CRISEYDE AS A COURTLY LADY

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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August 1960

C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER ONE

CRISEYDE AND THE CRITICS

A balanced appreciation of poetry requires both the objective and subjective methods of literary criticism, but it is generally agreed, as W.W. Lawrence writes of the Canterbury Tales, that "the further we recede from our own times, the less can impressionistic analysis stand by itself, no matter how penetrating the imagination behind it." [1]

The main direction of recent Chaucerian scholarship has been to show the inadequacies in purely subjective appreciation.[2] Since in the Middle Ages literature was largely the preserve of the aristocracy and the Church, a knowledge of medieval society and religion is required in understanding poetry dealing with these institutions. Without this knowledge, how can a twentieth-century reader appreciate the gentle irony in the portrait of Madame Eglentyne, for example, or the satire in the Wife of Bath's Prologue?

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[1] Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1951), p. 8.

[2] Albert C. Baugh, "Fifty Years of Chaucer Scholarship," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 659-672;
H.S. Bennett, "Medieval Literature and the Modern Reader," Essays and Studies, XXXI (1945), 7-18;
George R. Coffman, "Some Recent Trends in English Literary Scholarship, with Special Reference to Medieval Backgrounds," SP, XXXV (1938), 500-514;
Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 10 et passim.

Knowledge of historical backgrounds must be supported by an understanding of literary convention. Because of their preoccupation with realism, the critics who initiated modern Chaucerian scholarship fifty years ago were unable to appreciate convention. Recent scholars have restored the balance in criticism by emphasizing the conventional elements in Chaucer's writing, remarking particularly on the important role of courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde, the poem now regarded as his greatest artistic achievement.

An examination of the literary sources of Troilus and Criseyde is as inadequate, by itself, as the impressionistic approach to the poem. The story has been traced in exhaustive detail by H.H. Hughes, for example, from its origins in the Iliad through its development by Aeschylus, Ovid, Dares Phrygius, Dictys Cretensis, Benoit de Sainte Maure, Guido delle Colonne and Boccaccio.[3] The purpose of Hughes' study is to illuminate Criseyde's character and the meaning of Chaucer's poem. But this kind of literary criticism, in this case, is of little value, because the similarities between Criseyde and the early heroines arise only from the plot, while the differences are those of the heroine's character.

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[3] Chaucer's Criseyde and Her Ancestry (unpub. diss., Univ. of Texas, 1948).

For the relations of Chaucer's story to those of Guido, Benoit, and Boccaccio, see Karl Young, The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer Soc., 2nd Ser., No. 40 (London, 1908).

Of the sources of Chaucer's poem, only Il Filostrato contains any elements of courtly love. Boccaccio depicts Troilo as a courtly lover, but Criseida is hardly more than a Neapolitan courtesan, lascivious and shallow in character. "No man in his senses could expect her to be faithful," writes George L. Kittredge.[4] Criseyde, on the other hand, is a courtly lady. As H.H. Hughes himself admits, her only similarity to Criseida and her other "ancestors" is her betrayal of Troilus. "It is almost impossible to think of Chaucer's heroine without realizing the contrast between her and her prototypes."[5]

The differences between Chaucer's poem and its sources are two-fold: the introduction of courtly love as the social and religious ethic, and the realistic motivation of action from character. These two changes are interrelated: it is a mistake to see a conflict in the poem between literary convention and psychological realism. It is true that Troilus and Criseyde is written like a psychological novel, as Kittredge was the first to say.[6] The psychology is that of the twelfth and

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[4] Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p. 122.
For a comparison of Criseida and Criseyde, see N.E. Griffin and A.B. Myrick, eds., The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 70-95;
and Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love (Louisiana, 1940), Part Two, et passim.

[5] Hughes, pp. 388-389, 410.

[6] Kittredge, pp. 109, 112.

thirteenth centuries, however, not of the twentieth. Developed in the troubadours' analyses of their own emotions, in the introspective monologues of the romances, and in the psychological allegory of the Roman de la Rose, the psychology of love was the most outstanding element of courtly literature. Troilus and Criseyde is written in the French tradition, in which psychological realism and convention are inseparable.[7]

Many critics have stressed the realism in Troilus and Criseyde, ignoring its conventional aspects. J.S.P. Tatlock, for example, concentrates on the qualities of "human nature" in the poem and tries to establish that love as depicted here is universal.[8] H.R. Patch similarly regards the medieval code of courtly love as a modern and romantic emotion, and he sees Troilus and Criseyde as a triumph of "the realistic genius of the poet," released from the shackles of literary convention. "In an age when readers inevitably differ on fundamentals aesthetic as well as philosophical, impressionistic criticism is at times our only resource." [9]

Critics like Tatlock and Patch forget the relationship between realism and courtly love. They ignore the warnings of the historical critics that just when Chaucer seems (to us) most natural or realistic, he was often making the greatest use of convention. "He deceives you --

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[7] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford, 1953), passim.

[8] "The People in Chaucer's Troilus," PMLA, LVI (1941), 87-89; see Tatlock's denial of courtly love as a historical reality, in "Interpreting Literature by History," Speculum, XII (1937), 390-395.

[9] On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 88, 8-9.

as he should -- with the most innocent air in the world," writes W.W. Lawrence.[10] The audience of the fourteenth century, however, familiar with the metaphor of the religion of Love, would have recognized the literary convention underlying Troilus and Criseyde from the opening lines. Echoing the papal title of "Servus servorum Dei," Chaucer spoke of himself explicitly as a poet of courtly love, although he was not a lover:

> For I, that God of Loves servantz serve,
> Ne dar to Love for myn unliklynesse,
> Preyen for speed, al shold I therefore sterve,
> So fer am I from his help in darknesse.
> But natheles, if this may don gladnesse
> To any lovere, and his cause availle,
> Have he my thonk, and myn he this travaille! [11]

Chaucer's use of the courtly convention was no accident of literary history. According to C.S. Lewis, he deliberately omitted the Renascence elements of Boccaccio's Il Filostrato in order to "medievalise" Troilus and Criseyde. He returned to the literary methods of the previous two centuries, the great period of courtly love in France, and wrote according to the tradition of the romans d'aventure and the Roman de la Rose.[12] Chaucer's choice was deliberate, and this makes it impossible to ignore

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[10] Lawrence, Chaucer, p. 41.

[11] Troilus and Criseyde, I. 15-21. See also the typical religious metaphor of courtly love in the following exhortation to prayer, I. 29-49. The text is that of F.N. Robinson's edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1933). Subsequent references to Chaucer's poems will be to this edition.

[12] C.S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato," Essays and Studies, XVII (1932), 55-75; and Allegory, pp. 178-183.
See Sarah F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), 123-124;
Karl Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," PMLA, LIII (1938), 38-63.

the conventions of courtly love in the Troilus. Chaucer did not use courtly love merely for a romantic background as he did the siege of Troy (or as the authors of the first French romances used the histories of Rome and Byzantium). He employed the ethics of the code in his poem, which therefore cannot be fairly judged by any other standard.

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. (II. 22-28)

This stanza might have been written for the benefit of Tatlock and Patch. Chaucer could have left no more explicit reminder than this that the "usages" of courtly love in twelfth-century France were not those of romantic or modern love. To disregard the difference is to misrepresent the poem. When the conventions of courtly love are ignored, curious explanations are offered for the furtiveness of the love affair, the absence of marriage, or Troilus' inability to prevent Criseyde's departure. Troilus may seem an effeminate boy who takes to his bed in weakness and self-pity at every emotional crisis; he has been described by Tatlock as a manic-depressive who appeals to Criseyde's maternal instincts, and by a Freudian psychoanalyst as the "victim of an Oedipal tie to his mother." [13] Pandarus is seen as a

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[13] Tatlock, "The People," p. 93; see The Mind and Art of Chaucer (Syracuse, 1950), p. 43.
John Hagopian, "Chaucer as Psychologist in Troilus and Criseyde," Literature and Psychology, V (1955), 5-11.

treacherous seducer, who appeases his own frustrations by the vicarious experience of Troilus' love affair; John Speirs believes he is the most important character in the poem.[14]

More disastrous still are misrepresentations of Criseyde's character, for she is the central figure in the poem and the key to its meaning.[15] Her behaviour results in Troilus' sufferings during the courtship, and the extent of her resistance determines the subtlety of Pandarus' approach. The analysis of her nature, therefore, determines that of the other main characters. If she is innocent, Pandarus becomes a guileful seducer, Troilus a spoiled young man, and the poem, a warning against men's treachery. If Criseyde is calculating and unprincipled, Troilus becomes the wronged lover and the poem is an attack on woman's inconstancy.

Critics who misrepresent Criseyde commonly cast her in one of four roles, that of the 'Betrayed Innocent,' the 'Wanton Adulteress,' the 'Double Character,' or the 'Pawn of Fate.'

Victorian scholars, imbued even in their literary criticism with a nineteenth-century sense of chivalry toward women, see Criseyde as a 'Betrayed Innocent.' Even those who wrote after 1883 failed to see the implications of Gaston Paris' definition of amour courtois, made in

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[14] John Speirs, "Chaucer: (I) Troilus and Criseyde," Scrutiny, XI (1942), 91-104; see Chaucer the Maker (London, 1952), pp. 48-82.

[15] For an analysis of Criseyde's position in the poem, see Thomas R. Price, "Troilus and Criseyde, a Study in Chaucer's Method of Narrative Construction," PMLA, XI (1896), 307-322.

that year, or of William Dodd's subsequent relation of the convention to Chaucer. [16]

This group of critics sees Criseyde as a virtuous woman, whose feminine will is naturally too weak to resist the guileful seduction planned by Pandarus and Troilus. "We see the threads of the web in which she is entangled drawing ever closer around her," writes ten Brink, the first of the school: "her fall appears to us excusable, indeed unavoidable." Although Criseyde's seduction is not her fault, the following love affair with Troilus is intrinsically immoral. This illicit relationship is responsible for a gradual weakening of her moral fibre. Compared to her reluctance to yield to Troilus, her weaker resistance to Diomede's advances reveals her moral deterioration. Ten Brink exonerates her from the infidelity: "how is she accountable, when that first fall robbed her of her moral stay?" [17]

A.W. Pollard sees Criseyde as "the sweetest, most piteous of unfaithful women," and F.J. Furnivall describes her as "the beautiful Cressida, hesitating, palpitating like the nightingale, before her sin; driven by force of hard circumstances which she could not control, into unfaithfulness to her love." [18] H.H. Herdman employs the same similes: "As we see the meshes tightening about her, she seems like a bird swept

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[16] Gaston Paris, "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II," Romania, XII (1883), 459-534;
William G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1913).

[17] B. ten Brink, History of English Literature, II, i, p. 92, cited by Dodd, p. 154.

[18] A.W. Pollard, Chaucer (London, 1931), p. 95; first ed., 1893;
F.J. Furnivall, ed., The Leopold Shakespere (London, 1880), p. lxxx.

about and bewildered while battling against the storm, yielding at last only because it can resist no longer." He insists on Criseyde's moral innocence, saying that "Diomede's persuasive powers and her father's authority are responsible for her inconstancy. To Chaucer she is woman's innocence pitted against man's guile and treachery, and her fall is inevitable." [19]

This interpretation of Criseyde's character is based on the first part of the poem only, principally on her reaction to Troilus' courtship.[20] It omits any consideration of passages which show Criseyde acting with deliberation as the mistress of her own fate. The poem as these critics describe it is one of pathos, not of tragedy, since Criseyde is not given the moral responsibility for her own actions. Most important of all, the theory of the 'Betrayed Innocent' depends on an ethical code which considers adultery as a sin.

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[19] H.H. Herdman, Jr., "The Troilus and Cressida of Chaucer and of Shakespere," Sewanee Review, VII (1899), 172.
See A.W. Ward, Chaucer (London, 1923);
William J. Courthope, History of English Poetry (New York and London, 1895-1926), I, 264.

[20] A curious exception is Joseph Graydon's theory that Criseyde's infidelity was directly caused by Troilus' jealousy and stupidity. Graydon adds several episodes to the story: he postulates that Troilus betrayed the secret of his love in describing his dream to Cassandra, who spread rumours anticipating Criseyde's infidelity and making it impossible for her to return to Troy. Troilus' efforts to kill his supposed supplanter result in Criseyde's pity for Diomede's wounds and her surrender to him. See "Defense of Criseyde," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 144-177.
This theory is refuted by Joseph M. Beatty, Jr., "Mr. Graydon's 'Defense of Criseyde,'" SP, XXVI (1929), 470-481;
and by J. Milton French, "A Defense of Troilus," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 1246-1251.

Criseyde's love is similarly considered as a sin by the group of critics who present her as a 'Wanton Adulteress,' consistently capable of infidelity. Albert S. Cook refers to the poem's literary sources to support the theory that Criseyde is a shameless, self-indulgent woman. "Criseyde's ancient prototype, whether we call her Briseis or Chryseis, yielded and clave to the stronger, and could be transferred with much ease from one fighter to another," Cook writes; Criseyde is "a woman who had already been conceived by antiquity as bound to accede to the wishes of a conquerer." [21] Edgar Shannon similarly describes Criseyde as the descendant of Ovid's Helen, coy, disingenuous and faithless.[22]

R.K. Root, H.R. Patch, Raymond Preston and John Speirs are among the critics who elaborate on Cook's theory and search the text for evidence of Criseyde's vices and weaknesses.[23] Criseyde is an experienced widow, they point out, not an innocent maiden, and she enters the love affair with Troilus fully aware of what she is doing. At the worst, she is an immoral woman, at best, a shrewd opportunist. Her soliloquies reveal her as calculating, able to weigh Troilus' merits against the disadvantages and risks of a love affair. She enjoys the long period of courtship and deliberately keeps Troilus in suspense for as long as she can. Distorting

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21 "The Character of Criseyde," PMLA, XXII (1907), 533-534.

22 Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), pp. 160-168.

23 R.K. Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (Boston, 1934), revised ed., pp. 87-127. See acknowledgment of debt to Cook, p. 115;
Patch, pp. 74-83;
Raymond Preston, Chaucer (London, 1952), pp. 53-112;
Speirs, "Troilus and Criseyde," pp. 84-108, and Chaucer the Maker, pp. 48-82.

the text, they allege that at Deiphebus' house she shows no great surprise at Pandarus' ruse. They take her demand for sovereignty over Troilus as evidence of her arrogance. The only quality that restrains her amorous nature is her obsessive fear for her reputation. She is able to tremble and weep at will and to adopt a light air of confusion when it suits her. She is the mistress of her fate, and she goes to Pandarus' house in the expectation of meeting Troilus there. "It is evident that Criseyde knew how to woo under the guise of being wooed," Albert Cook comments.[24]

When the separation is imminent, Criseyde persuades Troilus that she must leave him. H.R. Patch has suggested that Troilus' lack of aggression has left Criseyde dissatisfied with him, and that the exchange of prisoners is the occasion but not the cause for her infidelity: "Why did she go after all? If she was satisfied with Troilus, why didn't she use one of the many resources at her command to stay longer in Troy with her lover?" [25] The lies that Criseyde subsequently tells to her father, to Troilus and to Diomede, are regarded as signs of moral corruption, and the hastiness of her capitulation is blamed on her rather than on Diomede -- a haste emphasized in spite of the uncertainty of the time lapse in the text. In summary, John Speirs suggests that Chaucer is portraying Criseyde satirically throughout the poem, basing her character on antifeminist writings: "naturalness of human behaviour and demeanour partly arises from an almost complete absence in her of a moral sense." [26] The moral of the poem is simply that woman is fickle.

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24 Cook, p. 547.

25 Patch, p. 89.

26 Speirs, "Troilus and Criseyde," p. 107.

Like the theory of the 'Betrayed Innocent,' the theory of the 'Wanton Adulteress' distorts and ignores parts of the text. Chaucer's sympathy and tenderness for his heroine are overlooked, as well as the striking differences between Criseyde and Boccaccio's Griseida. The theory condemns as vices the very virtues of courtly love, according to which Criseyde was guilty of no weakness or sin until her infidelity. Troilus and Criseyde is again interpreted so that it cannot be called a tragedy; there is no contrast between Criseyde's character and her infidelity. The poem is rather, as Raymond Preston sees it, a divine comedy, an opportunity for spiritual laughter.[27]

The apparent contrast between the 'Betrayed Innocent' and the 'Wanton Adulteress,' between Chaucer's sympathetic portrayal of Criseyde in the first part of the story and her contrasting infidelity in the second, has made the third group of critics abandon the attempt to solve the inconsistency. They see Criseyde as a 'Double Character' resulting from Chaucer's failure to match her nature with the final exigencies of the plot. Ernest Legouis, the French critic, describes Troilus and Criseyde as a 'glorious failure:'

> The sensuous and fickle heroine of Boccaccio could without any inconsistency change her lover as often as she pleased. Chaucer's Criseyde can only do so by belying what is not affected modesty on her part, but her very nature, that fresh innocence with which the poet has endowed her. Not only has he failed to give her betrayal an appearance of truth, but he has bestowed on the young widow a maiden's candour, thus rendering the character at once charming and inconsistent.[28]

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27 Preston, pp. 92-93.

28 Geoffroy Chaucer, trans. L. Lailavoix (London, 1934), p. 126. Original ed. pub. Paris, 1910.
See also Aldous Huxley, "Chaucer," Essays New and Old (New York, 1927), pp. 249-272;
Marchette Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England (New York, 1946), pp. 172-181.

Arthur Mizener does not consider the inconsistency an artistic failure on Chaucer's part, but says that it results from medieval concepts of character and action. He denies that Troilus and Criseyde is a psychological novel, or that Chaucer attempted to motivate behaviour as a modern realist would do. "For Chaucer a character consisted in a group of unchanging fundamental qualities, and . . . the relation between such a character and the events of the narrative was one of congruence rather than of cause and effect." [29]

Tatlock supports Mizener's view, commenting that Chaucer's purpose in the final scenes is to promote the dramatic rather than the lifelike: "in early literature human character is apt to be conceived and presented as static and not changing; to be given two Criseydes (as we pretty much are) is unusual, and a whole series of steps would be amazing." In analysing the moral of the poem, Tatlock suggests that Chaucer undertook not to explain how an attractive woman became faithless, but how infinitely appealing a woman notoriously to become faithless could be. "We are left to draw the inference that no matter how sweet and good any woman may be she cannot be trusted." [30]

Charles Muscatine develops Mizener's theory further. In terms of style, he represents Criseyde as vacillating between the courtly speech of Troilus and the naturalistic idiom of Pandarus. In terms of the poem's

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[29] "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde," PMLA, LIV (1939), 67.

[30] "The People," p. 99, and Mind and Art, p. 48.

meaning, Muscatine points to the ambiguity between Criseyde's courtliness and her realistic personality, between her virtue and her infidelity. He suggests that her ambiguity is her meaning, and that she is the symbol of earthly instability. Her infidelity is not a personal sin, but represents a failing that is "pathetic, universally human in its mixture with so much that is good." Criseyde's personal weakness does not explain her infidelity: "the poetry speaks more deeply and symbolically than this." "The truth of her characterization is in her consistent ambiguity. . . . The rendering of Criseyde's betrayal is symbolic rather than psychological." [31]

The weakness of the theory of the 'Double Character' lies in its basic assumption that Chaucer is interested in action rather than in character.[32] The text of the Troilus does not seem to support this assumption or the idea that Criseyde's personality is not realistically developed; it is in spite of the text that the theory denies psychological motivation. As a 'Double Character,' Criseyde becomes merely a symbol rather than the central figure of the story, and the poem ceases to be a personal tragedy. Criseyde is not morally responsible for her infidelity. Troilus and Criseyde is raised to a symbolic level of meaning, becoming a lament for all earthly mutability.

The fourth interpretation, which presents Criseyde as a 'Pawn of Fate,' similarly elevates the poem to a superhuman level of meaning. Judged by the standards of Christian philosophy, the Troilus can be seen

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[31] Chaucer, pp. 155, 162, 164. See p. 265, notes 60 and 61, for Muscatine's praise of Mizener.

[32] As Mizener concludes, "both Troilus and Criseyde are the victims of an act determined, not by Criseyde's character, but by the dramatic neccesities of the action." Page 81.

as an exposition of Boethian determinism. According to this concept, the work is a philosophical rather than a love poem. T.A. Stroud, for example, believes that Chaucer decided to supplement Boethius' treatment of "false goods," which had included only power, dignities, and fame and had made no mention of love. After Boethius' time, as the doctrine of courtly love became a conspicuous part of the medieval culture, "the possession of the loved one became a treasure hardly to be mentioned in the same breath with worldly honor or power." Chaucer revised Il Filostrato to supplement Boethius' conclusions in an area of human activity which the philosopher had neglected. "The token of fortune which Troilus acquired was altered to offer a greater illusion of sublimity than any other 'good' of this terrestrial world." [33]

According to this theory, the tragedy of the poem is that Troilus deliberately places his hope for happiness in what is corruptible and temporal. D.W. Robertson has called the Troilus an allegory of the Fall of Man, in which Troilus embodies Adam's higher reason, Criseyde, Eve's sensuality, and Pandarus, the external temptation of the Serpent.[34] In seeking worldly satisfactions, Troilus deviates from the way of Christian reason and lives according to foolish standards. He is the typical tragic hero, while Criseyde is only the personification of the sensual delight he seeks.

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[33] T.A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus," MP, XLIX (1951), 4-5.
See Bernard L. Jefferson, Chaucer and the Consolation of Boethius (Princeton, 1917).

[34] D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy," ELH, XIX (1952), 1-37.
See James Lyndon Shanley, "The Troilus and Christian Love," ELH, VI (1939), 271-281.

As far as Criseyde is concerned, the poem is not a tragedy, according to this group of critics, because she is relieved of any free will and moral responsibility. Since the poem is not meant to be psychologically realistic, her character is not intended to motivate her infidelity. She is a helpless 'Pawn of Fate,' little more than a symbol in the poem. Chaucer does not develop her appealing personality for her own sake, according to W.W. Curry, but to serve as a "powerful destinal force in the life of Troilus, the protagonist." [35] Criseyde is no longer the centre of the poem or even a comprehensive individual. She figures in the story only as an illustration of the idea that the Wheel of Fortune condemns all human endeavour: as W. Farnham writes, she is no more than the worldly possession of which Troilus must be deprived by Fate.[36]

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35 "Destiny in Chaucer's Troilus," PMLA, XLV (1930), 163. Curry analyses the whole poem without mentioning the problem of Criseyde's infidelity.

36 The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (Berkeley, 1936), pp. 137-157.
See also Kittredge, pp. 120-126;
J.L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius (Boston, 1934), pp. 150-159;
Sherman B. Neff, "Chaucer's Cressida," Elizabethan Studies and Other Essays in Honor of George F. Reynolds (Boulder, Colorado, 1945), p. 46;
Robert P. Ap Roberts, Criseyde and the Moral of Chaucer's Troilus (unpub. diss., Univ. of California, 1950), pp. 57-244;
Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde," PMLA, LXXII (1957), 14-26.

All four interpretations have serious weaknesses. When any one of these theories is advanced as the whole and only truth, Criseyde's character and Chaucer's intentions are distorted. The theories of the 'Betrayed Innocent' and the 'Wanton Adulteress' ignore vital passages of the text; the theories of the 'Double Character' and the 'Pawn of Fate' deny that Criseyde is a realistic and self-consistent character.

Each of these four interpretations of Criseyde's part in the poem contains an element of truth. The poem does demonstrate that men are not always to be trusted ('Betrayed Innocent'), that women are changeable ('Wanton Adulteress'), and that earthly love is mutable ('Double Character' and 'Pawn of Fate'). It is true, as the four descriptions of her character show, that Criseyde is a virtuous young woman, that she deliberately undertakes an extra-marital love affair, that there is a certain ambiguity in her character, and that she is to some extent the victim of circumstances. But the relationship of all these truths is evident only when the poem is judged by the standards of courtly love.

Only the code of courtly love can demonstrate that Criseyde's character is self-consistent throughout the poem, compatible with all her actions, and in harmony with Chaucer's explicit attitude toward her. As a courtly lady, she constantly behaves in conformity to the code. Using methods of psychological realism that are traditional in the literature of courtly love, Chaucer gives Criseyde a credible, fully developed personality. She is a living person; but she lives as a courtly lady, not as a woman of the twentieth century.

When Criseyde is understood as a courtly lady, the characters of Troilus and Pandarus can be seen in their true light, and the nature of the action becomes clear. The poem becomes, as Chaucer intended, a story of courtly love. In such a story the lovers can never consider marriage, their love has to be secret, the lover assents to his lady's superiority, and Love is the greatest earthly good.

Troilus and Criseyde also becomes, as Chaucer intended, a tragedy. As a 'Betrayed Innocent,' Criseyde figures in a poem that is only pathetic. As a 'Wanton Adulteress,' consistently immoral in her character and actions, she provides the material for ironic spiritual laughter. She is absolved of moral responsibility for her actions as a 'Double Character' or a 'Pawn of Fate,' and takes part in what is not a personal tragedy, but the universal earthly tragedy of mutability. Only when the poem is judged by the standards of courtly love, is Criseyde a tragic heroine.' She is not perfect in her role as a courtly lady; like all human beings she has an imperfection, a weakness that is developed as a tragic flaw. Tragedy arises when Fate combines with this flaw to produce a situation in which Criseyde's infidelity is inevitable, but still psychologically motivated. Her fault is not externally compelled by the structure of the plot (as if she were a 'Double Character') or by the Wheel of Fortune (as if she were a 'Pawn of Fate'). The tragedy depends on "hire gilt," on her acknowledged responsibility for her sin.' The tragedy evolves out of the contrast between what Criseyde is and what she does: she acts on the impulse of her fatal weakness, and not according to her virtuous character as a courtly lady.

Courtly love originated as a revolt against the ethical standards of feudal society and the Church, and the following chapter, "The Challenge of the Courtly Lady," shows how a poem on courtly love can be misunderstood when normal social and religious criteria are applied to it.

Since the position of the lady is the key-stone in the theory of courtly love (just as Criseyde's character is central to the meaning of Chaucer's poem), the third chapter examines the lady's role with respect to the four basic principles of the code.

Literary criticism has tended to concentrate (like the poetry itself) on the role of the lover to the neglect of the courtly lady, who is often misunderstood. Chapters Four, Five, and Six explain her traditional role. An account is given of the ladies who are Criseyde's real "ancestors," more closely related to her than the Trojan captives or the Neapolitan courtesan. The famous courtly ladies of France are described both in life and in literature, since the two are inextricable in the development of courtly love.

In the final chapter, Criseyde is compared to her "ancestors." A conflict is seen between her role as a courtly lady and her individual nature, and a new conception of the poem's tragedy is suggested.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHALLENGE OF THE COURTLY LADY

A) WOMAN IN THE FEUDAL WORLD

Two hundred years before the birth of Chaucer in England, a new doctrine of love began to prevail among the nobility of southern France. It was expressed first of all in the songs of the troubadours and in the social system taught at the twelfth-century courts of Poitiers and Troyes. Later this doctrine of "courtly love" (as it is called today) became a great power in the medieval world, challenging the authority of feudal society and of the Church.

Feudal society was based on the assumption that a woman's duty was unquestionably to obey her husband and her lord, just as a knight's duty in life was to serve his liege lord and suzerain. This sense of obligation and submission was the foundation of the social hierarchy: to challenge the principles of allegiance was therefore to attack the structure of society itself. The Church, as the second power in the medieval world (and it was very much a worldly power), saw obedience to God and to ecclesiastical law as man's primary duty, a duty from which no other claims on his service should divert him.

Feudal society and the Church, in many respects incompatible, were united in their attempts to meet the challenge of courtly love, which threatened basic tenets of both institutions. Courtly love had originated, in part, as a reaction against prevailing social and religious conditions in France, especially those conditions concerned

with the position of women, and for this reason was in direct conflict with feudal society and the Church.

The question of the specific sources of courtly love has been debated now for nearly one hundred and fifty years.[1] Briefly, the theories on the origins of the system can be divided into three groups: 'classical,' 'popular,' and 'Arabic.'

The 'classical' school of critics sees the origin of courtly love in the heritage of Greek and Latin literature left to the Middle Ages, specifically in the medieval Latin love lyrics, certain Platonic ideas on love and beauty, the Cupid and Psyche myth, and, in particular, the Ars Amatoria of Ovid.[2]

The 'popular' group of critics concentrates its research on the region of France in which the literature of courtly love first appeared, and examines in detail the folk songs of the Limousin and the May festivals of Provence, particularly the ceremonies of crowning the Queen of the May.[3] Interest has been taken in the Celtic legends carried across the Channel by minstrels and incorporated into French romances; many of these legends

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[1] S. Griswold Morley, "A Note on Arabic Poetry and European Poetry," Hispanic Review, VII (1939), 344-346.

[2] See in general the works of J. Dumont, Hennig Brinkmann, Eugène Baret, Alfred Pillet, Willibald Schrötter, Edward K. Rand and Stephen Gaselee.

[3] See the works of Gaston Paris, Alfred Jeanroy and Joseph Anglade.

describe a fairy mistress who is necessarily superior to her mortal lover, and who may partially account for the superiority of the courtly lady in French literature.[4]

The 'Arabic' group of critics, which has steadily been gaining strength in recent years, stresses the influence of the Arabic lyric poets of Moorish Spain on both the verse forms and emotional content of the literature of courtly love.[5] The influence of Arabic poets was carried over the Pyrenees into southern France by crusaders and minstrels for over a century. In particular, one Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi wrote (around the year 1022) a work called The Dove's Neck-Ring, which codified many commonplaces of Arabic love lyrics and was an important forerunner of Andreas Capellanus' De Amore. Ibn Hazm managed to combine Ovidian sensuality with a degree of Platonic spirituality, and his work contains many elements that later became familiar in the poetry of courtly love.[6]

These possible sources of courtly love are the seeds from which the code developed, but the seeds would never have prospered if the ground

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4 In Celtic sources of Guinevere's abduction, she is sometimes a fay abducted from her mortal husband by a supernatural lover: see the story of Etain and Airem, king of Ireland, in the ninth-century Irish Tochmarc Etaine, and the Welsh story of Riannon and Pwyll in the Mabinogion.

In French romances, see the supernatural Queen of Ireland in Durmart le Galois, Melior in Partonopeus, and Madoine in Claris et Laris.

5 See the works of Ramōn Pidal, Julián Ribera, Henri Pérès, Robert Briffault, Alois Nykl and Alexander Denomy.

6 In view of the conflict between courtly love and the Christian Church, it is interesting to note that Ibn Hazm's views were opposed to the Muslim orthodoxy of his time, and his writings were publicly burned in Seville during his lifetime. Ibn Hazm, The Ring of the Dove, trans. A.J. Arberry (London, 1953), p. 9.

For an account of Ibn Hazm and his code of love, see Alois R. Nykl, Hispano-Arabic Poetry and its Relation with the Old Provencal Troubadours (Baltimore, 1946), pp. 73-103.

on which they fell had not been ripe to receive them. The social and religious conditions of twelfth-century France were such that everything was ready for a new theory of love and womanhood. The real 'origin' of a social movement is often found, not in any specific cause, but in a general reaction against the prevailing way of life, and so it was with courtly love. 7

The nobleman of twelfth-century France married simply as a means of advancing his own interests through advantageous political alliance, the annexation of valuable estates in the form of a dowry, or through the expectations of inheritance. A woman was little more than a personification of the property and of the feudal ties associated with her; as a person in her own right she did not exist, and little respect was accorded her.

"The feudal male," writes Sidney Painter, "was chiefly absorbed in war and the chase. His wife bore him sons, his mistress satisfied his momentary lusts. Beyond this, women had no place in his life, and he had no interest in them. They were freely beaten and treated in general with callous brutality."[8] To emphasize the fact, the wife of a jealous noble was sometimes actually branded as the property of her husband.[9] The nobleman

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7 If the Hegelian theory of history is applied to this case, medieval society (based on the twin powers of feudalism and the Church) may be considered as the historical thesis.

Courtly love originated as the antithesis.

The final synthesis combined the three ideals of knighthood, Christianity and courtly love (Herrendienst, Gottesdienst and Frauendienst) into the single ideal of Chivalry, an ideal which never managed to achieve much consistency among its three components.

8 French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France (Baltimore, 1940), p. 102.

9 Emile Lucka, Eros: the Development of the Sex Relation through the Ages (New York, 1915), p. 54.

made no attempt to delude his wife about his extra-marital affairs; such arrangements were taken for granted by all parties concerned. In the thirteenth-century French romance of Escoufle, the Count of St. Gilles openly enjoys the favours of his wife and those of an amie as well. In his home he makes himself comfortable also among his wife's ladies-in-waiting, and when the young hero arrives he finds the count in negligee after dinner, lying with his head in the lap of Aelis, the heroine, waiting for dessert.[10] It was not only in fiction that such an attitude was taken. The heroine of Flamenca and Agnes de Tonnere of Joufrois were by no means the only noblewomen imprisoned by their husbands in a tower: Eleanor of Aquitaine, the most famous of all courtly ladies, was imprisoned by her husband, Henry II of England, in Salisbury Tower and other strongholds for fifteen years.

In consequence of the feudal attitude toward marriage, the consent of the couple (especially of the bride) was of no importance, and it is not surprising that the typical heroine of French romance should often have a fatalistic attitude toward her own marriage. Even though she might be secretly pledged to a lover, she knew she was bound by law to marry a husband of her father's choosing. Blonde of Oxford, for example, heroine of the thirteenth-century romance Jehan et Blonde, is secretly pledged to the absent Jehan, but it does not even occur to her to protest when her father arranges a marriage for her with the Count of Gloucester.

Nor was age of any importance. Children were sometimes led through a formal ceremony of betrothal when they were too young to speak

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[10] See the commentary by Sarah F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), p. 38.

er even to walk into the church, and marriage often took place soon afterwards. In 1158 Henry II of England and Louis VII of France arranged the betrothal of three-year-old Prince Henry to Louis' daughter Marguerite, who was scarcely one year old. To enable King Henry to possess himself of Marguerite's dowry without delay, the marriage itself took place two years later, when Prince Henry was five and Marguerite not yet three. In England, when a boy was fourteen and a girl was twelve, a legally valid marriage could be performed simply by an exchange of vows (followed by cohabitation), without the presence of a priest or even of any witness at all. When expediency demanded it, such marriages were very easily affirmed or denied without proof.

If the financial benefits of a marriage failed to materialize, if there was a change in the political situation, or if the wife failed to produce an heir, she could be repudiated without difficulty. Nor did the Church stand in the way of such separation. In the days when nearly all the nobility of western Europe were already related in some degree, the plea of incest was accepted as the basis for the great majority of divorces. For to allege consanguinity of even the fourth degree (that is, to have a common great-great-grandparent), or even to allege the relationship of being god-parents to the same child at a baptism, was enough to secure an annulment from the Church. Before the Lateran Council of 1215, the prohibition on marriage extended even to the seventh degree.[11]

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[11] In writing about conditions of marriage in the lower classes, G.G. Coulton points out that in the average village, where there were only about seventy families, the arithmetical chances of finding a mate outside the prohibited degrees must have been negligible. Medieval Panorama (Cambridge, 1949), p. 635.

Eleanor of Aquitaine was divorced from Louis VII of France on the usual grounds of consanguinity, after being married to him for fifteen years (1137-1152), and bearing him two daughters but no son. Her case is unusual only in so far as the separation took place largely at her own instigation. Within eight weeks she married again, this time to Louis' rival, Henry Plantagenet, who was only too glad to receive the vast feudal estate that came with her person. Some years later a less fortunate lady, the Princess Ingeborg of Denmark, was married in 1193 to Philip Augustus of France and crowned Queen with great ceremony. Philip Augustus realised just too late that he had made a political error in marrying her, and so, on the day after their marriage, he dismissed Ingeborg on the grounds of consanguinity and gave her leave to return home to Denmark.[12]

The attitude of the Church, compared to that of feudal society, provided equally fertile ground for the revolt that was to come with the advent of courtly love. The religion of Islam taught that woman had no soul or spiritual existence until she married and shared that of her husband. In the sixth century, the Christian Council of Mâcon had gone one step further and officially denied that woman had any soul at all.[13] She was in fact the Devil's instrument on earth. The great quantity of medieval anti-feminist literature provided ample material for works such as Andreas Capellanus' third book of De Amore, Jean de Meun's continuation of the

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12 Ingeborg was not prepared to let a crown slip through her fingers so easily. She retired to the French nunnery at Soissons, and Danish emissaries persistently pleaded her case before the Pope until Philip Augustus was forced to acknowledge Ingeborg, renouncing his second wife and children, eight years later.

Amy Kelly comments: "In the twelfth century women were not yet persons; but Ingeborg gave unmistakable evidence of personality." Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1957), p. 467.

13 Lucka, p. 50.

Roman de la Rose, and the Wife of Bath's Prologue. In the spoken sermon, too, W.W. Lawrence writes, "the ears of laymen were constantly assailed from the pulpit by reminders that a woman was the cause of the fall of Adam and that the wiles of women are responsible for many of men's later transgressions." [14] The phrase "mulier est hominis confusio" was the opening of the standard monastic definition of woman, and it was so well known that Chaucer's use of it, for example, in the Nun's Priest's Tale, would immediately have suggested to his audience the whole context of the phrase. [15]

While matrimony was one of the seven sacraments of the Church, religious dogma taught that love was intrinsically an evil passion (idolatrous in its nature), and love did not cease to be sinful even when sanctified by marriage. Indeed, the sin of the man who loved his own wife was heavier than that of the unmarried lover, because he had abused the sacrament of marriage. [16] In Peter Abelard's words, passionate love of one's own wife was adultery. St. Jerome, in his Epistola Adversus Jovinianum, provided ample material for all medieval antifeminism; he

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[14] William W. Lawrence, Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1951), p. 124.

On the same subject see Francis Lee Utley, The Crooked Rib (Columbus, Ohio, 1944), and G.R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1933).

[15] Carleton Brown, "Mulier est Hominis Confusio," MLN, XXXV (1920), 479-482.

[16] Following this line of reasoning, the Cathars (a heretical sect of the Church, often identified with the development of courtly love) discouraged marriage and inclined to condone concubinage, because 'free love' was only a temporary alliance and therefore the lesser sin.

See Alexander J. Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love", Medieval Studies, VI (1944), 222-227.

established that sexual intercourse was solely for the procreation of children:

> He who loves his own wife too ardently is considered disgraceful. A wise man should love his wife with judgment, not with passion; he should govern his voluptuous impulses and not rush headlong into intercourse. "There is nothing blacker than to love a wife as if she were an adulteress." Husbands and wives should dwell together according to knowledge, so that they may know what God wishes and desires, and that they may give honor to the weak vessel, woman. When a man abstains from intercourse, he honors his wife; when he does not abstain, it is evident that the opposite is true -- he insults her. [17]

The Wife of Bath was probably not the only woman who complained against the dogma of the Church, "Allas! allas! that ever love was sinne!"

When, at the beginning of the twelfth century, the reaction came, it was extreme. Courtly love advocated a theory of love that was the antithesis of existing religious and social custom. "The pendulum not only swung away from celibacy, but, passing the point of married chastity, went to the other extreme, and a system of conduct grew up in which the central point was adulterous love." [18] Courtly love not only suggested a new relationship between men and women; it advocated a new kind of life. It is easy to understand that it was the noblewomen themselves who gave the new movement its greatest impetus, both by personal example and literary patronage. The new ideas were propogated in poetry and the romances. In the upper classes more women than men were able to read and write: ladies in medieval illustrations and tales are constantly represented as reading books,

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[17] Eugene E. Slaughter, "Allas! allas! that ever love was sinne!" MLN, XLIX (1934), 85.

[18] Homer H. Hughes, Chaucer's Criseyde and Her Ancestry (unpub. diss., Univ. of Texas, 1948), p. 122.

and then, as now, women were the chief readers of romances.[19] Eleanor of Aquitaine's tomb at Fontevrault fittingly represents her with a book in her hand, which need not necessarily be regarded as a missal.[20] "Soverey-netee," as Chaucer knew, was what "worldly wommen loven best," and the noblewomen of France did all they could to encourage the movement that was to elevate them to a position rivalling that of the feudal lord and of the Church itself.

The challenge of the courtly lady to the feudal lord and to the Church is personified, one might say, by Eleanor herself. During her life she effectively challenged the political power of two kings, Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. She came from a line of forebears in Poitou who had "supported antipopes and plucked the beards of bishops when they came into collision with secular affairs." [21] Eleanor followed her ancestors' example by opposing the authority of Louis' monastic advisors in Paris. Later she obtained a divorce in defiance of a papal dispensation, and in popular folklore she earned herself a legendary reputation as a demon.

Although feminine activities such as the courts of love (established by Eleanor and Marie de Champagne) may have appeared to be

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[19] Coulton, p. 627. L.F. Salzman, English Life in the Middle Ages (London, 1955), p. 260.

[20] Kelly, p. 494.
The effigy is reproduced in Robert Briffault, Les Troubadours et le Sentiment Romanesque (Paris, 1945), p. 12, fig. 4.

[21] Kelly, p. 99.

mere social amusements, there is no doubt about the serious tendency underlying them. Speaking about the judgements passed in the courts of love, Gaston Paris writes:

> il faut y reconnaître, chez les grandes dames de ce temps où apparaît ce qu'on appelle "le monde", un effort pour créer et faire accepter aux hommes un amour idéale et raffiné, nullement platonique toutefois, et fondé sur la pleine possession, mais ne laissant aux sens qu'une part secondaire, étroitement lié à la pratique et à l'accroissement des vertus sociales, et donnant à la femme, à cause du risque qu'elle courait en s'y livrant, une supériorité constante qu'elle justifiait par l'influence ennoblissante qu'elle devait exercer sur son amant.[22]

Courtly love began with the glorification of adultery; nevertheless, it was in origin largely a search for a new kind of morality. Adultery, circumscribed by the rigid code of courtly love, was in essence far more moral than the existing conditions of marriage. "Since the human spirit is in the long run averse to social anarchy," writes H.H. Hughes, "no sooner had the revolt to license taken place than there began to grow up around the new immorality a system of checks and restrictions, perhaps less burdensome but no less elaborate than those which surrounded the old ecclesiastical code."[23] An excess of passion made a person unfit for love, according to Andreas Capellanus; a new kind of chastity was demanded from the perfect lover, who did not seek to embrace anyone except his beloved. The judgements of the courts of love laid great emphasis on fidelity. In contrast to the conditions of marriage, the love-alliance could be dissolved only by death, a 'widowhood' of two years being required of the survivor.

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22 "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II" Romania, XII (1883), 529-530. This is probably the most famous of all essays on courtly love.

23 Hughes, p. 122.

Those who see Eleanor of Aquitaine, Guinevere, and Criseyde only as immoral and wanton adulteresses, forget an important element of the courtly tradition.[24] Women such as Eleanor and her daughter Marie, in attempting to change the conditions of life around them, established a strict code of ethics which, though it knew no laws but its own, demanded mutual fidelity, self-sacrifice, and courage from its adherents.

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[24] See, for example, the estimation of Eleanor's character in Melrich V. Rosenberg, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of the Troubadours and of the Courts of Love (New York, 1937), pp. 80-81, 106;
the degradation of Guinevere's character in late Arthurian romances;
and the description of Criseyde in English ballads and in Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid.

B) THE COURTLY LADY AGAINST THE FEUDAL LORD

According to the terms of courtly love, writes Sidney Painter, "men and women who wished to be worthy had to love, and love was adultery or at least fornication; courtly love emerges from the pages of the De Amore as an extra-marital relationship in open defiance of feudal custom and ecclesiastical precept." [25] The ideal of service to the courtly lady was established in opposition to service to the feudal lord and to the Church.

Because courtly love challenged the basic fealties of feudal society (the duty of a knight to his lord, and of a wife to her husband), it appeared to some of the nobility as a threat to their authority. Henry II of England and his advisors, for example, were worried about the ideas that Eleanor of Aquitaine taught the young nobility of France and England, including Henry's heir and his two other sons. It was in part the seditiousness of the courtly doctrine taught at Poitiers and the fear of political revolt that caused Henry to close the court and imprison Eleanor.

According to the code of feudal society, the primary duty of a knight was fidelity to his lord, no matter what injury he might receive at his lord's hand. Eleanor, on the other hand, taught the young men at

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[25] Painter, p. 122.

Poitiers that they should become the vassal or 'man' of the lady they loved, pledging their loyal service to her instead of to their feudal lord. The old bonds were renounced, and knighthood became subservient to love. Although the lover became in many respects a more valorous knight, he had to be willing to sacrifice his honour for the sake of love. Lancelot, who was a braver knight than Gawain, willingly disgraced himself by riding in the shameful cart while in search of Guinevere, and he allowed himself to be defeated in a tournament to please her whim. Gawain, who was not a courtly lover, would not think of such behaviour.

"It is plain," remarks Amy Kelly, "that each and every one of the judgements in the queen's court is an arrant feudal heresy. Taken together they undermine all the primary sanctions and are subversive of the social order. No proper king or baron, even at the risk of being reckoned a boor, ought to subscribe to a single one of them." [26]

The knight bound by love was even willing to commit treason against his lord. Lancelot and Tristram both dealt treacherously with their kings, Arthur and Mark, when they committed adultery with their queens. According to the feudal code of knighthood, as James Thompson

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[26] Kelly, p. 211.

explains, they were guilty of treason:

> The essence of the feudal system was mutual fidelity and reciprocal service between suzerain and vassal, overlord and under-lord; the bond was not a light one; fealty and honor were at the bottom of it, sanctioned it and gave it the force of law. The most heinous crime in the feudal calendar was treason against one's overlord . . . . The crime of Lancelot was not mere adultery -- there was plenty of that in the feudal age as today. The crime of Lancelot was that he violated the chastity of the wife of his suzerain, and thus betrayed his suzerain. The monstrousness of the crime was not that Guinevere was a queen: but that Guinevere was Arthur's wife and Arthur was Lancelot's overlord. [27]

The process of changing loyalty from feudal lord to courtly lady has been described by C.S. Lewis as the "feudalisation of love." [28] In the substitution of "love-service" for feudal allegiance, many characteristics from the old loyalty were transferred to the new. Allegiance of the most rigid sort was, from its inception, the key-note of courtly love. The only Provençal word for courtly love was *domnei* or "lady-service," and in troubadour poetry the lady was addressed by the respectful masculine term *midons*, which means literally "my lord." In a poem declaring his love to Eleanor of Aquitaine, the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn used the exact formula of a feudal vassal paying homage to his lord, "with hands joined and head bowed I give and deliver myself to you:"

> Mas juntas, ab cap cle,
> Vos m'autrei e m coman.

The troubadour often described himself as the lady's *om lige* and *sers umils*. It is believed that the recitation of this formula of allegiance made part of an actual ceremony, in which the lady's accepted suitor became her lover. [29]

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27 James W. Thompson, "Catharist Social Ideas in Medieval French Romance," *Romanic Review*, XXVII (1936), 103.

28 C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1953), p. 2.

29 N.E. Griffin, ed., *The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio* (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 91.

The parallelism between the courtly lady and the feudal lord was not confined to poetic language. The courtly lady possessed the power of life and death over her lover, and she replaced the feudal lord with her authority over the knight who served her. If every knight in France had been a Lancelot, he would have fought in battle, travelled on quests, and been willing to break every law of feudal society in the service of his lady, and in obedience to her command alone. Feudal society would have crumbled. [30]

The conflict between the courtly lady and the feudal lord never reached any such climax. As is the case with most revolutionary ideas, the theory of courtly love was most potent at the beginning of its history, and as it gradually gained in popularity in France and the rest of western Europe it lost much of its original force. The elements of courtly love that endured the longest (after the beginning of the thirteenth century) were those that were compatible with feudal society, in particular the theory of the ennobling effects of love on the chivalrous knight. As courtly love and the age of chivalry decayed together, the old ideas expressed themselves mainly in the ceremony of the tournament. At the great tournament held outside Paris in 1389, the ladies encouraged their

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[30] The development of the story of Arthur and Guinevere illustrates fictionally the potential degradation suffered by the feudal lord when he came into conflict with courtly love. In the Celtic sources of the story, Guinevere is rescued from her abductor by Arthur himself. In the hands of the courtly writers, Arthur recedes to the background as Lancelot becomes the lover and heroic rescuer; Arthur is sometimes blamed for having permitted the abduction to take place. His degradation is complete in the thirteenth-century romance of Yder, in which he appears as a petty, jealous husband and an ungracious king.

knights to valour by presenting them with tokens to wear, dressing them in their armour, leading them out onto the field, and actually judging the tournament, awarding the winner with a crown. [31] A century later the degradation was complete: in the time of Richard II of England, a joust was held at Smithfield in 1465, at which sixty noble ladies walked onto the field leading their knights by silver chains. Each knight wore the 'gentle armour' of his lady's shift. [32]

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[31] Thomas Wright, Womankind in All Ages of Western Europe (London, 1869), pp. 162-165.

[32] E. Lynn Linton, "The Women of Chivalry," Fortnightly Review, XLVIII (1887), 568, 572.

C) THE COURTLY LADY AGAINST THE CHURCH

The conflict between the courtly lady and the Church was as strong as her struggle against the feudal lord. Amor is literally the reverse of Roma, and the heretical doctrine of courtly love was the antithesis of everything taught by the medieval Christian Church. From a sinful passion, courtly doctrine transformed love into the source of all virtue. While the Church declared that adulterous love (or even passionate love in marriage) could not in any way be good since it was forbidden, the defenders of courtly love asked how it could be evil if it were the source of all earthly good. Far from being an evil passion that should be avoided, the new doctrine declared that love was an ennobling power, a duty, and an inescapable fate laid upon all suitable men and women:

> those who stay away from the palace of Love live for themselves alone, and no one gets any profit from their lives; as they have no desire to be of any use, they are looked upon as dead to the world, and their reputation is in no wise worth speaking of, but ought by all means to be buried under the weight of silence. [33]

The difference between courtly love and the Church has been well summarized by G.G. Coulton, when he said that the troubadour stood a whole horizon apart from the preacher, so that women found themselves perpetually oscillating between a pit and a pedestal. [34] Far from seeing his lady as the Devil's instrument, the courtly lover regarded her as the source of all his virtue and happiness and almost as a divine being. She was perfect, of that there is no doubt, for the tenets of courtly love depend logically

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[33] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. John Jay Parry (New York, 1941), pp. 108-109.

[34] Coulton, p. 622.

on the perfection of the lady. The lover worshipped her as if she were a goddess or a saint, adoring her, and praying to her for mercy and the forgiveness of sins. The Christian concept of divine grace became strangely perverted in the new idea of the favour bestowed upon the lover, by the courtly lady and the god of Love, as a reward for devoted service. [35]

Lancelot, the perfect courtly lover, behaved like a worshipper at his tryst with Guinevere, whom he adored and before whom he knelt, holding her more dear than the relic of any saint. At parting, he suffered a martyr's agony, and as he left her room he bowed and acted precisely as if he were before a shrine. When he found an ivory comb belonging to Guinevere, with some golden hair still in it, he swooned, and then adored it as a religious relic. [36]

Certain women who were fallen creatures in the eyes of the Church were raised to sainthood and martyrdom in the new order, as, for example, in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, a legendary of Cupid's saints. The courtly lady even rivalled the position of the Virgin Mary herself: Alceste, the Queen of Love in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, became a mediator by analogy with the Virgin, as she interceded for the

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35 See Alexander J. Denomy, "Jois among the Early Troubadours: its Meaning and Possible Source, "Medieval Studies, XIII (1951), 177-217; and Eugene E. Slaughter, "Love and Grace in Chaucer's Troilus," Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry (Nashville, 1955), pp. 61-76.

36 Chretien de Troyes, "Lancelot," Arthurian Romances, ed. W. Wistar Comfort (London, 1951), pp. 288-289.

For an exposition of this aspect of courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde, see Arthur E. Hutson, "Troilus' Confession," MLN, LXIX (1954), 468-470. Troilus' words are compared to the Confiteor and the Act of Contrition used in the Church.

poet in return for his devotion to her. [37] Chaucer was again well within the established tradition of courtly love when he wrote of Criseyde:

> So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
> That lik a thing immortal semed she,
> As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
> That down were sent in scornynge of nature. [38]

Courtly love replaced the sacrament of marriage (and the feudal act of homage) with a ceremony in which the courtly lady accepted her suitor as her lover; curiously enough, a priest sometimes officiated at this ceremony. [39] In the presence of the priest, the lady gave her lover a kiss and a ring as he knelt before her; they exchanged vows, and an alliance was made that could be dissolved only by death:

> "What that I mene, O swete herte deere?"
> Quod Troilus, "O goodly, fresshe free,
> That with the stremes of youre eyen cleere
> Ye wolde somtyme frendly on me see,
> And thanne agreen that I may ben he,
> Withouten braunche of vice on any wise,
> In trouthe alwey to don yow my servise,
>
> "As to my lady right and chief resort,
> With al my wit and al my diligence;
> And I to han, right as yow list, comfort,
> Under yowre yerde, egal to myn offence,
> As deth, if that I breke youre defence;
> And that ye deigne me so muche honoure,
> Me to comanden aught in any houre;
>
> "And I to ben youre verray, humble, trewe,
> Secret, and in my paynes pacient,
> And evere mo desiren fresshly newe
> To serve, and ben ay ylike diligent,
> And with good herte al holly youre talent
> Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte, --
> Lo, this mene I, myn owen swete herte."

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[37] Dudley D. Griffith, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women," Manly Anniversary Studies (Chicago, 1923), p. 36.

[38] Troilus and Criseyde I. 102-105. The text is that of F.N. Robinson's edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1933). Subsequent references will be to this edition.

[39] Lucka, pp. 155-156.

. . . . . .

With that she gan hire eyen on hym caste
Ful esily and ful debonairly,
Avysyng hire, and hied nought to fast
With nevere a word, but seyde hym softely,
"Myn honour sauf, I wol wel trewely,
And in swich forme as he gan now devyse,
Receyven hym fully to my servyse,

"Bysechyng hym, for Goddes love, that he
Wolde, in honour of trouthe and gentilesse,
As I wel mene, eke menen wel to me,
And myn honour with wit and bisynesse
Ay kepe; and if I may don hym gladnesse
From hennesforth, iwys, I nyl nought feyne.
Now beth al hool, no lenger ye ne pleyne.

"But natheles, this warne I yow," quod she,
"A kynges sone although ye be, ywys,
Ye shal namore han sovereignete
Of me in love, than right in that cas is;
N'y nyl forbere, if that ye don amys,
To wratthe yow; and whil that ye me serve,
Chericen yow right after ye disserve.

"And shortly, deere herte and al my knyght,
Beth glad, and draweth yow to lustinesse,
And I shal trewely, with al my myght,
Youre bittre tornen al into swetenesse;
If I be she that may yow do gladnesse,
For every wo ye shal recovere a blisse,"
And hym in armes took, and gan hym kisse. (III. 127-147, 155-182.)

The courtly lover, in real life, did not cease to believe in the truths of the Church. But because courtly love provided him with a Paradise in this world, the young lover was willing to condemn himself to the torments of Hell in the next. "In Paradise what have I to do?" asks Aucassin, for example:

I care not to enter, but only to have Nicolette, my very sweet friend, whom I love so dearly well. For into Paradise go none but such people as I will tell you of. There go those aged priests, and those old cripples, and the maimed, who all day long and all night cough before the altars, and in the crypts beneath the churches; those who go in worn old mantles and old tattered habits; who are naked, and bare-foot, and full of sores; who are dying of hunger and of thirst, of cold and of wretchedness. Such as these enter into Paradise, and with them have I

nought to do. But to Heil will I go. For to Hell go the fair clerks and the fair knights who are slain in the tourney and the great wars, and the stout archer and the loyal man. With them will I go. And there go the fair and courteous ladies, who have friends, two or three, together with their wedded lords. And there pass the gold and the silver, the ermine and all rich furs, harpers and minstrels, and the happy of the world. [40]

Courtly love threatened, in effect, to become a rival religion. Its spirit and vocabulary were borrowed from the Catholic Church. It instituted the worship of the god of Love (who appeared indiscriminately in feminine form as well as masculine) and raised the status of the courtly lady herself to divinity. In the service of the new religion of love, a whole literature was created: new commandments were written (by Andreas Capellanus, for example), religious services were parodied as masses of Venus, and the love-vision was created in imitation of the apocalyptic writings of the Church. The tradition was elaborately developed and continued well into the fourteenth century, when Gower wrote his Confessio Amantis. [41]

The courtly lady issued a challenge that the Church could not ignore. From the beginning of the twelfth century, the Church attempted to lead the cult of the idealized woman back into orthodoxy, by instituting

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[40] Ernest Rhys, ed., Aucassin and Nicolette and other Medieval Romances and Legends, trans. Eugene Mason (London, 1928), p. 6.

[41] Described by Nevill Coghill as "a collection strung together, not to say ham-strung, by the single preposterous theme of Courtly Passion jacketed in the Seven Deadly Sins, each tale an example of some sin or sub-sin, as if Cupid had borrowed Christianity to sermonize his incompatible cult."
The Poet Chaucer (London, 1950), pp. 114-115.

the worship of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven.[42] The feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady was established in 1140. As courtly knights fought in the service of their lady, so, under the auspices of the Church, men were encouraged to join monastic orders to become 'Knights of Mary'. Strange tales were written, such as that "Of the Knight who prayed whilst Our Lady turneyed in his stead." [43] Just as courtly writers had borrowed simile and metaphor from the Church, writers of hymns to the Virgin used the language of erotic poetry, for example, in the hymn beginning "Ave Maria, J'aim tant," and in the poem to the Virgin with the refrain "Quia amore langueo." A peculiar feminism and a mixture of divine and earthly love invaded the precincts of the Church:

> Many commentaries on the Song of Songs were written for the nuns of the earliest convents for women, from the Abbey of Fontevrault -- so near the home of the first troubadour, Count William of Poitiers -- to as far as the Paraclete of Heloise. This epithalamium mysticism is to be found in Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh of Saint Victor, and Abelard himself.
>
> Héloise and Abelard first experienced themselves and then described abundantly in courtly poems and in letters the first great novel of passion-love in our history.
>
> Geoffrey Rudel died in the arms of the Countess of Tripoli, the 'faraway princess' whom he had loved without ever having seen. And Joachim of Floris predicted the coming incarnation of the Holy Ghost in a woman. [44]

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[42] Denis de Rougemont, Passion and Society, trans. Montgomery Belgion (London, 1956), p. 111.

[43] Aucassin and Nicolette, pp. 195-197

[44] De Rougemont, p. 110.

This mixture of sacred and profane love brings to mind Chaucer's Prioress. For a comment on the many resemblances between the courtly lady and the Prioress, see A.C. Gawley, "A Note on Chaucer's Prioress and Criseyde," MLR, XLIII (1948), 74-77; and R.T. Davies, "Chaucer's Madame Eglantine," MLN, LXVII (1952), 400-402.

In the long run, the Church defeated the challenge of the courtly lady by the simple expedient of assimilation: the courtly lady was led back into the fold. After the terrible Albigensian Crusade in the south of France (1208-1213) had virtually eradicated the sophisticated and heretical civilisation which had given birth to courtly love a century earlier, poetry was forced by the Church to abandon all heresies and immoralities. [45] Courtly love hastily became 'pure'. Even the great Arthurian legends, devoted from the first to thoroughly worldly ideals and profane passion, ended as the glorification of chastity: "Lancelot and Guinevere part in penitent anguish to the solitary gloom of their separate convents, while, in the splendour of perfect achievement, irradiated by the glory of the Holy Grail, emerges the figure of the sinless knight." [46] The exaltation of woman continued safely within the framework of orthodoxy with Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, and the other poets of the dolce stil nuovo. The culmination of the process came with Dante's Vita Nuova, in which courtly love became mystical and idealised to the highest degree, and the poet was led by Beatrice to a divine, not an earthly, Paradise.

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[45] The Albigensian Crusaders delivered a symbolic insult to the courtly lady when, during the general slaughter at Lavaur, the chatelaine was thrown into an empty well and stoned to death.

It is satisfying to read that at the gates of Toulouse womanhood returned a suitable answer, when an unidentified woman hurled a stone from the besieged ramparts and killed Simon de Montfort, the notorious leader of the Crusade.

[46] Lewis Freeman Mott, The System of Courtly Love Studied as an Introduction to the Vita Nuova of Dante (Boston, 1896), p. 108.

CHAPTER THREE

COURTLY LOVE

Critical comment on courtly love has not had a very long history. The French scholar Gaston Paris was the first critic to give this doctrine of love the name amour courtois or courtly love. Writing in 1883 on the Lancelot romances, Paris defined the principal characteristics of courtly love, and he described it as "un amour raffiné, savant, intimement lié à la courtoisie et à la prouesse, et donnant à la femme, en tant que maîtresse, une importance qu'elle n'avait pas eue jusque-là." [1] Since the end of the nineteenth century, many literary critics have attempted to define the nature of courtly love. Along with natural variations in emphasis and vocabulary, there are few serious inconsistencies in descriptions of the code.

It is extremely important, in any definition of courtly love, to remember that the doctrine applies only to the aristocracy: it is "courtly" because it is associated with the virtues of courtoisie and with courtly society, in particular with the aristocracy in the chateaux of twelfth-century southern France. Courtly love did not affect the social customs of the middle and lower classes, and elements of courtly love did not appear in the literature of the bourgeoisie for some two hundred years after its aristocratic origin.

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[1] Gaston Paris, "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II," Romania, XII (1883), 519, 534.

Courtly writers make it abundantly clear that "gentilesse" is necessary to a courtly lover. Andreas Capellanus, for example, advocates, at great length, an attitude of extreme humility and respect for womanhood; yet the reader is abruptly reminded of the social limitations of this respect when Andreas' code allows a knight to rape a peasant girl, if he feels so inclined, without wasting any prefatory words in courtly dialogue. Andreas would reason that women of this class cannot possibly feel the emotion of love. Although he acknowledges in theory that it is virtue rather than noble birth which fits a person for love, he obviously expects that virtue to appear only in those of noble birth. This attitude toward the lower classes endured in literature for many years:

> "Now fy, cherl!" quod the gentil tercelet,
> Out of the donghil cam that word ful right!
> Thou canst nat seen which thyng is wel beset!
> Thou farst by love as oules don by lyght:
> The day hem blent, ful wel they se by nyght.
> Thy kynde is of so low a wrechednesse
> That what love is, thow canst nat seen ne gesse." [2]

The "lusty bacheler" in the Wife of Bath's Tale, for example, raped a maiden who was not "gentil." The knight was protected from the law of the land by the "queene and othere ladyes mo," who, as courtly ladies, saw no offense to the code of love in his action. Taking him under the jurisdiction of her own court of ladies, the queen set the knight a riddle, "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren," to see whether he really

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[2] Parliament of Fowls, 596-602. The text is that of F.N. Robinson's edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1933). Subsequent references will be to this edition.

understood the basic principle of courtly love, that is, the sovereignty of the lady.[3] It has been suggested that the rigid class distinction of courtly love may partially have caused Chaucer's ultimate rejection of the code.[4]

The characters in the garden of the Roman de la Rose also illustrate the necessary social attributes of courtly love. Ydelnesse is the gate-keeper, Myrthe is the lord of the garden, and in his retinue are Gladnesse, Curtesie, Beaute, Richesse, Largesse, Fraunchise, and Youthe. The deterrents to courtly love, engraved on the outer wall of the garden, include social misfortunes such as Poverte and Vilanye (the attributes of a "vilein" as opposed to those of a courteous "gentil").

Elde is also excluded from the garden, since certain qualities of "yonge, fresshe folkes" -- a lively, gay disposition that manifested itself in the social gatherings of courtly society -- were regarded as essential to courtly love.[5] The Dreamer of the Roman de la Rose is

> twenty yer of age,
> Whan that Love taketh his cariage
> Of yonge folk. (Romaunt of the Rose, 21-23)

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[3] The dilemma posed by the loathly lady is a logical sequence of the riddle: it results in the knight asking the loathly lady to make the choice, admitting practically her sovereignty over him.
Bernard F. Huppé, "Rape and Woman's Sovereignty in the Wife of Bath's Tale," MLN, LXIII (1948), 378-381.

[4] Macdonald Emslie, "Codes of Love and Class Distinctions," Essays in Criticism, V (1955), 1-17.

[5] Alexander J. Denomy, "Jovens: the Notion of Youth among the Troubadours, its Meaning and Source," Medieval Studies, XI (1949), 1-22.
Andreas Capellanus lists old age (together with blindness and an excess of physical passion) as one of the three disqualifications for courtly love.

Youthe herself was "not yit twelve yeer of age," and her "lemman" was "right of sich an age / As Youthe his leef" (1283, 1301-1302). In the romance of Le Petit Jean de Saintré, the hero of sixteen is reproved by the Dame des Belles Cousines for not yet having undertaken the erotic duties of a knight. Troilus himself, it is thought, was not yet seventeen when he first saw Criseyde at the feast of the Palladium.[6]

The historical development of the code took place gradually as characteristic actions and emotions were imitated from poem to poem. Eventually fixed conventions were evolved; courtly love became an art or science, having strict and specific rules of conduct as well as a general moral code. The courtly lover had to obey the rules of the code in every detail (it was the lady's duty to see that he did so), and the more closely he followed the rules the sooner he was likely to prove worthy of his lady's love. Judging from Guinevere's treatment of Lancelot, nothing less than perfection in the lover's behaviour would do. The code carried the lover step by step through the four stages of love,[6a] as they were defined by the Provençal troubadours:

(1) fegnedor, or love aspirant, a period of uncertainty in which the lover worshipped the lady in silence and from a distance;

(2) precador, or love suppliant, a period of trial in which the lover declared his love to the lady;

(3) entendedor, or love recognized, in which the lover behaved as the lady's accepted suitor;

(4) drut, or love accepted, in which the knight was the lady's lover.

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6 John M. Steadman, "The Age of Troilus," MLN, LXXII (1957), 89-90.

6a See, for example, the courtship of the Man in Black in the Book of the Duchess.

The transition from the third to the fourth stage was marked by the ceremony discussed in the first chapter.[6b] The obligations of the fourth stage, in which the knight was the lady's courtly lover (excellently summarized by Chaucer in the vows exchanged by Troilus and Criseyde), are those referred to in most critical comment on courtly love. It is important that drut does not imply any physical relationship other than the single kiss exchanged at the ceremony; it does not mean that the knight automatically became the lady's lover in the modern sense of the word. The lady might grant her physical love to the knight in the course of time, but the consummation of adultery depended entirely on the lady's generosity or pity. It was never a foregone conclusion, and its presence or absence had no essential effect on love itself.

The question of how many courtly love affairs actually were chaste is a moot point. The condition of secrecy had to be fulfilled, and the lack of privacy, as one obstacle, made the physical consummation of love difficult or impossible in many cases. Iseult, for example, customarily slept with Mark in the royal chamber at Tintagel, in the presence of several of the king's men, including Tristan, Perinis, and the dwarf Frocin. When Lancelot and Guinevere were together in King Bademagu's castle, Kay the seneschal was asleep in the same room.[7]

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[7] Joseph Bédier, ed., The Romance of Tristan and Iseult (New York, 1956), pp. 73-75.
Chrétien de Troyes, "Lancelot," Arthurian Romances, ed. W. Wistar Comfort (London, 1951), pp. 327-329.

[6b] See above, pp. 39-40.

The relations between medieval literature and life are unusually hard to determine. Many critics, especially those who believe that the troubadours were Cathars, think that the first troubadours of southern France were generally chaste in their relationship with the courtly lady to whom they addressed their poems, but that the northern trouvères and later successors to the courtly tradition were not.[8] The troubadours traditionally complain of their lady's coldness: lack of mercy or pity is condemned by them just as much as yielding too easily. But the important thing is that the lady's favour, like divine grace, is bestowed through her unmotivated charity and cannot be demanded as a "right."

To emphasize that courtly love does not necessarily imply a physical relationship is not, of course, to deny that courtly love was basically sensual in its motivation. Its sensuality cannot be [illegible]ted. Persons who are old, blind (unable to appreciate physical beauty), or in any way unfit for physical love, are excluded by Andreas Capellanus from participating in courtly love. "Love is a certain inborn suffering," writes Andreas, "derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace."[9] From its origins courtly love

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[8] See Sidney Painter, French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Mediaeval France (Baltimore, 1940), pp. 114-117; Denis de Rougemont, Passion and Society, trans. Montgomery Belgion (London, 1956), pp. 75-76, 112-120.

[9] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John J. Parry (New York, 1941), p. 28.

was decidedly carnal, glorifying passionate physical love in opposition to the dogma of the Church; it was a glorification of earthly, sensual love or cupiditas, rather than an imitation of heavenly caritas.

In spite of this sensuality, the important element in amour courtois is not physical fulfillment: Andreas lists an excess of physical passion as the third disqualification for courtly love, after old age and blindness. His Rule XXIX states: "A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love." The element that is stressed in courtly love is the ceaseless desire, the yearning that is unappeased and unappeasable. In the fin' amors of the troubadours (following Arabic tradition), physical desire was aroused by every possible means, but it was never fulfilled. "False" love, amars, was faisé because it was sensual (for "pure" love was as sensual as it could possibly be): amars was false because it demanded fulfillment of sensual desire, and because its followers often had more than one lover.[10] In summary, the whole point of "pure" or courtly love is that sensuality was freely admitted to exist, but the rigid restrictions of the code of courtly love attempted to restrain and to sublimate this sensuality.

The code of courtly love is an elaborate one, defining in detail the lover's symptoms, manners and moral attitudes; but underlying the whole as a whole are four simple basic principles: adultery, secrecy, humility, and courtesy (or ennoblement). A fifth characteristic, irrelevant to this paper, is the allegory by which courtly love was described in literature.

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10 See Alexander J. Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," Medieval Studies, VI (1944), 175-260;
Denomy, "Fin' Amors: the Pure Love of the Troubadours, its Amerality and Possible Source," Medieval Studies, VII (1945), 139-207;
Theodore Silverstein, "Andreas, Plato, and the Arabs: Remarks on Some Recent Accounts of Courtly Love," MP, XLVII (1949), 117-126.

A) ADULTERY

The most important single characteristic of courtly love is that it is extra-marital or adulterous. The very first of the thirty-one rules laid down by Andreas Capellanus is that "Marriage is no excuse for not loving," that is, the courtly lady has no excuse for not having a lover as well as a husband.[11] The courtly lady is, in fact, almost inevitably married. The courtly lover addresses himself to another man's wife, hardly ever to an unmarried girl, for in the twelfth century the life of a maiden was spent largely in the seclusion of her parents' home and it was only after marriage that she enjoyed liberty.

No thought of marriage enters the relationship between the courtly lover and his lady; if, however, they do marry one another, according to courtly theory their love will immediately disappear. For love can never exist between a man and his wife. "We declare and we hold as firmly established," decreed Marie de Champagne, in her most famous judgement in the court of love at Poitiers, "that love cannot exert its powers between two people who are married to each other." [12] If a courtly lady was unmarried when she accepted her lover, marriage to another man was not a valid reason for abandoning her lover, as

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[11] Andreas, p. 184.

[12] Andreas, pp. 106-107.

Ermengarde of Narbonne made clear by one of her judgements:

> A certain lady had a proper enough lover, but was afterward, through no fault of her own, married to an honorable man, and she avoided her love and denied him his usual solaces. But Lady Ermengarde of Narbonne demonstrated the lady's bad character in these words: 'The later contracting of a marital union does not properly exclude an early love except in cases where the woman gives up love entirely and is determined by no means to love any more.' [13]

And any woman who was determined to give up love entirely was certainly no true courtly lady. "No woman," said Marie de Champagne, "even if she is married, can be crowned with the reward of the King of Love unless she is seen to be enlisted in the service of Love himself outside the bonds of wedlock." [14]

The courtly writers gave three reasons for the dissociation of love and marriage. The first reason is that the courtly lady must always be superior to her lover, and in marriage the wife is inevitably in the inferior position. "As a wife of another, above all as the wife of a great lord, she may be queen of beauty and of love," writes C.S. Lewis; "but as your own wife, for whom you have bargained with her father, she sinks at once from lady into mere woman. How can a woman, whose duty is to obey you, be the midons whose grace is the goal of all striving and whose displeasure is the restraining influence upon all uncourtly vices?" [15]

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[13] Andreas, p. 171.

[14] Andreas, pp. 106-107.

[15] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1953), pp. 36-37.

The second reason (closely related to the first) is that the lady must be in the position where she can voluntarily withhold or grant her love to the knight, giving it only as a free and gracious reward for his devotion. "For lovers give each other everything freely, under no compulsion of necessity," continues Marie's well-known judgement, "but married people are in duty bound to give in to each other's desires and deny themselves to each other in nothing." [16]

In the third place, courtly writers argue that love has to be adulterous because of its own nature. The very spirit of courtly love, they say, makes it intrinsically impossible for love to exist between man and wife. Just as, according to Cicero, kinship exists without the benevolence which is necessary to friendship, so marital affection exists, in the eyes of the courtly writers, without the essential qualities which are necessary for love.[17]

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[16] Andreas, p. 107.

[17] Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," pp. 185-187.

The first of these essential qualities is furtiveness, as Andreas Capellanus explains:

> Everybody knows that love can have no place between husband and wife. They may be bound to each other by a great and immoderate affection, but their feeling cannot take the place of love, because it cannot fit under the true definition of love. For what is love but an inordinate desire to receive passionately a furtive and hidden embrace? But what embrace between husband and wife can be furtive, I ask you, since they may be said to belong to each other and may satisfy all of each other's desires without fear that anybody will object? [19]

Furtiveness depends upon the conditions of secrecy necessarily imposed by adultery. When the relationship is no longer adulterous, this quality of furtiveness disappears, and the attractions of the love affair wane. Bernart de Ventadorn, for example, goes so far as to say that love which becomes publicly known is no longer love at all:

> c'amors, pois om per tot s'en vana,
> non es amors, mas es ufana,
> et es enois, vilani' e fondatz,
> qui no gara cui deu esser privatz.[20]

Andreas himself expresses the same idea: "The man who wants to keep his love affair for a long time untroubled should above all things be careful not to let it be known to any outsider, but should keep it hidden from everybody; because when a number of people begin to get wind of such an affair, it ceases to develop naturally and even loses what progress it has already made." [21]

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19 Andreas, p. 100

20 Quoted by Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love (Louisiana, 1940), p. 18.

21 Andreas, p. 151.

The argument that the second quality, jealousy, was an integral part of love was inherited by the courtly writers from the Arabic lyric poets. "He who is not jealous cannot love," writes Andreas Capellanus; "a man in love is always apprehensive." "Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love;" "jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved," and "a slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved." [22] What Andreas means by "real" jealousy is not the specific suspicion of infidelity, but a "pure" kind of jealousy, defined by Alexander Denomy as "a vehemence in desire and devotion of a truly ardent lover concerning his beloved, a fear that his love be not requited and that she be diverted from him, a solicitude and anxiety for her well-being to the exclusion of everything and everyone else." [23]

The lover's jealousy, his agonies of suspense and uncertainty during the period of trial, his constant fear of failing to be worthy of his lady and of losing her love, none of these can be reconciled with the secure and publicly acknowledged possession of marriage. When a husband's jealousy or fear is portrayed in courtly literature, often as that of an old husband for a young wife, it is described only to be mercilessly ridiculed (as in the figure of Sir Archambaut in the romance of Flamenca). The reasoning of the courtly writers and the exponents of the Church's dogma is antithetical, but it is in agreement on this one point: a husband was not supposed to act like a lover toward his own wife.

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[22] Andreas, Rules II, XX, XXI, XXII and XXVIII, pp. 184-186.

[23] Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," p. 186.

B) SECRECY

Quite apart from the effects of furtiveness on the emotions of the lovers, there was a very good reason for Andreas' observation that "when made public love rarely endures."[24] Since courtly love was adulterous and illegitimate in the eyes of the world, it had to be kept secret; for if publicly revealed, the forces of society and the Church were quick to bring retribution on the lovers, and the courtly lady was treated as harshly as her lover.

King Mark exiled Tristan from Tintagel and imprisoned Iseult the Fair in the castle tower, upon mere suspicion of their love. When a cunning trap furnished apparent proof of their adultery, Mark ordered both lovers to be burned alive without a trial or any opportunity to protest innocence. The fire was already alight when Tristan managed to escape, but Iseult remained to face her punishment:

> And though blood came at the cord's-knots, so tightly had the traitors bound her, yet still she said, smiling:
> "Did I weep for that when God has loosed my friend I should be little worth."
> When the news came to the King that Tristan had leapt that leap and was lost he paled with anger, and bade his men bring forth Iseult.
> They dragged her from the room, and she came before the crowd, held by her delicate hands, from which blood dropped, and the crowd called:
> Have pity on her -- the loyal Queen and honoured! Surely they that gave her up brought mourning on us all -- our curses on them!"
> But the King's men dragged her to the thorn faggot as it blazed.[25]

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[24] Andreas, Rule XIII, p. 185.

[25] Tristan and Iseult, pp. 84-85.
After Lancelot and Guinevere's secret meeting, Guinevere is accused of committing adultery with Kay the seneschal; but she is saved from a fate such as Iseult's. A trial is held at which Lancelot (as the queen's champion against Meleagant, the accuser) first swears on holy relics, truthfully of course, that Guinevere has had nothing to do with Kay, and then defeats Meleagant in the trial by combat, thus proving Guinevere's innocence. Chrétien, "Lancelot," pp. 330-333.

Dinas, lord of Lidan, knelt before the King and begged for mercy and justice (that is, a trial) on Iseult's behalf, but Mark refused to change his decision to burn Iseult. Since there was nothing else he could do, Dinas announced that he was leaving the King's service, and "Iseult smiled sadly at him" as he left. Iseult was finally rescued by Tristan and taken by him to the Wood of Morois; but before she is rescued, the punishment she suffers for behaving as a courtly lady is worth quoting at length:

> Iseult stood up before the flame, and the crowd cried its anger and cursed the traitors and the King. None could see her without pity, unless he had a felon's heart: she was so tightly bound. The tears ran down her face and fell upon her grey gown where ran a little thread of gold, and a thread of gold was twined into her hair.
>
> Just then there had come up a hundred lepers, deformed men with pitted and livid faces, limping on crutches to the clatter of hand-rattles. They crowded to the stake, and under their swollen eyelids, their blood-shot eyes gleamed at the sight. Yvain, the ugliest of them all, cried to the King in a piercing voice:
>
> "O King, you would burn this woman in that flame, and it is sound justice, but too swift, for very soon the fire will fall, and her ashes will very soon be scattered by the high wind and her agony be done. Would you have me show you a worse punishment, by which she would live, but in great shame and ever desiring death? Would you, King?"
>
> "Yes, life for her then, but in great shame and worse than death — I could love him who showed me such a torture."
>
> "Sire, in a few words here is my thought. See, I have a hundred comrades here. Give Iseult to us, so that we may have her in common. Our sickness fans our desires. Give her to your lepers: never will a lady have come to a worse end. See, our rags stick to our sores that ooze. She who at your side delighted in rich stuffs trimmed with fur, in jewels, in halls decked with marble, she who enjoyed fine wines, marks of esteem and merriments, when she beholds the court of your lepers, when she has to enter our hovels and lie with us, then Iseult the Fair, the Beautiful, will recognize her sin and will regret this black-thorn fire."
>
> And as the King heard them, he stood a long time without moving; then he ran to the Queen and seized her by the hand, and she cried:
>
> "Burn me! rather burn me! "
>
> But the King gave her up, and Yvain took her, and the hundred lepers pressed around. At the sound of their cries and yelpings, all hearts melted for pity. But Yvain had an evil gladness, and as he went he dragged her out of the borough bounds, with his hideous company.[26]

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26 Tristan and Iseult, pp. 86-87.

Terrible retributions such as these easily explain the emphasis laid on secrecy. The courtly lady's reputation had to be maintained at any cost, and her "honour" was the lover's primary concern. When the lover in the Chatelaine de Vergi, for example, decided that to be banished by his lord as a traitor in disgrace (and to be separated from the chatelaine) was too high a price to pay, he divulged the secret. By a trick, the chatelaine was led to think that her lover had been unfaithful, she died at once of a broken heart, and the lover killed himself.[27] The necessity for secrecy is similarly the moral in the romances of the Chatelain de Coucy, Escoufle, Galerent, Guillaume de Dole, Violette (or Gerard de Nevers) and Yder.[28] In Middle English literature, the revenge of the betrayed husband is described in the ballad of Sir Aldinger, the romances of The Earl of Tolous and Sir Triamour, and in the romance of The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguel.[29]

Fiction was apparently based on fact. Retribution by the husband could be as severe in real life in twelfth-century France as it was in the world of romance. The troubadour Peire Vidal, for example, had his tongue cut off merely for addressing his songs to the wife of

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[27] Alice Kemp-Welch, ed., The Chatelaine of Vergi (London, 1907).

[28] See the summaries of these romances in Sarah F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), pp. 122-123, 128, 131-133, 140-141.

[29] William G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1913), p. 7.

a powerful lord. In 1175, a year after Eleanor of Aquitaine's court at Poitiers had been forcibly dispersed, a vassal of Count Philip of Flanders was beaten half-dead and then suspended head downward in a sewer, for sighing Poitiers-fashion in the presence of his countess, Isabelle de Vermandois, one of the ladies of Eleanor's court.[30] The troubadour Guillem de Cabestaing was ambushed and killed by his lady's husband, Count Raimond de Rousillon; his heart was roasted and served to the countess, who was imprisoned in the tower. After the lady had eaten, the count showed her Guillem's head and asked whether she had enjoyed her meal, whereupon she replied, "So much that no other food shall ever pass my lips," and leapt out of the tower window to her death.

It was therefore a matter of necessary prudence that two of the rules of the courtly code were: "thou shalt not have many who know of thy love affair," and "thou shalt not be a revealer of love affairs."[31] In order to keep the secret from the lady's husband and from general slanderers and tale-bearers, the lover always had to be careful not to pay unusual attentions to his lady in public. Wykked-Tunge was an ever-watchful enemy of love, and Jelousie was easily aroused, as the Roman de la Rose illustrated. In the Chatelain de Coucy, a mere glance and a sigh betrayed the lover's secret to the watchful eyes of a jealous rival. The courtly lady herself had to be no less careful of her behaviour in public. When

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[30] Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1957), p. 232.

[31] Andreas, Rules VI and X, pp. 81-82.

Lancelot returned to Arthur's court after his imprisonment, for example, Guinevere restrained her happiness because "it may be that the King or some of the others who are there, and who are watching what takes place, would have taken the whole situation in, if, while all were looking on, she had followed the dictates of her heart." [32] "Myn honour sauf" was the preliminary condition which every courtly lady, including Criseyde, attached to the granting of her love.

Meetings between lovers were often arranged by trusted go-betweens, such as Deus-Parler in the second part of the Roman de la Rose and Pandarus in Troilus and Criseyde. It is obvious that such a character would have had no important place in the literature of courtly love if the need for secrecy and for guarding the lady's reputation had not played such a vital part in the convention.

It naturally follows, after all this emphasis on secrecy, that the most shameful crime a lover could commit was to be an "avauntour," boasting of his own success in love, and thereby damaging his lady's "honour." One of the cases tried before the court at Poitiers, for example, in which the offender was severely punished, was that of a knight who "shamefully divulged the intimacies and secrets of his love." [33] It is noteworthy that even in the court at Poitiers, where everyone was presumably "serving in the camp of Love," the conditions of secrecy were maintained: cases in the court of love were pleaded anonymously by a third party who never revealed the identity of the lovers.

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32 "Lancelot," p. 356.

33 Andreas, Decision XVIII, p. 175.

C) HUMILITY

Given the fact of adultery and the need for secrecy, the third principle of courtly love follows quite naturally. It is the spirit of abject humility in which the courtly lover regarded his relationship with his lady. Gaston Paris explains that the lady's superiority was granted to her by the lover because of the sacrifice she made and the great risk she took in voluntarily giving herself to him.[34] For this reason, regardless of his rank, the courtly lover was always in an inferior position to his lady. Although he was expected to be worthy of his lady's love, his modesty kept him from thinking himself to be so. According to the god of Love's commandments, humility was the lover's greatest virtue, as pride was his worst fault:

> Loke fro pride thou kepe thee wel;
> For thou maist bothe perceyve and fel
> That pride is bothe foly and synne,
> And he that pride hath hym withynne
> Ne may his herte in no wise
> Meken ne souplen to servyse.
> For pride is founde in every part
> Contrarie unto loves art. (Romaunt of the Rose, 2239-2246)

The lover's humility affected him, in his relations with his lady, with a timidity that nothing could relieve. In her presence he trembled and fainted, although in all other encounters he was a knight renowned for his courage. Yvain, for example, behaved like this when

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[34] "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde," p. 518.

he went with the damsel Lunete to see the lady Laudine, whom he had loved only in silence and from a distance.

> They found the lady seated upon a red cushion. I assure you my lord Yvain was terrified upon entering the room, where he found the lady who spoke not a word to him. At this he was still more afraid, being overcome with fear at the thought that he had been betrayed. He stood there to one side so long that the damsel at last spoke up and said: "Five hundred curses upon the head of him who takes into a fair lady's chamber a knight who will not draw near, and who has neither tongue nor sense to introduce himself." Thereupon, taking him by the arm, she thrust him forward. [35]

Cligés behaved similarly, and the contrast was made very clearly between his courage as a knight in battle and his humility as a lover. In order to rescue Fenice, Cligés killed twelve Saxons single-handed; but when they were alone after the encounter, he was afraid to reveal his love to her. Chrétien de Troyes took the opportunity to insert into the story a didactic paragraph on the code of love:

> Why does he wait and hold back who was so bold for her just now, but now in her presence is cowardly? God! whence comes this fear, that he should shrink from a lonely girl, feeble and timid, simple and mild? . . . Whoever would love must needs feel fear, for otherwise he cannot be in love. But let him fear only her whom he loves, and for her sake be brave against all others.[36]

The attitude of a typical courtly lady like Guinevere was naturally the antithesis of humility. The heroine of the twelfth-century French romance Ipomedon was actually called La-fiere, and Dangereuse was the name of Guillaume the Troubadour's lady. Although the courtly lady sincerely loved the knight she accepted as her lover, she never expressed

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[35] "Yvain," p. 205.

[36] "Cligés," pp. 140-141.

spontaneous natural affection. Her reaction to her suiter's courtship was one of aloofness and "daunger." Her coldness was the characteristic most often described by the poets of courtly love.

She possessed, in addition to this rather frigid reserve, the general qualities of "courtesy," for the courtly lady was always very lady-like. She was, according to the courtly code, perfection incarnate. In her manners she was courteously polite and gracious, as befitted her social position, which was often that of a queen. But toward her lover she behaved in a way that was haughty, disdainful, capricious and often apparently unjust. She did so because it was her duty to ensure that he conformed, in every detail, to the behaviour expected of him by the courtly code, and she had to express displeasure at any aberration on his part. Guinevere's apparent cruelty, for example, was intended to refine Lancelot's courage or to exalt his love. The courtly lady made her lover feel that he must continually strive to be worthy of her love, and that he would certainly lose her upon committing the least fault against the code. No matter how strongly she loved him, she had to conceal her own feelings during the period of courtship and not grant him her love too soon; for Andreas decreed that "the easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized." [37] The lady was also restrained by her own sense of modesty ("shame") and by fear for her reputation ("drede"). Only when the suitor had proved himself beyond doubt to be a perfect lover and a courageous knight did the lady's "daunger" withdraw, and her qualities of "fraunchise" (generosity, nobleness) and "pity" express

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[37] Andreas, Rule XIV, p. 185.

themselves in action. "Fraunchise" and "pity" were qualities the courtly lady had to possess, for "Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte."

The humility of the lover toward his lady was largely modelled on the respect which a feudal vassal owed his lord, and, similarly, it was akin to religious worship. Conversely, the courtly lady behaved with the power and authority of a worldly sovereign or a goddess. The idea of the lover's humility was present from the beginning of the historical development of courtly love. It was the most important element in the poetry of the troubadours and was their main contribution to the code, many of them devoting their lives as well as their poetry to the self-effacement of the service of love.

In addition to serving his own lady with absolute humility and devotion, the courtly lover was expected to honour ladies in general. "Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies," decreed Andreas, "thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love." [38] The god of Love instructed the Dreamer:

> And alle wymmen serve and preise,
> And to thy power her honour raise;
> And if that ony myssaiere
> Dispise wymmen, that thou maist here,
> Blame hym, and bidde hym holde hym stille.
> And set thy myght and all thy wille
> Wymmen and ladies for to please,
> And to do thyng that may hem ese,
> That they ever speke good of thee,
> For so thou maist best preised be. (Romaunt of the Rose, 2229-2238.)

The idea of humility and of service to ladies in general was one of the most enduring elements of courtly love; it survived for centuries after courtly love itself was dead, and it became a basic part of the ideal of Chivalry.

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38 Andreas, Rule VII, p. 82.

D) COURTESY

As the lover strove to conform to the code and to become worthy of his lady's love, his character and behaviour became transformed. The ennobling power of love was manifested in him and he achieved all the virtues of courtoisie. Once he submitted himself to the laws of love, his virtues flourished and his vices disappeared. "Now it is the effect of love that a true lover cannot be degraded with any avarice. Love . . . blesses the proud with humility; and the man in love becomes accustomed to performing many services gracefully for everyone," eulogized Andreas. "O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character!" [39]

Perfection was attainable under the code of courtly love, and the lover was expected to achieve nothing less than perfection in the development of his moral character. The troubadours constantly emphasized the amazing power of love in this respect. They regarded love as the source of courtly joie, which was in turn the source of all virtue:

l'amour fait naître dans une âme bien née une exaltation qui s'élève au dessus des sentiments vulgaires et la livre en proie à toutes les inspirations généreuses. C'est cet état d'esprit que les troubadours qualifient de joie et dont ils décrivent les merveilleux effets en d'interminables litanies.[40]

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39 Andreas, p. 31.
For the effect of love's ennobling power on Troilus, see Troilus and Criseyde III. 1716-1806.

40 Alfred Jeanroy, La Poésie Lyrique des Troubadours (Toulouse, 1934), II, 100.
See Alexander Denomy, "Joie among the Early Troubadours: its Meaning and Possible Sources," Medieval Studies, XIII (1951), 177-217.

"He who loves and does not become better indeed has a bad and miserable heart," wrote Bernart de Ventadorn; "I have improved so much that I look upon no man as richer than I am; for I know that I love the most beautiful lady and am loved by her, the most beautiful whom God created in the world, so far as the earth extends:"

Ben a mauvais cor e mendic
qui ama e no•s melhura;
qu'eu sui d'aitan melhuratz
c'ome de me no vei plus ric,
car sai c'am e sui amatz
per la gensor quod anc Deus fei
ni que sia el mon, so crei,
tan can te terra ni dura.[41]

The specific virtues which the lover exemplified were, needless to say, those listed in the code of courtly love. In manner, the lover adopted all the signs and symptoms of love, turning pale in the presence of his lady, suffering from heart palpitations when he suddenly caught sight of her, always thinking of her, and eating and sleeping very little. The virtues he acquired were the general chivalric virtues of generosity, truthfulness and modesty, summed up as the qualities of courtoisie as opposed to the vices of vileinie. He was scrupulously faithful, keeping himself chaste for the sake of the lady he loved, and pursuing love with a sense of modesty and respect. Though he devoted himself to the service of his own lady, he was obedient to the commands of ladies in general. He spoke no falsehood or slander. He respected other lovers, taking care not to reveal their affairs or to disclose the secret of his own.[42]

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[41] Quoted by Kirby, pp. 19, 291-292.

[42] Andreas, twelve commandments, pp. 81-82; thirty-one rules, pp. 184-186.

The lover's knightly valour increased and he performed incredible deeds of courage and strength, accomplishing exacting quests and defeating all other knights in combat. This effect of love has been described by John Wilcox in modern terms as "the partial sublimation of sexual impulses through chivalric activity." The lover, writes Wilcox, "transcends his old records for valor, fair play, generosity, humility and courtesy. His energies are largely devoted to quests. Most of his service to his lady is done at such a distance that his love is largely sublimated." [43]

The principle of ennoblement, the theory that love would turn the lover into a better knight, was the idea that linked courtly love to feudalism in spite of the fundamental antagonism of the two ways of life. The connection between courtly love and courtliness was illustrated everywhere in the literature of courtly love.

Though originally there was a clear distinction between cortezia (courtly love, the virtue and ideal of the courtly lover) and courtoisie (courtliness, the virtue and ideal of the chevalier or knight), the two ideals have become confused.

The confusion arose in the first place from the idea of the ennobling power of love, when the courtly writers said that love would make a knight more fully courtois. Later the idea was applied in the other direction as well, when it was decided that courtoisie or the virtues

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[43] John Wilcox, "Defining Courtly Love," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XII (1929), 323.

of knighthood were a necessary qualification for the prospective courtly lover. Courtoisie became both the result of, and the qualification for, courtly love.[44]

In the first place, since love was the source of all virtue, and all courtly and noble deeds had their origin in love, it followed logically that a perfect knight must be a courtly lover. Since courtoisie was the result of the ennobling power of love, no knight who was not a courtly lover could be truly courtois. Gawain, for example, was inferior to Lancelot as a knight only because he was not a lover. Gawain shirked crossing the sword-bridge, which Lancelot successfully took as the hardest but most direct route to Guinevere, while Gawain even failed in his attempt to cross the less demanding water-bridge. A man needed to love a lady according to the code of courtly love, as Lancelot loved Guinevere, before he could rise to perfection in knightly valour.

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[44] A problem arose like that of the chicken and the egg, or of obtaining a driver's licence some years ago, when one had to own a licence in order to drive, but had to have driven a car a certain number of miles in order to obtain a licence.

As C.S. Lewis puts it: "this solemn amatory ritual is felt to be part and parcel of the courtly life. It is possible only to those who are, in the old sense of the word, polite. It thus becomes, from one point of view the flower, from another the seed, of all those noble usages which distinguish the gentle from the vilein: only the courteous can love, but it is love that makes them courteous." Allegory of Love, p. 2.

On the relationship between cortezia and courtoisie, see Alexander Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 44-63;

Gustave Cohen, "La Courtoisie et l'Amour Courtois," Tableau de la Littérature Française Médievale - Idées et Sensibilitées (Paris, 1950), pp. 31-38.

In the second place, a man had to be courtois before he could aspire to win a lady's love. Curtesye follows the lord of the garden in the Roman de la Rose, while Vilanye is left outside: the virtues of knighthood and of the court were necessary qualifications for a courtly lover. To prove himself worthy of a lady's love, the suitor had to demonstrate that he was courageous and skilful in battle. The necessity for this is shown by the twelfth-century romance of Ipomedon, the beginning of which is summarized by Sarah Barrow as follows:

> Ipomedon, Prince of Apulia, enters the service of La-fiere, Duchess of Calabria, who has vowed to marry none but the bravest knight in the world. No one knows who Ipomedon is, but he soon wins attention by his courtesy and his skill in hunting. But for his indifference to prowess, La-fiere might have loved him at once. She does favor him, and one day at table they exchange glances which result in mutual love. Pretending to rebuke another squire, La-fiere makes it plain to Ipomedon that he should not aspire to love before he has shown his prowess. The hero goes away early the next morning accompanied by Tholomeus, his tutor. Properly equipped, he sets out in search of knightly deeds.[45]

The courtly lady, just as much as the lover, was expected to embody the virtues of courtoisie which could be possessed by a woman. But courtly love could have no ennobling effect on her: she was perfect to begin with, and her character could not be changed by love.

It is for this reason that loyalty to the lover was a quality of such vital importance in the courtly lady: loyalty was the only virtue of hers that was wholly dependent on the condition of being in love, the only addition that love could make to her character. Fidelity to

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[45] Barrow, p. 135.

one person was, of course, demanded from the lover himself by the god of Love:

> "And for thou trewe to love shalt be,
> I wole, and comaunde thee,
> That in oo place thou sette, all hool,
> Thyn herte, withoute halfen dool
> Of trecherie and sikernesse;
> For I lovede nevere doublenesse." (Romaunt of the Rose, 2361-2366)

In the judgements of the courts of love recorded by Andreas, infidelity of the lady seems to have been much more severely censured than infidelity on the part of the lover. The same is true in the poetry of courtly love. "I do not esteem a lady a straw, whoever she may be," wrote the troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, "if she accepts a lover and deserts another for him; she certainly does not act courteously:"

> Ges no pretz un botocays
> una don, qu'aitals sia,
> qu'un prenda et autr'en lays,
> no fai ges cortezia. [46]

There is more behind this difference in emphasis than the traditional double standard of morality upheld by men. Unfaithfulness in the courtly lady was especially reprehensible, because loyalty was the only virtue specifically demanded of her by the love affair. The lover had to struggle to obtain his virtues through a period of trial, and he could sin against the code of courtly love in a hundred different details. Infidelity was the only way in which a true courtly lady could sin against the code, since in all other respects she was, by definition, perfect.

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[46] Cited by Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," p. 56.

This seems to shed a good deal of light on the nature of Criseyde and her crime of "doublenesse." Grant that Criseyde is a courtly lady, and it follows logically that infidelity, because of her very nature, is the only sin she <u>can</u> commit against the code of courtly love.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COURTLY LADY IN LIFE

A) WALLADA THE POETESS

When courtly love is traced back to its origins in eleventh-century Moorish Spain, the remarkable figure of Wallāda stands out as a predecessor of the courtly ladies of twelfth-century France. Wallāda was a contemporary of the poet Ibn Hazm, who lived in Cordova from 994 to 1064, and who codified his ideas on love in The Dove's Neck-Ring. After Wallāda's father, a khalif of Cordova, was poisoned by one of his officers in 1025, she became the central figure in a court of poets and men of letters who wrote in her praise.

Unlike the courtly ladies of France, Wallāda was not married.[1] She was as unusual in physical appearance as in character. Her mother, who was a Christian slave, had endowed her with flaming red hair, a white skin and blue eyes. From her father, the Khalif Muhammad al-Mustakfi, she had inherited a violent temper and a dictatorial manner. Like the courtly ladies of France, Wallāda defied the orthodox religious teaching of her day: she refused to wear a veil, and she showed a complete disregard for the various inhibitions stipulated for women in the Koran. In her relations with men, she foreshadowed the absolute dictatorship of the courtly lady, but not her "daunger."

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[1] Arabic poets did, however, address their love poems to married women. In spite of Ibn Hazm's rule that one should not have a love affair with another man's wife, these addresses are believed to have reflected actual social practice.

Fifteen years after Wallāda's death, Ibn Bassām included her in his Dahīra (1106-1109), an anthology of the biographies of famous "contemporaries." Ibn Bassām described Wallāda like this:

> She was the first woman of her time. Her free manners and disdain of the veil indicated an ardent nature. This was, however, the best manner to show her remarkable inward qualities, the sweetness of her face and of her character. Her house at Cordova was the arena in which poets and prose writers were vying with each other. The literary men were attracted toward the light of the brilliant new moon, as if it were a lighthouse in a dark night. The greatest poets and prose writers were anxious to obtain the sweetness of her intimacy, which it was not difficult to attain.[2]

Wallāda was the source of inspiration for the poetry of Ibn Zaīdun (1003-1071), who loved her passionately, and who was (with Ibn Hazm) one of the two most outstanding poets of the time. Wallāda was herself a poetess as well as a literary patroness. Ibn Bassām recorded that she had two of her own verses embroidered on her gown, the verse on the right side reading:

> I am, by God, fit for high positions,
> And am going my way, with pride!

The left-hand verse read:

> Forsooth, I allow my lover to touch my cheek,
> And bestow my kiss on him who craves it! [3]

It was by sending the poet Ibn Zaīdūn verses, declaring her love, that Wallāda invited him to their first meeting in a beautiful garden. And it was when Ibn Zaidūn made a slight criticism of one of

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[2] Alois R. Nykl, Hispano-Arabic Poetry, and its Relation with the Old Provencal Troubadours (Baltimore, 1946), p. 107.

[3] Ibid.

her verses that Wallāda began to tire of him and to look favourably at a royal vizier, ignoring all Ibn Zaidūn's protests and declarations of undying devotion.

As an unconscious prediction of the relationship between the courtly lady and her humble lover, Aloïs Nykl's comments on this love affair are very revealing:

> Wallāda knew that if she yielded to these appeals, her lover would gain ascendancy over her and she was loth to allow this to happen. She was of the type that needed an intellectually inferior, wealthy man, who would give her a life of secure comfort, together with a feeling of being superior to him . . . . In his youthful inexperience Ibn Zaidūn thought that a display of poetic technique and erudition would arouse admiration in the heart of his angered sweetheart, and would bring her back to him. History shows that such methods have never produced the desired effect; on the contrary, they increased the woman's aversion and played into the rival's hands. Wallāda preferred a mediocre, wealthy man, who accepted her intellectual superiority. Thus she was able to humiliate a man who made her feel small and insignificant as a poetess.[4]

Wallāda eventually retired from literary life and lived in the royal vizier's harem. In 1091 she died, like Eleanor of Aquitaine, at the unusual age of eighty or more years, Ibn Zaidūn having died some twenty years earlier. "The base character of Wallāda's father took the upper hand in her life," summarizes Nykl, "but without her influence on Ibn Zaidūn Arabic poetry would have remained without some of its most precious gems."[5]

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[4] Nykl, p. 113.

[5] Nykl, p. 119.

Wallāda, significantly, had sought a lover who combined the qualities of wealth and intellectual inferiority. The courtly lady was content that these two qualities should be divided between an aristocratic husband, who was wealthy, and a lover, who was inferior to her not only intellectually, but in every aspect of the courtly code. In her insistence on superiority, therefore, in her forceful personality, in her defiance of orthodox religion, and in her patronage of literary men at her court, Wallāda foreshadowed the courtly lady.

B) THE TROUBADOUR'S LADY

Arabic customs and ideas on love were carried by minstrels, traders and crusaders over the Pyrenees into southern France, where courtly love developed at the beginning of the twelfth century.[6] Just as Ibn Zaidūn and other Arabic lyric poets in eleventh-century Cordova had been influenced by Wallāda, so the troubadours of Provence and the Limousin depended on their chatelaines for inspiration and patronage. With the Arabic verse forms and songs came the philosophy and social attitudes that formed the basic source of courtly love. As a result of imitation and repetition, certain features became conventionalized, and so did the behaviour of the troubadour-lover toward the chatelaine or courtly lady.

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[6] For an analysis of the Arabic sources of courtly love, see:
Nykl, pp. 371-411, et passim;
Ibn Hazm, The Dove's Neck-Ring, ed. Alois R. Nykl (Paris, 1931), introduction;
Robert Briffault, Les Troubadours et le Sentiment Romanesque (Paris, 1945), pp. 18-68;
Alexander J. Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," Medieval Studies, VI (1944), 175-260;
Denomy, "'Fin' Amors: the Pure Love of the Troubadours, its Amorality and Possible Source," Medieval Studies, VII (1945), 139-207;
Denomy, "Concerning the Accessibility of Arabic Influences to the Earliest Provençal Troubadours," Medieval Studies, XV (1953), 147-158;
Denomy, "Courtly Love and Courtliness," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 44-63;
Theodore Silverstein, "Andreas, Plato, and the Arabs: Remarks on Some Recent Accounts of Courtly Love," MP, XLVII (1949), 117-126;
Denis de Rougemont, Passion and Society (London, 1959), pp. 101-107.

The first troubadour of whom any record exists was Guillaume the Troubadour (1071-1127), sixth count of Poitiers and ninth duke of Aquitaine, grandfather of the famous Eleanor of Aquitaine. Eleven of his songs are extant, and though the later ones deal with courtly love, Guillaume himself was by no means a typical courtly lover. He composed his songs, according to Sidney Painter, "to furnish a pleasant accompaniment to his numerous triumphs over feminine virtue and then to regale his boon companions with songs recounting his amorous victories." [7] His songs have what has been described as a barrack-room flavour, intended for exclusively male company, certainly not for the ears of the ladies themselves. Amy Kelly summarizes Guillaume's style as that of "a poetry highly organized in form, intellectually subtle, lusty, piquant, cynical, the pastime of a worldling, who lived each day with gusto, dined well, slept heartily, and recked little of the awful day of judgement." [8]

In 1094, Guillaume the Troubadour married his second wife, Philippa of Aragon, and her suite probably contained singers who knew Arabic Andalusian verses. Guillaume himself later went on an ill-fated crusade to the east, where he may have heard new rhythms and melodies to imitate. When he returned to Poitiers, he found his countess, Philippa of Toulouse, taken up with one of those religious movements

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[7] Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Baltimore, 1940), p. 111. For a detailed account of Guillaume's poetry, life and character, see Reto R. Bezzola, "Guillaume IX et les Origines de l'Amour Courtois," Romania, LXVI (1940), 145-237.

[8] Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1957), p. 9.

perennially arising on the soil of Aquitaine. He left her to her spiritual pursuits and abducted the Countess of Châtellerault to enliven his middle years. This "courtly lady" of Guillaume's was Dangereuse, popularly known as Maubergeonne, the wife of Count Aimeri of Châtellerault. The relationship took an unusual turn in 1121, when Guillaume's son married Anor, the daughter of Dangereuse, and in the following year the couple became the parents of Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Guillaume IX was the first of a long line of troubadours, who, during the twelfth century, conventionalized the features of courtly love. The early troubadours came from Provence, the region of the langue d'oc, which became almost the universal language of poetry, used by writers even in Spain and Italy until the fourteenth century. Many of the troubadours travelled widely (Cercamon means court le monde, "around the world"), and they knew no frontiers. The courts of Aragon and Castille attracted many of them, and Spain and Italy became second countries for the troubadours of France. The time came when no prince would travel without troubadours or trouvères in his retinue.

The troubadours composed both the music and the words of their songs, which were usually addressed to married women -- chatelaines and countesses. Their poetry described the emotions and sufferings of love and listed the usual physical symptoms of the lover. It took account of the lover's joy at the sight of his lady and his sorrow at separation, the need for secrecy, love as the source of all virtue, and made constant appeals to the lady's "pity."

Above all, the troubadours' songs developed the concept of love-service, the idea of the humble lover "who loves even when his passion appears unrequited and who is willing to sacrifice all for Love."[9] Many troubadours seem to have put the theory into practice, devoting their lives to the service of a courtly lady. Bernart de Ventadorn, the most famous of them all, sang his songs to the great Eleanor of Aquitaine. Guillem de Cabestaing died for his devotion to the Countess of Roussillon. Peire Rogier dedicated his songs to Ermengarde of Narbonne, and Conon de Béthune sang before the countess Marie de Champagne and queen Aeliz of France (all three of these ladies being, by coincidence, at Eleanor's court of love at Poitiers). Jaufré Rudel, after long loving the Countess of Tripoli without ever having seen her, travelled across the sea and died in her arms when she gave him the kiss of peace as a greeting.

According to Thomas Kirby's rather idealistic account, unwavering devotion characterizes most of the troubadours:

> For them love was the dominant force in life and, if we are to believe the evidence of the poetry, nothing else was accounted worth while. Love predominated their every thought and action. . . . Patient and humble in the extreme, the troubadour devoted himself completely to his mistress, begged and implored for permission to be considered in her service, and professed ecstatic joy on those rare occasions when the bestowal of a solitary kiss indicated approval. This idea of love-service was perhaps the most important contribution which the troubadours made to the theory of courtly love.[10]

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9 Tom Peete Cross and William A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guinevere: a Study on the Origins of Courtly Love (Chicago, 1930), p. 96.

10 Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love (Louisiana, 1940), pp. 22-24.

Although Bernart de Ventadorn's career may not have been the life of "unwavering devotion to Love," that Thomas Kirby would like to think it, his relationship to Eleanor of Aquitaine is of interest. Bernart de Ventadorn was born at the castle of Ventadour (or Ventadorn), in the border region between Provence and northern France, the son of the servant who gathered wood for the oven in which the castle's bread was baked. Ventadour has a place in the history of courtly love, for it is thought that the actual fusion of classical Latin and Arabic elements first took place here, and that here the idea of the subjection of the lover to the lady's will was conceived.[11] Viscount Ebles of Ventadour surrounded himself with poets, and he was a friend of the first troubadour, Guillaume of Aquitaine. At this court Bernart grew up under the paternal eye of the viscount, who may secretly have been his actual father. Bernart made the mistake of revealing his love for the viscount's wife, and he was banished.

He attached himself to the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the traditional Provençal Vida, or "Life," of Bernart de Ventadorn describes their relationship as follows:

> Et el s'en partic et anet s'en a la duqessa de Normandia, q'era joves e de gran valor, e s'entendia mout en pretz et en honor et els benditz de sa lauzor. E plazion li fort li vers e las chansons d'en Bernart, don ella lo receup e l'onret e l'acuillic e·l fetz mout grans plazers. Lonc temps estet en la cort de la deqessa, et enamoret se d'ella, e la dompna s'enamoret de lui, don en Bernartz en fetz maintas bonas chanssons. Mas lo reis Enrics d'englaterra la pres per moiller, e la trais de Normandia e menet la·n en Englaterra; e'n Bernartz remas adonc de sai tristz e dolens.[12]

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[11] Urban T. Holmes, A History of Old French Literature (Chapel Hill, 1937), p. 172.

[12] Raymond T. Hill and Thomas G. Bergin, eds., Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours (New Haven, 1941), pp. 30-31.

Frank Chambers dismisses this love affair as one of the many false legends that grew up around Eleanor. He notes that Bernart seems to have been on the best of terms with Henry II, and considers Bernart's protestations addressed to Eleanor nothing more than poetic convention.[13] Amy Kelly, on the other hand, gives some credence to the legend. She says it was probably in 1152, while Eleanor and Henry were touring her lands after their marriage in May, that the exiled troubadour attached himself to the duchess' following and returned with her to her residence. While Henry, then Duke of Normandy, was in England to claim his succession to Stephen's throne, Eleanor remained behind to rule her domains, and she established her household there, probably in the city of Angers. Eleanor was at that time Duchess of Normandy and Poitou, and Countess of Anjou; Bernart, about the same age as Eleanor, was her feudal vassal.

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[13] Frank Chambers, "Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine," Speculum, XVI (1941), 462-463.

Chambers translates Bernart's Vida:

> And he departed and went to the Duchess of Normandy, who was young and of great worth and was a good judge of merit and honor and songs in her praise. And the verses and songs of Bernart pleased her much, wherefore she received him and honoured him and took him in and did many things to please him. For a long while he was in the court of the Duchess, and he fell in love with her, and the lady fell in love with him, and Bernart made many good songs about her. But King Henry of England married her and took her away from Normandy, and carried her to England; and Bernart then remained on this side, sad and grieving (p. 462).

Bernart's poems to Eleanor, though typical of the troubadour songs, give us many glimpses of Eleanor as she appeared in her own court. She is

"noble and sweet," "faithful and loyal," "one meet to crown the state of any king," "gracious, lovely, the embodiment of charm." When she bent upon him her eyes, full of fire and eloquence, he felt the joy of a Christmas fete. She was the most beautiful of women. For her gifts he would not give the rich city of Pisa in exchange. He rejoiced that she could read and interpret his secret messages for herself. He addresses her as "my Comfort." Tristram, he swore, never suffered such woes for Ysolt the Fair as he suffered for his lady. In her presence he trembled like an aspen, was witless as a child.[14]

Before Eleanor left Angers, Henry summoned Bernart to come to the court in London. The reputation of Bernart's former episode at Ventadour may have caused Henry to cut off the relationship between his duchess and the poet, whatever it might have been, by summoning Bernart to England. Bernart did return to Anjou, but then Eleanor herself moved to the city of Rouen. In October of 1154, the death of Stephen called Henry II and Eleanor to the throne of England, and Bernart was left behind.[15]

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14 Kelly, p. 111.

15 Kelly, pp. 111-113.
Henry J. Chaytor, The Troubadours and England (Cambridge, 1923), pp. 36-37, dates Bernart's visit to England as early in 1155, suggesting that Bernart was taken to London by Eleanor to participate in the coronation festivities. Kelly is the more reliable historian.

c) ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

When Bernart de Ventadorn sang his songs to Eleanor as Duchess of Normandy, she had already been a queen for fifteen years. At the age of fifteen, upon her father's death in 1137, she had inherited the regions of Poitou, handed down from her grandfather, Guillaume the Troubadour. Her lands embraced half the region of the langue d'oc. They stretched from the Loire valley to the Pyrenees, and from the heights of Auvergne to the sea in the west. They were larger than the lands of the dukes of Normandy or of the kings of France and richer than the whole island of Britain. According to feudal standards, Eleanor was the best marriage prize in western Europe, for her husband would gain pre-eminence over all his rivals. And Eleanor herself was attractive, lively, charming in manner and mature in mind.

She did not remain unmarried for long. In the same year that she received her inheritance, she was married to seventeen-year- old Louis VII of France and arrived in Paris in the late summer of 1137 as Queen of France. In her retinue she took Poitevin courtiers, poets and musicians. In spite of opposition from Louis' monastic advisors (in particular, Abbé Suger and Abbé Bernard of Clairvaux), Eleanor made her influence felt, and with her marriage the popularity of the Provençal troubadours' songs and their ideas on love spread northward. In the chilling atmosphere of the gloomy Capetian palace, while Louis, the monk-king, devoted himself to his religious devotions and affairs of state, she was alone responsible for the patronage of music and poetry.

"Les quinze ans pendant lesquels Eléonore fut reine de France (1137-52)," writes Paul Meyer, "sont probablement l'époque où la poésie courtoise du Midi commença à exercer une influence sensible sur celle du Nord." [16]

A colourful episode in Eleanor's life began when, at the age of twenty-five, she persuaded Louis to allow her to accompany him on the second Crusade, which was to proceed in 1147 by way of Antioch and Byzantium to Jerusalem. Thousands of the crusaders were her own vassals, and she was permitted to go in the hope that her presence might prevent a breach between the Franks and the Poitevins. Eleanor was allowed to take the cross, and with the queen went Sybille, Countess of Flanders, whose half brother was King of Jerusalem, Mamille of Roucy, Florine of Bourgogne, Torqueri of Bouillon, Faydide of Toulouse, and scores of other noble ladies.

A famous incident occurred at Vézelay, where the crusaders gathered in thousands to take the cross. "A legend tells us," writes Amy Kelly, "that the queen and her ladies disappeared and presently reappeared on white horses in the guise of Amazons, in gilded buskins, plumed, and with banners: that like Penthesilea and her warriors, the queen and her cavalcade galloped over the hillside of Vézelay, rallying laggard knights, tossing distaffs to faint-hearted cavaliers." "The tale is in character," she concludes, "and later allusions to Amazons en route, found in Greek historians, give some substance to it." [17]

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16 "Des Rapports de la Poésie des Trouvères avec Celle des Troubadours," Romania, XIX (1890), 5.

17 Kelly, p. 46.
Frank Chambers dismisses this as fabrication, but says the legend "sheds light on the character of the woman who inspired it," pp. 459-460.

On the crusade Eleanor saw all the luxury and elegance of the east, which, contrasted to the gloomy Capetian palace in Paris, must have made a deep impression on her mind. Nor was adventure lacking. Many battles were fought with the Saracens, and, on the return journey to France, Eleanor's ship was captured for ransom by Byzantine pirates and she was separated from Louis for two months.

In Antioch, Eleanor's friendship with her cousin, Raymond of Toulouse, Prince of Antioch, gave rise to unfounded rumours of misconduct on her part. It was in Antioch that Eleanor, revived by a climate and customs similar to her own, and reacting against the ten years' suppression to which her vivacious southern temperament had been subjected by the king's monastic advisors, first began to speak of permanent separation from Louis. When Louis and Raymond of Toulouse quarrelled bitterly over military plans, and the crusaders prepared suddenly to leave the city, Eleanor decided to stay in Antioch with her kinsman. She wanted a divorce, she declared, on the grounds of consanguinity of the fourth degree. Alarmed at the possibility of Raymond's bestowing Eleanor on one of his own allies or marrying her himself, the king's council urged Louis not to listen to her. When the crusaders left Antioch in the night, Eleanor was forcibly abducted.

At Tusculum, Pope Eugenius managed to effect a temporary reconciliation between Eleanor and Louis, waiving their consanguinity with a special dispensation. Soon after their return to Paris in November 1149, Eleanor gave birth to a daughter, the princess Alix,

disappointing the hopes of a male heir for the second time in twelve years. Her first child, Marie, had been born in 1145. The blow of having a second daughter, coupled with the death in 1151 of Abbé Suger (whose counsels had delayed the rift for a while), weakened Louis' resolution. He no longer struggled against Eleanor's will. The death of Abbé Suger left Louis to the counsels of Abbé Bernard, who had long disliked the queen and her whole impious family, and who encouraged the idea of separation for the good of France.

In September 1151, the first steps were taken. Louis and Eleanor rode to Aquitaine with a large escort to prepare for the withdrawal of the king's garrisons and administrators. There they parted, and early in the spring of 1152 Eleanor went home to Poitiers. On March 21 of that year, a synod to sanction the divorce convened at Beaugency near Orléans, a great gathering of archbishops, barons and nobles. The queen's domains were restored to her as she had possessed them before her marriage; both Eleanor and Louis became free to marry again, with the important proviso that Eleanor preserve her vassal's allegiance to the king.

On May 18, scarcely eight weeks after the annulment of her marriage to the king, Eleanor married Henry, Duke of Normandy. Her value to her husband is illustrated by the fact that, during those eight weeks, Geoffrey of Anjou and Thibault of Blois made two attempts to ambush her and to seize her and her fiefs as a marriage prize.

Amy Kelly thinks that this second marriage was secretly arranged before Eleanor's actual separation from Louis. Henry had come to Paris

with his father, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, in August 1151, to settle a dispute with the king and to pay their vassal's duty of homage to him. As an old friend of Eleanor's father, Geoffrey of Anjou may have lent a sympathetic ear to Eleanor's grievances. Young Henry, then eighteen years old, was a person of great importance in spite of his youth, being the pretender to the throne of England through the claims of his mother, Matilda Empress.

Henry was a personable young man; what was more important, he offered Eleanor the prospect of freedom from the yoke of the Capets. Henry was looking for an alliance that would give him every possible advantage in dealing with the king of France. Eleanor was the ideal woman.

> Though Henry was a born and bred feudal bargainer, he could see the queen was no liability to her dower. Newburgh, writing of this time, speaks of Eleanor's charms of person and her lively mind. As arbiter of the haut monde in the Ile, she was mistress of her queen's role, and Henry expected to have uses for a proper queen. She had seen the world at its very best, its notables in all citadels of Christendom. Her knowledge of places and personages, of affairs, of gossip and intrigue, made her a helpmate non-pariel for an ascendant king. That she was the proud victim of calumny, enkindled by unmastered emotions, merely enhanced her with an air of melancholy sophistication. Youth, 'the fast-withering flower,' still bloomed triumphant in her mien. The queen was nearly thirty, Henry but eighteen; but such disparate marriages were not uncommon where great fiefs were at stake.[18]

By obtaining Eleanor's provinces and treasuries, Henry became more powerful than the king himself, and, in England, the invincible rival of the reigning house of Blois. The alliance had advantages for Eleanor also, as it was the only marriage which could raise her to a status equal

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[18] Kelly, p. 100.

to her former position as queen of France. So the marriage took place, in spite of the fact that Henry affronted his overlord, that Eleanor should have asked Louis' sanction to remarry, and that Henry and Eleanor were related within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity.[19]

Upon her marriage to Henry, Eleanor became Duchess of Normandy, and in her own right she was still Duchess of Aquitaine and Gascogne, Countess of Poitou, Anjou, Maine, Saintonge, Angoumois, Limousin, Auvergne, Bordeaux, Agen and Touraine. After an interlude of two years, during which she lived at Angers and listened to the songs of Bernart de Ventadorn, she became Queen of England and Lady of Ireland.

Her life as Queen of England was her second role as a sophisticated patroness of the arts and learning. While Henry was occupied quelling anarchy up and down the kingdom, Eleanor's influence in London was felt in literature, music, architecture, drama and social amusements. She probably attracted to the English court some of the courtiers and troubadours that had made her halls in Angers a rallying point. Henry himself was interested in the arts, but he was much too preoccupied at this time to have been responsible for the new artistic milieu that developed quite suddenly around the royal palace of Westminster.

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19 In connection with their problem of consanguinity, it is interesting that there had been talk at the French court (before Henry's visit there in 1151) of attaching Henry to the throne of France by marrying him to Marie, Eleanor's elder daughter, but Abbé Bernard had forbidden the alliance on the grounds of consanguinity.

Eleanor's influence on literature, in particular, was remarkable. It was at this period, and within the reach of Plantagenet influence in Britain and on the continent, that literature began to incorporate the new ideas of courtly love and to take the form of romans d'aventure, largely replacing the heroic chansons de geste. And it should be noted that the new courtly literature consisted of strains which Eleanor herself was uniquely prepared to bring together. Tales of Rome and Byzantium, the troubadour love songs, literary representations of the elegant courtly life of France, and the "matter of Britain" which had been filtering into Poitou for two generations -- all these were components of the new romances, and all had played a part in Eleanor's personal experience.

Countless literary compliments were addressed to Eleanor at this time. While she was still Duchess of Normandy, Wace had dedicated to her his Roman de Brut, a redaction of Geoffrey of Monmouth's histories and Arthurian legends. Benoit de Saint-Maure was an Anglo-Norman trouvère, who probably lived at Sainte-Maure near Poitiers, and Eleanor is usually identified as the riche dame de riche rei whom Benoit praised in his Roman de Troie:

> For my presumption shall I be chid
> By her whose kindness knows no bounds?
> Highborn lady, excellent and valiant,
> True, understanding, noble,
> Ruled by right and justice,
> Queen of beauty and largess,
> By whose example many ladies
> Are upheld in emulous right-doing;
> In whom all learning lodges,

Whose equal in no peer is found,
Rich lady of the wealthy king,
No ill, no ire, no sadness
Mars thy goodly reign.
May all thy days be joy.[20]

It is ironical that these verses by Benoit, addressed to one of the most famous instigators of courtly love, should be placed in the middle of an antifeminist tirade on the inconstancy of women. In this context, the dedication becomes a kind of personal apology.

The story of Tristan and Iseult had been known at the queen's court in Angers and was mentioned by Bernart de Ventadorn in his songs. Amy Kelly wonders if "the Tristram story was not dressed at this time [1152-1154] by some necessitous conteur to have a pleasing, if veiled, topical significance for the duchess who had renounced a dull king for a bold young knight." [21] Be that as it may, at the court in London Thomas of Britain wrote his version of Tristram and Ysolt under the queen's inspiration, perhaps definitely for her. It is also quite possible that Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes were among the many writers connected with Eleanor's court in London. Marie de France spent most of her life in England, and is thought by some historians to have been Henry II's sister. Chrétien is thought to have been in England for some time before he went to the court of Troyes.

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[20] Translated by Amy Kelly, pp. 129-130.
On the date and dedication of the Roman, see Foster E. Guyer, "Chronology of the Earliest French Romances," MP, XXVI (1929), 257-277; and the successful refutation by F.A.G. Cooper, "Date and Dedication of the Roman de Troie," MP, XXVII (1930), 379-382.

[21] Kelly, pp. 112-113.

Eleanor's ideas did not confine themselves to literature, and her influence was felt on manners as well as on the arts. Dress and even speech became more effeminate. 'Demoralizing' dramatic spectacles were produced at court, and a general secularization of the arts took place. Social critics such as Walter Map and John of Salisbury commented in dismay on the amorality of England. "John declared that the foolish dawdling and love-making of rustics, once reckoned depraved by serious men, was affected by the gallants of the court, a statement that suggests that the mortifying ritual of the courts of love was somewhat understood in London, even as it had been in Poitou and the Limousin." Walter Map declared that the legendary virtue of the women of London had been completely corrupted by the new influence: "Fear all the sex." [22]

During the twelve years that followed their arrival in London, an estrangement gradually took place between Henry and Eleanor. The breach between them came to a climax in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies when Henry's famous affair with Rosamond Clifford was an open scandal. The king's frequent infidelities had become a byword in England, and it was his public flaunting of this favourite that aroused Eleanor's bitterness. Henry may have met Rosamond on his Welsh campaign in 1165, while Eleanor was acting as his viceregent on the continent; their relationship began in the following year, ending in 1177 with Rosamond's death. The affair was a notorious one, and it gave rise to many legends, such as that of

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[22] Kelly, pp. 130-131.

the wicked queen threatening fair Rosamond's life in the secret maze at Woodstock.[23] The truth behind that legend may be that Eleanor, travelling around England at the end of 1166, possibly found Rosamond lodged at Woodstock while Henry was abroad.

> Whatever the final incidents may have been, they led Eleanor to remember that, before ever she had been the Queen of France or of England, she had been the Countess of Poitou, and that, as scion of those Poitevins, Guillaume le Grand and Guillaume le Troubadour, she held in her own right a province beyond the Loire as sovereign as any king's, and a resolution to grasp into her own hands its wealth and freedom possessed her. . . . Such feudal dereliction in a woman was so extraordinary as to escape the apprehension of the average man.[24]

Eleanor planned to install Richard as her own heir; in her patrimony he would receive enough land and treasure to offset any rival among Henry's other sons, no matter what Henry could give them from the rest of his lands. Eleanor embarked on her plans with the statesmanship born of experience. She was Louis' vassal for Poitou and Aquitaine, and she knew she could rely on him to support any measures designed to harass Henry, his rival. Her own people, who had been ruled by Louis and by Henry for thirty years (since her first marriage in 1137), would welcome the time when they could throw off these alien shackles and revive the splendours of their own ducal court.

Henry took steps to protect his own imperial interests and those of his other sons. In the Christmas season of 1166 he presented Prince Henry to Eleanor's vassals in Poitiers, as Prince Richard's future overlord, and throughout the year 1167 he tried to subdue the rebellions

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23 Robert L. Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," MLN LXX (1955), 394.

24 Kelly, p. 194.

in Auvergne, Poitou and the Limousin. Henry and Eleanor held their Christmas court together in Argentan in 1167, after Eleanor had sailed there from England with Prince Richard, seven ships carrying her retinue and belongings. It was obvious that she intended to stay.

After the Christmas court, Henry escorted Eleanor through her own domains, and left her there under the protective surveillance of the Earl of Salisbury and a body of soldiers. But as they travelled to Poitiers, the Earl of Salisbury was killed in an ambush, unsuccessfully designed to capture Eleanor for ransom. Eleanor was left as her own mistress: she established her court in the ducal city of Poitiers, and assumed the administration of her own provinces. She set to work to restore the former glories of the Poitevin regime, undoing the oppressive works of Henry's seneschals, restoring exiled barons to their property, reviving the old fetes and fairs. With great pageantry she presented her eleven-year-old son Richard to the people, and inducted him as the future Duke of Aquitaine.

The following four years are those most important to the history of courtly love, for at Poitiers, with the help of Marie de Champagne and many other noble ladies, Eleanor established her famous court of love. The court at Poitiers flourished from 1170 to 1174, until rumours of sedition reached Henry's ears. In the spring of 1174, Henry descended on Poitiers from the north, closed down the court, and dispatched Eleanor with several other captives to England. Like so many fictional courtly ladies, Eleanor was imprisoned in a tower by her husband, partly because

of her ideas on love. Locked in Salisbury Tower when she was fifty-two years old, she was to remain there and in other English prisons for the next fifteen years of her life.

When Henry II died in July 1189, Eleanor was released. At the age of sixty-seven she re-emerged into political prominence and during the reigns of her sons, Richard Coeur-de-Lion and John, she played an important role in the affairs of Britain and the continent. One of her last acts, at the age of eighty, was to ward off an attempt made by her own grandson, the Count of Brittany, to capture her for ransom. In July 1202, Arthur besieged Eleanor and her small escort in the castle of Mirebeau, in which they had taken refuge. Eleanor moved with her men into the keep, lowered the portcullis, and held off the besiegers with cunning parley until King John arrived with soldiers to rescue her.

In March 1204 Eleanor died in her eighty-third year, having become a nun just before her death, and was buried in the Abbey of Fontevrault. The nuns of Fontevrault gave her an obituary rather out of keeping with her life as a courtly lady: "She enhanced the grandeur of her birth by the honesty of her life, the purity of her morals, the flower of her virtues; and in the conduct of her blameless life, she surpassed almost all the queens of the world." [25]

To the end of her life Eleanor showed the unusual intelligence and strength of character which had made her famous. She had been the mother of ten royal children, the wife of two kings, Louis and Henry, and

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25 Kelly, p. 493.

the mother of two kings, Richard and John. In feudal society especially, it is remarkable that she was so much the mistress of her own destiny. Both the annulment of her marriage to Louis and her separation from Henry took place on her initiative. Her intelligence and strong will, just as much as her hereditary domains and titles, made her a force to be reckoned with in the political affairs of France and England.

Her extraordinary life and personality made her a legend almost within her own lifetime. One story, dating from Eleanor's stay in Antioch on the crusade, has her exchanging letters with the famous Saladin, who fell in love with her and attempted to abduct her to his ship; in actual fact Saladin was only twelve years old when Eleanor was twenty-six.[26] Rumours were also circulated about her relationship with her kinsman, Raymond of Toulouse, Prince of Antioch. A third legend relates that she was intimate with her future father-in-law, Geoffrey the Fair, Count of Anjou, while she was Queen of France and he was the king's seneschal; a similar report connects her with Guillaume le Marechal, as in the ballad Queen Eleanor's Confession, in which she confesses her infidelity to Henry on her death bed.[27]

In addition to the legends which have some basis in historical fact, there are many songs and ballads which give Eleanor a supernatural and evil character. Robert Chapman suggests that the old stories of the

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26 Chambers, p. 461.

27 Chambers, pp. 467-468;
Chapman, p. 394.
The hero of the early thirteenth-century romance, Joufrois, is the secret lover of the Queen of England, wife of King Henry. See Sarah F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), p. 137.

demon countess of Anjou, one of Eleanor's ancestors, may have been transferred to her more famous successor. Eleanor herself became popularly known as a devil.' "It was an accepted part of her thirteenth-century reputation, and testifies in a striking way to her powerful hold on the imagination of her age." [28] The Middle English romance of Richard Coeur de Lion, for example, credits Richard with a demon mother, who flies straight through the roof of the church at Mass, when the holy sacrament is placed before her. This romance was written when Eleanor had been dead for scarcely fifty years.' The English author was retelling the tale from a French source, and in France the incident had become attached to Eleanor during the years closely following her death, perhaps actually during her lifetime.' "Eleanor was the kind of woman who would attract legend in any age," summarizes Chapman:

> She had an uncanny ability to get and keep the upper hand, she had sway over powerful men, her management was firm and aggressive. Yet she was full of beauty and grace, the patroness of troubadours.' The monk Richard of Devizes, her contemporary, described her in superlatives: 'Queen Alienor -- an incomparable woman, beautiful and modest, influential yet moderate, humble and learned (qualities which are rarely found in a woman) who was old enough to have had two kings for husbands, and two kings for sons, even now indefatigable in any labour, and whose endurance was the admiration of her age.' [29]

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[28] Chapman, p.' 396.'

[29] Chapman, p.' 394.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COURTS OF LOVE

A) THE COURT AT POITIERS

When Eleanor installed herself at Poitiers with Prince Richard in 1170, her most immediate task was to supervise the ducal household, which numbered many more than her own retinue. One of her feudal obligations was to supervise the education of at least the eldest children of her noble vassals. She had to approve the marriage of each of her vassals' heirs, and many alliances were arranged at the court, which attracted the heirs and heiresses of the great fiefs of the south. In addition to the young people from her domains, Eleanor's court included her own daughters and sons, as well as their fiancées, for it was the custom for betrothed girls to be educated at the court of their future relatives. "The very woman most unlikely to have been recommended for the responsibility," comments Amy Kelly, "was entrusted with the education and safekeeping of most of the children of mark west of the Rhine and north of the Pyrenees." [1]

The effects of the education given at Poitiers, and the unique code of manners taught there, influenced many of these young people in later years. Even Prince Henry, who was in many respects like his father, learned to prefer the glamour of chivalry and romance to the heavier affairs of state. The effects of Eleanor's teaching showed themselves particularly

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[1] Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1957), p. 200.
See "Eleanor of Aquitaine and Her Courts of Love," Speculum, XII (1937), 3-19.

on her own heir, Richard Coeur-de-Lion, the troubadour-king. [2]

As well as the young heirs and heiresses under Eleanor's care, the court at Poitiers included on occasion as many as sixty noble ladies; to accommodate them, Eleanor built additional domestic chambers around the great hall. The court was astir with many travellers, pilgrims, and young chevaliers assembling for the spring tournaments, for in the southern regions of France the tradition of great springtime assemblies was well established. The young nobles of Poitou and Aquitaine came to Poitiers to pay their homage and courtier's service and to be trained as squires. The court attracted numbers of restless young men who (due to the system of lateral inheritance) were landless while they waited for their patrimony.

To help her revive the customs of the court and to run the palace household, Eleanor sent for her eldest child, Marie, now twenty-five years old, a woman of great prestige and the wife of the Count of Champagne. Eleanor herself was forty-eight, and it is not known whether she had seen Marie since her separation from Louis, when the child was only six. Eleanor and Marie together evolved the unique code of behaviour, based on the theory of courtly love, which was designed to supply the refinement and inner discipline needed at the court. Social manners were reformed, just as they had been in London under the queen's influence, and the famous courts of love were established.

Assemblies, held in the great hall of Poitiers, were attended by

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[2] Thomas Wright notes that Richard II presided over a court of love in later years, as a Prince of Love. Womankind in Western Europe (London, 1869), p. 141.

courtiers elegantly dressed in silks and furs. Provençal music was sung, Breton lays and tales of Arthurian romance recited. The court of love, composed of the ladies seated on the dias at the end of the hall, was headed by Eleanor or Marie, and the climax of the evening came when the lovers' petitions were presented. Each question was discussed with all the formality of scholastic dialectic. Here the jurisprudence of courtly love was formulated, evening by evening, as judgements on lovers' petitions were given by the lady presiding over the court and recorded by Andreas Capellanus to supply the basis of his De Amore.

Isabel (or Elisabeth) of Vermandois, the Countess of Flanders, was one of the most outstanding noblewomen present at Eleanor's court during these four years.[3] Isabel was Eleanor's niece (daughter of Eleanor's younger sister, Petronilla) and Marie de Champagne's cousin. She was married to Philippe d'Alsace, who had been a boy of thirteen at the time of their wedding in 1156. Philippe became Count of Flanders in 1170, and so it was as Countess of Flanders that Isabel arrived at the court of Poitiers in the same year. Philippe's sister, Marguerite of Flanders, has also been mentioned as an influence in the development of courtly love.[4] Philippe himself apparently did not approve of the ideas taught at Poitiers, for Isabel's devotion to the precepts of the code involved her in trouble with her husband. He was the feudal lord who had

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[3] She was first identified by Gaston Paris, "La Comtesse Elisabeth de Flandres et les Troubadours," Romania, XVII (1888), 591-595.

[4] Myrrha Lot-Borodine, La Femme et l'Amour au XIIe Siècle (Paris, 1909), p. 14.

one of his vassals so severely punished for sighing Poitiers-fashion in the presence of his wife, in the year after the court had been dispersed and Isabel had been sent back to her husband in the city of Arras. Isabel remained under her husband's eye until her death in 1182. During the two years following her death, Philippe d'Alsace became the literary patron of Chrétien de Troyes, and gave him the theme for his Perceval, or Le Conte del Graal, a final retraction of all the values of courtly love.[5]

Another famous courtly lady known to have been at Poitiers is Ermengarde, Countess of Narbonne, whose name is also spelled Ermenjart or Mingardis.[6] Ermengarde was of about the same age as Eleanor and in many ways very like her, a typically authoritative lady. She ruled over the city of Narbonne in her own right. She fulfilled all the regular feudal responsibilities herself: she personally led forays at the head of her troops, participated in several sieges (such as the one at Baux in 1162), and created political leagues and intrigues. Louis VII granted her a privilege that no other woman seems previously to have had, "the right to act as magistrate in her domains, dispensing justice and levying fines, condemning and pardoning in her own name instead of through whichever husband she had at the time."[7] In the southern regions around Ermengarde's home, springtime fetes and assemblies were an old tradition, and on her return she incorporated her own

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[5] Mary D. Stanger, "Literary Patronage at the Medieval Court of Flanders," French Studies, XI (1957), 214-215.
Gustave Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes et Son Oeuvre (Paris, 1948), pp.87-88.

[6] Gaston Paris, "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II", Romania, XII (1883), 525, 534.

[7] Melrich V. Rosenberg, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of the Troubadours and of the Courts of Love (New York, 1937), pp. 201-202.

courts of love into these assemblies. At her court the troubadour Peire Rogier spent the most active years of his life, and he addressed his songs to her in courtly style, though Lewis Mott would like to think that she kept the troubadour at "a proper distance."[8]

Henry II's sister, Emma of Anjou, was probably present at the court of her famous sister-in-law, and perhaps so was the poetess Marie de France, who may have been another sister of the king. The Queen of France, Adèle (Alix or Aeliz) de Champagne, Marie de Champagne's sister-in-law, may also have been there; she had become Louis VII's third wife in 1160, only fifteen days after his second wife, Constance of Castile, died in childbirth. Andreas Capellanus refers to Adèle and not to Eleanor, when he writes of "the Queen" in his De Amore. After the court at Poitiers was disbanded, Adèle is believed to have continued the tradition of holding courts of love; one of the poems addressed to her by the troubadour Conon de Béthune relates that she used to preside at assemblies where love songs were recited. It is ironical that the lady whom Louis chose as a model of womanhood for the feudal world and the mother of his heirs should be known in history as a courtly lady and one of the chief instigators of courtly love.

After Louis married Adèle de Champagne in 1160, he gave his two eldest daughters in marriage to Adèle's brothers, Marie to Henri, Count of Champagne, and Alix to Thibault, Count of Blois. Marie and Alix were therefore in the strange position of being sisters-in-law to their own stepmother, a good illustration of the complexities of feudal marriage. In 1170,

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8 Lewis F. Mott, The System of Courtly Love (Boston, 1896), p.17. See John Wilcox, "Defining Courtly Love," Papers of The Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, XII (1929), 323-324.

when the court at Poitiers began, Alix (or Aélis) of Blois was a woman of twenty, who had probably not seen Eleanor since her parents' divorce when she was two years old. Like her sister Marie, Alix is known to have exerted an influence on the development of courtly love, and she may have been present at her mother's court.[9] Her husband, Thibault of Blois, was a literary patron; it was for him that Gautier d'Arras wrote his Eraclés, a romance in which Athanias and Paridés are typical courtly lovers who demonstrate the lesson that "the surest way to make a woman untrue to her husband is to shut her up and try to keep love out."[10] Thibault's patronage of Gautier suggests that he may have been influenced by the ideas propagated by his young wife.

These noblewomen, and many others like them, are the courtly ladies of history. They handed down the judgments in the courts of love held at Poitiers, establishing there the precedents for the code which was later written down by Andreas Capellanus. "The code of André gives glimpses of a woman's notions of society," writes Amy Kelly, "different in essential respects from the prevailing feudal scheme, which was certainly man-made. In the Poitevin code, man is the property, the very thing of woman; whereas a

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9 Lot-Borodine, p. 14.

10 Sarah F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), p. 127. See Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes, p. 75.

Foster E. Guyer, "Chronology of the Earliest French Romances," MP, XXVI (1929), 277, dates Eraclés and Gautier's Ille et Galeron after 1170, the date of the court at Poitiers. Ille et Galeron is also a sober study of courtly love, summarized by Barrow, pp. 134-135.

precisely contrary state of things existed in the adjacent realms of the two kings from whom the reigning Duchess of Aquitaine was estranged."[11]

When the court at Poitiers ended, Eleanor herself was imprisoned and could no longer contribute directly to the development of the social code she had established. When she was released from prison at the end of fifteen years, she had more important affairs on her mind. The ladies of Poitiers returned to the feudal, masculine world from which they had come, and not many of them had the opportunity to put into practice the code they had helped to establish. But those who had a measure of independence, such as Ermengarde de Narbonne and Queen Adèle, spread Eleanor's influence by continuing the customs of Poitiers at their own courts. "La cour d'Aliénor fut sans doute une modèle qu'on imita avec empressement," writes Gaston Paris: "à l'exemple d'Aliénor elle-même et d'Ermenjard de Narbonne, la reine Aeliz, la comtesse Marie, fille d'Aliénor, la comtesse Elisabeth, cousine des deux dernières, sans doute d'autres, ambitionnèrent à leur tour la gloire de docteurs et jurisconsultes d'amour."[12]

Considering all the historical evidence now available, it is impossible any longer to deny the actual existence of courts of love, as some early critics (such as Frederic Diez, in the first half of the nineteenth century) tried to do. Literature and art combine with historical documents to prove the existence of such institutions: Andreas Capellanus was recording events as they happened; and Thomas Wright, for example, supplements his

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11 Kelly, pp. 207-208.

12 Gaston Paris, "Les Cours d'Amour du Moyen Age," Journal des Savants, LIII (1888), 732. Quoted by Mott, p. 58.

discussion of courtly love with twelfth-century woodcuts and engravings of courts of love in progress.[13] It is perhaps significant that the last serious denial of courtly love as a social phenomenon appeared in the same volume as Amy Kelly's historical reconstruction of events at Poitiers.[14] It is true that it is difficult to determine how faithfully courtly love was practised, by a devoted few, in the twelfth century; and the courts of love may admittedly have been mainly a form of social amusement, as some writers argue.[15] But the actual existence of the courts of love, and the serious social tendencies underlying them, cannot be denied.

The court of love at Poitiers came to a dramatic end. In the winter of 1173, Henry II was in the north of France trying to subdue the strife between his own sons and their respective vassals. Rumours came to him that "the queen and her eldest daughter, that flower of the court of France, were maintaining in Poitiers, under cover of their brilliant entertainments, heaven only knew what commerce with his other enemies, and, worst of all, were filling the minds of his own sons not only with folly but with sedition."[16] Believing that Eleanor and her confederates were allying themselves politically with the king of France, Henry descended on Poitou, razing the castles of rebel vassals between Tours and Poitiers. Disguised

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13 Wright, pp. 136-140.

14 J.S.P. Tatlock, "Interpreting Literature by History," Speculum, XII (1937), 390-395.
Amy Kelly, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Courts of Love," Speculum, XII (1937), 3-19.

15 Mott, pp. 57-58.
William A. Neilson, The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love (Boston, 1899), pp. 249-250.

16 Kelly, p. 215.

as a man and riding astride her horse, Eleanor was captured with a small band of herdknights, as she fled towards Louis' frontiers for protection.

Eleanor was temporarily imprisoned in a southern castle, and Henry arrived at Poitiers at Pentecost, in the early summer of 1174, to close the seditious court. Marie de Champagne was sent back to Troyes, and Isabel of Flanders to her irate husband in Arras. Henry assembled his captives at Barfleur; they included Eleanor herself, the king's own sister, Emma of Anjou, his youngest son and daughter, Prince John and Princess Joanna, Prince Henry's wife, Marguerite, and his three other sons' fiancées, Alais, Constance and Alix, and perhaps, if she was the king's sister, Marie de France. The captives were shipped across the Channel to Southampton, in a violent storm, and distributed in prisons throughout England. Eleanor began her fifteen years' imprisonment in Salisbury Tower, "there to reflect upon that code of chivalry which was the masterpiece of all the arts that flourished under her patronage:"

> For the moment the feudal system triumphed. Sedition looked out from barred windows upon a world of havoc. The poets were dispersed, some to sing no more. The Poitevin knights who escaped went back to their native anarchy. Without regard for the Tractatus [by Andreas], the heiresses of Poitou and Aquitaine were henceforth given to those barons to whom they were due. The code of Marie and André the Chaplain fell for a time in abeyance. But ideas had gone forth from the palace in Poitiers, and these remained to shed a brightness in the world when rods had fallen from the hands of feudal kings and bolts had rusted in the tower of Salisbury.[17]

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[17] Kelly, p. 233.

B) THE COURT AT TROYES

Of all the courtly ladies who sought to imitate and continue the traditions of Eleanor's court, her eldest daughter, Marie de Champagne, was certainly the most outstanding. Marie had been married at nineteen to a prominent nobleman nearly twice her age, Henri the Liberal, Count of Champagne and brother of Queen Adèle of France. Marie gave him two children, a daughter called Scholastique and a son who was to become the King of Jerusalem. When she arrived at Poitiers to assist Eleanor at her court, she was twenty-five. "No woman of the beau monde had more prestige," writes Amy Kelly; "none was more correct. Marie shed the aura of Paris and Troyes upon the renaissance in Poitiers."[18] In 1174 Marie was sent by Henry II back to the Count of Champagne. Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus, if they were among her retinue at Poitiers, returned with her to the court of Troyes.

Seven years later Henri de Champagne died, leaving Marie, at the age of thirty-five, to act as regent for their young son. Marie now had all the freedom, wealth and prestige she needed to revive the traditions of Poitiers, albeit on a smaller scale, at her own court of Troyes, and during the years of her regency, until her death in 1198, literary activity flourished there.[19] Chrétien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus had been at the court for many years, and now there came in addition poets and troubadours such as Conon de Béthune, Auboin de Sézanne, and Gace Brulé.

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[18] Kelly, p. 203.

[19] It is significant that Chrétien de Troyes, repudiating courtly love in his later years, left the court of Troyes soon after the Count's death in 1181, and went to the court of Flanders to write his story of the grail-quest.

It has been suggested that Marie herself was a poetess, none other than the mysterious Marie de France:

> What sort of a woman was this Marie de Champagne, with her subtle wit, her mocking pleasure in setting the conscientious Chrétien to tell the tale of an adulterous love? We know very little about her save that she was in her own day what in modern phrase is called a queen of society, a 'Princesse de Lettres.' She was young, brilliant, imperious and obeyed. A modern scholar, Professor Emil Winckler, has suggested that she was the authentic Marie de France - the great poetess herself, whose light, seductive touch, whose wise and compassionate melancholy has endeared even to our own times the Lai du Chèvre Feuille and the story of Eliduc and his two wives. Was she indeed none other than this Princess Marie of France, who married the Count of Champagne? It is just a guess, a dream, an idle fancy - yet plausible and pleasant.[20]

The author of this conjecture finally rejects his theory, on the grounds that in the early sixties of the twelfth century Marie de Champagne, between the ages of fifteen and nineteen (then an unmarried princess in Paris), would have been too young to display the delicate wisdom and melancholy of the poetess. The date of the composition of the Lais is uncertain, however, and the idea of Marie de Champagne's authorship cannot be rejected for this reason only. Foster Guyer, in fact, happens to give the year 1170 as the date of the Lais, the very year in which Marie de Champagne began to study the practice of courtly love at Poitiers.[21] A more valid reason for rejecting the identification is that Marie de Champagne was largely responsible for establishing the theoretical code of courtly love, while Marie de France does not seem to have been at all interested in the abstract possibilities of the code, but only in its practical effects on character.

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[20] "Chrétien de Troyes," London Times Literary Supplement (15 Nov. 1934), p. 781.

[21] Guyer, "Chronology of the Earliest French Romances," p. 277.

In the same article another interesting suggestion, more substantial than the last, is made concerning Marie de Champagne. It is suggested that Marie's own character served as the model for the most famous courtly lady of literature, Guinevere, the heroine of Chrétien de Troyes' Lancelot: "Is it a freak of fancy to suppose that he drew in his portrait of a haughty and capricious beauty the features of the Countess of Champagne?"[22] A similar idea has occurred to C.S. Lewis: "I am probably not the first reader," he writes, "who has seen in the fantastic labours which Lancelot undergoes at the bidding of the Queen, a symbol of the poet's own genius bent to tasks unworthy of it by the whim of a fashionable woman."[23] The courtly lady of literature may quite well be more indebted to the courtly lady of history than most literary critics suspect.

Much of Marie's fame is due to her literary patronage of Chrétien de Troyes. "It appears from contemporary evidence," writes an editor of Chrétien's romances, "that the authority of this celebrated feudal dame was weighty and widely felt. The old city of Troyes, where she held her court, must be set down large in any map of literary history. For it was there that Chrétien was led to write four romances which together form the most complete expression we possess from a single author of the ideals of French chivalry."[24] Marie's patronage of Chrétien dates approximately from the time of her marriage and arrival at Troyes in 1164, to the time of her husband's death in 1181, a

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22 "Chrétien de Troyes," p. 178.

23 C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1953), p. 24.

24 W. W. Comfort, ed., Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes (London, 1951), pp. vii-viii.

period which encompasses her attendance at the court of Poitiers from 1170 to 1174.

Before the time when Marie became his literary patron, very little is known of Chrétien's life. It has been suggested that he was a herald-at-arms at the court of Troyes, but it is more likely that he was a cleric. He has been identified as one Christianus de St. Loup, mentioned in the records of the abbey of Chapelle-aux-Planches.[25] Basing his theory on the internal evidence of Chrétien's poems, Gustave Cohen has suggested that before Chrétien came to Troyes he was with Eleanor in England, during the years immediately following her coronation in 1154. If so, it is probable that Chrétien contributed to literary developments at the London court.[26]

Before Marie's arrival at Troyes in 1164, Chrétien had already written a number of works. He has listed these himself at the beginning of his second romance, Cligés. He is, he says, the author "who wrote of Erec and Enide, and translated into French the commands of Ovid and the Art of Love, and wrote the Shoulder Bite, and about King Mark and the fair Iseut, and about the metamorphosis of the Lapwing, the Swallow and the Nightingale."[27] The first of these Ovidian adaptations, Les Comandemanz Ovide or Les Remèdes d'Amour, is now lost. The second, L'Art d'Amors, a translation of Ovid's

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25 L.A. Vigneras, "Chrétien de Troyes Rediscovered," MP, XXXII (1935), 341-342.

26 Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes, p. 89, The following arrangement and dates of Chrétien's works are those suggested by Cohen.

27 "Cligés," p. 91.

Ars Amatoria, is believed to have been written for Eleanor of Aquitaine while she was Queen of France, that is before 1152.[28] Both L'Art d'Amors and the third adaptation, Le Mors de L'Espaule, the story of Pelops and Tantalus, are now lost. The final Ovidian poem is extant, Philomena or De la Hupe, de l'Aronde et del Rossignol, an elaboration of an episode from the Metamorphoses.

Two romances are associated with Chrétien's early years. The first of these, the "conte populaire" of Guillaume d'Angleterre, is extant but not universally ascribed to Chrétien's authorship. The second is the lost romance of Le Roi Marc et Yseuz la Blonde, the Tristan story mentioned by Chrétien in his introduction to Cligés.

Erec et Enide is the first of Chrétien's five well-known Arthurian romances. It is thought to have been written soon after 1160, since that is the date generally ascribed to the Roman de Troie, which Chrétien's romance evokes or imitates. Erec et Enide should probably be dated between 1160 and 1164, since it is very far from conforming with Marie de Champagne's ideas, being the story of a devoted wife's submission to her husband's persecution. The romance shows a superficial influence of the new ideas on love that were at this time spreading across France, but Chrétien was clearly doubtful about the benefits of love for a knight. Erec et Enide illustrates a conflict between the ideals of knighthood and of courtly love, in which Gloire finally triumphs over Amour. Upholding the code of knighthood against the new ideas on love, Chrétien demonstrates that love should inspire knight-

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[28] Guyer, p. 277.

hood while remaining subordinate to it: the chivalric ideal is opposed to uxoriousness. In Erec et Enide, as in all his romances except Lancelot, Chrétien upholds the institution of marriage.

In Chrétien's next three romances, Cligés, Lancelot, and Yvain, love is conceded to be the sovereign power in the world, and knighthood becomes subordinate to it. Only Lancelot and Yvain, however, were written under Marie's supervision. In spite of certain influences of courtly love evident in Cligés, this romance was probably written before Marie's marriage to the Count of Champagne. The influence of courtly love is seen principally in the Ovidian love casuistry and in the Byzantine setting of the story. The story includes much didacticism on love, written in the new courtly style; love is portrayed as a refined desire and a delicate art, and acknowledged as the supreme power in the world. But the influence of courtly love does not touch the heart of the romance. The heroine's status is equal to the hero's: she is no longer in the inferior position of Erec's wife, but neither is she in the superior position of a courtly lady. Both the love stories in Cligés end in marriage; the sin of adultery is laboriously avoided by the introduction of two magic potions into the plot, and marriage and love are declared to be compatible.

Lancelot, or Le Chevalier de la Charrette, is the most famous of Chrétien's romances, and the first of his works written under Marie de Champagne's patronage. It is a perfect expression of her ideas on love, and Chrétien's dedication gives some idea of the extent of her influence:

> Since my lady of Champagne wishes me to undertake to write a romance, I shall very gladly do so, being so devoted to her service as to do anything in the world for her, without any intention of flattery ... I will say, however, that her command has more to do with this work than any thought or pains that I may expend upon it. Here Chrétien begins his book about the Knight of the Cart. The material and the treatment [matière et sens] of it are given and furnished to him by the Countess, and he is simply trying to carry out her concern and intention.[29]

The adulterous code of courtly love was apparently contrary to Chrétien's own sense of morality. The dedication, in which he emphasized Marie's influence, in places sounds very much like an apology. In Chrétien's earlier romances, love had been subordinate to knighthood, and married love had triumphed over adultery. Lancelot was the only romance in which Chrétien described true courtly love, and, in spite of his memorable presentation of it, he did not find the theme congenial. "We assume that he did not like adultery," comment Cross and Nitze, "no matter how ardently others might justify it on grounds philosophical or social. Chrétien, poet of the courtois world, remains at heart a bon bourgeois. The irony of the situation is that he was instrumental in setting up the 'system.'"[30] Chrétien left the Lancelot unfinished: it was completed by Godefroi de Leigni, who wrote the last thousand verses and noted: "Godefroi de Leigni, the clerk, has written the

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[29] "Lancelot," p. 270.

[30] Tom Peete Cross and William A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guinevere: a Study on the Origins of Courtly Love (Chicago, 1930), p. 69.

conclusion of 'the Cart;' but let no one find fault with him for having embroidered on Chrétien's theme, for it was done with the consent of Chrétien who started it." [31] Chrétien's treatment of love in his last two romances, Yvain and Perceval, confirms the impression that he did not endorse the courtly code.

Lancelot was written after 1164, the date of Marie's marriage. The next romance, Yvain, must have been completed before 1174. Within this period of ten years, critics have ascribed various dates to the composition of the two romances.[32] At that time ideas of courtly love had become fairly widespread in France, and it is possible that Lancelot and Yvain could have been written before Marie de Champagne left Troyes to spend the rest of this ten-year period at the court of Poitiers, which was closed in June 1174.

It is much more probable, however, that Lancelot and Yvain were written after Marie had come under Eleanor's influence, and after the

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[31] "Lancelot," p. 359.

[32] Guyer, p. 277: Lancelot 1164-1165, Yvain 1166-1167.
Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes, p. 77: Lancelot after 1167, Yvain before 1174.
Hermann J. Weigand, Three Chapters on Courtly Love in Arthurian France and Germany (Chapel Hill, 1956), p. 7: Lancelot, 1170.
"Tristram, Lancelot and Courteous Love," London Times Literary Supplement (1 Sep. 1932), p. 597: Lancelot 1170.
Lot-Borodine, p. 5: Lancelot 1172, Yvain 1172-1173.

elaborate code of courtly love had been fully evolved. Lancelot is the most perfect expression extant of courtly love in the form of a romance, and it conforms in every detail to the code. Apparently composed deliberately as an exposition of courtly love, it would be a strange coincidence if it had been written before the code itself was developed at Poitiers.

Andreas Capellanus is known to have accompanied Marie de Champagne to Poitiers, where he recorded the judgements of the court and tabulated the laws of love. It is very probable, although no literary critic seems to have suggested it, that Chrétien de Troyes also accompanied Marie, and that the romances of Lancelot and Yvain were written at Poitiers between 1170 and 1174, not at the court of Troyes.

It seems only logical that these two romances should have been written in an atmosphere of intense interest in the problems of courtly love. If Chrétien did compose them at Poitiers, he wrote under the direct supervision of Marie de Champagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine, at the very time and place where the code of courtly love was most discussed, and where Marie de France (whether she was Henry II's sister or Marie de Champagne) probably wrote her Breton Lais.

Lancelot is a fictional exposition of the code evolved at Poitiers.[33] The heroine is the dominant figure, no longer equal to the hero, as in Cligés, or inferior to him, as in Erec et Enide. Guinevere is the perfect courtly lady, as Lancelot is the perfect courtly lover. For Guinevere, haughty and tyrannical in her attitude toward her lover, love appears to be only a whim. For Lancelot, love is a religion. "L'amour règne dans son âme avec une tyrannie sans nul contre-poids," writes Gaston Paris; il y est le principe des actions les plus hardies et les plus nobles, comme il le fait passer par-dessus toutes les considerations, même de gloire et de conscience. C'est le type absolu de l'amoureux tel qu'il a longtemps été conçu dans la poésie, et rêvé, sinon réalisé, dans la vie."[34] Lancelot's labours in the first part of the story, his continence and singleness of purpose, his knightly prowess, Guinevere's displeasure, their double attempt at suicide, the meeting at night, and Guinevere's contradictory orders at the final tournament, are all in complete accordance with the code recorded by Andreas.

The conflict between courtly love and feudal chivalry could not be more clearly expressed than in the opposition of Lancelot's love to

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[33] For an analysis of the elements of courtly love in Lancelot, see Paris, "Etudes," pp. 516-534; Lot-Borodine, pp. 151-192; Cohen, Chretien de Troyes, pp. 223-301; Wilcox, passim; Cross and Nitze, passim; Lewis, pp. 23-32; Weigand, pp. 7-15; Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Baltimore, 1940), pp. 127-131.

[34] Paris, "Etudes," p. 517.

his knightly honour, reputation for prowess, and duty to defend his sovereign's lady. "La prouesse n'est donc plus qu'un moyen, et pas même le moyen principal, pour conquérir la femme," writes Myrrha Lot-Borodine; "l'honneur, c'est-à-dire la morale de la chevalerie, devient une chose secondaire et qui peut être sacrifiée sans scrupule à la grande cause sentimentale." [35]

In Yvain, knighthood is still subordinate to love, but the romance contains a clear retreat from the values of Poitiers. The motive of the plot is a protest in the name of knighthood against the domination of love, even though the protest is vain. Chrétien rejects the central convention of adultery (upon which the principles of secrecy, humility, and ennoblement logically depend), and Yvain marries his courtly lady, Laudine. Charles Muscatine believes that the conventions of courtly love may be parodied in the romance, particularly in the courtship before the marriage.[36]

Perceval or Le Conte del Graal, Chrétien's final work, was written at the court of Philippe d'Alsace about ten years after Yvain, probably between 1182 and 1184. The theme of the Grail-Quest is believed to have been given to him by the Count. The poem repudiates the values of knighthood and of love (which has degenerated into nothing more than instinctive desire), and the heroine plays an unimportant role. Perceval remained unfinished because of Chrétien's death, around the year 1190.

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35 Lot-Borodine, p. 188.

36 Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), pp. 47-54.

A second literary figure at the court of Troyes was Andreas Capellanus. He was, as his name implies, a chaplain, and recently he has been identified from eight references in the diocesan records of Troyes as Andreas Luyères, a priest and canon of St. Stephen's.[37] Andreas accompanied Marie to Poitiers in 1170, perhaps as one of her spiritual advisors, and Marie commissioned him to record the events in the courts of love there. His De Amore was actually written later, at the court of Troyes, some time between 1174-1190. A considerable amount of internal evidence points to the specific date of 1184 to 1186, [38] which means that the De Amore was written during Marie's regency, when she revived the customs of Poitiers at Troyes.

It has been suggested that Andreas came under the influence of Chrétien de Troyes, imitating his Arthurian romances in the tale of the Breton knight who obtained the thirty-one rules of love, at the end of Book II, and in the short tale of the Garden of Love, in the fifth dialogue of Book I.[39]

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[37] John F. Mahoney, "The Evidence for Andreas Capellanus in Re-Examination," SP, LV (1958), 1-6.

[38] Arpad Steiner, "The Date of the Composition of Andreas Capellanus' De Amore," Speculum, IV (1929), 92-95;
"The Identity of the Italian 'Count' in Andreas Capellanus' De Amore," Speculum, XIII (1938), 304-308.

[39] Mott, p. 52.

Marie de Champagne's influence is as evident in Andreas' work as it is in Chrétien's romances. It was probably not limited to giving Andreas the idea for the book and to making him record the sessions of the courts of love, in which she made many of the judgements. She may have helped with the actual writing of the De Amore. Amy Kelly comments that "the reader perceives through his mind's eye the shadow of Marie at his elbow, correcting, refining, interpolating, and deleting, with the high-handed disregard for sources that made composition a pleasure of self-expression in her day." [40] John Parry, the translator of The Art of Courtly Love, notes that Andreas' knowledge of the Bible, the Church Fathers, and classical Latin writers seems to have been somewhat scanty. Parry comments on the fact that at times the style rises above anything of which Andreas himself seems capable, as though he were writing from dictation.[41]

The De Amore is written in three Books, patterned on Ovid's popular Ars Amatoria, but with the central emphasis reversed: woman is man's inspiration, not his plaything. More than half of the De Amore is devoted to eight long dialogues between men and women of the various ranks of nobility, illustrating how love may be acquired by readiness of speech. The ladies in these dialogues (placed in the first Book)

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40 Kelly, p. 206.

41 Andreas, p. 20.

quibble upon the casuistry of love, while their suitors are verbose and pompous. Andreas' writing has been described as "scholastic gravity unrelieved by imaginative sympathy," [42] and he is thought incapable of using the light touch needed to reproduce elegant courtly speech, so well rendered in Chrétien or Marie de France.

Andreas condenses the essence of courtly love into twelve commandments, included in the fifth dialogue, and into thirty-one rules, listed at the end of the second Book. The notable judgements made by the ladies in the courts of love are contained in the second Book and form the most interesting part of the De Amore.

The third Book is a "Rejection of Love," a complete retraction of the first two Books. It lists an astonishing variety of antifeminist arguments in its support. The retraction is supposedly based on the principles of the Christian faith. Andreas instructs Walter, the young nobleman to whom the De Amore is addressed, to read the work "not as one seeking to take up the life of a lover, but that, invigorated by the theory and trained to excite the minds of women to love, you may, by refraining from so doing, win an eternal recompense and thereby deserve a greater reward from God." [43] This is a strange adaptation of the ennobling power of love: the advice sounds very much like a justification of Andreas' own position at the courts of Poitiers and Troyes.

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[42] Barrow, p. 6.

[43] Andreas, p. 187.

Several critics have attempted to defend the sincerity of Andreas' religious principles. Father Denomy, C.S.B., describes Andreas as a sincere Christian philosopher, writing his work on the principle of the "double truth" expounded by the Latin Averroists. Andreas proves his proposition on rational grounds, and then refutes it on the grounds of faith, as the Averroists did. The statement that love is excellent is proved to be true according to philosophy, but false according to faith.[44] R.J. Schoeck suggests that Andreas was imitating the work of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, The Twelve Steps of Humility (written about fifty years before the De Amore), when he composed the twelve commandments of love. By a conscious use of irony, says Schoeck, Andreas was calling attention to the idolatrous nature of courtly love.[45]

D.W. Robertson, Jr., also sees the De Amore as a work of conscious irony, in which the apparent meaning of the first two Books should be reversed by the reader, whereupon it becomes obvious that the work is an illustration of the triumph of caritas over cupiditas. The nature of the love described in the first two Books is fornicatio. Andreas was a serious priest, maintains Robertson, who knew that idolatrous

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44 Alexander Denomy, "The De Amore of Andreas Capellanus and the Condemnation of 1277," Medieval Studies, VIII (1946), 107-149; The Heresy of Courtly Love (New York, 1947).

45 R.J. Schoeck, "Andreas Capellanus and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: The Twelve Rules of Love and the Twelve Steps of Humility," MLN, LXVI (1951), 295-300.

sexual love was an extreme form of cupiditas and a reflection of the Fall of Man. The attractions of cupidity are therefore portrayed ironically by Andreas, as they are by Chrétien de Troyes, Guillaume de Lorris, and other writers who are normally regarded as serious exponents of courtly love.[46]

To John Jay Parry, on the other hand, Andreas seems "less like a philosopher following innocently a course which reason and nature tell him is right than like a scoundrel calculating the risks of violating the code under which he has been brought up."[47] His retraction of love was due, not to Christian principles, but to simple expediency based on ecclesiastical ambition. Andreas was really nothing less than a hypocrite, writing the retraction to satisfy his ecclesiastical superiors.

This view of Andreas is substantiated by the nature of the retraction itself, and by the first two Books of the De Amore which reveal him as a worldly man. The rejection of love does little to change the picture of Andreas as a very Chaucerian kind of cleric, an impression created by several passages in the first two Books. At the beginning of the first Book, Andreas is anxious to establish that the clergy are

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[46] Robertson, "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Gardens," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24-49;
"The Subject of the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus," MP, L (1953), 145-161.

[47] Parry, Review of The Heresy of Courtly Love by Alexander Denomy, MLQ, X (1949), 107-109.

superior in rank to the highest nobility, and in the introduction to the eight dialogues he writes, "among men we find one rank more than among women, since there is a man more noble than any of these, that is, the clerk."[48] Clerks make better lovers than noblemen, declares the suitor in the eighth dialogue.

After excusing the love of the clergy as being perfectly permissible, Andreas introduces a section on the love of nuns, on which John Parry comments:

> Andreas boasts of his own skill in 'the art of soliciting nuns' and smacks his lips over an adventure he once had with one of them; very regretfully he was forced to decline her proffered advances because of the very severe penalties which, in this world and the next, are inflicted upon a man who carries on a love affair with a nun. The picture we get of Andreas from his book is that of a man who is connected with the Church, but for whom spiritual affairs are not the first consideration.[49]

This extraordinary book, written under the influence of Marie de Champagne and recording her activities and those of other courtly ladies, was certainly not read as a spiritual restorative. Its influence was at least as strong as the practical example of the courts at Poitiers and Troyes in spreading the theory of courtly love across France and the rest of western Europe. Although it was not translated into English until 1941, the large number of extant manuscripts in French, Italian, Spanish and German, testifies to its unusual popularity.

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[48] Andreas, p. 36.

[49] Andreas, p. 18.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COURTLY LADY IN LITERATURE

A) CHANSONS DE GESTE AND ROMANS D'AVENTURE

The chansons de geste, French epic poems dating from the beginning of the eleventh century, deal with the actions of the tragic hero, with war and with feudal loyalty. The poems were composed by writers of northern France, far from the regions in which courtly love developed one hundred years later. W. Wistar Comfort describes the chansons de geste as "devoted either to the conflict of Christendom under the leadership of France against the Saracens, or else to the strife and rivalry of French vassals among themselves."

> These epic poems, of which some three score have survived, portray a warlike, virile, unsentimental feudal society, whose chief occupation was fighting, and whose dominant ideals were faith in God, loyalty to feudal and family ties, and bravery in battle. Woman's place is comparatively obscure, and of love-making there is little said. It is a poetry of vigorous manhood, of uncompromising morality, and of hard knocks given and taken for God, for Christendom, and the King of France. [1]

The character and status of the women in the chansons de geste are in accord with the feudal and ecclesiastical conceptions of womanhood. The contrast between these women and the courtly ladies of literature

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[1] Arthurian Romances by Chrétien de Troyes (London, 1951), p. xv.
For the convenience of literary criticism, Dorothy Everett has divided French medieval literature into the following five categories:
(1) chansons de geste;
(2) romans d'aventure [including the "society romances," see below, p. 126];
(3) saints' legends, didactic biographies;
(4) ballads, which alluded to a story already familiar to the hearer;
(5) narrative tales, simple and brief, including the fabliaux.
See "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances," Essays and Studies, XV (1929), 100.

demonstrates the revolutionary nature of courtly love. Far from being figures of central importance, women here are insignificant. "When present at all," writes Thomas Kirby, "they take but a minor part, far removed from the charming tyrant and all-inspiring goddess of later days." [2]

Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, however, the position of women in the chansons de geste underwent changes. In the early poems, women were minor incidents in the careers of the heroes. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, owing to the influence of the courtly romances, they became compelling agents and objects to be won.

In spite of the increasing prominence of women, they did not command any greater respect from the hero. Throughout the three hundred years that the chansons de geste developed as a literary form, the hero remained first and last a fighting-man. "Only as a diversion or by chance is he interested in woman. His dearest companions throughout," writes Comfort, "are his horse and his sword; only from time to time do we hear of his wife, his mother or his sweetheart." [3] In these epics courtly love made no impression on the ecclesiastical and feudal attitude toward woman.

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[2] Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love (Louisiana, 1940), p. 32. Kirby cites as examples Alde and Bramimonde of the Chanson de Roland, Guiborc of the Guillaume d'Orange, and Belyssant of Amis et Amile.

[3] W. Wistar Comfort, "The Character Types in the Old French Chansons de Geste," PMLA, XXI (1906), 331.

In Raoul de Cambrai, for example, the hero curses his own mother when she tries to offer him advice. Before burning down the convent at Origny, he hurls insulting epithets at the Mother Superior. As the convent is destroyed, the mother of Bernier, Raoul's vassal, is burned to death; Bernier sees her body, with her psalter still burning on her breast, but, being a faithful vassal, he says nothing.

In the second part of Raoul de Cambrai, the prominent position of the heroine demonstrates the influence of the romances. The chanson describes her love for Bernier. When Bernier arrives as a guest at Guerri's castle, the host's daughter is immediately attracted to him, and she sends her father's chamberlain to bring him to her rooms, to bathe and to play chess with her. When Bernier comes, she takes the initiative and describes her own charms to him.

Her behaviour is typical of the heroines of the chansons de geste, in which it was considered the woman's role to fall in love and to make the advances to the man, often in a forceful manner. The hero was occupied with matters of greater importance. His role was to perform heroic deeds, for which the love offered to him was a natural reward. As a consequence of this attitude, the hero was disdainful toward even the most amorous women, often dismissing their offers of love as annoyances.[4]

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[4] See Comfort, "Character Types," pp. 376-379; Thomas Wright, Womankind in all Ages of Western Europe (London, 1869), pp. 110-113.

In the twelfth century, poets such as Chrétien de Troyes began to write romans d'aventure, or chivalric romances, defined by Dorothy Everett as "stories of adventure in which the chief parts are played by knights, famous kings or distressed ladies, acting more often under the impulse of love, religious faith, or, in many, mere desire for adventure."[5] Adventure and love are the two great themes of these works; interest is shifted from deed to motive, and the psychological element elaborated.

The theory of courtly love is most apparent in the kind of romances which Sarah Barrow regards as a subdivision of the romans d'aventure: this group is composed of the romances of sentiment, the "society romances," in which "adventure itself is of secondary importance, yielding in interest to sentimental psychology and to social refinement."[6] In these "society romances" the personality of the courtly lady began to develop during a period of roughly twenty years, before Guinevere emerged as the perfect courtly lady in Chrétien de Troyes' Lancelot.

The transition from epic to romance was gradual. The first romances, such as Aubri de Besançon's Roman d'Alexandre, attempt to place deeds of medieval chivalry in the setting of classical times. Epic and romantic elements are juxtaposed in the Roman de Thèbes, written around the year 1150: it is full of echoes of the epic Chanson de Roland, but it also has a new social aura of courtliness, a taste for marvellous

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5 "A Characterization," p. 100.

6 The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), p. 2.

description, and a few simple love-episodes that are not found in the classical version of the Thebiad.[7]

The Roman d'Eneas, written five or ten years after the Roman de Thèbes, also alternates the heroic and erotic styles: there is no relation between Aeneas at war and Aeneas in love. In the erotic parts of the romance, the symptoms and manners of courtly love are described. Lavinia is developed as the heroine, and a detailed account is given of her love for Aeneas, described with elaborate rhetoric, and monologue.[8]

Benoit de Sainte-Maure introduces three love stories into the interminable battle scenes of his Roman de Troie, written around 1160 and dedicated to Eleanor of Aquitaine.[9] Because of his connections with Eleanor and with the story of Troilus and Briseida (one of the three "love stories"), and because of his influence on the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Benoit de Sainte-Maure is often associated with the development of courtly love.[10] But in reality, Benoit was an antifeminist. His dedication to Eleanor is placed in the context of a tirade against women's frailty and inconstancy. His version of the story of Troilus and Briseida is written to demonstrate the inconstancy of a faithless mistress.

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[7] Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), pp. 12-13.

[8] Ibid.

[9] F.A.G. Cooper, "Date and Dedication of the Roman de Troie," MP, XXVII (1930), 379-382.

[10] On the appearance of courtly love in the romances of Eneas and Troie, and the influence which these works may have had on Chrétien de Troyes, see Gustave Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes et Son Oeuvre (Paris, 1948), pp. 38-73.

Benoit invented the episode of Briseida's infidelity. Her relationship to Diomede forms the central part of his version of the story, which begins with Briseida's separation from Troilus. Benoit warns all men to heed the moral of this story, and not to put their trust in women. He has an Ovidian conception of love as a degrading passion. In his version of the story, there is nothing courtly about the love affair or about Briseida's character, and Benoit says it was public knowledge that she was Troilus' mistress. Briseida's grief at separation from Troilus does not prevent her from carefully packing all her possessions and adorning herself for the journey. Upon her arrival in the Greek camp, she behaves insolently to her father, and her resistance to Diomede's advances is from the beginning extremely weak. Briseida is beautiful and accomplished, possessing wealth and social status, but she is not a courtly lady.[11]

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[11] Homer H. Hughes, Chaucer's Criseyde and her Ancestry (unpub. diss., Texas, 1948), pp. 74-100.

R.M. Lumiansky, "The Story of Troilus and Briseida According to Benoit and Guido," Speculum, XXIX (1954), 727-733. Lumiansky points out that Guido delle Colonne, the author of a history and not a romance, is even more antifeminist than Benoit.

B) THE LAYS OF MARIE DE FRANCE

Little is known of Marie de France except that she was probably born around 1140 in the town of Pitre, in Normandy. She is believed to have spent most of her life in England, probably at the London court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine, since Gaston Paris thinks Henry II is the unnamed king to whom the Lays are dedicated.[12] It has been suggested that she was Marie de Champagne, Eleanor's daughter. She has also been tentatively identified as the noblewoman who was the abbess of Shaftesbury from 1181 to 1215, a natural daughter of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, and hence a half-sister of Henry II.

Marie's Breton Lays have been described as "the most delightful literary productions of the twelfth century."[13] The date of their composition is generally assigned to the years between 1160 and 1175. They are short poems (varying in length from 150 to 900 lines), marked by simplicity, wisdom, and a gentle melancholy. Although they have an aura of courtliness and the principles of courtly love are observed, Marie sometimes seems to excuse adultery rather than to glorify it. In their realism the lays differ from the romances of most of the courtly writers of the twelfth century. Marie's poems are like character studies

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[12] Lays of Marie de France and Other French Legends, trans. Eugene Mason (London, 1954), introd.

[13] Sidney Painter, French Chivalry (Baltimore, 1940), p. 131.

in the form of short stories, in which, in spite of an observance of the outward appearance of courtly love, the people do not behave like typical courtly lovers.

Marie de France wrote with her eye on the real world, which for her was the aristocratic world of the court. She saw for herself that love was not inevitably the source of all good, and she portrayed normal behaviour, not that dictated by the code of courtly love. As S. Forster Damon points out, courtly love interested Marie only for its practical results, not for its theoretical possibilities. "She did not judge (whether to praise or condemn) her characters by its laws, -- which indeed were still fluid; she observed, rather, the effect of those laws upon them." [14]

Marie's realism, and consequent deviations from the code of courtly love, are particularly apparent in her portrayal of ladies. She endows them with natural qualities, and the more human and realistic they become, the further they remove from the prototype of the courtly lady, who is a combination of queen and goddess. In spite of their gracious manners, high status, beauty and modesty, they lack the "daunger" of the courtly lady, her tyranny and indifference. In the "Lay of Sir Launfal," for example, Tryamour declares her love to Sir Launfal at their first meeting, gives him presents, and comes to him whenever he summons her. When Sir Launfal

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[14] S. Forster Damon, "Marie de France: Psychologist of Courtly Love," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 968.

boasts rashly that he loves a lady more beautiful than the Queen, he is brought to trial, and Tryamour comes to Arthur's court to show her beauty and to vindicate her lover.

The heart of courtly love is missing from the Lays because, as Forster Damon says, Marie was too much of a realist to portray her own sex as perfect. She could not idealize the courtly lady as masculine writers did. "Once the essential adoration was punctured, the heart was gone out of the whole system. She respected her sex, of course; but she had enough cattiness in her not to respect all of it. Her heroines fare a shade worse than her heroes at times, though none of the men are wholly perfect, either." [15]

Homer Hughes suggests that Marie's realistic treatment of her heroines helped to pave the way for the test of reality which Chaucer was to give courtly love.[16] Forster Damon makes a similar comment: "As a classifier of these souls, Marie takes her place as a forerunner of Chaucer. But since she was a woman of noble blood, her knowledge of life was much more limited. She would have loved Madame Eglantine, forgiven Criseyde without effort, and ignored the Wife of Bath." [17]

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[15] Damon, p. 968.

[16] Hughes, p. 127.

[17] Damon, p. 995.

C) THE HEROINES OF CHRETIEN DE TROYES

Though the courtly lady was to be most perfectly represented in the character of Guinevere in Chrétien's Lancelot, some influences of the code are evident even in the treatment of his earlier heroines. In his first romance, Erec et Enide, the lady is described in the most laudatory terms. She occupies as prominent a place in the story as the hero, who marries her because of her beauty and charm, forgetting his duties of knighthood for her sake.

In spite of the contrast between Enide and the heroines of the chansons de geste, however, the romance is in essence the antithesis of courtly love. Neither in her own character nor in the plot in which she is placed is Enide a courtly lady. Like the heroines of Marie de France, she lacks Guinevere's "daunger" and tyrannical attitude toward her lover. According to Chrétien, she is "affable, of pleasing character and kindly mien." [18] Myrrha Lot-Borodine describes Enide as "une enfant humble et craintive, dont le premier mouvement est de se courber sous la volonté supérieure à la sienne." Enide knows, from the beginning of the romance, that a wife should not interfere with a knight's duties: "elle reconnaît que le devoir de l'homme est de 'valoir' et celui de la femme de s'effacer discrètement et de vivre dans l'ombre projetée par la gloire de son seigneur." [19]

Enide herself reproves Erec for neglecting his duties because of his preoccupation with her. The major part of the romance then relates the

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[18] Chrétien de Troyes, Arthurian Romances, ed. W. Wistar Comfort (London, 1951), p. 32.

[19] La Femme et l'Amour au XIIe Siècle (Paris, 1909), p. 75.

trials through which, in order to prove that his love is subordinate to his knighthood, he leads Enide on their travels. Finally he is reconciled to Enide in married love. "Et l'idée maîtresse du roman se dégage d'elle-même comme un fruit mûr, se détachant de la branche: L'homme ne doit jamais sacrifier sa prouesse à son amour pour une femme." [21]

As William Nitze has pointed out, the moral of Erec et Enide is emphasized by the episode of the Joy of the Court.[22] This episode tells the story of the knight Mabonagrain and the lady who loved him. Fearing to lose Mabonagrain's love, the lady one day made him swear a "rash boon" to do whatever she asked him; she then specified that he was never to leave the garden in which they lived together, until he was defeated in combat by another knight. In this way she hoped to make him devote his life to love and to prevent him from fulfilling his duty as a knight. The lady receives her just deserts when Erec achieves the Joy of the Court and defeats Mabonagrain; she is heart-broken, because she no longer has any hold on her lover. In telling

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[21] Lot-Borodine, p. 76.
C.S. Lewis comments: "The story belongs to the same general type as that of Griselda -- the story of wifely patience triumphing over ordeals imposed by the irresponsible cruelty of a husband -- and, as such, it cannot possibly reconcile itself with even the most moderate ideal of courtesy." The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1953), p. 26.

[22] "Erec and the Joy of the Court," Speculum, XXIX (1954), 691-701. See "Erec et Enide," pp. 71-83.

her story to Enide, she gives a revealing description of their courtship: "I was still but a little child. He was very handsome and attractive. There we had an understanding between us that pleased us both. I never had any wish but his, until at last he began to love me and promised and swore to me that he would always be my lover and that he would bring me here: that pleased us both alike."

Enide reciprocates by telling the lady about her relationship with Erec, and she illustrates the similar antithesis between herself and the courtly lady of theory:

> "Fair cousin, he married me in such a way that my father knew all about it, and my mother was greatly pleased. All our relatives knew and rejoiced over it, as they should do. . . . . For he is so good a knight that better cannot be found, and he is of very gentle birth: I do not think that any can be his equal. He loves me much, and I love him more, and our love cannot be greater. Never yet could I withhold my love from him, nor should I do so. For is not my lord the son of a king? For did he not take me when I was poor and naked? Through him has such honour come to me that never was any such vouchsafed to a poor helpless girl." 23

In Cligés, the last of Chrétien's poems written before he came under the influence of Marie de Champagne, the heroines approach closer to the courtly lady. Soredamors and Fenice are equal in status to the heroes of the romance, Alexander and his son Cligés; the heroines are not inferior to their lovers as Enide was, but they are not yet in the superior position of the courtly lady.

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23 "Erec et Enide," pp. 80–82.

Like Alexander, Soredamors exhibits all the usual physical symptoms of a lover, indulging in typically long monologues filled with the new casuistry of love. She behaves with a certain reserve. "Did ever such a thing come about that a woman should be so forward as to make love to any man, unless she were clean beside herself," she asks in a soliloquy. But her reserve is not owing to any sense of "daunger." She is afraid of earning Alexander's disapproval, and on one occasion she nervously tries to summon the courage to address him by name. Unlike the courtly lady, Soredamors does not judge her lover objectively, or consider whether he is worthy of her love. She is as infatuated with him as he is with her, and she declares: "If he love me not, yet will I love him." [24] Myrrha Lot-Borodine describes Soredamors as "l'image d'une héroine courtoise, figure gracieuse à peine ésquissée; -- c'est la vierge aux cheveux d'or qui ouvre ses yeux noyés d'extase à la clarté du premier jour d'amour." She points out that Soredamors is too sweet to be a typical courtly lady.[25]

During their "courtship," Soredamors and Alexander have scarcely exchanged a word, but the Queen, having perceived from their blushes and other signs that they are in love, gives Soredamors to Alexander with these words: "You are acting very foolishly in not speaking out your mind; for concealment will be the death of you; thus you will be the murderers of Love. Now I counsel you to exercise no tyranny, and to seek no passing

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[24] "Cligés," pp. 97-109.

[25] Lot-Borodine, pp. 98, 150.

gratification in your love; but to be honourably joined together in marriage." [26] The first three principles of courtly love, in other words, adultery, secrecy, and "tyranny," have no place in this romance, and even the ennobling power of love does not noticeably improve Alexander's knightly qualities.

In the story of Cligés, son of Soredamors and Alexander, Chrétien makes his second heroine protest explicitly against the principle of adultery, so essential to the code of courtly love. Fenice, the maiden who loves and is loved by Cligés, is introduced as the future wife of the emperor Alis. Contrary to the courtly code, she regards marriage as infidelity to her love. She asks her nurse, Thessala, for help: "I would rather be torn limb from limb than that men should speak of us as they speak of the loves of Iseut and Tristan, of whom so many unseemly stories are told that I should be ashamed to mention them. I could never bring myself to lead the life that Iseut led." [27] Confessing her love to Cligés, Fenice affirms her resolve not to follow Iseult's example (or to conform to the adulterous code of courtly love).[28]

Although the marriage itself cannot be prevented, the lovers' problems are solved by two magic potions, the first of which renders the

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[26] "Cligés," p. 121.

[27] "Cligés," pp. 131-132.

[28] "Cligés," pp. 159-160.
Some critics see the romance as a deliberate answer to the story of Tristan and Iseult. See Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes, Chapter VI: "Un Anti-Tristan: Cligés."
Sarah Barrow comments, "Perhaps, as some think, Chrétien intended the romance as an 'anti-Tristan;' Fenice certainly saw herself as an anti-Iseult." Page 42.

emperor impotent, and the second of which produces apparent death in Fenice. The intricacies of the plot are created so that adultery can be avoided. Cligés finally becomes the emperor of Greece, making Fenice his empress, and the romance ends with a declaration of the compatibility of love and marriage.

The romances of Erec et Enide and Cligés repudiate adultery and other central concepts of the courtly code. Enide, Soredamors and Fenice believe in married love, and they treat their husbands with respect. Their similarities to the courtly lady are purely superficial, occurring only in their beauty and qualities of courtoisie, in their position as an object of love, and in the conventional symptoms of the love from which they themselves suffer.

In Chrétien's Lancelot, or Le Chevalier de la Charrette, the perfect courtly lady appears at last in the character of Guinevere. Written under the direct influence of Marie de Champagne, Lancelot was specifically designed to illustrate the tenets of the code of courtly love. The romance tells of Lancelot's efforts to rescue Queen Guinevere from her abductor, Meleagant, son of the king of Gorre, who has taken her to the land "whence no foreigner returns."

Lancelot's perfection as a courtly lover and his valour as a knight emerge in adventures recounted in detail in the first part of the poem, where he attempts to follow the queen to the king of Gorre's castle.[29] After defeating Meleagant, Lancelot is shown into Guinevere's presence.

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29 "Lancelot," pp. 270-319. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

This is Guinevere's first appearance since her abduction. The famous scene that follows is the reader's introduction to the courtly lady par excellence and to her quality of "daunger."

> When the Queen saw the king [Bademagu of Gorre] holding Lancelot by the hand, she rose before the king, but she looked displeased with clouded brow, and she spoke not a word. "Lady, here is Lancelot come to see you," says the king; "you ought to be pleased and satisfied." "I, sire? He cannot please me. I care nothing about seeing him." "Come now, lady," says the king who was very frank and courteous, "what induces you to act like this? You are too scornful toward a man who has served you so faithfully that he has repeatedly exposed his life to mortal danger on this journey for your sake, and who has defended and rescued you from my son Meleagant who had deeply wronged you." "Sire, truly he has made poor use of his time. I shall never deny that I feel no gratitude toward him." Now Lancelot is dumbfounded; but he replies very humbly like a polished lover: "Lady, certainly I am grieved at this, but I dare not ask your reason." The Queen listened as Lancelot voiced his disappointment, but in order to grieve and confound him, she would not answer a single word, but returned to her room (pp. 319-320).

Later, Guinevere explains the cause of her displeasure to Lancelot. "What? Did you not hesitate for shame to mount the cart? You showed you were loath to get in, when you hesitated for two whole steps. That is the reason why I would neither address nor look at you." "May God save me from such a crime again," Lancelot replies, "and may God show me no mercy, if you were not quite right! For God's sake, lady, receive my amends at once, and tell me, for God's sake, if you can ever pardon me." (p. 327)

The nature of Lancelot's "crime" is an excellent indication of the perfection expected of the courtly lover. The extent of the sacrifice demanded of Lancelot in mounting the cart is made very clear.

> In those days such a cart served the same purpose as does a pillory now; and in each good town where there are more than three thousand such carts nowadays, in those times there was only one, and this, like our pillories, had to do service for all those who commit murder or treason, and those who are guilty of any delinquency, and for thieves who have stolen others' property or have forcibly seized it on the roads. Whoever was convicted of any crime was placed upon a cart and dragged through all the streets, and

he lost henceforth all his legal rights, and was never afterward heard, honoured or welcomed in any court. The carts were so dreadful in those days that the saying was then first used: "When thou dost see and meet a cart, cross thyself and call upon God, that no evil may befall thee" (p. 274).

Lancelot is aware of the disgrace this entails (and throughout the rest of the romance he is subjected to many insults because of it), but he hesitates only a second before sacrificing his honour to love. The account of his momentary inner conflict is a notable example of the allegorical style of psychological realism in the courtly romances.

Common sense, which is inconsistent with love's dictates, bids him refrain from getting in, warning him and counselling him to do and undertake nothing for which he may reap shame and disgrace. Reason, which dares thus speak to him, reaches only his lips, but not his heart; but love is enclosed within his heart, bidding him and urging him to mount at once upon the cart. So he jumps in, since love will have it so, feeling no concern about the shame, since he is prompted by love's commands (pp. 274-275).

Guinevere's displeasure at this momentary hesitation is in accordance with the rules of courtly love, although by any other standards it could be interpreted only as cruel ingratitude. She should not, however, be regarded as ungrateful. She behaves as a courtly lady should under the circumstances, fulfilling her obligation to reprove her lover whenever he makes the slightest deviation from the code which is supposed to lead him to perfection. Guinevere, as Myrrha Lot-Borodine points out, is the antithesis of Enide: "elle ne vit pas de la tendresse qu'elle donne, mais de l'hommage qu'elle reçoit," [30]

Guinevere sincerely loves Lancelot. Although it is belied by her behaviour in public, and (according to standards other than those of courtly love) by her treatment of Lancelot in the preceding scene, the

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[30] Lot-Borodine, p. 191.

depth of her love is revealed when a rumour reaches the castle that Lancelot has been killed:

> The news of this spread until it reached the Queen, who was sitting at meat. She almost killed herself on hearing the false report about Lancelot, but she supposes it to be true, and therefore she is in such dismay that she almost loses the power to speak; but, because of those present, she forces herself to say: "In truth, I am sorry for his death, and it is no wonder that I grieve, for he came into this country for my sake, and therefore I should mourn for him." Then she says to herself, so that the others should not hear, that no one need ask her to drink or eat, if it is true that he is dead, in whose life she found her own. (p. 322).

Guinevere then exhibits the typical sang-froid of the great courtly lady, as she begins to commit suicide by starving herself. Her beauty fades and she grows weak: "the Queen thus mourned for him without eating or drinking, until they thought she too would die" (p. 323). If she had not learned that Lancelot was alive, she undoubtedly would have killed herself.

Guinevere's qualities of "bel accueil," "fraunchise," and "pity" are revealed when Lancelot meets her again at Bedemagu's castle. "This time the Queen did not lower her eyes to the ground, but she went to meet him cheerfully, honouring him all she could, and making him sit down by her side. Then they talked together at length of all that was upon their hearts" (p.326). In spite of Guinevere's fear for her reputation ("drede"), they arrange a meeting for that night: "her love and her heart go out to him" (p. 329).

The courtly lady has complete power over her lover. This is the thesis of the whole romance, which becomes very clear in the account of Lancelot's behaviour during the tournament at Noauz (pp. 341-345). Guinevere asserts her authority until she is sure that her whim is Lancelot's law. "En effet, la victoire de l'amour est complète dans la

scène du tournoi," writes Myrrha Lot-Borodine, "la domination de la dame y absolue, son caprice proclamé une loi inviolable et accepté par l'ami avec une pleine confiance, aveuglement." 33

On the first day of the tournament, Guinevere thinks she recognizes the disguised knight because of his outstanding valour, and she sends him a secret message to do his worst. Lancelot accepts her command willingly, "like one who is altogether hers," and makes himself the laughing stock of the whole tournament. "And the Queen, as she watches him, is happy and well-pleased, for she knows full well, though she does not say it, that this is surely Lancelot." On the second day, Guinevere sends Lancelot the same message, and his reply is "My thanks to her, since such is her will!" When Guinevere hears of this answer, "she heartily rejoiced, feeling no longer any doubt that this is he to whom she altogether belongs, and he is hers in like manner." She sends her damsel back to Lancelot with the final message to do his best. "Tell her now that it is never a hardship to do her will, for whatever pleases her is my delight," replies Lancelot, and the damsel comments to Guinevere: "Lady, I never saw so courteous a knight, for he is more ready to obey every command you send to him, for, if the truth be known, he accepts good and evil with the same countenance." "Indeed," says the Queen, "that may well be so."

Lancelot has proved himself to be a perfect courtly lover. He is finally rescued from his prison and returns to Arthur's court amid great rejoicing, in time for his appointed joust with Meleagant (pp. 346-356). Guinevere is the most joyful of all, but she complies with the dictates of secrecy and is careful to hide her happiness from Arthur and the rest of the

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33 Lot-Borodine, p. 187.

the court. Lancelot defeats Meleagant for the third time and kills him, and the romance ends, leaving Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot to live in the typical courtly "ménage à trois" detested by Fenice.

As a summary of Guinevere's role as a courtly lady in the romance, Gaston Paris' famous account of her character is worth quoting at length:

> Elle est le modèle de toutes les perfections de la femme, comme Lancelot est celui de toutes les vertus viriles. Sa courtoisie et sa douceur ont captivé le bon roi Bademagu, comme la façon accomplie dont elle remplit ses fonctions de reine fait le bonheur de son mari et le charme de sa cour. Elle aime Lancelot autant qu'elle en est aimée, et ne paraît pas plus que lui éprouver de remords de sa conduite. Quand elle le croit mort, et qu'elle a lieu de penser que sa dureté avec lui en est la cause indirecte, elle se résout à mourir de faim, cachant d'ailleurs l'excès de sa douleur et son sinistre dessein, et conservant avec tous le décorum qui convient à son rang. Pour le voir et le recevoir, elle oublie les dangers qu'elle peut courir, et lui donne le rendezvous qui manque en effet la perdre. Mais à coté de ces traits qui lui sont communs avec son amant, sa conduite avec lui en présente de tout opposés. Elle l'accueille, après la merveilleuse aventure qu'il a pour elle seule menée à bonne fin, avec une durèté extrême, fondée sur ce qu'il a hésité un instant à accepter l'infamie pour la suivre, ce qui serait la plus cruelle ingratitude si ce n'était l'application des règles d'un art raffiné de l'amour. Elle se plaît à lui imposer ses fantaisies les plus singulières, comme quand elle lui ordonne de se comporter au tournoi du pis qu'il pourra, et elle se réjouit en son coeur de la docilité enfantine qu'elle rencontre, et qu'elle a préparée en réprimant comme elle l'a fait la plus légère apparence d'écart. Aux yeux du poète, elle est en cela dans son rôle tout aussi bien que lui, et elle est le type accompli de dame tout comme il est celui de l'ami. [34]

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[34] "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II," Romania, XII (1883), 517-518.
See also Cohen, Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 223-301;
and Tom Peete Cross and William A. Nitze, Lancelot and Guenevere: a Study on the Origins of Courtly Love (Chicago, 1930), passim.

Chrétien's Yvain, or Le Chevalier au Lion, is also a romance of courtly love, but it shows a movement away from the code since the principle of adultery is not observed: the hero kills the heroine's husband and then marries her himself. "L'action du Chevalier au Lion tourne autour du même pivot que celle de la Charrette, 'autour des bonnes grâces de la dame,' implorée par son ami, prêt à vivre ou à mourir pour l'amour d'elle," writes Myrrha Lot-Borodine. "Cependant la différence est déjà marquée. D'abord, il ne s'agit plus maintenant d'adultère mondain, mais d'une possession complète et legitime." [35]

Apart from the fact that she marries Yvain, Laudine is in all other respects a typical courtly lady, very similar to Guinevere in character. She is "hautaine, impitoyable et dure." A certain complexity in her character arises from the fact that she also has traits of the popular literary type of the "veuve vite consolée." Laudine takes the dominant role in her relationship with Yvain: he loves, she allows herself to be loved. Unlike Soredamors and Enide, Laudine is willing to accept her lover (or husband) only on the condition that she is adored. As Lot-Borodine points out:

> Cette particularité qui éloigne Laudine des premières héroïnes de Chrétien, la rapproche de la reine Guinièvre. Pareille à la dame de Lancelot, elle domine, même absent, toute la situation, et il n'est pas exact de dire qu'elle n'est qu'une 'figure secondaire' parce qu'elle n'apparaît que furtivement dans notre récit. [36]

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[35] Lot-Borodine, p. 237.

[36] Lot-Borodine, p. 236.
Like Guinevere, it is interesting that the Celtic sources of the story reveal Laudine as originally supernatural, a fairy mistress, analogous to the figure of Morgan le Fay.

In the second part of the romance, Yvain makes a vain protest against Laudine's domination in his attempt to resume his independent life of knighthood. He leaves her to go on a quest and fails to return within the time she had specified. Laudine is humiliated, to say the least, at Yvain's attempt to put her in the second place in his life. Her pride is offended (quite rightly so, according to the code of courtly love), and she shows herself to be unforgiving and irreconcilable.

Yvain tries to expiate his sin in her eyes by a series of heroic deeds occupying more than half the romance. In the end, Laudine is reconciled to him, but only because of the damsel Lunete's ruse in making her swear to restore the anonymous 'Knight with the Lion' to his lady's favour. The Knight is Yvain; the lady is Laudine herself; and when she realizes she has been tricked, she exclaims:

"God save me! You have caught me neatly in a trap! You will make me love, in spite of myself, a man who neither loves nor esteems me. This is a fine piece of work, and a charming way of serving me! I would rather endure the winds and the tempests all my life: And if it were not a mean and ugly thing to break one's word, he would never make his peace or be reconciled with me" (p. 268).

Yvain makes his peace by repentance:

"Lady, one ought to have mercy on a sinner. I have had to pay, and dearly to pay, for my mad act. It was madness that made me stay away, and I now admit my guilt and sin. I have been bold, indeed, in daring to present myself to you; but if you will deign to keep me now, I never again shall do you any wrong" (pp. 268-269).

The romance of Yvain presents the same problem as that in Erec et Enide, the conflict of Gloire and Amour, but the opposite solution is

given: in Yvain, the knight is conquered by his love for the courtly lady. The romance of Perceval, or Le Conte del Graal, Chrétien's last work, depicts the triumph of Dieu over both the ideals of Gloire and Amour. Man is once again predominant over woman. The only "heroine" in the romance is Blanchefleur, a maiden in distress whom Perceval rescues and briefly loves; he leaves her to continue his quest, stating his honourable intention of returning to marry her. Love is sacrificed to the abstract ideal of the Grail-Quest, and Perceval's only goal in life is eternal beauty: Blanchefleur is described by Lot-Borodine as "une amoureuse sacrifiée." [37] The courtly lady has disappeared.

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[37] Lot-Borodine, p. 275.

D) THE LADY OF THE ROSE

Between 1229 and 1236, some fifty years after Chrétien's death, Guillaume de Lorris began his Roman de la Rose. He wrote 4,500 lines of the complete poem, which was brought to five times this length by the satirical Jean de Meun, some time between 1268 and 1277.[38] The courtly lady appears only in Guillaume's part of the poem, for Jean de Meun was an antifeminist as well as a satirist. The Roman de la Rose was famous in the Middle Ages largely because of Jean's abusive satire of women, which precipitated quarrels between feminists and antifeminists until the time of Christine de Pisan, at the end of the fourteenth century. The poem became known as a heresy against the religion of Love. Chaucer, for example, did not translate the satire in his version of the poem (although he drew on it freely for the Wife of Bath's Prologue), but his translation led the god of Love to accuse him of writing "an heresye ayeins my lawe" (Legend of Good Women, Prol., 330).

Guillaume's part of the Roman de la Rose is a perfect exposition of courtly love, comparable only to Chrétien's Lancelot in its strict adherence to the code. Chrétien's romans d'aventure probably played a large

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[38] F.M. Warren, "On the Date and Composition of Guillaume de Lorris' Roman de la Rose," PMLA, XXIII (1908), 269-284.

Guillaume's part of the poem continues up to line 4432 of Chaucer's translation, "The Romaunt of the Rose," in F.N. Robinson's edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1933). Subsequent references will be made in the text to this translation, rather than to the French edition of Le Roman de la Rose, trans. André Mary (Paris, 1928), pp. 19-83.

part in developing the allegorical form used by Guillaume de Lorris. Wherever Chrétien describes thoughts or a state of mind, he tends to use an allegorical style in which a normal monologue is replaced by an inner 'dialogue,' held between the two emotions conflicting in the person's mind. Love and Reason debate as Lancelot hesitates to mount the shameful cart ("Lancelot," pp. 274-275), Pity and Generosity conflict within him as he wonders whether to spare a prisoner's life or to grant a damsel's request to kill him (pp. 305-306), and Common-sense struggles with Guinevere's Love as she tries to disguise her joy at Lancelot's return to Arthur's court (p. 356). "It is as if . . . men could not easily grasp the reality of moods and emotions without turning them into shadowy persons," comments C.S. Lewis. "Allegory, besides being many other things, is the subjectivism of an objective age." [39]

Guillaume de Lorris omitted the adventurous action of the romances, and concentrated solely on the psychology of courtly love. Using the allegorical form developed in the monologues of the romances, he portrayed a love story enacted by the personifications of the lovers' emotions. In spite of the literary form used, Guillaume's story is

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[39] Lewis, p. 30.

See also, idem, pp. 112-116;
Charles Muscatine, "The Emergence of Psychological Allegory in Old French Romances," PMLA, LXVIII (1953), 1160-1182;
Muscatine, Chaucer, pp. 19-29;
Ernest Langlois, Origines et Sources du Roman de la Rose (Paris, 1891), passim;
Robert W. Frank, "The Art of Reading Medieval Personification-Allegory," ELH, XX (1953), 237-250;
Alan M.F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love: a Reinterpretation of the Romance of the Rose (Lubbock, Texas, 1952), passim.

essentially more realistic than any of the exploits related in the romans d'aventure. Guillaume rejected the fantastic elements of Arthurian adventure and concentrated on the realities that he knew best, the realities of the inner world.

Although the Roman de la Rose is a story of courtly love, involving both a lover and his lady, it is only in the literary criticism of recent years that attention has been paid to the heroine of the romance. The poem had a great influence on Chaucer, for example, both directly through his translation of parts of it, and indirectly through the influence of Boccaccio; F.N. Robinson summarizes critical opinion by saying that the Roman de la Rose "probably exerted on Chaucer a more lasting and more important influence than any other work in the vernacular literature of either France or England" (p. 663). In 1907, Lisi Cipriani wrote on the influence of the Roman de la Rose on Chaucer, giving detailed comparisons between it and Chaucer's love poems, including Troilus and Criseyde. She discusses Troilus as a lover, the character of Pandarus, and the ethical teachings of the poem, but she fails to touch on the relationship between Criseyde and the heroine of the Roman de la Rose: in fact, she does not once mention Criseyde's name.[40]

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[40] "Studies in the Influence of the Romance of the Rose on Chaucer," PMLA, XXII (1907), 552-595.

A few years later, Dean Spruill Fansler published Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose, in which he examines textual comparisons in the greatest possible detail, even counting the exact number of lines that Chaucer borrowed from the Roman. Like Cipriani, Fansler concentrates on the dream-vision poems and Troilus and Criseyde; but he barely mentions Criseyde and fails to recognize her relationship to the heroine of the Roman de la Rose.[41]

The relationship of this heroine to Criseyde was not pointed out until C.S. Lewis wrote his Allegory of Love in 1936. The slow recognition of the lady's role was due largely to the allegorical form used by Guillaume. As C.S. Lewis points out, by distributing her character among personifications Guillaume appears to have removed the lady from the stage entirely:

> You cannot really have the lady, and, say, the lady's Pride, walking about on the same stage as if they were entities on the same plane. Nor is it unnatural for a lover to regard his courtship as an adventure, not with a single person, but with that person's varying moods, some of which are his friends and some his enemies. A man need not go to the Middle Ages to discover that his mistress is many women as well as one, and that sometimes the woman he hoped to meet is replaced by a very different woman. Accordingly, the lover in the Romance is concerned not with a single 'lady,' but with a number of 'moods' or 'aspects' of that lady who alternately help and hinder his attempts to win her love, symbolized by the Rose. . . . This ostensible banishment of the heroine from the stage does not prevent her being vividly present to an attentive reader throughout. Rather, it gives her a place in the poem which only a great novelist could have given her by other means.[42]

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[41] (New York, 1914). Fansler describes Criseyde as "Reason personified," because of her reflective monologues and, in particular, a paraphrase of one statement made by Raison (II. 715-718). Page 185.

[42] Lewis, p. 118.

The Roman de la Rose opens as the Dreamer walks beside the river of life in his youth, and passes through a high wall into the beautiful garden of courtly society. In the garden he watches the dancing and singing of Myrthe and all his retinue, Gladnesse, Swete-Lokyng, Beaute, Richesse, Largesse, Fraunchise, Curtesye and Youth, personifications of the social setting required for courtly love. This is the idealized world of medieval courtly society:

> Tho myghtist thou karoles sen,
> And folk daunce and mery ben,
> And made many a fair tournyng
> Upon the grene gras springyng.
> There myghtist thou see these flowtours,
> Mynstrales, and eke jogelours,
> That wel to synge dide her peyne. (759-765)

The Dreamer comes eventually to the fountain of Narcissus, representing the eyes of a lady, into which he gazes deeply. . . . In the well he sees the reflection of

> A roser chargid full of rosis,
> That with an hegge aboute enclos is, (1651-1652)

which represents the mind of the young lady living in the garden or world of courtly society. The Dreamer rises and approaches the rose plot itself, and he sees one rose-bud in particular, more beautiful and sweet smelling than the rest, which he wishes to pick. This Rose represents the lady's love.[43]

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[43] "The Rose, in Guillaume, is clearly the Lady's love: in Jean de Meun it has a different signification; but nowhere does it mean the Lady herself."
Lewis, p. 129.

Before the Dreamer can stretch out his hand toward the Rose, he is wounded by five arrows fired by the god of Love, who has been following him unseen through the garden. The Dreamer must learn to be a courtly lover before he can aspire to win the Lady's love. He surrenders to the god of Love, pays him homage in feudal style, and is then instructed by the god in the commandments of Love, which describe the duties and pains he will have to bear as a lover (1927-2950).

The Dreamer then returns to the "roser" and begins his advances to the Lady. This section of the Roman de la Rose, continuing to the end of Guillaume's part of the poem, is the most interesting in its representation of the character of the courtly lady. "Any protracted wooing involves a conflict not only between the man and the woman but between the woman and herself," writes C.S. Lewis; "it is this second conflict which occupies the most interesting scenes in the Roman." [44]

The first personification met by the lover is Bialacoil, a pleasant young squire who is the son of Curtesye; Bialacoil leads the Dreamer through the hedge into the rose-garden. The lover, as C.S. Lewis says, begins to "advance himself in her favour by means of ordinary social intercourse." [45] The Lady gives him a courteous reception, out of politeness and normal friendliness. Bialacoil literally means "bel acceuil," "fair welcome."

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[44] Lewis, p. 118.
This part of the poem occupies lines 2968-4432 in the "Romaunt of the Rose," and pp. 63-83 in André Mary's French text.

[45] Lewis, p. 130.

The Lady's love, however, is not easily won: "The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized," wrote Andreas Capellanus in his fourteenth rule of love. The lady's Rose is guarded by a "cherl" called Daunger, a maiden called Shame, and a third personification known as Wykked-Tonge, representing the slanderous gossip of the court. The first two are qualities that, like Bialacoil, are part of the Lady's own character; they represent her reserve or aloofness, and her sense of modesty, and they protect the Lady from the Dreamer and her own Bialacoil.

Bialacoil, "that was so fair, / So gracious, and debonair," treats the lover with friendliness and picks him a green leaf that grows near the Rose. Encouraged by this, the lover makes the mistake of asking for the Rose itself, and Bialacoil, "affrayed all," emphatically refuses. Daunger is suddenly aroused "Out of the place where he was hid," Bialacoil runs away, and the Dreamer is driven back outside the hedge.

The lover has lost the Lady's confidence, and he is downcast. "The sting of disappointment drives him to reflect," writes C.S. Lewis; "or, as the allegory has it, Reason chooses this moment to descend from her high tower and address him." [46] Reason advises the Dreamer to renounce the folly of love, but he refuses and soon begins to progress again with his courtship.

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[46] Lewis, p. 131.

The Dreamer confides all his woe in Freend, who tells him to disarm Daunger with apologies and flattery. The Dreamer does so, and Daunger agrees to allow him to admire the Rose from the far side of the hedge:

> Love where that the list; what recchith me,
> So thou fer fro my roses be? (3447-3448)

The lover does as he is told and stays outside the hedge, endeavouring to win Daunger's good will. He behaves perfectly in accordance with the code of courtly love, striving to be worthy of his lady, but he suffers because of her typical disdain and cruelty:

> I compleyned and sighed sore,
> And langwisshed evermore,
> For I durst not over goo
> Unto the Rose I loved soo.
> Thurghout my demyng outerly
> Than he had knowledge certanly
> That Love me ladde in sich a wise
> That in me ther was no feyntise,
> Falsheed, ne no trecherie.
> And yit he, full of vylanye,
> Of disdeyn, and cruelte,
> On me ne wolde have pite,
> His cruel will for to refreyne,
> Though I wepe alwey, and me compleyne. (3485-3498)

The centre of interest in the story now moves to the Lady, as qualities of her own come to the lover's aid. She lets the Dreamer suffer for a time, until he has proved himself as a courtly lover, and then she does what was expected of her by the code. Frauchise and Pite plead successfully with Daunger for Bialacoil's return; the Lady's generosity and her pity for the lover's suffering make her welcome him once again. Soon the Dreamer is inside the hedge again, standing with Bialacoil near the Rose.

The lover takes the initiative again. He has learned from experience, and this time he makes a more moderate request, asking Bialacoil for permission to kiss the Rose, not to pluck it. Bialacoil refuses, saying he is afraid of Chastite. "The story has reached its turning-point," comments C.S. Lewis. "All that Bialacoil can be expected to do for him has been done; thus far and no farther will the qualities intrinsic to the Lady carry her -- her frankness, her friendliness, her pity. If all were in the Lady's hands this check might prove final." [47]

To support the lover's request for a kiss, Venus enters the story, representing unforeseen natural passion on the Lady's part. Venus is the goddess "Which ay werreyeth Chastite" (3699). She pleads with Bialacoil, "Graunte hym a kis, of gentilnesse!" (3746), and touches him with her torch, whereupon Bialacoil grants the request:

> And to the Rose anoon wente I,
> And kisside it full feithfully. (3759-3760)

Almost immediately Wykked-Tonge arrives and rushes to rouse Jelousie: the tale bearers of the court gossip and awaken the suspicions of the Lady's relatives. Jelousie berates the defenceless Bialacoil for his negligence and says he will imprison him. Shame, the Lady's modesty, comes forward in Bialacoil's defence and promises that she will restrain Bialacoil in the future if Jelousie will

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[47] Lewis, p. 133.

allow him to remain at liberty. Bialacoil meant no harm, says Shame:

> "But in sothnesse I trowe nought
> That Bialacoil hadde ever in thought
> To do trespas or vylonye;
> But, for his modir Curtesie
> Hath taught hym ever to be
> Good of aqueyntaunce and pryve." (3887-3892)

"It is touching and natural," comments C.S. Lewis, "that in the long speech here allotted to Shame no word is spoken for or against the lover. It is Bialacoil who has betrayed her: Bialacoil who is to be defended, for he does no more than his mother Courtesy taught him, and meant all for the best. The girl cannot believe that her habit -- if we may drop into our own vernacular -- of 'being nice to people' is a fault." [48]

The Lady's guardians are not so easily appeased. Jelousie will not relent, and he sends Shame and Drede (the sixth of the Lady's own qualities) to rouse Daunger. The gaps in the hedge are closed to keep out the Dreamer; a "diche deep" is dug around the rose-garden, and a strong tower is built in which Bialacoil is imprisoned. Jelousie, Daunger, Shame and Drede each keep one of the gates of the tower, and an "olde vekke" or hag is placed on guard over Bialacoil "for to espye / The maner of his governaunce" (4286-4287). The Dreamer is left outside the rose garden to lament, and at this point Guillaume de Lorris' part of the poem comes to an end.

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48 Lewis, pp. 133-134.

This description of the courtly lady is in all respects in accordance with the code of courtly love, which explicitly dictates her reserved but courteous reception of the lover in polite society, her cruelty while he suffers, and her pity and generosity toward him once he has proved himself worthy of her love.[49] The struggle within the Lady's mind (between Bialacoil, Fraunchise and Pite on one hand, and Daunger, Shame and Drede on the other) corresponds to real life as well as to the courtly code. It is not explicitly stated that the Lady's guardians (Jelousie) include a husband, but the principle of secrecy is strictly observed, and Drede quakes before Jelousie and Wykked-Tonge.

It is important, however, to remember that the Lady of the Rose is a person, and not a generalisation of the courtly lady. Being familiar with the allegorical monologues in the romances, a thirteenth-century audience would have understood the Lady's individuality at once. The Roman de la Rose is fictional rather than didactic; it is the analysis of a particular psyche, not of Everyman in love. Moral allegory was generalised, but Guillaume's psychological allegory was purely individual and descriptive.[50]

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[49] Gunn tries to draw a distinction between the innocent and youthful love in the Roman, and the corrupt, sensuous adultery of the courtly code; pp. 427-428.

[50] Muscatine, "Emergence of Psychological Allegory," pp. 1160-1182.

Guillaume de Lorris succeeded in portraying a heroine who is as detailed and almost as complex as Chaucer's Criseyde. He described "an ideally conceived heroine whose emotions are so finely analyzed that their very complexity and interrelatedness constitute her concreteness," writes Charles Muscatine. "This is the truest area of 'characterization' within the courtly style proper. The heroine of the Roman has all the pale but charming individuality that the style could support or that the ideology could afford." [51] The "plot" of the Roman de la Rose is similar to the inner struggle Criseyde suffers as Troilus courts her, and in character Criseyde is very close to the Lady of the Rose:

> In her fears and hesitations, in her constant betrayal at the hands of Bialacoil (who means no harm), in our certainty that she will yield and yet will claim -- in a sense honestly -- that she has been won against her will, we see the outlines of the character which Chaucer has developed for us in his Cresseide. For Chaucer's Cresseide is a borrowing, not from Boccaccio, but from Guillaume de Lorris. [52]

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[51] Muscatine, Chaucer, p. 40.

[52] Lewis, p. 136.

Muscatine could have been talking of Criseyde in this comment on the Roman de la Rose:

> "The Lady's sense of fair play, of the irrecoverable passage of time, and her admiration for the Lover's physical appearance, as represented allegorically by the speech [of Venus], are irreproachably true to life. But the Lady herself is ideally conceived. Venus in her has none of the turbulence and vehemence that another poet might have given her, and so the speech of Venus to Bel Acueil is without turbulence of rhythm, and Venus' vocabulary is courtly." Chaucer, p. 37.

E) THE COURTLY LADY : A SUMMARY

The resemblance between Criseyde and the Lady of the Rose does not mean that Chaucer consciously used the Roman de la Rose as the source for Criseyde's character and behaviour. The resemblance only stresses Criseyde's close relationship to the conventional courtly lady of French literature.

Charles Muscatine points out that the Lady of the Rose has all the individuality "that the style could afford or that the ideology could support." [53] But the ideology of courtly love could not support very much individuality in the character of the courtly lady. The heroines of courtly literature can be judged only in relation to the code, as being close to or far from the ideal of the perfect courtly lady; the heroines of Chrétien de Troyes' romances, for example, have to be judged on this comparative basis. The individuality or personal characteristics of a courtly heroine cannot be a literary criterion for criticism, because the courtly lady in literature is a stereotyped figure.

Guinevere and the Lady of the Rose are the models for dozens of courtly ladies just like them. The Lady of Fayel in the Châtelain de Coucy, the heroine of Flamenca, Agnes de Tonnere in Joufrois, Athanais in

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53 Chaucer, p. 40.

Eraclés, La-fiere in Ipomedon, Blonde of Oxford in Jehan et Blonde, Lidoine in Meraugis de Portleguez, and many others, all behave according to the rules of love codified by Andreas Capellanus and illustrated in fiction by Chrétien de Troyes and Guillaume de Lorris. In so far as these ladies adhere to the code, they are all the same. Perfection in the code of courtly love allows no room for variation; and the true courtly lady is inevitably perfect and the same.

It is for this reason that Chaucer's Criseyde usually deviates from the courtly code whenever she exhibits any individuality of character.[1] Her conventionality links her in every respect to the code; her individualities consist in aberrations from the code and result in something less than perfection. It is inevitable that her commendable characteristics are those of the code; her weaknesses are her own.[2] Her act of greatest individuality, the infidelity which distinguishes her from all other courtly ladies, is the greatest possible crime against the code of courtly love.

The physical appearance of the courtly lady was as stereotyped as her character. According to medieval theory, virtue was invariably represented externally by fairness of form. Perfection of beauty matched perfection of character, and only evil was ugly in appearance. The physical characteristics of the courtly lady were usually described at the same time as her virtues, by the rhetorical device of effictio, a formal catalogue or portrait. Typical examples are the descriptions of

Ydelnesse and Beaute in the Roman de la Rose (539-561, 1008-1032), and Blanche in the Book of the Duchess (817-1041).

The courtly lady had hair that was golden or auburn, worn long and perhaps (like Blonde of Oxford) wound twice around her head. Like Madame Eglentyne, she took pride in a forehead high and smooth. Her ears were small and delicate. Her complexion was white and red (especially in England), and her face was rounded or oval in shape. Her eyebrows were darker than her hair, arched and narrow, but not plucked and not too close together. Her eyes were bright and sometimes smiling. In England they were grey in colour, and in France, vair, blue or azure. She had a nose that was straight and long, well set in her face. Her mouth was small and round, with full red lips and even teeth. Her chin was dimpled, and her white neck was arched like a swan's. Her body was slender and quite tall, with a straight back and a long waist; her breasts were small and high, and her arms were an ell long, ending in white hands and slender fingers.[54]

This description was typically medieval in its tendency to idealize and to disregard individual qualities in order to form a general principle. Within the rigid specifications for the courtly

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[54] For a detailed account of medieval beauty, see Wright, Womankind, pp. 238-241.
For the appearance of the courtly lady, see Muscatine, Chaucer, pp. 17-18.

lady's appearance, not much lattitude remained for the poet's imagination, except in the use of similes. Only a poet of Chaucer's standing could individualize his portraits with any freshness, and describe women like Blanche and Alisoun. In spite of the formality of style, descriptions sometimes capture a certain beauty and freshness, such as this portrait of the heroine of Aucassin and Nicolette:

> Then she took her skirt in both hands, the one before, and the other behind, and kilted her lightly against the dew which lay thickly upon the grass, and so passed through the garden. Her hair was golden, with little love-locks; her eyes blue and laughing; her face most dainty to see, with lips more vermeil than ever was rose or cherry in the time of summer heat; her teeth white and small; her breasts so firm that they showed beneath her vesture like two rounded nuts; so frail was she about the girdle that your two hands could have spanned her and the daisies that she brake with her feet in passing showed altogether black against her instep and flesh, so white was the fair young maiden. [55]

Apart from occasional freshness of imagination, Lowes' comment on the thirty-two portraits in Benoit de Sainte Maure's Roman de Troie applies to most of the formal portraits of the time: "you might shuffle the names, and then shuffle the descriptive details, and, save for keeping men and women apart, put the list together again as chance decreed and never a soul in a thousand would be the wiser." [56] Most notable about physical descriptions of the courtly lady is the extraordinary fixity of the type, in all medieval literature as well as the literature of courtly love, from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries. [57]

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55 Aucassin and Nicolette and Other Medieval Romances and Legends, trans. Eugene Mason (London, 1928), ed. Ernest Rhys, pp. 13-14.

56 J.L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of his Genius (Boston, 1934), pp. 160-161.

57 see D.S. Brewer, "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature," MLR, L (1955), 257-269.

So conventional was the ideal that it was sometimes used to imply what was not directly expressed. Chaucer, for example, relies on tradition in describing Emily and Criseyde. Without using more than a hint from his sources, he makes the reader picture Criseyde as the conventionally beautiful heroine, though there is the one exception of her joined eyebrows. As D.S. Brewer notes, Chaucer took "only a few significant details from Boccaccio. But his brevity would not have been so successful if it were not for the ancient conventional tradition. Neither he nor Boccaccio needed to describe every aspect of the heroine. Everybody knew her. She was always the same." [58]

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[58] Brewer, p. 266.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CRISEYDE

A) CRISEYDE AS A COURTLY LADY

Troilus and Criseyde is directly descended from the French literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It has been analysed as a dramatised version of the Roman de la Rose, and as a conscious attempt to revive the form of the romans d'aventure.[1] Like the Lady of the Rose, Criseyde is the central figure in a poem of courtly love; she has been compared by Karl Young to the heroines of French romance, such as the Dame de Fayel in the Chatelain de Coucy, and Ydoine in Amadas et Ydoine. Chaucer's poem differs from the romans d'aventure in that the hero's knightly deeds and ennobling adventures are reduced to a minimum, allowing the love story to occupy nearly all the action.

The structural difference between Troilus and Criseyde and the romans d'aventure is owing to Chaucer's immediate source, Boccaccio's Il Filostrato. Chaucer adopted the plot of Boccaccio's love story but, in order to make the poem an exposition of the code of courtly love, he radically changed the nature of the action and the character of the protagonists.

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[1] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1953), pp. 157-197; and "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato," Essays and Studies, XVII (1932), 55-57.

Karl Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," PMLA, LIII (1938), 38-63; and "Aspects of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde," University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, II (1918), 367-394.

Sarah Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (New York, 1924), pp. 123-124.

The most basic of Chaucer's changes is in the character of the heroine: Boccaccio's Criseida is not a courtly lady. She is related to the ladies of the Decameron, since she yields herself with small tax upon Pandaro's eloquence, and herself sends for Troilus to come to her house. The changes Chaucer made in the characters of Troilus and Pandarus depend logically on alterations in the heroine. Criseyde's courtly quality of pity is emphasized, so that Troilus' lamentations and sufferings are given a greater place in the poem; in comparison to Troilo, he is humble and fearful. Pandarus must approach Criseyde with a subtlety and savoir faire to match her own; he is made older, wiser in the ways of the world, capable of affection and sober counsel. "The metamorphosis of Criseyde - a change at once profound and subtle - was, through its implications, the greatest stroke of genius in the poem," writes J.L. Lowes.[2]

Criseyde's character is transformed by Chaucer's adherence to the four basic principles of the courtly code: Adultery, Secrecy, Humility, and Ennoblement.

The plot could not support the introduction of a husband, but the love between Troilus and Criseyde is extra-marital, if not adulterous, and no thought of marriage intrudes. The heroine remains a widow, as she

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[2] John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius (Boston, 1934), p. 144.

had been in Il Filostrato, and not an innocent girl.[3] Boccaccio made Criseida a widow, instead of the pucelle of his sources, because he believed widows to be amorous by nature. Criseyde, too, is naturally inclined to love, as befits a courtly lady who believes that Love is the greatest earthly good and the "lawe of kynde:"

> Now sith it may nat goodly ben withstonde,
> And is a thing so vertuous in kynde,
> Refuseth nat to Love for to ben bonde,
> Syn, as hymselven liste, he may yow bynde.[4]

This is Chaucer's creed as the poet of courtly love. Troilus is the only character who does not (in his early mockery of love) believe in this dogma from the first. Pandarus assumes that Criseyde is predisposed to love:

> "And wastow why I am the lasse afered
> Of this matere with my nece trete?
> For this have I herd seyd of wyse lered,
> Was nevere man or womman yet bigete
> That was unapt to suffren loves hete,
> Celestial or elles love of kynde;
> Forthy som grace I hope in hire to fynde.
>
> "And for to speke of hire in specyal,
> Hire beaute to bithynken and hire youthe,
> It sit hire naught to ben celestial." (I. 974-983)

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3 Thomas Kirby connects the "yeres two" of Criseyde's widowhood with the courtly convention of mourning for a lover, stipulated by Andreas Capellanus in Rule VII and Judgement XIV.
See "A Note on Troilus, II, 1298," MLR, XXIX (1934), 67-68; and "Troilus, II, 1298, Again," MLR, XXXIII (1938), 402.

4 Troilus and Criseyde, I, 253-256. The text is that of F.N. Robinson's edition, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1933). Subsequent references will be to this edition.

According to the code, love was more than pleasure: it was a duty laid upon all suitable persons, and a courtly lady was held morally responsible for the love caused by her beauty. Criseyde's reactions to the courtship, examined below, indicate that she believes in this, as well as in all other tenets of the code.

> "Shal I nat love, in cas if that me leste ?
> What, par dieux! I am naught religious." (II. 758-759)

In accordance with the principle of Adultery, Criseyde is described, in this way, as naturally acquiescent to love. But Chaucer emphasizes that Criseyde is not sensual. He omits or minimizes Boccaccio's expressions of delight in purely physical passion, in which Criseida revels, particularly in her accounts of the erotic zest of furtiveness. Every step of the main action in Il Filostrato is the result of Criseida's passionate nature. She arranges her meeting with Troilo, she goes to meet him in his hiding-place, and leads him to her bed-chamber. Chaucer gives Pandarus the aggressive part in the machinations, so that Criseyde's desire to surrender receives the least possible emphasis. According to the code of courtly love, it would be perfectly permissible for the lady to take the initiative in arranging a meeting of this kind, if she felt that her lover's devotion merited such a reward. Chaucer achieves greater harmony with the code, however, by emphasizing its spiritual aspects, and by motivating Criseyde's actions from Pity, not sensuality.

Secrecy, the second principle of the code, is the key-stone of the poem. Criseyde's Drede, the courtly lady's fear for her reputation,

is Pandarus' most formidable antagonist. "Myn honour sauf" is the condition on which Criseyde accepts Troilus as a suitor (III. 480), and it is the opening phrase of her vows as she advances to the next stage and accepts him as her courtly lover (III, 159). Her final words to Pandarus before the consummation are a plea that she "honour may have, and he plesaunce" (III. 944).

Troilus is indoctrinated by Pandarus in the necessity for secrecy and in the wickedness of "avauntours" (III. 264-329), and Criseyde's honour is always uppermost in his mind. When the exchange of prisoners has been decreed, the conflict in Troilo's mind is evenly balanced between his selfish love and his concern for Criseida. Troilus' consideration for Criseyde's honour overrules his love, and he allows her to depart from Troy rather than violate the code by disgracing her name and by incurring her displeasure.

The main action of Troilus and Criseyde would have no justification without the necessity for secrecy. Criseyde's hesitation, the role of Pandarus, his plots at Deiphebus' house and his own home, even the separation of the lovers in the end, all depend on this cardinal principle of the code.

The principle of Humility receives perfect expression in Troilus, the prototype of the courtly lover. He acknowledges Criseyde as his superior in every aspect of the code. His humility is expressed particularly in his vows to Criseyde at Deiphebus' house, and in the consummation scene where, in notable contrast to Troilo's self-possession, he faints. "His weakness under the onset of love is meritorious -- it is

in the best courtly tradition," writes Robert Ap Roberts. "It impresses upon the reader not only the power of love which can reduce a strong man to a state of utter weakness but also the completeness of his surrender to love and the overwhelming sincerity of his passion." [5]

Along with Troilus' perfect humility, Chaucer conversely portrays Criseyde's superiority as a courtly lady. Her social rank is raised, in comparison to Criseida's, by descriptions of her courteous manner, her retinue, her social relationships with the royal family, and her "palais" and garden. Pandarus, on familiar terms with his niece, nevertheless addresses her formally as ye and yow (as Troilus consistently does, even in the most intimate scenes): thus Criseyde's standing as a courtly lady is emphasized rather than her informal position as someone's relative. [6]

Many of Boccaccio's references to the heroine's low rank are omitted. Troilo's praise of Criseida's virtue, in refutation of Cassandra's aspersions on her low rank, is omitted by Chaucer, who in another place makes Criseyde declare that it was Troilus' "moral vertu," and not his "estat roial," that caused her love (IV. 1667-1680). "Instead of receiving the praise of a social superior," comments Karl Young, "she rises to the dignity of a domina controlling her vassal, and conferring upon him a favour. Thus once more Criseyde is brought into the circle of heroines of romance." [7]

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[5] Robert Pigott Ap Roberts, Criseyde and the Moral of Chaucer's Troilus (unpub. diss., Univ. of California, 1950), p. 50.

[6] See Charles Walcutt, "The Pronoun of Address in Troilus and Criseyde," PQ, XIV (1935), 282-287.

[7] Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," p. 56.

Because of her elevated social position, Criseyde is able to exercise far more authority than Criseida, and sovereignty is a quality which the courtly lady must possess. The lines in which Criseyde demands sovereignty from Troilus, at Deiphebus' house, have no parallel in Il Filostrato. Criseida was not the type of woman to insist on her superiority, as Thomas Kirby comments, and Boccaccio was right not to develop in her this aspect of the courtly heroine. "Chaucer, on the other hand, adds greatly to the artistic perfection of his poem, not to mention the complexity of his heroine's character, by making her, among other things, the sovereign mistress. Though she is in no sense a Guinevere, she still has absolute power over Troilus; his confession is a complete admission of his mistress's supremacy." [8]

In accordance with the principle of Ennoblement, Troilus is portrayed as being endowed by the power of love with all the qualities of courtoisie. He conforms in detail to the commandments of the god of Love in the Romaunt of the Rose (2175-2716) and in the rules of Andreas' De Amore. Because of his perfection, Criseyde is largely relieved of her duty as a courtly lady to ensure her lover's conformity to the code. Troilus' jealousy of Horaste, discussed below, is the only fault for which he has to be reproved. The omission of chastisement from her role constitutes a major difference between Criseyde and other courtly heroines, such as Guinevere or the ladies of the De Amore. "In Andreas' sample dialogue between a man and a woman of the higher nobility, the tone seems dogmatic

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[8] Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love (Louisiana, 1940), p. 205.

and didactic," writes Constance Saintonge. "The woman's function is to hold the man firmly up to an ideal of conduct: she checks excesses in his discourse; she catechises him on the subject of love and is quick to trap him in contradictions and fallacies; it appears that only after a great deal of persuasion and lofty talk will she deign to give him hope." [9]

In accordance, therefore, with Chaucer's exposition of the principles of Adultery, Secrecy, Humility and Ennoblement, Criseyde is developed as a perfect courtly lady. From her bearing, "men myght in hire gesse / Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse" (I. 286-287). Pandarus describes her as having all the qualities necessary for the part she is to play:

> "For of good name and wisdom and manere
> She hath ynough, and ek of gentilesse.
> If she be fayr, thow woost thyself, I gesse.
>
> "Ne I nevere saugh a more bountevous
> Of hire estat, n'a gladder, ne of speche
> A frendlyer, n'a more gracious
> For to do wel, ne lasse hadde nede to seche
> What for to don; and al this bet to eche,
> In honour, to as fer as she may strecche,
> A kynges herte semeth by hyrs a wrecche." (I. 880-889)

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[9] Constance Saintonge, "In Defense of Criseyde," MLQ, XV (1954), 313-314.

She possesses, in summary, all the characteristics of the Lady of the Rose. The first two qualities visible, at the Palladium, are Shame and Daunger:

> And yet she stood ful lowe and stille allone,
> Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,
> And neigh the dore, ay undre shames drede,
> Simple of atir and debonair of chere
> With ful assured lokying and manere. (I. 178-182)

And Troilus is struck by

> hire mevynge and hire chere
> Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle
> Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,
> Ascaunces, "What! may I nat stonden here?" (I. 289-292)

Bialacoil is evident in all her social relationships, for example in her first welcome of Pandarus (II. 87-91), as well as in her attitude toward Troilus. After Drede has been reassured that Wykked-Tonge and Jelousie will not be roused, the qualities of Fraunchise and Pity finally lead her to accept Troilus as her lover.

The progress of Troilus' courtship corresponds to the four stages of courtly love; fegnedor (love aspirant), precador (love suppliant), entendedor (love recognised), and drut (love accepted).

Fegnedor occupies the whole of Book I, which describes Troilus' suffering as he loves Criseyde in silence and from a distance. According to the commands of the god of Love (Romaunt of the Rose, 2856-2860, 3338-3394), he confides his woe in "A frend of his, that called was Pandare" (I. 547), whom he customarily addresses as "frend."

Pandarus' role is established in courtly tradition. Karl Young traces his precedents in the romances and mentions, for example, the

Queen's part in Cligés.[10] "Many romances contain an element easily comparable to the reality and naturalism which Pandarus evokes; even the narratives of unreal and fantastic adventure are likely to exhibit a basic, or an incidental, view of ordinary life . . . . In its sparing use of actuality Chaucer's poem is more romantic than some of the romances are." Karl Young warns, however, that the comic and realistic effects of Pandarus' role can be overestimated. His derision of the lovers (not, it should be noted, of Love) has the charm of making Troilus and Criseyde seem more youthful, "like the innocently sensuous lovers who dwell in romances." [11]

Being a courtly lover himself, Pandarus knows immediately what allies and what opponents he will find among Criseyde's own qualities. He knows that he must direct his whole campaign against her Drede, or fear for her honour, and try to arouse her Pity for Troilus' sufferings. He describes her Pity and Drede to Troilus:

> "And also thynk, and therwith glade the,
> That sith thy lady vertuous is al,
> So foloweth it that there is som pitee
> Amonges alle thise other in general;
> And forthi se that thow, in special,
> Requere naught that is ayeyns hyre name;
> For vertu streccheth naught hymself to shame." (I. 897-903)

The second stage of courtly love, precador, is initiated in Book II when Pandarus reveals Troilus' love to Criseyde. It is a

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10 Quoted above, Chapter Six, pp. 135-136.

11 Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," pp. 60-62.

common misconception that Pandarus' purpose in this scene is to persuade Criseyde of the propriety of love per se, as opposed to her life as a widow. If Pandarus has to accomplish this, he succeeds in a remarkably short time, since Criseyde agrees at the end of this interview to accept Troilus as a suitor (II. 470). If she were really opposed to love at the beginning of the scene, her swift change of mind would show her in an unfavourable light. As a courtly lady, however, Criseyde is naturally amorous or inclined to love. Pandarus' undertaking is to convince her that Troilus loves her in accordance with "Loves lay," as a courtly lover. Criseyde has every reason to be fearful of an uncourtly relationship, which is merely sensual; but under the terms of courtly love, on the other hand, her honour would be her lover's prime concern, and Drede could be allayed.

Because courtoisie is the necessary qualification for a courtly lover, Pandarus begins by praising Troilus as a knight (II. 155-207). Following this, he describes the characteristic by which the courtly lover is most readily distinguished, that is, his "love-sickness" (II. 316-350), from which, according to the code, the lover might die. Pandarus is sincere when he says that he would rather be hanged than "ben his baude." For this is to be a relationship governed by the rules of courtly love; it is not, as Criseyde fears, a sensual amour in which the lover's aim is merely physical fulfillment, regardless of whether her honour should be "shente." Pandarus sincerely does not wish to bind Criseyde "to hym thorough no byheste," for she is to be granted the freedom and the superiority of the courtly lady. And he ends his declaration by assuring

Criseyde that the principle of Secrecy will be observed, and that Wykked-Tonge and Jelousie will not be aroused by an apparent friendship (II. 365-385):

"So lat your daunger sucred ben a lite."

Criseyde tries to assess the truth of Pandarus' assertions, and she asks him what he wishes her to do. Notably unsuccessful in wooing his own lady as a courtly lover (a role for which nature does not seem to have intended him), Pandarus now makes a mistake that is nearly fatal to Troilus' cause. He advises her,

"That ye hym love ayeyn for his lovynge,
As love for love is skilful guerdonynge." (II. 391-392)

This is heresy against the code of courtly love. The lover should offer his devotion humbly to the lady, according to the code, and she has the right to make him suffer for years before accepting him as a suitor. Such a lover achieves the fourth stage, drut, only when his lady judges that he has reached perfection as a courtly lover, and is worthy to receive her love. Her physical love may afterwards be bestowed at her discretion. Criseyde summarises the courtly theory perfectly, when she reflects,

"For man may love of possibilite,
A womman so, his herte may tobreste,
And she naught love ayein, but if hire leste." (II. 603-609)

To make matters worse, Pandarus substantiates his advice with the familiar argument, "gather ye rosebuds" (III. 386-427): "Elde daunteth daunger at the laste." It is noteworthy that this argument is the only

one which Pandaro had to use to effect Criseida's surrender. Because this approach is hostile to the spirit of courtly love, it has the opposite effect on Criseyde. She bursts into tears, and reproaches Pandarus for his faithlessness.

Pandarus immediately reverts to an argument based on the code, and appeals to Criseyde's Pity. She sincerely believes that Pandarus and Troilus ... may die if she does not treat them carefully: "it nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie" (II. 462). She must act so that both Troilus' life and her honour are protected; Having made quite sure that Pandarus asks nothing of her that is outside the code (II. 473), she accepts Troilus as her suitor:

> "Ne love a man ne kan I naught, ne may,
> Ayeins my wil; but elles wol I fonde,
> Myn honour sauf, plese hym fro day to day." (II. 478-480)

She would not have been so hesitant, if she had not feared that Pandarus was advocating an uncourtly, physical relationship:

> "Therto nolde I nat ones han seyd nay,
> But that I drede, as in my fantasye;
> But cesse cause, ay cesseth maladie." (II. 481-483)

Pity will carry her no further, as Pandarus accords (II. 484-490). For, in <u>entendedor</u>, as the accepted suitor, Troilus now has to prove himself worthy of her love.

Before Pandarus leaves Criseyde, he reaffirms that her relationship with Troilus will be a courtly love affair. His words seem perfectly sincere if they are judged by the standards of courtly love. Only if

love of this kind is held to be "harm" or "yvel," can Pandarus be judged hypocritical when he says:

> "But for to save his lif, and elles nought,
> And to noon harm of yow, thus am I dryven;
> And for the love of God, that us hath wrought,
> Swich cheer hym dooth, that he and I may lyven!
> Now have I plat to yow myn herte shryven;
> And sith ye woot that myn entent is cleene,
> Take heede therof, for I non yvel meene." (II. 575-581)

Pandarus returns to Troilus to report that Criseyde has recognized Troilus as a suitor, and that the third stage of courtly love, entendedor, has begun.

Criseyde now has to judge her suitor's qualities as a courtly lover. She had already begun by questioning Pandarus in the interview discussed above. She had made sure that Troilus was observing the law of secrecy: "Woot noon of it but ye?" She had then inquired, "Kan he wel speke of Love?"

> "I preye
> Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye." (II. 503-504)

In answer Pandarus gave an account (generally assumed to be fictitious) of the scene in which he learned of Troilus' love; he showed Troilus in as courtly a light as possible, placing him in the conventional garden beside a well and giving him a speech that illustrates perfectly the metaphor of the religion of Love (II. 505-553).[12] Criseyde seemed satisfied with these important qualifications possessed by Troilus.

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[12] It is possible that this episode may actually have occurred; there is no proof that Pandarus is fabricating the scene.

Pandarus does not distort Troilus' character as a courtly lover, or invent his use of religious metaphor. Troilus' words to Pandarus in the first Book (I. 932-938) parallel the Act of Contrition, just as his speech in Pandarus' account is an echo of the Confiteor.

See Arthur E. Hutson, "Troilus' Confession," MLN, LXIX (1954), 468-470.

After Pandarus has left, Criseyde retires to her closet to reflect. She is reassured by the fact that her relationship with Troilus is governed by the rules of courtly love.

> Whan that she
> Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
> Of peril, why she ought afered be.
> For man may love, of possibilite,
> A womman so, his herte may tobreste,
> And she naught love ayein, but if hire leste. (II. 603-609)

Troilus then rides past her window on his return from battle, his appearance confirming Pandarus' descriptions of his courtoisie:

> So lik a man of armes and a knyght
> He was to seen, fulfilled of heigh prowesse;
> For bothe he hadde a body and a myght
> To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse;
> And ek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,
> So fressh, so yong, so weldy seemed he,
> It was an heven upon hym for to see. (II. 631-637)

Troilus appears, as Karl Young says, like a typical hero of French romance.[13] As well as his qualities of valour, he possesses the necessary virtue of humility, for when he hears the people's cries of praise, "he wax a litel reed for shame" (II. 645). The sight of him appeals, as it should, to Criseyde's qualities of "mercy and pitee" (II. 655), but Chaucer is careful to emphasize that she does not love Troilus at first sight (II. 666-679).

An important part of entendedor is described as Criseyde embarks on a long soliloquy, in which she weighs Troilus' courtly qualities against the possible disadvantages of accepting him as her lover (II. 659-812).

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13 The passage, which does not appears in Il Filostrato, may be derived from the Roman d'Eneas.
Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," p. 39.

Only if the traditions of courtly love are ignored, can this soliloquy be said to reveal her as calculating or as an opportunist. Nor should one say, as Kittredge does, that the monologue reveals in Criseyde "the excellent mental habit of looking at a subject from several points of view." [14] Criseyde's soliloquy conforms to convention and can be distorted if it is interpreted realistically. Critics who comment on Criseyde's hesitation or complexity forget that Guillaume's Roman de la Rose is nothing more than the story of a courtly lady's vacillations. "The whole mode of presenting this conflict has left naturalism behind," writes Charles Muscatine. "No longer is she presented as the possibly 'calculating' woman, in the realistic sense, any more than the endless inner debates of romance represent their thinkers as calculating." [15]

The conventional courtly lady, as Nevill Coghill describes her, has to be "a complex of yielding and withdrawal," [16] and Criseyde would be uncourtly if she did not debate with herself like this. She conforms precisely to the code as she weighs the demands on her freedom, the uncertainties of love, the danger of betrayal, and the menace to her honour

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[14] George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, 1933), p. 133.

[15] Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 158. On the convention of the inner monologue, see pp. 12-30, 264-265.

[16] Nevill Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (London, 1950), p. 18.

posed by Wykked-Tonge and Jelousie, balancing these risks against

> his excellent prowesse,
> And his estat, and also his renown,
> His wit, his shap, and ek his gentilesse. (II. 660-662)

It would be a simple exercise to rewrite Criseyde's soliloquy as an allegorical conflict between Bialacoil, Fraunchise, Pite, and Daunger, Shame and Drede. "Then slepeth hope, and after drede awaketh" (II. 810) comments Chaucer.

Criseyde's monologue is compared by Karl Young to soliloquies by heroines of the romans d'aventure, and he likens Criseyde in this respect to Lavinia in the Roman d'Eneas, Soredamors in Cliges, and La-fiere in Ipomedon. "In his cultivation of amorous psychology, Chaucer is no innovator; he is maintaining the tradition of romance."[17] The scenes that follow Criseyde's soliloquy, like Troilus' triumphant entry into the city, have no counterpart in Il Filostrato, and Karl Young describes them as "opening the casements directly upon the world of romance." In the palace garden Antigone sings a song in praise of Love (adapted from a poem by Guillaume de Machaut), and when Criseyde retires to her room, she hears the song of the nightingale and dreams of the white eagle that exchanges her heart for his (II. 813-931).

Troilus is urged by Pandarus to bring the stage of entendedor to completion. He must now bring his courtly qualities to Criseyde's attention and appeal to her Pity. Troilus writes Criseyde a letter which, in spite of Drede, she accepts. She writes a courteous reply, as

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[17] Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," p. 59

evidence of her Pity and Fraunchise, "and gan hire herte unfetre / Out of desdaynes prison" (II. 1217-1218). In her letter she reaffirms that Troilus is her courtly suitor, but not her lover, and that she has no obligations toward him except those of normal Bialacoil or friendliness:

> She thanked hym of al that he wel mente
> Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde
> She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde
> In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,
> She wolde ay fayn, to doon his herte and ese. (II. 1221-1225)

Pandarus concurs with Criseyde that Troilus should not win her love too easily, for, according to the code of Andreas Capellanus, the courtly lady must not yield too soon. "The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized." [18] But Pandarus urges Criseyde not to delay too long out of "the forme of daunger," before she admits that Troilus' love is worthy of her acceptance. Troilus' riding by her balcony, as she talks to Pandarus, confirms her earlier impressions of worthiness and courtoisie. Pandarus urges her once again to accept Troilus' love and to admit him to the stage of drut, but Shame makes her refuse:

> And whi, for shame; and it were ek to soone
> To graunten hym so gret a libertee. (II. 1291-1292)

An unspecified period of time elapses, during which she replies to the letters which Troilus sends her every day, but during this interval love does not progress beyong the stage of entendedor. Using allegorical

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[18] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. and trans. John J. Parry (New York, 1941), Rule XIV, p. 185.

terms, Pandarus describes to Troilus the state of Criseyde's feelings:

> "Peraunter thynkestow: though it be so,
> That Kynde wolde don hire to bygynne
> To have a manere routhe upon my woo,
> Seyth Daunger, 'Nay, thow shalt me nevere wynne!'
> So reulith hire hir hertes gost withinne. (II. 1373-1377)

The courtship has reached the stage at which, in the Roman de la Rose, Bialacoil has refused the lover's request to kiss the Rose. "The story has reached its turning point," comments C.S. Lewis on the Roman, in words that apply equally to Troilus and Criseyde. "All that Bialacoil can be expected to do for him has been done; thus far and no farther will the qualities intrinsic to the Lady carry her — her frankness, her friendliness, her pity. If all were in the Lady's hands this check might prove final. But all is not." [19] It is symbolic of Criseyde's lack of sensuality that Chaucer replaces Venus' intervention by the machinations of Pandarus.

There is no counterpart in Il Filostrato for the episode at Deiphebus' house (II. 1394-1757, III. 50-217). The elaborate plans for the meeting are carried out successfully, and it is due to Pandarus' cleverness that Wykked-Tonge and Jelousie are not aroused, and that the story has a happier conclusion than the first part of the Roman de la Rose. Pandarus arranges a situation that will appeal to Criseyde's Pity; when she can see for herself how Troilus suffers from her unwillingness to accept his love. Troilus is instructed by Pandarus to "pitously compleyne" as he feigns illness. But the plot is not really a deception. It is designed to make Criseyde more aware of an actual situation: from the beginning

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19 C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, 1953), p. 133.

Troilus had suffered from an authentic love-sickness. He does not now need to dissimulate:

> "Iwis, thow nedeles
> Conseilest me that siklich I me feyne,
> For I am sik in ernest, douteles,
> So that wel neigh I sterve for the peyne" (II. 1527-1530).

Chaucer emphasizes that Criseyde believes Pandarus' story about Poliphete, and that she goes to the house of Deiphebus "Al innocent of Pandarus entente" (II. 1723). Only at the very last moment does Pandarus tell her what to expect, as he makes a final appeal to her Pity: "Sle naught this man, that hath for yow this peyne!" (II. 1736). In spite of her surprise, Criseyde demonstrates the self-possession of the courtly lady as she courteously greets Troilus, expressing Bialacoil (III. 68-77).

The appeal to Criseyde's Pity is successful. Troilus tells her of his sufferings, his devotion and his humility, "And Pandare wep as he to water wolde" (III. 115): there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Pandarus' tears. With Pandarus as a witness, Criseyde and Troilus exchange vows and enact the traditional ceremony at which entendedor is replaced by drut.[20] Criseyde accepts Troilus as her courtly lover, gives him the symbolic kiss, and agrees to a future meeting.

Criseyde's physical surrender must not now be taken for granted. In accepting Troilus as her courtly lover, she has by no means

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[20] Quoted above, Chapter Two, pp. 39-40.

agreed to grant him her physical love. Whether she will consider his devotion worthy of this final favour, how soon she will do so, for what particular service, and how their meeting for this purpose will be arranged, remain matters of conjecture. She has agreed merely to accept Troilus' service, and to meet him at an unspecified time at Pandarus' house, literally "To speke of love." Criseyde's purposes are not those of Pandarus. From her point of view, the consummation requires three conditions: if Troilus should achieve perfection through the ennobling power of love, if a meeting should be arranged under conditions of secrecy, and if Troilus should appeal strongly to her Pity, then it would be fitting for Criseyde, as a perfect courtly lady, to follow Guinevere's example and grant her physical favours to her lover.

During the lapse of time between their exchange of vows at Deiphebus' house and their meeting on the rainy night at Pandarus' house, the ennobling power of love raises Troilus to perfection as a courtly lover, and the first of these three conditions is fulfilled (III. 470-476). Troilus and Criseyde meet and speak to one another as often as they can, and letters are sent to and fro <u>via</u> Pandarus.

> And shortly of this proces for to pace,
> So wel his werk and wordes he bisette,
> That he so ful stood in his lady grace,
> That twenty thousand tymes, er she lette,
> She thonked God that evere she with hym mette.
> So koude he hym governe in swich servyse,
> That al the world ne myght it bet devyse. (III. 470-476)

The second condition, absolute secrecy, is achieved by Pandarus' elaborate caution in bringing Troilus and Criseyde together at his house. Chaucer says he does not know whether Criseyde believed Pandarus when he said that Troilus would not be present (III. 575-578). It is probable that she expects to see Troilus at dinner, but her expectations are disappointed (if this is so), and she prepares to leave without having seen him. Because of the great rain, she agrees to stay, without the slightest suspicion of what is to happen during the night. As Robert Ap Roberts writes, "the smoky rain is not a mere astrological curiosity but a part of Chaucer's artistic scheme -- a scheme which clearly forbids the notion of a preconceived surrender. The point is not that Criseyde had choice in the matter of going to Pandarus' house, but whether her going and remaining, in any way, reflects covert desire." [21]

Circumstances, then, cause Criseyde to stay, but they do not

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[21] Ap Roberts, p. 32;
See pp. 251-252, note 48;
It is true that Pandarus counted upon rain on the night of the surrender (see III. 549-551), but it is manifestly impossible that he could foresee the supranatural (sic) rain. What plan he intended to use to persuade Criseyde to stay is never revealed, for the storm serves his purpose. At the point where the rain occurs, the reader does not know Pandarus' plan fully and so he does not see the <u>full necessity</u> for the rain. The reader has no feeling that Pandarus has banked upon the supranatural. He knows that Pandarus intends Criseyde to stay the night, but he does not, after the rain has secured this end, insist upon an answer to the question "How did Pandarus plan to get Criseyde to stay?" Very probably the question does not even occur to him.

cause her to yield to Troilus. Her surrender depends entirely upon her love for him, as she says:

> "Ne hadde I or now, my swete herte deere,
> Ben yolde, iwis, I were now nat here" (III. 1210-1211).

This statement does not refer to the frame of mind in which she came to Pandarus' house, or in which she decided to stay. It is a simple expression of the motive for her reactions to the circumstances which Pandarus and Fate have devised.

Pandarus fulfills the third condition for the consummation, by appealing to Criseyde's Pity. He tells her that Troilus is jealous of Horaste,

> "And he is come in swich peyne and distresse
> That, but he be al fully wood by this,
> He sodeynly mot falle into wodnesse" (III. 792-794).

Criseyde's worth as a courtly lady is completely established during the scene which follows. She behaves with the greatest delicacy and reserve $(\text{Shame and Daunger})_x$ and shows how highly she values her honour (Drede). She offers Pandarus a ring to take to Troilus, as proof of her love (III. 883-887). This ring is no mere trinket; it is a symbol of Troilus' status as an accepted lover, and is the counterpart of the ceremonial kiss bestowed on him at Deiphebus' house, when entendedor was replaced by drut.[22] When Pandarus, however, emphasizes that the only alternative to receiving Troilus is to break his heart, Criseyde's role as a courtly lady leaves her no choice. After making a final plea for Pandarus to guard her honour, she yields to the dictates of her Pity.

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[22] The importance attached to such a ring is illustrated in the French romances of Escoufle, Amadas et Ydoine, and Violette. See the summaries of the plots in Barrow, pp. 121-122, 128, 140-141.

Chaucer has arranged the scene to emphasize the difficulty of winning Criseyde, minimizing her desire to surrender. She is neither a 'Betrayed Innocent' nor a 'Wanton Adulteress.' Her behaviour under the circumstances is perfectly in accord with the code of courtly love:

> This accident so pitous was to here,
> And ek so like a sooth, at prime face,
> And Troilus hire knyght to hir so deere,
> His prive comyng, and the siker place,
> That, though that she did hym as thanne a grace,
> Considered alle thynges as they stoode,
> No wonder is, syn she did al for goode. (III. 918-924)

It has been suggested that in making Criseyde reprove Troilus for his jealousy, Chaucer is removing an element of the code which seemed distasteful to him (III. 988-1050).[23] The kind of jealousy regarded as necessary to courtly love, however, is not the suspicion of infidelity, like Troilus' "mysbyleved and envyous folie" (III. 838). Courtly love demands "pure" jealousy, based by the Arabic lyric poets on solicitude rather than suspicion, and described by A.J. Denomy as a "vehemence in desire and devotion of a truly ardent lover concerning his beloved."[24] In accusing Criseyde of betraying her vows and loving Horaste, Troilus is accusing her -- the perfect goddess and sovereign of courtly love -- of a crime. Troilus is guilty of a heresy against the code: "hire servant

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[23] Kirby, p. 209;
Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," pp. 47-49.

[24] Alexander J. Denomy, "An Inquiry into the Origins of Courtly Love," Medieval Studies, VI (1944), 186.

and hire knyght / Ne sholde of right non untrouthe in hire gesse" (III. 984). Like Guinevere, Criseyde has to chastise her lover before she can grant him her greatest favour. But Pity, Fraunchise, and Bialacoil win the final victory: "Awey, thou foule daunger and thow feere" (III. 1321).

In the consummation scene, all the elements of courtly love are enhanced, and there is no place for the concupiscence of Il Filostrato. In contrast to Troilo's zest and self-assurance, Troilus kneels before Criseyde as Lancelot knelt to Guinevere, "in the wise / Of dewete, as for his observaunce" (III. 969-970). The scene is the climax of Chaucer's exaltation of courtly love: it ends in a traditional Provençal aubade, and it leads in to a magnificent glorification of the ennobling power of Love. As Karl Young says, "in this episode Chaucer's story passes out of ordinary life, and beyond romantic Troy, into romance itself." [25]

In Troilus and Criseyde, therefore, the four stages of courtship and the consummation of the love have been observed in complete accordance with the code of courtly love. Chaucer again adheres to the code in describing events between the decree in parliament and Criseyde's departure from Troy. The necessity for secrecy is the key to this part of the poem, and the observation of this principle makes only one conclusion possible: Criseyde must go.

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[25] Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," pp. 45-46.

Nor does Troilus' helplessness in the face of circumstances reflect unfavourably on his character; quite to the contrary. "The very unselfishness which makes Troilus an ideal lover is to make Troilus lose Criseyde," writes Robert Ap Roberts. "If he were less perfect in his desire to preserve Criseyde's honour, he would take action to prevent her departure." [26] The rules of courtly love, which he had followed in his courtship and love affair, combine with circumstances to make him helpless. He gives in to Criseyde's arguments that she must depart, not because he is weak, but because he, too, must yield to the code.

Troilus cannot ask Priam to allow Criseyde to remain in Troy, firstly, because it would disclose the secret of their love, and, secondly, because Priam had already pledged the exchange with his word of honour. Neither can Troilus abduct Criseyde from the city, firstly, because she would be dishonoured, secondly, because he would be committing the same criminal offense that caused the Trojan War (Telemon's abduction of Hesione, and Paris' abduction of Helen), and, thirdly, because Antenor's return appears to every patriotic Trojan to be for the city's good.

Troilus can consider abduction only if Criseyde herself is willing to face the loss of her honour. Many critics have suggested, as Pandarus does (IV. 610-616), that Criseyde's refusal to flee with Troilus indicates that she does not fully love him. But, as a courtly lady, it is quite impossible for her to consider deliberate dishonour: in the face

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[26] Ap Roberts, p. 83.

of circumstances, she is as helpless as Troilus to prevent her departure. Chaucer's revisions of Il Filostrato in the fourth Book are made to heighten the inevitability of her departure, the completeness of her love, and the sincerity of her grief.[27] Criseyde is given an acute awareness of Troilus' suffering, an awareness which Criseida lacks.[28] And to emphasize the depth of Criseyde's love for Troilus, Chaucer violates the code by making her regard a future marriage as a betrayal of her lover (IV. 1472-1536).

It is noteworthy that the suggestion of the plan to depart and then return originates not with Criseyde but with Pandarus:

> "So shapeth how destourbe youre goynge,
> Or come ageyn, soon after ye be went." (IV. 934-935)

If Criseyde herself were to make the suggestion first, the reader might feel that she has some ulterior motive. Chaucer avoids this possibility, and his comments, emphasizing the sincerity of her intention to return, have no equivalent in Il Filostrato:

> And trewelyche, as writen wel I fynde,
> That al this thyng was seyd of good entente;
> And that hire herte trewe was and kynde
> Towardes hym, and spak right as she mente,
> And that she starf for wo neigh, whan she wente,
> And was in purpos evere to be trewe:
> Thus writen they that of hire werkes knewe. (IV. 1415-1421) [29]

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[27] For a detailed account of these revisions, see Ap Roberts, pp. 114-125.

[28] See also IV. 747-749, 757-760, 794-798, 897-903, 1286-1295.

[29] See also IV. 764-770, 834-847, 1331-1337, and V. 57-63.

Criseyde's plans are plausible. She knows that any delay she could effect to stay in Troy would be only temporary. It is better to agree to the exchange and then contrive to return, when the Trojans have achieved their political end and recovered Antenor. But Criseyde discounts the one consideration which will make her return impossible, that is, the possibility that Troy is doomed by the gods.[30] Calchas is not, as she thinks, sending for her because he fears she is ill-treated by the Trojans, nor is he concerned about the loss of his property. He sends for Criseyde for the same reason that he left Troy, because he believes that the city is doomed; but Criseyde regards this belief only as an example of the way men delude themselves through the oracles. Incredible as it may seem to the reader, Boccaccio's Criseida does not know why her father deserted. Though Criseyde, on the other hand, knows her father's reason for leaving, her religious scepticism cancels out that knowledge, making it credible that she could plan her return in contempt of the gods. Criseyde is thus placed in the traditional position of all courtly ladies, from Wallāda to the chatelaines of Christian France: she is opposed to the orthodox religion of her day, as well as to the forces of the society around her.

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[30] Ap Roberts, pp. 132-144.
See Ap Roberts, "Notes on Troilus and Criseyde, IV, 1397-1414," MLN, LVII (1942), 92-97.

B) CRISEYDE AS AN INDIVIDUAL

In spite of the fact that Criseyde behaves in conformity to the code until after her departure from Troy, she is not, after all, a perfect courtly lady. Like Pandarus, she is forced by the conventions of courtly love to act a part for which nature does not seem to have intended her. In her relations with Troilus, Criseyde behaves overtly like an authoritative courtly lady in the French tradition, but her innate character has a gentleness or softness which is out of harmony with her role. She is by nature a potentially tender, submissive and loyal wife, rather than a despotic mistress. She is more like Dorigen than Guinevere.

This mildness in Criseyde's nature constitutes her originality and distinguishes her from other courtly ladies. But, because the courtly lady was always perfect, and because perfection in the laws of l'amour courtois allowed no room for variation, Criseyde's individuality is an aberration from the code. Her commendable characteristics are those of the courtly lady, but her weaknesses are her own. Her singularity of character leads directly to her infidelity, which is unique in the literature of courtly love, and which is the greatest possible crime against the code.

Many critics have analysed Criseyde's softness as the tragic flaw which caused her downfall. Her weakness has been variously described as her desire for harmony with society, her inability to make a deliberate choice, her inclination to take the line of least resistance, her tenderness of heart, her impressionability, her childlike nature or her natural femininity.

Like several critics before him, C.S. Lewis has described Criseyde's ruling passion as fear -- "fear of loneliness, of old age, of death, of love, and of hostility; of everything, indeed, that can be feared. And from this Fear springs the only positive passion which can be permanent in such a nature; the piteable longing, more childlike than womanly, for protection, for some strong and stable thing that will hide her away and take the burden from her shoulders." [31] Chaucer's text supports this analysis.

The only kind of fear which a courtly lady was permitted to feel was Drede, fear for her reputation. Timidity like Criseyde's had no place in the system. In spite of this discrepancy between her nature and her courtly role, Chaucer gives Criseyde a consistent character. He does so by emphasizing her Pity, that great virtue of the courtly lady: he describes her gentleness and softness in such a way that they are, on the one hand, components of her courtly virtue, and, on the other hand, parts of her intrinsic weakness. It is a paradox that, in some passages of the text, Criseyde's virtue and her vice are hardly distinguishable. The fact that Criseyde was "slydynge of corage" has been interpreted both as an assertion of her fickleness (the one note of censure in her portrait), and, conversely, as a commendation of her Pity, meaning that she had "a heart quick to move in sympathy." [32] The paradox is necessary if Criseyde is to appear basically alike in her love and in her infidelity.

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[31] Lewis, p. 185.

[32] P. van D. Shelley, The Living Chaucer (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 126. Homer H. Hughes, Chaucer's Criseyde and Her Ancestry (unpub. diss., Univ. of Texas, 1948), p. 412.

Chaucer doubles the length of Boccaccio's introductory description of his heroine in order to tell, even before giving her name or an account of her beauty, that she was

> in gret penaunce,
> For of hire lif she was ful sore in drede,
> As she that nyste what was best to rede;
> For bothe a widewe was she and allone
> Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone. (I. 94-98)

With characteristic sympathy for all things small or defenceless, Chaucer develops Criseyde's weakness and her need for protection throughout the poem.[33]

It has been suggested that Criseyde's dream of the white eagle reveals her need of a strong, decisive lover.[34] Certainly she sought security in her love for Troilus:

> she felte he was to hire a wal
> Of stiel, and sheld from every displesaunce;
> That to ben in his goode governaunce,
> So wis he was, she was namore afered. (III. 479-482)

This inclination to lean on a lover is uncourtly, and Criseyde is incapable of facing "the mooste stormy lyf" of love, or the challenges of life in general, with the equanimity of Guinevere.

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[33] For references to Criseyde's fearfulness, see:
I. 94-98, 108, 180;
II. 115, 124, 302-314, 449-455, 482, 606, 708-714, 770, 810, 900, 1101, 1128, 1470;
III. 479-482, 572, 753, 1096, 1226, 1238;
IV. 672, 678, 772, 859, 1225, 1363, 1483, 1535, 1560, 1644-1645;
V. 704, 710, 727-728, 1026-1027, 1603, 1627.

[34] Charles A. Owen, Jr., "The Significance of Chaucer's Revisions of Troilus and Criseyde," MP, LV (1957), 4.

Criseyde's momentary consideration of the political danger to which she might expose herself if she angered Troilus by refusing his suit, for example, is quite out of keeping with her role as a courtly lady:

> "Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit,
> Thorugh whicch I myghte stonde in worse plit,
> Now were I wis, me hate to purchace,
> Withouten nede, ther I may stonde in grace?" (II. 711-714)

Her awareness of Troilus' status as a prince -- "Ek wel woot I my kynges sone is he" (II. 708) -- echoes the attitude of Enide, an uncourtly heroine: "Never yet could I withhold my love from him, nor should I do so. For is not my lord the son of a king?" [35]

Similarly, Criseyde is frightened at the thought of Poliphete's "advocacies" (II. 1467-1478). Her desire to avoid trouble, and to "lat hym han al yfeere" without any opposition, contrasts vividly with the aggression of courtly ladies like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Ermengarde of Narbonne, who fought law suits, administered justice in their own domains, created political treaties, and founded the jurisprudence of courtly love on dialectics.

The contrast between Criseyde's gentleness and the self-reliance of the typical courtly ladies becomes more obvious in Books IV and V. Compared to the trials endured by other courtly ladies, Criseyde's troubles are insignificant. Eleanor was imprisoned for fifteen years, and Guinevere was abducted to a strange land. Iseult was sentenced to be

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[35] Chrétien de Troyes, "Erec et Enide," Arthurian Romances, ed. W. Wistar Comfort (London, 1951), p. 82.

burned alive, then given to the lepers, and forced to live in hiding in the Wood of Morois. Criseyde faces nothing worse than a short journey and temporary separation from Troilus.

Iseult could still smile as she was led to the stake, since she knew that Tristan was safe. When Guinevere was told that Lancelot had been killed, she forced herself to show no more dismay than befitted her as Lancelot's queen. Criseyde, on the other hand, is so overcome with sorrow and fear that she loses her self-control. When the Trojan ladies visit her, she weeps openly in their presence (IV. 708-720).

If the news that Lancelot was alive had not reached Guinevere, she would have killed herself by slow starvation. Criseyde, too, thinks of death: "How sholde I lyve, if that I from hym twynne?" (IV. 758).[36] Confessing that she is afraid to kill herself with a sword or dagger, "for the crueltee," she determines on the method used by Guinevere:

> "Thanne shal no mete or drynke come in me
> Til I my soule out of my breste unshethe;
> And thus myselven wol I don to dethe." (IV. 775-777)

But Guinevere chose starvation not from fear of a violent death, but because her "honour" had to be preserved. Neither in life nor in literature did the typical courtly lady know anything like Criseyde's physical cowardice. When the Countess of Rousillon, for example, heard of the death of Guillem de Cabestaing, she leapt out of the window of her prison to her death.

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[36] See IV, 733-734, 739, 753.

Criseyde thinks she may die naturally of sorrow as, according to the code, it was possible to do.[37] The Chatelaine of Vergi died as soon as she was told that her lover had betrayed her. When Criseyde faints, Troilus thinks this is what has happened. Like the Chatelaine's lover, he draws his sword to kill himself. But Criseyde is too human to die of a broken heart, and she regains consciousness.

> But at the laste, as that hire eye glente
> Asyde, anon she gan his swerd espie,
> As it lay bare, and gan for fere crye,
> And asked hym, whi he it hadde out drawe. (IV. 1223-1226)

When Troilus tells her "how hymself therwith he wolde han slawe," she makes a final protestation that she would have killed herself too (IV. 1235-1241). Then she drops the subject.

All the while she lived in Troy, Criseyde had been afraid of the enemy outside the walls of the city: "I am of Grekes so fered that I deye" (II. 124). Circumstances now compel her to face the Greeks. She tells Troilus that she dreads the thought of staying in the camp. "Among tho men of armes evere in feere" (IV. 1363). She will be "With wommen fewe, among the Grekis strong" (V. 689). Her terror of the war and of the military camp contrasts notably with the attitude of those courtly ladies who participated in military affairs. Ermengarde of Narbonne rode at the head of her own troops, directing them in forays and in sieges. Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Amazons travelled on the Second Crusade and witnessed battles against the Saracens. Eleanor herself

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37 See IV. 774, 819, 898, 907-910, 1149.

emerged unscathed from her capture by Byzantine pirates; she had been ambushed more than once in Provence. In 1174 she fled from Poitiers disguised as a man, riding astride her horse. She travelled the length and breadth of England with Henry to quell rebellion, and, at the age of eighty, successfully withstood the siege of Mirebeau.

Criseyde presents a very different picture as she rides toward the "Grekis oost," weeping tears of sorrow and of fear, and scarcely able to keep her seat on her horse. Her fear of violence and death is directly responsible for her decision not to return to Troy, the first step toward her infidelity.

On the ninth night, Criseyde still intends to return. She does not know why her father has refused to allow her to go back to the city (V. 694-695). She sees only that her plans have failed and that she must find another way. She is terrified at the prospect of stealing away from the Greek camp at night (V. 701-707), but her love for Troilus is so strong that she thinks she can face the risk of capture or of death.

> "But natheles, bityde what bityde,
> I shal to-morwe at nyght, by est or west,
> Out of this oost stele on som manere syde." (V. 750-752)

Up to this point Criseyde is firm in her resolve: "This purpos wol ich holde" (V. 754). But on the tenth day something happens to make her "take a purpos for t'abyde" (V. 770). She learns that to return to Troy means certain death. Diomede tells her that the city is doomed:

> "Trusteth wel, and understondeth me,
> Ther shal nat oon to mercy gon on-lyve." (V. 887-888)

He persuades her that Calchas' predictions are true, and she realizes for the first time her father's motive in exchanging her for Antenor. Criseyde had been prepared to risk death in an attempt to escape. But, just as she was incapable of suicide in Troy, so this prospect of certain death is more than she can face, and she decides to stay with the Greeks. Her religious scepticism disappears, and she prays for the gods to remove the barrier which she is not strong enough to cross:

> And therwithal she caste hire eyen down,
> And gan to sike, and seyde, "O Troie town,
> Yet bidde I God, in quiete and in reste
> I may you sen, or do myn herte breste." (V. 1005-1008)

Criseyde now has two alternatives. She may stay in the Greek camp, remaining faithful to Troilus, or she may accept Diomede as a lover. Because Chaucer is portraying Criseyde's infidelity with great sympathy, he deliberately minimizes the first of these two possibilities: he almost suggests that it did not exist. He speaks of the causes of Criseyde's decision to stay and the causes of her infidelity as if they were the same.

In so doing, Chaucer is not really distorting the issues. Because of Criseyde's own nature, the first alternative is an impossibility.

> And this was yet the werste of al hire peyne,
> Ther was no wight to whom she dorste hire pleyne. (V. 727-728)

She cannot support the burden of loneliness and fear. Her tragic flaw combines with fate to make her infidelity inevitable. "What cruelty it is," writes C.S. Lewis, "to subject such a woman to the test of absence -- and of absence with no assured future of reunion, absence compelled by the

terrible outer-world of law and politics and force (which she cannot face). . . . The very depth of her love for Troilus facilitates her fall, in so far as it produces in her, when once Troilus is left behind, a desolation that heightens to imperative craving her normal hunger for comfort and protection." [38]

Until the tenth day, when she abandoned hope of returning to Troy, Criseyde had not found Diomede attractive. On the journey to the Greek camp, grateful for any offer of support, she had accepted his offer of friendship; but it is a mistake to think that she saw Diomede from the first as a potential lover. Such swift acquiescence to his advances would have been too flagrant a violation of the courtly code and out of keeping with her previous conduct. Criseyde had seen in Diomede only a potentially strong friend:

> She thanked Diomede
> Of al his travaile and his goode cheere,
> And that hym list his frendshipe hire to bede;
> And she accepteth it in good manere. (V. 183-186)

As Chaucer had revised Boccaccio's poem to emphasize the courtly elements in the love story, he now modifies his source so as to minimize any courtly strains in Criseyde's relationship with Diomede. In Il Filostrato, Diomede waits until the fourth day before he begins to court Criseida. He is almost as attractive a courtly lover as Troilo. He insists on yielding complete sovereignty to Criseida, and his love is sincere.

Chaucer makes Diomede a philanderer, a "supplanter" and an "avauntour:" "And som men seyn he was of tonge large" (V. 804). Diomede makes his advances to Criseyde before reaching the camp, and the first

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[38] Lewis, p. 187.

description of him betrays his experience in love,

> As he that koude more than the crede
> In swich a craft. (V. 89-90)

The courtly elements in his speech are removed, and in his portrait only his qualities as a warrior are emphasized. As Troilus was a perfect courtly lover, so Diomede is an example of all that a courtly lover should not be. He is cunning, bold, and self-confident. As Robert Ap Roberts writes, "He is exactly the sort of man whom the Courtly Lady dreads above all things to be involved with." [39]

Diomede does not approach Criseyde as a courtly lover, and she does not respond as a courtly lady. The world of courtly society has been left behind in the city of Troy, walled in like the garden of the Rose. Pandarus and Troilus had both seen Criseyde in the light of the courtly code, and during the love affair her weakness had been disguised by the conventional authority of her position. But the code is not respected in the military camp. Criseyde can no longer look for help from her role as a courtly lady. She has to act naturally, and her innate weakness comes to the fore. We see her as she really is, weak and fearful. It will require strength and skill to rebuff Diomede's advances, and Criseyde is "muwet, milde, and mansuete" (V. 194).

Traces of the courtly lady appear only when Criseyde lies to Diomede in order to preserve the secrecy of her former love. She becomes

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[39] Ap Roberts, p. 156. See pp. 152-160.
See Kirby, pp. 242-245.

so dissociated from her previous role that she can even regret that she had to act as a courtly lady in her relationship with Troilus. To some extent she repudiates the code that was responsible for their separation:

> "Alas, I ne hadde trowed on your loore,
> And went with yow, as ye me redde er this!
> Than hadde I now nat siked half so soore.
> Who myghte have seyd that I hadde don amys
> To stele awey with swich oon as he ys?" (V. 736-740)

The new relationship is the antithesis of courtly love. From the beginning, Diomede is the dominant partner, and his interest in the affair is purely sensual. Chaucer indicates that the relationship is uncourtly when he denies that "she yaf hym hire herte" (V. 1050). Criseyde's pity on Diomede's wounds and her new vow of fidelity linger as two echoes from her courtly role in the past.

Placed in the same circumstances, the typical courtly lady would have remained faithful to her lover even if she had not braved death and returned to Troy. She would have been, like Guinevere or Eleanor, a woman of steel. Criseyde's tragedy is that she is a courtly lady not by nature but only by circumstance, and the system subjects her to strains she cannot support. Under any other code, she would not have had to leave Troy; she would have remained with Troilus, loving and loved to the end.

C) EPILOGUE

All the evidence of his other poems suggests that when Chaucer came to write the Troilus he was ready to subject courtly love to the test of reality. This was a test that the code inevitably failed. As Erich Auerbach has demonstrated, the literature of courtly love was in many respects (despite its interest in psychology) inimical to realism.[40] The system itself had originated as a reaction against life -- life, at any rate, as it was lived in twelfth-century France. Courtly love was therefore inherently artificial. It was to a large extent a matter of behaviour, an art to be practised rather than a passion to be felt. Gaston Paris has described courtly literature as "une poésie raffinée et savante, d'amour de tête, comme on l'a fort bien dit, et non d'amour de coeur." [41]

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[40] Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. W.R. Trask (Princeton, 1953), p. 142.

[41] Gaston Paris, "Etudes sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II," Romania, XII (1883), 521.

The unnaturalness of courtly love is excellently revealed, for example, in the fourth judgement recorded by Andreas:

"Another question like this came up: two men who were in all things absolutely equal began to pay court at the same time and in the same manner and demanded urgently that they be loved. Therefore it was asked which man's love could be chosen in such a case. We are taught by the admonition of the same countess [Marie de Champagne] that in such a case the man who asks first should be given the preference."

Only if their proposals are completely simultaneous (one wonders how) is it proper for the woman "to choose the one of the two toward whom she finds her heart inclining." Page 169.

The code recorded by Andreas Capellanus was evolved by ladies of very unusual character. The extraordinary qualities of forcefulness, possessed by Eleanor of Aquitaine and Ermengarde of Narbonne, for example, were exaggerated to an unnatural degree in the personalities of Guinevere and the fictional ladies of the De Amore.

Chaucer knew much about women and much about courtly love. It is not unreasonable to suppose that he saw the two were incompatible. He knew (perhaps unconsciously) that the typical courtly lady was an unnatural woman. In his Troilus and Criseyde, therefore, the artificiality of the code was inevitably revealed when Chaucer created a heroine who was, in her behaviour, a courtly lady, but in her nature much truer to life than was Guinevere.

When circumstances co-operate with the lovers in the Troilus, the beauty of the courtly ideal surpasses that of any other earthly emotion. But, when fate becomes hostile, the structure of the code crumbles because of its artificiality. In forcing Criseyde to leave Troilus, the system demands that she act contrary to her own nature and the promptings of her love. On the personal level, Criseyde's tragedy is that the laws of courtly love allow no margin for her human weakness.

The poem contains a tragedy, however, that is greater than Criseyde's personal downfall. The tragedy is the failure of courtly love itself. The most beautiful of human ideals is flawed to its core,

because it fails to take account of human nature. Instead of being a means whereby love can find its highest expression, the code in the end results in the destruction of the very love it exalted. The tragic impact of the poem depends to a great extent on Chaucer's sense of lacrimae rerum, as he portrays the disintegration of the beautiful ideal.[42]

Courtly love failed in this way because it claimed to be more than an expression of human love. The epilogue of Troilus and Criseyde is the poem's natural conclusion, philosophically and artistically. It is not a mere contrast of earthly and heavenly love. Chaucer was not of the ascetic temperament. He believed in human values, and would not have renounced natural love. Moreover, if he had wanted only to show the mutability of earthly love, as many critics suggest, there was no need to make the love in Troilus and Criseyde so perfectly courtly: any other form of human love would have served as well for this moral. The fact that Chaucer did not mention marriage in the epilogue indicates that he was dealing with something more than earthly love.

Courtly love was a religion. It pretended to replace Christianity, and the courtly lady was exalted to the position of a goddess.[43] But the Church of Love, as Chaucer and every medieval man knew, was idolatrous. In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer demonstrates that the idol has feet of clay. The goddess of courtly love is in reality only a weak woman, human to her core. The code that expects her to be

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[42] Morton W. Bloomfield, "Chaucer's Sense of History," JEGP, LI (1952), 301-313.

[43] The fact that courtly love also replaced feudal allegiance was insignificant once the age of feudalism had passed.

more than human is doomed to fail and to destroy her. Criseyde's infidelity is, in this sense, the fault of the code itself.

Chaucer addresses his epilogue not to his whole audience, but to those very people who are qualified for courtly love. He has shown them that their religion is idolatrous, and that it takes no account of human nature. Now he directs them to the only religion in which divinity and humanity are reconciled:

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with youre age,
> Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his ymage
> Yow made. (1835-1840)

The courtly lady, the fallen goddess, is replaced by the perfect "mayde and moder."

* * *

> Chaucer, undoubtedly did excellently in hys Troylus and Cresseid; of whom, truly I know not, whether to meruaile more, either that he in that mistie time, could see so clearely, or that wee in this cleare age, walke so stumblingly after him.
>
> (Sir Philip Sidney)

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APPENDIX

CHAUCER'S REJECTION OF COURTLY LOVE

In his early years, Chaucer translated part of the Roman de la Rose and wrote in the accepted French tradition, like Graunson, Deschamps and Froissart.[1] He was, as Alan Gunn has said, "the chief of the poets who drew from the fountainhead of the Roman de la Rose," and he was known to his contemporaries as a poet of courtly love.[1]

Deschamps addressed his Ballade to Chaucer, describing him as a writer who had

> Seme les fleurs et plante le rosier
> Aux ignorans de la langue pandras
> Grant translateur noble geffroy chaucier
> Tu es damours mondains dieux en albie
> Et de la rose en laterre angelique.[2]

Similarly, in the first version of Gower's Confessio Amantis (1390), Venus spoke of Chaucer as her disciple and poet, who was expected to produce some great "testament of love" as the fruit of his work.[3] The passage, nowever, did not occur in any later version of the Confessio Amantis. Its omission may be due to a quarrel between Gower and Chaucer. On the other hand, it may well be that Venus' reference to Chaucer had ceased to be appropriate.

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[1] Alan M.F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love: a Reinterpretation of the Romance of the Rose (Lubbock, Texas, 1952), p. 409.

[2] Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357-1900 (Cambridge, 1925), Vol. III, Appendix B, 16-17.

[3] Spurgeon, Vol. I, 10.

Chaucer's dream-vision poems reveal an increasing sense of realism in his attitude to courtly love.[4] Although the Book of the Duchess describes a typical love affair, the portrayal of Blanche is notable for its truth to life. She is more human, more gentle, than the conventional courtly lady. She does not exercise her full prerogative:

> she wolde not fonde
> To holde no wyght in balaunce
> By half word ne by countenance,
> . . . . . .
> And seye 'Sir, be now ryght war
> That I may of yow here seyn
> Worshyp, or that ye come ageyn!'
> She ne used no suche knakkes smale. (1020-1022, 1030-1033)

Guinevere's displeasure at Lancelot's hesitation to mount the cart, and her behaviour at the tournament of Naouz, would have been incomprehensible to Blanche.

In the House of Fame, Chaucer detaches himself from his subject by saying that he is not a lover. This is a break with the tradition established from the troubadours to the French poets of Chaucer's day. The personal detachment increases Chaucer's scope for ironic and realistic comment.[5] The story itself suggests that Chaucer felt he was becoming stale as a poet of love. Although the Parliament of Fowls is not

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[4] See Agnes Getty, "Chaucer's Changing Conceptions of the Humble Lover," PMLA, XLIV (1924), 202-216.

[5] Dorothy Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems," PMLA, LXXIV (1959), 515.

a satire on courtly love, the code is compared realistically to other forms of love and its class distinctions are made obvious. Chaucer remains objective and personally uninvolved in love.[6]

The works written after Troilus and Criseyde substantiate the theory that Chaucer's greatest love-poem concludes with his rejection of the courtly code. In the Legend of Good Women he barely disguises his disillusionment with the code. The poem may be a conscious travesty of the courtly lady, and the emphasis on "authority" in the Prologue strongly suggests that such women are not to be found in real life.[7]

The Canterbury Tales portray love in all its forms. Courtly love is presented seriously and satirically.[8] Aspects of the courtly

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[6] See Macdonald Emslie, "Codes of Love and Class Distinctions," Essays in Criticism, V (1955), 1-17;
Robert W. Frank, Jr., "Structure and Meaning in the Parlement of Foules," PMLA, LXXI (1956), 530-539;
Charles O. McDonald, "An interpretation of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules," Speculum, XXX (1955), 444-457;
Gardiner Stillwell, "Chaucer's Eagles and Their Choice on February 14," JEGP, LIII (1954), 546-561.

[7] See Paull F. Baum, "Chaucer's Glorious Legende," MLN, LX (1945), 377-381;
Robert M. Garrett, "Cleopatra the Martyr and Her Sisters," JEGP, XXII (1923), 64-74;
Harold Goddard, "Chaucer's Legend of Good Women," JEGP, VII (1908), 87-129, and VIII (1909), 47-112;
R.M. Lumiansky, "Chaucer's Parlement of Foules: a Philosophical Interpretation," RES, XXIV (1948), 81-89.

[8] See Arthur Hoffman, "Chaucer's Prologue to Pilgrimage: The Two Voices," ELH, XVIII (1951), 241-252.

lady are satirized in the Prioress, Alisoun, and Pertelote, and she is discredited by the Manciple:

> Ther nys no difference, trewely,
> Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
> If of hir body dishonest she bee,
> And a povre wenche, oother than this —
> If it so be they werke bothe amys —
> But that the gentile, in estaat above,
> She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
> And for that oother is a povre womman,
> She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.
> And God it woot, myn owene deere brother,
> Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.
>
> (Manciple's Tale, 212-222)

The "Marriage Group" — the Wife of Bath's, Clerk's, Merchants' and Franklin's Tales — deals with the central problem of sovereignty, the question whether the husband or wife should predominate.[2] According to the Church and to feudal society, man should be the master. Courtly love reacted against this theory by asserting the supremacy of the courtly lady. Chaucer's answer to the question is to deny both these

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[2] See George R. Coffman, "Chaucer and Courtly Love Once More — The Wife of Bath's Tale," Speculum, XX (1945), 43-50;
Hugh Holman, "Courtly Love in the Merchant's and Franklin's Tales," ELH, XVIII (1951), 241-252;
George L. Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," MP, IX (1912), 435-467;
William W. Lawrence, "The Marriage Group in the Canterbury Tales," MP, XI (1913), 247-258;
Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and Courtly Love," ELH, IV (1937), 201-212;
J.S.P. Tatlock, "Chaucer's Merchant's Tale," MP, XVIII (1921), 625-659.

extremes. In the Franklin's Tale, love and marriage are declared to be compatible in a way never visualized by the Church, feudal society, or the courtly code:

> Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
> Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
> Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
> Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,
> And nat to be constreyned as a thral;
> And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal.
>
> (Franklin's Tale, 764-770)

Chaucer's solution was the only realistic one. It was, in fact, practiced generally in the knightly class of his time.[10] Chaucer could be realistic in his treatment of the code because he knew the courtly lady well. At the court in London he had met and admired ladies like Blanche. But, like Marie de France before him, he was too shrewd not to observe the courtly lady's imperfections. Perhaps the reason why he was not himself a courtly lover was that he could not idealise the courtly lady as the code required. He saw her as she really was, not in the light of theory.

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[10] Gervase Mathew, "Marriage and Amour Courtois in Late Fourteenth Century England," Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford, 1947), pp. 128-135.