version of the Grail story
which achieves a certain degree of reconciliation between
spirit and flesh, between spiritual and worldly chivalry.
Much has been made of the difference between the two authors:
the _Queste_ was written by a Cistercian monk and _Parzival_ by a
knight. Joan Ferrante, for instance, comments that in defend-
ing "the ideals of chivalry and love" Wolfram had an interest
in maintaining the values of the knightly class.[2] There is of
course a contrast between the two works, as is indicated by
the fact that whereas Galahad, the hero of the _Queste_, remains
virgin, Parzival marries. But once we accept that in accordance
with my analysis of the nature of chivalric ideas the _Queste_
is not in any meaningful sense 'unchivalric', we must recognise
that for the purpose of describing chivalric ideology the
common elements in these two versions of the Grail legend
are more important than their differences. I shall in fact
also argue that in several respects the metaphorical chivalry
of the _Queste_ has distinct connections with practical
knightly activities, demonstrating once again that practical
and ideological aspects of this subject cannot be clearly
differentiated.

It is therefore my purpose to discuss the _Queste_
as an example of a central feature of chivalric ideas. It elabor-
ates the religious symbolism of chivalry, and continues the
contrast between religious and amatory knighthood which I

claimed in the previous chapter as an important aspect of literary treatments of chivalry. This contrast is crucial not only to Arthurian literature, but also, I hope to show, to such works as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Chaucer's Prologue.

There is, however, another objection that might be raised to my insistence on the centrality of the Queste to an exploration of the nature of chivalry. The work openly demands to be read in quasi-biblical fashion, and frequently includes both text and gloss--the latter in the form of interpretations of the knights' adventures by the ubiquitous hermits. Some commentators have felt that the prominence of this technique sets the work apart from the main current of imaginative literature and disqualifies it from representing any but a narrowly sectarian view of life. We may consider this argument largely despatched by the discovery, in significant recent criticism, of the value of reading medieval literature generally against the background of the way in which its original readers studied the Bible. The Queste makes explicit an invitation to allegory on the subject of chivalry which is or may be implicit in many other works.

The basic structure of the Queste, both in itself and in its relationship to the earlier section of the Vulgate Cycle, does in fact correspond to some extent with that of the two scriptural testaments. Lancelot, the old Adam, along with a host of other knights, such as the proud and wrathful Hector, the murderous Lionel and the worldly Gawain, fails

in the quest, meeting with shame and obstruction, while in a
contrary redemptive movement the chosen Grail knights (Galahad--
Lancelot's son, Perceval and Bors) approach their apotheosis.
Lancelot's earlier career in the Lancelot proper, and the
frequent prophecies there about the quest, mean that the
Queste had its own equivalent to a previous testament
in that work. Galahad is present in type from the beginning,
as Christ is in the Old Testament. In addition the romance
reaches back into the Old Testament itself to explain Galahad's
ancestry (he is the last of Solomon's line) and the origin
of the ship which takes the chosen knights to Corbenic, where
Galahad heals the Maimed King, and to Sarras, where he sees
the ultimate Grail mystery and dies. The ship was built
by Solomon at the command of his wife, and reminds us of
Solomon's temple and other biblical types of the Church, such
as Noah's ark and the ark of the covenant. The ship itself
contains objects which symbolise the fall and redemption, the
old law and new law, and the scriptures. The Queste thus asserts
its quasi-scriptural texture and its affinity with the various
re-enactments and foreshadowings in the Old Testament of
the drama of man's fall and redemption.[3]

The scriptural structure is complemented by a
sacramental and liturgical pattern which, as F. W. Locke
explains, is an important principle in the work's organisation.
The work opens at the "hore de none" on the eve of Pentecost,
evoking both the death of Christ and the vigil for his
return. At Pentecost itself Galahad comes to Camelot.[4]

Perceval's aunt points out to Perceval the parallel between
this coming and that of the Holy Ghost (though the event
also recalls the incarnation and Christ's second coming),
and the implication that the Round Table knights are to
be compared to the apostles. The Round Table is the third
of three great fellowships which have existed in the world,
the first two being the table of Christ and his apostles
and the table of the Holy Grail in the time of Joseph of
Arimathea.[5] Galahad appears suddenly in the midst of the
knights like Christ (John 20:19), intensifying the liturgical
and biblical overtones, and clad in the red and white
colours associated with both Christ and the Holy Ghost.[6]

In accordance with the Round Table's eucharistic
precedent the Grail itself arrives to feed the knights, but
the effect on them is decidedly less than Pentecostal:
instead of speaking in tongues they are struck dumb with
sin (15:15-17).[7] The quest which is then initiated is
therefore intended as a form of collective penance. Pauphilet
notes that the Queste is "une véritable amplification sur
les bienfaits de la confession".[8] The quest's completion
is marked by another dispensation of the Grail's food, at
the celebration of the mass by Christ himself at Corbenic,
where the three successful knights are joined by nine
unidentified others to make up the apostolic twelve (267:16 ff.).

At one level the Grail represents the grace that
God gives to men through the eucharist, but it can involve
more or less according to the capabilities of the recipient.[9]

Only Galahad is allowed the complete vision, presumably of
God; Perceval and Bors participate in the mystical union of
the Grail experience, but Lancelot is allowed only glimpses.
More generally the Grail is the spiritual 'food' given by
God, which is compared to the manna given to the Israelites
in the wilderness (153:7-9); in this way the quest also exists
independently of the sacramental nuances, and embodies the
soul's search for God--a search in which, as a hermit tells
Lancelot, only the chosen can succeed (127:18-128:16).

Within these scriptural and liturgical patterns,
knightly activity has a primarily allegorical function,
as may be illustrated by a brief account of one of Galahad's
early adventures. Near the start of the quest he removes
the covering from a tomb in a churchyard, and reveals a knight
lying inside--the feat which Lancelot was unable to achieve.
A monk in the adjoining abbey explains to him that the tombstone
signifies the obduracy of this world, and the dead body represents
mankind in his deadness and blindness before the advent of
Christ, or the Jews in their persistence in refusing to
recognise him (37:23 ff.).[10] Galahad is therefore a reminder
of Christ in "semblance" rather than in "hautece" (38:21), and
will play a role in relation to the kingdom of Logres analogous
to that of Christ in the salvation of the whole world (38:21-29).
At the abbey Galahad knights a man called Melias and rides
on with him, but Melias trusts in temporal rather than
spiritual prowess, declining to take the 'right' way when they
arrive at a fork in the road (41;interpretation, 45:6 ff.),

and covetously picking up a crown he finds in his path. He is
therefore humbled by being wounded by two attacking knights,
but is rescued by Galahad, in an episode interpreted as the
conquest of Melias's two great sins, concupiscence and pride,
by the "saint chevalier" (46:7-11). Galahad subsequently
defeats seven brothers and rescues the maidens they have
imprisoned--an action interpreted allegorically as Christ's
conquest of the seven deadly sins and liberation of the souls
of the just (55:1-15).

There is evidently a certain justice in Pauphilet's
claim that in Galahad's case "l'allégorie en lui a tué l'homme".[11]
The most important function of the knighthood of Galahad and
his fellows on the quest is as an extended metaphor for the
Christian life and for the events of the fall and redemption.
It is his "chevaliers", we are told, whom Christ died to save,
and the crucifixion itself is described as a combat in which
he bore only the shield of patience and humility in defeating
his enemy (163:17-20). Monks vested for mass are regularly
described as being "revestu des armes Nostre Signor" (81:33-82:1).
Pauphilet comments: "Dieu et Satan entraînent l'homme dans
leur guerre éternelle et l'homme peut, à son choix, être le
'serjent' de Dieu ou de Satan." The mass is therefore an
important "symbole du combat de Dieu contre Satan".

Nevertheless, there is a connection between the
Queste's metaphors and the world of practical chivalry.
Pauphilet pointed out the practical aspects of the military
temperament of the Cistercians: "Le combat pour Dieu, la

'chevalerie de Jhesucrist', n'était pas à Cîteaux une simple métaphore. De très bonne heure le caractère énergique et plus actif que spéculatif de la piété cistercienne avait préparé cet ordre aux enterprises militaires et lui avait valu la faveur de ceux qui aux frontières de la chrétienté combattaient les ennemis du Christ avec des armes réelles." The Cistercians promoted the crusades, and were closely involved with two knightly orders in the Iberian peninsula, the orders of Calatrava and Alcantara, while continuing to be associated with the Templars, for whom St. Bernard had written his famous treatise on spiritual knighthood, and whose uniform of the red cross on white Galahad himself wears.[12]

Reflecting these solid historical interests to some extent, the identity of the knights of the Queste occupies a continuum between their role as representatives of mankind generally and their depiction as knights in a historically-based sense. In an encounter with a hermit, for example, Gawain is told that he has proved a bad member of "l'ordre de chevalerie"; he has been admitted to the order "por ce que vos servissiez a nostre criator et deffendissiez Sainte Eglise et rendissiez a Dieu le tresor que il vos bailla a garder, ce est l'ame de vos" (54:11-18). The practical role of knighthood as a specialised activity, the defence of the Church, is here juxtaposed with its metaphorical representation of the Christian life, the defence of one's individual soul. Similarly, when Bors defends a lady (Holy Church) against the

attacks of her older sister (the Synagogue, or Old Law), a
priest tells him: "vos estiez chevaliers Jhesucrist, por
quoi vos estiez a droit tenuz de deffendre Sainte Eglyse"
(185:15-16). Furthermore, the spiritual virtues of the
participants in the quest are translated into behaviour which
recalls the practical virtues recommended by the chivalric
manuals. Bors' glad acceptance of privation, sleeping on
hard ground and eating bread and water, conforms to the
prescriptions for making hardy knights as well as to monastic
ideals. Lancelot's refusal to kill after his repentance
echoes the historical denunciations of knights' homicidal
tendencies, and contrasts with the behaviour of Gawain, who,
though hardy, enterprising and courageous, entirely lacks
any spiritual awareness, and who ends up killing, by accident
or otherwise, a large number of knights, including his brother
Yvain.[13]

The main source of chivalric failure, however, is one
whose impact is primarily symbolic rather than practical--
illicit love. In the great warfare between God and Satan, the
service of the latter is associated particularly with allegiance
to a woman. Women are taboo on the quest without reference
to any distinction between worthy and unworthy kinds of love.
As the knights are about to set out, a hermit announces
that "nus en ceste Queste ne maint dame ne damoisele qu'il
ne chiee en pechié mortel" (19:15-16). The episode of Solomon's
ship emphasises that the crucial factor in man's fall was Eve's
seduction of Adam; incorporated into the bed on the ship are

posts made from the tree which grew from a branch planted
by Eve, after she had torn it from the tree of knowledge
when eating its fruit (210:29 ff.). The prime test of the
knights involved in the quest appears to be that of chastity.
Galahad's purity is constantly stressed, while Bors and Perceval
rank below him largely because they have flaws which are
expressed mainly in terms of sexual weakness.

Bors has sinned against chastity involuntarily with
the daughter of King Brangoire, and must rehabilitate himself
by austerity and mortification of the flesh. A central
episode in this process is his rejection of a beautiful woman
who with her handmaidens threatens to throw herself from a
tower if he will not become her lover (180:7 ff.). Perceval,
as in other versions of his story, is a man who must train
and mature his perception of other people and his consequent
responses to them. This is most dramatically illustrated
by his temptation on the rocky island, where, as is explained
to him, God "vos i a ore mis en esproeve et en essai por
savoir et por conoistre se vos estes ses feelx serjans et ses
loiax chevaliers ausi come l'ordre de chevalerie le requiert"
(99:31-100:1). Perceval is visited by a beautiful woman
who arrives in a ship (the ship of the Synagogue rather than
that of the Church), and persuades him to take off his armour
(his defence against evil) and sleep in her tent. She makes
him drunk, whereupon he becomes very amorous, and she extracts,
as a condition of her compliance, his oath "come loiaux chevaliers"
to obey only her commands. Perceval is saved at the last moment

by catching sight of the cross on his sword hilt. In
recognition of his partial failure he wounds himself in the
thigh (110:29-31).

The most fully examined case of conflict between the
two kinds of chivalry, that which places itself at the
service of love for a woman and that which is directed
towards love of God, is Lancelot's. Early on in the quest
he is made to realise his unworthiness: he fails to recognise
Galahad and is unhorsed by him, sleeps through a visitation
of the Grail itself, and is rebuked for his sinfulness by a
heavenly voice. A hermit tells him the parable of the
talents to explain that he has abused the gift of being
made the world's greatest knight. Instead of being God's
"chevaliers et ses serjanz" he has fought for the devil against
God, like a mercenary who fights against the lord who has
hired him (68:33-69:2). A squire whom Lancelot meets reviles
him in the strongest terms as one who "soliez estre tenuz au
meillor chevalier dou monde, or estes tenuz au plus mauvés et
au plus desloial" (118:3-4). After further instruction on
his sins by a different priest, Lancelot dons a hair shirt.
His period of penitence eventually enables him, with some
falterings, to be reunited with Galahad and to reach Corbenic;
but while witnessing the Grail mystery at a distance he
steps into the room itself, against God's command, and is
thrust out and deprived of his senses for twenty-four days—
one day for each year of his sinfulness.

The sin for which Lancelot undergoes this penance, and for which he is deprived of participation in the Grail eucharist, is of course his relationship with Guinevere. This one sin destroys the best part of his many original virtues, pre-eminent among which was his initial love of chastity (123:25-33), and is symbolic of all his sinfulness. It is in effect his only specific offence. His first confessor brings him eventually, after much internal struggle, to acknowledge it:

> Je sui morz de pechié d'une moie dame que je ai
> amee toute ma vie, et ce est la reine Guenievre,
> la fame le roi Artus...Ce est cele qui m'a fet
> venir de povreté en richece et de mesaise a toutes
> les terriannes beneurtez. Mes je sai bien que
> par cest pechié de li s'est Nostre Sires si
> durement corociez a moi qu'il le m'a bien mostré
> puis ersoir. (66:8-10, 15-18)

The priest then demands that he never again offend his creator by committing mortal sin with the Queen or any other woman, and Lancelot swears assent "come loiaux chevaliers". He has, however, further adjustments yet to make. He must patiently hear Guinevere scorned and reviled as one who has enchanted him but who neither loves not esteems him (118:11-13), and he hears from a later informant that, contrary to what he has always proclaimed, she is not responsible for any of his famous deeds (126:25-27). Lancelot is asked to see himself in a tradition---of Adam, the first man, Solomon the wisest, Samson the strongest, Absalom the most beautiful---of men brought low through women. The devil, he is told, deciding to attack Lancelot in the same way, entered the worthless Guinevere, and trapped him into the path of lust. From this, other sins soon came, for Lancelot had sworn that he

would prize nothing except having his way with her whom he
found so beautiful (125:7-126:11). At other points also
in his education Lancelot is asked to see his frailty in
specifically sexual terms. At the tournament where he fights
for the black knights against the white he finds that he
has been fighting against virginity and chastity (144:1-3).
His journey to Corbenic is undertaken in a boat with only
the corpse of Perceval's chaste sister as company; a monk
tells him to hake heed of this opportunity, "si que la
chastée de toi s'acort a la virginité de lui" (248:32-249:4).

The anti-feminism of the romance is modified to some
extent, however, by a redemptive movement which works largely
through women. On the one hand are the temptresses: Eve,
Solomon's wife, Guinevere, and the seductress of Perceval;
at the other extreme stands Perceval's sister, the only woman
who <u>is</u> allowed on the quest. But Eve's planted branch signifies
the movement towards redemption, which is continued in Solomon's
ship. It is Solomon's wife who orders it to be built, even
though her own deceits symbolise, as Solomon is told, the
woman's wiles by which man's sorrow first came about. The process
culminates in Perceval's sister, who guides Galahad, and whom
Myrrha Lot-Borodine identified as "une réincarnation médiévale
de la Vierge Marie"[14]

According to Mme. Lot-Borodine the vital role performed
by this lady on the quest, despite the hermit's injunction,
represents a breaking down of the rigid division between earthly
and divine love: "elle est le véritable intermédiaire entre

les deux plans sur lesquels se meut l'action de la Quête, le
plan mystique et le plan terrestre. On pourrait presque dire:
sans elle pas de Christ-chevalier."[15] There is, however, little
room between antinomies of chastity and lust for this kind of
intermediary. To suggest that the association of Galahad and
Perceval's sister is any but a mystical and symbolic one
(recalling Christ and his mother, and Christ and his Church)
is surely to introduce a rather grotesque element into the
proceedings. Nuances of "le plan terrestre", except in the
sense that she is physically his guide, must compromise the
talismanic chastity of both. Perceval's sister, like a nun,
sacrifices her hair for Galahad to wear as a girdle for his
sword. The fact that he becomes 'her knight' (228:25-6) in
fact makes starker, because of the parallelism, the contrast
between this chivalric pledge and the allegiance of Lancelot
to Guinevere.

2. Wolfram's 'Parzival'

The asceticism of the Queste adds its own distinct
voice to the chivalric chorus, but its essential burden is
already well represented there. Wolfram's Parzival has a
basically similar point to make, despite its reputation as
a version of the Grail legend designed for the less exacting
standards of l'homme moyen sensual. Hermann Weigand's view
that the work represents a synthesis of the spiritual and the
secular, of religious faith and "courtly values", is fairly
typical.[16] Wolfram does indeed end his poem with praise of a
life which can please both God and the world. We may also

concede Wolfram's great enthusiasm for marriage and for
loyalty in love (see, for example, the incident involving
Sigune and Schianatulander), and his enjoyment of the
spontaneous passionate gesture. But the spiritual and
the secular remain in the same firm order of precedence in
Parzival as in the Queste, and there is no convincing evidence
for Weigand's claim that for Wolfram "all deeds of chivalry
...are engendered by love and admiration for women".[17] The
poem exploits a contrast between two kinds of chivalry
similar to that in the more austere Queste. Its hero
must undergo an arduous development before he is ready to
achieve the adventure of the Grail. In one sense this
development involves the rejection of worldly knighthood
in favour of spiritual. But Parzival is never truly worldly,
for his folly, or "tumpheit", arises from ignorance rather
than from conscious sinfulness. Despite his long period of
apprenticeship, he is always nearer to Galahad (a character
invented by the author of the Queste) than to Lancelot. Meanwhile
the chivalry of worldliness finds its embodiment in Parzival's
foil, Gawain.

Parzival is first kept in ignorance of knightly ways
by his mother, who hopes to keep him from becoming a knight.
Forced at last to concede defeat, she gives him misleading
advice which leads him initially into folly. On reaching
Arthur's court he is educated in military and social behaviour
by Gurnemanz, but his first visit to the Grail castle, where
at the sight of the Grail procession he fails through over-

conscientious civility to ask the question that would heal
the wounded king, reveals the inadequacy of those worldly
accomplishments in the spiritual test represented by the Grail.

For his other achievements he is triumphantly received
at Arthur's court, but his moment of greatest honour in the
worldly sphere turns out to be his moment of deepest shame
by other (no less chivalric) standards. In fact, as D. H.
Green points out, his triumph at Arthur's court emphasises
the shortcomings of the Round Table as well as his own. An
ugly maiden, Cundrie, arrives and curses him for his Grail
failure, and Parzival's shock is itself a sign of his inner
worth, in contrast to the rather blandly sympathetic response
of the Round Table knights.[18] But when Parzival is about to
leave in an attempt at redress he is still spiritually a long
way from his goal. Typically, Wolfram represents his unregener-
ate attitude as the result of ignorance. Parzival asks,
"wê waz ist got?" ("Alas, what is God?"), and declares that
if God ruled "mit kreften" he would never have allowed him
to be thus disgraced. He forswears God's service, bitterly
counselling Gawain to trust instead on a woman's inspiration
in battle—advice which Gawain takes very much to heart (332:1-14).

Eventually, on a Good Friday, Parzival comes across
Trevrizent, a hermit and former knight who proves to be his
uncle (456 ff.), and immediately confesses his sinfulness. It
is four and a half years since he has been in a church, for
he has trusted entirely to his skill in fighting and has
hated God; indeed he still reproaches God for what he conceives

to be his failures towards him (460:19-461:26). Trevrizent explains to him the Christian faith, and Parzival finds that in addition to his failure at the Grail castle he has unawares committed further offences, having been responsible for the deaths of his mother and of Ither, his uncle. After his confession, penance and absolution, and further adventures, Cundrie once more arrives to tell him that he is now found worthy to be the Grail knight; she conducts him to the Grail castle, where he asks the redeeming question which cures Anfortas.

Parzival's gradual conquest of his folly and ignorance is matched by the process in which he reconciles his role as human lover with his destiny as the Grail knight. No simple fusion of religious and romantic motifs, however, is involved. Fairly early in his chivalric career he rescues Condwiramurs from her oppressor Clamidê, and eventually marries her. The test of prowess is matched by a test of chastity (or temperance) when Condwiramurs at an early stage in their acquaintance gets into his bed (192:1-194:2). Parzival takes no advantage of the situation until the third night after their oddly informal marriage (201:19-203:11), when he recalls the advice of Gurnemanz on the etiquette of such matters. Despite the comic overtones, the couple's love is felt to be both strong and temperate.

Condwiramurs and their son Loherangrin are eventually enshrined in the Grail inscription along with Parzival himself. But first Parzival must establish both the purity of his love

and the priority of spiritual love and of the Grail quest.
Trevrizent presents God to him as the absolute exemplar of
faithful love (466), which at a lower level Parzival has already
experienced with his wife. Torn between love for his wife
and his desire to pursue the quest, however, he eventually
recognises the primacy of the latter. Once it is achieved
he finds there is no real conflict between the two desires,
for he is reunited with Condwiramurs and becomes the Grail
king. The Grail king, we are told, can marry, in accordance
with the directions of the Grail, though the knights who serve
it (the 'templars') are sworn to chastity.

The religious nature of Parzival's chivalric vocation
and the purity of his love are emphasised by contrast with
the career of Anfortas, the wounded king. In book IX, the
episode of Parzival's confession and instruction at the hands
of Trevrizent (greatly expanded from Wolfram's source, Chrétien's
Perceval, and made the thematic and numerological centre of
the poem), Parzival learns that Anfortas was wounded in
the testicles by a poisoned spear.[19] At the time Anfortas had
been compelled by love to seek adventures; he had fought
constantly for the love of his lady, and his desire for
love tolerated no restraint (472:29-30; 478:1-479:12).
'Amor' was both his banner and his battle-cry:

> Amor was sîn krîe.
> Der ruoft is zer dêmuot
> iedoch niht volleclîchen guot. (478:30-479:2)

This kind of love, incompatible with "demuot" (humility)
--a virtue of which Wolfram makes a great deal--is linked by

Wolfram with pride and the offence that caused man's fall.
H. B. Willson compares Anfortas's 'living death' (230:20)
to St. Bernard's remarks on the state of fallen man, and
notes that Trevrizent declares that the fall of man involved
the loss of the earth's 'virginity' at the murder of Abel
(463:23-464:22). Anfortas is unable to move, since sin
deprives man of freedom of will. After his penance, however,
he is redeemed to a state of perfection. Willson argues
that Anfortas (like Mordrain of the Queste) recalls both
sinful man and Christ's suffering on his behalf; consequently
Parzival, in addition to his Christ-like function, must show
compassion, as a man, for the sufferings of Christ, represented
by the agony of Anfortas's genital wound.[20] Trevrizent
himself, Parzival's confessor, reveals that he abandoned
knighthood to become a hermit because of his offences on
behalf of love against his order while he was a Grail knight
(495:7-30). Another example of the anarchic possibilities
of love is provided by Parzival's father, Gahmuret, whose
amorous tendencies caused great sorrow and turmoil. Even
his final union with Parzival's mother, Herzeloide, involved
the heartless abandoning of his previous loves, Belakane and
Ampflise.

Through Anfortas, Wolfram depicts man's sin and
consequent suffering in terms of chivalry pressed into the
service of a sexual sin. His prime example of this kind of
chivalric bondage, however, is Gawain (Gawan). Gawain's exploits,
which are distinguished by worldly standards, occupy Wolfram's

attention both immediately before and immediately after
the scene of Parzival's spiritual revival, and take the form
mainly of the pursuit of amatory conquest.[21] He is identified
with the idea of love of women as the root of knightly
prowess, and he and his kin, we are told, have followed the
bidding of "Frou Minne" all their lives (585:5-586:30).

This idea is continually subject to Wolfram's mockery.
In one episode, for example, Gawain is wooed by Obilot, a
mere child, who plays at having a knight in her service and
incongruously mimics the sentiments she considers appropriate
to a courtly lady (369:1-370:7). Gawain at first turns her
down as too young, but recollecting Parzival's words he promises
his diminutive lady that he will bear arms in her honour,
and that in battles it will be she who is doing the fighting,
even though he may appear to be doing it. Obilot solemnly
sustains his hyperbole, declaring eloquently that she will offer
him such a range of protective and consolatory services as
a guardian deity might be able to dispense. Clasping her
tiny hands between his, Gawain retorts that he now lives at
her command (370:8-371:22). In the battle that follows,
Gawain captures Meljanz and compels him to surrender to
Obilot, declaring that it was she who defeated him (394:17-20).
Clinging timidly to Gawain, Obilot accepts his homage (396:1-4).
Weigand appears to take this fatuous episode at face value
as a "very striking illustration of the convention that
represents the knight's deeds as in reality performed by his
lady", but the comic depreciation of that 'convention' is

unmistakeable.[22]

Gawain's kind of _minne_ is parodied in a contrasting
way in the case of his affair with the voluptuous Antikonîe.
King Vergulaht has sent him to his sister Antikonîe with
the command that she entertain him until the king's return.
This 'command' is made the subject of some arch flirtation
by the lady, and Gawain seizes the opportunity to plant "ein
kus ungastlîch" on her "heiz, dick' unde rôt" mouth (405:19-21).
They immediately fall into conversation ("suezer rede"), which
Wolfram drily tells us consisted only of Gawain's pleas for
her favours and of Antikonîe's refusals (405:26-27). She
protests that she doesn't know who he is, and he helpfully
replies in defence of his ancestry that he is his aunt's brother's
son (406:14-15). The other occupants of the room tactfully
taking their leave, Gawain becomes bolder and reaches under
her clothes to touch her thigh (407:2-3). But when both are
in a frenzy of desire they are interrupted by a knight who
accuses Gawain not only of trying to rape Antikonîe but also
of having previously killed her father. The pair escape
into a tower, and Antikonîe proves a stalwart warrior. She
arms Gawain with a chess-board (since he has no sword), while
she herself hurls great chess pieces at the mob below--in the
manner, Wolfram notes, of huckster women at a Carnival riot
(409:8-9). Meanwhile the connection between the knight's
valour and love is burlesqued by the greedy looks which
Gawain casts on his accomplice whenever he has a chance. His
explorations of her suggestively described rabbit-shaped body,

from her hips to her bosom, infuse him with a "manlîch"
courage, to the confusion of his enemies (409:22-410:12).
The magnificent crudity of this episode sharply undercuts
Gawain's pretensions to courtly and elegant behaviour.

Wolfram is a skilful comic writer, but beneath the
farcical elements and Rabelaisian incongruities here the
serious central theme of the poem is pushed forward. The
conflict aroused by Gawain's behaviour is eventually settled
when Vergulaht announces that he has been defeated by Parzival
and forced to promise to get the Grail for him. The obligation
is passed on to Gawain, who is in the King's power as a result
of the Antikonîe affair, and Gawain sets out on the Grail
quest with Vergulaht (424:15-426:10, 428:18-26, 503:21-30).
Gawain's courage on his adventures is tested in a way that
deliberately recalls Parzival's Good Friday crisis, but
which also has ironic overtones (566 ff.).[23] D. H. Green
comments that "there is a nice irony in the fact that Gawain,
an erotic adventurer second to none, should have to undergo
his climactic adventure in bed, that this is where he should have
to prove his knightly valour and not on horseback... This is
highly suspect, for the other hero of a romance whose 'adventures'
take place in bed is the lover Tristan, whose leap from his
bed to Isolde's Gottfried describes as a poinder...Although
Gawain's adventure is not an erotic one like Tristan's it is
clearly just as non-knightly."[24]

Though the culmination of Gawain's career is not to
be the Grail, his ordeals are rewarded by the love of the

haughty Orgeluse of Logrois. To make clear the significance
of this prize, and the contrast between Gawain and Parzival,
Wolfram retrospectively explains that Orgeluse is the woman
whom Anfortas was 'serving' when he was wounded (616:11-617:3).
We also learn that no knight has ever been able to resist her
blandishments except Parzival, who defeated her knights and
rejected her offer of her property and person, explaining
his prior commitment to his wife and the Grail (618:19-619:14).
Gawain's achievement in the worldly sphere has thus been
decisively rejected by Parzival. In view of this I find
distinctly puzzling Weigand's judgment that "no stigma can
attach to Gawan, whatever he does--this despite the fact
that the contrast between Gawan and Parzival as regards the
poet's degree of empathy cannot be overlooked by any discerning
reader. Gawan is the perfect knight-errant bent on worldly
adventure...the question of reconciling his pursuit of adventure
in the service of ladies with his faith in God and his observance
of church ritual never arises for Gawan...Wolfram, fully
aware of a basic difference in the motivation of his two
heroes, obviously side-stepped the temptation of pointing up
an antithesis."[25]

3. Chivalry as a Metaphor for the Christian Life

Weigand's comment is a good example of the way in
which the potency of knighthood as a vehicle for religious
ideas has been consistently underestimated, just as the
positive importance of the knight's role as lover of women

has been exaggerated. The presentation of chivalry as

an imitation of Christ is by no means confined to works with

the distinctive subject-matter of the Grail. The concept

of spiritual warfare is of course as old as Christianity

itself. Such scriptural passages as St. Paul's on spiritual

armour (Ephes. 6:10-17) or the first verse of Job 7 were

widely-used sources of the commonplace in the Middle Ages.

On the latter, for instance, St. Bruno Astensis commented:

"Hinc beatus Job qualiter hac in vita militare debeamus,

insinuat; qua in re se ipsum qualiter militaverit exemplum

ponit. "Militia enim est vita hominis super terram"; quia

quanto tempore in hac vita sumus, per arma justitiae a

dextris et a sinistris semper contra vitia et malignos

spiritus pugnare debemus; quatenus, finita militia, pro

victoria coronemur".[26] The morality play, Mankind, invokes

the words of Job in administering the following advice:

> The temptacyon of þe flesch ʒe must resyst   lyke a man,
> For þer ys euer a batell betwyx þe soull and þe body:
> 'Vita hominis est milicia super terram.'
>
> Oppresse yowr gostly enmy and be Crystys own knyght.
> Be neuer a cowarde ageyn yowr aduersary.
> Yf ʒe wyll be crownde, ʒe must nedys fyght.
> Intende well and Gode wyll be yow adjutory.[27]

Life was a battle between the forces of good and those

of evil, as in the combat of the vices and virtues in the

Psychomachia of Prudentius, or Huon de Méry's early thirteenth-

century Tornoiemenz Antecrit, or Lancelot's dream of the tourna-

ment between the black and white knights in the Queste (140:5-

145:4).[28] The Church Militant was an army in which each Christian

had his rank. In the description in the <u>Legenda Aurea</u> of the rank of martyrs, for instance, we are told that they are given to us "in exemplar ad certandum". As St. Chrysostom said,

> tu christiane, delicatus es miles, si putas te
> posse sine pugna vincere, sine certamine triumphare,
> exerce vires fortiter, dimica atrociter, in
> proelio isto concerta, considera pactum, conditionem
> attende, militiam nosce; pactum, quod spopondisti,
> conditionem, quam assumsisti, militiam, cui nomen
> dedisti. Hoc enim pacto cuncti pugnaverunt, hac
> conditione universi vicerunt, hac militia triumph-
> averunt.[29]

Are we justified, therefore, in regarding this traditional metaphor, which long antedated the development of the medieval knight, as a significant element in chivalric ideology? One might object that the metaphor of spiritual warfare was sufficiently common to be autonomous of the ramifications and historical developments of actual military life, to which it was originally indebted. If, indeed, chivalry were simply a system of directives for the practical conduct of the soldier's life, a clear distinction between it and its metaphorical adaptation would be feasible. But chivalry was never so restricted a subject, and it is false to make a rigid distinction between those elements of chivalry which were of practical importance and those which were merely idealistic or theoretical.

Furthermore, because chivalry comprised a series of idealisations and imaginative extensions of the idea of warfare (among others), it was forced into intimate interaction with other imaginative elevations of the military life. In the process of expansion and assimilation by which chivalric

idealism developed, spiritual warfare was one of the primary
concepts to be subsumed, just as it in turn exercised an
inevitable influence on formulations of the knight's social
duty in terms of defence of the Church. The intimate connection
of knighthood as a metaphor for the Christian life with the
definition of the religious duties of the knights is revealed
in documents such as St. Bernard's _Ad Milites Templi_. In addition,
the general chivalric idealisation of prowess and moral
rectitude merges into the metaphor of spiritual warfare
without perceptible transition. The subject of chivalry
cannot therefore be considered in isolation from this pervasive
metaphor.

The religious symbolism of knighthood clearly operates
at a great variety of levels, in works whose connections
with practical aspects of chivalry vary from the extensive
to the purely metaphorical. Chivalry "better agreeth to the
soule than to the body", declared Ramon Lull in a work which
nevertheless purports to be intended for the practical
instruction of squires.[30] Christine de Pisan's _Epistle of
Othea_ moves frequently between the different levels. The
"Glose" to her successive texts usually refers to the knight's
physical conduct (section 63, for example, cautions against
too much hunting; section 79 criticises needless military risks),
while the "Allegorie" refers to his spiritual state. In the
latter, however, the "good knyght goostli" often refers to
any Christian rather than just a knight, and a further dimension
is added to the term in section 10, where the allegory declares

that "man scholde haue in his mouthe the trouthe of the
verray knyghte Ihesu Crist".[31] In section 85 Christine
gathers together these mutually-reinforcing meanings, declaring
that "þis present lijf is but a knyȝthode" of continual
struggle against evil. Alanus de Insulis declared that "Militia
enim exterior figura est interioris militiae, et sine interiori,
exterior est inanis et vacua...Accingatur ergo miles exterius
ad reformandam violentam pacem temporis; interius quoque
gladio verbi Dei, ad restaurandam pacem proprii pectoris."[32]
Moving primarily to the exterior level, he then defines the
duties of the knight as defence of the Church and of the
people, complaining that this is just what the knights
nowadays do not do. The passage affords a striking but by
no means unusual example of the interpenetration of the
practical and metaphorical aspects of religious chivalry.

Chivalric metaphors were very commonly used to
express the role of the clergy, martyrs and angels, as well as
ordinary Christians. In the Queste, as we have seen, monks
vested for mass are often described as wearing the armour of
God. Piers Plowman similarly refers to priests as "godes
knyghtes" (C, XIV, 125). An English translation of Higden's
Polychronicon, referring to St. Gregory's approval of the
Benedictine rule, declares that "it was a wys dede to wiþdrawe
fro hem þat gooþ to holy chevalrie ["ad sacram militiam", in
the original] likynge of metes þat wiþdraweþ þe soule from
holynesse of dedes and of þouȝtes."[33] The knight in Trevisa's
Dialogus inter militem et clericum compares the endowments of

the Church to the wages of knights: "It is seide ȝou, þat ȝe

haueþ y-forȝe alle siche lordschipes & riches to help of

youre lif to wages of holy chyualrie, to haue mete and

drynke and cloþ."[34] Wyclif used the figure in an attack on

the friars, declaring that the ecclesiastical order established

by Christ is more perfect than that founded by the friars:

"knyghtis of þis religion be most holy and moste perfite, ffor

Jesus Crist and his apostils ben chef knyghtis þerof". As

with feudal relationships, priests should take their power from

the lord to whom they owe knight-service, "and þus alle prestis

þat ben Cristis knyȝtis han power of him to þis eende".[35]

In <u>Mum and the Sothsegger</u> the friars are described as knights

who joust <u>against</u> Jesus.[36]

Martyrs are described as God's knights in the early

thirteenth-century metrical "Life of Saint Katherine". Pagan

philosophers brought to dispute with the saint are converted

by her and consequently burnt; Christians come by night

> & biburieden ham
> deorliche, as hit deh
> drihtines cnihtes.[37]

A full statement of the idea that martyrs are "oure Louerdes

knyȝtes" is found in the "Banna sanctorum" of the <u>South English</u>

<u>Legendary</u>. Christ's coming is described in terms of a king's

ordering his troops for battle:

> Wanne a kyng wole bataille nyme to holde up is riȝte
> He ordeineþ verst is ost and ȝarkeþ hem to fiȝte
> Byuore he set is alblasters and is archers also
> Is trompours to scheuwe wat he is & is baner þerto
> And if þe kyng þanne aredy is mid þe ueorste he wole beo
> Vorto hardie al is men þat non ne scholde fleo
> Þanne mot in þe rerewarde hardy kniȝtes wende
> Hare louerdes riȝt to holde up and þe bataille bringe to ende
> And if hi beoþ couwardes in hare dede þe bataille is al ilore

In þis manere oure swete Louerd an eorþe was ibore...[38]

The "trompours" and "alblasters" (crossbowmen) are the

"prophetes" and "patriarks". The greatest fighter of all

is Christ himself, but despite his "stronge deþ" he would

have lost his cause

> ȝif is kniȝtes of þe rerewarde þe strengore ne couþe fiȝte
> Of here louerd emsample i nome & flecchi nolde hi noȝt
> þe apostles ne þe martirs ar hy were to deþe ibroȝt.[39]

In the Laud MS. of the Legendary, we are told that when the

noble knight St. Ypolite was urged by the Emperor to remember

the honour he would lose unless he recanted, he replied that

> a newe knyȝht ich am bi-come newe batayle to do;
> Godes knyȝht of heouene ich am and all mi wille so is
> þat ich in his batayle be sone i-martred, i-wis.[40]

Albert Pauphilet cites examples of angels referred to as

knights, participating in human battles, in the chansons de

geste, and of patristic descriptions of angels as soldiers.[41]

Wyclif's Bible referred to the angels who announced Christ's

birth to the shepherds as "a multitude of heuenli knyȝthod",[42]

and Bartholomew de Glanville, in Trevisa's translation of

his encyclopaedia, De proprietatibus rerum, explained

that angels "buth I-clepid knyȝtis [in the original

"milites"], for þey werreþ & fiȝtiþ for vs aȝen wickide fendes".

Broadening his scope to include all Christians, Bartholomew

asserts that "Lente is þe tyme of chiualrie of cristene men,

in þe whiche tyme we fightiþ sharpliche aȝens vices & synnes".[43]

In Wyclif's translation Paul advises Timothy that "no man

holding knyȝthod to God inwlappith him silf with worldli

nedes".[44] The phraseology reveals how the word acquired,

in addition to its basic meaning here of military service, overtones derived from the personalised feudal implications of knighthood.

4. Christ as Knight

No consideration of the extent to which chivalric terminology was used as a religious metaphor is complete, however, without a consideration of the image of Christ himself as a knight. This most dramatic exploitation of the religious possibilities of knightly symbolism is frequently found in medieval literature, as has often been noted.[45] Its popularity in the face of some bizarre and even grotesque aspects is a witness to the habit of mind which routinely associated chivalric practice and religious ideas. If each individual Christian had a knightly obligation, it was as a participant in the great combat on the side of the chief knight, Jesus Christ.

The idea of Christ as a warrior fighting the devil is of course common in early Christian literature, and patristic writers frequently referred to the crucifixion as a combat. As Sister Le May has written, "_Christus Victor_ is a persistent theme, not only of exegetical tracts and homilies, but also of the liturgical embellishments of hymns and sequences."[46] To some extent Christ's appearance as a knight is merely an updating of the metaphor. In _Li Tornoiemenz Antecrit_, for example, Christ and Satan lead their respective armies armed as knights in the normal manner of contemporary military leaders, bearing appropriate heraldic devices. The figure of

Christ the knight became a commonplace immediately comprehensible
independent of any extended chivalric metaphor. Thus the
third shepherd in the Ludus Coventriae "Adoration of the
Shepherds" greets Christ simply: "Heyl comely knyth þe deuyl
to ouer throwe". Thomas of Hales, advising trust in God
rather than in earthly princes, asks, without obvious chivalric
preliminaries, "Nere he, mayde, ful seoly/þat myhte wunye
myd such a knyhte?"[47]

In more elaborate forms, however, the motif employed
the ramifications of chivalric theory and practice.
Christ fights for man as his champion in a judicial duel,
or in a tournament at which man is the prize.[48] In some
cases we find the oxymoron of his fighting unarmed, having
temporarily forsworn his divine power. An English sermon
supports the statement that man is the servant of God because
he was won in battle by describing the Christ-knight going to
fight the devil (a giant) after laying aside his arms in
heaven, and bearing only a black bier (his penance on the
cross), a white lily (his body), and the five red roses of
his wounds.[49] In one lyric Christ declares: "I am iesu,
þat cum to fith/With-outen seld & spere". According to another
paradox, Christ heals by fighting: he is "so douhti a knyht",
coming blood-stained from battle, "Chaunpyoun to helen
monkunde in vyht".[50]

Christ's armour affords opportunities for allegory and
moralising in the manner of the chivalric manuals. Descriptions
of Christ's arming, as Rosemary Woolf points out, were very
common, especially in sermons. The 'armour' referred to is

variously his human flesh, the manifestations of his agony,
or the physical details of the crucifixion. An example of
the first of these possibilities is contained in an Anglo-
Norman poem by Nicholas Bozon, cited by Professor Woolf,
which describes the incarnation as Christ's arming of
himself, helped by a maiden.[51] Another example from Professor
Woolf's discussion combines the latter two of the three
elements, though the idea of Christ as himself a knight is only
implied. The writer of this lyric is a knight of Christ, in
the sense that he will put on Christ's sufferings as his
armour:

> At þe y mot myn armes borwe,
> Mi sheld shal be þe swerd of sorwe,
>   marie þat stong to þe herte;
> Þe holi cros my baner biforn,
> myn helm þi garlond of sharpe þorn,
>   Mi swerd þi scourges smerte.
> Mi plates shullen þi nailes be,
> myn acotoun þat spere tre,
>   þat stong þi swete syde.
> Now y am armed þus wel,
> nel y him fle neuere a del,
>   tyde what bi-tyde![52]

An _exemplum_ in the _Northern Homily Collection_ compares the
cross to a knight's shield, the crown of thorns to a "basenet",
and dramatically imagines Christ wounded by his own spear:

> his scheld at his bac bar he
> þat was þe harde rode tre.
> þer oþur man bere heore spere
> þe poynt forþward hem to were,
> he bar þe poynt in his syde
> and to his herte he let hit glyde.[53]

More frequently the cross becomes Christ's horse: his
tormentors in the famous passage in the Towneley "Processus
Crucis" declare that since he is a king he must "Iust in

tornamente", sitting fast on his "palfray":

> ffor we shall sett the in thy sadyll,
>   ffor fallyng be thou bold.
> I hete the well thou bydys a shaft;
> Bot if thou sytt well thou had better laft
>   The tales that thou has told.[54]

In one lyric the image of the cross as a horse is introduced
directly, with the figure of Christ as a knight only implied
as a premise:

> Rest-les i ride.
> lok up on me! put fro ӡe pride.
>
> Mi palefrey is of tre,
> wiht nayles naylede ӡwrh me.[55]

One of the most extensive uses of the image is found
in _Piers Plowman_. Sister Le May observes that "the whole
scheme of Redemption is represented by the poet in terms of
knighthood, from the mystery of the Incarnation to the
Harrowing of Hell."[56] This perhaps implies a systematic
treatment which is not in evidence, but indeed several of the
main events of Christ's life, besides the crucifixion itself,
are incorporated into the chivalric scheme, though not
without bizarre touches. The Annunciation takes the form
of a declaration by Gabriel that "one Iesus, a Iustice sone"--
a reference which continues the association of knighthood in
the poem with the dispensing of justice--must rest in Mary's
"chambre", where he will become skilful in fighting, "To
haue y-fouӡte with the fende ar ful tyme come" (B,XVI, 90-4, 100-2).
His miracles are accounted for by the instruction he receives
from Piers in "lechecraft"--a useful knightly attainment,
since it will enable him to cure himself "thowgh he were

wounded with his enemye". Jesus practises his skill by healing

the sick around him (B, XVI, 103-10). Palm Sunday evokes

the comparison of Christ to a candidate for knighthood:

> Barfot on an asse bak bootles cam prykye,
> With-oute spores other spere and sprakliche he lokede,
> As is the kynde of a knyght that cometh to be doubed,
> To geten hus gilte spores and galoches y-couped...
> <div align="right">(C, XXI, 9-12)</div>

The central event is the 'joust' itself--a judicial

duel ("bi Iuggement of armes") to decide "Whether shulde

fonge the fruit the fende or hymselue" (B, XVI, 95-6). The

"fruit" is of course "Piers fruit the Plowman" (B, XVIII, 20),

or man, whom Christ will win by right of conquest (C, XXII, 26-

53). As Jesus approaches Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Faith

cries out his name "As doth an heraud of armes when auntrous

cometh to Iustes" (C, XXI, 14). Christ will

> Iouste in Peers armes,
> In hus helme and in hus haberion humana natura;
> That Crist be nat knowe for consummatus deus,
> In Peeres plates the Plouhman this prykiere shal ryde...
> <div align="right">(C, XXI, 21-4)</div>

The idea that Christ's incarnation is an adoption of man's

armorial bearings is repeated when the dreamer demands of

Conscience, "Is this Iesus the Iuster?.../Or it is Pieres the

Plowman! who paynted hym so rede?":

> Quod Conscience, and kneled tho 'thise aren Pieres armes,
> His coloures and his cote-armure ac he that cometh so blody
> Is Cryst with his crosse conqueroure of Crystene'.
> <div align="right">(B, XIX, 12-4)[57]</div>

The boldest and in some respects the climactic passage

of this kind rather poignantly describes how Longinus recovers

his sight when 'jousting' with Jesus. The Jews break the

legs of the two thieves,

Ac ther was no boye so bolde godes body to touche,
For he was knyght and kynges sone kynde for-ȝaf that tyme
That no boye hadde hardinesse hym to touche in deyinge.
Ac ther cam forth a blynde knyght with a kene spere y-grounde,
Hihte Longeus, as the lettere telleth and longe hadde lore
                                                    hus sight.
By-fore Pilat and other peuple in the place he houede.
Ac maugre hus meny teth he was mad that tyme
To Iouste with Iesus this blynde Iuwe Longeus;
For alle hij were vnhardy that houede ther other stode,
To touche hym other to tryne hym other to take hym doun and
                                                    graue hym,
Bot this blynde bachelere that bar hym thorw the herte;
The blood sprang doun by the sper and vnsperrede the knyghtes
                                                    eyen.
Tho fel the knyght vpon knees and cryed Iesu mercy—
'A-ȝens my wil hit was,' quath he 'that ich ȝow wonde made!'
                                        (C, XXI, 78-91)

Thus Faith bi-gon to fare with the false Iewes—
'Corsede caityfs! knyghthod was hit neuere
To bete a body ybounde with eny briȝt wepne,
The gree ȝut hath he geten for alle hus grete wondes.
For ȝoure champion chiualer chief knyght of ȝow alle
Ȝelt hym recreaunt rennynge ryght at Iesus wil.
                                        (C, XXI, 100-5)

Since I have argued that the image of knighthood

as an imitation of Christ stands in sharp contrast to that

of knighthood as the love-service of a lady, it is important to note

that Christ, as a knight, is sometimes depicted as a lover

as well as a warrior. In patristic writings the object of his

love is Israel or the Church; in the later Middle Ages it is

more frequently the individual human soul.[58] The presentation

of Christ as a husband fighting to win back his faithless

wife from her seducer, the devil, was popular in sermons, where

the bride was explained as representing the soul, whose sins

constituted spiritual adultery.[59] Another form of the image

is that in which Christ is a knight fighting to win his lady's

love and often dying in the process. He may complain of her

'unkindness' and plead with her to remember his wounds and'·
his love. In many instances the dying knight requests the
lady to treasure his blood-stained shirt or armour.

The earliest and most famous appearance of this latter
motif is perhaps that in the Ancrene Wisse, which tells us
that Christ, coming "as kene cniht" to fight for us in a
tournament, "schawde þurh cnihtschipe þet he wes luue wurðe.
as weren sumhwile cnihtes iwunet to donne".[60] A fuller
version of the story is told by the Knight of La Tour Landry:
a maiden, falsely accused, is championed by a knight, who in
trial by combat kills her accuser and would-be seducer. Her
champion, however, dies of five mortal wounds he has received
in the fight, and we are told that Christ fought and died to
redeem us in just the same way.[61] The theme is found also in
various forms in the Gesta Romanorum. According to one of the
Middle English versions, the daughter of the Emperor Fredericus
is seduced by an earl and disinherited. A knight offers to
fight for her inheritance if she will agree to love him
exclusively. He defeats her enemy but dies from his wounds,
whereupon she takes his bloody shirt (in another version it is
his armour) and hangs it up, according to her promise, as a
reminder not to take any other husband. The key to the allegory
explains that the Emperor is the father of heaven, the empire
is paradise, the daughter the soul of man, the earl the devil,
and the "wele faire knyȝte and a stronge" is Christ.[62]

The relationship between this common allegory and the
literature of knightly love-adventure with which it is often

associated is problematic. Sister Le May, echoing several
earlier commentators, claims that the Church attempted to
"offset the harm which a literary convention was effecting in
the moral and social world" by introducing "a literature which
would present this favorite topic of courtly love in a religious
way. If the knight must have a paramour whom he could only
worship at a distance, and who was beautiful and lovely, and
worthy to be served and to give one's life for, where could
he find one so perfect as the Virgin Mary? If every lady
must love a knight who would suffer every evil for her, who
would serve her--nay, who would die for her--where could she
find one if not in the fairest, truest, richest of knights--
Our Lord?"[63] This argument, like that which regards the
religious aspects of chivalry as ecclesiastical impositions
on secular habits, does not do justice to the autonomous
imaginative capacity of religious feeling. The expression of
love for the Virgin or for Christ, common enough in direct form,
need not be considered as a substitute for an originally
secular expression of love just because it employs an earthly
metaphor. Moreover, for the essential image of Christ as
human lover, recourse to a 'harmful' literary convention was
unnecessary, since the Song of Songs and Hosea provided
irreproachable precedents. Nor does the complaint of
'unkindness' have exclusively erotic associations, since it is
a charge sometimes levelled by Christ against mankind generally
without reference to the image of Christ as lover.[64]

    Nevertheless there is some justice in Rosemary Woolf's
comment that "the recurrent question of the love-debate

concerning what suitor had the most rightful claim to a
lady's love, and the fictitious submission of issues of
love to the justice of a mock court of law, provided a
writer of literary inventiveness with a perfect background
of associations for depicting Christ's pre-eminent claim
to deserve man's love."[65]   But the influence worked in the
other direction as well, as is shown by the Conte de la
Charrette, where an ostensibly amorous subject rests upon
an infra-structure provided by the life of Christ, and
especially the Harrowing of Hell   (see above, section IV,
4). The image of Christ's sacrifice for the human soul and
that of the knight's duel for a lady in this respect mutually
support each other's imaginative potency.

We should not, however, assume that the periodic
interdependence of these two images indicates a religious
endorsement of the idea of the knight fighting to obtain
the love of women. In the first place, the ladies for whom
the Christ-knight fights are either being oppressed or have
been seduced. Both situations presuppose an abuse of weakness
by a third party, and therefore conventionally call for
knightly intervention. In the second place, the depiction
of Christ as an importunate lover paradoxically strengthens
our awareness of the contrast between the purity of Christ's
motives and the mixed nature of those of earthly lovers.
A similar effect is discernible, as I have noted, in the
relationship between Galahad and Perceval's sister in the
Queste, where the startling contrast between the insistence

on Galahad's chastity and the intimacy of such a gesture
as the lady's sacrifice of her hair emphasises the mystical
aspects of the union, and diverts towards that mysticism
all the potential sensual and emotional intensity of the
situation.

5. 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'

This discussion of chivalry's capacity to embody
religious ideas has moved a long way from fourteenth-
century knightly practice. My last example, however,
is a work which is usually assumed to reveal a familiarity
with practical as well as theoretical aspects of knighthood.
But I hope to show that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
reveals not only an awareness of chivalric practice but
also a familiarity with the traditions I have been discussing--
a tradition in which a polarity is established between the
chivalry of love-service and the chivalry which is an
imitation of Christ. The structure of the poem, I shall
argue, rests on the assumption that the appropriate develop-
ment for a knight, and hence for any individual confronting
the things of this world, is the rejection of an idea of
chivalry based on luxury and the love of women in favour
of one grounded in mortification of the flesh and spiritual
allegiance. In making this point the romance uses the figure
of the knight primarily as an extended metaphor for the
Christian life (and deviations from it); but in doing so it
makes references to ideals of conduct at several levels,

recalling at times events in the life of Christ, while at
others invoking the practical dictates of the discursive
writings on knightly behaviour. The work thus reinforces
our sense of the interpenetration of the practical and
symbolic aspects of Christian chivalry.

At one level Gawain is a reminder of Christ, and
his journey to meet the Green Knight recalls the descent
into hell. Bernard Levy has documented the infernal
associations of Gawain's journeying towards the north, and
noted that Gawain's stay at Bertilak's castle echoes Christ's
three days in hell.[66] Other parallels Levy suggests include
the journey into the wilderness to face temptations, and
the voluntary submission to a symbolic death at the Green
Chapel; the green girdle becomes a sign of both humility
and triumph, like the "croun of þorne" mentioned at the
very end of the poem.[67]

Unlike Christ, however, Gawain is not perfect, and
his more sustained role is as the representative of mankind,
facing a choice between the pursuit of the perfect life and
the indulgence of self. The whole structure of the beheading
game is of course a spiritual test, whether arranged by
benevolent or malevolent powers. The scene of his arming
recalls Paul's "whole armour of God", and the pentangle
on his shield indicates that Gawain has committed himself
to the path of spiritual perfection.[68] His winter journey
involves struggles against hostile beasts (720-5) and loneliness,
and the endurance of a bleak landscape which encourages despair.[69]
The greatest temptation, however, awaits him in the castle,

where his fallibility is eventually revealed, though he
resists the primary object of his hostess's blandishments.
As R. H. Green remarks, Gawain is led to put his faith in
the magical girdle instead of in the pentangle, which, though
an old magical sign, now symbolises non-magical faith in God.[70]
The slight blow on his neck, chastising his pride, is a
kind of circumcision: the Green Knight's first appearance,
when the reckless pride of Arthur and his court is at its
highest, and Gawain's meeting with him at the Chapel, both take
place on the Feast of the Circumcision.[71] Levy hypothesises
that the testing can be seen in terms of the three traditional
temptations of the World (the pride and worldly glory of the
court), the Flesh (Bertilak's wife, whose beauty is equated
with the ugliness of her "alter ego", the old hag), and the
Devil (the Green Knight himself, from whom Gawain is tempted
to run away--thus denying his faith in God).[72] Gawain is as
nearly perfect as it is possible for a man to be, but he needs
to be reminded through the neck wound and the girdle of
man's inevitable tendency to sin.

The poem makes its ethical discriminations at another
level through the presentation of alternative conceptions
of chivalry. Gawain is the representative of the Round Table
as well as of mankind generally. Arthur's knights are
renowned for their chivalry, in a military and a social
sense, and it is this reputation which the Green Knight comes
to test:

> Bot for þe los of þe, lede, is lyft vp so hyʒe,
> And þy burʒ and þy burnes best ar holden,
> Stifest vnder stel-gere on stedes to ryde,
> Þe wyʒtest and þe worþyest of þe worldes kynde,
> Preue for to play wyth in oþer pure laykez,
> And here is kydde cortaysye, as I haf herd carp,
> And þat hatz wayned me hider, iwyis, at þis tyme.   (258-64)

The danger of chivalric pre-eminence of this kind is the
"surquidré" and "hawtesse" which Morgan sends the Green Knight
to probe (2454-8). Arthur's court does indeed demonstrate
this kind of pride, especially through the inappropriate
frivolity with which it treats serious matters. Arthur
dismisses the Green Knight's visit as an 'interlude'; the
courtiers indulge in 'japes' on the eve of Gawain's departure,
and laugh on his return at his confession of cowardice,
covetousness, and perfidy (470-5, 540-1, 2513-5).

But we should resist the assumption that Arthur's
court 'represents' chivalry in any universal sense. Prowess
and courtesy can no more be equated with chivalry than can
the readiness for sexual adventure by which the lady of the
castle expects to recognise Gawain as chivalrous. As in
Chaucer studies, the loose employment of the term has produced
some contentious judgments of the romance. Larry Benson,
for example, claims that the laughter of the Green Knight
and the court teaches Gawain that "chivalry takes itself a
bit too seriously, that men become ridiculous and foolish
when they attempt to live up to so superhuman an ideal."
Whatever Benson thinks this ideal is, it is symbolised
for him primarily by the Round Table in the romance, and

the criticism of it which he discerns there reflects the
unsympathetic climate of late fourteenth-century 'realism'
(of which we have heard much in connection with Chaucer).
Benson goes on to argue that unlike many other Arthurian
romances which denounce chivalry, or emphasise religious
virtues at chivalry's expense, <u>Gawain and the Green Knight</u>
"takes the old ideals neither too lightly nor too seriously
...it condemns knighthood, but lightly...Gawain, the represent-
ative of knighthood, must denounce himself, and in doing so
he shows us its most attractive quality, its nobility of
aspiration."[73]

What is the ideal of which Gawain falls short?
Does he fall short of an ideal symbolised by the Round
Table, or do the Round Table knights, even more than Gawain,
fall short of quite another ideal? Was the chivalric ideal
so vulnerable that, as Benson suggests, the brutality of the
Hundred Years War could discredit it? We are back with the
questions raised by my initial survey of Chaucer commentary,
and in the light of my conclusions about the nature of chivalric
ideas we must conclude that chivalry, here as elsewhere,
is not any one thing. The poem discriminates between various
competing versions of the chivalric ethos, and its ultimate
standard of judgment is no less chivalric for being that
of orthodox Christian doctrine.

Before proceeding with this argument, however, I wish
to look briefly at two other expressions of the idea that a
contrast is involved in the romance between chivalric and

Christian values. Gordon Shedd identifies chivalry with the romance form as a literary genre and its typical heroes, who are normally successful in their enterprises through their strength in battle. The "code" of chivalry "has tended to become worshipped as an end in itself. The most dangerous and reprehensible outgrowth of this idolatry is the unconscious assumption that through faithful adherence to the code human perfection is possible...We have seen what this loss of perspective does to the literature it spawns: it creates a seemingly endless succession of success stories. And we have seen what this loss of perspective does to the individual who blindly follows the code: Gawain has been looking, throughout the poem, for an external, concrete enemy; and in the process he has shown his ignorance of the truth that the real enemy is himself."[74] Michael Foley, in a recent contribution to the debate about Gawain's confessions, argues that in keeping the girdle Gawain offends against the knightly code but not against Christian morality. His confession to the priest is therefore valid, but though he is absolved as a Christian he is not forgiven as a knight until he has confessed to another member of the order.[75]

In Shedd's view Gawain attempts to adhere to chivalric standards, and in the process fails to meet the demands of Christianity; according to Foley's interpretation, by contrast, he follows the dictates of religion but offends against the more stringent standards of knighthood. Now it is quite feasible that an unknightly act (the killing of an opponent's

horse, for example) might not be considered an offence in a religious perspective, though it is hard to see how a breach of faith with someone to whom one has pledged loyalty could be regarded in the same way. But the main objection to both these theories is that the poem not only does not establish two independent scales of value, but in fact decisively rejects the idea through the account of the lady's temptation of Gawain.

Arthur's court does indeed represent a certain kind of chivalry, but it is one in which the values of secular nobility have become somewhat detached from other-worldly considerations. Christmas at Camelot is a virtually secular festival (37 ff.). Gawain is treated as the leading, though not perhaps typical, member of this court; at Bertilak's castle he is recognised as the epitome of the courtly and aristocratic manner (915-27). The temptation of Gawain, which begins as soon as he enters the castle, consists primarily in the invitation to identify himself with the features of Camelot which have been reproduced and heightened in Bertilak's luxury hotel. Gawain finds what is indeed a home away from home after his sojourn in the wilderness. The richness and softness of his clothing, his bed and bed-clothes, his chamber and the chair he sits in, and the depth and soundness of his sleep, are repeatedly emphasised.[76] The 'penitential' meal which he appears to accept with relish is a triumph of gastronomic ingenuity over the restrictions of religion (888-98). The element of

testing and probing here is pointed up by the fact that
when Gawain becomes a little drunk ("For wyn in his hed
þat wende"), his companions take advantage of his 'mirth'
to question him "vpon spare wyse/Bi preué poyntez" about
himself, and find out who he is (899-907). In its immediate
juxtaposition with the mention of Gawain's drinking and
garrulousness, the discretion attributed to the questioners
has overtones of subtlety as well as of courtesy.

Christmas turns out to be as secular an occasion as
at Arthur's court the previous year. The castle appears as if
in immediate answer to the knight's prayer for "sum herber
þer heȝly I myȝt here masse,/Ande þy matynez to-morne" (755-6);
but when Gawain finally takes his place in the chapel the
service is no sooner over than he is flirting with and embracing
a beautiful lady, asking in 'knightly' fashion to be her
'servant' (970-6). More spices and wine are called for,
and Gawain proceeds to fulfil the expectations that he will
demonstrate his skill in "luf-talkyng". The contrast between
the nature of the festival and the manner of celebrating
it is brought into sharp focus by significant juxtaposition
bordering on bathos:

> God hatz geuen vus his grace godly for soþe,
> Þat such a gest as Gawan grauntez vus to haue,
> When burnez blyþe of his burþe schal sitte
>   and synge.
>   In menyng of manerez mere
>   Þis burne now schal vus bryng,
>   I hope þat may hym here
>   Schal lerne of luf-talkyng. (920-7)

And again:

> On þe morne, as vch mon mynez þat tyme
> þat Dryȝtyn for oure destyné to deȝe watz borne,

> Wele waxez in vche a won in worlde for his sake;
> So did hit þere on þat day þurʒ dayntés mony:
> Boþe at mes and at mele messes ful quaynt
> Derf men vpon dece drest of þe best.   (995-1000)

Gawain fits well into this sybaritic environment,
confirming his initial identification with Arthurian values.
Bertilak leads him further into the trap with his proposal
to detain him longer:

> þe grene chapayle vpon grounde greue yow no more;
> Bot ʒe schal be in yowre bed, burne, at þyn ese...(1070-1)

The specific way in which the host proposes that his guest
spend the time suggests lack of vigilance, sensuality and sloth,
while Bertilak's smooth words reduce the appointment at the
Chapel to a mere matter of scheduling. Gawain appears
not to see that he is being manipulated, even when Bertilak
makes his proposal specific. The softening-up process is
moving towards a climax, but Gawain has just agreed to lower
his guard. The host's supporting argument that he ought
to lie in until late each morning in order to catch up on
his eating and sleeping after his labours should be a
transparent trick (1093-104). Gawain has, after all, been
constantly feasting, and there is a suspicious note in
the inclusion of Bertilak's wife in the plan. Moreover,
the knight, we surely sense, should not be relaxing his
vigilance so close to his time of crisis.

Pragmatic considerations, however, are not the most
important element here. Gawain's quiet morning sleep contrasts
dramatically with the noise and bustle of the hunting scenes;
on each day the transition from the one scene to the other is

made in mid-sentence, an effect which the cinema could not achieve more successfully.[77] Lying in bed long into the morning represents something of a commonplace in chivalric literature. When Chrétien's Erec abandons knightly activity and devotes himself to Enide—a clearly unsatisfactory situation in the romance, involving the loss of both reputation and Erec's proper function in society—he frequently stays in bed until noon. In the Morte Darthur Tristan and Lancelot leave Sir Dynadan "slepynge in his bedde" to ride off to the tournament at Lonezep. Dynadan's continued sleep is as much a gesture of his dissent from the knightly code as his scornful remarks.[78] More obviously Gawain offends against the almost unanimous strictures of the chivalric handbooks. Such writers as John of Salisbury, Honoré Bonet, and Geoffroi de Charny condemned the use by knights of clean sheets, soft beds, good food and drink, and late rising.[79]

Through indulgence in these luxuries Gawain is compromised before the crucial test actually comes. Having slipped so complacently into the ease prepared for him, he is indeed the "sleper vnslyȝe" that the lady calls him (1209). His moral state is so clearly conveyed in that reproach that the possible relevance of the frequent biblical use of the figure of the unwary sleeper hardly needs to be invoked.[80] The lady herself develops the theme, recalling the entrapping of Mars and Venus by Vulcan (and hence also the enslavement of Mars by Venus), when she declares that she has captured him:

I schal bynde yow in your bedde, þat be ȝe trayst...
Ȝe schal not rise of your bedde, I rych yow better,

> I schal happe yow here þat oþer half als,
> And syþen karp wyth my knyȝt þat I kaȝt haue. (1211, 1223-5)

Gawain's alignment with the Arthurian values leads him to temporise, appeasing rather than confronting the challenge. Having unsuccessfully feigned sleep he now professes to yield himself completely to his visitor (1214-6). The gesture is courteous in the sense that it is designed to avoid giving offence, but Gawain's courtesy here only leads him further into trouble rather than keeping him out of it. He is attacked in the name of those characteristics for which he and the people he represents have a special reputation, and he attempts to respond as he is expected to--flattering the lady and deprecating himself (1241-7)--even though her bold offer of her body is absurdly removed from any notion of courtesy (1237-40). He reasserts his pledge to be 'her knight',

> And, soberly your seruaunt my souerayn I holde yow,
> And yowre knyȝt I becom, and Kryst yow forȝelde, (1278-9)

and she concludes her first visit by extracting a kiss from him as proof of his famous "cortaysye". Gawain has been trapped by his own values, having tacitly consented to a view of chivalry and the noble life in terms of luxurious living and of courteous behaviour--the latter appearing to comprise mainly "luf-talkyng". The lady's temptations force the audience to examine the implications of the Arthurian world and the assumption that the Round Table and the pentangle are harmoniously integrated.

On her second visit she summons chivalry itself

rather than courtesy to her support. Instead of reproaching
Gawain for lacking the special distinction associated with
him, she claims that he is not even performing his duties
as a member of the order of chivalry. It is interesting
to note that the most explicit statement I have come across
in medieval literature of the nature of chivalry (as a
general concept) in terms of love-service is put into the
mouth of this woman whom Gawain must quite evidently resist:

> And of alle cheualry to chose, þe chef þyng alosed
> Is þe lel layk of luf, þe lettrure of armes;
> For to telle of þis teuelyng of þis trwe knyȝtez,
> Hit is þe tytelet token and tyxt of her werkkez,
> How ledes for her lele luf hor lyuez han auntered,
> Endured for her drury dulful stoundez,
> And after wenged with her walour and voyded her care,
> And broȝt blysse into boure with bountees hor awen.
>   (1512-9)

The knight is well versed in his "hetes"--presumably
his knightly vows--and therefore must be expert in "trweluf
craftes" (1525-7). Gawain declines to debate the issue with
such an 'expert' on the subject (1540-5), but although
he continues to refer to himself as her knight and her servant
(1538, 1548) his actions indicate that he does not concur
with the lady on this question. His real allegiance, as we
are told on the next morning, is to the Virgin Mary, who
is watching over "hir knyȝt" (1769). The basic alternatives
involved in chivalry are once more expressed in terms of these
two kinds of love service. Gawain, like Geoffrey of Monmouth's
Arthur, carries the image of the Virgin painted on the inside
of his shield (2744-6).[81] The idea of a knight serving the
Virgin as his lady appears in the lyrics:

swete leuedi of me þu reowe
& haue merci of þin knicht,

and Lydgate addressed St. George as "oure lady knyght".[82]

On the third morning the lady tries a frontal assault,

and Gawain is forced into a direct confrontation: he must

Oþer lach þer hir luf, oþer lodly refuse.
He cared for his cortaysye, lest craþayn he were,
And more for his meschef ȝif he schulde make synne,
And be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aȝt. (1772-5)

Even now Gawain makes his choice between the two interpret-
ations of courtesy and dishonour almost unwittingly, but the
lady at least regards herself as having been "swared for
soþe, þat sore me þinkkez". (1793). Gawain has thus passed
the chastity test, but his subsequent lapse in the matter of
the girdle is not an isolated incident, detachable from the
larger test of his whole stay at the castle, of which the
attempt to seduce him is only a part. The chivalric handbooks
justified their insistence on the austerity of a knight's
life, which I have already mentioned, on the grounds that if
pampered he would be too fearful for his life to be an
effective soldier. This fear is exactly what leads Gawain
to take the charmed girdle after his lengthy period of
soft living.

He has succumbed partially to the temptation of
worldliness, but he has not taken the decisive step of embracing
the chivalry of the world--represented by the lady's amorous
conception of the knight's role--rather than that of God.
The real purpose of his testing, including the chastity test,

has been to probe the depth of his worldliness. This is
emphasised by the Green Knight, when he points out that he
blames Gawain for his fault less than he might since it
was not committed for blatantly materialistic reasons--
"for no wylyde werke" (2367), a probable reference to
Gawain's indifference to the material value of the girdle.
Nevertheless, despite his indifference to the lady's charms,
Gawain himself sees his failure in terms of a misplaced
allegiance to a woman. He remarks that the ladies of the
castle have beguiled 'their knight' with their tricks, and
consoles himself with the thought that the noblest and most
exalted men of ancient times--Adam, Solomon, Samson, David--
were similarly dealt with (2411-28).

The poem demands that we view chivalry, and the
attitudes to the world for which it stands, in terms of a
choice between knightly service to God and that to a woman.
The Green Knight exploits the ambivalence of the concept when
he tells Gawain, before administering the third stroke:

> Halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt,
> And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may. (2297-8)

The "hode" (order of knighthood) in its true form is indeed
a protection; as conducted by Arthur, however, it has led
Gawain to his present peril, and the "hetes" of the order as
Bertilak's wife expresses them will do him no good at all.
The girdle is also fraught with this duality, recalling the
belt which was as important a token of knighthood as the
sword, spurs or shield. The sign of "surfet" and shame that

Gawain initially adopts in self-disgust becomes subsequently
the symbol of his striving for the perfection of the pentangle
and of his recognition of the necessity for humility. When
he rides "in renoun", and "quen pryde schal me pryk for
prowes of armes", it will remind him of the frailty of the
flesh and of the dangers of his worldly occupation (2433-8).[83]

       Gawain's dissociation from the mere secularity of
Arthurian chivalry, and his new spiritual orientation, are
emphasised by his reception at Arthur's court. The court
maintains its frivolity (2514), and though it also adopts
the green baldric the gesture does not appear to arise from
any understanding of Gawain's experience. Indeed the motivation
is largely unregenerate pride in Gawain's achievement; in
returning alive he has contributed to "þe renoun of þe
Rounde Table" (2519). As Gordon Shedd notes, the Round Table
adopts the girdle as a symbol of invulnerability (in the
way that Gawain had done originally) rather than of vulnerab-
ity, thus parodying Gawain's experience. Having been forced
in the course of the poem to modify his alignment with
Arthurian values, Gawain finds himself now detached from
the company whose chief knight he had originally been,
unable to share their laughter.[84]

       From this consideration of Gawain in terms of a
polarity between the chivalry of worldly indulgence and
that of spiritual perfection, I will in the next chapter
turn back to Chaucer. This discussion of chivalry's relationship

to love and to religious symbolism has provided an essential
background to any tenable hypothesis about Chaucer's interest
in the subject. In an earlier section I argued for the
primacy of chivalry's imaginative and symbolic elements, and
their responsiveness to the wider theoretical framework of
medieval thought rather than to practical or mimetic realities.
Subsequently I noted the gulf between the real historical
activities of knights in Chaucer's time and the activities of the
knights portrayed in his work. The Knight of the Prologue,
I maintained, need represent no exception to this statement.
Chaucer's knights are frequently lovers, and I have noted
the tendency of fictional literature to polarise the moral
choices involved in an identification of true chivalric
conduct in terms of a contrast between the knight's pre-
occupation with love and his allegiance to God. Love is by
no means outlawed for the knight under the right circumstances,
but the evidence of the romances suggests that the prior claim
of religious impulses in the idealism inspired by knighthood
was not just a defiant assertion of the homilists.

VI

CHAUCER AND CHIVALRY

1. Chaucer and the Chivalric Tradition

In considering Chaucer and his knights in the light
of my general findings about chivalry, I am not of course
suggesting that he was directly influenced in this aspect
of his writing by the individual works I have examined,
many of which he probably did not know. My purpose has
instead been to suggest that the works cited, originating
in several different countries and centuries, provide a
sufficiently coherent sense of the nature of the chivalric
tradition to be a helpful guide to reading both Chaucer and
some of his interpreters. A possible objection to such a
supposition may be anticipated with reference to my use
of Arthurian and connected romances in establishing that
tradition, since some critics have proposed that Chaucer's
attitude toward chivalry was characterised by hostility to
the Matter of Britain. Gollancz ascribed Chaucer's avoidance
of Arthurian stories as vehicles for the serious embodiment
of chivalric virtues to the satirical attitude towards
contemporary romances that he is assumed to display in
"Thopas". Robert Haller sees Chaucer's choice of a classical
rather than Arthurian story for a discussion of the noble
life and rulership in the "Knight's Tale" as one of the

indicators of his impatience with romances. Though ultimately deeming it over-simple, Brewer entertains the theory that Chaucer's "sarcasm about Arthurian romance" testifies to "the incompatibility of a great master of the realistic" with such romances as those by Chrétien de Troyes. In "Thopas", according to this theory, the English romances are mocked not just for their "verbal incompetence" and such-like failures, "but because they are romances, which to Chaucer means silliness."[1]

The case for Chaucer's hostility to Arthurianism appears initially to find support in what is usually assumed to be an ironic reference to the Prose Lancelot in the "Nun's Priest's Tale":

> This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
> As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
> That wommen holde in ful greet reverence. (VII, 3211-3)

The impression is reinforced by what Brewer, in propria persona, calls the "light-heartedly sceptical dismissal" of Lancelot in the 'Squire's Tale":

> Who koude telle yow the forme of daunces
> So unkouthe, and swiche fresshe contenaunces,
> Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges
> For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynges?
> No man but Launcelot, and he is deed. (V, 283-7)

Scorn for the legend of Arthur would, however, have been an unusual attitude for a fourteenth-century Englishman. Brewer quite rightly points out that there was nothing "effeminate" about the English Arthurian tradition. Both Malory and the author of the alliterative Morte Arthure probably intended references to English monarchs in their portrayals of Arthur's achievements.[2] Edward III announced his intention in 1344 of

building a round table in order to restore to chivalry its
ancient prestige--a project which eventually resulted, in
modified form, in the Order of the Garter.

There are in fact no external factors to support the
notion that Chaucer opposed such developments, and the
internal evidence is extremely dubious. On the Nun's Priest's
aside Brewer comments: "This could be just a light-hearted
antifeminist squib, possibly with some contemporary reference,
and also an example of Chaucer's scepticism towards several
aspects of contemporary chivalric ideals."[3] The antifeminism
involved is surely directed primarily against the Wife of
Bath, who has told a story invoking the patronage of the
Arthurian tradition, and the Nun's Priest's real complaint
is that women like the Wife hold in reverence that part of
the Arthurian story dealing with the love of Lancelot and
Guinevere. The aspect of 'chivalric ideals' which Chaucer,
like so many other writers, is mocking is the tendency to
regard that kind of love as part of the appropriate conduct
of a knight.

Arthur's knights, like the one in the Garden of Idleness
of the Chaucerian Romaunt who was "sib to Artour of Britaigne"
(1199), were frequently associated with amorous behaviour,
and Lancelot provided the most famous instance of this
proclivity. The temptation to follow his example led Paolo
and Francesca to the Inferno (V, 128 ff.), whereas the correct
perspective in which to view his love is that of his eventual
repentance, which Dante showed himself familiar with in

the Convivio (IV, 28:60). It is appropriate that the Wife
and the Squire (who also makes mention of Gawain) should be
associated with a story containing such opportunities for
misreading—a point which I shall return to.[4] But we should
not assume that Chaucer, any more than Dante, believed the
story of Lancelot to be a mere tale of bawdry. The author
of Gawain and the Green Knight evidently did not consider
the Arthurian theme disqualified from embodying serious moral
and chivalric discriminations, and anyone who had read the
Vulgate Queste could hardly dismiss the subject as mere
silliness in the "Thopas" vein. Admittedly, the Grail
knight, Perceval, is mentioned in the "Thopas" (line 916),
but Chaucer may quite easily have intended to mock the
English Sir Perceval of Galles without involving the Grail
theme, since the romance makes no mention of the Grail.

It is quite possible, all the same, that Chaucer
considered and rejected the idea of making a substantial
contribution to Arthurian literature. But any such rejection
can hardly have been based on a distaste for the 'unreal'
world of romance or an automatic dismissal of widely-used
stories. The Athens or Thebes of the "Knight's Tale" have
no greater an essential reality than Camelot, and in a
number of cases—the Troilus and the "Clerk's Tale", for
example—Chaucer was aware of using stories already widely
known. The author of the House of Fame's jaunty discussion
of Macrobius, the Troilus's solemn acknowledgements of Lollius,

and the narrative sophistication of fragment VII itself,
is hardly likely to have aimed so straightforward a kick at
the _truth_ of the book of Lancelot, however undistinguished
some of its redactors.

It is more probable that the Nun's Priest's irony
is directed against readers who assume that the truth of the
Lancelot story is mainly a literal one. Such readers are
not only fooled into thinking that the elaborations of romancers
---perfectly justified in their own terms---are historically
valid, but at a deeper level fail to follow Chaucer's and
the Nun's Priest's insistence that they should take the
fruit rather than the chaff. Failure to penetrate beyond
the literal level is in Augustinian terms a commitment to the
carnal world, and failure to see the most important level
of truth in the Lancelot story indicates an inability to
understand its ultimately spiritual purpose and its rejection
of carnality. The Nun's Priest does not, after all, deny the
truth of the book of Lancelot; rather he claims that his
own story is just as true---as in the most important sense it
is.[5] The reference also of course sustains the mock-heroic
mode, as does the introduction later in the tale of another
chivalric hero, Richard I, or the mention of the fall of
Troy and the burning of Carthage and Rome. The humour of these
comparisons lies in the homeliness of the actual cock-and-hen
story---an irony which comes to rest ultimately on Chaunticleer's
pride and pretensions---rather than in any denigration of the
heroic events or their literary embodiments.

Much of the support for the idea that Chaucer was sceptical about chivalry has come from the unwarranted supposition that he was hostile to romance forms generally, allied to the assumption that chivalry could be identified with these forms. On the other hand, the contrasting hypothesis that Chaucer displays a continual concern with chivalry, as usually expressed, requires us to see every mention of a knight, and every relationship that can be viewed in terms of 'courtly love', as indicative of that concern (see chapter I). The problem clearly lies to a large extent in the looseness with which the term 'chivalry' is habitually used, and I will very briefly recapitulate what have seemed to me the considerations essential to any satisfactory employment of the term.

My analysis has shown, I believe, that to attempt to restrict the term to a fixed and known set of meanings would be inadequate. Yet it has also revealed a coherence of sorts underlying the seemingly amorphous concept, by tracing the emergence of the knight as an embodiment of secular power and dominance, and treating the various directions in which chivalric ideas spread as the responses of the concept of secular power to the varied pressures of historical practice and medieval ideology generally, with the latter always more important than the former. The diversity involved in this process was balanced by a gradual establishment of chivalric commonplaces, such as the threefold task of knighthood (sometimes reduced to two functions: protection of the

Church and commonweal), the necessity of physical prowess,
the importance of austerity and discipline, the danger of
pride and vainglory, and the antithesis between the knight
as servant of God and as servant of woman.

Chaucer displays a reasonable familiarity with these
commonplaces, sufficient to establish that he was aware of
the potential conceptual loading of the idea of knighthood,
but not such as to indicate that he shared Gower's emphatic
concern with chivalric dogma. The Parson asks: "What seye
we thanne of hem that pilen and doon extorcions to hooly
chirche? Certes, the swerd that men yeven first to a knyght,
whan he is newe dubbed, signifieth that he sholde deffenden
hooly chirche, and nat robben it ne pilen it; and whoso
dooth is traitour to Crist" (X, 766). Comparing the pillaging
knights to wolves, he implicitly introduces the metaphor
of the false shepherd neglecting his flock, since knights
are intended to protect the Church: "And, as seith Seint
Augustyn, 'they been the develes wolves that stranglen the
sheep of Jhesu Crist'; and doon worse than wolves. For
soothly, whan the wolf hath ful his wombe, he stynteth to
strangle sheep. But soothly, the pilours and destroyours
of the godes of hooly chirche no do nat so, for they ne
stynte nevere to pile." (X, 767-8). This analogy is
normally applied to the failings of the priesthood, as the
Parson himself does later ("They sellen the soules that lambes
sholde kepen to the wolf that strangleth hem", X, 791), and
its use to describe the knights comprises an implicit reference

to the conventional parallel between priest and knight. A
similar interchangeability of images is evident in Fals-Semblant's
speech in the Romaunt, where the appearance of false priests
(wolves in sheep's clothing) is described in terms of knights
treacherously attacking the city they are supposed to defend:

> If ther be wolves of sich hewe
> Amonges these apostlis newe,
> Thou hooly chirche, thou maist be wailed!
> Sith that thy citee is assayled
> Thourgh knyghtis of thyn owne table,
> God wot thi lordship is doutable!
> If thei enforce hem it to wynne,
> That shulde defende it fro withynne,
> Who myght defense ayens hem make? (6269-77)

The secular role of knighthood is adumbrated in
conventional terms in the Parson's discussion of temporal
power: "...therfore was sovereyntee ordeyned, to kepe and
mayntene and deffenden hire underlynges or hire subgetz
in resoun, as ferforth as it lith in hire power, and nat
to destroyen hem ne confounde" (X, 773). The Parson enumerates
faults associated especially with the knights when he attacks
those "that devouren the possessiouns or the catel of
povre folk" (774); he declares that "to pride hym in his
strengthe of body, it is an heigh folye" (458), and castigates
the nobility for their pride in "gentrie" or noble birth (460).

This latter form of pride, as well as the chivalric
pursuit of fame generally, is satirised through the prominence
of heralds in the largely meretricious proceedings of the
house of Fame, where they cry out for largesse on the grounds
that they are the self-styled representatives and arbiters of

Fame:

> Thoo atte last aspyed y
> That pursevantes and heraudes,
> That crien ryche folkes laudes
> Hyt weren alle... (HF, 1320-3)

In their large books are the coats of arms

> Of famous folk that han ybeen
> In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye,
> Syth first began the chevalrie.   (1338-40)

The Manciple's digression on social inequalities glances at

the tradition of deflating martial fame by comparing

Alexander to the outlaw he captured:

> To Alisaundre was toold this sentence,
> That, for the tirant is of gretter myght,
> By force of meynee, for to sleen dounright,
> And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,
> Lo, therfore is he cleped a capitayn;
> And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,
> And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
> Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,
> Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.   (IX, 226-34)

Fals-Semblant, in the Romaunt, claims that honouring false

friars is as sensible as honouring the noble and chivalric

classes for their rich clothes:

> And where is more wod folye,
> Than to enhaunce chyvalrie,
> And love noble men and gay,
> That joly clothis weren alway?   (7243-6)

Many of the dicta of the chivalric manuals against

rashness in warfare are echoed in the "Tale of Melibee".

Prudence advises her husband "that, for any presumpcion of

youre strengthe, that ye dispise nat, ne accompte nat the

myght of youre adversarie so litel, that ye lete the kepyng

of youre persone for youre presumpcioun; for every wys man

dredeth his enemy...Thanne shul ye everemoore contrewayte

embusshementz and alle espiaille"(VII, 1314-5. 1318). When

Melibee proposes to fortify his house, she cautions that

"heighe toures" are "nat worth a stree, but if they be

defended by trewe freendes that been olde and wise...Thanne

seye I that in vengeance-takyng, in werre, in bataille, and

in warnestooryng, er thow bigynne, I rede that thou apparaille

thee therto, and do it with greet deliberacion"(VII, 1335,

1344-5). Prudence's identification of the decisive factor

in battle is quite consistent with Lull or Bonet: "For the

victorie of batailles that been in this world lyth nat in

greet nombre or multitude of the peple, ne in the vertu

of man, but it lith in the wyl and in the hand of oure

Lord God Almyghty. And therfore Judas Machabeus, which was

Goddes knyght,...seyde right in this wise: 'Als lightly,' quod

he, 'may oure Lord God Almyghty yeve victorie to a fewe folk

as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataile comth nat by

the grete nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God

of hevene" (VII, 1655-7, 1659-62).

The term 'God's knight', applied here to Judas

Maccabeus, also appears in metaphorical form in Chaucer's works.

In the Boece (IV, m.1:14-7) man's thought "is makid Godis

knyght by the sekynge of cleer trouthe to comen to the verray

knowleche of God". Tiburce, in the "Second Nun's Tale", becomes

"Goddes knyght" on being baptised by Pope Urban (VIII, 353),

and when Cecilia visits the prospective martyrs she amplifies

the figure by paraphrasing St. Paul:

> Now, Cristes owene knyghtes leeve and deere,
> Cast alle awey the werkes of derknesse,

> And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse.
> Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille,
> Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved.
> (VIII, 383-7)

The Christ-knight image is also used by Chaucer. The Man of
Law comments that Constance, accused by the false knight of
the murder of Hermengyld, has no knightly champion to fight
for her in a judicial duel but Christ:

> Allas! Custance, thou hast no champioun,
> Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!
> But he that starf for our redempcioun,
> And boond Sathan (and yet lith ther he lay),
> So be thy stronge champion this day! (II, 631-5)

The idea is repeated by the Friar, who concludes his vitupera-
tive tale with the sanctimonious assurance that the fiend "may
nat tempte yow over youre myght, /For Crist wol be youre
champion and knyght" (III, 1661-2).

This familiarity on Chaucer's part with the common-
places of chivalric thought is perfectly congruent with my
assertion that his interest in the subject lies, as might
be expected, in the symbolic possibilities it offered,
rather than in the opportunity it afforded for comment on
current political or social developments. The military
discussions of the "Melibee", for instance, are primarily
allegorical, and the Parson, in his use of chivalric
commonplaces, is mainly concerned to amplify his treatment of
pride and avarice with examples from the stock failings of the
nobility. There is of course, apart from this evidence,
every reason to suppose that Chaucer was familiar with the
literature of chivalry in various forms, and--once we have

understood the nature of chivalric ideas—virtually no reason
for believing that he felt particularly detached from it.
We may therefore return to the point from which I deviated in
chapters IV and V to survey in greater detail the subjects
of amorous and Christian chivalry. I wish to set the Knight
and Squire of the General Prologue firmly in the context of
the conventional polarity between worthy knighthood in the
service of God and unworthy knighthood in the service of a
lady. The distinction is not indeed new, but the perspective
in which I believe we ought to see it has not been previously
suggested as far as I am aware.

2. The Knight and the Squire

At a historical level, the Knight of the Prologue
is a very specialised and restricted figure. As a knight
in the strict sense he is by no means representative of the
knights of his day, nor is he described as a complete
exemplar of the standard knightly functions. There is
nothing of the landed gentleman and local administrator
about him; his career contains no mention of the secular and
social protective function attributed to knights, or of the
national wars of the time. Instead he has concentrated on
defence of the Church in the form of crusades, which—though
in practice usually offensive—represented the only way in
which that crucial duty could be practically realised.

Ultimately, however, the Knight is a much more inclusive
figure than these facts appear to indicate. In the first place

he embodies, as a knight, the whole concept of temporal
power divinely ordained for the preservation of society.
Despite the foreign nature of his military enterprises, he
cannot escape this identification, for he is set squarely
before us like any fictional knightly hero as a model of
prowess. He is not, I think, described as being actually
in armour (lines 75-6 appear to tell us that his tunic reveals
the marks caused by recent wearing of a mail coat over it:
were he actually wearing the "habergeon" now, an unlikely
event, the marks would presumably not be visible) nor is
there any mention of his arms. But the mention of the
evidence of his having been in armour recently provides a neat
compromise between the mimetic demands of the situation—a
peaceful pilgrimage—and the emblematic figure of the armed
and mounted knight.

Chaucer chose not to elaborate here the symbolism of
temporal power in the direction of social analysis by revealing
in the portrait the precise nature of the knight's secular
role as a figure of government; such a process might in any
case have detracted from the force of the symbolism, since, as
I have noted, knights had no concrete domestic social role
to match their conceptual importance. In the "Knight's Tale",
as we shall see, the knight's role as temporal lord and
governor is given considerably more scope. But in the Prologue
we have, in the figure of a defender of the Church, a man whose
practical function, by association with the common and important

metaphor of the _miles Christi_, adds a symbolic dimension at
two distinct levels to his basic identity as a knight. He
expresses the fundamental postulate of the pilgrimage in its
movement from London to Canterbury, from the seat of secular
government to that of spiritual: the commitment of temporal
power and goods to spiritual ends. At the same time he
encapsulates the primary duty of each individual to be a
soldier of Christ and to imitate Christ's own knightly
struggle in the knighthood of this worldly life. It is not
perhaps far-fetched to say that the position of the Knight's
portrait in the _Canterbury Tales_ bestows an echo, albeit a
fleeting one, of a chivalric quest on the whole enterprise.
The pilgrimage and the knightly quest, especially that of the
Grail, were two culturally central images linked by their
common purpose of expressing the appropriate linear direction
that should underlie man's apparent wanderings.

The Knight's emblematic quality makes his salient
position in the narrative a standard against which we may
assess other characters in a fairly comprehensive way. His
importance is not confined, as Jill Mann has argued, to his
professional expertise, or to his example of zealous fulfilment
of the duties of his estate and fidelity to strenuous ideals.
As a Christian knight he invites a wider frame of reference than
the merely chivalric--or, more precisely, he broadens the
scope of chivalry to include basic moral and religious
considerations. The attitudes of other characters to chivalry,
and their conceptions of it, take on a larger importance in this

perspective.

This hypothesis of the purpose of the Knight's description is supported by the juxtaposition of his portrait with that of the Squire. The latter is immediately characterised as a "lovyere", and the idea is repeated twice: he has "born hym weel.../In hope to stonden in his lady grace", and "So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale/He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale." This wakefulness and this 'hot' loving clearly do not indicate the kind of chaste stimulus to worthiness of which writers on chivalry approved. Hatton compares the Squire's kind of love to the concupiscence condemned by Geoffroi de Charny and the Boucicaut chronicler. He also attacks the common attitude that the Squire is to be indulged for the recognised failings of youth, by pointing out the censorious attitude to youthful failings customarily found in medieval writers, and claiming that twenty was not at the time regarded as an age of immaturity.[6]

Even if we accept the association of the Squire with the figure of the youth in the common scheme of the ages of man, the judgment upon him is not waived. The folly of youth, like the devoutness of age, represented a natural tendency rather than a standard or an ideal. The point may be illustrated by a passage from the late morality play, Mundus et Infans. Infans has progressed as far as nineteen years old, at which point his name is Lust-and-Lyking, and he makes a speech which bears a notable resemblance to the portrait of the Squire:

> A ha! now Lust and Lyking is my name!
> I am as fresshe as flourys in Maye;
> I am semely shapen in same,
> And proudely apperelde in garmentes gaye;
> My lokes ben full louely to a ladyes eye,
> And in loue-longynge my harte is sore sette.[7]

These are the characteristics of youth, but they are also the signs of the speaker's continuing thraldom to the world. The play makes clear that unless Infans takes the advice of the spiritual mentors who come to him he will remain on the path to perdition.

The element of schematisation in the relationship of the two portraits in the Prologue is clear: the Knight's service of God, his austerity and the suggestion of chastity in his maidenly meekness, contrast with the Squire's seeking after the "grace" not of God but of his lady, his concupiscence and his rich apparel. This is essentially the same distinction as that which we have noted in Gower, Chrétien, the Prose Lancelot, Malory, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and may justly be considered to reflect a commonplace of chivalric symbolism. A recognition of the traditional nature of the contrast is helpful to an understanding of the moral perspective it establishes; but it also clarifies the confusion many readers have felt about the degree of sympathy the Squire is intended to elicit.

Many critics, especially in recent years, have recognised that the Squire falls short of the standard set by his father, but have hesitated to characterise the tone of the portrait as condemnatory. The passage is full of

emphatic statements; but whereas the immediately incongruous element in such a positive approach is evident in many portraits (such as that of the Friar), the Squire's has an exuberance and ebullience which are not so easily dismissed. His physique is both pleasing and strong, unlike that of the grotesques who are so strongly represented at the Tabard. He is energetic, "fressh", merry and demonstrative, and has "born hym weel, as of so litel space" in war. He is, furthermore, courteous, and his social accomplishments are varied. The attractiveness of the description is evident, and need not be a disturbing factor when we realise his affinity to the chivalric tradition which produced the Lancelot of the Prose Lancelot and the Gawain of Wolfram's Parzival. In worldly terms he is likely to prove a fine knight—strong in battle, courteous and socially pleasing. But he must also be evaluated in the more crucial dimension of which his father's deeds remind us, just as Lancelot must submit to the test of the Grail quest—to the dismay of his twentieth-century admirers.

The Squire's relationship to the criterion represented by the Knight is sufficiently broad in its implication to be regarded as a foreshadowing of the subsequent departures by other pilgrims from that ideal. The Knight/Squire contrast announces the main structural pattern of the Prologue, in its constant suggestions of an order and an ideal which relapse into inversion and chaos. The choice between the two figures is one which all earthly pilgrims are confronted with, whether of not they are members of the practical world of chivalry.

3. The Knight and his Tale

If the Knight and the Squire are intended to recall
a tradition of chivalric symbolism embodied in literary works
rather than contemporary historical realities, we should
not be surprised that their tales have yielded so little to
the seeker after political allusion. Romance, in a broad
sense, is their natural habitat, and claims that the Knight
is retreating into an unreal idealistic world by not telling
a story based on his own crusading experiences are beside the
point. Yet it is true to say that had Chaucer allowed him
to tell such a 'realistic' tale he would have risked
introducing an unpredictable element. The response of
his audience to the practical results of the crusading
ideal might have been distinctly mixed, as my survey of
views for and against crusading has suggested. The "Knight's
Tale", on the other hand, vindicates the romance as a vehicle
for the presentation of important ideas, while the "Squire's
Tale", as has often been shown, illustrates its possibility
of degenerating into nonsense.

The Knight's exemplary function within the Prologue is
matched by that of his tale in the overall structure of the
Tales, which has been well described recently by John Norton-
Smith:

> The deliberate position of the tale within
> the journey sequence suggests that Chaucer
> wished the first pilgrim to provide
> a representation of experience in a unified
> coherent account...in order to explain the
> composition of our universe, especially
> commenting on action, choice, will and appetite.

> Thereafter the reader should have the sensa-
> tion of unity of represented experience break-
> ing down into a less coherent, sometimes trivial
> multiplicity. At the same time, the Host's
> authority for arranging the order of the telling
> of the tales gives way to the anarchic pressure
> of contending personal wills. When we have
> finished reading the tales we may see the
> Knight's contribution as occupying this
> position of initiating unity in the narrative
> and so providing a certain parallel with the
> Parson's Tale in its exegetical and ultimate
> position.[8]

The tale does not, however, amplify the Knight/Squire contrast
of the Prologue in a completely straightforward way. In
Palamon and Arcite we recognise without difficulty the
propensities of the Squire, but the association of Theseus
with the Knight involves a significant metamorphosis. What
the Knight appears to do is to complement his own knightly
role as defender of the Church by creating an ideal defender
of the commonwealth. As has been widely recognised,
Theseus is primarily a figure concerned with the regulation
and maintenance of law. While firmly the warrior and follower
of Mars, he executes through his prowess and the authority
it sustains a series of quasi-judicial procedures: the conquest
of the Amazons and the Thebans, the two judgments on Arcite
and Palamon, and the marriage of Palamon to Emily. Like the
defeat of the Minotaur depicted on his pennon, these actions
all represent the control of disruptive and lawless elements.[9]

The lawless element most fully studied in the poem
is the passion of Palamon and Arcite--the successors of
Polynices and Eteocles--the latest example of the traditionally
destructive behaviour of the royal house of Thebes.[10] Theseus's

decision not to release the pair is vindicated when they
renounce even the oath made between themselves. As Norton-
Smith points out, Arcite's "gretter lawe" of love--the natural
law of each man for himself--is "no 'law' at all"; Arcite insists
that no one can prescribe a law of any kind for a lover
(I, 1163-6, 1604-6):·

> Arcite chooses a philosophy which commits
> him to a single act of anarchic appetitiveness;
> in so doing he denies the validity of 'formal
> law' and 'natural law'; when brought within the
> compass of formal law by Theseus he prays to a
> Mars who is totally destructive and overtly
> identified with universal disorder; Saturn, the
> god of disorder (who shares the destructive
> features of Mars), settles his fate.[11]

As I have already noted (section III, 2) the violent and
anarchic lengths to which Palamon and Arcite are drawn in their
combats, as well as the concern of Theseus for formal control
of such activities, are heightened by Chaucer's choice of
descriptive detail and disregard of purely mimetic considerations
in the fight in the grove and in the tournament.

Law-enforcement is in fact as closely related to
Theseus's status as a knight as is his military prowess.
The latter alone is not a sufficient qualification for
knightliness. His banner displays the red statue of Mars (975-6),
and he periodically invokes the name of "myghty Mars the
rede" (in lines 1708 and 1747 for example), but the portraits
in the temple of Mars reveal that in isolation the spirit
of warfare is mere slaughter and bloodthirstiness. Detached
from wider considerations Theseus's conquests would be delusive
--summed up in the picture of "Conquest, sittynge in greet

honour,/With the sharpe swerd over his heed/Hangynge
by a soutil twynes threed" (2028-30). Arcite is also a
servant of Mars, and bears a red banner at the tournament.
But he invokes the principle of destruction in order to
further his service of Venus, whereas of Theseus we are told
that "after Mars he serveth now Dyane" (1682)--a juxtaposition
and contrast so significant that it can hardly mean simply
that after fighting he hunts.

Theseus combines military prowess with judicial
responsibility, conquering the Amazons with "his wysdom and
his chivalrie" (865), and employing the knightly practice
of the tournament as an instrument of regulatory policy.
Arcite and Palamon, as knights and nobles, are bound by duty
to uphold law, but instead they renounce and attempt to
subvert it, disregarding at the same time the rules governing
specifically knightly activities such as the judicial combat.
Like Tristan, Arcite degrades himself in status, and "cladde
hym as a povre laborer" (1409), becoming appropriately enough
"Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte" (1427). Theseus,
however, from his marriage of Hippolyte to his arrangement
of Palamon's marriage, shows that love and order are not incompatible.
Chivalry provides a regulation for love as well as for war.

Some critics, however, have claimed that Theseus's
attempt to preserve order is frustrated by the eventual
outcome of the tournament. Joseph Westlund, for example,
sees the result of the tournament as the reversal of an
orderly plan through the wilful actions of the gods.

The "Knight's Tale", he asserts, "presents the continued
subversion of noble efforts to bring order out of disorder".
According to Merle Fifield, Saturn's intervention makes a
mockery of the tournament; Arcite's death "illustrates the
fall of corporate order as represented by the chivalric code".[12]
These objections seem to me to miss the point of both the
borrowings from Boethius and the function of the tournament.
Saturn is not the ultimate disposer of the universe, but he is
part of the mechanism of Fortune. Those who trust in powers
so interlinked with the workings of Fortune as Venus and Mars
put themselves in his power too. As far as the tournament
itself is concerned, Theseus's responsibilities end when he
has followed the usual procedures attendant upon a judicial duel.
He ensures that the scales of divine justice are not weighted
by the hand of man--that both sides are theoretically equal,
and fight according to recognised rules--and announces a rule
for the recognition of the winner. An arena, literally
and metaphorically, has been provided for the operation of
Providence through Fortune. If events turn out favourably
for Palamon, despite the fact that he is the one captured and
brought to his opponent's stake, we may nevertheless assert
that those events are contained within that arena. Moreover,
the tournament proves to be a very successful way of deciding
the issue, despite the fatality. Order and harmony are,
in the end, the result of Arcite's death; they might not have
been the ultimate fruits of his victory.

The way in which Theseus's behaviour demonstrates a
'politic' use of a ruler's power—dealing firmly with the
ruthlessness bred by struggles for both lordship and love, but
eschewing tyranny and remaining responsive to the influence
of friends, women and counsellors—has been well demonstrated
by Haller.[13] Theseus, we may conclude, is the complete
ruler in the three senses which seem to have appealed most
to the medieval mind: he is a powerful soldier, a just and
disinterested judge, and a prudent receiver of advice. Not
content with a practical demonstration of these qualities, he
sums up, in a magnificent and strangely moving speech at
the end of the tale, the proper attitude to "al this thyng"—
the whole of the temporal world, including its positions of
authority: "He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page"—
relating its instability to the order and "faire cheyne of
love" by which men may "wel discerne/That thilke Moevere
stable is and eterne" (3003-4).

Returning to the fictional author of this _tour de force_,
we notice a marked contrast between the omission of the
societal implications of knighthood in the portrait of the
teller and their centrality in his tale. The Knight himself
is a defender of the Church and a symbol of the Christian
life, somewhat removed from the ties of society just as he
has been from its geographical location. Theseus, on the
other hand, is defined by his nodal position in the social
network.

In his choice of subject-matter, we may perhaps be

intended to see the Knight venturing out of his normal
territory in response to the challenge embodied by the Squire.
The austere crusader moves into the world of the love-romance
in order to assert the validity there of the principles he
represents. He does not, however, as has sometimes been
claimed, settle on a story of love-casuistry. Love in the
poem is a volatile and potentially lawless element, capable
of disrupting the social and moral order; it is also, as we
have seen, a traditional symbol of the forces which threaten
to undermine and invert specifically chivalric functions.
There is, however, a more direct appropriateness in the
Knight's choice. The tale is a vigorous examination of the
proper function of law and lordship, and as such perfectly
attuned to the Knight's function as exemplar of the whole
apparatus of secular authority and the possibilities of
worldly endowment. The Knight himself is, after all, not
just one of the most senior of the pilgrims, but virtually
the sole representative, in strict terms, of one estate--
a whole third of society.

We still have to explain the discrepancy between the
Knight's choice of knightly emphasis in his practical affairs
and his choice of emphasis in his tale. What Chaucer appears
to have done is to divide the two main respects in which
knighthood was of ideological and symbolic importance, not
between the Knight and the Squire, but between the portrait of
the Knight and the tale he tells. At one level the complement-
ary relationship indicated by the Knight and his tale is

between the defence of the Church and the maintenance of
society. In addition to his role as governor and judge,
Theseus exemplifies the latter duty by his defence of widows
and orphans; he acts _in loco parentis_ to Emily, and champions
the ladies conspicuously widowed at Thebes. At another
level, moreover, the Knight and his tale complement each other;
in terms of the duties of all men, whether or not knights
or men in positions of temporal authority, the Knight's
portrait is a reminder of the obligations to spiritual
warfare of each Christian soul, while Theseus, his _alter ego_,
explains and demonstrates the wisdom for the individual of
contemplating all temporal goods--including fleshly love--in
the perspective of Providence rather than of Fortune.

The imbalance of the Prologue's presentation of
knighthood is thus redressed, while maximum impact for the
symbolic extensions of the concept of chivalry is obtained
through the separate treatment of its two main positive aspects.
Furthermore the arrangement allows Chaucer to express the
range of chivalric symbolism he desires without sacrificing
the solidity of the figures he creates. Had he attempted
to create in the Prologue an ideal knight who combined in
practice all the dictates of the chivalric handbooks we
would probably be confronted by a less than convincing figure,
a person of generalised and diverse achievements for whom,
as I have argued, there was no real place in fourteenth-
century England.

But the Knight as we have him is a specialist and a

professional in addition to his symbolic aspect. Likewise

Theseus is both a warrior <u>and</u> a protector of his people;

the theoretical interlocking of the military, judicial

and protective functions is realised in him in a more

compelling way than it would have been by any knight that

Chaucer could have picked out of the society of his day—

or, say, by a knight of the shire in one of Richard II's

parliaments. Theseus is indisputably convincing in the role

of administrator of justice with sword in hand, a combination

that was primarily theoretical by Chaucer's time:

> And at a stert he was betwix hem two,
> And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!
> Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!" (1705-7)

My analysis of the contrast between the Knight and

the Squire leads me in two directions from this point—

towards the further deployment in the <u>Tales</u> of the theme so

plangently announced at their outset, and to a further

scrutiny of the motif of the lover-knight in some of the

earlier works. I shall deal with the latter subject first,

starting by returning briefly to the <u>Book of the Duchess</u>.

4. <u>Knightly Love in the Minor Poems</u>

In the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> a knight recounts his

youthful venture into love. The black knight's initial state

is one which the reader of Geoffroi de Charny and the Chevalier

de la Tour-Landry will find familiar: youth governed him

"in ydelnesse",

> For al my werkes were flyttynge
> That tyme, and al my thoght varyinge. (801-2)

The object of his unstable attentions, by contrast, was "hool enclyned to alle goode", with a virtue not bred of mere ignorance. "Trouthe" had chosen her for "hys maner principal", and she was distinguished for her "stedefast perseveraunce,/And esy, atempre governaunce" (1007-8).

Unlike Geoffroi de Charny, however, Chaucer is not interested in presenting a scheme for producing knights who will aim above all at gaining honour on the battlefield, or in any practical scheme at all. It is not with any such practical end in mind that Chaucer suggests the proper role of a woman's love in the formation of a knight. For him the important qualities of knighthood are inner ones—as indicators of moral states rather than of practical utility—and the black knight's development is an inward process, described (appropriately in view of his rank) in terms of the chivalric convention that Geoffroi and others discussed. The lady does not send her admirers off to fight in far countries as a test of their worthiness, for she desired "to holde no wyght in honde". That kind of "knakkes smale" is identified with caprice and frivolity. Had the desire to crusade been a result of the inner worthiness which the lady's example eventually produced in her lover, no such censure, we may assume, would have been passed on the activity.

The black knight does not, however, undergo any dramatic transformation. Having been rejected rather bluntly he tries again "another yere" and is this time successful. After the leisurely pace of the poem so far these developments

come with surprising rapidity; less than thirty lines separate
the lady's yea and nay. The reasons for the reversal are
not explicitly given, and D. W. Robertson's statement that
the lover's motives are at first merely selfish but eventually
are not so perhaps insufficiently acknowledges this fact.[14]

Yet there is a discernible shift in emphasis between
the lover's first and last states. The stress on his inexperience,
his "yonge childly wit"--

> I was ryght yong, soth to say,
> And ful gret nede I hadde to lerne   (1090-1)

--and the comic ineptitude of his first courting (1208 ff.),
is dispelled eventually by the sense of a time lapse which
tempers, confirms and matures his attachment. He and his lady
both learn that he "loved hyr in no gere" (1257)--his love was
by no means transient. Though there is no recantation of
the early hyperbole--

> For certes she was, that swete wif,
> My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,
> Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blesse,
> My worldes welfare, and my goddesse, (1037-40)

--yet the comparative brevity and matter-of-factness of the
account of the second declaration imply a calmer and more
deliberate state of mind. Moreover one aspect of his love occupies
a much more prominent place the second time around.
Towards the end of his first speech the knight swears "al
hir worship for to save"; but not until later is the lady
fully convinced, when the consideration, unambiguously expressed,
becomes the prime grounds of her change of mind:

> and she wel understod
> That I ne wilned thyng but god,

> And worship, and to kepe hir name
> Over alle thyng, and drede hir shame. (1261-4)

To call the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> a chivalric poem
would be to exaggerate the importance of the aspect of it
that I have briefly examined. But the mention of the lady's
refusal to send her admirers crusading (1024-33) is a clear
reference to the significant chivalric motif which I have
already discussed, and which Gower, for instance, introduces
in book four of the <u>Confessio</u>. We are therefore justified
in seeing the poem in the context of the tradition which
scrutinised the relationship between knight and lady. The
main reason why Chaucer linked his indirect elegy to this
tradition was undoubtedly that it allowed him to capitalise on
that aspect of the convention which concerned itself with
the lady as the knight's inspiration. In this way he was
able both to praise Blanche and to suggest that an important
element in her praiseworthiness was the extent of her influence
on Gaunt; the catalogue of her virtues is a reminder of
something that must be lived up to. But the ambiguity of
the chivalric tradition in this respect was such that two
important conditions had to be established: the virtuousness
both of the lady and of the lover's motives. The former
is of course beyond question, though the poet is nevertheless
careful to establish it, while the latter is tested by time,
and confirmed by the lady's recognition that he "ne wilned
thyng but god"—as well as by the black knight's own dismissal
of the idea that his lady's 'mercy' involved any compromise of
her chastity (1271-2).

Subject to these discriminations, the relationship
of knight and lady was evidently not one which Chaucer
invariably regarded as an example of misplaced chivalric
allegiance. Yet it appears that more often than not,
especially when the figure of the knight is allowed the full
emblematic force of arms and armour (lacking in the Book of
the Duchess), he found the negative and destructive aspects
of the conjunction of chivalry and love more engrossing than
its potentially positive implications. Other of the minor
poems provide examples of this more sharply negative attitude.
The Legend of Good Women, for example, explicitly attributes
Antony's downfall in the "Legend of Cleopatra" to the
snare of a maddening love:

> But love hadde brought this man in swich a rage,
> And hym so narwe bounden in his las,
> Al for the love of Cleopataras,
> That al the world he sette at no value.
> Hym thoughte there nas nothyng to hym so due
> As Cleopatras for to love and serve. (LGW, 599-604)

Vincent Dimarco is convinced that this indicates that Antony
is ennobled by love: "His love for Cleopatra enhances his
already formidable prowess in arms, but, more important, serves
to correct the deficiency in his character. Thus it is that
the knight's flight from battle and his later suicide are
in no way depicted as despicable or ignoble by the poet...it is
a tragic and ennobling experience."[15] But about the irony
involved in the presentation of Antony there can surely
be little doubt. At the moment of prosperity, we are told,
he became a rebel to his city and a betrayer of his wife
(589-94). Though he is "a ful worthy gentil werreyour", his

prowess is not sufficient to the occasion, and his heroic
stature is distinctly questionable in view of the fact that,
though "Hym roughte nat in armes for to sterve/In the defence
of hyre and of hire ryght" (605-6), he actually dies by his
own hand at the very moment when Cleopatra herself (though
her 'right' has been lost) is in greatest need of defence.

The qualifications that Chaucer places here on
Antony's heroic stature cannot be attributed to the same
strategy as that which results in the denigration of Aeneas
in the "Legend of Dido". The humorously reductive attitude
towards traditional heroism displayed there is intended
as an obvious distortion—a distortion which emphasises the
falsity of the idea of producing a martyrology of love.
But the ostensible aim of the "Legend of Cleopatra" is not
to show Cleopatra as a victim of Antony (in the way that
Dido is, with the reservation I have noted, of Aeneas),
but to celebrate her fidelity to him, for "Was nevere unto
hir love a trewer quene" (695). In fact, of course, the legend
reveals the folly of both the lovers, as the ironic
ambiguity of the last word of this line reminds us.

In its own way the "Legend of Dido" also attacks
the idea of love as an inspiration to chivalry. In fact
the unifying feature of the Legend of Good Women appears
to be its sustained undercutting of the tendency to apply
inflated, and especially religious, concepts to love. Thus
the narrator suggests that Aeneas falsely abandons a privileged
position as Dido's lover; his proper function was to have

performed sincerely and permanently his knightly services

to Dido:

> And wayten hire at festes and at daunces,
> And whan she goth to temple and hom ageyn,
> And fasten til he hath his lady seyn,
> And beren in his devyses, for hire sake,
> Not I not what; and songes wolde he make,
> Justen, and don of armes many thynges... (1269-74)

But of course the narrator's approving attitude towards

Aeneas's amorous attentions is undercut by the obvious violence

it does to the true nature of Aeneas's position as explained

in the _Aeneid_; Aeneas must liberate himself from an enslavement

to passion in order to pursue his true mission as a conqueror.

The narrator has not only declined to "folwe, word for word,

Virgile" (1002), but has stood Vergil's story on its head.

The clearest and most concise treatment in the minor

poems of the antagonistic tendencies of love and knighthood is

found in the "Complaint of Mars". This poem has puzzled many

critics, and attempts at interpretation have concentrated

on possible historical allegories such as that asserted by

Shirley.[16] Manly however decried the allegorical approach

on the basis of his conclusion that the astronomical conditions

described were not fulfilled at any time between 1369 and 1400,

declaring that the poem is "a mere exercise of ingenuity in

describing a supposed astronomical event in terms of human

action and emotion".[17] The poet's attitude to the action and

emotion described is nevertheless a matter of dispute. C. S.

Lewis claimed that Chaucer depicts "the relation of mistress

and lover in what was then conceived to be its normal or

healthy condition", although the poem's "hint of the opposite

point of view" suggests some loss of confidence in the
health of such relationships.[18] Other commentators have .
pointed out that the love affair does not exactly thrive,
but not until the recent extensive re-examination by Chauncey
Wood of the poem, its astrological implications, and the
history of the Venus and Mars myth, has the poem's full
satirical edge been exposed.[19]

Professor Wood argues that the classical story as
known in the Middle Ages was generally regarded as a comic
condemnation of immoderate love, and that the representation
of the story through the astrological phenomenon of conjunction
would have confirmed this condemnation, since the association
of Venus and Mars in a horoscope indicated a tendency to
sexual depravity. Moreover the conjunction occurs in a
sign in which Mars is weak but Venus powerful, suggesting
that Chaucer "wished to satirize those love relationships in
which men subject themselves to women". The story is a moral
tale presented by the bird in reproof of those whose love
must flee the sol iustitiae, and in celebration of St. Valentine,
who was associated with good or wedded love. The bird urges
the lecherous to put off the works of darkness and to choose
a new 'mate' (in a broad sense), rather than following the
example of Mars, whose complaint "is simply a demonstration
of the subjection of reason to passion as it was astrologically
acted out earlier in the poem."[20]

In addition to being the god of classical legend
and the planet of medieval astrology, however, Mars is a knight

in the poem, and this fact allows us a further angle from
which to contemplate the affair. He is referred to as "thys
worthy knyght" (44), as Venus's knight (64, 187), and as "This
worthi Mars, that is of knyghthod welle" (75). This last
appellation has two senses, since Mars is not only a distinguished
knight but also the "god of armes" and hence patron and
archetype of all knights, as Theseus acknowledges in the
"Knight's Tale". Indeed at the end of his complaint Mars
appeals for compassion on his plight first of all to the
"hardy knyghtes of renoun" who are "of my devisioun" (272-3).
The chivalric terms of the description are sustained when,
at the approach of Phoebus, he dons his hauberk and helmet
and seizes his sword and spear, while Venus flees to Mercury's
castle.

John Norton-Smith has pointed out that this knightly
figure is less crudely violent than the Mars who appears
in many classical sources, and has inferred that "the Chaucerian
literary account of Mars and Venus can only come into being
after the exclusively medieval creation of the concept of an
idealized knighthood and chivalry."[21] Norton-Smith appears
to suggest further, though in elliptical fashion, that this
transformation makes more appropriate Mars' seemingly total
concern with love rather than war. But in the light of my
conclusions about the treatment of love in the fictional
and non-fictional literature of chivalry, such a judgment is
unjustified. The references to knighthood link Chaucer's
poem to a chivalric tradition which, except in special

circumstances, exploited the antipathy between true chivalry and the chivalry of love. As a man totally in thrall to his mistress, Mars is a familiar representative of the latter kind. The chivalric tradition thus provides a perspective on the poem analogous to those examined by Professor Wood.

Mars falls fatuously short of the stature we expect from the "patroun" and lord of all knights. In the first instance there is his ignominious bridling by Venus, who reduces him to complete submission "With nothing but with scourging of her chere" (42). Roles have been reversed, and Venus employs the warlike aspect by which he is so often characterised (see, for example, "Knight's Tale", I, 2042) against him. In addition, as Professor Wood points out, Mars swears an absolute oath of perpetual obedience, whereas Venus swears to love him only on condition that his behaviour warrants it (47-9). Despite this, Mars blithely sings, the epitome of false security. He has been reduced to a state of childlike dependence, revealed by the maternal solicitude of Venus when Mars is obliged to enter Taurus alone--"For hyt stod so that thilke tyme no wight/Counseyled hym ther, ne seyde to hym welcome" (66-7).

'Conjunction' is finally and briefly achieved, but on the approach of Phoebus Mars' first reaction is fear, succeeded by a most unmilitary frenzy of pain, impotent fury and despair. Fiery sparks instead of tears burst out of his eyes, and once he is armed he shakes his spear so violently that he almost breaks it (95-6, 102). His armour proves merely an encumbrance

because of its weight, and instead of protecting him from his
enemy roasts him in the heat of the sun. "Furious and wod",
he contemplates self-destruction---a common phenomenon among
knights disappointed in love, as we have seen---and "ne roghte
not a myte for to dye" (123-6).

We are therefore well prepared for the absurdities of
the complaint itself, and especially of the proem:

> The ordre of compleynt requireth skylfully
> That yf a wight shal pleyne pitously,
> Ther mot be cause wherfore that men pleyne;
> Or men may deme he pleyneth folily
> And causeles; alas! that am not I!
> Wherfore the ground and cause of al my peyne,
> So as my troubled wit may hit atteyne,
> I wol reherse; not for to have redresse,
> But to declare my ground of hevynesse. (CM, 155-63)

The first three lines are comically redundant, suggesting not
a direct expression of woe but the cumbersome, nervous
hesitancy of a weak speaker rather in awe of the decorum
demanded by the situation. Mars goes on to reveal that his
main concern is to avoid the scorn of his hearers; he will
explain "the ground and cause of al my peyne" not in order to
have redress but "to declare my ground of hevynesse." Beneath
this circularity is perhaps the notion that mere expression
will bring relief of some kind, but Mars manages to sound as if
he is merely satisfying the arbitrary dictates of genre.

The tone of the stanza is self-pitying, as is that of
some of the ensuing ones. Once again he threatens suicide
(189), and eventually settles into a wholesale questioning of
the purpose of love (218 ff.). This passage too is not without
absurdity ("And somme han never joy til they be ded"), but more
significantly indicates a basic failure of perception on the

part of Mars himself. If he is generalising from his own experience, he is drawing much larger conclusions than his evidence warrants; if on the other hand he is stating a case that is self-evident ("as men alday may se"), he convicts himself of folly in having accepted in the first place the "angle-hok" of love which so torments him. Although he blames "the God that sit so hye" for creating the cause of his misfortune, he recognises his own "unwit" and foolishness "That made me coveyten and purchace/Myn oune deth" (269-70). The fact that Mars has turned against himself the death-dealing power he symbolises is constantly before us.

Mars' recognition of the disastrous nature of the love he has indulged is most forcefully expressed through the image of the brooch of Thebes. The centrality of this image is suggested by the fact that it appears at first to have given its name to the entire poem.[22] The 'Theban' behaviour for which it stands is important elsewhere in Chaucer—notably in characterising the behaviour of Arcite and Palamon, and of Troilus and Criseyde.[23] The brooch is at the same time both supremely suitable to the complaint and comically anachronistic since, as Statius explains, its manufacture was an act of revenge for the adultery of Mars and Venus.[24] Vulcan moulded it out of evil passions, "Luctus et Irae/et Dolor et tota pressit Discordia dextra",[25] stamped it with figures of ill-omen such as serpent heads, plagues, and the girdle of Venus, and presented it as a bridal gift to Hermione (Harmonia), the daughter of Venus and Mars.[26] As a result,

she and her husband Cadmus were eventually turned into hissing
serpents. The brooch was inherited by the daughter of this
match, Semele, who was in turn blasted by Jove's lightning
through Juno's intrigue. Jocasta, the mother of Oedipus, wore
it; Eriphyle, one of Jankyn's "wykked wyves" in the "Wife of
Bath's Prologue" (III, 740-6), coveted it, and sent her
husband Amphiaraus to his death after being bribed with it
by Polynices. She in turn was killed in vengeance by her son.
Eventually Argia wears the brooch at her ill-omened marriage
to Polynices in the Thebaid. The introduction of the brooch
thus emphasises that Mars' misadventure is a primal and
archetypal disturbance of concord.[27]

When Mars finally addresses those to whom he wishes
to direct his complaint, he turns first to the knights,

> Al be I not worthy to so gret a name,
> Yet, seyn these clerkes, I am your patroun,   (274-5)

somewhat bashfully requesting them to complain for him, since
"The proudest of yow may be mad ful tame". Underneath this
plea that they mock him not is the inference that knights are
particularly liable to the plight of their patron. The
figure of complaining Mars, we may conclude, is analogous
to and invokes the equally emblematic motif of the knight
enthralled by his lady, central to the chivalric tradition.[28]

5. Troilus the Knight

The similarities between Mars' situation and that of
Troilus have been recognised by critics with strongly
contrasting views of both poems. Troilus places himself

entirely in the hands of the woman he loves; he too undergoes

a forced separation in which his seemingly grief-stricken

mistress strikes up a complaisant relationship with someone

else. He also fluctuates between suicidal frenzy and bitter

complaint.[29] Just as Venus 'bridles' Mars, so Troilus's

falling in love is compared to the submission of a horse to

the whip when "proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe/Out of the

weye" (I, 218-24).[30] Troilus is several times associated

with Mars directly or indirectly, and book III is ironically

dedicated to Venus, who can "fierse Mars apaisen of his ire".[31]

This parallelism suggests that in Troilus too we will

find an example of the inversion of the proper chivalric

function. Traditional estimations of the poem do not, however,

recognise this, but have tended to praise its hero. According

to W. G. Dodd, Troilus is, for Chaucer as much as for his sources,

"a valiant and thoroughly practical knight". C. S. Lewis

commented that "As an embodiment of the medieval ideal of

lover and warrior, he stands second only to Malory's

Launcelot: far, I think, above the Launcelot of Chrétien."

According to G. T. Shepherd, Troilus is "strong, resolute in

action and successful in war...both masterful and humble in

the consummation of his love." Marion Green declares him to

be an ideal Christian knight, whose initiation in the 'religion

of love' is intended to recall the chivalric association of

the knighting ceremony with that of priestly ordination. Karl

Young describes him as an ideal hero of romance, displaying

"the valor required of a courtly lover", and asks us to note

his "manly behavior" at the parliament, where he is "a model of fortitude, concealing his extreme distress, and in the midst of the turbulence planning a courageous course of action."[32]

Several reassessments of the poem in recent years, however, have been distinctly less flattering to its principal figures, and Troilus's knightly excellence has been disputed. Gaylord has analysed the ambiguity of Troilus's "gentilesse", arguing that ultimately he abandons the characteristics associated with this term in both its main senses--the dictates of "moral vertu" and the behaviour proper to his exalted rank. Adrienne Lockhart traces a somewhat similar degeneration of the concept of 'worthiness' as it is applied to Troilus throughout the poem. In contrast to the worthiness of Hector, the "worthi dedes" inspired in Troilus by love become eventually a matter of military prowess only.[33] In a similar vein, June Hall Martin notes "the protagonist's tendency towards parodying the perfect knight rather than being one". His passivity (which periodically obliges Criseyde to exchange roles with him and take the initiative herself), his lachrymosity and lugubriousness, and his comic foolishness in the bedroom scene, identify him strongly with figures like Aucassin. Instead of being proclaimed as the 'best knight' in accordance with common practice in chivalric romances, "Troilus, by contrast, is always pointed up as second best", and Hector's primacy frequently mentioned.

"As a knight", June Martin writes, "Troilus's reputation
is but an echo of Hector's; as a lover his proficiency is
dependent upon the practical arrangements of Pandarus."[34]
Frank Whitman compares the treatment of Troilus to the
condemnation of the love affairs of knights in Vox Clamantis
—a subject which I have already discussed. The debilitating
results of love described by Gower are exemplified, Whitman
claims, in the "ludicrous" behaviour of Troilus, on whom the
effect of love is "one of emasculation". The narrator who
appears to approve of the liaison, venerate Criseyde, and so
forth, is as unrepresentative of Chaucer as the narrator of
the General Prologue.[35]

The absurdities into which Troilus falls as a result
of love make him a recognisable figure in terms of the
chivalric tradition of lover-knights I have examined. His
failures to take any kind of physical initiative in love are
in obvious contrast to his capability in battle, and are
similar to Lancelot's failure (in the Prose Lancelot) to do
so much as keep his horse from jumping in the river while he
gazes on Guinevere. As with other knightly lovers, however,
the comedy of this passion is matched by its desperateness.
Love, for Troilus as much as for Tristan, is mainly a matter of
suffering; it leads him, like Chrétien's Lancelot, periodically
towards self-destruction. Troilus frequently calls for his
own death, and ends his life in a suicidal frenzy. As Wyclif
declared, men "snyttid wiþ lecchorie" become "pure batelouse",
and "bi þis fals luf ben made pure hardy to assayle hor enmyes,

by foly þat ledes hom."[36] Criseyde's question on observing
Troilus ride home from battle, "Who yaf me drynke?", is surely
a reminder of the love-potion administered so fatally to
Tristan and Isolt.

In accordance with this tradition, however, Chaucer
engages in a certain amount of deliberate ambiguity about
the effect of love on his knight, just as Gottfried does. As
with Lancelot too, there is a case to be made for the idea
that love inspires Troilus to exceptional deeds; not only
is he formidable in the field, but he also becomes

> The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre,
> The thriftiest and oon the beste knyght,
> That in his tyme was or myghte be. (I, 1080-2)

He rejects pride, is "benigne" to all, "And in despit hadde
alle wrecchednesse" (III, 1787). Like Gottfried, Chaucer
announces near the beginning of his work the possibility of
the beneficial effects of love:

> And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,
> And worthi folk maad worthier of name,
> And causeth moost to dreden vice and shame. (I, 250-2)

But like Gottfried also, Chaucer proceeds to undercut this
assertion (or at least its applicability to this particular
case) by showing a rather different development.

The hypothesis of the beneficial effects of love is
qualified by various factors besides those of Troilus's comic
inadequacy and passivity as a lover, his suffering, and his
self-destructiveness. This affair, like Lancelot's, must be
judged by its eventual fruits, which are despair and death.
Moreover, the two stories share the background of a great but

doomed political structure; the worlds of Troy and of Arthur's court were connected, as the introduction and conclusion to <u>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</u> indicate. Although Troilus's liaison is not directly responsible for the fall of Troy, the fate of the city should evidently be his prime consideration. Even if they were not knights, and thus specifically committed to the defence of the people, Troilus and Lancelot would both be recognisable as men who fail to put the common weal above the satisfaction of their private desires.

It is in this respect mainly that Troilus suffers from the frequent comparison between him and Hector. Hector's motives are broadly social--he is "the townes wal" as the narrator tells us--whereas Pandarus's comparable description of Troilus as "sheld and lif for us" is suspect because of his special pleading. It is in fact Hector who speaks in Criseyde's defence at Priam's parliament, and who is rebuked by the populace for attempting to "shilde" her (II, 154, 201; IV, 176-88). Even Deiphebus's earlier disinterested readiness to champion Criseyde against her enemies "with spore and yerde" (II, 1425-8) works as a foil to Troilus's failure to consider anything of the kind. He fails to do so because he believes any public action will run counter to his duties as a lover. The dilemma shows the knightly duty of protecting a widow in sharp conflict with the effects on a knight of love. The knight cannot even protect the person he loves, though she is a widow to boot.

Nevertheless, at times Troilus appears to be carrying out a general social duty with as much diligence as Hector:

> In alle nedes, for the townes werre,
> He was, and ay, the first in armes dyght. (III, 1772-3)

In reality, however, Troilus does not fight "for the rescous

of the town" but in the furtherance of his passion for

Criseyde, to "liken hire the bet for his renoun" (I, 478, 481):

> And this encrees of hardynesse and myght
> Com hym of love, his ladies thank to wynne. (III, 1776-7)

The last phrase here adds another dimension entirely to the

statement and to the entire encomium at the end of book III.

As for Troilus's social benevolence, we see no examples of it,

and the connection between this benevolence and the traditional

chivalric obligation to succour all defenceless people is

obscured by Troilus's evident preoccupation with love. The

nature of his concern to "esen hem that weren in destresse"

(III, 1790), for instance, is qualified by its juxtaposition

with this special interest:

> And glad was he if any wyght wel ferde,
> That lovere was, whan he it wiste or herde. (III, 1791-2)

In a somewhat similar way, Diomede's more cynical offer to

Criseyde of his protection "as a knyght" appears to invoke a

general social duty while in fact being a deliberate ploy for

her seduction (V, 109-16, 124-40). It is clear that in

carrying out his social and military duties Troilus's

contributions are of a largely incidental nature, that he is

prepared to abandon those duties for the furtherance of a

love affair (IV, 1503 ff.), and that in the end—despite his

great slaughters on the battlefield—he renounces them.

If we are intended to view Troilus to some degree in

this light, his condition as a knight is clearly of some

importance. It is my contention that Chaucer stresses the
link between his knighthood and his personal activities as
a lover, so that knight and lover become almost interchangeable
terms. Troilus is not just a knight, or a knight of Troy: he
is Criseyde's knight. This manoeuvre calls attention to
Troilus's ancestors in a literary tradition which identifies
his choice of allegiance as a false one in both chivalric and
more general terms.

Troilus's knighthood is mentioned several times in
book II in connection with his eligibility as a lover—either
by Pandarus to his niece, or by the narrator, or by Criseyde
herself (II, 331, 761, 1263, 1594). The crucial formulation—
as in "myn owen knyght" and other phrases—is introduced in
the rather foolish song sung by Criseyde's niece, Antigone
(II, 827 ff.).[37] The song praises the perfect bliss of love,
but its argument is transparently weak. In the first place it
equivocates on the question of whether love involves suffering
(see especially lines 854 and 866), and secondly it rests
entirely on the supposed happiness of the singer with "myn
owen knyght", who is "moost ententif/To serven wel, unweri
or unfeyned" (871, 838-39). The hyperbole of the stanza
describing the lover ("Of trouthe grownd...stoon of sikernesse")
suggests that no one but Christ deserves such praise, and the
climax reveals that the perfect lover is in fact lost, or more
likely a figment of the singer's imagination:

> Iwis, I love hym best, so doth he me;
> Now good thrift have he, wherso that he be! (II, 846-7)

Nevertheless it is this song which seems to convince
Criseyde that lovers really feel such blisses "as they konne
faire endite", causing her to abandon her previous belief
that "Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne" (II, 777).
The song thus sets up the formula into which Troilus is
expected to fit, while at the same time the falseness of
Criseyde's expectations is foreshadowed. It is therefore
significant that Criseyde picks up the phrase from the song,
receiving Troilus into her service at their first interview
as "deere herte and al my knyght" (III, 176). The use of
the word cleverly plays on the ambiguous possibilities of the
situation, for Troilus can be her knight either in the sense
of being her temporal lord or in that of being her vassal and
servant. In fact he moves rapidly away from the former to the
latter. The scene starts with Criseyde's formal request for
the continuance of his "lordshipe", but almost immediately
the relationship of fealty is inverted as Troilus pledges
a sort of vassalage to her as a knight in her service, and
Criseyde in turn adopts a distinct tone of indulgent
authority.

As Troilus's novitiate draws towards its end and
consummation approaches, references to him as Criseyde's
knight cluster more thickly. "Ye knowe ek how it is youre
owen knyght," declares Pandarus, urging his niece that she
should therefore "bi right" put Troilus out of his misery
(III, 915-6). "Troilus hire knyght" is indeed "to hir so
deere" (920) that Criseyde, addressing him again as "deere

herte and al my knyght" (996), agrees to assure him that his
jealousy is groundless,

> Al thoughte she hire servant and hire knyght
> Ne sholde of right non untrouthe in hire gesse.   (III, 983-4)

Again in this phrasing there is a strong suggestion of formula:
her servant and knight has adopted a role which technically
does not qualify him to have his jealousy indulged. The fact
that Troilus is a knight continues to be an important aspect
of their relationship even in bed. Having started to caress
itemised portions of Criseyde's anatomy, he proceeds to hymn
the praises of Cupid, but is recalled to the task in hand by
her vigorous words:

> And at o word, withouten repentaunce,
> Welcome, my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce!   (III, 1308-9)

Troilus is again "youre humble servant and youre knyght"
(III, 1487) when, interrupted by dawn, they pledge fidelity
to each other.

The significance of these references appears to be
that they highlight the implications in chivalric terms (both
practical and symbolic) of Troilus's choice of the service of
Criseyde. The episode of the consummation is a crucial one
for this choice, and it is of course the moment at which the
lovers most obviously re-enact the history of Mars and Venus.
Another critical point in terms of Troilus's knightly
allegiance is that at which he ponders his response to the
news of Criseyde's impending exchange, and here too the theme
of knighthood is shown to be relevant through the use of the
kind of phrases I have been discussing. Criseyde laments that

she must "departen fro my knyght", and swears that she will
never be false to "my Troilus, my knyght", (IV, 746, 1537).
Pandarus's advice to "manly sette the world on six and sevene"
is presented as being particularly suitable for a knight
(or at least for such a knight as Troilus has become). It is
of course the same argument as that advanced by Arcite:

> Forthi tak herte, and thynk right as a knyght,
> Thorugh love is broken al day every lawe. (IV, 617-8)

Troilus himself meditates on his quandary--in particular on
whether to take a stand on the matter--in terms which indicate
that 'knight' and 'lover' have become parallel ideas for him:

> For certeyn is, syn that I am hire knyght,
> I moste hire honour levere han than me
> In every cas, as lovere ought of right.
> Thus am I with desir and reson twight.   (IV, 569-72)

The connection of knighthood with 'honour' and 'reson', however,
must surely remind us that being a knight involved obligations
of honour in a much more inclusive sense than that in which
the term is used here--broader obligations than those of
a lover. The insistent possessives--"Youre owen knyght",
"al my knyght"--act as a continual reminder of the narrowing
of the role of knight which Troilus's choice of service involves.

5.   'The Merchant's Tale'

In the "Complaint of Mars" and Troilus, we see Chaucer
employing a central feature of the literary inheritance of
chivalry to direct our judgment of the central figures, and
to establish distance between the reader and the lovers. In
the General Prologue and the "Knight's Tale", I have argued,

he complements the symbolism of the knight-lover with its obverse, that of the knight whose concerns are fighting for God and defending the commonwealth. I wish now to turn to the further development of this theme in the Canterbury Tales.

I have stressed that the symbolic possibilities of chivalry were more potent than its practical ramifications, and that Chaucer's knights, not excepting the Knight of the Prologue, appear to have little connection with the world of practical knighthood as Chaucer would have known it. The knights of the tales do not provide evidence of an interest, on the part of the actual author or his fictional narrators, in the practical issues of fourteenth-century knighthood. Attempts to indicate that particular tales were intended as attempts to reform a particular social institution, or as rebukes or object-lessons to contemporary knights, or that non-knightly narrators reveal pretensions or hostility to knightly status, I have judged unsatisfactory.

If we look for a concern with chivalry at the symbolic level in the tales, however, we do find there some significant reflections of the prominent Knight/Squire contrast, outside the tales of the Knight and the Squire themselves. In particular, I wish to consider again the contributions of the Merchant, the Wife of Bath and the Franklin. Each of these figures is a consequential or at least highly visible member of the social fabric, but not technically a knight (or, in

the case of the Wife, a knight's wife or daughter). Yet
each one tells a story about a knight, in the context of
some of the traditional trappings or associations of knight-
hood--lordship in the case of the "Merchant's Tale", the
Arthurian setting in that of the "Wife of Bath's Tale",
and knight errantry in that of the "Franklin's Tale". These
stories neither glorify nor attack chivalric ideas, but
they present us with alternative conceptions of the chivalric
life which are reflections of their tellers, and which
bear significant relationships to the chivalric theme in
the Canterbury Tales as a whole.

It is therefore not only the Knight and Squire who are to
be judged according to their conceptions of the knight's
function. If my conclusions about the nature of chivalry
are valid, it comprised a series of linked ideas which were
not the distinct property of any one segment of society.
The concept of chivalry was acknowledged as a cultural positive
by society as a whole and the burgess did not feel rebuked
or oppressed by it any more than the peasant or cleric,
though all three complained bitterly of departures from what
they regarded as proper chivalric behaviour. To a lesser
extent, this universality applied also to chivalric practice.
Both the civil and the military functions of knights, as
I have pointed out, were heavily encroached on by people
who had not been knighted, and this was not a new development
in Chaucer's time. As a result, we may hypothesise that

whatever an individual's social aspirations, his conception
of chivalry could be regarded as an important indicator of
his wider attitudes. The possibility of alternative forms
of chivalry was an issue of concern to merchants and franklins
as well as knights.

This is perhaps especially valid an assumption in
the context of the Canterbury Tales, which is in one sense
a literary competition, where the participants are judged by
their literary tastes (in the widest sense) and skills.
Chivalric ideas and practices comprised a substantial part of
the literary and quasi-literary entertainment of people of
all ranks, a fact which the first tale of the journey could
only emphasise. If in "Sir Thopas" Chaucer was satirising
not chivalric romance as such but the particular absurdities
--reflecting popular literary taste--of certain of its forms,
we may entertain the possibility that he was doing much the same
thing in a rather different way in other tales.

The satirical literature of chivalry provides
several instances of works in which people of non-knightly
class are judged by their responses to chivalric notions.
In spite of all delusions, the generosity and amplitude of
mind required to sustain Don Quixote's idealism frequently
rebuke the petty viciousness, intolerance, small-mindedness
and sheer prosaic nature of those he encounters. Cervantes
reveals that even a discredited version of chivalry is able
to act as a touchstone of human values. An even more

pertinent example is Beaumont's <u>The Knight of the Burning</u>
<u>Pestle</u>, a play roughly contemporaneous with <u>Don Quixote</u>.
Neither chivalry nor the late chivalric romances are themselves
objects of more than incidental satire here; the victims
are the London tradesmen and their inflated sense of self-
importance. The citizens' lack of understanding of the idea
of chivalry is an emblem of their lack of moral and artistic
discrimination. They fail to see the incongruity of a grocer-
errant or the absurdity of his 'adventures', and they reveal
themselves as literal-minded believers in the grosser
elements of the romances. Offered a play about a merchant,
they try to turn it into a play about a knight. But more
basically they can make no sense of the play aesthetically
or morally, imposing arbitrary demands on the plot and
sympathising always with the wrong characters--the oppressive
father, the absurd lover, the shrewish wife, and so on.
Taken too far, this parallel proves misleading, for there
is no thorough-going satire of mercantile or knightly figures
in the tales. Yet I suggest that we are asked to judge
those of Chaucer's characters I have mentioned in part by
their literary portrayal of the chivalric world.

The Merchant presents us with a knight whose two
preoccupations are sensuality and material possessions.
Admittedly the Merchant does not endorse January, and his
comments on his wisdom are sarcastic. But from the Merchant's
point of view, January's folly is that of entering into

marriage when he is an old man, and especially with a
young woman; there is no clear indication that the Merchant
wishes to make a more general condemnation of him. We
may therefore suggest that the tale contains a depiction
of the noble life as envisaged by the Merchant, and which
reflects his own propensities. To assume that his choice
of a knight rather than a merchant is intended to disguise
the teller's self-revelation, or to make it possible for him
to take a detached attitude towards his characters, is
perhaps to indulge in too modern a view of the idea of
character in literature. More consistent with Chaucer's
usual method is the belief that even when describing a
knight's life, the Merchant reveals his own characteristics—
and perhaps those associated with his occupation. The quality
of January's knighthood should then direct us back to his
fictional creator rather than to the estate of knighthood in
Chaucer's England.

Returning for the moment to the tale itself, rather
than its dramatic context, we may note that the salient
features of January's noble life consist of "greet prosperitee"
and wide-ranging indulgence in "bodily delyt" (IV, 1247-50).
His luxurious life-style is a result not only of his agreement
with those clerks who "holden that felicitee/Stant in delit"
(2021-2), but also of his belief that noblesse oblige:

> This noble Januarie, with al his myght,
> In honest wyse, as longeth to a knyght,
> Shoop hym to lyve ful deliciously.
> His housynge, his array, as honestly
> To his degree was maked as a kynges. (2023-7)

The deliciousness of his household appointments is particularly represented here by the garden, which is emblem and venue of his amorousness and also symbol of his honourable social position: "Amonges othere of his honeste thynges,/He made a gardyn..." (2028-9). His honour is vested in the greatness of his possessions.[38]

Just as there is a direct connection established here between January's knightly rank and his material well-being, so this garden links his material possessions to his sensuality. His concern for the privacy of the garden and his concern to monopolise the sexual activities of his wife--in fact his whole need to possess--are summed up in the walled garden with its small wicket, the key of which January will not allow anyone else to bear. The key is both traditional sign of ownership and, as Gottfried showed in the episode of the Minnegrotte, convenient erotic symbol.   *ownership + sex*

In a similar way, January's very decision to marry is the result of his two basic preoccupations. The narrator at first professes ignorance as to the specific reasons why January should want a wife, but then obliquely suggests that he may desire to produce an heir and to be cared for in time of sickness (1272, 1289). The knight's own professed motive-- remorse for sinfulness (1402-4)--is not perhaps to be dismissed as bogus, though his continued desire for sensual pleasures indicates a lack of understanding of what his real sinfulness has been. His most urgent reasons nevertheless are those which

dictate his choice of a young and pretty woman. Although
January never mentions his lust in this way, it is evidently
uppermost in his mind continually. His days of wild oats,
however, are over; "bodily delyt", we may assume, is no longer
so easy to come by. He desires a sexual partner who is
constantly available. Furthermore, he believes that a young
woman will be more easily moulded (1429-30) and, finally,
will enable him to produce an heir and secure the continuance
of his prosperous estate---for he would rather be eaten by dogs

> Than that myn heritage sholde falle
> In straunge hand, and this I telle yow alle. (1439-40)[39]

Indeed, January displays a frenzied enthusiasm to minister
to the special requirements of his wife's pregnancy--"theron
shal be no lak,/Mighte I yow helpen with myn herte blood" (2346-7).

He therefore takes a wife whom he can regard as one
of his possessions, sexually and mentally, and who will
eventually provide a recipient for his material wealth. She
will be "the fruyt of his tresor" (1270), and naturally
January is fiercely possessive. His jealousy and suspicion
are so "outrageous" after he becomes blind

> That neither in halle, n'yn noon oother hous,
> Ne in noon oother place, neverthemo,
> He nolde suffre hire for to ryde or go,
> But if that he had hond on hire alway. (2088-91)

The thought of her remarrying after his death is as repugnant
to him as the idea of her present unfaithfulness; his position
is so intolerable that "he wolde fayn/That som man bothe hire
and hym had slayn" (2075-6)---a neat reversal of the Merchant's
earlier sardonic reference to Ephesians 5:28-9:

> If thou lovest thyself, thou lovest thy wyf;
> No man hateth his flessh, but in his lyf
> He fostreth it... (1385-7)

January's suspicion of May is implicitly compared to a merchant's

concern for the fate of his investments in the narrator's

rhetorical question pointing out the inevitability of the

deception:

> O Januarie, what myghte it thee availle,
> Thogh thou myghte se as fer as shippes saille? (2107-8)

There is therefore a distinct irony about January's

assertion in the garden that "Noght for no coveitise" had

he married May. He did not indeed take her for her material

wealth, but he had certainly coveted her. The materialistic

basis of the relationship is made clear a few lines later,

when he begs her fidelity, appealing first to her love of

Christ and her own honour, and then resorting to bribery:

"ye wynne therby...al myn heritage, toun and tour;/I yeve it

yow, maketh chartres as yow leste" (2170-2).

The point of all this is of course that the Merchant's

knight turns out to have the qualities traditionally

associated primarily with merchants. The vices almost invariably

attributed to merchants in estates literature were fraud and

avarice.[40] But more important here is the conventional

attribution of care and suspicion as their dominant traits.

Reason, in the Romaunt, comments in this fashion on the

"chapman or marchaunt" who has "of gold many besaunt":

> For in the getyng he hath such woo,
> And in the kepyng drede also,
> And set evermore his bisynesse
> For to encrese, and not to lesse... (5593-6)

A little later he returns to this example:

> Ther may no marchaunt lyve at ese;
> His herte in sich a were is sett
> That it quyk brenneth more to get,
> Ne never shal ynogh have geten,
> Though he have gold in gerners yeten,
> For to be nedy he dredith sore.
> Wherfore to geten more and more
> He set his herte and his desir;
> So hote he brennyth in the fir
> Of coveitise, that makith hym wood
> To purchace other mennes good.   (5698-708)

Evidence that this portrait is not mere homiletic hyperbole is provided by Iris Origo in her biography of the fourteenth-century Tuscan merchant, Datini. She notes the insistence of Datini's contemporaries on the necessity of shrewdness to the point of morbid distrust. "The earth and sea", her subject himself wrote, "are full of robbers, and the greater part of mankind is evilly disposed." The Marchesa Origo explains what this view of human nature involved in practice for a contemporary Florentine, Giovanni Frescobaldi:

> Any deal must be regarded with initial suspicion,
> 'for many are the snares and malicious devices
> used to attract a merchant, and every man thinks
> that rubble will turn into gold in his hands'.
> Friends should be chosen only for what can be got
> out of them—'It is good to have friends of all
> kinds, but not useless men'—and even with prosper-
> ous friends, a man should always be on his guard.
> 'Remember,' he wrote, 'envy is more general in
> all men's hearts, than is commonly believed...
> and so you will not err in ever keeping your
> business secret and not making a show of it
> and not speaking in your shop of your riches and
> of your profits.' Secrets, of course should be
> kept to oneself: 'To confide in a man is to turn
> yourself into his slave.'[41]

This stereotype appears to fit neatly not only with January's obsessive suspicion of May but also with the portrait of the Merchant in the General Prologue. His talk is always

of "th' encrees of his wynnyng", and the conventional

anxiety of merchants is displayed in the fact that

> He wolde the see were kept for any thyng
> Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle. (I, 276-7)

Nevertheless, we should not without further scrutiny assume

that Chaucer uses January's conception of knightliness to

satirise the shortcomings of merchants generally, or in a

way directly applicable to the society of the time. We may

further ask whether Chaucer rebukes mercantile 'sadness' by

reference to its opposite, 'franchise', a virtue often associated

with chivalry, and whether he sets up a contrast in the Tales

between a set of values associated with knights and a conflicting

set of values connected with merchants.

There is not, I think, convincing evidence to support

any of these hypotheses. As far as chivalry is concerned,

Chaucer stresses its ambivalent possibilities; the chivalric

life, after all, could be as materialistic as the mercantile

one. Denunciations of the rapaciousness of knights were

enormously common, as I have indicated, and the Parson turns

for his first example of avarice not to merchants but to

lords and knights (X, 751-68). The Chessbook urges merchants

to flee avarice and covetousness, but it similarly adjures knights

to avoid covetousness---which leads them to despoil the people

---and instead to be "large and liberal".[42] As for merchants,

Chaucer's treatment of them indicates that they provided him

occasionally with a convenient matrix for the satirical

presentation of materialistic attitudes, and with a symbol for

an inappropriately intense concern with money and material
welfare; but it is also clear that for Chaucer merchants
did not have any kind of monopoly on these characteristics,
nor did they in any complete sense embody those attitudes.

This conclusion is supported by Chaucer's treatment
of merchants in other tales, where we are initially invited
to identify merchants with avarice and materialism, but
ultimately obliged to recognise that men and women of other
occupations are equally prone to such vices. The Man of Law,
for instance, cites merchants as support for his prudential
attitude that "Bet is to dyen than have indigence", but
turns out to be a model of the worldly and materialistic
man himself.[43] In the "Shipman's Tale" Chaucer presents a
merchant who appears to be a stereotype of prudence (in this
special sense) and avarice, but who turns out to be far less
grasping than the wife and monk who cuckold him. Albert
Silverman suggests that the tale is "a satire upon the merchant's
serious, sober, business-like manner of living", and Stillwell
regards it as the centrepiece of Chaucer's interest in the
mercantile mind, characterised by the concept of 'sadness'.[44]
But it seems to me equally important to note that Chaucer
in fact rejects the idea that the merchant in the tale is
especially concerned with "th'encrees of his wynnyng".
By contrast he emphasises the merchant's hospitality, his
generosity in lending money, his embarrassment at having
been obliged by sudden exigency to request payment of a debt

already discharged.[45] The merchant's supposed "nygardye" is
almost entirely the invention of his wife's avarice and the
result of her extravagant tastes in clothing (she also claims
to Daun John--falsely as we learn--that her husband is a poor
lover).[46] The frequent puns linking sex and money are thus,
for the reader (as opposed to the narrator), not primarily
jokes at the husband's expense, but, more immediately,
reflections on the fact that the most inclusive form of
carnality in the tale is that of the wife, despite the
contempt for a careful handling of money which both she and
Daun John affect. The reduction of the merchant's marriage to
a commercial transaction is the wife's doing rather than the
husband's.[47]

The life of merchandising thus provides Chaucer with
an emblem of materialism, but he is at pains to note that
a monk or lawyer, a knight or a physician can be as carnal
as a merchant, or more so.[48] The fact that the Merchant
portrays in his tale a knight who displays the vices often
attributed to merchants cannot therefore be seen in terms
of a clash of two value-systems. The mercantile characteristics
of January are reminders that, even in his attempt to portray
a scene of noble life in another country, the Merchant is
bound by his own preoccupations with possession, and that in
envisaging a knight's life in these terms he is committed to
the chivalry of carnality rather than to true knighthood.

7. 'The Wife of Bath's Tale'

Perhaps the most striking example in the Canterbury
Tales of a 'bourgeois' character who is to be judged in part
by her conception of chivalry is the Wife of Bath. Her
Prologue introduces us to the eccentric results of her
reading, and when she turns to her tale itself she invokes
a literary tradition which had inspired a great variety of
purposes and treatments and, in view of Dante's mention of it,
probably acquired a certain notoriety for being misinterpreted.
If she has been able to kick up so much dust with scriptural
and patristic materials, what will she not do with a story
of Arthur? Her interpretation of the significance of the
Arthurian stories turns out to be as wayward as her previous
forays into exegesis, and she believes she has found there
an exposition of her own convictions about the justification
of lust and the desirability of the supremacy of women. As
a reader, the Wife inverts the advice of St. Augustine,
finding everywhere not the lesson of charity but that of
cupidity.

Many of Chaucer's commentators have assumed that
in treating Arthurian matters in this light she was right.
The story she tells, according to W. W. Lawrence, "is an
excellent illustration of the conventions of chivalry,
according to which a knight must obey the will of his lady...
Chivalry had insisted on blind devotion to the gentler sex."
The Wife, in this view, has a just estimation at least of
Arthurian literature, though "Chaucer is here having a little

fling at the weaknesses of the system of chivalry.[49] As I have indicated, this assumption involves a misreading of the central actions of the story of Arthur. Even if Chaucer associated the Arthurian romances primarily with popular distortions of chivalric values, he would have recognised the distorting elements as such, and is unlikely to have taken popular versions as definitive.

It has been suggested, however, that the Arthurian element in the tale is unimportant. Tony Slade points out that references to Arthur form a standard introduction to many folk-songs and ballads "which usually have little or nothing to do with any romance tradition". G. H. Gerould comments that the tale is not really a romance because of the "grotesque absurdity of beginning a tale of 'gentilesse' with rape". That kind of incongruity seems to me, on the other hand, to indicate that we are indeed intended to pay careful attention to the claims of the story to be associated with Arthurian events. Malone notes that most of the ballad and romance analogues have Arthurian settings, though not Gower's version (CA, I, 1407-1861), but claims that Chaucer's redaction is a simple "tale of wonder" with an Arthurian frame, explaining the rape as a relic of the original pre-Arthurian fairy-tale source. S. Eisner's source study reveals that Arthurian elements are very prominent in the numerous precedents and analogues, but also indicates that the great variety in literary value and social level of these materials denies any definite answer to the question of

what the current 'tone' and status of Arthurian literature
were in Chaucer's time.[50] In this uncertain situation the
most helpful conclusion appears to be that Chaucer is as
unlikely to have inserted a prefatory reference to Arthur
simply to give the performance the air of a folk-tale as he
is to have retained such a reference simply because he found
it in his source.

As Dorothy Colmer has pointed out, the Wife is
something of a village gossip and therefore the natural
retailer of folk-stories of all kinds.[51] One might in fact
argue that there is a greater sense of representative
popular taste about the "Wife of Bath's Tale" than is found
in any other of the tales, including the "Thopas", despite
the maverick position occupied by the Wife among the other
pilgrims. All the other tales have in their choice of
subject-matter or in their treatment, however universally
unexceptionable their purpose, stronger sectional overtones--
whether courtly (in a broad sense), homiletic, pious, clerkly,
exotic, bawdy or whatever. In linking her story to Arthurian
chivalry, the Wife may perhaps be regarded as the spokesman
for a popular view which misrepresented a traditional literary
enterprise, and by doing so misinterpreted the whole dominant
secular idealism of society.[52]

The ancient British world which the Wife describes
is not merely one whose finest institution is flawed by
lechery; it is instead permeated by licentiousness. The land
is "fulfild of fayerye", whose activities include lurking in

bushes and under trees to impregnate passing women. Appropriately enough in this context, one of Arthur's knights rapes a virgin and is saved from the legally prescribed penalty by Guinevere's ascendancy over the king. The knight is sent out on a quest for a year to find out what women most desire— a task which may stand as an epitome of the kind of knight-service of ladies which is scrutinised in a great deal of chivalric literature. The career of, say, Chrétien's Lancelot or Wolfram's Gawain can be roughly summarised as a search for ways of pleasing their lady or ladies.

Not surprisingly the knight turns eventually for his goal on this quest to the elvish emblems of lechery first mentioned, who "Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede" (III, 861). This is in fact just what they are doing when the knight eventually finds them (991-6). The clear implication of the Wife's earlier comment that now the only incubi are the friars is that she regards elves as incubi.[53] We are therefore invited to assume that the old hag is a succubus, and her transformation into a beautiful young woman in bed can only strengthen that assumption. Her offer to save his life if he will put himself in her power is one of the oldest motifs of diabolism in Christian literature.

The hag's eventual beauty, as Bernard Levy, Robert Haller and Thomas Hatton have all pointed out, is a false and illusive one.[54] Whereas the Wife wishes us to infer from the tale that a man can only see the true beauty of a woman when he gives her sovereignty—even though, like

Alison, she may be getting ugly on the surface--Chaucer's meaning is quite opposite. Levy compares the hag to Dante's siren (Purg., XIX, 1-33), who is originally ugly but becomes beautiful as the poet looks on her with eyes of desire. The moment at which the knight in the tale finds the hag beautiful results therefore from his final submission to concupiscence and to her. She has made him think her both beautiful and faithful, whether she is or not, in the same way as the Wife has treated her husbands. Once they have resigned to her the "sovereynetee", she can convince them of anything she wants. The knight submits to the illusion that sin is beautiful. His physical life has been preserved but he has been led to spiritual death, for the old hag is literally his "dampnacioun". He, like January, is doubly blind at the end of the tale, having deliberately closed his eyes.

As Hatton points out, this is the climax of a series of interlinked inversions in the tale. By the original rape the knight inverts his knightly duty to protect women, and at another level yields his reason to his passions. Arthur hands over to the Queen his duty to administer justice, unlike Theseus, who takes the counsel of women but makes his own decisions. The knight next yields to the hag, promising to do the next thing that she asks him. Having married her, he puts himself in her "wise governance" and she fulfils his "worldly appetit". One might say that, having started as a rapist, he ends up getting raped.

Bernard Huppé has surmised that the Queen intervenes
in the judicial proceedings consequent upon the rape because
the knight has raped a peasant woman and this action, though
condemned by ordinary law, was little more than an indiscretion
or lack of mesure according to the 'courts of love'. The
Queen sets him his task to find out whether he is still
loyal to the cardinal precept of 'courtly love'--the sovereignty
of women--and the hag confirms the lesson in her speech in
bed. Although based on a very dubious reading of Andreas
Capellanus, this may be the view which we are to suppose was
held by the Wife herself.[55] But if we look at the actual
legal situation with respect to rape, an alternative conclusion
presents itself.

The sentence that the Wife tells us was passed on
the knight for his crime is death--"Paraventure swich was the
statut tho" (891-3). Bracton in fact looked back to a time
when ancient law prescribed death for ravishers of virgins,
and a few years after he wrote the Second Statute of Westminster
(1285) named rape once more as an offence punishable by death.[56]
Handlyng Synne also warned that the legal penalty was death:

> 3yf þou rauyssh any mayden clene--
> Azens here wyl, þat ys to mene,--
> hyt ys seyde þurgh lawe wrete,
> þat þyn hede shulde be of smete
> (Lawe makeþ þat commandement)
> with-outyn any iuggement;
> þat mayst þou fynde al an sum
> In code, 'de raptu virginum'. (2177-84)

Margaret Gist notes that the Middle English romances also
usually treat death as the natural penalty for rape.[57] In
practice, however, a variety of accommodations might be made

without resort to this drastic extremity; less severe
punishments, money fines, and restitution of some kind
were common.[58]

The most widely recognised theoretical penalty for
the rape of a virgin in medieval England, however, appears
to have been castration and blinding. Castration was the
practice of William I, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,[59]
and Bracton regarded that, along with blinding, as the
normal procedure. The offender is to suffer "the loss of
members, that there be member for member, for when a virgin
is defiled she loses her member and therefore let her defiler
be punished in the parts in which he offended. Let him
thus lose his eyes which gave him sight of the maiden's
beauty for which he coveted her. And let him lose as well the
testicles which excited his hot lust." Bracton also mentions a
provision for the rapist's horse, dog (such as a greyhound) and
even his hawk to be similarly mutilated if present on the
occasion of the crime.[60]

This last practice suggests that the incident described
by Chaucer has a certain emblematic character. The knight
comes riding from a hawking-ground on the banks of a river, sees
a maid walking before him (the poet thus dwelling momentarily
on the process of lust being stimulated by the sight of beauty),
and "maugree hir heed"--a phrase which means perhaps that he
threatens to kill her if she will not submit--forcibly "rafte
hire maydenhed" (884-8). At first the most severe penalty
known for such a crime is imposed, and he "sholde han lost his

heed"; but as in so many real-life cases a compromise is reached.

At first it appears that the knight has got off quite free by being handed over to the women, but eventually we see that the death penalty has in effect been commuted to the punishment most associated with his offence (especially in view of its particular circumstances) and in a crude sense most appropriate to it. In being set to discover women's greatest desire, judged by a court of women, and forced to marry (and give over 'maistrie' to) a foul wife, the knight has been sentenced to emasculation; in believing that his wife is beautiful, young and faithful, "His herte bathed in a bath of blisse" (1253), he has lost his eyes. But there is perhaps a further twist to the humorous irony of this situation. Pollock and Maitland note that if the criminal's wife intervened in his favour the sentence of blinding and emasculation was sometimes reduced to blinding alone.[61] By intervening for the knight in return for his promise, which turns out to be a promise of marriage, the hag has played the wife's part, and achieved what is for the Wife of Bath the perfect compromise, a husband "meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde"—and blind to all her shortcomings.

The Wife's main purpose is to demonstrate the wisdom of a man's resigning his power into the hands of a woman. But she is not satisfied to make her point in the crude form of the popular fabliau; there will always be Millers on the anarchic fringes of society to attempt to overthrow the

established order by running at it with their heads, and to provide mere parody. Instead she wants to make a case that will claim a more universal validity. She wishes to reveal chivalry itself as a principle which embodies her own cause—to capture the foremost symbol of human (and especially male) temporal power and yoke it to her car of rebellion against "auctoritee". In particular the world of Arthur, from which chivalry was thought to derive a substantial part of its lustre, is invoked as a sanction of sexual licence. In this respect the Wife gives a strong impression of representing a popular misconception, though other parts of the Canterbury Tales remind us that the gentle classes are themselves susceptible to somewhat similar delusions. In view of his praise of the Squire, the Franklin would appear to be an example of this latter tendency.

8.   'The Franklin's Tale'

Turning from the Wife's tale to that of the Franklin, the reader is likely to notice especially two passages which seem to echo the former tale. In the first place the Franklin as well as the Wife sets his story in the remote past:

> Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
> Of diverse aventures maden layes,
> Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;
> Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe... (V, 709-12)

Both narrators refer us back to the Britons or Bretons, and though the Franklin's tone is a trifle more antiquarian than that of the Wife, both are consciously evoking a foreign setting. In each case the foreignness is balanced by more

familiar elements. The Wife's opening,

> In th'olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,
> Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
> Al was this land fulfild of fayerye,

introduces the well-known figure of Arthur before moving
to the alien suggestions of a land filled with sprites, while
the Franklin's hint of the exotic or primitive ("hir firste
Briton tonge") is modified by a sense that that early
literary tradition is still accessible to him and his
listeners: "And oon of hem have I in remembraunce".

In the second place there is a distinct resemblance
between the paradoxical situation of the married couple at the
end of the Wife's tale and that of Dorigen and Arveragus at
the start of the Franklin's. The knight in the former decides
to "put me in youre wise governance", and is rewarded by
being told that his wife will be "also good and trewe/As
evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe" (III, 1243-4).
Arveragus, in similar fashion, swears that he will obey
Dorigen "and folwe hir wyl in al," and in return his wife
promises to be his "humble trewe wyf", despite--or because
of--his indulgence. The Franklin to some extent takes over
where the Wife left off.

In both cases the purpose for the narrators of the
appeal to a special literary tradition seems to be in part
to establish an ambience, with particularly chivalric
characteristics, within which such arrangements as this
marital one will appear to be the normal course of things.
It is an appeal to the spirit of chivalric romance, and, as

we have seen, a very questionable one. Moreover the Franklin's

defence of the decisions of his protagonists,

> Love is a thyng as any spirit free.
> Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,   (V, 767-8)

links him both to the Wife's outrageous inversions and to

Arcite's anarchic "who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?"[62]   He is

also of course linked before the start of the tale itself to

the chief exemplar of carnal chivalry, the Squire. In

regarding the Squire as an epitome of "vertu" and "gentilesse"

he identifies his conception of noble behaviour and of what

chivalry for him is all about. There is no need for us to

assume that he is being sycophantic or pretentious in doing

so.

The essential carnality reflected by this identification

is well prepared for by the portrait of the Franklin in the

General Prologue, with its close attention to the variety,

delicacy and extent of his diet, a feature perhaps intended to

indicate the habitual tenor of his conversation: "To lyven in

delit was evere his wone" (I, 335). Ironically, however, he

combines this materialism with a quite opposed posture: "Fy on

possessioun," he cries, "But if a man be vertuous withal!"

(V, 686-7). The ending of his story, indeed, features a

comparison between three men who display that they are "fre"

by renouncing obligations owing to them. Taking 'freedom'

and 'gentilesse' as the hallmarks of the chivalric character,

however, the Franklin is undercut by his inadequate understanding

of those concepts--a fact revealed both by his identification

with the Squire and by his comments on the progress of his

own tale.

The inadequacy of the Franklin's version of
'gentilesse' has been well argued by Gaylord in a rebuttal
of the older view that the tale portrays an ideal marriage
as a summation of a 'marriage group'.[63] Gaylord points out
that none of the three 'contestants' *does* anything truly
"gentil", and that in the case of the 'trouthe' of Arveragus
"a knight's concern for his own name and exaggerated conception
of knightly word result in a harsh decision which ignores
the welfare of the party most intimately concerned."[64]
The point is driven home by Gaylord's analysis of the
non-binding nature of rash promises, and a rewarding comparison
with the situation in Il Filocolo, where the husband's action
is declared to be foolish.

The Franklin's idea of freedom, whether his own
self-proclaimed freedom from worldliness, or the generosity
he attributes to his characters, is likewise largely bogus.[65]
The quality of freedom, we will recall, figures prominently
in the description of the Knight in the General Prologue,
and occurs frequently in chivalric descriptions more or less
interchangeably with franchise (used in V, 1524) and largesse.
The cluster of terms appears to stand for two related virtues--
generosity, and the freedom from selfish or worldly
considerations which promotes it. In the Franklin's version of
the knightly past, this concept is invoked to explain first
of all the relationship of Arveragus and Dorigen. "Of his
free wyl" the knight swears to allow his wife all freedom and

to renounce "maistrie", for "Love is a thyng as any spirit
free." The Franklin's justification of this is somewhat
misleading. He digresses to praise patience, sufferance,
temperance and "governaunce" in human relationships. But
"governaunce" is what in an equally important sense
Arveragus does not have, and his decision to impose no
constraints on his wife appears not to be based on a prudent
consideration of human needs and frailties but on the desire
to "lyve in ese" (788)—and also perhaps on the fact that he
has little option, his wife having accepted his suit in the
first place partly because of "his meke obeysaunce" (739).

The hollowness of Dorigen's freedom becomes apparent
when Arveragus goes away to seek "in armes worshipe and honour",
having already imperilled his honour at home. His absence
is not perhaps directly a symbol of his abdication of
authority, as Russell Peck suggests, since fictional knights
at least were expected to do such things—as is evidenced
most obviously by Erec et Enide; but it provides the test of
Dorigen's announced need for freedom. Peck comments that
the equality in marriage which had appeared at first perhaps
a wise arrangement turns out to be anarchic, as Dorigen is
led by her emotions and fears.[66] Indeed she seems almost
to seek enthralment rather than liberty. It is surely with
a certain perverse ingenuity that she fastens her attention
on the rocks after her friends have tried to distract her
from her frantic grief by taking her for a walk on the cliffs.
Her desire to be free of the rocks is also counter-productive,

for their banishment would represent an absence of shores
and bounds, giving a superficial sense of freedom from
restraint but in fact denying the ordering and controlling
purpose of that Providence to which Dorigen appeals.
Fittingly, this craving is answered by an illusion ("It semed
that alle the rokkes were aweye"), and in the context of the
other illusions in the Canterbury Tales (especially in the tales
of the Merchant and the Wife) this development is surely
intended to reflect primarily the blindness and self-deception
of the persons who are thus tricked (in this case both
Dorigen and Aurelius).

Finally, the freedom of Arveragus and Aurelius at the
end of the story is illusory (1604-5). Dorigen's freedom
militates against that of her husband, since as Hatton points
out Arveragus really gives up nothing, having already renounced
the "maistrie".[67] Aurelius, on the other hand, does not
so much commit an act of generosity as prevent himself at
the last moment from doing the opposite. He realises that to
insist on his bargain would be to "doon so heigh a cherlyssh
wrecchednesse/Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse" (1523-4).

The spring which sets in motion these supposedly
"fre" and "gentil" actions is Dorigen's rash promise. Why
does she suggest it? If intended even partly seriously it
would of course be foolish, since the removal of the rocks
would then not be more than a very mixed blessing: it would
safeguard her husband's voyage home to some extent, but
also result in her infidelity to him. It is, however, offered

"in pley". If intended to soften the blow of outright
refusal it is surely a strange miscalculation. There would
appear to be several ways in which Dorigen could offer
Aurelius advice of a consolatory or moralistic nature, and
her own proposal must appear a rather heartless jest, as
indeed Aurelius does seem to take it:

> "Madame," quod he, "this were an inpossible!
> Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deth horrible." (1009-10)

Dorigen's action seems instead to be a response to the kind
of fictional world the Franklin has imagined for her to
exist in. It is a world in which knights win ladies or
languish for them, in which the resources of chivalry are
deployed in the cause of love. Dorigen's conditional offer
of her love to Aurelius thus appears to be a formalised
entering into the spirit of the imagined chivalric world,
and in particular into the spirit of the garden of earthly
delights (the central feature of this society, and appropriately
the place Dorigen appears to set out towards to fulfil her
obligation). But to some extent the offer is also a
continuation of the attitudes consecrated in her marriage.
In the Franklin's idea of the noble and chivalric life these
activities are normative and give the participants a
consciousness of noble and heroic status. Dorigen, in her
rather squalid dilemma, spends "a day or tweye" comparing
herself to illustrious women of the past. W. W. Lawrence
thus perhaps speaks for the Franklin himself when he claims
that the "hero" of the tale (by whom he means Aurelius) is
"a flower of chivalry", in that he falls in love with a
married woman, pines away for her, and so on. Certainly the

Franklin appears to endorse Muriel Bowden's judgment that
Arveragus, "although quite different from the Knight of the
Canterbury Pilgrimage, may also be described as 'a verray,
parfit gentil knyght'."[68] This heroic status is of course
endangered by Dorigen's promise and its consequences, but
the Franklin makes sure that nobody has to pay for such
mistakes. The patina of ancient chivalric romance is cast
over the story and obscures necessary distinctions, allowing
all participants to retain, quite meretriciously, the esteem
of their creator.

Why then is the Franklin, like the Wife of Bath, shown
to have a misleading sense of the values and literary
traditions associated with chivalry? As suggested above
(section III, 3), we must probably abandon the cherished
notion that he is a parvenu attempting to assert his membership
in a chivalric class or his inheritance of a chivalric
tradition, and even the idea that he is trying to define a
sector of social gentility with himself inside it. Nor are
there satisfactory grounds for thinking that in showing that
a clerk can do a "gentil dede" as well as any knight or
squire he displays a hostility towards a knightly caste from
which he feels excluded.

We are faced with the conclusion that chivalry is relevant
to a consideration of the Franklin and his tale primarily
in that his faulty conception of it extends our perception
of his materialistic view (in the wide sense) of life.
But knighthood, though an ideal with general social implications,

relates particularly to ideas of lordship and secular power; if the Wife is to some extent the representative of the vox populi, transmitting a view of chivalry associated with some of the popular romances, the Franklin is a suitable representative of the role of lordship, involved as he has been in both local and royal government. Arveragus's failure as a knight is a failure of proper lordship, as is that of Arthur and of the protagonist of the Wife's tale. In both stories the failure is masked by a diversion in the form of an appeal to 'gentilesse'. The Wife's knight is presumably induced by the explanation of the concept to relinquish his objection to the hag's supposed low birth, not realising that the real significance of the exposition is to reveal his own lack of any claim to 'gentilesse' in the first place. Arveragus is saved from the results of his imprudence by the Franklin's creation of a spurious context in which his actions, and those of others yet more culpable, can be seen as 'gentil'.[69] In both tales 'gentilesse' serves only to obscure the real distinctions about models of social aspiration which Chaucer indicates in his contrasting portraits of the noble life as represented by the Knight and the Squire.

Yet there remain intriguing possibilities in the Franklin's possession of knightly status without actual knighthood. In praising the Squire, he declares that he would "levere than twenty pound worth lond,/Though it right now were fallen in myn hond" (683-4) that his own son were like the Squire. Twenty librates, or land worth twenty pounds a year, had been since the thirteenth century considered

equivalent to a knight's fee, and thus the traditional property quali-
fication for a man's being obliged to become a knight,
though the actual figure stipulated in the writs for distraint
varied considerably.[70]   This perhaps means that the Franklin
would rather have, like presumably the Squire's father, an
inherited right to knighthood than the possessions (which he
surely has) which qualify him to become one.   Is Chaucer then
indicating that the Franklin can not, for all his wealth
and social rank, be a proper knight?   If so, then surely
the distinction is valid in symbolic terms only: the Franklin
is not a true knight in the same way that the Squire is not
a true knight--not so much because of any social disabilities
or because he has not been formally knighted, as because
unlike the Knight of the Prologue he has opted for the
sensual rather than the spiritual interpretation of the concept
of knighthood.

9. Conclusion

It is, I conclude, the symbolic possibilities of
chivalry which Chaucer was primarily interested in, and
which offer the greatest scope to analysis in his works.
In this respect he has more in common with other writers
of fictions about knights in the Middle Ages than is usually
assumed.   No doubt in terms of actual life he had views on
the practical chivalric issues of his day; but whether
he enthusiastically supported the crusaders who left the
court at London for the East, whether he lamented the 'decadence'

of contemporary knighthood, whether he was absorbed in
or detached from the whole ethos of chivalry—these are
questions which are unlikely to find answers since they are
not answered in Chaucer's works.

In several of those works, I have argued, Chaucer
made fairly extensive use of certain traditional preconcep-
tions about what constituted the proper behaviour of a
knight and therefore the proper attitude of men towards
the things of this world, especially the love of women.
He used chivalry conventionally in works like the "Knight's
Tale" and Troilus as a means of focusing on the alternative
possibilities, for good or ill, confronting the man who
is free to "florysh hys herte in thys worlde".

The analysis of chivalric ideas which has led
me to these conclusions has involved extensive documentation.
If such preliminaries seem at times disproportionately
bulky, I may nonetheless claim that attempts to interpret
medieval literature by reference to the idea of chivalry
indicate that such a reconsideration of the subject was
overdue. This reassessment required not just another
survey of the chivalric 'virtues' but an investigation
of the basic generating principles of the subject and its
reasons for existence. I do not claim that chivalric
ideas have up to this time been neglected, but that dubious
readings of medieval literature (including Chaucer) have
frequently looked for support to an assumed system of special

chivalric values. In scrutinising that support I have concentrated mainly on Chaucer, but my findings also provide, I hope, a useful contribution to the study of other medieval writers.

NOTES

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[1]Muriel Bowden, A Reader's Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer (New York, 1964), p. 33.

[2]D. S. Brewer, Chaucer in His Time (London, 1963), p. 201.

[3]W. H. Schofield, Chivalry in English Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1925), pp. 37, 47. See also N. Coghill, Chaucer's Idea of What Is Noble (London, 1971), pp. 8-16.

[4]Billings, A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances (New Haven, 1901), pp. xxii-xxiii; Coulton, Chaucer and His England (London, 1908), p. 105; Warre Cornish, Chivalry (London, 1901), p. 196; Brewer, Chaucer (3rd ed.; London, 1973), p. 12. Paul Christophersen also attributes to Chaucer skepticism about the "tradition of chivalry"; see "The Englishness of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", in On the Novel: A Present for Walter Allen on His 60th Birthday from His Friends and Colleagues, ed. B. S. Benedikz (London, 1971), pp. 46-56. See also J. A. Burrow's discussion of Chaucer's "civilian" virtues, which he ascribes in part to a general unheroic atmosphere in the late 14th century (Ricardian Poetry (London, 1971), pp. 95-100), and D. W. Robertson's comments on the anti-heroic "Englishness" of Chaucer's art in A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1962), pp. 284-5.

[5]The Waning of the Middle Ages, tr. F. Hopman (London, 1924), p. 47.

[6]"Class Distinctions in Chaucer", Speculum, 43 (1968), 304. It is interesting to note that Puttenham presumed both Chaucer and Gower to have been knights; see The Arte of English Poesie, ed. G. D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge, 1936), p. 60.

[7]For early attempts to identify a real-life original see A. S. Cook, The Historical Background of Chaucer's Knight (New Haven, 1916), pp. 77-8.

[8]Cook cites the future Henry IV and his grandfather (Historical Background, pp. 52, 77). See also his "Beginning the Board in Prussia", JEGP, 14 (1915), 375-88, and Claire-

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Eliane Engel, "Les Croisades du Chevalier", Revue des Sciences Humaines, n.s. no. 120 (1965), 577-85. J. M. Manly drew a parallel with three contemporary crusaders named Scrope, one of whom Chaucer definitely knew, in "A Knight Ther Was", Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 38 (1907), 89-107 (repr. in E. Wagenknecht, ed., Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism (New York, 1959), pp. 46-59). Z. S. Fink criticised the search for a single original, arguing that the large number of candidates "provides us with good reasons for minimising rather than emphasising the element of idealisation in Chaucer's Knight" ("Another Knight Ther Was", PQ, 17 (1938), 321-30). Jill Mann has claimed that the search for real-life models is unrewarding "not because of the impossibility of finding any real four-teenth century knights whose careers are similar, but on the contrary because of the frequency with which suitable candi-dates present themselves." She suggests that Chaucer's aim "is not to impart knowledge of a particular career, but rather to introduce references to as many campaigns and battles as possible so that the accumulation of examples may suggest a whole professional world" (Chaucer and Medieval Estates Sat-ire: the Literature of Social Classes and the "General Pro-logue" to the "Canterbury Tales" (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 11, 110-11. On literary sources for the portrait see Schofield, Chivalry in English Literature, pp. 30-3; Bowden, A Commen-tary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (2nd ed.; New York, 1967), pp. 46-9; F. E. Bryant, "Did Boccaccio Suggest the Character of Chaucer's Knight?", MLN, 17 (1902), 470-1.

[9] "A Knight Ther Was", 107.

[10] The Triumph of English, 1350-1400 (London, 1969), p. 73.

[11] "A Knight Ther Was".

[12] "Humor in the Knight's Tale", ChauR, 3 (1968-9), 88-94. Cf. William Frost's comment that the Knight has a "pious and logical mind"--Christian, chivalric and heroic--but a tendency to charming ingenuousness which leads him into un-witting irony ("An Interpretation of Chaucer's Knight's Tale", RES, 25 (1949), 290-304, repr. in R. J. Schoeck and J. Taylor, eds., Chaucer Criticism (Notre Dame, Ind., 1960), I, 98-116). See also Judith Herz's comment that the Knight in his tale is limited by "the assumptions of chronicle history" ("Chaucer's Elegiac Knight", Criticism, 6 (1964), 223).

[13] Artistic Ambivalence in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale"

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(Gainesville, Fla., 1968), pp. x, 80, 227-9.

[14] "Chaucer's Precarious Knight", in Charles A. Huttar, ed., Imagination and the Spirit: Essays in Literature and the Christian Faith Presented to Clyde S. Kilby (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971), p. 100.

[15] "The Worthiness of Chaucer's Knight", MLQ, 25 (1964), 66-75. Mitchell argues that the Squire embodies chivalry's vanity, self-indulgence and materialism, while the Prioress foolishly aspires to be the kind of romance heroine for whom the chivalric man would fight. The Knight's courtesy is thus brought into question by its association with the Squire, the Prioress and eventually even the Friar, while his worthiness is equally ambiguous because it is a quality ascribed also to the Friar, the Merchant, the Franklin and the Wife of Bath. This is a rather heavy-handed treatment of Chaucer's irony. On the question of the Knight's career as a mercenary see also Edmund Reiss, "Chaucer's Parodies of Love", in Chaucer the Love Poet, ed. J. Mitchell and W. Provost (Athens, Ga., 1973), pp. 39-40. This dubious assumption is based on lines 64-6 of the General Prologue. (All citations of Chaucer's works refer to The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson [2nd ed.; Boston, 1957].)

[16] "Literary and Historical Researches Respecting Chaucer's Knight and Squire", DAI, 33 (1972), 1677A (Pennsylvania).

[17] Dimarco, pp. 294-5, 305-8, 317.

[18] Dimarco, pp. 329-57. This argument ignores the unstabilising effect on the situation in the Near East of the rise of Timur (Tamburlaine). A. S. Atiya comments: "If the Crusade of Nicopolis...had been postponed for six years until the time of the battle of Angora (1402), the power of the Ottomans might have been wrecked for ever, and--who knows?-- the dream of uniting the forces of the West and the Far East in conjunction with Timur the Tatar against the Mamluks realised and the Holy Land regained for Latin Christianity... The failure of this movement was not entirely due to the Mongol adoption of Islam as their state religion, but...rather to the inability of the crusading countries to take united action at the right moment" (The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages (2nd ed.; New York, 1965), pp. 22, 24). For a similar view see J. J. N. Palmer, England, France and Christendom, 1377-1399 (London, 1972), p. 207.

[19] See Dimarco, pp. 359-91.

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[20]Dimarco, pp. 29-40, 53-8, 68, 93-111.

[21]Dimarco, pp. 114-5. For a more convincing interpretation of Theseus's willingness to listen to advice see R. S. Haller, "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", ChauR, 1 (1966), 81-4.

[22]A Reader's Guide, pp. 19, 42-4, 177, 182.

[23]Ibid., p. 45.

[24]Ibid., p. 20.

[25]Ibid., pp. 40-1.

[26]Ibid., pp. 35-6.

[27]"The Philosophical Knights of The Canterbury Tales", South Atlantic Quarterly, 64 (1965), 99. See also his A Knyght There Was: the Evolution of the Knight in Literature (Lexington, Ky., 1967), pp. 78-93. For a somewhat similar approach see Gervase Mathew, "Marriage and Amour Courtois in Late 14th Century England", in H. Newstead, ed., Chaucer and his Contemporaries: Essays on Medieval Literature and Thought (New York, 1968), pp. 104-11.

[28]Chivalry in English Literature, pp. 26-35, 47 ff..

[29]Fleming identifies the source of some of the Squire's accomplishments in the God of Love's advice to Amant in the Roman de la Rose ("Chaucer's Squire, the Roman de la Rose, and the Romaunt", N&Q, n.s. 14 (1967), 48-9). For a concurring interpretation of the passage see Chauncey Wood, "The Significance of Jousting and Dancing as Attributes of Chaucer's Squire", English Studies, 52 (1971), 116-8. Cf. the claim of E. P. Kuhl and H. J. Webb that the Squire is "in the great tradition, worthy to follow in the footsteps of his father, the 'parfit knyght'" ("Chaucer's Squire", ELH, 6 (1939), 284).

[30]Marie Neville claimed that the Squire, out of caste loyalty, reasserts the chivalric ideals discredited by the Wife and the Merchant, to whose tales his own is in the sharpest contrast "in its attention to the niceties of the chivalric code, in its insistence on seemliness, compassion, and the other obligations of the gently born" ("The Function of the Squire's Tale in the Canterbury Scheme", JEGP, 50 (1951), 177). The "chivalric code" referred to here appears to be the same nebulous mixture of qualities advanced by Muriel Bowden. A more persuasive interpretation of the dramatic context of the tale is that of Joyce Peterson, who concludes that "in the

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effort to dissociate himself and Courtly Love from the Mer-
chant's crude caricature, the Squire has exposed his own
spiritual anarchy. His misuse of the fable has underlined
the carnality he was attempting to deny, and he has demon-
strated the perniciousness of his kind of gentilesse" ("The
Finished Fragment: A Reassessment of the Squire's Tale",
ChauR, 5 (1970), 74). Robert Haller comments that "unlike his
father the Knight, whose ordered vision of the world allows
him to tell a tale in which all of the narrative devices illus-
trate an order, the Squire is as disordered philosophically as
he is poetically" ("Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Uses of
Rhetoric", MP, 62 (1965), 293). D. A. Pearsall comes to similar
conclusions in "The Squire as Story-Teller", UTQ, 34 (1964),
82-92. John P. McCall attributes the tale's incongruities to
the fact that the Squire has "the trappings of nobility without
the practice; he knows the theories of knighthood, art and love,
but his performance is still adolescent and immature" ("The
Squire in Wonderland", ChauR, 1 (1966), 109).

[31]"Thematic Relationships between Chaucer's Squire's
Portrait and Tale and the Knight's Portrait and Tale", Studies
in Medieval Culture, 4, part 3 (1974), 452-8.

[32]"Chaucer's Elegiac Knight", 212-24.

[33]History of English Literature, tr. H. M. Kennedy
(New York, 1889), I, 226. See also M. Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer
of England (New York, 1946), pp. 50-2.

[34]Oeuvres de Froissart, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove
(Brussels, 1867-77), I, 418-9.

[35]Chaucer's London (New York, 1968), pp. 3-4, 136-9,
154, 217-8. For the Squire's involvement in the 1383 expedition
see Alan Gaylord, "A85-8: Chaucer's Squire and the Glorious
Campaign", Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and
Letters, 45 (1960), 341-61.

[36]"Thematic Relations between Chaucer's Squire's Por-
trait and Tale and the Knight's Portrait and Tale", 458.

[37]"Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Decline of Chivalry",
ChauR, 7 (1973), 194-209.

[38]"The Canterbury Tales and Late Fourteenth Century
Chivalry: Literary Stylization and Historical Idealism", DA,
27 (1966-7), 456A (Nebraska). Parts of this argument are
published in the article, "Thematic Relationships", mentioned
above, and others in "Chaucer's Crusading Knight, a Slanted
Ideal", ChauR, 3 (1968), 77-87, and "Chauntiçleer and the Monk,

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Two False Knights", PLL, 3, supplement (1967), 31-9.

[39]Hatton subscribes to some extent to the idea that knighthood was in practice in a state of decline resulting from specific and unique historical circumstances (as distinct from the general tendency for practice to fall short of ideal-ism); he claims that "most writers saw the problem of chiv-alric degeneration as more real and pressing than ever before." Yet, as he justly points out, medieval writers "did not pos-tulate changes in the ideal to adapt it to the changed con-ditions. Instead they called for changes in men's attitudes and practices to make the ideal once more viable." He concedes that the social ills of the 14th century would not in fact have been cured by a reformation of chivalric practice, but explains that people of the time inevitably sought help from a supposed past golden age ("The Canterbury Tales", pp. 27-8, 60).

[40]Ibid., pp. 7-18.

[41]Ibid., pp. 61-84. See also "Chaucer's Crusading Knight, a Slanted Ideal". One might of course object that if Chaucer believed the failures in the war with France were partly the responsibility of unsatisfactory and outmoded knights, it is questionable whether he would have seriously believed in the feasibility of plans to employ these same knights in a great crusade enterprise. It is also likely that if Chaucer had a keen eye for knightly failures he would have realised how dismal was the performance of most of the knights who took part in Peter of Cyprus's expeditions. Hatton's analysis of the impact of political events on crusade plans is, however, supported and more fully documented by Palmer in England, France and Christendom. Palmer points out that the war was the most potent factor preventing the ending of the Schism (rather than the other way round), and that only England and France were equipped to lead a counter-offensive against the rapid and alarming success of the Ottomans. By 1395 the restoration of Catholic unity and the dispatch of a crusade were generally agreed throughout Europe to be the ultimate objectives of Anglo-French negotiations, and Mézières' writings on the crusades appeared in response to hopes raised by periodic truces. Three of the four 'evangelists' of his projected order were used as intermediaries between the two courts, and peace conferences were always connected with crusade proposals. Palmer believes that a Christian victory at Nicopolis "might very easily have led to the complete expulsion of the Ottomans from Europe" (p. 207).

[42]R. S. Loomis suggested long ago that the listing of

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campaigns exclusively against pagans in the Knight's portrait
indicated Chaucer's disapproval of secular wars generally
("Was Chaucer a Laodicean?", Essays and Studies in Honor of
Carleton Brown (New York, 1940), pp. 129-48; repr. in Schoeck
and Taylor, Chaucer Criticism, I, 291-310). The point was
disputed by G. Stillwell and H. J. Webb, who argued that the
Knight would have fought wherever his son did, the campaigns
being divided between father and son according to their
religious or national nature "on aesthetic grounds" only
("Chaucer's Knight and the Hundred Years' War", MLN, 59 (1944),
45-7). In the light of Gaylord's findings this seems unlikely,
though Gaylord remarks that "it would seem preposterous to
claim flatly that Chaucer made his ideal knight a crusader in
order to criticize covertly the English wars against the French
and the Spanish" ("Chaucer's Squire and the Glorious Campaign",
360). The further point that Loomis makes is that the Knight's
portrait is evidence of Chaucer's Lollard sympathies. The
argument depends heavily on the assumption that the knights
who were Chaucer's friends were Lollards, a belief convincing-
ly challenged by M. T. Waugh, "The Lollard Knights", Scottish
Historical Review, 11 (1913), 55-92.

[43]"The Canterbury Tales", pp. 124-7.

[44]Ibid., pp. 126-7. The two main political allusions
Hatton suggests must of course be considered quite separate,
since in terms of the tale they are not compatible. Further
topical allusions, also scarcely satisfactory, are identified
by Hatton in the "Monk's Tale" and the "Franklin's Tale" (pp.
146-7, 182-3).

[45]Cf. J. L. Hotson's suggestion that the "Melibee" was
written to dissuade John of Gaunt from invading Castile in
1386 ("The Tale of Melibeus and John of Gaunt", SP, 18 (1921),
429-52), which was dismissed by W. W. Lawrence. Lawrence
argued that "to conclude that John of Gaunt would have been
moved by close translation of a popular and well-known work,
written in the preceding century, and containing nothing
pointing directly to the invasion of Castile, is to attribute
to that robust hero a supernormal sensitiveness" ("The Tale
of Melibeus", Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown,
pp. 100-1). Stillwell argued that the tale shows support for
Richard II's peace policy towards the war with France, but
provided no compelling evidence ("The Political Meaning of
Chaucer's Tale of Melibee", Speculum, 19 (1944), 433-44). See
also John Barnie, War in Medieval Society: Social Values and
the Hundred Years War, 1337-99 (London, 1974), pp.132-3.

[46]"The Canterbury Tales", pp. 134-47, 153-64. On the
Monk as a parody of knighthood see R. E. Kaske, "The Knight's
Interruption of the Monk's Tale", ELH, 24 (1957), 249-68. For
an opposing view of the interruption see Dean Ebner, "Chaucer's
Precarious Knight", 87-92.

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[47] _Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire_, pp. 106-20.

[48] Mann, p. 115.

[49] Mann, pp. 116-7, 119-20.

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[1] For references to early studies of chivalry see R. Barber, _The Knight and Chivalry_ (London, 1970), p. 351, and F. J. C. Hearnshaw, "Chivalry and Its Place in History", in E. Prestage, ed., _Chivalry: a Series of Studies to Illustrate Its Historical Significance and Civilizing Influence_ (New York, 1928), pp. 34-5.

[2] See, for example, E. A. Freeman, _The History of the Norman Conquest of England_, V (Oxford, 1876), 47-9, 482; J. R. Green, _A Short History of the English People_ (New York, 1882), p. 203. See also Thomas Bulfinch, _The Age of Chivalry; or Legends of King Arthur_, repr. in _Bulfinch's Mythology_ (New York: Carlton House, n.d.), p. 304; J. A. Symonds, _An Introduction to the Study of Dante_ (London, 1893), pp. 255-6; Hearnshaw, "Chivalry and Its Place in History", pp. 1-35; H. O. Taylor, _The Mediaeval Mind: a History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages_ (4th ed.; Cambridge, Mass., 1925), I, 522.

[3] A. P. Stanley, _The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D._ (London, 1844), I, 245-6.

[4] See L. Gautier, _La Chevalerie_, ed. J. Levron (Paris, 1959; originally published 1884), pp. 35-52. See also Symonds, _Introduction to the Study of Dante_, pp. 257-9.

[5] Taylor, _The Mediaeval Mind_; Cohen, _Histoire de la chevalerie_ (Paris, 1949); Painter, _French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Mediaeval France_ (Baltimore, 1940).

[6] See Huizinga, "The Political and Military Significance of Chivalric Ideas in the Late Middle Ages", in his _Men and Ideas_, tr. J. S. Holmes and H. van Marle (New York, 1959), pp. 196-206, and _The Waning of the Middle Ages_, pp. 47 ff.. For Huizinga's wider argument about culture of this kind as 'play' see _Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture_ (Boston, 1955). The quotation from Borst is in "Das Rittertum

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in Hochmittelalter, Idee und Wirklichkeit", Saeculum, 10
(1959), 214; that by Rocher is in "'Chevalerie' et Littérature
'Chevaleresque'", Etudes Germaniques, 21 (1966), 165.

[7]"'Chevalerie' et Littérature 'Chevaleresque'", 178.

[8]See, for instance, G. Ehrismann, "Die Grundlagen
der ritterlichen Tugendsystem", ZDA 56 (1919), 137-216;
Gervase Mathew, "Ideals of Knighthood in Late Fourteenth-Cen-
tury England", in Studies in Medieval History Presented to
Frederick Maurice Powicke, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and
R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948), pp. 354-62; Eduard Neumann,
"Der Streit um das ritterliche Tugendsystem", Erbe der
Vergangenheit: Festgabe für Karl Helm (Tübingen, 1951), pp.
137-55. For further comments on the controversy described
by Neumann see Henry Kratz, Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival:
an Attempt at a Total Evaluation (Bern, 1973), pp. 449-52.

[9]European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, tr.
W. R. Trask (London, 1953), p. 535.

[10]Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12 und 13 Jahrhundert
(Heidelberg, 1964).

[11]"'Chevalerie' et Littérature 'Chevaleresque'", Etudes
Germaniques, 21 (1966), 167-8, 178-9; 23 (1968), 348-56.

[12]French Chivalry, p. 149. The most recent attempt
to give an account of the whole subject is that of Barber in
The Knight and Chivalry, which usefully summarises a large
body of relevant material. A recent popular account of
conventional ideas about the history of chivalry is Raymond
Rudorff's The Knights and Their World (London, 1974).

[13]See John Barnie, War in Medieval Society: Social
Values and the Hundred Years War, 1337-99 (London, 1974), pp.
56-8.

[14]See, for example, F. Warre Cornish, Chivalry, pp.
325-7; P. Lacroix, Military and Religious Life in the Middle
Ages and at the Period of the Renaissance (London, 1874), pp.
138-9; Gautier, La Chevalerie, pp. 53-6; R. L. Kilgour, The
Decline of Chivalry as Shown in the French Literature of the
Late Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), passim.

[15]See Lynn White, Jr., Medieval Technology and Social
Change (Oxford, 1962), pp. 3-11.

[16]White, p. 28.

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[17]See C. W. C. Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages, A.D. 378-1515*, rev. and ed. J. H. Beeler (Ithaca, 1953; originally published 1885), pp. 10-26.

[18]See Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, tr. L. A. Manyon (London, 1961), pp. 147-75.

[19]Bloch, pp. 312-6.

[20]Oman, p. 26.

[21]See Michael Powicke, *Military Obligation in Medieval England: a Study in Liberty and Duty* (Oxford, 1962), esp. pp. 30-7; A. L. Poole, *Obligations of Society in the XII and XIII Centuries* (Oxford, 1946), p. 52; J. Boussard, "Les Mercenaires au XIIe siècle", *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole de Chartres*, 106 (1945-6), 189-224; H. J. Hewitt, *The Organisation of War under Edward III* (Manchester, 1966), p. 95.

[22]See Barber, *The Knight and Chivalry*, pp. 190-1.

[23]See Oman, pp. 67-72; Barber, pp. 191-2; M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1965), p. 131.

[24]See A. E. Prince, "The Army and the Navy", in *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336*, I (Washington, 1940), pp. 336-52; May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 234-41.

[25]See A. T. Hatto, "Archery and Chivalry: a Noble Prejudice", *MLR*, 35 (1940), 40-54.

[26]See Lynn White, p. 35.

[27]See, for example, the section on knights in the very popular *Chessbook* (*Solacium ludi scacorum sive Liber de moribus hominum*, c. 1275) of Jacobus de Cessolis; in Caxton's translation, *Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse, 1474: a Verbatim Reprint of the First Edition*, with an introd. by W. E. A. Axon (London, 1883), see book II, ch. 4. See also Honoré Bonet, *Tree of Battles* [Arbre des Batailles], tr. G. W. Coopland (Liverpool, 1949), p. 121.

[28]Oman, pp. 59-60. For modifications of this view see Barber, p. 190; Huizinga, *Waning*, p. 88.

[29]*Laws of War*, p. 130.

[30]*Gesta Regis Ricardi*, in *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis: the Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I...; known commonly under the name of Benedict of Peterborough*, ed. W. Stubbs (London [Rolls Series, no. 49],

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1867), II, 186. See also Rudorff, The Knights and Their World, pp. 67-70.

[31]Verbruggen, "La Tactique militaire des armées de chevaliers", Revue du Nord, 29 (1947), 161-80; White, p. 35.

[32]See, for example, Hearnshaw, p. 26.

[33]See Bloch, pp. 325-9.

[34]See Cohen, pp. 37-8. Merchants aspiring to knighthood were usually admitted only for reasons of military exigency. In such cases the requirements of birth were set aside by formal dispensation, and the kings gradually asserted a royal prerogative over the frequently lucrative right to do so (see Bloch, pp. 320-5). L. Foulet notes examples of bourgeois knights in France in the 13th century, and quotes a reference by the 14th-century chronicler Jean le Bel to "chevaliers nobles et non nobles" ("Sire, Messire", Romania, 72 (1951), 76-7).

[35]F. M. Stenton, The First Century of English Feudalism, 1066-1166 (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1961), pp. 143-5; Bloch, p. 170; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 30-7. The cniht was originally a youth or servant, and hence the word was applied to a retainer in the personal service of a nobleman. These Anglo-Saxon cnihtas fought on foot, but after the Conquest the term became identified with the Norman chevaler. Cniht and chevaler were translated into Latin as miles.

[36]See F. M. Nichols, "On Feudal and Obligatory Knighthood", Archaeologia, 39 (1862), 189-244. Stenton, however, notes that the addition of the word miles to names in legal documents as a mark of distinction was not usual until the 13th century (First Century, pp. 142-3n.).

[37]See I. J. Sanders, Feudal Military Service in England: a Study of the Constitutional and Military Powers of the Barones in Medieval England (London, 1956), pp. 89-90.

[38]For this complicated process see Sir Maurice Powicke, The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307 (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1962), pp. 543-4; A. H. Noyes, The Military Obligation in Medieval England (Columbus, Ohio, 1930); Powicke, Military Obligation; A. E. Prince, "The Indenture System under Edward III", in Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait (Manchester, 1933), pp. 283-97.

[39]Powicke, Military Obligation, p. 26; Poole, pp. 40-1; Sanders, p. 51; J. O. Prestwich, "War and Finance in the Early Norman State", Transactions of the Royal Historical

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Society, 5th Series, 4 (1954), 19-43.

[40]See Bloch, pp. 220-4; Painter, French Chivalry, p. 15.

[41]Powicke, Thirteenth Century, pp539-41; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 70-2; Poole, pp. 36, 45-6.

[42]See Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 108-17; Powicke, Thirteenth Century, p. 548.

[43]See Powicke, Thirteenth Century, pp. 546-7, 552-3; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 71-9, 103; Sanders,p.91; W. Stubbs, The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development (5th ed.; Oxford, 1926-9), III, 563-4; Noyes,p.208.

[44]See N. Denholm-Young, "Feudal Society in the Thirteenth Century: the Knights", History, 29 (1944), 119; Prince, "Indenture System", pp. 283-97.

[45]See Denholm-Young, "Feudal Society", 118; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 107-8, 170-2; R. S. Loomis, "Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations of Arthurian Romance", in Medieval Studies in Memory of A. K. Porter, ed. W. R. W. Koehler (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), I, 79-97.

[46]See Bloch, pp. 330-1.

[47]See R. B. Dobson, The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 (London, 1970), p. 107.

[48]See Michael Powicke, "The English Aristocracy and the War", in The Hundred Years War, ed. K. Fowler (London, 1971), pp. 126-7; Military Obligation, p. 171; Powicke, Thirteenth Century, pp. 551-2; Stubbs, Constitutional History, III, 565-8.

[49]"Feudal Society", 110-2. Poole's estimate (p. 36) is higher but much vaguer. Sir M. Powicke notes that the theoretical number of knight's-fees due to the King was more than twice as large as the estimated number of "potential" knights in this period (Thirteenth Century,p.541n.). See also D. Hay, Europe in the 14th and 15th Centuries (London, 1966), p. 69.

[50]See E. F. Jacob, "The Beginnings of Medieval Chivalry", in Chivalry, ed. Prestage, p. 53; Poole,pp.53-6; Denholm-Young, "Feudal Society", 114; R. F. Trefarne, "The Knights in the Period of Reform and Rebellion, 1258-1267: a Critical Study in

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the Rise of a New Class", Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research, 21 (1946), 1-12.

[51] See G. Lapsley, "Knights of the Shire in the Parliaments of Edward II", English Historical Review, 34 (1919), esp. 34-42; Powicke, Thirteenth Century, p. 542n..

[52] Rotuli Parliamentorum (1272-1503), ed. J. Strachey and others, V (London, 1767), 116. See McKisack, pp. 188-9; Stubbs, Constitutional History, III, 410-6; Powicke, Military Obligation, p. 175.

[53] See A. B. Ferguson, The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism (Durham, N.C., 1960), p. 116; Hay, Europe, p. 63; Barber, p. 21; Stubbs, Constitutional History, III, 569.

[54] See Robertson, Chaucer's London, p. 119; M. M. Postan, "Some Social Consequences of the Hundred Years War", Economic History Review, 12 (1942), 6; L. Foulet, "Sire, Messire", Romania, 72 (1951), 349. McKisack (p. 264) notes examples of the knighting of kinsmen of successful lawyers and influential bishops. See also G. G. Coulton, Chaucer and His England, p. 172.

[55] Oeuvres de Froissart, ed. K. de Lettenhove, IX, 415.

[56] See GP, 376; Robertson, Chaucer's London, pp. 4-5, 77-8; Sylvia Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300-1500) (Chicago, 1948), p. 18. Examples of the mingling of technically chivalric and non-chivalric classes are recorded by Bruce McCully in an unpublished Harvard dissertation of 1910, "Chivalry and Romance in 14th Century England", pp. 89-95. The assumption of a conflict of values between the merchant classes and the military nobility is made by G. Stillwell in his analysis of the 14th-century alliterative poem, Winner and Waster ("Wynnere and Wastoure and the Hundred Years War", ELH, 8 (1941), 241-7). For the poem itself see A Good Short Debate Between Winner and Waster, ed. I. Gollancz (2nd ed., rev. M. Day; London, 1930). In a recent study of the poem, however, Thomas Bestul concludes that the satire is more traditional than topical; it portrays a confrontation of the vices of avarice (Winner) and prodigality (Waster), and its comments on the King's extravagance are an aspect of totally conventional advice to (and complaint against) medieval kings (Satire and Allegory in 'Wynnere and Wastoure' [Lincoln, Neb., 1974]).

[57] See L. Foulet, "Sire, Messire", Romania, 72 (1951), 74; J. S. Roskell, The Commons in the Parliament of 1422

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(Manchester, 1954), p. 92; McCully , "Chivalry and Romance", pp. 86-7, 120-2.

[58] Oeuvres de Froissart, V, 289-95. Froissart offers no objection to the holding of a judicial duel between a squire and a knight (Oeuvres, XII, 29-39). According to Foulet's findings, strict distinctions were made between knights and squires only in occasional formal situations in the 14th century ("Sire, Messire", Romania, 72 (1951), 509).

[59] McKisack, p. 264.

[60] See Gervase Mathew, "Marriage and Amour Courtois in Late 14th Century England", pp. 104-11, and his The Court of Richard II (London, 1968), pp. 102 ff..

[61] Waning, pp. 58, 89-90; see also Bloch, p. 326; Barber, pp. 31-2.

[62] Quoted by Huizinga, Waning, p. 56. Hearnshaw (p. 28) notes that when Francis I made Henry VIII a member of a French order of knighthood he claimed Michael as the first knight.

[63] See the translation by Caxton, The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry, ed. A. T. P. Byles (London, 1926), p. 20. Lull's Libro de la Orden de Caballería was written in the late 13th century, and expanded in a 14th-century French translation, Lordre de chevalerie (ed. P. Allut, in his Etude biographique et bibliographique sur Symphorien Champier [Lyons, 1859]), which was well known in England and accurately translated by Caxton.

[64] Tree of Battles, p.100; MO, 23617-28. This and subsequent references to Gower's works are to The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford, 1899-1902).

[65] See R. S. Loomis, "The Heraldry of Hector, or Confusion Worse Confounded", Speculum, 42 (1967), 32-5.

[66] L'Epistre d'Othéa à Hector, ed. G. Campbell (Paris, 1924), purports to instruct the young Hector in matters of knighthood. The work was translated into English in the 15th century by Stephen Scrope (The Epistle of Othea, ed. C. F. Bühler [London, 1970]). See also the work of Christine de Pisan translated by Caxton as The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, ed. A. T. P. Byles (London, 1932), p. 12.

[67] Ordre of Chyualry, pp. 96, 101.

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[68] _The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances_, ed. H. O. Sommer (Washington, 1908-16), III, 113-4.

[69] Ed. W. Foerster (Halle, 1884), lines 30-5.

[70] C, II, 102-5. This and subsequent references to Piers Plowman are to _The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, in three parallel texts_, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1886).

[71] Ed. A. Longnon (Paris, 1895-9), lines 9130-1.

[72] See, for example, J. G. Mann, "Instances of Antiquarian Feeling in Medieval and Renaissance Art", _Archaeological Journal_, 89 (1932), 254-74.

[73] See, for example, Huizinga, _Waning_, pp. 59-60.

[74] Matt. 8:9; 27:27, in _The New Testament in English According to the Version by John Wycliffe_, ed. J. Forshall and Sir F. Madden (Oxford, 1850). In English the words 'knighthode' and 'chevalrie' were regularly used in reference to soldiers and military activity generally, as well as in more restricted senses. The _MED_ gives approximately the following meanings of 'chevalrie' in the late 14th century: 1. A body or host of armoured, mounted warriors or knights serving an overlord. 2. The nobility (knights and their superiors) as a social class or estate. 3. Knighthood as a ceremonially conferred rank, as in the order of chivalry. 4. Warfare, war enterprise or feat; prowess or skill in war. 5. The ethical code of chivalry, typically comprising such qualities as allegiance, honour, valour, generosity, courtly manner. Two basic senses of 'knighthode' are distinguished, each with several sub-divisions: 1. (a) Active military service, military operations, warfare, fighting. (b) Body of knights, soldiers, an army. (c) Military training, soldiering. (d) Skill in fighting, fighting ability, prowess, courage. 2. (a) Rank or status of a knight. (b) A particular knightly order. (c) The knights as a class, the aristocracy. (d) Qualities or actions befitting a knight, the knightly ideal, nobility of conduct, courtesy. The two main senses of 'knight' are: 1. A noble warrior; a member of the land-holding class, owing service to his lord and fighting on horseback; one who had received the status of knight from the king or other important knight. 2. A soldier of Biblical or ancient times; (fig.) a fighter in God's cause. On the subject of terminology see also Bumke, _Studien zum Ritterbegriff_, p. 69.

[75] See Ruth Mohl, _The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature_ (New York, 1933), pp. 277-80; John of

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Salisbury, Policraticus, book VI, tr. J. Dickinson as The Statesman's Book of John of Salisbury (New York, 1927), p. 190.

[76]See Keen, Laws of War, pp. 56-9.

[77]The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance (Durham, N.C., 1965), p. 57.

[78]See, for example, Kilgour, Decline of Chivalry, ch. 7.

[79]"'The Unknightly Knight': Anti-Chivalric Satire in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century English Literature", DAI, 32 (1972), 5742A (Texas). See pp. 192-3.

[80]Indian Summer, p. 143; see also Eugene Vinaver, Malory (Oxford, 1929), p. 64.

[81]Ordre of Chyualry, p. 122.

[82]For a list of 15th-century translations of chivalric manuals see Ferguson, Indian Summer, p. 5n.; see also Diane Bornstein, "The Chivalric Manual in 15th-Century England", DA, 31 (1971), 6540A (New York).

[83]Ordre of Chyualry, p. 52.

[84]Game and Playe of the Chesse, pp. 176, 160.

[85]See Anthony Steel, Richard II (London, 1941), p. 41; Oeuvres de Froissart, XVI, 199-200.

[86]See, for example, Gower's "Sunt Clerus, Miles, Cultos, tres trina gerentes;/Hic docet, hic pugnat, alter et arua colit" (VC, III, 1-2). For other examples of this common formulation see E. Kennedy, "Social and Political Ideas in the French Prose Lancelot", MAE, 26 (1957), 101-2.

[87]See Mohl, passim; Ferguson, Indian Summer, p. 134. For examples of estate formulations which approach more nearly the diversity of social roles see the list presented by Jill Mann in Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire, pp. 203-6. Merchants and tradesmen presented an obvious problem in the tripartite scheme. G. R. Owst cites a 14th-century MS. which claims that God made the clergy, knights and labourers, but the devil made the burghers and usurers (Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1966), pp. 553-4).

[88]See, for example, Bonet, Tree of Battles, p. 114; Sommer, Vulgate Version, III, 113-4; Mohl, p.277. Gower was to some extent aware of the discrepancy between the order of

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knighthood and the idea of the knight as exemplar of secular authority. Although occasionally using the latter concept, he declared at one point that knighthood is not an estate but an order (MO, 23593-604).

[89] Select English Works of John Wyclif, ed. Thomas Arnold (Oxford, 1869-71), III, 130, 143, 145. In certain situations the tripartite formula was susceptible to the pressures of social reality: a sermon delivered before parliament in 1433 grouped the nobility and the bishops together in the first of the three estates, and relegated the knights to the second, along with esquires and merchants. Such a procedure was, however, exceptional. See Ferguson, Indian Summer, p. 134.

[90] Statesman's Book, p. 203. See also the Lady of the Lake's comment, Sommer, III, 115.

[91] See, for example, Ordre of Chyualry, pp. 20, 31; Game and Playe of the Chesse, pp. 53-4; Wyclif, Select Eng. Works, III, 145. Piers Plowman approves of hunting by knights for agricultural reasons (C, IX, 28-31), while Christine de Pisan warns the young knight against too much hunting in Othea, section 63.

[92] Tree of Battles, p. 213. Cf. a passage from the 14th-century religious treatise Speculum Christiani, where the miles Christi is described in terms normally applied to the good judge: "Cristes knyght goo3 bi gud loos and euyl fame of the ryght syde and of the lefte syde. He is not proude of praysynge, ne he is broken by blamynge" (ed. G. Holmstedt (London, 1933), p. 236, lines 30-3).

[93] Ed. A. J. Perry (London, 1925).

[94] Histoire de la chevalerie, p. 39.

[95] See The Articulate Citizen, pp. 61-6.

[96] See Ferguson, Indian Summer, pp. 111-2; Keen, Laws of War, p. 133; Robertson, Chaucer's London, p. 4.

[97] The injunction to defend orphans and widows originates with James 1:27, and was included in various liturgical accretions to the knighting ceremony. See the examples of the "benedictio armorum" in Monumenta Liturgica, PL, 138, cols. 1121-4. The knight is to be the "defensio atque protectio... ecclesiarum, viduarum, orphanorum, omniumque servientium, contra saevitiam pagorum" (col. 1121).

[98] Indian Summer, pp. 106-10, 125. The idea did not

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always command acceptance: Gower protested that since knights should be fighters they should be exempt from civil duties, such as service on a "commun enquerrement" (MO, 23761-72).

[99]For an example of this very common sentiment see VC, V, 469 ff..

[100]See R. W. Ackerman, "The Knighting Ceremonies in the Middle English Romances", Speculum, 19 (1944), 285; McCully, "Chivalry and Romance", p. 183.

[101]Ordre of Chyualry, introd. and p. 57. For the general principle see Mohl, pp. 332-9. Bromyard compared society to a harp, where each string must keep its correct place and length (Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p. 558).

[102]A Poem on the Times of Edward II, ed. C. Hardwick (London, 1839), st. 52. For other contemporary examples of this see Thomas W. Ross's introduction to "A Satire of Edward II's England": a Critical Edition (Colorado Springs, 1966), pp. 46-7.

[103]The Life and Feats of Arms of Edward the Black Prince, ed. Francisque-Michel (London and Paris, 1883), esp. lines 65-88, 1616-27. For the association of largesse with chivalry, see Marian P. Whitney, "Queen of Medieval Virtues: Largesse", in Vassar Medieval Studies, ed. C. F. Friske (New Haven, 1923), pp. 181-215.

[104]For examples see Painter, French Chivalry, pp. 56-7. That virtues like courtesy in a chivalric context were not, however, always restricted to questions of social demeanour is clear from a number of medieval texts; see, for example, the early 13th-century poem, "Les Ailes de prouesse", by Raoul de Houdenc (quoted by Cohen, Histoire de chevalerie, pp. 149-50): the 'wing' of "courtoisie" contains several feathers, symbolising such things as the duty "d'honorer toujours sainte Eglise".

[105]Le Livre de chevalerie, in Oeuvres de Froissart, ed. K. de Lettenhove, I, part iii, p. 480. See also Mathew, "Ideals of Knighthood in Late 14th-Century England", pp. 61-2.

[106]Livre de chevalerie, p. 528; Ordre of Chyualry, p. 113.

[107]Lines 467-70 (Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama, ed. J. M. Manly (Boston, 1897), I, pp. 368-9.

[108]Vegetius's De re militari was the most influential military treatise in the western world from Roman times until

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the 19th century. See Flavius Vegetius Renatus, The Military Institutions of the Romans, tr. J. Clark, ed. T. R. Phillips (Harrisburg, Pa., 1960). The treatise was widely used by medieval writers. Jean de Meun translated it, and his translation was versified by a contemporary, Jean Priorat. For details of other French medieval translations of Vegetius see Christine Knowles, "A 14th Century Imitator of Jean de Meung: Jean de Vignay's Translation of the De Re Militari of Vegetius", SP, 53 (1956), 452-8. There is also a Middle English verse translation, Knyghthode and Bataile, ed. R. Dyboski and Z. M. Arend (London, 1935).

[109] See Military Institutions, bk. I.

[110] Statesman's Book, esp. p. 183.

[111] See Christine's Fayttes of Armes, pp. 29-30, and the discussion of Bonet's L'Apparicion Maistre Jehan de Meun in R. L. Kilgour, "Honoré Bonet: a 14th Century Critic of Chivalry", PMLA, 50 (1935), 358-61. See also Kilgour's account of Jean Gerson's attack on contemporary knighthood as lacking peasant qualities of stamina in a sermon of 1405 (Decline of Chivalry, p. 183). Deschamps describes the ideal training of a knight as being a progression up through the ranks of the army, starting at the bottom with the archers ("Lay de vaillance", Oeuvres complètes, ed. G. Raynaud and Q. de St-Hilaire (Paris, 1878-1903), II, 216).

[112] Tree of Battles, p. 213. Geoffroi de Charny also denounces the debilitating effect on knights of physical comforts and luxuries (Livre de chevalerie, pp. 486-8).

[113] Ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1860), pp. 50-1. Philippe de Mézières in his Epistre lamentable, written after the defeat of the Nevers expedition at Nicopolis, despaired of the "orgueil, convoitise et luxure" of the nobles, and for recruitment to his new Order of the Passion put his faith in knights, squires, 'bourgeois' and merchants (see N. Jorga, Philippe de Mézières, 1327-1405, et la croisade au XIVe siècle (Paris, 1896), p. 501).

[114] Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England, tr. S. E. Thorne (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), II, 19.

[115] War in Medieval Society, p. 95.

[116] See also CA, III, 2285-90.

[117] Epistle of Othea, tr. Scrope, text 39.

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^{118}Ed. E. J. Arnould (Oxford, 1940). See Barnie, pp. 61-5.

^{119}V. J. Scattergood, "The Two Ways. An Unpublished Religious Treatise by Sir John Clanvowe", English Philological Studies, 10 (1967), p. 47, lines 458 ff..

^{120}Select Eng. Works, III, 139.

^{121}See, for example, CA, III, 2363 ff.; "Manciple's Tale", IX, 233 ff.. Alexander was also conventionally associated with the idea of magnanimitas, which presented an analogous problem and elicited similarly ambiguous responses; see Margaret Greaves, The Blazon of Honour: a Study in Renaissance Magnanimity (London, 1964), pp. 31-6.

^{122}PL, 207, cols. 293-7. See Owst, pp. 331, 336.

^{123}Mohl, pp. 346-55.

^{124}Owst, p. 407. See also The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-89), ed. M. A. Devlin (London, 1954), p. 261.

^{125}Fifteenth-Century Translations of Alain Chartier's "Le Traité de L'Esperance" and "Le Quadrilogue Invectif", ed. M. S. Blayney (London, 1974), p. 156.

^{126}Stanzas 50 and 56. For other examples see Bernard of Clairvaux, Ad Milites Templi de laude novae militiae liber, PL, 182, cols. 921-40; John of Salisbury, Statesman's Book, pp. 184, 238; Wyclif, Select Eng. Works, III, 145. For the attacks of preachers on the "varietas vestium" of knights, see Owst, pp. 332, 407. The author of Mum and the Sothsegger denounced the luxurious dress of Richard II's courtiers, and declared that lords should choose knights who are "sad of her sawis", tempered by suffering (ed. M. Day and R. Steele (London, 1936), book III, lines 110-206).

^{127}See Ross, "A Satire on Edward II's England", p. 46.

^{128}For examples of general attacks of this kind on knights and their current degeneracy, see Bernard of Clairvaux, PL, 182, cols. 923, 926; The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry, ed. T. F. Crane (London, 1890), p. 63; Owst, pp. 95-6, 331-8; A Poem on the Times of Edward II, stanzas 48-56; Ordre of Chyualry, pp. 44-6 (and Caxton's epilogue, p. 122); Fayttes of Armes, p. 25; Etienne de Fougères, Livre des manières, ed. J. Kremer (Marburg, 1887), p. 128; Alanus de Insulis, Summa de arte praedicatoria, ch. 40 (PL, 210, cols. 185-7); MO, 23665 ff.;

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VC, V, 497 ff.; Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne', ed. F. J.
Furnivall (London, 1901-3), lines 2264-5, 2275-8. See also
the 15th-century English translation of the Quadrilogue Invectif,
pp. 150-6, 166-8, 226-40. One of Chartier's four debaters,
however, is a knight, who defends his profession, blaming the
people's indiscipline and their refusal to pay for armies, and
pointing out that fighting is not easy, that it involves
great hardships, and that it sometimes calls for restraint
(which may appear to be cowardice) rather than immediate
action (pp. 174-94). References to other attacks on the
knights' "rapine, injustice and oppression" are given by
Jill Mann, p. 261 (n. 39). For the numerous attacks by
Deschamps and Chartier on the decadence of French knights,
see Kilgour, Decline of Chivalry, pp. 91-107, 198-206.
Robertson notes that Peter de la Mare deplored the degenerate
condition of English chivalry in a speech to the Commons in
1377 (Chaucer's London, p. 138). In the satirical poem, Le
Voeu du Héron, Edward III's knights are bitterly mocked--one
of them being commended for his feudal zeal in swearing to
kill all in his path in the coming war, sparing neither church
nor altar, pregnant woman or child (see B. J. Whiting, "The
Vows of the Heron", Speculum, 20 (1945), 261-78).

[129]De civitate dei, PL, 41, cols. 637-8. For the
development of the Church's attitude and the conflict between
pacific and militant views see Carl Erdmann, Die Entstehung
des Kreuzzugsgedankens (Stuttgart, 1935). For a typical
medieval expression of the Augustinian position see Gower's
In Praise of Peace, lines 65-9.

[130]Summa theologica, tr. Fathers of the English
Dominican Province (2nd ed.; London, 1921-32), part II, ii, q. 40,
art. 1. See also Bede Jarrett, Social Theories of the Middle
Ages, 1200-1500 (Westminster, Md., 1942), p. 206; Keen, Laws
of War, pp. 21-2, 65-7.

[131]For Christine de Pisan's discussion of the subject
see Fayttes of Armes, pp. 9-25.

[132]See Keen, Laws of War, passim; G. D. Squibb, The
High Court of Chivalry (Oxford, 1959), pp. 1-24.

[133]Keen, p. 185.

[134]Since the maintenance of the law of arms required
the mutual consent of kings to its validity there was little
point in attempting to decide legally the justice of individual
causes of war. In effect the issue at stake was that of who
had the right to declare war; the old feudal right of anybody
of noble status to carry on a private war was gradually

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restricted to sovereign princes alone. See Keen, pp. 68-81.

[135]See F. H. Cripps-Day, The History of the Tournament in England and France (London, 1918); N. Denholm-Young, "The Tournament in the Thirteenth Century", in Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke, pp. 240-68; Ruth Harvey, Moriz von Craûn and the Chivalric World (Oxford, 1961), pp. 122-207; Barber, pp. 153-88.

[136]See The Exempla...of Jacques de Vitry, pp. 62-4; Handlyng Synne, lines 4571-636; Owst, pp. 334-5; Painter, French Chivalry, p. 156.

[137]See Denholm-Young, "The Tournament", p. 241n..

[138]Quoted by Jarrett, Social Theories of the Middle Ages, pp. 192-3.

[139]Cited by H. J. Weigand, Wolfram's 'Parzival': Five Essays with an Introduction, ed. U. Hoffman (Ithaca, 1969), pp. 165-6.

[140]See Livre de chevalerie, p. 466; Deschamps, Oeuvres, II, 219; Barber, 187-8.

[141]Chaucer, p. 11. For the development of the tournament as a theatrical spectacle see Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages, 1300 to 1660 (London, 1959), I, 19-49.

[142]It was prohibited and never took place. The first 'Round Table' actually held in England was probably that at Walden in 1252, held in defiance of royal prohibition (see Denholm-Young, "The Tournament", pp. 254-5). R. S. Loomis finds records of 'Round Tables' held outside England as early as 1223 ("Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations of Arthurian Romance", pp. 79-97). The cult of Arthur was already flourishing enough to spill over into practical gestures when Richard I presented the sword 'Excalibur' to Tancred of Sicily (Denholm-Young, "The Tournament", p. 255). See also G. H. Gerould, "King Arthur and Politics", Speculum, 2 (1927), 33-51; R. S. Loomis, "Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast", Speculum, 28 (1953), 114-27.

[143]See Ruth H. Cline, "The Influence of Romances on the Tournaments of the Middle Ages", Speculum, 20 (1945), 204-11; E. Sandoz, "Tourneys in the Arthurian Tradition", Speculum, 19 (1944), 389-420; Cripps-Day, pp. 59-61, 83 ff.; Loomis, "Chivalric and Dramatic Imitations", pp. 82 ff.. For the conversion of the tournament into a complicated game with scoring systems etc., see Barber, pp. 166-9.

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[144]Painter, _French Chivalry_, pp. 57-8; Froissart, _Oeuvres_, V, 46-70; Chandos Herald, _Life and Feats of Arms_, lines 302-55.

[145]See Keen, _Laws of War_, pp. 123, 133, 155.

[146]See Huizinga, _Waning_, pp. 84-6.

[147]_Waning_, p. 56.

[148]_Oeuvres_, VIII, 41-2. Keen, however, points out that the Prince's behaviour at Limoges had a certain legal orthodoxy (_Laws of War_, pp. 121-33), and Barnie comments that it was by no means a unique occurrence (_War in Medieval Society_, pp. 77-9).

[149]_Life and Feats of Arms_, lines 236-9, 1616-33. Other examples of discrepancies in the chronicles between the behaviour of knights and political and military realities are recorded by Kilgour (_Decline of Chivalry_, pp. 7-11), who regards them as symptomatic of "the decay of the true chivalric ideal".

[150]_Oeuvres_, II, 1. On this subject see also Hatton, "The _Canterbury Tales_ and Late 14th-Century Chivalry", pp. 29-30, where the chronicles are compared to saints' lives in their purposes.

[151]_Life and Feats of Arms_, lines 302-55. By contrast, a recent study of John Barbour's _Bruce_ suggests that in that work the traditionally formalised elements in chivalric accounts of warfare were pushed into the background by Barbour's concern with other, irreconcilable aspects of the 14th-century wars between England and Scotland, especially his conception of the wars as part of a national struggle for freedom by the Scots. See Bernice W. Kliman, "The Idea of Chivalry in John Barbour's _Bruce_", _MS_, 35 (1973), 477-508.

[152]See _Mediaeval Mind_, I, 549-57.

[153]See S. Painter, _William Marshal_ (Baltimore, 1933), p. 289; cf. Barnie, pp. 75-6.

[154]Cuvelier, _Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin_, ed. E. Charrière (Paris, 1839); Deschamps, "Le Lay du tresbon connestable B. du Guesclin", _Oeuvres_, II, 324 ff.; Perroy, _The Hundred Years War_, tr. W. B. Wells (London, 1951), pp. 148-9. For a fairly uncritical view of Du Guesclin see E. V. Stoddard, _Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France: His Life_

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and Times (New York, 1897).

[155]Kindrick, "The Unknightly Knight", pp. 24-5; cf. Taylor, Mediaeval Mind, I, 528-9; Hearnshaw, pp. 5-10.

[156]Note, for instance, the Church's continual endeavours to enforce the "Peace of God" and "Truce of God": see Bloch, pp. 411 ff., and Frederic A. Ogg, ed., A Source Book of Medieval History (New York, 1907), pp. 228-9.

[157]Ordre of Chyualry, p. 25. For an account of some sermons which expounded the knight's religious duties see A. Lecoy de la Marche, La Chaire française au Moyen Age (2nd ed.; Paris, 1886), pp. 387 ff..

[158]Statesman's Book, pp. 190, 196-204. See also the Livre des manières of John's contemporary at the court of Henry II, Étienne de Fougères, pp. 119-43.

[159]See Ordre of Chyualry, pp. 25-7; Sommer, Vulgate Version, III, 114; Livre de chevalerie, p. 517; Mum and the Sothsegger, lines 1736-42; PP, C, XVIII, 289-93.

[160]See, for example, PL, 138, cols. 1121-4.

[161]Oeuvres, XV, 176-7.

[162]Ordre of Chyualry, ch. 6. See also L'Ordène de chevalerie, a 13th-century French poem in which a captive Christian explains to his Saracen captor the religious symbolism of the initiation rites and of the various stages of arming (Fabliaux et contes des poètes français, ed. Barbazan (Paris, 1808), I, 59-82). There are similar accounts in the Livre de chevalerie, pp. 514 ff., and Sommer, III, 115. For references to other accounts of the religious significance of knightly equipment, see P. Meyer, "Nouvelles catalanes inédites", Romania, 20 (1891), 579-80.

[163]"De armis sacerdotis", in Gemma animae, PL, 172, cols. 569-70. For further discussion of this kind of symbolism see section V, 3, below.

[164]See S. Armitage-Smith, John of Gaunt (London, 1904), pp. 168-71.

[165]Wills and Inventories Illustrative of the History, Manners, Language, Statistics etc. of the Northern Counties of England etc., ed. J. Raine (London, 1835), I, 71-2n..

[166]In Praise of Peace, lines 249-52. See Erdmann,

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Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens, pp. 312-3; Hearnshaw, pp. 7-9.

[167]A Poem on the Times of Edward II, stanza 49.

[168]Ordre of Chyualry, p. 91. See also Lecoy de la Marche, Chaire française, pp. 397-8. For further discussion of this subject see section III, 5, below.

[169]Information about the crusading orders is summarised by Barber, pp. 225-90. The idea of orders of chivalry within the order of chivalry was revived in the 14th and subsequent centuries for frankly symbolic reasons. Orders like the Garter (1348), the French Ordre de l'Etoile (1351-2), and the later Burgundian Golden Fleece, were founded as a means of furthering national unity, emphasising personal loyalty to the king or duke, and enhancing his prestige (see Barber, pp. 305-13; Huizinga, Waning, pp. 75-7). Although the highest ethical and religious ideals were announced at their founding, these orders show how chivalry could incorporate the new sense of patriotism and royalism. Chivalric enthusiasm pressed into the service of a nationalist policy is also a feature of The Boke of Noblesse; see Ferguson, Indian Summer, pp. 145-8.

[170]Luis Weckmann, "The Middle Ages in the Conquest of America", Speculum, 26 (1951), 131-2; Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 258-9. The Portuguese colonist Albuquerque proposed in 1513 an expedition via the Red Sea to capture Mohammed's body and demand in exchange for its release the temple at Jerusalem. See Anthony Luttrell, "The Crusade in the 14th Century", in Europe in the Late Middle Ages, ed. J. R. Hale, J. R. L. Highfield, B. Smalley (London, 1965), p. 154. Norman Daniel notes the enduring hold on the European imagination of the idea that the First Crusade was one of the greatest events in the world's history (The Arabs and Medieval Europe (London and Beirut, 1975), ch. 5).

[171]For eyewitness accounts of Urban's speech see D. C. Munro, ed., Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, series I, vol 1, no. 2 (rev. ed.; Philadelphia, 1902), pp. 2-3.

[172]Ad Milites Templi, PL, 182, cols. 921-40.

[173]Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature, tr. W. R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), pp. 116-7. For similar opinions see A. C. Gibbs,

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Middle English Romances (London, 1966), p. 6; J. Stevens,
Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches (London, 1973), pp.
106-7.

[174] In Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama, ed.
Manly, lines 199-203, 210-1, 331-2, 445-8.

[175] Lines 740-1, 746-50. The Macro Plays, ed. M. Eccles
(London, 1969), p. 25.

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[1] CM, lines 44, 75, 97-102, 130, 272-5.

[2] On the sea-fight, see the note in Robinson's edition,
p. 847. R. W. Frank comments that in the naval battle an
obvious chance for "chivalric" description is ignored: "At no
point do the values of chivalry emerge; there is no sense
that they control the scene" (Chaucer and the "Legend of
Good Women" (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 40-5). Frank's
discussion of chivalry in the poem is vitiated by a lack of
precision about what he means by the term.

[3] Frank (p. 105) asks why there is "no appeal to a
larger morality" than chivalry, and answers that the confron-
tation of Tarquin and Lucrece represents the opposition of
two codes, the "code of chivalry" and the "code of modesty".
I find this forced.

[4] "Troilus and Criseyde", in Companion to Chaucer
Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, 1968), pp. 373, 380.

[5] Chaucer's London, p. 221.

[6] A Knyght There Was, p. 80; "The Philosophical Knights
of The Canterbury Tales", 90.

[7] See Burrow, Ricardian Poetry, pp. 97-100.

[8] "The Philosophical Knights", 91-2.

[9] "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Knight's Tale", RES,
25 (1949), 302. For dissenting views see Peter G. Beidler,
"Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Its Teller", English Record, 18
(1968), 54-60; Paull F. Baum, Chaucer: a Critical Appreciation

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(Durham, N.C., 1958), p. 104.

[10]Brewer, Chaucer in His Time, p. 201; Bowden, Reader's Guide, p. 23; Schofield, Chivalry in English Literature, p. 40; Robertson, "Elements of Realism in the Knight's Tale", JEGP, 14 (1915), 226-55; Thurston, Artistic Ambivalence in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale", pp. 176 ff.. See also H. S. Wilson, "The Knight's Tale and the Teseida Again", UTQ, 18 (1949), 131-46.

[11]Beidler, "Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Its Teller", 56-8; Herz, "Chaucer's Elegiac Knight", 212; Haller, "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", ChauR, 1 (1966), 67-84; Benson, "The Knight's Tale as History", ChauR, 3 (1968-9), 107-23.

[12]Artistic Ambivalence, pp. 79-86.

[13]Bonet wrote that "mercy is indeed due to a prisoner, and his captor must give it to him and prevent discourteous treatment of him while he is in his power. He must give him reasonable food as far as he can, and must bear himself companionably and charitably towards him for the love of our Lord; and if he does not wish to let him go free, let him ask reasonable and knightly ransom, such as is possible for the prisoner to pay...If he do otherwise he is not a gentleman but a tyrant, and no knight" (Tree of Battles, p. 153). Chaucer emphasises Theseus's refusal to take ransom, and the fact that Palamon and Arcite are imprisoned in a "grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong" (1056). Palamon is at one point fettered (1279), and lies seven years "In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun" (1451). But the two prisoners have a garden view of sorts, and Palamon is able to roam "in a chambre an heigh"(1065). Their "angwissh and...wo" (1030) consist mainly in mental suffering at the prospect of perpetual imprisonment. There is a further consideration. Bonet suggests that a captured enemy should not be set free if "by his deliverance there is danger of having greater wars" (p. 134). The two knights are politically dangerous to Athens; Palamon assumes that Arcite will attack Athens when he has returned to Thebes (1287), and plans to do so himself (1484). Moreover, in refusing ransom to two prisoners of royal blood Theseus is sacrificing to this consideration an opportunity of significant financial gain.

[14]"Elements of Realism", 235. Johnstone Parr compares the tournament to that held in 1390 at Smithfield ("The Date and Revision of Chaucer's Knight's Tale", PMLA, 60 (1945), 317), and George Neilson points out marked resemblances between some details of the tournament in the tale and procedures at the new kind of treason duel of chivalry, which became fairly

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common in the 14th century (Trial by Combat (London, 1890), pp. 186-7). The 'realism' of the tournament is also maintained by Sister M. E. Whitmore, Medieval English Domestic Life and Amusements in the Works of Chaucer (Washington, D.C., 1937), pp. 208-19.

[15] Bruce Cowgill, "Chaucer and the Just Society: Conceptions of Natural Law and the Nobility in the Parliament of Fowls, the Knight's Tale, and the Portraits of the Miller and the Reeve" [DAI, 31 (1971), 5357A (Nebraska)], pp. 78-136. See also Thomas A. Van, "Second Meanings in Chaucer's Knight's Tale", ChauR, 3 (1968-9), 70.

[16] "The Knight's Tale as History".

[17] See "Brotherhood in Arms", History, 47 (1962), 1-17.

[18] "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", 70.

[19] Trial by Combat, p. 187. Gloucester's ordinance, based on an earlier one of Philip the Fair, was published by Harold Dillon, "On a MS. Collection of Ordinances of Chivalry of the 15th Century, Belonging to Lord Hastings", Archaeologia, 57 (1900), 61-6, and is also to be found in E. Rickert, Chaucer's World, ed. C. C. Olson and M. M. Crow (New York, 1948), pp. 151-6. "Hoo!" is also the word with which the Knight interrupts the Monk in the midst of his tale (VII, 2767).

[20] Dillon, "On a MS. Collection of Ordinances of Chivalry", 62.

[21] See Tree of Battles, pp. 117, 192-200. Christine de Pisan also condemned such combats, but conceded that although they "be of our doctours reproved" they were "in usage" by noble men and knights, and she would therefore discuss the procedures for "the lernynge of thoos that shall most iuge thereof/ And semblably of theim that shall vndertake them" (Fayttes of Armes, pp. 261-7)

[22] See Tree of Battles, pp. 192-200.

[23] Cowgill suggests that men who are "irresponsible" enough to fight on this scale for love represent a dangerous and aggressive element who might otherwise seek an outlet for their energies in war--by aiding Arcite or Palamon in an attack on Athens, for example ("Chaucer and the Just Society", pp. 126-8).

[24] See Harvey, Moriz von Craûn and the Chivalric World, p. 153.

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[25]See Denholm-Young, "The Tournament in the 13th Century", pp. 253-62; Barber, The Knight and Chivalry, pp. 156-7.

[26]Reader's Guide, p. 27.

[27]"Character and Class in the Wife of Bath's Tale", JEGP, 72 (1973), 329-39. Robert Haller also suggests that the Wife may represent parvenu commercial values ("The Wife of Bath and the Three Estates", AnM, 6 (1965), 63).

[28]Cf. MO, 23389 ff., and Le Roman de la Rose, ed. E. Langlois (Paris, 1914-24), lines 18607 ff.. See also the note in Robinson's ed., p. 704.

[29]Deschamps, Oeuvres, IX; S&A, pp. 333-56. See also The Literary Context of Chaucer's Fabliaux: Texts and Translations, ed. L. D. Benson and T. M. Andersson (Indianapolis and New York, 1971), pp. 203-73.

[30]The autobiographical case is argued by G. G. Sedgewick, "The Structure of the Merchant's Tale", UTQ, 17 (1947), 337-45.

[31]"The Merchant's Lombard Knight", TSLL, 3 (1961), 259-63.

[32]MO, 7319-20.

[33]MO, 25429-88.

[34]"The Merchant's Lombard Knight", 262. The Merchant is definitely a man of some importance in the commercial world. Sylvia Thrupp notes that "in late medieval usage the term 'merchant' was usually reserved for a specific type. The merchant was a man of mixed enterprise, who primarily represented wholesale trade but combined with it one or more of a number of other interests" (The Merchant Class of Medieval London, p. 6).

[35]"January, Knight of Lombardy", NM, 72 (1971), 735-8.

[36]"Chaucer's 'Sad' Merchant", RES, 20 (1944), 1-18.

[37]See IV, 1246, 1266, 2042, 2254, 2259.

[38]The theme also appears in the "Knight's Tale", "Man of Law's Tale", "Wife of Bath's Tale", "Summoner's Tale", "Clerk's Tale", "Melibee", and "Manciple's Tale", as well as in PP, C, IV and V, and Mum and the Sothsegger.

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[39]R. K. Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (2nd ed.; Boston, 1922), pp. 271-2; G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), p. 204; R. M. Lumiansky, "The Character and Performance of Chaucer's Franklin", UTQ, 20 (1951), 344-56. See also Lumiansky's Of Sondry Folk: the Dramatic Principle in the Canterbury Tales (Austin, 1955), pp. 184-5.

[40]"Sentimental Comedy in the Franklin's Tale", AnM, 6 (1965), 19-27.

[41]"Sovereignty and the Two Worlds of the Franklin's Tale", ChauR, 1 (1966-7), 253-71.

[42]"Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Uses of Rhetoric", 294.

[43]"The F-Fragment of the Canterbury Tales", ChauR, 1 (1966-7), 88-102, 135-56. Stanley Kahrl theorises that the Franklin attempts to set the Squire right about what 'gentilesse' really is ("Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Decline of Chivalry", 207).

[44]"Chaucer's Franklin and the Literary Vavasour", ChauR, 8 (1973), 33-59. P. J. Frankis links the term 'vavasour' specifically to Chrétien's use of the term in Yvain and Erec, concluding that "What determined Chaucer's usage was the literary exemplum of the vavasour as a model of hospitality." Frankis notes that the reference in Yvain is translated as "knight" in the 14th-century English Ywain and Gawain, and suggests that "it is therefore likely that the word vavasor did not mean anything very specific to the fourteenth-century English translator..." ("Chaucer's 'Vavasour' and Chrétien de Troyes", N&Q, n.s. 15 (1968), 46-7).

[45]"The Social Status of Chaucer's Franklin", PMLA, 41 (1926), 262-79. Gerould points out that franklins are given equal status with knights in John Russell's early 15th-century Book of Nurture (The Babees Book, ed. F. J. Furnivall (London, 1868), p. 269). For the idea that the Franklin is not impressed by the "Squire's Tale", but is politely and diplomatically putting an end to the embarassing performance, see Charles F. Duncan, Jr., "Straw for youre Gentilesse: The Gentle Franklin's Interruption of the Squire's Tale", ChauR, 5 (1970), 161-4, and Joyce Peterson, "The Finished Fragment: a Reassessment of the Squire's Tale".

[46]Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England, II, 32.

[47]In the first two respects his career is similar to

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that of Chaucer, and R. Blenner-Hassett argues that there are
further similarities between the two men ("Autobiographical
Aspects of Chaucer's Franklin", Speculum, 28 (1953), 791-800).
K. L. Wood-Legh notes examples of the numerous men who held
the same offices as the Franklin in late 14th-century England
("The Franklin", RES, 4 (1928), 145-51). Jill Mann connects
the Franklin's portrait with traditional satires of corrupt
administrators (Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire, pp. 158-9).

[48] Oeuvres de Froissart, I, 420; Moorman, "The Philo-
sophical Knights of The Canterbury Tales", 99; Scheps, "Sir
Thopas: the Bourgeois Knight, the Minstrel and the Critics",
TSL, 11 (1966), 35-43; Winstanley, ed., The Prioress's Tale.
The Tale of Sir Thopas (Cambridge, 1922), pp. lxv-lxxv. Manly
agreed that the tale attacks the "ridiculous pretentiousness"
of the Flemings ("Sir Thopas: a Satire", E&S, 13 (1928), 52-73).

[49] "Satire in Sir Thopas", PMLA, 50 (1935), 81-91.

[50] S&A, pp. 486-559. See also Kindrick, "The Unknightly
Knight", pp. 71-81.

[51] See Chauncey Wood, "Chaucer and 'Sir Thopas': Irony
and Concupiscence", TSLL, 14 (1972), 393-4.

[52] See Manly, "A Knight Ther Was"; Cook, The Historical
Background of Chaucer's Knight; Bowden, A Commentary on the
General Prologue, pp. 52-68. On "Tramyssene" and "Palatye" see
Cook, pp. 74-6, Bowden, p. 58.

[53] See A. S. Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle
Ages, pp. 330, 345-68.

[54] Criticism of the 'crusades' against the Albigensian
heretics was particularly vitriolic. See Palmer A. Throop,
Criticism of the Crusade: a Study of Public Opinion and
Crusade Propaganda (Amsterdam, 1940), ch. 2.

[55] This was the reaction of Petrarch, and of Mézières
in his Oratio Tragedica. Mézières' first response had been
shame that the event had been transmitted to the West as a
great victory. See N. Jorga, Philippe de Mézières, 1327-1405,
et la croisade au XIVe siècle (Paris, 1896), pp. 304-6; Atiya,
Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, p. 370.

[56] Atiya, Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 431-3.

[57] A. S. Atiya, The Crusade of Nicopolis (London, 1934),
pp. 107-9.

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[58]"La douleur fut universelle en Occident, quand arriva la nouvelle de cet assassinat...en Italie, en France, en Angleterre l'indignation fut générale contre les rebelles et les meurtriers...Froissart, Pétrarque, Cuvelier, l'auteur de la Chronique de Du Guesclin, Machaut, Chaucer, les chroniqueurs italiens et anglais parlèrent avec regret de sa mort et firent l'éloge de ses brillantes vertus chevaleresques" (Jorga, Philippe de Mézières, pp. 392-3).

[59]Jorga, pp. 308-9.

[60]Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, p. 10.

[61]Ibid., pp. 4-11. For an account of the main contributions see pp. 34-154.

[62]Pierre Dubois, The Recovery of the Holy Land [De recuperatione terre sancte], tr. W. I. Brandt (New York, 1956).

[63]The unoriginality of Mézières' plans is also pointed out by Jorga, Mézières, p. 351.

[64]See, for example, Bonet, Tree of Battles, pp. 126-7.

[65]See Norman Daniel, Islam and the West: the Making of an Image (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 109-12, 124-6, 133.

[66]Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 3.

[67]Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 129-31; Southern, Western Views of Islam, pp. 24-7.

[68]See Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 141-9; Southern, pp. 29-32; Beatrice White, "Saracens and Crusaders: from Fact to Allegory", in Medieval Literature and Civilisation: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London, 1969), pp. 170-91; D. C. Munro, "The Western Attitude towards Islam during the Period of the Crusades", Speculum, 6 (1931), 329-43.

[69]See C. H. Haskins, The Renaissance of the 12th Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), pp. 278-302.

[70]See James Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable and Islam (Princeton, 1964), which also contains texts of the Summa totius haerensis Saracenorum and Liber contra sectem sive haeresim Saracenorum.

[71]Southern, pp. 33-9, 47-61. For William's account

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see "The Journey of William of Rubruck", in The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, ed. C. Dawson (New York, 1955), pp. 89-220.

[72]Southern, pp. 42-5, 62-75. The complexity of the western response to the Mongols is illuminated by a recent study by C. W. Connell, "Western Views of the Origins of the 'Tartars': an Example of the Influence of Myth in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century", Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 3 (1973), 115-37. See also M. W. Baldwin, "Western Attitudes towards Islam", Catholic History Review, 27 (1942), 403-11.

[73]See J. Schmidlin, Einführung in die Missionwissenschaft (Münster, 1917), pp. 80 ff..

[74]See Throop, Criticism of the Crusade, pp. 123-7, 129-30.

[75]Atiya, Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 77-84; Jorga, Mézières, p. 457.

[76]Quoted by Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable and Islam, p. 22.

[77]Bacon, Opus Maius, tr. R. B. Burke (New York, 1962), I, 111-2.

[78]Published in the appendix to H. Prutz, Kulturgeschichte der Kreuzzüge (Berlin, 1883), pp. 573-98.

[79]See Throop, pp. 127-9, 134-5.

[80]See also B, XV, 535-8.

[81]See Throop, pp. 136-7.

[82]Summa theologica, part II, ii, q. 10, art. 8.

[83]Throop, p. 166.

[84]Bonet, Tree of Battles, pp. 126-7; Sir Gilbert Hay, "The buke of the law of armys", in Gilbert of the Haye's Prose Manuscript (A.D. 1456), ed. J. H. Stevenson, I (Edinburgh and London, 1901), pp. 102-6.

[85]Southern, p. 105.

[86]See Atiya, Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 126-7, 330, 347, 398-434, 442-3.

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[87]See, for example, Deschamps, Oeuvres, I, 138-9;
III, 172; A Poem on the Times of Edward II, st. 49.

[88]See Paradiso, IX, 121-38; XV, 142-8; Inferno, XXVII,
85-91. For other examples of Dante's use of the Saracens to
attack Christians see Sir Maurice Powicke, "Dante and the
Crusade", in his The Christian Life in the Middle Ages and
Other Essays (Oxford, 1935), p. 37.

[89]"Dante and the Crusade", p. 31.

[90]Select Eng. Works, III, 140-1; Southern, pp.81-2. Cf.
PP, B, XV, 407-8.

[91]Southern, p. 83.

[92]See R. Thomassy, Jean Gerson (Paris, 1843), p. 56;
Kilgour, Decline of Chivalry, pp. 178-81.

[93]The complexity of Genius's role has been noted by
several commentators and variously interpreted. Gower's
editor Macaulay commented (p. xix) that the "conception of a
Confessor who as priest has to expound a system of morality,
while as a devotee of Venus he is concerned only with the
affairs of love (I, 237-80), can hardly be called altogether
a consistent or happy one...The Confessor is continually
forgetting one or the other of his two characters, and the
moralist is found justifying unlawful love or the servant of
Venus singing the praises of virginity." Russell Peck, in his
edition of selections from the poem, asserts that as Nature's
representative Genius's interests are greater than those of
Venus, who is used by Nature merely for procreation. Genius
will thus speak of more than just cupidinous love, and help
Amans to recover his true nature (Confessio Amantis (New York,
1968), pp.xv-xvi). C. S. Lewis wrote that Genius "is forced
against his will to pass sentence on the very powers that he
serves...He would have kept silence if he could; but if you
press him, he must confess that the whole world which he
represents, Venus, Cupid and the court of Love, are but idle
dreams and feigned consecrations of human infirmities" (The
Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford,
1936), p. 219). John H. Fisher describes Genius "as a kind
of hemmed in, straitjacketed Nun's Priest longing for a wider
mission", apologetically giving the lover from time to time
what is technically, for the speaker, heretical advice (John
Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer (London, 1965),
p. 197). The confession structure is of course clearly
intended to recall Nature's confession to Genius in the Roman
de la Rose, and especially her complaint there (lines 19021 ff.)

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and in the De planctu Naturae of Alanus de Insulis that man alone in the created universe abuses love. Genius in the Roman represents the inclination of that universe to act according to naturalis concupiscentia, and he is thus ignorant of the dimension of Christian grace in human affairs. The comic results of his attempts in the Roman to pronounce on spiritual matters beyond his competence are well analysed by John V. Fleming, The 'Roman de la Rose': a Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton, 1969), pp. 192-4, 209 ff.. What remains less than clear about Genius's role in the Confessio is his function in absolving the Lover for his service to Venus. On the role of Genius generally, see also Michael H. Means, The Consolatio Genre in Medieval English Literature (Gainesville, Fla., 1972), pp. 59-69.

[94] John Gower, p. 260. The fact that Gower is inconsistent in his attitude to the crusades is briefly noted by E. Flügel, "Gowers Mirour de l'Omme und Chaucers Prolog", Anglia, 24 (1901), 437.

[95] MO, 23665-808. The accusation of bribery at assizes is repeated in VC, V, 520.

[96] Fisher is probably right in seeing another expression of antipathy to the French wars--"In which non wot who hath the werre"--in CA, Prol., 172-9 (see Fisher, John Gower, p. 190).

[97] See Throop, pp. 202-3.

[98] "The Canterbury Tales and Late 14th-Century Chivalry", pp. 65-6.

[99] Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore, 1951), pp. 169-70.

[100] "Chaucer's Precarious Knight", pp. 92-5, 100.

[101] "The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale", 249-68.

[102] "The Canterbury Tales", pp. 134-5.

[103] VII, 2395, 2654, 2683, 2681.

[104] "The Canterbury Tales", pp. 135-45; "Chaunticleer and the Monk, Two False Knights", PLL, 3 (supplement, 1967), 31-9. In the latter, Hatton argues that the "Nun's Priest's Tale" is an answer to the "Monk's Tale", telling the story of a temporal lord (Chaunticleer) who manages eventually to avert 'tragedy'.

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[105]See Fleming, "Chaucer's Squire, the Roman de la Rose and the Romaunt", 49; Wood, "The Significance of Jousting and Dancing as Attributes of Chaucer's Squire"; Cowgill, "Chaucer and the Just Society", p. 119.

[106]LGW, 1274; TC, III, 1718; CT, I, 2486-7; V, 1098, 1198; IX, 42.

[107]See Hatton, "Thematic Relationships".

[108]Oeuvres de Froissart, I, 419.

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[1]Nitze, Arthurian Romance and Modern Poetry and Music (Chicago, 1940), p. 43; Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 123; Pauphilet, Le Legs du Moyen Age (Melun, 1950), p. 153; quoted by P. E. Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte", in Essays on Malory, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), p. 68

[2]Sommer, Vulgate Version, III, 112-7.

[3]The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, ed. E. Vinaver (2nd ed.; Oxford, 1967), p. 120. All references to Malory's works are by page numbers to this three-volume edition.

[4]Maurice Valency theorises that chivalry's main branches may be seen in terms of a contrast between the knights of northern France, who were warriors and had little time for women, and those of southern France, who were primarily lovers (In Praise of Love (New York, 1968), pp. 38-58).

[5]The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth, ed. A. Griscom (London, 1929), pp. 457-8. The passage is noted by Hope Allen, "The 'Ancren Riwle' and Geoffrey of Monmouth", MLR, 29 (1934), 173.

[6]Laws of War, esp. p. 185.

[7]Throop, Criticism of the Crusade, pp. 156-8; Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric (London, 1968), p. 127.

[8]See L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal, comte de

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Striguil et de Pembroke, ed. P. Meyer (Paris, 1891-1901),
I, 3041-148, 3455-552.

[9]Historia regum Britanniae, p. 458.

[10]Oeuvres, XIV, 260-1.

[11]The squire's challenge runs: "Y a-t-il là nul
gentil homme qui pour l'amour de sa dame voldrait faire aucun
fait d'armes?...Si en ait qui peut, et tout pour l'amour de
sa dame. Or vera-on entre vous, Englès, se il y a nul
amoureux" (Oeuvres, IX, 275). At the Combat of the Thirty
Beaumanoir issued a similar challenge (V, 289).

[12]Moriz von Craûn, p. 195.

[13]Lines 4603-14. In the idolatrous Garden of Idleness
in the Romaunt of the Rose we find the lady Largesse holding
the hand of a knight who has returned victorious from a
tournament where he has fought "for the love of his lemman"
(lines 1197-1210).

[14]Introduction to the Study of Dante, pp. 257-9.

[15]Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 320-38.

[16]Statesman's Book, p. 238.

[17]Ordre of Chyualry, pp. 101, 116.

[18]Select Eng. Works, III, 164-5.

[19]Laws and Customs of England, II, 32.

[20]Epistle of Othea, trans. Scrope, texts 7 and 47;
Christine de Pisan, Oeuvres poétiques, ed. M. Roy (Paris,
1886-96), III, 164-7; The Book of the Duke of True Lovers,
tr. A. Kemp-Welch (London, 1908), pp. 106-11.

[21]Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry, pour
l'enseignement de ses filles, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon
(Paris, 1854). The two English translations of the 15th
century have been edited by T. Wright, The Book of the Knight
of La Tour Landry (London, 1868), from which my quotations
are taken (pp. 171-86).

[22]Decline of Chivalry, pp. 108 ff..

[23]Livre de chevalerie, p. 469.

[24]Ibid., p. 480. A similar recommendation is made

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by Geoffroi in a poem; see A. Piaget, "Le Livre Messire Geoffroi de Charny", Romania, 26 (1897), 409.

[25] Livre de chevalerie, pp. 483-8. For references to satirical attacks on the miles amoris in these terms by Alanus de Insulis and others, see Robertson, Preface, pp. 409-10.

[26] Le Livre des faicts du bon Messire Jean le Maingre, dit Boucicaut, in J. F. Michaud and J. J. F. Poujoulat, eds., Nouvelle collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France depuis le XIIIᵉ siècle jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIᵉ siècle (Paris, 1881), II, 220-2.

[27] See Robertson, Preface, pp. 454-5, for a discussion in these terms of Jean le Bel's Li Ars d'amour. For a similar approach to the subject of knights and women, see Hatton, "The Canterbury Tales and Late 14th Century Chivalry", pp. 84-105. David Lampe finds a parallel between the Boucicaut chronicler's account of the proper use of love and the discussion of the theme in The Cuckoo and the Nightingale ("Tradition and Meaning in The Cuckoo and the Nightingale", PLL, 3 supplement (1967), 49-62).

[28] Oeuvres, VI, 154; XIV, 122; III, 467.

[29] CA, IV, 2045-134. According to the usual story (see, for example, Ovid, Met., IX, 1 ff.), Deianeira is tricked by Nessus into sending the shirt to renew Hercules's dying love, unaware of its poisonous properties. The point, however, remains that Hercules ultimately received no joy of his conquest; Deianeira's complicity, as Chaucer's Monk points out, is not really material: "But nathelees somme clerkes hire excusen/By con that highte Nessus, that it maked./Be as be may, I wol hire noght accusen" (VII, 2127-9).

[30] Elsewhere Gower connects idleness in military matters with sensual love. See, for example, CA, VII, 4345 ff., where Genius notes that, although "King David hadde many a love", he was not like "hem that so here eses soughten", but

> Knyghthode he kepte in such a wise,
> That for no fleisshli covoitise
> Of lust to ligge in ladi armes
> He lefte noght the lust of armes.
> For where a Prince hise lustes sueth,
> That he the werre noght poursueth,
> Whan it is time to ben armed,
> His contre stant fulofte harmed...

See also MO, 22816-8: the king will not be feared who abandons his shield and finds battle only in bed.

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[31] Translations of the Vox are from The Major Latin Works of John Gower, tr. Eric W. Stockton (Seattle, 1962).

[32] John Gower, p. 185.

[33] John Gower, pp. 196-7.

[34] Othea, allegory of text 59.

[35] Quoted by Brewer, Chaucer in His Time, pp. 221-2.

[36] The other of course is Andreas Capellanus's De arte honeste amandi, tr. J. J. Parry as The Art of Courtly Love (New York, 1941). For a bibliography of writings on this work up to 1960 see Felix Schlösser, Andreas Capellanus: seine Minnelehre und das christliche Weltbild um 1200 (Bonn, 1960); references to more recent contributions are given in Barbara N. Sargent, "A Medieval Commentary on Andreas Capellanus", Romania, 94 (1973), 528-41. For an introduction to the debate about the usefulness and accuracy of the whole concept of 'courtly love' see The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany, 1968), and In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, ed. Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou (Port Washington, N.Y., and London, 1975). Even D. H. Green, who is strongly aware of ironic aspects of the chivalric romances, treats love as part of the "accepted values of knighthood", and therefore sees ironic undercutting of lovers as examples of attacks on chivalric values generally. See "Irony and Medieval Romance", FMLS, 6 (1970), 49-64, repr. in D. D. R. Owen, ed., Arthurian Romance: Seven Essays (Edinburgh and London, 1970), pp. 49-64.

[37] Margaret A. Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 193; McCully, pp. 220-1; Kurt Lippmann, Das ritterliche Persönlichkeitsideal in der mittelenglischen Literatur des 13 und 14 Jahrhunderts (Leipzig, 1933).

[38] The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras His Sone Who Conquered Rome, ed. E. Hausknecht (London, 1881), lines 975-8.

[39] Sir Beves of Hamtoun, ed. E. Kölbing (London, 1885-94).

[40] Sir Eglamour of Artois, ed. F. E. Richardson (London, 1965).

[41] Ipomadon, ed. A. T. Kölbing (Breslau, 1899).

[42] Sir Degrevant, ed. L. F. Casson (London, 1944).

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[43]Sir Launfal, ed. A. J. Bliss (London, 1960).

[44]Ed. Longnon, lines 16743-17764, 21832-22425.

[45]The Romance of Guy of Warwick, ed. J. Zupitza (London, 1883-91).

[46]Aucassin et Nicolette, ed. M. Roques (2nd ed.; Paris, 1954), section 10. The satiric and parodic nature of the work has been recognised only fairly recently. See, for example, R. Harden, "Aucassin et Nicolette as Parody", SP, 63 (1966), 1-9. June Hall Martin sees Aucassin as a parody of the "courtly lover" (Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover (London, 1972), pp. 21-36). On satirical elements in the poem see also William S. Woods, "The Aube in Aucassin et Nicolette", in Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Urban Tigner Holmes, Jr., ed. J. Mahoney and J. E. Keller (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965), pp. 209-15.

[47]Love and War in the Middle English Romances, p. 107.

[48]Heinrich Zimmer, The King and the Corpse: Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil, ed. J. Campbell (New York, 1948), p. 134.

[49]See J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300 (2nd ed.; Gloucester, Mass., 1958), I, 204n., 205.

[50]See Malory, Works, pp. 425, 429-30, 569-70, 681, 734-54, 1172-3.

[51]V, 67, 128.

[52]The Anatomy of Love: the 'Tristan' of Gottfried von Strassburg (New York, 1971), p. 36.

[53]Literature and Art in the Middle Ages (London, 1970), pp. 153-4.

[54]See Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas, ed. J. Bédier (Paris, 1902-5); see also G. S. Loomis, Tristan and Isolt: a Study of the Sources of the Romance (2nd ed., ed. R. S. Loomis; New York, 1970). For a recent comparative study of the Tristan romances see Joan M. Ferrante, The Conflict of Love and Honor: the Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy (The Hague, 1973).

[55]"The Early Tristan Poems", in R. S. Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a Collaborative

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<u>History</u> (Oxford, 1959), p. 143.

[56]The formations of the characters' names vary from
work to work. I shall refer generally to the main figures
as Tristan and Isolt, ignoring such variations, and shall also
use the most normal anglicised forms for most references to
other frequently encountered romance characters, such as
Gawain, Lancelot and Guinevere, except where this would
cause confusion. For the variants of names in versions of
the Tristan story see Ferrante, <u>Conflict of Love and Honor</u>, p. 122.

[57]Eilhart von Oberg, <u>Tristrant</u>, ed. H. Bussmann
(Tübingen, 1969).

[58]See Ferrante, <u>Conflict of Love and Honor</u>, pp. 64-9.

[59]<u>The Romance of Tristran, by Beroul</u>, ed. A. Ewert
(Oxford, 1939-70).

[60]A. Varvaro, <u>Beroul's Romance of Tristan</u>, tr. J. C.
Barnes (Manchester, 1972), p. 95.

[61]<u>Sir Tristrem</u>, ed. G. P. McNeill (Edinburgh, 1886).

[62]Beroul included Arthur in the story, but Thomas
and Gottfried omitted him. For the French prose versions see
<u>Le Roman de Tristan en prose</u>, ed. Renée L. Curtis (Munich,
1963-), and the summary by E. Löseth in <u>Le Roman en prose</u>
<u>de Tristan, le roman de Palamède et la compilation de Rusticien</u>
<u>de Pise, analyse critique d'après les manuscrits de Paris</u>
(Paris, 1890). For the MSS. and printed versions see E.
Vinaver, <u>Etudes sur la Tristan en prose</u> (Paris, 1925), pp.
37-62. For other references see T. C. Rumble, "'The Tale of
Tristram': Development by Analogy", in R. M. Lumiansky, ed.,
<u>Malory's Originality: a Critical Study of 'Le Morte Darthur'</u>
(Baltimore, 1964), pp. 122-3n., and Ferrante, <u>Conflict of Love</u>
<u>and Honor</u>, pp. 22-3. Ferrante (pp. 100 ff.) analyses
<u>La Tavola Ritonda</u>, an Italian prose version of the early
14th century, as a "unified" example of the prose tradition.

[63]Curtis, ed., <u>Le Roman de Tristan en prose</u>, pp.
183 ff.. See also Curtis's <u>Tristan Studies</u> (Munich, 1969),
pp. 10-18; E. Vinaver, "The Prose Tristan", in Loomis, ed.,
<u>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages</u>, pp. 339-47.

[64]See Ferrante, <u>Conflict of Love and Honor</u>, pp.
17, 19-20.

[65]For summaries of modern interpretations see Rosemary
Picozzi, <u>A History of Tristan Scholarship</u> (Berne and Frankfurt,

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1971), esp. pp. 109-54; Ruth G. Kunzer, The 'Tristan' of Gottfried von Strassburg: an Ironic Perspective (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 1-2; Ferrante, Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 118-9. The Christian interpretation was most influentially stated by F. Ranke, Tristan und Isolde (Munich, 1925).

[66] "Gottfried von Strassburg", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, pp. 147-8. 155. For a recent study, stimulating but ultimately confusing, which sees the poem as an attempt to create a 'religion of love', see Esther Quinn, "Beyond Courtly Love: Religious Elements in Tristan and La Queste del Saint Graal", in Ferrante and Economou, eds., In Pursuit of Perfection, pp. 179-201.

[67] Jackson, Anatomy of Love, pp. vii, 27-30, 37, 102-3, 117, 131, 154-64, 192-3; "Gottfried von Strassburg", pp. 148-50. On the villainy of society in Gottfried's Tristan see also R. S. Loomis, The Development of Arthurian Romance (London, 1963), p. 87. For a brief survey of the Tristan romances in terms of their various solutions to the problem of reconciling the "lyric conventions" of 'courtly love' with the needs of society at large, see Joan Ferrante, "The Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form", in In Pursuit of Perfection, pp. 164-73.

[68] Kunzer, pp. 67, 86. For other views on Gottfried's lack of emphasis on the warrior function see p. 37.

[69] The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1966), pp. 39, 48.

[70] Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan, ed. R. Bechstein (3rd ed.; Leipzig, 1890-1), lines 81-100. All references to Gottfried's Tristan are by line numbers to this edition.

[71] Lines 832-68. Cf. TC, I, 353; III, 1355. On the figure of the bird-snare for illicita delectatio in the Roman de la Rose and elsewhere, see Robertson, Preface, pp. 94-5.

[72] Lines 947-54, 970-2, 1006-7. Andreas Capellanus ironically defines love as suffering (The Art of Courtly Love, pp. 28-9).

[73] The connection is made explicit in lines 14380-1. See Kunzer, pp. 96-7, 166, 175; Beroul, lines 2147-60. For the tradition of the "love chase" see Marcelle Thiébaux, The Stag of Love: the Chase in Medieval Literature (Ithaca, 1974), pp. 89 ff..

[74] In Marie de France's Guigemar (lines 103-32), the

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thigh wound received while hunting and which will not heal
is identified with the wound of love and its attendant
suffering (Marie de France, Lais, ed. A. Ewert [Oxford, 1960]).
The Grail King is also usually said to be suffering from a
wound in the loins that will not heal. In Malory, Lancelot
is wounded in the thigh by a boar, and Perceval, having been
almost seduced by the devil in woman's guise, wounds himself
in the thigh as a penance and a sign of his human frailty
(Malory, Works, pp. 821, 919). For the dual possibilities
of such a wound--as sign of lechery or of mortification of
the flesh--see Robertson, Preface, p. 451. Chrétien's Erec,
fighting Yder for the sparrow-hawk, is wounded in the thigh,
and the poet compares the occasion to Tristan's fight with
Morold (Erec et Enide, ed. M. Roques (Paris, 1955), lines
942-6, 1241-4). See also Tom Artin, The Allegory of
Adventure: Reading Chrétien's 'Erec' and 'Yvain' (Lewisburg
and London, 1974), p. 93; VC, V, 225 ff..

[75]On the image of Isolt as predator--Minne's 'falcon'--
see A. T. Hatto, "Der Minnen vederspil Isot", Euphorion, 57
(1957), 302-7. For the use of the snare metaphor for love
in the poem see Thiébaux, The Stag of Love, pp. 135-7.

[76]"Gottfried von Strassburg", pp. 152-3.

[77]Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Îsolt, ed.
A. Closs (Oxford, 1958), p. xlv. For the debate see Kunzer,
pp. 111-2n.. We may compare the use of a love potion as a
poetic symbol for violent passion in Shakespeare's
Midsummer Night's Dream.

[78]"Tristan et Lancelot", in De l'amour profane à
l'amour sacré: études de psychologie sentimentale au
Moyen Age (Paris, 1961), p. 53.

[79]On the association of the love-philtre with death
see Curtis, Tristan Studies, pp. 36-41.

[80]Translations of Gottfried are from Tristan, tr.
A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth, 1960).

[81]Cf. an episode in La Borgoise d'Orleans, in Fabliaux,
ed. R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen (Oxford, 1957), p. 21;
also, of course, Chaucer's tales of the Miller and Merchant.

[82]Kunzer, p. 117.

[83]For a survey of commentary see Kunzer, pp. 136-40.
For a list of interpretations arguing that ordeals were being
attacked see Bédier, Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas, I, 212.

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On the historical background see R. W. Southern, <u>The Making
of the Middle Ages</u> (London, 1966), p. 97.

[84]See F. Ranke, <u>Die Allegorie der Minnegrotte in
Gottfrieds Tristan</u> (Berlin, 1925); Picozzi, <u>History of Tristan
Scholarship</u>, pp. 115 ff.; Kunzer, pp. 168-9n.; Ferrante,
<u>Conflict of Love and Honor</u>, pp. 96-7.

[85]"Gottfried von Strassburg", pp. 153-4.

[86]Kunzer, pp. 162, 172-3. F. P. Pickering deprecates
the comparison between Gottfried's passage and allegories of
church buildings, claiming that the description has an
eclectic variety of sources and is "an admixture of mock-solem-
nity and irreverence...his 'accommodation' of the routines of
allegory is <u>inter alia</u> a display of virtuosity and wit"
(<u>Literature and Art</u>, pp. 145-6).

[87]On the identification of Isolt with the white stag,
see Rainer Gruenter, "Der vremede Hirz", <u>ZDA</u>, 86 (1955-6),
231-7. Several critics have noted the irony that Tristan
the master huntsman becomes himself the object of a hunt, by
both Mark and Minne. See John S. Anson, "The Hunt of Love:
Gottfried von Strassburg's <u>Tristan</u> as Tragedy", <u>Speculum</u>, 45
(1970), 594-607; Thiébaux, <u>The Stag of Love</u>, pp. 128-43.

[88]Lines 269-70, 387-94. References are to Bédier's
edition.

[89]<u>The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval
Literature</u> (Ithaca, 1974), esp. pp. 147-89.

[90]Brody, pp. 185. /

[91]Similarly pejorative implications are contained
in the two existing versions of an episode in which Tristan
presents himself to Isolt pretending to be a madman. See
<u>La Folie Tristan de Berne</u>, ed. E. Hoepffner (2nd ed.; Stras-
bourg, 1949); <u>La Folie Tristan d'Oxford</u>, ed. E. Hoepffner
(2nd ed.; Strasbourg, 1943). In Malory's "Book of Sir
Tristram de Lyones" Tristram appears incognito a large number
of times, often for no apparent reason. His disguises lead
to combats with his friends, thus stressing the way in which
love obliterates normal social recognitions.

[92]See <u>Fragments du Tristan de Thomas</u>, ed. B. H.
Wind (Leiden, 1950), pp. 14 ff..

[93]Lines 2279-310, 3912-4. References to <u>Cligés</u> are to
the edition of W. Foerster (Halle, 1884). <u>Cligés</u> had fought
to win Fénice for his uncle Alis, but Alis's marriage to her is

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a breach of his promise not to marry but to make Cligés his heir.

[94]Lines 2772-5, 2789-92. On Narcissus see Robertson, Preface, pp. 93-4, and his "Chrétien's Cligés and the Ovidian Spirit", Comparative Literature, 7 (1955), 37.

[95]The thematic purpose of Chrétien's references to the Tristan story has been the subject of considerable debate. See Jean Frappier, "Chrétien de Troyes", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, pp. 171-2, 174.

[96]Erec et Enide, ed. Roques, lines 2430 ff.. Lancelot's day appears to be half over by "prime de jor" (see Lancelot, line 609). References to Lancelot are to Der Karrenritter (Lancelot) und das Wilhelmsleben (Guillaume d'Angleterre) von Christian von Troyes, ed. W. Foerster (Halle, 1899).

[97]The Allegory of Adventure, pp. 101-2. Cf. "Merchant's Tale", IV, 1385-8.

[98]"The Storm-Making Spring and the Meaning of Chrétien's Yvain", SP, 64 (1967), 581.

[99]Allegory of Adventure, pp. 141-250.

[100]Cf. Malory, pp. 806 ff.; Sommer, V, 381 ff..

[101]See Julian Harris, "The Role of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain", PMLA, 64 (1949), 1143-63. For other speculations on the significance of the lion see A. H. Diverres, "Chivalry and fin' amor in Le Chevalier au Lion", in W. Rothwell et al., eds., Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead (Manchester, 1973), pp. 114-5.

[102]Diverres ("Chivalry and fin' amor") agrees that Chrétien distinguishes between the kind of chivalry represented by Arthur's court and that exemplified by Yvain after the cure of his madness. He asserts that "the dominant thought throughout the romance is that the keynote of chivalry is selfless service in the cause of justice" (p. 109). He rejects, however, the idea that any conflict is involved between chivalry and fin' amor on the grounds that it is through love of a dompna (Laudine) that Yvain finally achieves unselfishness, fidelity, and true knightly achievements. But the process by which Yvain becomes worthy of Laudine is in fact closer to the behaviour associated with worthy, non-concupiscent chivalric love (see section IV, 1, above) than to that normally associated in modern criticism with the term fin' amor.

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[103]"Etudes sur les romans de la Table Ronde. Lancelot du Lac. II. Le Conte de la Charrette", Romania, 12 (1883), 459-534. See also T. P. Cross and W. A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere: a Study on the Origins of Courtly Love (Chicago, 1930), pp. 67-76; Frappier, "Chrétien de Troyes", pp. 179-80. A recent article by Z. P. Zaddy attempts, unconvincingly I feel, to support Gaston Paris' original claim that the romance is an exemplification of the 'commandments' of love found in Andreas Capellanus: "both works glorify sexual love as inspiring all that is highest and best in man". Zaddy also claims that "a detailed examination of the Charrete and the De amore leaves one with the very distinct impression that certain sections of twelfth century society...were greatly intrigued by the possibilities of finding an alternative to the sexual code imposed by Church and State" ("Le Chevalier de la Charrete and the De amore of Andreas Capellanus", in Rothwell et al., eds., Studies...in Memory of F. Whitehead, pp. 379, 397).

[104]Painter, French Chivalry, p. 130; Micha, "Etudes sur le Lancelot en prose. II. L'Esprit du Lancelot-Graal", Romania, 82 (1961), 359; Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1913), p. 2; Lot-Borodine, "Tristan et Lancelot", in De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré, p. 60. For Mme. Lot-Borodine's analysis of Chrétien's romances in terms of the successive domination of first "l'idéal chevaleresque", then "l'amour", and finally "l'idéal religieux", see La Femme et l'amour au XIIe siècle d'après les poèmes de Chrétien de Troyes (Paris, 1909), pp. 278-9. For an early reservation about the 'courtly love' interpretation of Chrétien see Charles Grimm, "Chrestien de Troyes' Attitude towards Woman", Romanic Review, 16 (1925), 236-43.

[105]Lines 1-29. See Foerster's ed., p. lxviii; Frappier, "Chrétien de Troyes", p. 175. On the terms Chrétien uses see D. W. Robertson, "Some Medieval Literary Terminology, with Special Reference to Chrétien de Troyes", SP, 48 (1951), 669-92.

[106]See, for example, Jean Rychner, "Le Prologue du Chevalier de la charrette", in Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune (Gembloux, 1969), II, 1121-35.

[107]Jackson, Anatomy of Love, p. 27; Mandel, "Elements in the Charrette World: the Father-Son Relationship", MP, 62 (1964), 97-104. See also A. H. Diverres, "Some Thoughts on the Sens of Le Chevalier de la Charrette", FMLS, 6 (1970), 24-36, repr. in Arthurian Romance: Seven Essays, ed. Owen, pp. 24-36; Robertson, Preface, pp. 448-52, 487. For a survey of modern scholarship on the Charrette see F. D. Kelly, Sens and Conjointure in the 'Chevalier de la Charrette' (The Hague, 1966), pp. 4-21.

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[108]Alfred Adler argues that Guinevere's humiliation at
the hands of Kay and Arthur shows her to be very vulnerable
to abuse at court despite her position, and in need of another
defender--Lancelot--on whom she is therefore justified in
imposing special tests of loyalty ("A Note on the Composition
of Chrétien's Charrette", MLR, 45 (1950), 33-9). This ignores
the absurdity of the lengths to which Guinevere carries the
testing process, and also the degree to which she consents to
the chain of events leading up to her being taken from the
court by Kay (even though at the moment of departure she
thinks reproachfully of Arthur's negligence)--especially her
blithe acquiescence in Kay's request that Arthur promise him
whatever he asks.

[109]Robertson, Preface, p. 449; D. Shirt, "Chrétien de
Troyes and the Cart", Studies...in Memory of F. Whitehead, pp.
279-301. See also Diverres, "Some Thoughts on the Sens of
Le Chevalier de la Charrette", 25-6. For an opposite
interpretation of the significance of "reisons" see Z. P.
Zaddy, Chrétien Studies: Problems of Form and Meaning in
'Erec', 'Yvain', 'Cligés' and the Charrete (Glasgow, 1973),
pp. 190-2. Zaddy equates "reisons" with prudential self-interest,
in contrast to the self-sacrifice demanded by love.

[110]See Robertson, Preface, p. 450. Cf. Chaucer's
"perilous fyr, that in the bedstraw bredeth" ("Merchant's
Tale", IV, 1783).

[111]Diverres, "Some Thoughts on the Sens of Le
Chevalier de la Charrette", pp. 28-9.

[112]Preface, p. 450.

[113]On the connection with Tristan, see H. Newstead,
"The Equivocal Oath in the Tristan Legend", in Mélanges offerts
à Rita Lejeune, II, 1082.

[114]"Some Thoughts on the Sens of Le Chevalier de la
Charrette", pp. 32-3.

[115]Lancelot and Guenevere, p. 78. For a convincing
presentation of the case that Godefroi carried out Chrétien's
instructions see Kelly, Sens and Conjointure, pp. 94-7, 185-6.

[116]See Zimmer, The King and the Corpse, pp. 170-3,
176-7; G. Cohen, Un Grand Romancier d'amour et d'aventure au
XIIe siècle: Chrétien de Troyes et son oeuvre (Paris, 1931),
p. 274; David Fowler, "L'Amour dans le Lancelot de Chrétien",
Romania, 91 (1970), 390; D. D. R. Owen, "Profanity and Its
Purpose in Chrétien's Cligés and Lancelot", FMLS, 6 (1970),

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37-48, repr. in Owen, ed., Arthurian Romance: Seven Essays, pp. 37-48. For other examples see Owen, p. 42n.. For the great popularity of the Gospel of Nicodemus and its thorough penetration of medieval art and literature see the introduction to The Middle English Harrowing of Hell and Gospel of Nicodemus, ed. W. H. Hulme (London, 1907), pp. lxiv ff..

[117]On these episodes see Artin, Allegory of Adventure, pp. 110-4, 227-9, 237-40.

[118]See Fowler, "L'Amour dans le Lancelot", 383.

[119]Adler, "A Note on the Composition of Chrétien's Charrette", 37; Fowler, 389; Ferrante, "Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance Form", pp. 150-2; Loomis, The Development of Arthurian Romance, pp. 50-4. On alleged defects in the Charrette, see Foerster's ed., pp. lxxxiii-lxxxv; G. Paris, "Etudes sur les romans de la Table Ronde", 483-4; Jessie L. Weston, The Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac (London, 1901), p. 434.

[120]Robertson, Preface, p. 452; Owen, "Profanity and Its Purpose", 47-8. Owen (39-42) compares the echoes of Christ's death and resurrection in the account of Fénice's feigned death and revival in Cligés: "if this is Fénice's Passion, it is a very private and selfish one, and without any redemptive value beyond herself and Cligés" (48).

[121]Artin, Allegory of Adventure, p. 194. The phenomenon is not peculiar to Chrétien. In the Vulgate Queste del Saint Graal, for instance, the Maimed King is intended to serve as a reminder both of Christ's Passion and of the sufferings of fallen man, the Old Adam. When healed by Galahad he is also intended to remind us of Simeon, who waited to see Jesus before dying. Perceval recalls primarily tempted man, but when tempted by the devil on a rocky island takes on Christ-like echoes. His sister reminds us of both the Virgin Mary and the Church as bride of Christ. See F. W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail: a Literary Study of a Thirteenth-Century French Romance (Stanford, 1960).

[122]Medieval Story and the Beginnings of the Social Ideals of English-Speaking People (2nd ed.; New York, 1938), p. 121.

[123]The Knight and Chivalry, p. 118.

[124]"Chivalry in the Morte", in Bennett, ed., Essays on Malory, p. 101.

[125]Introduction to Malory's The Morte Darthur, Parts

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Seven and Eight, ed. D. S. Brewer (Evanston, 1968), p. 6.

[126]"Le Double Esprit et l'unité du Lancelot en prose", appendix to augmented edition of Ferdinand Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose (Paris, 1954; originally published, 1918), p. 449. Mme. Lot-Borodine's essay is also reprinted in her book, De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré, pp. 122-33.

[127]See, for example, Helen Adolf, Visio Pacis: Holy City and Grail (University Park, Pa., 1961). On the social and religious function of Arthurian romance see also Jean Frappier, "Le Graal et la Chevalerie", Romania, 75 (1954), 165-210.

[128]Parzival, section 468, lines 28-30. All quotations from Parzival are from Karl Bartsch's edition, Parzival und Titurel (4th ed., rev. M. Marti; Leipzig, 1927-9).

[129]"The Birth of the Grail Quest", in Innovation in Medieval Literature: Essays to the Memory of Alan Markman, ed. D. Radclif-Umstead (Pittsburgh, 1971), p. 28.

[130]"'The Tale of the Death of Arthur': Catastrophe and Resolution", in Malory's Originality, ed. Lumiansky, p. 271.

[131]See A. W. Thompson, "The Additions to Chrétien's Perceval", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature, pp. 206-17.

[132]Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 10.

[133]Lot, Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 28; A. Micha, "Etudes sur le Lancelot en prose. II. L'Esprit du Lancelot-Graal", 376-7.

[134]Pauphilet, Legs du Moyen Age, pp. 212-7; Frappier, Etude sur la Mort le Roi Artu, roman du XIIIe siècle (2nd ed.; Geneva and Paris, 1961), pp. 31-55, 122-46.

[135]"The Vulgate Cycle", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature, p. 315.

[136]Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, pp. 75, 87, 88.

[137]Ibid., pp. 106, 91-4.

[138]"The Vulgate Cycle", p. 302. See also his Etude sur la Mort le Roi Artu, p. 146.

[139]"L'Eve pécheresse et la rédemption de la femme dans la Quête du Saint-Graal", in De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré, p. 134.

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[140] Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte", pp. 64-9; Charles Moorman, The Book of Kyng Arthur: the Unity of Malory's Morte Darthur (Lexington, Ky., 1965), p. 14.

[141] Sommer, III, 3: 8-9. All references to the Lancelot proper are to this edition.

[142] "The English Prose Morte", in Bennett, ed., Essays on Malory, pp. 18-9.

[143] La Queste del Saint Graal, roman du XIIIe siècle, ed. Albert Pauphilet (Paris, 1923), p. 66, lines 13-5. References to the Queste are to this edition.

[144] Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 93.

[145] La Mort le Roi Artu, roman du XIIIe siècle, ed. J. Frappier (concise ed.; Geneva and Lille, 1954), pp. 70-1. References to the Mort Artu are to this edition.

[146] The point is noted by James Cable in the introduction to his translation of the Mort Artu, The Death of King Arthur (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 13. In the Middle English stanzaic Le Morte Arthur, Lancelot is asked by Bors (Boert) where he is wounded, but does not say, thus inviting the interpretation that his wound is not merely physical (Le Morte Arthur, ed. J. D. Bruce (London, 1903), lines 467-71).

[147] "Tristan et Lancelot", p. 67. See also Frappier, Etude sur la Mort le Roi Artu, pp. 296, 299.

[148] Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 99.

[149] Morte Arthur, lines 3712-21; Malory, pp. 1252-3.

[150] F. Whitehead, "Lancelot's Penance", in Bennett, ed., Essays on Malory, p. 109.

[151] "Le Double Esprit et l'unité du Lancelot en prose", pp. 454-6.

[152] Etude sur la Mort le Roi Artu, p. 301.

[153] "Lancelot's Penance", pp. 104-5.

[154] "Malory's Launcelot and the Noble Way of the World", RES. n.s. 6 (1955), 364.

[155] Introd. to The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight, p. 28.

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[156]"Malory and the Chivalric Order", MAE, 25 (1966), 211-30. See also R. W. Ackerman, "The Middle English Metrical Romances", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature, pp. 490-1; A. J. App, Lancelot in English Literature, His Role and Character (Washington, 1929), pp. 41-5.

[157]"The English Prose Morte", p. 20.

[158]Mort Artu, p. 114; Malory, p. 1164.

[159]E. Vinaver, Malory (Oxford, 1929), pp. 78-82. See also his commentary to the Works, pp. 1535-7, and his essay, "Sir Thomas Malory", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature, p. 547.

[160]"The English Prose Morte", p. 17.

[161]See The Book of Kyng Arthur, pp. xix-xx.

[162]"Sir Thomas Malory", p. 548; Works, p. 1537.

[163]"Malory's Treatment of the Sankgreall", PMLA, 71 (1956), 498-9. Moorman notes that in addition to his excisions of homiletic material Malory also cut out needless details of battles at several points (p. 499n.). Versions of this article appear in The Book of Kyng Arthur, pp. 32 ff., and as "'The Tale of the Sankgreall': Human Frailty", in Malory's Originality, ed. Lumiansky, pp. 184-204.

[164]"The English Prose Morte", p. 17.

[165]See L. H. Loomis, "Arthur's Round Table", PMLA, 41 (1926), 771-84.

[166]"The Relationship of Lancelot and Guenevere in Malory's 'Tale of Lancelot'", MLN, 68 (1953), 90.

[167]"Malory's Treatment of the Sankgreall", 501.

[168]The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight, p. 31.

[169]"Malory's Treatment of the Sankgreall", 503-4.

[170]The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight, pp. 32-3.

[171]"Malory and the Chivalric Order", 227-9.

[172]"Lancelot's Penance", pp. 112-3.

[173]"'The Tale of the Death of Arthur'", p. 247.

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[174]"Courtly Love in Malory", ELH, 27 (1960), 169-71.
On the function of the Tristram story within the Morte
Darthur, see Thomas C. Rumble, "'The Tale of Tristram':
Development by Analogy", in Lumiansky, ed., Malory's
Originality, pp. 118-83. Rumble argues that the Tristram
story is introduced as an analogy to that of Lancelot, lest
we should think that the latter's degeneration is "an anomaly--
a single flaw in an otherwise perfect world" (p. 146). The
"Tristram" provides a middle or development section for the
whole of the work. For Vinaver's vigorous denial of Rumble's
assessment see Works, p. 1446.

[175]See Moorman, "Courtly Love in Malory", esp. p. 169;
Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte", pp. 69-81.

[176]The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight, pp. 24-5.

[177]"Lancelot's Penance", p. 107.

[178]Review of E. K. Chambers's Sir Thomas Wyatt and
Some Collected Studies, in MAE, 3 (1934), 239. For a similar
view see Davies, "Malory's Launcelot and the Noble Way of the
World".

[179]The Book of Kyng Arthur, pp. 17, 38-40.

[180]"'The Tale of the Death of Arthur'", p. 257n..

[181]"Malory's 'Vertuouse' Love", SP, 53 (1956), 469.

[182]Elizabeth T. Pochoda, Arthurian Propaganda: 'Le
Morte Darthur' as an Historical Ideal of Life (Chapel Hill,
N.C., 1971), pp. 128-9. This work contains a valuable
descriptive bibliography of Malory criticism.

[183]Pochoda, pp. 102-40.

[184]"The Two Venuses and Courtly Love", in In Pursuit
of Perfection, p. 17.

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[1]Etude sur la Queste del Saint Graal, attribuée à
Gautier Map (Paris, 1921), p. 26.

[2]"The Conflict of Lyric Conventions and Romance

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Form". p. 164.

[3]On this subject see also F. W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail. pp. 38, 80-5; Pauphilet, Etude sur la Queste, pp. 144-54.

[4]See Locke, pp. 40 ff..

[5]La Queste del Saint Graal, ed. Pauphilet, 74:20-75:4; 76:24-77:3; 78:7-10, 18-26.

[6]See Locke, pp. 48-55; Pauphilet, Etude, pp. 107-8.

[7]The point is noted by Pauline Matarasso in her translation, The Quest of the Holy Grail (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 286.

[8]Etude, p. 49.

[9]In an influential essay Etienne Gilson showed correspondences between the Queste and the ideas of grace and mystical union with God of Bernard of Clairvaux. See "La Mystique de la grâce dans la Queste del Saint Graal", Romania, 51 (1925), 323-47, repr. in his Les Idées et les lettres (Paris, 1932), pp. 59-91. For the general Cistercian influence in the work see Pauphilet, Etude, pp. 53-83.

[10]See M. Schlauch, "The Allegory of Church and Synagogue", Speculum, 14 (1939), 448-64.

[11]Etude, p. 141.

[12]Etude, pp. 47-8, 62-3, 67-70.

[13]Even in the 13th-century French prose Perlesvaus, which uses the Grail story for a detailed allegory of the life of Christ, and which J. N. Carman has described as a "symbolic New Testament...employing a system of knightly substitutions for Biblical characters", the final vision of the Grail by Arthur (who has been firmly associated with temporal power, as Gawain has been with spiritual power) establishes the union of temporal and spiritual power which is the ultimate justification of Christian knighthood in its literal (as opposed to metaphorical) sense. See Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins (Chicago, 1932-7); J. N. Carman, "The Symbolism of the Perlesvaus", PMLA, 61 (1946), 42-83. In some respects the Perlesvaus is in fact closer to the crusading spirit than the Queste; Arthur and his knights believe in conversion by conquest, and W. A. Nitze notes the "belligerent tone" of the work ("Perlesvaus", in Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature, pp.

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269-70). Lancelot fails to see the Grail when he arrives
at its castle because he is unrepentant about his love;
indeed, when reproached by King Pelles he insists on the
chivalric advantages of courtesy and valour that his love
brings him. In context the ironic implications of this
claim are surely indisputable, but Nitze ("Perlesvaus", p.
266) considers Lancelot's protestations an expression of
"the ideals of knighthood", and Thomas Kelly in a recent
article claims that the romance remains ambiguous in its
attitude to Lancelot's love, approving both "chevalerie por
dames" and "chevalerie por la Nouvelle Loi" ("Love in the
Perlesvaus: Sinful Passion or Redemptive Force?", Romanic
Review, 66 (1975), 1-12).

[14]See "L'Eve pécheresse et la redemption de la femme
dans la Quête du Saint-Graal", pp. 147, 157.

[15]Ibid., p. 148.

[16]Hermann Weigand, "Courtly Love in Wolfram's
Parzival", in his Wolfram's 'Parzival': Five Essays, ed.
Hoffman, p. 168.

[17]Parzival, ed. Bartsch, 827:9-14; 435:2-440:19;
Weigand, pp. 171, 186 ff.. For a survey of commentary on
love in the poem see Henry Kratz, Wolfram von Eschenbach's
'Parzival': an Attempt at a Total Evaluation, pp. 455-9.
Kratz insists that the pursuit of Minne is an integral part
of chivalry in romances generally (see esp. pp. 36-42).

[18]"Irony and Medieval Romance", pp. 59-60.

[19]See Otto Springer, "Wolfram's Parzival", in Loomis,
ed., Arthurian Literature, pp. 232-3, 236, 247. Cf. Malory's
King Pelles, who was "smytten thorow both thyghes...for his
hardynes" (Works, p. 990).

[20]H. B. Willson, "The Grail King in Wolfram's Parzival",
MLR, 55 (1960), 553-63. See also Hugh Sacker, An Introduction
to Wolfram's 'Parzival' (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 32-43, 117-8.

[21]For a survey of commentary on the thematic relation-
ship of Gawain to Parzival see Kratz, pp. 566-9.

[22]Weigand, pp. 172-3.

[23]See Springer, p. 239.

[24]"Irony and Medieval Romance", p. 62.

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[25]Weigand, pp. 197, 197-8n..

[26]Expositio in Job, PL, 164, col. 577.

[27]Lines 226-32. The Macro Plays, ed. M. Eccles (London, 1969), p. 161. For an exegesis of the Job and Ephesians passages in an English homily, see "A Treatise of Ghostly Battle", in Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and His Followers, ed. C. Horstmann (London, 1895-6), II, 421-7. The treatise is discussed by Sister Marie de Lourdes Le May, The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in English Literature (Washington, 1932), pp. 34-9.

[28]Li Tornoiemenz Antecrit von Huon de Mery, ed. Georg Wimmer (Marburg, 1888). See also PP, C, XXIII, 69 ff..

[29]Jacobi a Voragine Legenda aurea, vulgo Historia lombardica dicta, ed. T. Graesse (3rd ed.; Breslau, 1890), ch. 162 ("De omnibus sanctis"), p. 724.

[30]Ordre of Chyualry, p. 60.

[31]Stephen Scrope, in the letter to Sir John Fastolf with which he prefaced his translation of Christine's work, noted that the purpose of the allegories is "to lerne euery man nov lyving in this world how he schuld be a knyht exercisyng and doyng the dedys of armys gostly, for ever-lasting victorie and helthe of the sovle" (Epistle of Othea, appendix A, p. 123).

[32]Summa de arte praedicatoria, ch. 40 (PL, 210, col. 186). The passage is mentioned by Robertson, Preface, pp. 174-5.

[33]Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis, together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the 15th Century, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby (London, 1865-86), VI, 49.

[34]Ed. Perry, pp. 22-3.

[35]Select Eng. Works, III, 367, 354.

[36]Ed. Day and Steele, p. 42.

[37]Lines 1432-6. The poem is edited by Eugen Einenkel and printed in an appendix to The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katherine of Alexandria, ed. H. H. Gibbs (London, 1884).

[38]The South English Legendary, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill (London, 1956-9), I, 2, lines 23-32.

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[39] *Ibid.*, I, 3, lines 54-6.

[40] *The Early South-English Legendary; or, Lives of Saints*, ed. C. Horstmann (London, 1887), p. 482.

[41] *Etude sur la Queste del Saint Graal*, p. 103.

[42] Luke, 2:14 (*The New Testament in English according to the Version by John Wycliffe*, ed. Forshall and Madden). Cf. "the kny3thod of heuene" (Deeds (Acts), 7:42).

[43] British Museum, Add. MS. 27944, fol. 14r, col. 1; fol. 128r, col. 1 (quoted in *MED*, part L.1, p. 562b, part C.2, pp. 234b-235a).

[44] 2 Tim., 2:4. Trevisa's knight quotes the passage in support of his argument that the Church should not interfere with "secular nedes and bysynesse" (*Dialogus*, p. 9).

[45] For references to discussions of the subject see Sister Le May, *The Allegory of the Christ-Knight*, pp. xi-xii.

[46] Le May, p. 31. For examples of the figure of Christ fighting with Satan in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and other works, see pp. 44-51.

[47] *Ludus Coventriae, or The Plaie called Corpus Christi*, ed. K. S. Block (London, 1922), p. 150, line 113; Carleton Brown, ed., *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford, 1932), p. 72. Other instances of such vestigial references to the tradition are given by Le May, pp. 54-6.

[48] See, for example, Henry of Lancaster's *Livre de seyntz medicines*, p. 138.

[49] *Middle English Sermons*, ed. W. O. Ross (London, 1960), pp. 37-8. The sermons are collected in a 15th-century MS., but are themselves older.

[50] Carleton Brown, ed., *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century* (2nd ed., rev. G. V. Smithers; Oxford, 1952), pp. 82,28. Cf. *Queste del Saint Graal*, 163:17-20.

[51] See Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 53-6.

[52] Brown, *XIVth Century*, p. 223. The *South English Legendary* describes Christ as a knight who is 'armed' by John, his standard-bearer, at his baptism in the Jordan (ed. D'Evelyn and Mill, I, 2-3).

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[53]The _exemplum_, but not the allegorical exposition, is printed by C. Horstmann in "Die Evangelien-Geschichten der Homilien-Sammlung des MS. Vernon", Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen, 57 (1877), 274-5; quoted by Rosemary Woolf, "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature", RES, n.s. 13 (1962), 1.

[54]The Towneley Plays, ed. G. England and A. W. Pollard (London, 1897), XXIII, st. 16 (p. 261). Sister Jean Marie Kann argued that the "sadyll" was a 'seat' thought to have been built into the cross ("The Cross in the Towneley Plays", Traditio, 5 (1947), 331-4), but Rosemary Woolf rightly discounts this unnecessary notion ("The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight", p. 14). For examples from sermons of the image of the cross as Christ's horse, see Woolf's article, p. 13.

[55]Brown, XIIIth Century, p. 67.

[56]Le May, p. 42. On the sources of the Piers passages see Le May, pp. 44-5; Wilbur Gaffney, "The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in Piers Plowman", PMLA, 46 (1931), 155-68; R. St.-Jacques, "Langland's Christ-Knight and the Liturgy", Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa, 37 (1967), 146-58.

[57]For other references to Christ's joust and his coat-armour see B, V, 507-8; B, XVI, 162-6, 176-82.

[58]Woolf, The English Religious Lyric, pp. 58-9. Geoffrey Shepherd associates the shift of emphasis with St. Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs. See his edition of the Ancrene Wisse, Parts Six and Seven (London and Edinburgh, 1959), xlix and 55. For other examples of the idea of Christ wooing the individual soul, see PL, 159, cols. 618, 640; 176, cols. 964-5; 204, col. 1131.

[59]See Woolf, "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight", p. 3.

[60]The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Ancrene Wisse, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien (London, 1962), pp. 199-203. The image of Christ as lover is of course very frequently found in the writings of the Katherine Group. For other examples see Woolf, The English Religious Lyric, pp. 45-62. See also the "Corpus Christi Carol", in which Christ is visualised as a knight with bleeding wounds (The Early English Carols, ed. R. L. Greene (Oxford, 1935), p. 221). In a variant version of the famous lyric, "Quia amore langueo", the speaker is not, as is usually the case, the Virgin but instead Christ, who has fought for his erring 'sister', man's soul (The Faber Book of Religious Verse, ed. Helen Gardner (London, 1972), pp. 56-60).

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[61]The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry, ed. Wright, p. 143; cited by Le May, p. 27.

[62]The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage (London, 1879), pp. 23-6. See also, for example, Henryson's "The Bludy Serk", in Poems, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh, 1933), pp. 173-6. Rosemary Woolf compares, as part of the same phenomenon, those exempla which relate the seizing of a man's inheritance and the rightful owner's regaining it through the efforts of a friend ("The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight", 15). Another version is the story of the two sisters, which appears in Yvain and the Queste.

[63]Pp. 11-2. Sister Le May further argues (see esp. p. 52) that at the end of the 13th century the vogue of the Christ-lover-knight motif declined with the passing of the heyday of the romances, leading to a resurgence of the Christ-warrior-knight concept, exemplified for her in Piers. Her evidence is, however, highly selective, and ignores the continuing popularity of the former theme in the 14th and 15th centuries.

[64]See The English Religious Lyric, p. 49.

[65]Ibid., p. 60.

[66]"Gawain's Spiritual Journey: Imitatio Christi in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", AnM, 6 (1965), 65-106. For parallel movements in French romances see La Mule sans frein, ed. R. C. Johnston and D. D. R. Owen (Edinburgh and London, 1972), esp. introd., pp. 3-4; D. D. R. Owen, The Vision of Hell: Infernal Journeys in Medieval French Literature (Edinburgh and London, 1970).

[67]Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon (2nd ed., rev. by N. Davis; Oxford, 1967), line 2529. All references are to this edition. The relevance of the Christ-Knight motif is also noted by Hans Schnyder, but whereas Levy argues at length that the Green Knight is the devil, Schnyder sees Christ echoes in the Green Knight as well as in Gawain. Bertilak, according to Schnyder, is Christ the hunter of souls, and his castle is the heavenly city or the Church. Schnyder therefore treats only the visit of Gawain to the Green Chapel as a descent into hell ("Sir Gawain and the Green Knight": an Essay in Interpretation (Berne, 1961), pp. 41-3, 55-6, 63 ff.).

[68]Lines 619 ff.. See R. H. Green, "Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection", ELH, 29 (1962), 134-5. Ironies are also involved here: D. H. Green points out that Solomon is connected with the perfection of the pentangle in lines 625-6, but cited as an example of falling into imperfection through

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women in line 2417; Gawain proves similarly fallible ("Irony
and Medieval Romance", 53). Schnyder (pp. 53-4) argues that
the parrots and doves on his helmet are a reference to the
helmet of salvation.

[69]Schnyder glosses the seven kinds of beasts as the
seven deadly sins, and more questionably claims that the
wintry landscape reflects the lack of charity in Gawain's
soul (pp. 51 ff.). Though not concerned with the spiritual
aspects of Gawain's adventures, John Speirs claims that
Bertilak's castle is "unmistakeably a version of the Grail Castle"
("Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", Scrutiny, 16 (1949), 287).

[70]"Gawain's Shield", 134-5.

[71]See Schnyder, p. 44; Levy, 104.

[72]Levy, 91 ff..

[73]Larry D. Benson, Art and Tradition in 'Sir Gawain and
the Green Knight' (New Brunswick, N.J., 1965), pp. 240-8.

[74]"Knight in Tarnished Armor: the Meaning of Sir Gawain
and the Green Knight", MLR, 62 (1967), 11.

[75]"Gawain's Two Confessions Reconsidered", ChauR, 9 (1974), 73-9.

[76]Lines 853-9, 875-81, 1120-1, 1470-2, 1686-7, 1731,
1748, 1873, 1928-31.

[77]Lines 1178-81, 1468-72, 1729-32.

[78]Erec et Enide, lines 2430 ff., esp. 2442-3; Malory,
Works, 743:2-3.

[79]See, for example, Geoffroi de Charny's Livre de
chevalerie, pp. 486-8; Bonet, Tree of Battle, p. 213. See
also section II, 4, above.

[80]Cf. Matt., 25:13; Rom., 13:11; Ephes., 5:14.

[81]Historia regum Britanniae, ed. Griscom, p. 438.
Arthur's connection with the Virgin is stressed also in the
Historia Britonum attributed to Nennius. See R. H. Fletcher,
The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles, especially those of
Great Britain and France (Boston, 1906), pp. 32-4.

[82]Brown, XIIIth Century, p. 116; The Minor Poems of John
Lydgate (part I), ed. H. N. MacCracken (London, 1911), p. 367.
On St. George as symbol and figurehead of chivalry, and his
close association with the crusades, see G. J. Marcus, St. George
of England (London, 1929), pp. 39-59.

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[83]This aspect of the romance is admirably commented on
by Donald Howard in "Structure and Symmetry in Sir Gawain",
Speculum, 39 (1964), 427, 429: "[Gawain's shield] is at base
a worldly object, a part of his warlike gear, designed at once
to protect his body and remind him of his immortal soul, so
that it suggests at once his knightly valor and his spiritual
indifference to destiny...It thus points to the proper
attitude for a knight: to be indifferent to one's life in
the world and yet preserve it, to use the world well and yet
love it little...[Gawain] is admirably suited to put his
destiny to the test: he is devoted to the articles of faith
and has the virtues appropriate to the ideal Christian knight.
The problem is to maintain the fine balance between this
religious ethos and the unavoidable necessity of using worldly
means to preserve life and accomplish knightly deeds."

[84]Shedd, "Knight in Tarnished Armor", 13. See also
Green, "Irony and Medieval Romance", 61. For an account of
the poem which shares several of the assumptions of my own,
see G. V. Smithers, "What Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
is About", MAE, 32 (1963), 171-89. Smithers draws a
parallel between Gawain and the Queste: "The behaviour of
Gawain in the English poem is utterly at variance with the
mediæval Gallic conception of the knight who was the
embodiment of courtoisie...The poet's concern...is with
spiritual and Christian and ecclesiastical values, and therefore
with the spiritual rather than the secular aspect of the
knightly ethos as embodied in Gawain." Gawain is "committed
to certain ideals substantially like those of chevalerie
celestiel".

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[1]Sir I. Gollancz, "Chivalry in Medieval English
Poetry", in Chivalry, ed. Prestage, p. 173; Haller, "The
Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", 84; Brewer, "Chaucer
and Chrétien and Arthurian Romance", in Chaucer and Middle
English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins, ed. Beryl
Rowland (London, 1974), pp. 257-8.

[2]W. Matthews suggests that the alliterative Morte
Arthure is to some extent a criticism of Edward III's war
with France (The Tragedy of Arthur (Berkeley and Los Angeles,
1960), pp. 178 ff.. See also Barnie (War in Medieval Society,
pp. 147-50), who believes that The Awntyrs of Arthure contains
a similar criticism of Edward.

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[3]"Chaucer and Chrétien", p. 256. Brewer suggests that
the mention of women's reverence of the story of Lancelot
refers to the part played by Marie de Champagne in the
composition of Chrétien's Charrette. Chaucer, he proposes,
knew the romance and had seen "what a farrago of nonsense it is".

[4]On the Squire's mention of Gawain (V, 95), see B. J.
Whiting, "Gawain: His Reputation, His Courtesy and His
Appearance in Chaucer's Squire's Tale", MS, 9 (1947), 189-
234; F. P. Magoun, Jr., "Chaucer's Sir Gawain and the Old
French Roman de la Rose", MLN, 67 (1952), 183-5.

[5]Haller comments that the "truth" of the "Nun's Priest's
Tale" is like that of the story of Lancelot with respect to
the self-deception of Chaunticleer in letting Pertelote's
beauty blind him ("The Wife of Bath and the Three Estates",
AnM, 6 (1965), 60n.).

[6]"Thematic Relationships", 454-6; "The Canterbury Tales",
pp. 95-8. The colours associated with the Squire, "whyte and
reed", are also those mentioned in the Parson's discussion
of immodest male dress (X, 424), and were also the colours
worn by the personal retainers of Richard II, whose court was
noted for shameless extravagance (see G. Mathew, The Court of
Richard II, p. 125). But red and white are also important
chivalric colours in the Queste, since they are Galahad's
colours, and associated with the Grail, Pentecost and Christ.
See Pauphilet, Etude sur la Queste, p. 108; Locke, Quest for
the Holy Grail, pp. 46-8, 66. The Squire's embroidery also
emphasises his carnal use of a spiritual potential. Cf. in
addition the ironic attack in TC, III, 1384, on those who
"callen love a woodnesse or folie", for they shall "forgon the
white and ek the rede"; see also the Pardoner's "Now kepe yow
fro the white and fro the rede" (VI, 562).

[7]Lines 131-6 (Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama,
ed. Manly, I, 358).

[8]Geoffrey Chaucer (London, 1974), pp. 126-7.

[9]Webb, claiming that Theseus is condemned for cruelty
in the "Knight's Tale", points out the attacks on the perfidy
of Theseus in LGW, 2171 ff. and HF, 405 ff. ("A Reinterpretation
of Chaucer's Theseus", 289). But in view of the multitude of
classical stories involving Theseus, and their lack of any
consistent characterisation of him beyond the heroic, we cannot
assume that Chaucer intended any connection to be drawn between
his roles as conqueror of Thebes and betrayer of Ariadne. The ironic
possibilities of the passages from LGW and HF also make any
application of them to the "Knight's Tale" problematic.

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[10] See Haller, "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", 73.

[11] Norton-Smith, pp. 129, 133. The same critic points out that "the closing funeral of Arcite is intended to balance the opening denial of funeral rites by Creon", which had been a "denial of the observation of formal law" (p. 133).

[12] Westlund, "The Knight's Tale as an Impetus for Pilgrimage", PQ, 43 (1964), 526-37; Fifield, "The Knight's Tale: Incident, Idea, Incorporation", ChauR, 3 (1968-9), 103.

[13] "The Knight's Tale and the Epic Tradition", 73-84.

[14] "The Historical Setting of Chaucer's Book of the Duchess", in Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Urban Tigner Holmes, pp. 187-8, 193-4.

[15] "Literary and Historical Researches Respecting Chaucer's Knight and Squire", pp. 126-7.

[16] See Robinson's note, pp. 856-7. For other allegorical suggestions see G. H. Cowling, "Chaucer's Complaintes of Mars and Venus", RES, 2 (1926), 405-10; George Williams, "What is the Meaning of Chaucer's Complaint of Mars?", JEGP, 57 (1958), 167-76.

[17] "On the Date and Interpretation of Chaucer's Complaint of Mars", Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, 5 (Boston, 1896), 124.

[18] Allegory of Love, p. 170. Cf. Dimarco's assertion (p. 134) that Mars' submission to Venus is regenerative of his character.

[19] Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars: Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery (Princeton, 1970), pp. 103-60. Norton-Smith claims that the poem establishes "an archetypal plot or pattern of tragic love, a complex yet compressed exemplum of doomed, unfortunate fine amour" (p. 28). Gardiner Stillwell comments that as far as illicit love is concerned Chaucer exhibits "sympathetic, but nonetheless very pointed irony and humor" ("Convention and Individuality in Chaucer's Complaint of Mars", PQ, 35 (1956), 69). J. J. Mogan compares the relationship of Mars and Venus to the liaisons in the "Knight's Tale" and Troilus: the use of planetary symbols indicates that love is initiated and tragically terminated in each of these works by fate (Chaucer and the Theme of Mutability (The Hague, 1969), pp. 79-80).

[20] In another study of the "Complaint" and its classical inheritance, Melvin G. Storm concludes that for Chaucer the

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affair between Venus and Mars exemplified the disabling of power by lust. See "Chaucer's Poetic Treatment of the Figure of Mars", DAI, 34 (1973), 742A (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).

[21] Norton-Smith, p. 25.

[22] Lydgate referred to the poem as "the broche which that Vulcanus at Thebes wroughte"; MS. Harl. 7333 entitles it "The Broche of Thebes". See also Robinson's note, p. 856.

[23] When Pandarus interrupts Criseyde to initiate his intrigue she is listening to the story of Thebes, including that of Oedipus and that of the death of Amphiaraus through the treachery of his wife, Eriphyle (TC, II, 83-108). Cassandra introduces her interpretation of the boar in Troilus's dream by telling the story of Thebes; Diomede (the boar) is the inheritor of the Theban tradition and thus an appropriate nemesis for Troilus and Criseyde's indulgence in 'Theban' behaviour (V, 1464-1515).

[24] See Thebaid, II, 265-305. For a survey of the horrors involved in the story of Thebes, and Jove's use of them as punishment for the city's evil conduct. see Thebaid, I, 4-14, 227-39.

[25] Thebaid, II, 283-4.

[26] For Venus's girdle, see Iliad, XIV, 214.

[27] Norton-Smith's argument (pp. 32-4) that Chaucer transformed Statius's necklace into a more ambiguous symbol by softening some of the harsh implications of the original is unconvincing. The parallel between the brooch and Venus's face which he mentions is an obvious and necessary one for Mars' purpose, as is the insistence on the brooch's beauty, which aroused such fatal covetousness. It is not true that "Chaucer transfers the authorship from Vulcan to the ultimate Maker" (p. 34); Mars uses the making of the brooch as an analogy to the creation of Venus, but does not suggest that they are both made by the same person—a point which is obscured by Norton-Smith's loose employment of quotations from the poem.

[28] Similarly in the "Canon's Yeoman's Tale" the idea of a knight fighting for love appears in a setting of lust and folly. The duped priest, in his eagerness to attain the secret of the canon's alchemy, is compared to a "knyght in armes" eager "to doon an hardy dede,/To stonden in grace of his lady deere" (VIII, 1347-9).

[29] Wood (p. 114) compares Mars' attack on God with Troilus's

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curses of everyone except Criseyde (TC, V, 206-10). See also
Robertson, Preface, p. 492.

[30]In both cases the image involves the reversal of the
normative use of the figure as the curbing by the soul of the
body's sensual appetite (see Beryl Rowland, Blind Beasts:
Chaucer's Animal World (Kent, Ohio, 1971), pp. 129 ff.).
The point is that Troilus has no business being identified
with a horse in the first place, especially a restive one.
His proper function as a rider is doubly important since he is
a knight. Lull insists on the importance of a knight's control
over his horse in both allegorical and practical terms (Ordre
of Chyvalry, pp. 85-6). The "Treatise of Ghostly Battle"
supports the injunction that the soul should control the body
by pointing out that "there may noo mane fyȝte ayenst hys
enemy but yef hys horse be meke and mylde" (Yorkshire Writers,
ed. Horstmann, I, 421; cited by Le May, p. 35). The knight's
relation to his horse is of continual importance in chivalric
literature. Arcite, for instance, rides out to the woods on
a "courser, startlynge as the fir" (I, 1502), but is later
thrown; Hatton gives examples of the sin of pride symbolised as
a man falling off a horse ("The Canterbury Tales", pp. 121-3).
A priest in the Vulgate Queste takes the mounting of a powerful
warhorse by the sinfully wrathful Hector as an emblem of pride
(159:24-6). Pauphilet notes that a large horse was a common
symbol of pride, and cites a Cistercian source to the effect
that "le cheval est un animal orgueilleux et fier, qui aime
les rivalités et la guerre, les coȝts ardent et les désirs
sans frein" (Etude sur la Queste, p. 114). In Gawain and the
Green Knight, Gawain's horse, Gringolet, is described as "huge"
(line 2047) just as Gawain is leaving for the Green Chapel,
where his pride will be humbled. Cf. also PP, C, XI, 134, where
the devil is referred to as a "prout prikyere of Fraunce".

[31]See, for example, II, 630, 988; III, 22, 437; V,
306-7. The undiscriminating praise of Venus in the proem to
book III is as suspect as the similar passage in CM, 174-81, and
for similar reasons. The "gladnesse/Of Troilus, to Venus
heryinge" (III, 47-8) will be reversed in the last two books,
just as Mars's good fortune is reversed. Mars's judgment is
unreliable because he is a buffoon and still enthralled by
Venus, while the narrator of the Troilus claims to be Venus's
clerk (III, 40-1). This continues the ironic stance of I, 15-6
(the narrator must be taught the joys of love, since he does
not himself participate "for myn unliklynesse"), familiar to us
from a number of Chaucer's other works (on this widely discussed
subject see esp. Wood, "Chaucer and 'Sir Thopas'", 394-7); it
also implies an admission of bias, a hint of coercion (he can
only write what Venus approves), and a comparison between
himself and Genius in the Roman de la Rose, who delivers a
fatuous sermon proclaiming reproduction to be the highest duty

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of mankind. It is the dramatic context that is ignored by
D. S. Brewer in his discussion of the stanza in praise of
Venus from CM ("Chaucer's 'Complaint of Mars'", N&Q, n.s.
1 (1954), 462-3).

[32]Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, p. 142;
Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 195; G. T. Shepherd, "Troilus and
Criseyde", in Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in
Middle English Literature, ed. D. S. Brewer (University, Ala.,
1966), p. 78; Marion N. Green, "Christian Implications of
Knighthood and Courtly Love in Chaucer's Troilus", Delaware
Notes, 30 (1957), 57-92; Karl Young, "Chaucer's 'Troilus and
Criseyde' as Romance", PMLA, 53 (1938), 50. For other examples
of the common view that Troilus is ennobled by love see Thomas
A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study of Courtly Love (Baton
Rouge, 1940); Brewer, Chaucer in His Time, pp. 168-9.

[33]Gaylord, "Gentilesse in Chaucer's Troilus", SP, 61
(1964), 19-34; Lockhart, "Semantic, Moral and Aesthetic
Degeneration in Troilus and Criseyde", ChauR, 8 (1973), 100-18.

[34]Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the
Parody of the Courtly Lover, pp. 37-70. (For the reversal
of roles see also R. E. Kaske, "The Aube in Chaucer's
Troilus", in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Schoeck and Taylor, II,
167-79.) Muscatine concedes that "It is difficult to think
of a single hero of French romance who is quite so prostrated
by love, so removed from the actual business of courtship,
who depends so completely on an intermediary" (Chaucer and the
French Tradition (Berkeley, 1960), p. 137).

[35]"Troilus and Criseyde and Chaucer's Dedication to
Gower", TSL, 18 (1973), 1-11. D. H. Green comments that we
distrust the objectivity of a narrator who appears to fall in
love with Criseyde, and compares Chaucer's setting up of the
fictitious Lollius to Wolfram's use of the probably fictitious
Kyot as a method of dissociating the author to some extent
from the narrator ("Irony and Medieval Romance", 54-5).

[36]Select Eng. Works, III, 165.

[37]Cf. CM, 64 and 187: Venus has "compassioun of her
knyght", and Mars in turn promises "To ben her truest servaunt
and her knyght." In the "Merchant's Tale" (IV, 1723-4) Venus
laughs (from joy or amusement) when January becomes "hir
knyght". Saturn ("Knight's Tale", I, 2470-1) assures Venus
that he will accommodate Palamon, "that is thyn owene knyght".

[38]Cf. Muriel Bowden's comment that "January is termed
a 'knight' by the pompous and not very discerning Merchant, but
Chaucer would expect his audience to look beneath the surface

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and recognise January as being the antithesis of the ideal.
January, that lascivious old man, lives luxuriously, because
he believes that that way of living 'longeth to a knyght'"
(Reader's Guide, p. 20).

[39]It is perhaps noteworthy that Jezebel is eaten by
dogs as a punishment for assisting Ahab's covetousness of the
garden of Naboth. See 1 Kings, 21, and 2 Kings, 9:30-7.

[40]See, for example, MO, 25237-500, and the confession
of Avarice in PP, C, VII, 196-285. For a host of other
references see Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire,
pp. 99, 253-4.

[41]The Merchant of Prato: Francesco di Marco Datini
(rev. ed.; Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 121.

[42]Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse, p. 49.

[43]II, 114, 122-3. See Chauncey Wood, "Chaucer's Man
of Law as Interpreter", Traditio, 23 (1967), 149-90.

[44]Silverman, "Sex and Money in Chaucer's Shipman's Tale",
PQ, 32 (1953), 329-36; Stillwell, "Chaucer's 'Sad' Merchant".

[45]See esp. VII, 20-2, 38-42, 254, 283-6, 291, 327,
383-4.

[46]See VII, 172, 179, 245-8. On the question of the
merchant's capacities as a lover, cf. lines 112-23 and 377-81.
In an analogue in the Decameron (VIII,1), the main point of
the story is that the wife is deceived as a punishment for
treating avariciously the advances of her lover (see S&A, pp.
439-43). The narrator of the "Shipman's Tale" tries unsuccessfully
to change this emphasis.

[47]As an unsuccessful attempt to set up a pejorative
image of merchants the tale is suited to the Shipman, who
habitually steals wine which he is carrying from Bordeaux
for merchants (GP, 396-7); as an attempt to portray the folly
of being a stingy husband the tale is also suited to the
Wife of Bath, for whom it was at one time perhaps intended
(see Robinson's note), especially since the wife is revealed
as the more acquisitive of the two.

[48]One might argue that the avarice and miserliness of
the Physician (see GP, 427, 441-4; for general remarks on the
avarice of physicians see Romaunt, 5721 ff.) are revealed in his
tale by the inappropriateness of his attitude towards Virginius,
who is described as a knight in VI, 2, 5, 180, 193, 203, 261.
The version of the story in the Roman de la Rose (5589 ff.)

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is designed to exemplify the fallibility of judges and of
human justice; the Physician turns it into a glorification
of the heroic deed of Virginius. Virginius's deed is very
dubious, and one might suggest that he turns his knightly
sword against the wrong person in killing his daughter rather
than the false judge, since Virginius appears to enjoy
popular support. He does not have the excuse of Jephthah,
who had sworn an oath to God (see lines 240-1, and Judges,
11:30-9). As a knight, Virginius carries out his duty by
killing the oppressed innocent party he is supposed to
protect; as a parent, he abuses his power, treating the life
of his child as if it were his own property to dispose of.
Hence the digression on the duties of parents (lines 93-
102). There is a fine irony about the Physician's warning,
"Beth war, that...by youre necligence in chastisynge,/That
they ne perisse..." (97-9). For a convincing account of some
of the Physician's inadequacies as a narrator see Anne
Middleton, "The Physician's Tale and Love's Martyrs: 'Ensamples
mo than Ten' as a Method in the Canterbury Tales", ChauR, 8
(1973), 9-32. See also Richard L. Hoffman, "Jephthah's
Daughter and Chaucer's Virginia", ChauR, 2 (1967-8), 20-31.

[49]Medieval Story and the Beginnings of the Social
Ideals of English-Speaking People, pp. 210-1.

[50]Slade, "Irony in the Wife of Bath's Tale", MLR, 64
(1969), 241-3; Gerould, Chaucerian Essays (Princeton, 1952),
p. 75; Kemp Malone, "'The Wife of Bath's Tale'", MLR, 57
(1962), 481-9; Eisner, A Tale of Wonder: a Source Study of
'The Wife of Bath's Tale' (Wexford, 1957).

[51]"Character and Class in the Wife of Bath's Tale", 331.

[52]Another reason for the appropriateness of a tale of
knighthood for the Wife is suggested by Bernard Levy, who
notes that the Wife is presented in the GP as a parody of a
knight. Her hat is "As brood as is a bokeler or a targe",
and there are "on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe" (I, 471,
473), while her extensive "wandrynge by the weye" to foreign
shrines parallels the campaigning of the Knight ("Chaucer's
Wife of Bath, the Loathly Lady and Dante's Siren", Symposium,
19 (1965), 371-2). Note also the Wife's assertion that "Mars
yaf me my sturdy hardynesse" (III, 612), on which see Wood,
Chaucer and the Country of the Stars, p. 114. Cf. Bruce
Cowgill's assertion that the Miller is a "knight manqué".
Besides his brawn, his belligerence and his victories at
wrestling, he is the bearer of a sword and buckler.
The sword was restricted to the knightly classes, for whom
it was of course an important symbol, and therefore illegal
for the Miller to carry ("Chaucer and the Just Society", p. 151).

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[53]The point is made by Wood, "Chaucer and 'Sir Thopas'", 393.

[54]Bernard Levy, "Chaucer's Wife of Bath", 366-70; Haller, "The Wife of Bath and the Three Estates", 47-64; Hatton, "The Canterbury Tales", pp. 153-64. For an opposite view (that the knight is reformed by the curtain lecture, the hag's magic working on him as well as on her), see J. P. Roppolo, "The Converted Knight in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale", College English, 12 (1951), 263-9.

[55]"Rape and Women's Sovereignty in the Wife of Bath's Tale", MLN, 63 (1948), 378-81. See De arte honeste amandi, I,xi (tr. Parry, pp. 149-50).

[56]Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England, II, 415, 418; Sir F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1898), II, 491; Sir W. Holdsworth, A History of English Law (4th ed.; London, 1935), III, 361.

[57]Love and War in the Middle English Romances, p. 111.

[58]Pollock and Maitland, History of English Law, II, 491. Bracton noted that a woman had the right to marry her ravisher if she wished, even if she were common and he noble (II, 417), and mentioned a series of graduated punishments listed in ancient laws for offences ranging from indecorous touching to outright rape. He also pointed out that, although all rape incurred severe punishment, the penalty is adjusted according to the status of the victim, "according as she is married or a widow living a respectable life, a nun or matron, a recognised concubine or a prostitute plying her trade without discrimination of person, all of whom the king must protect for the preservation of his peace, though a like punishment will not be imposed for each" (II, 415).

[59]The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, tr. G. N. Garmonsway (London, 1953), p. 220.

[60]Bracton, II, 414-5, 418.

[61]Pollock and Maitland, II, 492n..

[62]The sentiment is also discredited in that it is a quotation from the argument of La Vieille in the Roman de la Rose, 13940-66. See Fleming, The 'Roman de la Rose': a Study in Allegory and Iconography, pp. 180-1.

[63]"The Promises in the Franklin's Tale", ELH, 31 (1964), 331-65.

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[64]Ibid., 349. For defences of the Franklin's notions of 'gentilesse' and 'trouthe' see Lindsay A. Mann, "'Gentilesse' and the Franklin's Tale", SP, 63 (1966), 10-29; Berger, "The F-Fragment", 155-6.

[65]For an opposite view see Gertrude M. White, "The Franklin's Tale: Chaucer or the Critics", PMLA, 89 (1974), 454-62.

[66]"Sovereignty and the Two Worlds of the Franklin's Tale", 261.

[67]"The Canterbury Tales", p. 174.

[68]Lawrence, Medieval Story, pp. 102-3; Bowden, Reader's Guide, p. 35.

[69]For a similar conclusion see Hatton, "The Canterbury Tales", pp. 159, 174.

[70]See Sir M. Powicke, The Thirteenth Century, p. 548; Stenton, The First Century of English Feudalism, pp. 164-74.

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This bibliography is arranged in four parts. Part 1 lists
editions and translations of medieval writings; parts 2-4
contain secondary works. Studies of a mainly historical na-
ture appear in part 2, and essentially literary ones in part
3. Commentary on Chaucer, however, is listed separately in
part 4.

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