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. Since Chaucer's knights are frequently lovers,
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Since Chaucer's knights are frequently lovers,
special attention is paid within this broad hypothesis to the role of love in chivalric ideas. While fighting for love appears to have been of negligible importance as a factor in practical knighthly 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 those 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
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".
This study originated as an examination of the knights 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 centrifugal, 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 my discussion, but I have not attempted to impose a greater sense of unity than is justified by the heterogeneous nature of the materials involved.

I am indebted to Dr. Chauncey Wood and to Dr. Laurel Braswell for their advice, and to Catherine Roberts for her encouragement.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AnM     Annuaire Mediaevale
ED      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
DAT     Dissertation Abstracts International
E&S     Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association
EEETS   Early English Text Society, original series
EEETS 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 Aevum
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'Oomme
MP      Modern Philology
MS      Mediaeval Studies
N&Q     Notes and Queries
NM      Neuphilologische Mitteilungen
PL      Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina
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<tr>
<td>PLL</td>
<td>Papers on Language and Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>Philological Quarterly</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Piers Plowman</td>
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<td>RES</td>
<td>Review of English Studies</td>
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<td>S&amp;A</td>
<td>Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATF</td>
<td>Société des Anciens Textes Français</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Studies in Philology</td>
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<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Troilus and Criseyde</td>
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<td>VC</td>
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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 literature 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."

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."
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
geo-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 Christendom 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. 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 consideration 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." 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 historical attitude which puts particular emphasis on the discrepancies 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...." 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."  

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 prosperity." 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."
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.  

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."  

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 "troutbe" 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 Diomed, 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.

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."

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 'truthe' 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 gentilese, 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 mercantilism 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{foul amour} not of Christian chivalry", and that his portrait "continues the ironic contrast of the old chivalry with the new."\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Hanly 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. 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. It is difficult to imagine the Knight as a direct embodiment of national victory in a war whose campaigns are conspicuously absent from his curriculum vitae. Hatton, however, makes a similar suggestion, adding that the portrait of the Squire may be a direct admonition to Richard on his courtiers' extravagance.

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.\footnote{41} It is with this objective in mind, Hatton claims, that Chaucer omitted merely nationalist victories from the career of his ideal knight.\footnote{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. 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. 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.

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.

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. 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".
If we examine the Knight's portrait closely, we see that the immediate ends of his professional 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 character, but not a religious aim.

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 traditional 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 relative validity in the absence of any system 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 undertake 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 knighthood 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. 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. 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."

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\

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." Various attempts to categorise chivalric values as homogeneous and monolithic have proved unsatisfactory. 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 spirituality 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, enormous. 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. 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. 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.)

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. 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.

Moreover the importance of battles generally in the Middle Ages was not great in comparison to that of siege-warfare. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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." 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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. These troops were paid for by scutage, a tax introduced by Henry II which could be substituted for the fulfilment of knight-service obligations. 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.

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.

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). 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.

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.

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.

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. 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."  

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.  

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 investigation 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. 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 Knighetes 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 Knighetes."5

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.5 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.5
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. 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. 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. 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.

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, subscribing— 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. 51

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 possibilities, 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 consideration 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.  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. 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

David by hus daies dobbede kny3tes,
And dude hem swerye on here swerde to serve truth the eure,
Whanne god by-gan heuene in that grete blysse,
He made kny3tes in hus court creatures ten...\(70\)

Froissart in Néliador 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 "knyghtis" who obeyed the centurion or who scourged Jesus were anything but common soldiers.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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." 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. 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. 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." 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 the ende that every knyght shold haue hors and harneys/ and also the vse and craft of a knyght", 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. Caxton's translation of Lull urges knights to challenge traitors to combat since the true knight cannot lose in such a contest. His translation of Jacobus de Cessolitis declares that "A knyghts vertue and myght is not knowen but by his fightynge...And thus is hit of every man the more vailliant/ the more honoured...And what is a knyght worth wyth cute hors and armes/ certaynly nothyng more than on of the peple or lasse pauentre." 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 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. 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. 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. Wyclif divided the membership of the Church into three groups—preachers, defenders and labourers—describing the defenders as "lordes and knyghtis, and oher men of armes"; but later in the same treatise he referred to the same groups as "prestis, and gentil men, and laboreres of pe 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. 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." The knight maintains his military efficiency by pastimes such as hunts and jousts or tournaments. 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 "Thau h e 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. 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.  

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. 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. 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. 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.

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 onslaught 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 retrospective 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 "burtoisie". Froissart was equally fond of recording instances of such virtues in knightly conduct. Geoffroi de Charny, a French knight who died carrying the oriflamme at Poitiers, recommended that knights should not neglect "de jouer de jouter, de parler, de danser et de chanter en compagnie de dames et de damoisesles". Geoffroi approved also of a moderate concern with dressing well, and Lull declared that a knight is "oblyged and bounden...to honour his body in beyng well cladde and nobly". Holychurch asserts that knights "shoulde nat faste ne for-bere sherte;"
Bote feithfullich defende and fy3te 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. 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." 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.
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 knight ing 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." 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." 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 deploving 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 dut\efore
Sur tous les autres seculers
Sont à louer, car leur mestiers
Du siècle est le plus honoré
De prouesse et de renommé:
Mais autrement en leur degré,
En cas qu'ils soient baratiers,
Lors seront ils ly plus blâmé
Par tout le siècle et difamé
Et des privés et d'estrangers. (MQ, 23989-24000)

The reservations that piety placed on the active
knightly life are clear from the Livre de seyntz medicines of
the first duke of Lancaster, a celebrated participant in
tournaments. Another distinguished soldièr, 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.

Wyclif asked why a butcher should not be praised more than
a knight who kills many men. 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.

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 Nohl 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 norished in delices" have "made softe the courages" of French knights. 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 "disqysed/ So diverselych i-dy3t, /That no man may know/A mynstrel from a kny3t... Thei beth desqysed as tormentours/I-come fro clerks pleye".

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. 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 recognising 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 dependent 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 theoretically 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. 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 profiteering. 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.

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.\(^1\)

Chivalry's function as a convenient focus for conflicting 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.\(^2\) 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. Knights who died in them were theoretically 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 reproued, 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 joust and a devotee of the Virgin. On his way to a tournament 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".

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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

The chroniclers have been much abused for naivety 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.

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. 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 flamme./À la firent mainte veuf dame/Ét maint pobre enfant orphany." 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, cient notamment registre et mis en mémore perpétuel, par quoy li bon y puissent prendre exemple, je me veoil ensonnier de les mettre en prose.

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

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." 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. 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". 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." 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.

This parallel is reflected most obviously in the way in which the knighting ceremony frequently became a liturgical ritual in church. The central significance of this is indicated in Froissart's account of how an English squire, Henry Crystode, 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. 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 ingenuity 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 ways". 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, falsotees 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. 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.

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. 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...". 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 prove 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 chyvalry ageynst the enemies of the Crosse and ben martirs yf they doye For they fyghte for tenhaunce the holy feyth catholyk.

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. 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." 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 chyvalry!
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: "Conscyne close 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 every place. 

This suggestion that the knight can either remain on the level of worldliness or transcend it is reinforced by a similar
incident in The Castle of Perseverance. Humanum Genus is enfeoffed by Mundus, and declares:

\[\text{You feffyst me wyth fen and feld}
And hye hall, be holtys and hyll.
In werylwy wele my wytte I welde...}\]

I am kene as a knyt.
Whoso ageyn po Werld wyl speke
Mankyme schal on hym be wreke,
In stronge presun I schal hym steke,
Be it wronge or ryth.179

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 knighthly 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 Pruysse, and into Tartzarye,  
To Alysaundre, ne into Turkye,  
And byd hym faste anoon that he  
Goo hoodles to the Drye Se  
And come hon 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 knighly life (such as crusading) are mentioned only as ancillary to that role.

In The Parliament of Pouns knighthood appears as a qualification for love and an indicator of noble birth. The
representative of the birds of prey declares that the formal eagle should be mated with him who is

the worthieste
Of knyghthood, and longest had used it,
Most of estat, of blod the gentilleste (548-50)

—where "longest 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 serve
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 Hoorman 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 wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,  
On which he rood a pas ful softly...  
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 thynge, as wel as hardynesse...  
His helm toheven was in twenty places,  
That by a tissew 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...

(II, 624-7, 631-4, 633-42)

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, 43-5) 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 dodes, 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. 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. 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 turning first to the "Knight's Tale", however, it is necessary to observe that the assumption of the Knight's historical solidity 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." 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 supplicant 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 battlefield, they recover only to be 'wounded' by Emily (1096-7, 1115-3, 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. The oath has been sworn on their knighthood, and Palamon claims that Arcite is therefore "bounden as a knight" 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 leve 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 (2383-4). 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. 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: "Thor maystow seen devisynge of harneys/So unkouth and so riche..." (2496-7). They are armed "Everych after his opioun" (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 bear skin 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. 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. 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-century 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' attendants had become a problem; the Statuta Armorum curbed the
participation of non-knightly forces, and prohibited the kind of incident that Chaucer describes here. 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".

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. Nevertheless 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". 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?} \\
\text{Is this the lawe of kynge Arthures hous?} \\
\text{Is every knyght of his so dangerous? (III, 1088-90).}
\end{align*}
\]

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. 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. 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. 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". 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 thiese nobles alle. (IV, 1383-9)

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 January was become 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. 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." 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.

Harry Berger takes a more sympathetic view of the Franklin'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". ¹⁴⁴

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. ¹⁴⁵ 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."

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". 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 worshippe 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 wes of chivalrie the flour,
Is comen hoon, and othere worldly men.
O blissful artow now, thou Dorigen,
That hast thy lusty houstone 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 Hoorman 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 contemptuous attitude of the French and English aristocracy to the military efforts of the Flemish bourgeoisie. 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. 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. 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 Payerys", 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 "prikyns," and fantasies about succubi and elf-queens.
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 of the campaigns against the infidels in which he has participated. (I, 51-60). 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. 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 Lyeyes 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 1). For Thomas Ratton 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 Dimarco, 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. Iyeys was also hastily abandoned soon after its capture, and Satalye, though held for twelve years, was eventually retaken by pagans in 1373. 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 campaign 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. 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.

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.
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.  

Along with the formulation of theories as to how 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. 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. 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; 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{74} A combination of force and persuasion was suggested by propagandists like Humbert of Romans and Ramon Lull, who in his \textit{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. 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 vaginal. Omnis qui acceperit gladium, gladio peribit'".

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 proselytising.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 somewhat semyne to owre bileue,
For thi loue and bileue in o persone almighty;
And we, lered and lewede in on god bileueth.

And sith that this Sarasenes scribes, and Iewes
Han a lippe of owre bileue the liytloker, me thynketh,
Thei shulde torne, who so travaile wolde to teche hem
of the trinite. (B, XV, 385-8, 492-4)

Since they have been misled by Mohammed, the Church has a clear duty to remedy the situation, but the Pope instead "with monye mementeyneth 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 converten hem to Crist and Cristendom to take.
Alas! that men so longe on nakamede by-leyuen,
So meny prelates to preche as the pope maketh,
Of Nazareth, of Nyryve of Neptalym, of Damaske,
That thei ne wendeth the wey as holy writ biddeth,
Ite in universum mundum sutthe ze wilneth the name
To be prelates, and preche the passion of Iesus...

Now sytthe that these Sarrasyns and al-so the Iewes
Comm the fereste clause of owre by-leyue Credo in deum patrem,
Prelates and preestes sholde preoue, yr thei myghte,
Lere hem liytulum and liytulum et in Iesum Christum, filium eius
Til thei couthe speke and spelle et in spiriitum sanctum...

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.\textsuperscript{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."\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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
"makony molestacioun to cristyn that is in thair jurisdictiouen" were justified. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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." 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.

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". 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, XII, 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 tho gh ther be schad.
This finde I writen, hou Crist bad
That noman other scholde sle.
What scholde I vinne over the Se,
If 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 sweetnesse of delices,
Thus thei defenden ous the vices,
And sitte hemselven al amiddle;
To slene and feihten thei ous bidde
Heem whom thei scholde, as the tok 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 incompatibility 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 sise, that hier I noght.  
Crist with hisoghne 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 his 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 grete partie of that was wonne  
To Cristes feith stant now miswente:  
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 implication 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 diray,
Tu qui travaillles 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';
On autrement, 'C'est pour m'amye,
Dont puisse avoir sa druerie,
Et pour se je travailleray'. (L10, 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 mouenus
Bella viris istis, lex ibi nostra silet:
Non ibi bulla monet, ibi nec sentencia lata
Aggravat, aut gladius prelia noster agit:
Que sua sunt Christus ibi, si vult, vendicet ipse,
Proque sua bellum proprietate ferat.
Nos ita longinquus non frangimus ocia guerris,
It neque pro Christi 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 fighete;
So mai the knyght 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 renerery
Solono l'estat que chacun vaille.
Ton dieu, q'a toy prouesce baille,
Drois est q'au primer commencaille
Devant tous autres soit servi;
Car chivalor q'ensi se taille
Pour son loer dieus apparailler
L'onour terrin, le ciel aucy. (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 *Vox* and *In Praise of Peace* Gower uses conventional formulas about the crusade to attack wars between Christians, while in the *Mirour* 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" (KQ, 23869-80).

The reason for this discrepancy was that Gower inherited 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 *Mirour* 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. Disregarding 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 do fight, however, should be free from civil duties and should receive great privileges, including exemption from the normal sanctions of the law. 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 paisis et ton prochien
Ait guerre en soy, tout est en vein
L'onour, qant tu t'es eslongez
De ton paisis et estrangez;
Car cil qui laist ses duetes,
Et ne voet faire son certein,
Ainz fait ses propres volentés,
N'est resoun qu'il soit honoures,
Combien gu'il soi t du forte mein. (M.0, 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 (B0, 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 spoke, and natheles
Crist hath comanded love and pes,
And who that worscheth 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".

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 war, 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. 93 The Host has, after all, disclaimed any intention of further "playe" 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. 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. 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. 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. 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". 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 relationship 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 processions chevaleresques", noted Albert Pauphilet, "est, comme on sait, la conquête de l'amour." 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. Malory is similarly silent on this point in Arthur's declaration of the duties of the knights of the Round Table. 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
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 etern statum dignitatis britannia tunc reducita erat quod coma luxu ornamentorum facecia incolarum cetera regna excellebat. Quicumque vero famosus probitate miles in eadem erat unius coloris usitibus atque armis utebatur, facete etiam mulieres consililia indumenta habentes. Nullius amorem habere dignabatur nisi tercio in milicia probatus esset. Efficiebantur ergo caste & meliores & milites pro amore illarum probiores...

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. 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. 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. 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: "Nox milites simulachrum proelii sciendo equestrem ludum componunt, mulieres in editio uxorum aspicientes in furiales amoris flammam ioci irritant." 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. 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. 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. In Handlyng Synne, Robert Mannyng of Brunne attacked the practice of knights fighting for women in tournaments as
mere folly and lechery:

\[ \text{lyt ys here dame lechrye} \\
\text{Of here cumb alle here maystrye.} \\
\text{Mary tynes, for wynmen sake,} \\
\text{Knyghtys turnamentys make,} \\
\text{And whan he wendyp to pe turnament} \\
\text{She sendyp hym sum pryuy present,} \\
\text{And hyt hym do for hys leman} \\
\text{Yn vasshelage alle pat he kan} \\
\text{So ys he bete here, for here love,} \\
\text{Pat he ne may sytte hys hors aboue,} \\
\text{Pat peraventure yn alle hys lyue} \\
\text{Shall he neuer aftywr pryue.} \]

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 requeyre foly of the wyf of a knyght/ ne tenclyne her to wickednesse/ is not the honour of a knyght." 17

Some later writers show more awareness of dalliance as a knighthly preoccupation, but are hardly sympathetic. Wyclif declared that the knights and gentry were especially "smyttid wip lechorie...as if hei holde hit bot a gamen, one to lye by opers wife", and provided an unflattering explanation of the belief that love might lead to an increase of martial prowess: "ffor, as philosoforis scyn, bothe mon and beestis ben pure batelouse in time of his deede; and men bi his fals luf ben made pure hardy to assayle hor enmyes, by foly pat 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 goddessse". 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, worschipfull 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 shanefull 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. 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". Similarly, Geoffroi asserts that by participation in various kinds of social recreation knights learn the basis of the honour they must seek:
Car en telles compagnies et telx gieux et esbatemens prennent les bonnes gens d'arnes leurs bons commenceiens que regars et désir, amour, pensée et souvenir, gayeté de cuer et joliveté de corps les met en la voie de l'encouencement à ceulx qui omques n'en auroient eu connaissance 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 Geoffroï 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 joëuse et la plus durable et la plusloyale", 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 peut rien valoir, ne durer longuement, que les dames ne s'en repentent et retraient d'une part, et li chaitifs de droicte hone". 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.\textsuperscript{25}

Geoffroi de Charny thus presents in terms of honour the same distinction between chaste (or married) and concupiscent 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 accomplishments, 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'honorable poursuite chevalereuse".\textsuperscript{25} 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.\textsuperscript{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 joene 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

When that knyhtode schal be werred,  
Lust mai noght thanne be preferred;  
The bedd not 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,
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 women 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 yet 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, 2295-304)

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 Mirour 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.' (M0, 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'endengan tout est failliz. (23951-2)

This position is greatly expanded in the fifth book of Vox Clamantis, 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, cules 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, animum" (V, 264)—for the sake of love, and then reproach Fortune for his lack of reward:

Cum vicisso putet miles sibi vim mulieris,
Hec et amore pio cuncta petita fuet,
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 everything 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, 479-30). 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 ignorant 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 amat 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.²²

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.* 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. The sentiment of the author
he was neuer a god werryour
That cowde not loue a-ryght:
For loue hath made many a conquerour
And many a worthy knihte.\(^{36}\)

--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. 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 Christendon, 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.

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. 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.

Some other romances, of course, like *Sir Orfeo* or *Floris and Blaunchfleur*, 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, *Kéliador*, 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. 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. 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 kynight", 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 chansons de geste, *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.45 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 nettle, 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. 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. 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 straightforward 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". Gower's Traité isolates the two knights as examples of folly:

Comanes sont la cronique et l'istoire
De Lancelot et Tristrans ensement;
Enore maint 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
magnino infortunii dolore dies suos extremos clauerunt."
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". 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.

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. 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."

The earliest surviving versions are fragments by 'Beroul'
(possibly Norman), Thomas (probably Anglo-Norman), and the
German, Eilhart von Obers, 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 Cliges 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 uncontrollable 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. Isolde 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 repentance 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 revenge 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 Tristren is anything more or less than a hero. 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. 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.

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.
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. 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." 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 exaltation 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 Minnesang 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 accomplishments, and his education is distinctly bookish. Jackson also emphasises Gottfried's "categorical refusal" to describe the Swertleit, or knighting ceremony. 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". 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."  

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:

\[\text{ez liebet liebe und edelt mut,} \]
\[\text{ez staetet triuwe und tugendet leben.} \quad (174-5)\]

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 foreshadowing 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 lined twig.\(^71\) He had no idea that love was such keen sorrow, "daz herzliebe waere/so nahe gende ein swaere" (915-7), 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 (1939-2020). 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. 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 excursion 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:

\[\text{wis diemnet und wis unbetrogen,}
\text{wis warhaft und wis wolgezogen. (5027-8)}\]

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. 

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
They become love's huntsmen, setting snares for each other (11934-8). 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 "wunderlichem 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 then 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 Himmetrank." 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." 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 à la dignité d'un pur symbole, le symbole de la noble Himna. 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.73 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 "truwe", 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wir buwen die minne} \\
\text{mit gefullyten sinne,} \\
\text{mit valsche und mit akust} \\
\text{und suochen damme an ir die lust} \\
\text{des libes unde des herzen:} \\
\text{sone birt si niuwan snerzen,} \\
\text{unguot und unfruht unde unart...} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(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 practice perfidy: "alsus so leret minne/durnahetcliche 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 "suceze 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. 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". 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 dryly remarks, on God's "hövescheit" or courtesy (15545 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 gart 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:

\[
\text{da wart wol goffenbaeret} \\
\text{und al der werd't bewaeret} \\
\text{daz der vil tugenthafte Krist} \\
\text{wintschaffen alse ein ermel ist:}
\]

\[
\text{er'st allen herzen bereit,} \\
\text{ze durmähte und ze trügeheit.} \\
\text{ist ez ernest, ist ez spil,} \\
\text{er ist ie, swie so man wil.} \quad (15737-40, 15745-8).\]

(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.

Tristan and Isolt are nevertheless eventually banished from the court. The anarchic nature of their passion drives them into the wilderness. In Béroul'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 Himmegrotte, 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. 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".  

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". 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 Kark's lack of success as a 'hunter' that he finds the Himmerrotte. 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. 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:

\[
\text{dui blintheit derminnen} \\
\text{dui blendet uze und innen,} \\
\text{si blendet ougen unde sin.} \quad (17745-7)
\]

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. 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, 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'.

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 stumbling on the truth, asking Caerdin to tell Isolt that if God does not attend to his sickness he will die:

\begin{quote}
mustrez li le mal que jo ai:
se Deu n'en pense, jon murréi. (2545-6)
\end{quote}

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 friendship. 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 Norté 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. 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.
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 rautiers
Et ses cuers fu a l'un autiers. (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 seriens alié
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. 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 Chretien'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 Chrétiens preference for multivalent symbolism
rather than strict allegory. 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 villain 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. 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. 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.

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.

Chretien'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. 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." 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). 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.

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 mêmes 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 fighting 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,
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 "Pour lui sotener 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 "haine 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. (4374-5)

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 mesure 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. 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\footnote{2} 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
erlier 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. 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.

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. 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:

Vassaus, grant hardemant
As fet, et mout ies fos nais
Quant antrez ies an cest Pais.
Ja hon ça venir ne dëust,
Qui an charrete estê ëust,
Ne ja Deus jëbir 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 mal'urté
Ou nos avons long 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 Sir 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. 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 *Norte 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." 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". 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." 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.

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 *Norte Darthur* are comparatively straightforward. 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. 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 Lancelot and the Morte Darthur; 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." 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 other two parts "dans le cadre d'un plan général établi à l'avance." 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."

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 Quête. 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 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." 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". 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". 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 les 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'.

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 *Morte Arthu* 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". 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'." The Lady of the Lake, in urging Guinevere to return Lancelot's love, finds distinctly mitigating circumstances in the "folie" of their liaison:

Car il ne vaut riens ne nule riens ne prise enuers vous, ne li pecies del siecle ne puelt 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 honorer sor toutes autres. Car vous ames le seignor & la flor de tot cest monde, si vous poes de ce vaier que onques mais dame ne pot faire ce que vous poes. Car vous estes compaigne au plus praudome & 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 follement", 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 accentuées avec les années." 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 loiaute en nul chevalier ne en nul home, quant desloiaute s'est herbergie 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 compagnie, 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. 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. 225-7).
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. Similarly, Guinevere's penance, which Whitehead considers "dry and perfunctory" in the Morte Artu, is not a result of finding that she has no further function in the world. 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 (Morte 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 errerments, 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
sufferd of us all that we shulde suffer 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 Arty 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 thoughte 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 *Morte Arthu* 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". In private Bors and Hector curse the liaison, predicting that it will lead to a great war between Arthur and Lancelot's kin (*Morte Arthu*, 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 (*Morte Arthu*, pp. 51-65). 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 horns 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 'secularised' 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.\textsuperscript{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 knighthood 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 disproportionate 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.\textsuperscript{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."\textsuperscript{164}

The tide of scholarly opinion appears to have turned decisively against any straightforward acceptance of Vinaver's denial of the unity of the \textit{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 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".

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 Doomday 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 pryncipall for drede of God, for knyghtes that bene ad­ventures sholde nat be advoutrers nothir lech­erous, for than they be nat happy nother for­tunate unto the werrys; for other they shall be overcom with a sympler knyght than they be hem­sself, 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 between 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 calllyth 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 worship 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 worshipfull man nor worshipfull woman but they loved one bettir than another; and worship in armys may never be foyled. But firste reserve the honour 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 stablytye. But the olde love was nat so. For men and women coude love togydis seven yerys, and no lycoures lustis was betwyxte them, and than was love trouthe and faythfulnes. 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 remembrance the monethe of May, lyke as ded quene Gwnenyver, 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. 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.

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.

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 understanding 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 nowadays", 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 do 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*.
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." 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.
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 defending "the ideals of chivalry and love" Wolfram had an interest in maintaining the values of the knightly class. 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 elaborates 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 Haimed 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. 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.

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). 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". 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.
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 (37:25 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" (45:7-11). 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". 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" (81:53-82:1). Pauphilet comments: "Dieu et Satan entraînent l'homme dans leur guerre éternelle et l'homme peut, à son choix, être le 'sergent' 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 entreprises 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 def fendissiez 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 tenez de deffendre Sainte Eglyso" (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. 15

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 pechie 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 loiaux 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 (68:35-69:2). 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 pechí de li s'est Nostre Sires si durement corocioz a moi qu'il le m'a bien mostré puis esoir. (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 nor 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 Corbonic is undertaken in a boat with only
the corpse of Perceval's chaste sister as company; a monk
tells him to take 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 is 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". 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 "tumpeit", 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. 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 sinfulfulness. 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 Clamidé, 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. 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 sin krie.
Der ruoft is zer demuot
iedoch niht vollecllichen 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. 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. 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 "Trou 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
Gawain's kind of minne is parodied in a contrasting way in the case of his affair with the voluptuous Antikonīe. King Vergulaht has sent him to his sister Antikonīe 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 ungastlichen" on her "heiz, dick' unde rift" mouth (405:19-21). They immediately fall into conversation ("suezer rede"), which Wolfram dryly tells us consisted only of Gawain's pleas for her favours and of Antikonīe'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 Antikonīe but also of having previously killed her father. The pair escape into a tower, and Antikonīe 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 "manlich"
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
crash of 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 Antikonien affair, and Gawain sets out on the Grail
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 ȝe must resyst lyke a man, For ȝer ys euer a batell betwyx þe soull and þe body: 'Vita hominis est milicia super terram.'

Oppresse yowr gostly enmy and be Crystys owne knyght. Be neuer a cowarde ageyn yowr aduersary. Yf ȝe wyll be crownde, ȝe must nedys fyght. Intẽnde 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 tournament 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 *Legenda Aurea* of the rank of martyrs, for instance, we are told that they are given to us "in exemplar ad certandum". As St. Chrysostom said,

\[\text{tu christiana, delicatus es miles, si putas te posse sine pugna vincere, sine certamine triumphare, exerce vires fortiter, dimica atrociter, in proelio isto concerta, considera pactum, conditionem attende, militiam nosce; pactum, quod spopondisti, conditionem, quam assumisti, militiam, cui nomen dedisti. Hoc enim pacto cuncti pugnaverunt, hac conditione universi vicerunt, hac militia triumphaverunt.}\]

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 agreeeth 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 schole haue in his mouthe the trouthe of the verray knyghte Ihesu Crist". In section 85 Christine gathers together these mutually-reinforcing meanings, declaring that "his present lijf is but a kny3thode" 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 reformandum violentam pacem temporis; interius quoque gladio verbi Dei, ad restaurandum pacem proprii pectoris." 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 pat goof to holy chevalrie ["ad sacram militiam", in the original] likyng of metes pat wiþdraweþ þe soule from holynesse of dedes and of þouȝtes." The knight in Trevisa's Dialogus inter militem et clericum compares the endowments of
the Church to the wages of knights: "It is seide zou, þat þe haueþ y-fone alle siche lordschipes & riches to help of youre lif to wages of holy chyualrie, to haue mete and drynke and cloþ." 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 knyʒtis han power of him to þis eende". In Mum and the Sothsegeþer the friars are described as knights who joust against Jesus.

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 deorlíc, as hit deh drihtines cnihþes.

A full statement of the idea that martyrs are "oure Louerdes knyʒtis" is found in the "Banna sanctorum" of the South English Legendary. Christ's coming is described in terms of a king's ordering his troops for battle:

Wanne a kyng wolde bataille nyme to holde up is riʒte
He ordeineþ verst is ost and þærkeþ hem to fiʒte
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 ueroste he wolde beo
Vorto hardie al is men þat non ne scholde fleo
Þanne mot in þe rerewarde hardy kniʒtis wende
Hare louerdes riʒt to holde up and þe bataille bringe to ende
And if hi beþ cowerdes in hare deðe þe bataille is al ilore
In his manere cure swete Louerd an eorpe was ibore...

The "trompours" and "alblasters" (crossbowmen) are the "prophetes" and "patriarks". The greatest fighter of all is Christ himself, but despite his "stronge dep" he would have lost his cause

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 knyght ich am bi-come newe batayle to do; Godes knyght of heouene ich am and all mi wille so is Pat ich in his batayle be sone i-martred, i-wis.

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.

Wyclif's Bible referred to the angels who announced Christ's birth to the shepherds as "a multitude of heuenli knyghtod".

and Bartholomew de Glanville, in Trevisa's translation of his encyclopaedia, De proprietatibus rerum, explained that angels "buth I-clepid knygtis [in the original "milites"], for hey werreb & fijtib for vs azen wickide fendes". Broadening his scope to include all Christians, Bartholomew asserts that "Lente is pe tyme of chivalrie of cristene men, in pe whiche tyme we fightib sharpliche azens vices & synnes".

In Wyclif's translation Paul advises Timothy that "no man holding knyghtod to God irwlappith him sifl with worldli nedes". 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. 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." To some extent Christ's appearance as a knight is merely an updating of the metaphor. In Li Tornoimenz Antecrít, 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-outer seld & spere". According to another paradox, Christ heals by fighting: he is "so douhti a knyht", coming blood-stained from battle, "Chaumpyoun 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.\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{verbatim}
At \textit{pe} y mot myn armes borwe,
Mi sheld shal be \textit{pe} swerd of sorwe,
marie \textit{pat} stong to \textit{pe} herte;
\textit{pe} holi cros my baner biform,
\textit{myn} helm \textit{pi} garlond of sharpe \textit{porn},
\textit{Mi} swerd \textit{pi} scourges smerte.
\textit{Mi} plates shullen \textit{pi} nailes be,
\textit{myn} acotoun \textit{pat} spere tre,
\textit{pat} stong \textit{pi} swete syde.
\textit{Now} y am armed \textit{bus} wel,
nel \textit{y} him fle neuere a del,
tyde what bi-tyde!\textsuperscript{52}
\end{verbatim}

An \textit{exemplum} in the \textit{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:

\begin{verbatim}
his scheld at his bac bar he
\textit{pat} was \textit{pe} harde rode tre.
per opur man bere heore spere
\textit{pe} poynt for\textit{ward} hem to were,
he \textit{bar} \textit{pe} poynt in his syde
and to his herte he let hit glyde.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{verbatim}

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 "Just in
tornamente", sitting fast on his "palfrey":

  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 3e pride.

    Mi palefrey is of tre,
    wiht nayles nayled ȝwrh 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-fouȝte 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 "though 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 pryke,
With-out spores other spere and sprakliche he lokede,
As is the kynde of a knyght that cometh to be doubted,
To geten hus gilte spores and galoches y-couped...
(C, XXI, 9-12)

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, XVII, 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 pryxiere shal ryde...
(C, XXI, 21-4)

The idea that Christ's incarnation is an adoption of man's armorial bearings is repeated when the dreamer demands of Conscience, "Is this Jesus the Iuster?.../Or it is Pieres the Plowman! who paynted hym so rede?":

Quod Conscience, and kneled tho 'thise aren Pieres armes,
His colores and his cote-armure ac he that cometh so blody
Is Cryst with his crosse conqueroure of Crystene'.
(B, XIX, 12-4)

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-3af that tyme
That no boye hadde hardinesse hym to touche in deyinge.
Ac ther cam forth a blynde knyght with a kene sperre y-grounde,
Hihte Longeus, as the lettere telleth and longe hadde lore
hus sight.

By-føre Pilat and other peuple in the place he houede.
Ac maugre hus meny teth he was mad that tyme
To Jouste 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,
But this blynde bachelere that bar hym thorw the herte;
The blood sprang doun by the sper and vnsperrede the knyghtes
eye.

Tho fel the knyght vpon knees and cryed Iesu mercy--
'A-3ens my wil hit was,' quath he 'that ich 3ow wonde made!'
(C, XXI, 78-91)

Thus Faith bi-gon to fare with the false Iewes--
'Corsede caityfs! knyghthed was hit neuere
To bete a body ybounde with eny brijt wepne,
The gree gyt hath he geten for alle hus grete wondes.
For 3oure champion chiualer chief knyght of 3ow alle
3elt 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. 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. 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 sumhwhile cnihtes iwunet to donne". 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. 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.

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?" 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.

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. 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 infrastructure provided by the life of Christ, and especially the Harrowing of Hell (see above, section IV, 328). 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 development 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.\textsuperscript{66} Other parallels Levy suggests include the journey into the wilderness to face temptations, the voluntary submission to a symbolic death at the Green Chapel; the green girdle becomes a sign of both humility and triumph, like the "crown of thorns" mentioned at the very end of the poem.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{68} His winter journey involves struggles against hostile beasts (720–5) and loneliness, and the endurance of a bleak landscape which encourages despair.\textsuperscript{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:
The danger of chivalric pre-eminence of this kind is the "surquidrē" 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, *Gawain and the Green Knight* "takes the old ideals neither too lightly nor too seriously ...it condemns knighthood, but lightly...Gawain, the representative 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. 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
pat wende"), his companions take advantage of his 'mirth'

11 to question him "vpon spare wyse/Bi preué poyntez" about
himself, and find out who he is (899-907). In its immediate

11 juxtaposition with the mention of Gawain's drinking and
garrulousness, the discretion attributed to the questioners

11 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

11 per he3ly I my3t 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-talkynge". 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 sope,
þat such a gest as Gawan grauntetz vus to haue,
When burnez blypé of his burþe schal sitte
and syngse.

In menyng of manerez mere
þis burne now schal vus bryng,
I hope þat may hym here
Schal lerne of luf-talkynge. (920-7)

And again:

On þe morne, as vch mon mynez þat tyme
þat Dryȝtyn for oure destynẽ to deȝe watz borne,
Wele waxez in vche a won in worlde for his sake;  
So did hit þere on þat day þurȝ daynteþ 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 þþe schal be in youre 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 vnslyʒe" 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 þe trayst...
þe 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-talkynge". 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). 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 knyght,

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

Øper lach þer hir luf, øper lodly refuse.
He cared for his cortaysye, lest craþayn he were,
And more for his meschef þif he schulde make synne,
And be traytor to þat tolke þat þat telde aþ. (1772-5)

Even now Gawain makes his choice between the two interpretations of courtesy and dishonour almost unwittingly, but the lady at least regards herself as having been "swared for soþe, þat sore me þinkkez". (1795). 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, zif 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 "he renoun of he 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 vulnerability, 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 preoccupation 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 women 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 unkouth, and swiche freshe contenances,  
Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges  
For drede of jalouse mennes apercevynges?  
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." 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, 23:60). 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. 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. 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 donat so, for they ne stynte neveere 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 stranglet 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 *Roman', 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 such hue
Amonges these apostles newe,
Thou holy chirche, thou maist be wailed!
Sith that thy citee is assayed
Thoughg knyghtis of thyn owne table,
God wot thi lordship is douteable!
If thi enforce hem it to wynne,
That shulde defende it fro withynne,
Who myght defende ayens hem make? (6269-77)

The secular role of knighthood is adumbrated in conventional terms in the Parson's discussion of temporal power: "...thefore 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
Thoo atte last aspyed y
That pursevantes and heraudes,
That crien ryche folkes laudes
Hyt weren alle... (HE, 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. (138-40)

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 wyght,
By force of meynee, for to sleeene downright,
And breneen hous and hoom, and make al playn,
Lo, theryfore is he clepode a capitayn;
And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,
And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
Ne bryngye a contree to so greet mescheef,
Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef. (IX, 226-34)

Fals-Sembiant, in the Roomeant, 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,
Then 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 strenthe, 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 nan
dredeth his enemy... Thanne shal ye everemoore contrewayte
embusshementz and alle espiaille" (VII, 1314-5. 1318). When Helibee 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, or thou bigynde, I rede that thou apparraille 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 bataillles 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 ofoure Lord God Almighty. And thenerefore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knyght, seyde right in this wise: 'Als lightly,' quod he, 'may ourc Lord God Almighty 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 ourc Lord God of hevene" (VII, 1655-7, 1659-62).

The term 'God's knight', applied here to Judas Maccabaeus, 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 knowlche 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 leewe and deere,
Cast alle away the werkes of darknesse,
And arneth yow in armure of brightnesse.
Ye han for sothe ydoon a greet bataille,
Your eour is doon, your e 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 Hermengyl, has no knightly champion to fight for her in a judicial duel but Christ:

Allas! Custance, thou hast no champioun,
Ne fighte kanstownght, so veylaway!
But he that starf for our redempcioun,
And boond Satan (and yet lity ther he lay),
So be thy stronge champion this day! (II, 531-5)

The idea is repeated by the Friar, who concludes his vituperative tale with the sanctimonious assurance that the fiend "may nat tempte yow over youre nyght, /For Crist wol be youre champion and knyght" (III, 1651-2).

This familiarity on Chaucer's part with the commonplaces 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 "Nelibee", 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 wel... In hope to stonden in his lady grace", and "So noote 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 freshe as flourys in Maye;
I am semely shapen in same,
And prouedly apperalde in garments gaye;
My lokes ben full louely to a ladyes eye,
And in loue-longynge my harte is sore sette.

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 sensation of unity of represented experience breaking 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.

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.

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.
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, 1163-5, 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 1705 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, sittynde 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" (855), and employing the knighly 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 knighly 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". 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. 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 complementary 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 and 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 start he was betwix hem two,
And pulled out a sword, 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 Tales 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 Book of the Duchess.

4. Knightly Love in the Minor Poems

In the Book of the Duchess 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 flyttyng
That tyme, and al my thoght varyng. (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 insufficienly 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 grete node 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 hole, and al my blesse,
By 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 understand
That I ne wilned thynge but god,
And worship, and to hope hir name
Over alle thyng, and drede hir shame. (1261-4)

To call the Book of the Duchess 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 Confessio. 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 Dimalarco 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 become 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 severe 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. 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". 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. 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.

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." 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' knight (64, 187), and as "This worthi Mars, that is of knyghthood 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 renown" 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." 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, Hars 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" (65-7).

'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 not be cause wherfore that men pleyne;
Or men may dome he pleythen folily
And causeles; alas! that am not I!
Wherfore the ground and cause of al my peye,
So as my troubled wit may hit atteyne,
I wol reherse; not for to have redresse,
But to declare my ground of hevynesse. (Ch, 155-55)

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 peye" 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 ounce 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 "wyld wyves" in the "Wife of Bath's Prologue" (III, 740-5), 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 pret 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. 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). 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".

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 "smyttid wiþ lecchorie" become "pure batelouse", and "bi þis fals luf ben made pure hardy to assayle hor enmyes,
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 gentilost, and ek the mooste fre,  
The thriftiest and on 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 maide vortthier of name,  
And causeth moost to dremen 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 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 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
Crisseyde's defence at Priam's parliament, and who is rebuked
by the populace for attempting to "shilde" her (II, 154, 201;
IV, 176-38). Even Deiphobus's earlier disinterested readiness
to champion Criseyde against her enemies "with spore and
yarde" (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 Criscyde 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 Pandarbus 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.). 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 865), 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 ground...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; How 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 "lordship", 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 untruthen 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, Thorough 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 lover 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 knighthood—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 emphasize. 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 *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a play roughly contemporaneous with *Don Quixote*. 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 "great 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 January, with al his myght,
In honest wyse, as longoeth to a knyght,
Swoop hym to lyve ful deliciously.
His housynge, his array, as honestly
To his degree was neced 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 uther of his honoste thynges, He made a gardyn..." (2023-9). 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 Minnewrotte, convenient erotic symbol.

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 heritace sholde falle
In straunge hand, and this I telle you alle. (1439-40)

Indeed, January displays a frenzied enthusiasm to minister to the special requirements of his wife's pregnancy—"theron shal be no lak, /'righte 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 holde 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 "Nought for no covetise" 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 wyn heritige, towh and towh;/I yeve it yow, nesheth 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. But more important here is the conventional attribution of care and suspicion as their dominant traits.

Reynor, in the Romaunt, comments in this fashion on the "chapman or marchaunt" who has "of gold many besaunt":

For in the getynge he hath such woo,
And in the kepynge drede also,
And set evermore his bisynesse
For to encrease, and not to lesse... (5593-6)
A little later he returns to this example:

There may no marchaunt lyve at ese;
His herte in sich a were is sett
That it quyk brenneth more to get,
He never shal ynogh have geten,
Though he have gold in gerners yeten,
For to be nedy he dreedith 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 purchase 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 ruble 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 prosperous 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.'

This stereotype appears to fit neatly not only with January's obsessive suspicion of Hay 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 Hiddelburgh and Orewelle. (I, 276-7)

Nevertheless, we should not without further scrutiny assume
that Chaucer uses January's conception of knic;htliness 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 "Eth is to dyen than have indigence", but turns out to be a model of the worldly and materialistic man himself. 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'. 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. 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). 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.

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. 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. 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 Jower'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-Arturian 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. 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 Collier has pointed out, the Wife is something of a village gossip and therefore the natural retailer of folk-stories of all kinds. 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.

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. 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. 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 "sovereignty", 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 appetite". 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

Mandlyne Synne also warned that the legal penalty was death:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3yf } & \text{bou rauyssh any mayden clene—} \\
\text{Açens here wyl, } & \text{bat ys to mene,—} \\
\text{hýt ys seyde } & \text{burgh lawe wrete,} \\
\text{þat } & \text{bun hede shulde be of smete} \\
\text{(Lawe make} & \text{þat commandement}) \\
\text{with-outyn } & \text{any iuggment;} \\
\text{þat mayst } & \text{þou fynde al an sum} \\
\text{In code, } & \text{'de raptu virginum'. (2177-84)}
\end{align*}
\]

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" (584-8). 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. 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 joke it to her case 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:

Whise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes;
Ryneved in hir firste Briton tongue;
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 remembrance".

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.
Woman, 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 lover a lave?"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'. 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." 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. 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. Indeed she seems almost to seek enthrallment 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". 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 impossible! 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 verry, parfit gentil knyght'". 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'. 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" (633-4) 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 qualification for a man's being obliged to become a knight, though the actual figure stipulated in the writs for distraint varied considerably. 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 preconceptions 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

Chapter I


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. 86.

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-
Notes to Chapter I.

Eliane Engel, "Les Croisades du Chevalier", Revue des Sciences Humaines, n.s. no. 120 (1965), 577-85. J. M. Hanly 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), 39-107 (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", EQ, 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 fourteenth century knights whose careers are similar, but on the contrary because of the frequency with which suitable candidates 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 Satire: the Literature of Social Classes and the "General Prologue" to the "Canterbury Tales" (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 110-11. On literary sources for the portrait see Schorfield, Chivalry in English Literature, pp. 30-3; Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (2nd ed., New York, 1967), pp. 46-9; P. E. Bryant, "Did Boccaccio Suggest the Character of Chaucer's Knight?", MLN. 17 (1902), 470-1.

9 "A Knight Ther Was", 107.


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 unwitting 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 chronic 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.


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 un 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", CHAU, 1 (1966), 81-4.


23 Ibid., p. 45.

24 Ibid., p. 20.

25 Ibid., pp. 40-1.

26 Ibid., pp. 35-6.


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 Roman", 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 Merchant'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 demonstrated 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 illustrate an order, the Squire is as disordered philosophically as he is poetically" ("Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Uses of Rhetoric", EP, 62 (1965), 293). D. A. Fearsall 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).


36 "Thematic Relations between Chaucer's Squire's Portrait and Tale and the Knight's Portrait and Tale", 458.


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 "Chaunticleer and the Monk,
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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 idealism); he claims that "most writers saw the problem of chivalric degeneration as more real and pressing than ever before." Yet, as he justly points out, medieval writers "did not postulate changes in the ideal to adapt it to the changed conditions. 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).

Ibid., pp. 7-18.

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).

R. S. Loomis suggested long ago that the listing of
campaigns exclusively against pagans in the Knight's portrait indicated Chaucer's disapproval of secular wars generally ("Was Chaucer a Laudian?", 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", MTN, 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 convincingly challenged by M. T. Waugh, "The Lollard Knights", Scottish Historical Review, 11 (1913), 55-92.


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 "Melibeus" 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 Melibeus", Speculum, 19 (1944), 433-44). See also John Earsie, War in Medieval Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War, 1337-92 (London, 1974), p. 132-3.

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48 Mann, p. 115.
49 Mann, pp. 116-7, 119-20.

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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 Marië (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 Littérateur Chevaleresque", Etudes Germaniques, 21 (1966), 165.

7"Chevalerie' et Littération 'Chevaleresque", 178.


10Studien zum Ritterbegriff im 12 und 13 Jahrhundert (Heidelberg, 1964).

11"Chevalerie' et Littération 'Chevaleresque", Etudes Germaniques, 21 (1966), 167-8, 178-9; 23 (1968), 348-56.

12French 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).


14See, for example, P. 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.


16White, p. 28.
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19 Bloch, pp. 312-6.


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.


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, Waring, 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, 1951), pp. 143-5; Bloch, p. 170; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 30-7. The cnikt 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 cniktas fought on foot, but after the Conquest the term became identified with the Norman chevaler. Cnikt and chevaler were translated into Latin as miles.

36 See F. M. Nichols, "On Feudal and Obligatory Knighthood", Archaeologia, 99 (1852), 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. 143-3n.).


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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40 See Bloch, pp. 220-4; Painter, French Chivalry, p. 15.

41 Powicke, Thirteenth Century, pp. 539-41; Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 70-2; Poole, pp. 36, 45-6.

42 See Powicke, Military Obligation, pp. 108-17; Powicke, Thirteenth Century, p. 548.


46 See Bloch, pp. 330-1.


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. P. Treferne, "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..


55 Œuvres 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 ("Wynnerere 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 'Wynnerere and Wastoure' [Lincoln, Neb., 1974]).

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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 Huyinga, Waning, p. 56. Hearnsnow (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.


64 Tree of Battles, p. 100; MQ, 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.


67 Ordre of Chyvalry, pp. 96, 101.
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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, 1856).


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 P. 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 knighthly order. (c) The knights as a class, the aristocracy. (d) Qualities or actions befitting a knight, the knighthly 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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76 See Keen, Laws of War, pp. 56-9.


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.

77. Indian Summer, p. 143; see also Eugene Vinaver, Malory (Oxford, 1929), p. 64.

81 Ordre of Chyualry, p. 122.


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 schema. G. R. Owst cites a 14th-century MS. which claims that God made the clergy, knights and labourers, but the devil made theburghers 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 Chivalry, pp. 20, 31; Game and Playe of the Chess, 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 go03 bi gud loos and euy1 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).


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 knightling 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
always command acceptance: Gower protested that since knights should be fighters they should be exempt from civil duties, such as service on a "commun enquierremment" (MO, 23761-72).

99 For an example of this very common sentiment see VC, V, 469 ff.


101 Ordre of Chivalry, introd. and p. 57. For the general principle see Höhl, 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).


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 Chivalry, 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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109 See Military Institutions, bk. I.


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, 1396), p. 501).


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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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.


126. Stanzas 50 and 56. For other examples see Bernard of Clairvaux, Ad Milites Templi de laude novae militiae libri, PL, 182, cols. 921-40; John of Salisbury, Statesman's Book, pp. 184, 236; 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 Hum 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).


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 de Chvalry, pp. 74-6 (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); NO, 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).


131 For Christine de Pisan's discussion of the subject see Fayettes of Armes, pp. 9-25.


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
restricted to sovereign princes alone. See Keen, pp. 68-81.


136 See The Exempla...of Jacques de Vitry, pp. 62-4; Handlying 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.


140 See Livre de chevalerie, p. 466; Deschamps, Œuvres, 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 R. 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.


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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.


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, Etienne 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, 239-93.

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.


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 Chyvalry, 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, Wa•, 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.


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,
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

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1 On, 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 confronta-
tion 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

5 Chaucer's London, p. 221.

6 A Knight 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. Beldier,
"Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Its Teller", English Record, 18
(1968), 54-60; Paul F. Baum, Chaucer: a Critical Appreciation
Notes to Chapter III


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 thikk 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
Notes to Chapter III


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 N. 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).


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 lernyng of thoo that shall most iuge thereof/And semblably of theim that shall undertake 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).

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26 Reader's Guide, p. 27.


30 The autobiographical case is argued by G. G. Sedgwick, "The Structure of the Merchant's Tale", UTQ, 17 (1947), 337-45.


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).


36 "Chaucer's 'Sad' Merchant", RES, 20 (1944), 1-18.

37 See IV, 1246, 1266, 2042, 2254, 2259.

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42 "Chaucer's Squire's Tale and the Uses of Rhetoric", 294.


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).


47 In the first two respects his career is similar to
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).


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. 74-8, Bowden, p. 58.


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.

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.

Atiya, Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, pp. 431-3.

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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.


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.


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
Notes to Chapter III


73 See J. Schmidlin, Einführung in die Missionwissenschaft (Münster, 1917), pp. 80 ff.


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.


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.


85 Southern, p. 105.

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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.


91 Southern, p. 83.


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.)
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 concurriscntiae, 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 wet who hath the werre"--in CA, Prol., 172-9 (see Fisher, John Gower, p. 190).


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.


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"; Cougill, "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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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).


6 Laws of War, esp. p. 185.


8 See L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal, comte de
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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. Cr vera-on entre vous, Engles, 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 Craün, p. 195.

13 Lines 4603-14. In the idolatrous Garden of Idleness in the Romain 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 lemmman" (lines 1197-1210).

15 Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 320-38.
16 Statesman's Book, p. 238.

18 Select Eng. Works, III, 164-5.

Laws and Customs of England, II, 32.


20 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).

21 Ibid., p. 480. A similar recommendation is made
Notes to Chapter IV

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.


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", PII, 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 natheles somme clerkes hire excusen/By oon 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

Knaythode he kepe 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 hisc lustes suieth,
That he the werre noght poursuieth,
When it is tyme to ben armed,
His contre stant fulofto harme...

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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32 John Gower, p. 185.


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 (Fort 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 "Ironic and Medieval Romance", FMLS, 6 (1970), 49-64, repr. in D. D. R. Owen, ed., Arthurian Romances: Seven Essays (Edinburgh and London, 1970), pp. 49-64.


41 Ipomadon, ed. A. T. Kölbing (Breslau, 1899).

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44 Ed. Longnon, lines 16743-17764, 21832-22425.


47 Love and War in the Middle English Romances, p. 107.


49 See J. D. Bruce, The Evolution of Arthurian Romance from the Beginnings Down to the Year 1300 (2nd ed.; Gloucester, Mass., 1958), 1, 204n., 205.


51 V, 67, 128.


55 "The Early Tristan Poems", in R. S. Loomis, ed., Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: a Collaborative
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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, Conflict of Love and Honor, p. 122.


58 See Ferrante, Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 64-9.


60 A. Varvaro, Beroul's Romance of Tristan, tr. J. C. Barnes (Manchester, 1972), p. 95.


64 See Ferrante, Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 17, 19-20.

65 For summaries of modern interpretations see Rosemary Picozzi, A History of Tristan Scholarship (Berne and Frankfurt,
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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.


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.


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 Thiébaut, 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
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. 321, 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.


Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Isolt, 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.


On the association of the love-philtre with death see Curtis, Tristan Studies, pp. 36-41.

Translations of Gottfried are from Tristan, tr. A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth, 1960).


Kunzer, p. 117.

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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84 See F. Ranke, Die Allegorie der Minnegrotte in Gottfrieds Tristan (Berlin, 1925); Picozzi, History of Tristan Scholarship, pp. 115 ff.; Kunzer, pp. 168-9 n.; Ferrante, Conflict of Love and Honor, pp. 96-7.


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-solemnity and irreverence...his 'accommodation' of the routines of allegory is inter alia a display of virtuosity and wit" (Literature and Art, pp. 145-6).

87 On the identification of Isolt with the white stag, see Rainer Gruenter, "Der vremede Hirz", ZDA, 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 Tristan as Tragedy", Speculum, 45 (1970), 594-607; Thiebaux, The Stag of Love, pp. 128-43.


89 The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature (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 La Folie Tristan de Berne, ed. E. Hoepffner (2nd ed.; Strasbourg, 1949); La Folie Tristan d'Oxford, 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.


93 Lines 2279-310, 3912-4. References to Cligés are to the edition of W. Förster (Halle, 1884). Cligés had fought to win Fé Nicole 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.


95 The thematic purpose of Chretien's references to the Tristan story has been the subject of considerable debate. See Jean Frapplier, "Chretien 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 Kerrenritter (Lancelot) und das Wilhelmsebene (Guillaume d'Angleterre) von Christian von Troyes, ed. W. Foerster (Halle, 1899).


98 "The Storm-Making Spring and the Meaning of Chretien's Yvain", SP, 64 (1957), 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 Chretien 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 Chretien 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 domnna (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. F. Cross and W. A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere: a Study on the Origins of Courtly Love (Chicago, 1930), pp. 67-76; Frappier, "Chretien 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 Charrette 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 Charrette 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 Chretien's romances in terms of the successive domination of first "l'idéal chevaleresque", then "l'amour", and finally "l'idéal religieux", see La Ferme et l'amour au XIIe siècle d'après les poèmes de Chretien de Troyes (Paris, 1909), pp. 278-9. For an early reservation about the 'courtly love' interpretation of Chretien see Charles Grimm, "Chrestien de Troyes' Attitude towards Woman", Romanic Review, 16 (1925), 236-43.


106 See, for example, Jean Rychner, "Le Prologue du Chevalier de la charrette", in Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune (Gembloux, 1969), II, 1121-35.

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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", MLH, 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.


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.

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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.


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 Cligès: "if this is Fénice's Passion, it is a very private and selfish one, and without any redemptive value beyond herself and Cligès" (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).


123 The Knight and Chivalry, p. 118.


125 Introduction to Malory's The Morte Darthur, Parts
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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.


130 "The Tale of the Death of Arthur": Catastrophe and Resolution", in Malory’s Originality. ed. Lumiansky, p. 271.


132 Étude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 10.


136 Étude sur le Lancelot en prose, pp. 75, 87, 88.

137 Ibid., pp. 106, 91-4.

138 "The Vulgate Cycle", p. 302. See also his Étude 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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141 Sommer, III, 3: 8-9. All references to the Lancelot proper are to this edition.


144 Etude sur le Lancelot en prose, p. 93.


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.


149 Morte Arthur, lines 3712-21; Malory, pp. 1252-3.


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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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.


162 "Sir Thomas Malory", p. 548; Works, p. 1537.

163 "Malory's Treatment of the Sankgreall", PMLA, 71 (1956), 493-9. 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.


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.


168 The Morte Darthur, Parts Seven and Eight, p. 31.


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.

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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.


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".


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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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.


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.


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?", Romantic Review, 66 (1975), 1-12).


15 Ibid., p. 148.


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).


21 For a survey of commentary on the thematic relationship 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.


28 Li Tornoiemenz Antecrit von Huon de Mery, ed. Georg Wimmer (Marburg, 1888). See also PP, C, XXIII, 69 ff.


30 Orde 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 every man now lying 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.


34 Ed. Perry, pp. 22-3.


36 Ed. Day and Steele, p. 42.


38 The South English Legendary, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Hill (London, 1956-9), 1, 2, lines 23-32.
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39Ibid., I, 3, lines 54-6.

40The Early South-English Legendary; or, Lives of Saints, ed. C. Horstmann (London, 1887), p. 482.

41Etude sur la Queste del Saint Graal, p. 103.


43British Museum, Add. MS. 27944, fol. 14r, col. 1; fol. 128r, col. 1 (quoted in MED, part I.1, p. 562b, part C.2, pp. 234b-235a).

442 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).

45For references to discussions of the subject see Sister Le May, The Allegory of the Christ-Knight, pp. xi-xii.

46Le 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.

47Ludus Coventriae, or The Playe 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.

48See, for example, Henry of Lancaster's Livre de seyntz medicines, p. 138.

49Middle English Sermons, ed. W. O. Ross (London, 1960), pp. 37-8. The sermons are collected in a 15th-century MS., but are themselves older.


52Brown, 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 "sadiyll" 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.


57 For other references to Christ's joust and his coat-armour see B, V, 507-8; B, XVI, 162-6, 176-82.


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. Herbage (London, 1979), 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.


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 one 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..


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, 745:2-3.

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.


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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 medieval Gallic conception of the knight who was the embodiment of courtisie...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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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. 179ff... 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".


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 et 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-Shaksperian Drama, ed. Manly, I, 358).


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).


13 “The Knight’s Tale and the Epic Tradition”, 73-84.


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 love” (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. 356.

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 Amphiaras through the treachery of his wife, Eriphyle (TC, II, 93-108). Cassandra introduces her interpretation of the boar in Troylus's dream by telling the story of Thebes; Diomede (the boar) is the inheritor of the Theban tradition and thus an appropriate nemesis for Troylus 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.


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 Troylus's
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\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Blind Beasts: Chaucer's Animal World} (Kent, Ohio, 1971), \textit{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 (\textit{Ordre de Chivalry}, \textit{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 fyte ayenst hys enemy but yef hys horse be meke and mylde" (\textit{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 ("\textit{The Canterbury Tales}", \textit{pp.} 121-3). A priest in the Vulgate \textit{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 coûts ardent et les désirs sans frein" (\textit{Etude sur la Queste}, p. 114). In \textit{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 \textit{PP}, C, XI, 124, where the devil is referred to as a "prout prikyere of Fraunce".

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 unlikynesse"), 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 \textit{Roman de la Rose}, who delivers a fatuous sermon proclaiming reproduction to be the highest duty
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.


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, 157-79.) 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 Lollitus 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 "compassion 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, MQ, 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.


42 Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse, p. 49.


44 Silverman, "Sex and Money in Chaucer's Shipman's Tale", Pq, 32 (1953), 329-36; Stillwell, "Chaucer's 'Sad' Merchant".


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.)
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 neglect in chastisyng...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.


51 "Character and Class in the Wife of Bath's Tale", 331.

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 CP 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 Ledy 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; Baller, "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. Rappolo, "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, 1, xi (tr. Parry, pp. 149-50).


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 cutright 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, 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).


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, 1324-66. See Fleming, The 'Roman de la Rose': a Study in Allegory and Iconography, pp. 180-1.

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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.


66 "Sovereignty and the Two Worlds of the Franklin's Tale", 261.


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.

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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 nature 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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