

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

University of Alberta

The Eloquent Lady: Lessons from the Tower

by

Susan Gail Hopkirk



**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements from the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

in

Comparative Literature

Department of Comparative Literature, Religion, and Film/Media Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2002



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-68583-7

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Susan Gail Hopkirk

Title of Thesis: The Eloquent Lady: Lessons from the Tower

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 2002

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Susan Hopkirk

16 Maplewood Crescent
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
C1A 2X5

April 15, 2002

The popular fear of what a reader might do among the pages of a book is like the ageless fear men have of what women might do in the secret places of their body

- Alberto Manguel, A History of Reading

My deepest gratitude to:

Dr E. D. Blodgett for his supervision, patience, and wit.

Dr. Milan V. Dimic, Dr. Claudia Potvin, Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh, Dr. Stephen Reimer, and Dr. Stephen Steele for comprising my doctoral committee and offering thought-provoking comments and suggestions.

My friends for their joie de vivre.

The Hopkirks and the Jenkins clan for reminding me of life beyond academia.

And, finally, to my family for their love, encouragement, and laughter: Gerry, Gail, Janice, Sean, Grace, Sam, Henckel and Haggis.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation will synthesize disparate ideas discussed briefly by medievalists. The ideas central to this thesis — including double-speak and reading within the romance — are poorly documented, and have only been discussed as adjunct ideas in scholarship concerned with other topics. They have not been linked, and are rarely central to the scholarly texts in which they appear.

In the feudal paradigm, language is literal, used to describe and control the world around the feudal court. In this world, it is men who have the reputation of skill with language. In the courtly world of the romance paradigm, however, language is not used in the service of feudalism, but used to conceal and digress in the service of Love. In romance narrative, men are clumsy and careless with language, susceptible to the rash boon, speaking truer than they know, and lying.

In the romance narrative, women, by contrast, maintain complete control of discourse at all times. To conceal and promote love, they use double-speak: the discursive practice of couching the truth in such a way that it is correctly interpreted by a select few, but misinterpreted by others not privy to the secrets of Love.

Women have a compelling reason for this skill in discursive practices. Double-speak is often learned from reading romance while imprisoned. For women, language is a means to free themselves from their untenable situations.

This reading of didactic romance transforms a prison into a liminal space, where the woman enters a passive prisoner, and leaves an active agent in her own life. Love teaches duplicity to allow the lovers to protect their love, and the result, at least temporarily, is a desirable one.

Table of Contents

1 - INTRODUCTION	1
2 - FEUDALISM IN ROMANCE	18
3 - THE RASH BOON	32
SIR ORFEO	42
WOMEN AND THE RASH BOON	47
4 - THE TRANSGRESSION OF SILENCE	53
LANVAL	53
LA CHASTELAINE DE VERGI	57
5 - SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT	75
6 - THE LADY IN THE TOWER	94
THE SOLITUDE OF THE TOWER	104
THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN	104
7 - READING (IN) THE ROMANCE	110
BOOKS IN THE TOWER	110
8 - THE EDUCATION OF THE HEROINE	124
9 - WOMEN AND LANGUAGE	131
DOUBLE-TALK	133
10 - TRISTAN AND ISOLDE	137
11 - FLAMENCA	157
12 - CONCLUSION	184
ENDNOTES	201
WORKS CITED	299

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the feudal paradigm, language is ideally used to describe and control the world around the feudal court. Language is literal, and a man's word is his bond. In this world, it is men who have the reputation of skill with language; women's language is rarely considered in the feudal paradigm. It is man who has control of language, and the world it controls and defines.

In the romance paradigm, that of the courtly world, however, language is not used in the service of feudalism.¹ Language is used in the service of Love, and discursive practices change from the literal to the figurative and metaphorical. Discourse is no longer used to describe and reveal; in Love's service, discourse is used to conceal and digress. In this paradigm, it is women who are adept in discursive practices. While the feminized knight (as I shall call him) — the courtly knight, rather than the feudal one — does achieve some agility with language, it is women who gain mastery of language. In romance narrative, men are clumsy and careless with language.²

Men's carelessness with language takes several forms. One of these forms, apparently exclusive to men, is the rash boon, where an undefined request is unconditionally granted. Examples are found in Floire et Blancheflor, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gottfried's Tristan, in Pwyll Prince of Dyved from The Mabinogion, in the The Wooing of Etain, and in Chrétien de Troyes' Erec et Enide. Even King Arthur suffers from this lack of linguistic *mésure* in Kilhwch and Olwen from The Mabinogion and Chrétien de Troyes's The Knight of the Cart. Women do not exhibit this trait — perhaps because they are the ones who suffer due to such rash boons. Rhiannon, Guinevere and Etain are all abducted due to rash boons, due to the carelessness of the

men around them. It is the more linguistically adept women who save the men — and thus themselves — from the situations in which men embroil them due to a lack of skill in discourse.

As part of their carelessness with language, men such as Pwyll, Gottfried's Tristan, Aucassin, and Sir Gawain also lie outright.³ In addition, it is almost exclusively men, as with William in Flamenca, and Gottfried's Tristan, who use disguises, another form of deception, in romance. And it is men who sometimes lose their tenuous grasp on language entirely, as is the case with Archimbaut in Flamenca. They do not even realize when their language has an ironic aspect, and fall victim to speaking truer than they know.

Women, by contrast, maintain complete control of discourse at all times. Living in a world torn between feudalism and courtly rules, they manage to follow both. While not lying, which would be a direct contradiction of the feudal code (and the Christian ethic),⁴ they use discourse to conceal and promote love, as the romance paradigm, ruled by Love, demands. Women do not lie; rather, they use double-talk. Double-talk is the discursive practice of couching the truth in such a way that it is correctly interpreted by a select few, but misinterpreted by others not privy to the secrets of Love. From the literalism of feudalism, romance narrative moves to ambiguity, with the possibility of interpretation, where only lovers hold the key to interpretation. Women in Gottfried's Tristan, Flamenca, and Aucassin and Nicolette use double-talk, consciously creating double meanings.

Double-talk allows women to observe the letter (if not the spirit) of the law of feudalism and Christianity, which rejects lying. However, double-talk also allows women

to remain loyal to the discursive demands and ethical code of Love. This code demands that lovers never deceive each other, even as they plot to deceive those who would oppose their love. In the romance paradigm, it is Love that justifies deception, and women's adept linguistic manipulations.

Nevertheless, despite the above code, the attitude toward women and their skill at language is often ambiguous. Ironically, it is men who often lie and mistakenly trust other men. Yet men mistrust women for their use of language, even though women do not lie outright. Women are praised for their skill at courtly love and discourse, the weapons they use to gain control of their lives. Yet they are also reviled for the use of these weapons.

Women have a compelling reason for this skill in discursive practices. For women, language is a means to free themselves; speech acts allow women to constitute themselves, and to re-make the world around them. Double-talk, learned from romance, frees women from their untenable situations. The *maumariée* escapes her *jaloux*. In the *lais* of Marie de France, Yonec's mother's lament frees her from her tower. Flamenca is also freed from her tower through wiles taught by romance.

How do women learn to perform double-talk? They learn it in one of two ways: occasionally, they learn it from mothers or a mother-figure, as with Gottfried's Isolde, but more often they learn it from reading romances, the literature of Love. In particular, the heroine is often separated from the public sphere, and uses reading to while away her imprisonment. In Marie de France, the mother of Yonec is familiar with the romance tradition. Flamenca reads romance during her imprisonment. Aucassin and Nicolette fall in love while being educated in the romance tradition together. Even Dante's Paolo and

Francesca become conscious of their love whilst reading a romance. Cryseide and her ladies read romance.

When reading romance is itself an object of representation in romance, it appears as more than a temporary escape. Romance reading can lead to a permanent escape from a very real prison. This reading of didactic romance transforms a prison into a liminal space, where the woman enters a passive prisoner, and leaves an active agent in her own life. In this liminal space, the romance will become didactic and usher in societal change. The identity that is constructed is not merely a private one, contained in the liminal space, but spills out into the public sphere also. Romance concerned itself with this quest for identity, and the reconciliation of the private and the public sphere. The self is consciously created, indeed chosen.

The desire for change does not merely stay enclosed within the romance read by the fictional heroine. The romance is both perceived and used as a didactic text. The desires of its audience are translated from the liminal space, both physical and psychological, of their personal experience of the romance genre to the fictional world beyond the pages of their romance within a romance, with desirable results. Self-creation leads to renewal on many levels, including a new paradigm in which to exist.

The valorization of romances seems justified by the societal changes presented in Flamenca. Flamenca's wiles, taught to her by her study of romance, have allowed her to re-enter society, and transform that society from a sterile, unhappy one, into a courtly, chivalrous one, where even the much-maligned Archambaut is better for the changes brought about by his cuckolding. There is also a happy ending for Aucassin et Nicolette. The skill at discursive practices, including double-talk, that romance reading teaches

women, seems to create a preferable world. Even when the romance narratives do not contain a “happy ending,” there does not seem to be the suggestion, on the part of the author, that feudal society would have offered a happy solution either.

Learned from reading romance, double-talk allows women, and their courtly knight lovers, to escape from the rigid confines of a feudal world to a courtier paradigm. In this new world, Love teaches duplicity to allow the lovers to protect their love, and the result, at least temporarily, is a desirable one.

This placing of romance as a didactic text serves the internal purpose of allowing the heroine to escape from her prison. However, it also serves the external purpose of defending both the genre of romance against its attackers and justifying its authors. Attacks on romance were vituperous and bitter often dismissing it as a frivolous and unimportant — or corrupting — literary tradition.⁵ Romance authors defend themselves within their works, and insist on the didactic, important nature of their work. Romance is the salvation of many of their heroines, and they posit their works as a possible saving grace for their implied real — largely feminine — audience as well.

Justification of the Problem’s Pursuit

This dissertation will synthesize and bring together disparate ideas discussed briefly by medievalists. Several areas of this dissertation concern ideas that are poorly documented and discussed. For example, the idea of the rash boon, as well as its predominantly male domain, is largely undocumented.

Andree Kahn Blumstein discusses the notion of female double-talk in the book Misogyny and Idealization in the Courtly Romance. However, Kahn Blumstein discusses this notion only in reference to Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan, and is not interested in

discovering double-talk in other texts or viewing it as a theme of a canon of romances. He also does not discuss at any length how women learn this skill. Thus, there is no mention of women learning their verbal skills from other women.⁶ Similarly, the reading of romances is not linked to the learning of double-talk.

The reading of romance and reading within romance has also been poorly investigated. While there are now texts emerging about medieval women and reading, reading within romance, especially of other romances, is discussed rarely, if at all. Nancy Zak mentions this phenomenon in *Flamenca* in passing in her book, The Portrayal of the Heroine in Chrétien de Troyes's 'Erec et Enide', Gottfried von Strassburg's 'Tristan', and 'Flamenca', and Joan M. Ferrante discusses this idea in the article "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy." However, it has not been the subject of study in its own right, but merely appears occasionally appended to other arguments. Intertextuality among romances is similarly poorly discussed, and is often limited to discussions of Chaucer.

While Peter W. Travis discusses didacticism and literature in his article, "Affective Criticism, the Pilgrimage of Reading, and Medieval English Literature," the idea of romances in particular positing themselves as didactic texts has rarely been explored. In the article "The *granz biens* of Marie de France," John Stevens discusses this idea in relation to the *lais* of Marie de France, but not to romance in general.

In his article, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," Paul Sænger discusses the new privacy for self-realization that silent reading allowed, but does not link this specifically to romances. The woman imprisoned in the tower is

discussed in several texts, but is often not linked to the self-realization and self-construction that takes place in that liminal space.

In addition, several of the romances that are used as primary texts in this dissertation have been largely left untouched by medievalists in recent decades. While Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, the romances of Chrétien de Troyes and the *lais* of Marie de France are perennial favourites, other romances such as Flamenca, La Chastelaine de Vergi, Aucassin et Nicolette, and Sir Orfeo are often given little consideration in the romance canon.

Thus, the majority of the ideas central to the argument of this thesis, that is double-talk, reading the romance, reading within romance, the didacticism of romance, and romance's effect in liminal space, are poorly documented, and have only been discussed as adjunct ideas in scholarship concerned with other topics. They have not been linked, and are rarely central to the scholarly texts in which they appear. Thus, both through examining the relationship between these acts and concepts, and by placing them in the forefront of research, this dissertation will ensure its originality, and make a new contribution to the field of medieval studies.

Regarding the Texts Chosen

This dissertation will concentrate principally on medieval romance texts.⁷ Other sources will occasionally be mentioned, including non-romance texts and the visual arts, when appropriate, but there is neither the time nor space to discuss these subjects in depth.

The texts chosen as primary texts for this dissertation may not all be, strictly speaking, romances. Nevertheless, they are informed and shaped by the romance tradition

and, in many cases, explicitly link themselves with this tradition through the mention of specific romance narratives. To assist the reader, I will refer to the collection of texts discussed here as romances, for together they add to, and are a part of, the romance paradigm, even though separately they may not fit the strictest definitions.

I have chosen the texts discussed here for several reasons. First and foremost, they give examples of the phenomenon I am examining. More particularly, though, they fit at least partially within a paradigm as delineated by the following overlapping characteristics that were used for the selection of romances in this dissertation: the theme of heterosexual, romantic love; a courtly setting; a woman whose marital status changes; a heroine who plays a central, active role; an injustice against the heroine; women in relation to other women; a scarcity of magic; an awareness of and emphasis on language and discourse; romances that are not allegories, and, finally, vernacular romances from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

1. The theme of heterosexual, romantic love.

While I realize the use of the term “romantic” to refer to love in the Middle Ages is problematic, I think it best describes to the modern reader of this dissertation the nature of love in question. These texts feature heterosexual love affairs that are of both the body and the mind. They are neither simply the sexual gratification often sought in fables and *fabliaux*, nor the spiritual love praised in many religious texts.⁸ Instead, they combine the two.⁹

2. A courtly setting

The narratives presented here have a courtly setting. This is partner to the expectation of romantic love, for it is romantic love at an aristocratic level that is featured. On those

occasions where the hero or heroine is not aristocratic, his or her virtues quickly raise him or her to this social level.

One way of describing these two characteristics would be the term “courtly love.”¹⁰ If one takes this as defined as romantic love, in an aristocratic setting, then it is indeed so. However, the definition of courtly love is not so simple. Larry D. Benson offers an amended version of C. S. Lewis’s famous definition: “Humility, Courtesy, and the Religion of Love” (239). Roger Boase defines courtly love as “a comprehensive cultural phenomenon: a literary movement, an ideology, an ethical system, a style of life, and an expression of the play element in culture, which arose in an aristocratic Christian environment” (129-130). Boase also sees courtly love as “the elevation of a lady into an object of veneration. . . the emphasis on the need for secrecy, the idea of love as a source of moral and social refinement, and belief in love’s potentially destructive power” (124). These characteristics are true of the texts discussed in this dissertation. Given the range of texts covered here, however, many further refinements or restrictions often associated with this idea must be discarded. Themes such as adultery, the woman on a pedestal, or *fin’ amors* ideas of *amor de lonh* may apply to individual texts, but not to the selection on any consistent basis. What is consistent is the emphasis on discourse, and courtly love as a mastery of courtly language and behaviour. Benson sees this as “the conviction that this sort of love is admirable — that love is not only virtuous in itself but is the very source and cause of all other virtues, that indeed one cannot be virtuous unless he is a lover” (240). Unfortunately, in the tales discussed here, love is not always so positive, and so I prefer to see courtly love as a double-edged sword, closer to the elements Boase lists: “illusion, commitment, virtuosity, secrecy, unpredictability, risk, emulation” (128).

3. A woman whose marital status changes.

The heroine may be unmarried at the beginning of the tale and get married in the course of the narrative, or she may be faithful and become an adulteress as the story unfolds. Marriage vows are either given or broken. This change mirrors other changes in the heroine's life. However, her romantic situation alters dramatically, with the ultimate goal of achieving happiness. This does not always occur permanently, but generally does temporarily, and is the motivation behind her actions.

4. A heroine who plays a central, active role

For the romances central to my thesis, the strong heroine plays a large, if not central, and active role. She is often the protagonist of her own story. This is a characteristic that excludes many medieval texts, including many texts traditionally categorized as romances.

Many medievalists have discussed the misogyny of medieval romance: the woman exists on a pedestal, with a very small role to play; she is not to act herself, but is rather to inspire the knight. Diane Bornstein, in The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women, states: "The medieval heroine may be a temptress or a virgin, disdainful or unaware, but she rarely plays an active role. Since her main function is to provide motivation for male characters, we usually see her through their eyes" (9). And these eyes are unfocused — they may see beauty, or certain traits, such as cruelty, distance, or generosity, but the lady is rarely a personality; rather she serves a function, and represents the courtly lady in general, rather than a specific individual. Again, to quote from Bornstein: "In the typical romance, little attention is given to the

characterization of the lady, who exists mainly as a motivating force or source of inspiration for the knight” (9).

W.T.H. Jackson agrees.

These are the qualities which seem to me to spring more or less directly from social factors. It has been argued by many critics that only married women could move freely in medieval courtly society and that love must therefore necessarily be adulterous. In support of this they cite the well-known work on love by Andreas Capellanus. In fact, however, adulterous love is exceptional in the romances. Erec and Yvain both are interested only in their wives. Parzival is a glorious example of the true love possible between married persons. The Lancelot-Tristan group stresses an adulterous relationship, partly because of the intention to discuss the power of love. There is a good deal of evidence of disapproval of the Tristan story on the grounds that it glorifies an immoral relationship. Chrétien de Troyes himself attacks the popularity of itself in the introduction to his non-Arthurian romance *Cligès*. (Jackson, Literature 96)

This is not to discount the great strides made by romance, merely in recognition of the fact they even bother to have women present in their narratives. In the late eleventh-century Carolingian *chanson de geste* La Chanson de Roland, Roland's fiancée is mentioned twice, once as a threat to ensure courage, and again when she expires upon hearing of Roland's death. In comparison to this, even a lady upon a pedestal seems marvelous. This is how many romances are perceived: “The true fact is that, in the romances, the stress is on *service* to a lady and its implications, not on love as passion.

Again with the exception of the Lancelot-Tristan group, the interest lies in the knight's duty rather than in his relations with the opposite sex" (Jackson, Literature 96). This is certainly true of some romances, but not of all. This dissertation will be examining romances where this is not true.

There is a sub-genre of romance that shows us a courtly lady who is not so passive, who is more than mirror for her narcissistic knight. She is active, with a voice of her own that she uses.¹¹ Further, she is an active force for good,¹² a relatively new vision for women, as Joan M. Ferrante notes:

Along with the psychological and ahistorical nature of romance, there is another aspect relatively new in medieval literature — the idea of love as a motivation to good action. Again there may be explanations for the occurrence of this idea, first in Provençal literature and spreading thence through western Europe, in the social fact of women as patronesses of the arts, custodians of the fief, and so forth. Certainly the Christian doctrine of charity would create an atmosphere receptive to such a concept. Whatever the source, it is a factor in romance. Instead of the destructive nature of woman's love that is emphasized in classical and early Christian writing, we begin to have a force for good, an inspiration to action and virtue without which no hero of romance can function properly. (Ferrante, Conflict 13)

While the heroine may finish by being a force for good, her story generally does not begin happily, which leads to the next characteristic of romance discussed here.

5. An injustice against the heroine

These romances generally begin with a social injustice against the female protagonist. Often, this social injustice is a barrier between the heroine and her desired life, represented by a controlling male: a jealous husband, an overprotective father or brother.¹³ The barrier can also be physical: the stereotypical fairy-tale heroine trapped in a tower. This social injustice against the heroine often mirrors an inappropriate society. And these romances often offer a very practical solution to her dilemma.

6. Women are in relation to other women.

A more minor characteristic, but nonetheless an intriguing one, is that these texts show women in relation to other women. This is a critique of literature even up to the twentieth century, that women are "only seen in relation to the other sex" (Woolf 82). While a heterosexual love story between the hero and the heroine are central to these texts, the heroine generally has female friends, handmaidens, and even wise mothers and aunts to rely upon. She is part of a society of women and is portrayed in that context, a context where women must possess personal franchise, for no male is present to act for them.

7. Magic is rare.

While there are many magical medieval romances, magic is not central to the romances featured here. It is incidental, generally featured at most as a "function," a vehicle to advance the story, rather than for delight's sake. However, when magic does occur, it is accepted without question by the characters. When it is featured, the linguistic aspect of magic is emphasized. This focus is related to the next characteristic: an emphasis on language and discourse.

8. An awareness of and emphasis on language and discourse.

The romance, the dominant genre of the Middle Ages,¹⁴ is concerned with language in a way that is not seen in earlier genres, such as epic and drama (comedy and tragedy). As the literature of courtly love, romance portrays its concerns: “Courtly love. . . is especially dependent on the forms of speech, since not only is every lover a poet, but the main characteristics of the courtly lover — his courtesy, humility, and religion of love — are expressed in speech” (Benson 243). In romance, language has the power to cast spells, seduce ladies, as well as serve as a solemn oath. The texts chosen here portray this obsession with the power of discourse. The principal texts discussed in this dissertation evince an awareness on the part of their creators that they are very much positioning their text as part of the romance paradigm. As mentioned earlier, they are self-reflexive, with both implicit and explicit intertextual allusions. They are aware of, and concerned with, discourse, with all the possibilities and problems contained therein.¹⁵

9. Romances that are not allegories.

While these romances certainly have allegorical elements, they are not, ultimately, allegories. They have as primary characters people with names and personalities — although these names may be allegorical, and the personalities may be mere functions to advance the plot, they do not feature, in general, characters with names such as “Jealousy” and “Erudition.”¹⁶ For this reason, texts such as the Romance of the Rose have been excluded.

10. Vernacular romances from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Finally, these romances are mainly from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While the characteristics and events appear in other times, they reach a critical mass in this era, as does the romance ethos. W.T.H. Jackson comments as follows:

Let us repeat once again that the Middle Ages was a long period. The evolution of the vernaculars into literary languages was a long slow process. The twelfth and early thirteenth centuries saw those vernaculars in full flower, and a fairly short period of relative prosperity and settled conditions have an opportunity for leisure, without which no great literature is possible. The flowering period was short, the decline long and painful. Only in England is medieval literature at its greatest in the fourteenth century. (Jackson, Literature 357)¹⁷

Many of the topics discussed in this dissertation, including reading in romance, the association of romance with female readers,¹⁸ and the association of romance with private, liminal space, appear in the twelfth century. However, it is thirteenth-century romances, composed mainly in Old French and Occitan, that will provide the richest field for this topic, for several reasons. The thirteenth-century, which Gustave Cohen names the “Grand Siècle,” is a rich one for both its diversity of literature, and the growing diversity of its audience.

Ainsi donc, si notre littérature du XIII^e ne justifie pas à elle seule l'épithète de Grand Siècle que j'ai cru pouvoir lui décerner, elle n'en a pas moins pour l'élargissement de la classe des auteurs, et du public lisant (et non plus seulement écoutant), par l'apparition des genres nouveaux — roman allégorique, théâtre comique, chronique historique, avènement de la prose—, une importance aussi décisive dans l'ordre littéraire que le développement de l'Ecole de Paris dans l'ordre de la philosophie et de la musique. (Cohen 172)

While beginning in the twelfth-century, romance continues as an influential and popular genre in the thirteenth-century as well. "Le genre roman, qui est né à la limite semi-séculaire du XIIe siècle et dont le mérite revient à la langue française qui lui a abandonné son nom, n'a rien perdu de sa vogue et de son efficace" (Cohen 196). Moreover, the tradition had time to grow into a canon, and this led to greater intertextual references among romances, as the paradigm had time not only to develop and become established, but to become self-reflexive. What begin as elliptical references to other romances become leitmotifs in the thirteenth-century.

After the thirteenth century, as already noted by Jackson, the "renaissance" is over. Referring to the late thirteenth century, Hollister states that the

closing of the frontiers was accomplished by diminishing prosperity and a drying up of high medieval culture. The brilliant cultural achievements of the High Middle Ages were products of a buoyant, expanding frontier society, fired by a powerful faith, driven by immense ambitions, and beguiled by a world in which, so it seemed, anything was possible. This world came to an end when the frontiers closed. (Hollister 219)

Further, the audience for romance coarsened, with the texts following suit:

The Albigensian Crusade shattered the culture of southern France, and in Germany there was political and social disruption in the thirteenth century. The refined audience was lost, the material of the stories remained, and inevitable the stress again was placed on the relatively crude aspects of the poems — the wonders of fairyland and the wholesale slaughter of giants by the hero. The subtleties of character and of morals vanished with the

audience, never large, which could appreciate them. (Jackson, Literature 59)¹⁹

While the majority of the central texts feature all these criteria, the majority of the minor texts feature only a few of these criteria. Nevertheless, they feature some and show that these characteristics, rather than being isolated occurrences in medieval romance, are found throughout the genre. They exhibit enough to create a field where these ideas are entwined, the “entrelacement” of Lewis’s romance applied to the romance genre as a whole.

Let us now examine the romance paradigm, beginning, ironically, with feudalism.

Chapter 2 - Feudalism in Romance

The first thing that needs to be stated about these romances is that they take place against the backdrop of feudalism. This is not to say that feudalism is valorized in these romances, but it is present. Romance builds upon this foundation.

Feudalism is described as follows by Marc Bloch:

Sujétion paysanne; à la place du salaire, généralement impossible. large emploi de la tenure-service, qui est, au sens précis, le fief: suprématie d'une classe de guerriers specializes; liens d'obéissance et de protection qui attachent l'homme à l'homme et, dans cette classe guerrière, revêtent la forme particulièrement pure de la vassalité: fractionnement des pouvoirs, générateur de désordre: au milieu de tout cela, cependant, la survivance d'autres modes de groupement, parentale et État . . . tels semblent donc être les traits fondamentaux e la féodalité européenne. (610)²⁰

Hollister discusses "some of the things that feudalism was not. It was not, for one thing, a universal and symmetrical system" (197). Nevertheless, an overall, generic idea of feudalism can be extracted from the romances in question – they are not concerned with particulars, but rather with a generality to provide the backdrop for the more engrossing matter of romance. Feudalism has a specific relationship with language, one that emphasizes literality and truth. There is no gap between signifier and signified.²¹

Regarding feudalism, Bogin states that "every member of society (males only) was tightly linked into a vertical seam of mutual obligation" (21). Feudalism does not

include women. But, ironically, the system that develops with courtly love is very similar to the feudal system it rejects. Regarding the feudal environment of the troubadours and trobairitz in southern France, Bogin notes:

Everyone, even the most powerful lord, was required to perform the ritual of vassalage, or homage (from *homme*, liege-man), by which his lifelong loyalty to his immediate superior was sworn and sanctified. The future vassal knelt before his lord, hands joined; the lord placed his own hands around the clasped hands of the vassal. Then the vassal rose and, with his hand upon a Bible or some sainted relic, swore his oath of fealty. This simple ceremony would provide the central metaphor of troubadour love poetry, the vassalage of man to woman:

(Domna, per vostr' amor	Lady, for your love
joh las mas et ador!)	I join my hands and worship!
	Bernart de Ventadorn
	fl. 1150-1180

(Bogin 21)

Here, the woman is allowed a role, and an important one at that. Hollister states: "The very essence of feudalism was the notion of reciprocal rights and obligations" (199). As shall be seen, this is what the romance heroine wants, to have a reciprocal relationship with a man. While this does not occur with husbands or guardians, it does with lovers.

Gillian Beer, in The Romance, notes: "The increased role of women and the emphasis on sexual love chiefly helped distinguish the Arthurian romance from earlier related Carolingian literature. This helped to establish the 'feminine' temper of the genre" (25). However, romance's interest in different aspects of language also intertwined with

the new foregrounding of women and courtly love. Courtly love is a love built of words, and interested in appropriating words that formerly belonged to the feudal system.²²

The courtly code was in its way revolutionary. It subverted the values of feudal society by its emphasis on bargains, the fantasy of female dominance, its individualism and its paradoxical legalism which piquantly appropriated the language of authority while undermining authoritarian assumptions. (Beer 23)

Because feudalism as represented in romance is dismissive of women, who are often little more than chattel,²³ romance is dismissive of feudalism. Gillian Beer states that one of the characteristics of romance is "a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply" (10). In these romances, all are judged by the code of courtly love, and the characters representing feudalism are found wanting. In these romances, feudalism often takes the form of the undesirable and controlling male, whether this is a husband, a father, a brother, or another relative or guardian.²⁴

This is not to suggest, however, that feudalism is entirely without merit. In Erec et Enide, Arthur himself states his idea of his kingship:

«Je sui rois, si ne doi pas mantir.²⁵
 Ne vilenie consantir,
 Ne fauseté, ne desmesure:
 Reison doi garder et droiture.
 Ce apartient a leal roi
 Que il doit maintenir la loi,
 Verité, et foi, et justise.
 Je ne voldroie an nule guise
 Faire deslëauté ne tort,
 Ne plus au foible que au fort.
 N'est droiz que nus de moi se plaingne
 Et je ne voel pas que remaigne
 La costume ne li usages
 Que suet maintenir mes lignages.

De ce vos devroit il peser,
 Se ge vos voloie alever
 Autres costume et autres lois
 Que ne tint mes peres li rois.
 L'usage Pandragon, mon pere,
 Qui roi estoit et emperere,
 Doi je garder et maintenir,
 Que que il m'an doie avenir.»
 (Erec 1757-1778)²⁶

However, for romance, most of these attributes are also applied to the courtly knight.

There are characteristics that the courtly knight shares with the feudal knight, such as the insistence on the importance of physical prowess and readiness for combat: “The preoccupation with war extended even into their leisure, of which the active pursuits — jousting and hunting — were a training for combat, and even the passive ones — heraldry, chess and the reading of histories and knightly deeds — recalled the field” (Orme 30).

However, the courtly knight builds upon this basic demand of feudal knights, and adds other necessary, more important, courtly characteristics to it:

Chivalry, originally a term of war, came also to mean a code of good manners at home. The perfect knight was expected to behave with courtesy to women, with deference to the great and with politeness even to the lower orders. Gentle youths, growing up in their own or in some other household, were expected to give their attention to personal hygiene, deportment, the rules of social precedence and etiquette at table. Helpful manuals were written to explain the conventions in these matters. When the tables were cleared and the company withdrew to make merry in hall

or chamber, other accomplishments were desirable: the ability to sing and dance, to play on the harp or pipe. (Orme 30)

The association with music is one of the defining characteristics of the courtly knight,²⁷ marking them as artistic, and possibly even feminized. The courtly knight also has an advantage in that he has the graces that attract women. His skill in language is to his benefit, not merely in the feudal arena, but the arena of love as well.

In her letters to Abelard, Heloise refers to some of the attributes that made her love him. First is his reputation, and her belief that he surpassed all others on earth.

What king or philosopher could match your fame? What district, town or village did not long to see you? When you appeared in public, who did not hurry to catch a glimpse of you, or crane his neck and strain his eyes to follow your departure? Every wife, every young girl desired you in her absence and was on fire in your presence: queens and great ladies envied me my joys and my bed. (Abelard 115)

Heloise then continues to list his other attributes, including the ability to compose songs and use words.

You had besides, I admit, two special gifts whereby to win at once the heart of any woman – your gifts for composing verse and song, in which we know other philosophers have rarely been successful. This was for you no more than a diversion, a recreation from the labours of your philosophic work, but left many love-songs and verses which won wide popularity for the charm of their words and tunes and kept your name continually on everyone's lips. The beauty of the airs ensured that even

the unlettered did not forget you; more than anything this made women sigh for love of you. And as most of the songs told of our love, they soon made me widely known and roused the envy of many women against me. For your manhood was adorned by every grace of mind and body.
(Abelard 115)

But the appreciation of women is not the only reason men choose to learn music. There is another reason for the association of music with the courtly knight: the courtly knight is learned and literate,²⁸ and music is associated with this education.

Closely connected with reading (which in medieval times was probably always performed aloud) was the study of song; indeed it so dominated the elementary schools that they were generally known to contemporaries as "song schools." "Song" meant plainsong such as the clergy used for reciting the psalms and hymns of the divine office, rather than any more elaborate polyphonic music. The importance of song in medieval schools is easily understood. It helped to teach a clear, correct pronunciation of words, instead of the mumble into which ordinary reading aloud is liable to deteriorate. (Orme 63)

In contrast to their feudal counterparts, the courtly knight has a smooth tongue. This is one of the most important characteristics of the courtly knight, separating him from his feudal counterpart. W.T.H. Jackson notes:

It is a notorious fact of the literary history of the Middle Ages that the heroes of the national epics are inarticulate. . . . How different is the

romance! *Facundia*, the power of smooth and polished speech, is the very essence of the characters. (Jackson, Problems 185)

The ability to control language is the single most important characteristic that the courtly knight possesses, more important than battles or physical prowess.²⁹ In the Prose Lancelot, Pharien gives this advice to nephew Lambegues.

Et tant saches tu tu bien de voir, tres granz honors gist en morir par hardement et par proesce, et granz hontes et granz reproches vient en dire fole parole et fol consoil.³⁰ (qtd. in Kennedy 785)

The ability to manipulate language allows the courtly knight to woo women, negotiate with other knights, and have a greater control of the world around them. Words, under both the feudal and the courtly love codes, were very powerful tools:

Words were originally magic and to this day words have retained much of their ancient magical power. By words one person can make another blissfully happy or drive him to despair, by words the teacher conveys his knowledge to his pupils, by words the orator carries his audience with him and determines their judgments and decisions. Words provoke affects and are in general the means of mutual influence among men. (Freud 41)

However, the feudal knight is operating at a distinct disadvantage in romance. For in the feudal world, language is straightforward, with no gap between the signifier and the signified, with no gap between words and reality. However, while this emphasis on the veracity of words and naming may be true of feudalism, it does not apply to the romance tradition:

A quite different situation may be found in the medieval romance tradition, where one of the underlying assumptions has always been that there is more to a man than can be seen and certainly more than can be accounted for by social institutions. Not surprisingly, many romances contain scenes that address the problems within heraldic signification systems more directly and demonstrate that simple knowledge of outward signs is not sufficient for an understanding of the inner reality. (Arthur 50)

Romance is the world of *engin*. While *engin* can mean engine or device, male *engin* signifies deceit and trickery,³¹ two actions inimical to the feudal ethos, where truth is nominally valorized. This is one half of the dual nature of language: in a feudal world, language is truthful, and has an intimate relationship with reality, with no gap between signifier and signified. But the romance is placed in a world that emphasizes the importance of a solid grasp of, not feudal, but courtly language: language used to conceal and deceive and digress. Unfortunately for them, since they live in the world of romance, this is a strength that eludes many knights, both feudal and courtly.

But this lack of linguistic ability was something that feudalism demanded to some extent. Men could not be adept at manipulating language if the integrity of feudalism were maintained.³² Because language was literal, and a word was their bond, men had limited choices: to keep silent, to tell the truth or to lie. And lying often brought disaster in the medieval world. That men had only these choices also remains true for romance. And only one of these choices, truth, was acceptable in a feudal world. Fortunately for the courtly knight, while he may be bound by these expectations in the feudal realm, he is not so bound in the courtly one.³³

The courtly knight uses this twisting, equivocal relationship with truth to his advantage, dissembling in two distinct ways. First, the courtly knight does indeed lie when it suits him.³⁴ In The Romance of Floire et Blanceflor, when his hostess mentions Blanceflor to Floire, Floire attempts poorly to dissemble with his hosts.

ele est ma suer et jou ses frere.
 --Amis, dist Daires, ne cremés,
 par mi le voir vos en alés.
 Se vos la dansele querés,
 saciés por voir con fous errés!
 Sire, fait il, por Diu, merci,
 fius de roi sui, je vos afi,
 et Blanceflor si est m'amie
 Emblee me fu par envie.³⁵
 (Conte de Floire 1746-1754)³⁶

Second, the courtly knight is constantly using disguises, making use of what W.T.H. Jackson terms "the common medieval lack of visual memory" (Jackson, Problems 193). This is linked to the misuse of language, particularly in the denying of identity, through lying and misrepresentation. This also plays upon the feudal belief that appearance reflects (internal) reality and upon the feudal assumption that appearance often (though not always) indicated the inward character of a person.³⁷

The external as a mirror of the internal does occasionally occur in romance as well, particularly where it involves emotions, ones strong enough that they cannot be hidden. In Marie de France's Yonec, the heroine cannot hide her joy at her new lover, and thus betrays her love to her spying husband.³⁸ The Knight in La Chastelaine de Vergi cannot hide his distress from the Duke, and the Chastelaine's face also reflects her inner turmoil.³⁹ Sir Orfeo's wife, Heurodis, cannot hide her tears when she encounters her husband after being stolen away.⁴⁰

In Flamenca, the narrator makes a correlation between appearance and internal reality when he comments that

Ens Peire Gui nom poc deixar
 que non l'avengues a plorar.
 Li domna fon de ginollos;
 ben fes parer que mal li fos.
 car per los ueils l'aiga.l descent.
 de que li cara fort l'escent;
 (Flamenca 3573-78)⁴¹

This is similar to the descriptive passage found in chansons de geste such as The Song of Roland, where physical reactions are described to show emotion, and could be posited as a carryover from the feudal epic tradition. However, Blakeslee comments on the "increasing tendency [of the romance] to react upon itself as the story progresses, in the paradoxes and ironies which characterize its later development" (66). What may have started out as a norm is increasingly subverted. In Flamenca and other romances, the acceptance of appearance in everyday dealings, and its rejection by the courtly lovers, exist side by side.

Thus, in romance, appearance does not always reflect reality, and courtly knights often use this philosophical failing to trick their feudal counterparts. Courtly knights are very fond of disguises. In Flamenca, William uses a disguise as an excuse to meet Flamenca in church. First, he insists that he be tonsured, to pass for a priest.⁴² Then, he orders:

Fais mi tallar capa redonda,
 granda e larga e prionda,
 de saia negr'o d'esimbru,
 de nacliu o de galabru
 que.m cobra tot d'oris en oris.
 (Flamenca 3683-7)⁴³

In The Mabinogion, Pwyll uses a disguise to get Gwawl to agree to a rash boon, and thus retrieve his wife Rhiannon.⁴⁴ “And Pwyll was clad in coarse and ragged garments, and wore large clumsy old shoes upon his feet” (Pwyll 9).⁴⁵ Disguises are also used in Sir Orfeo,⁴⁶ Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan,⁴⁷ and even by Abelard.

In the examples given thus far, the courtly knight is far more skilled than his feudal counterpart, whether in using disguises or language to deceive and gain his desire. However, even the courtly knight, for all his vaunted eloquence, is not as facile as he would like to think. The romances are replete with men, both feudal and courtly, who clumsily wield language and pay the price for their lack of skill.

The inability of men to command language is the subject of many medieval romances. This disability causes sorrow and suffering in the Grail Story. In Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival, the hero does not comprehend the nature of language, and so is unable to heal the Fisher King.

And Parzival — here’s the key now, this is the crisis of the story — is filled with compassion and is moved to ask, “What ails you, uncle?” But immediately he thinks, “A knight does not ask questions.” And so, in the name of his social image, he continues the Waste Land principle of acting according to the way you’ve been told to act instead of the way of the spontaneity of your noble nature. (Campbell, Search 255)

R. Howard Bloch notices the same problem in Chrétien de Troyes:

Then too, Chrétien’s *Perceval* turns at crucial moments around questions of silence and speech: first the mother’s advice always to ask the name of one’s companion, countered by the oblique father’s injunction against

speaking too much; then the silence at the Grail Castle, followed by his cousin's reproach: "If only you had asked the questions," she scolds, "you could have restored the king's lands and his power." (120-1)

It is women who realize the importance of words, while the father merely counsels silence. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's version, Parzival does receive a second chance, despite being told he can never return, and does ask the correct question. The correct words being spoken cures the king and his land.

In Erec and Enide, Arthur, in quest of adventure as he so often is, announces that the chase of the white stag will be held:

Li rois a ses chevaliers dist
 Qu'il voloit le blanc cerf chacier
 Por la costume ressaucier.
 Mon seignor Gauvain ne plot mie,
 Quant il ot la parole oïe:
 «Sire, fet il, de ceste chace
 Navroiz vos ja ne gré ne grace.
 Nos savomes bien tuit piece a
 Quel costume li blans vers a:
 Qui le blanc cerf ocirre puet
 Par reison beisier li estuet
 Des puceles de vostre cort
 La plus bele, a que que il tort.»
 (Erec 36-48)⁴⁸

"Immediately. . . the king's proposal to hunt the white stag, and thus his authority, is called into question by Gauvain" (Busby, Character 69). But even if Gawain presents realistic reasons for his criticism, Arthur emphasizes his rights as king.

Li rois respont: «Ce sai ge bien.
 Mais por ce n'an lerai ge rien.
 Car parole que rois a dite
 Ne doit puis estre contredite.»
 (Erec 59-62)⁴⁹

Diverres notes: “This episode allows us to discover his insistence on his authority, that once he has made a decision, on no account may it be changed, even when warned of its possible divisive outcome” (Diverres 60). But Arthur’s insistence on his authority leads to greater conflict with his vassals. Still, it is appropriate that Arthur shows such a lack of *mésure*. Gaster notes: the “king personifies or epitomizes the ‘spirit’ or character of a living community as it exists in a particular moment of time” (Gaster 115). In this case, Arthur suitably represents a society of verbal excess, of carelessness with words.

Jaufry, the hero of a self-titled romance, who generally seems relatively aware and careful with language, breaks an oath he offered freely. His promise that he will not eat until he has completed his quest is broken with nary a second thought.

Just as the sun came up, he met with a neatherd, driving a cart laden with bread and wine and household goods. The simple man invited him, in holy charity, to break his fast; and used such kindly words the hungry knight could scarce refuse, frankly avowing that for three days he had not tasted food. Thereat the neatherd drew from the cart good wheaten bread and sweet wine, roast capons, partridges, and part of a wild boar. Spreading a fair white cloth beneath a leafy tree, close by a crystal brook, he served the knight, and paid him great respect. (Jaufry 75-6)

There is no wrestling with his conscience, no worries about his broken oath; it does not seem to enter Jaufry’s mind that he has broken his word, and a vow he himself created, no less. Again, later that day, Jaufry sits down to a meal at the home of two youths he has met, with no nagging conscience apparent.

Men also fall into the exclusively male trap of speaking truer than they know. They unwittingly proffer words that have more than one meaning, even though they themselves appear to be aware of only one of them. This is the ironic counterpart of women's double-talk, where a woman consciously chooses her words for their double meaning.⁵⁰ Feudal knights such as Sir Archimbaut fall into this trap,⁵¹ but so do courtly knights such as Sir Gawain.⁵²

But one of the most serious linguistic excesses of men involves their pride over largesse, and a lack of *mésure*. This leads to the rash boon.

Chapter 3 - The Rash Boon

Another aspect of the carelessness of language of men is the rash boon, which appears in numerous medieval romances. In the rash boon, "Typically, someone agrees to grant a request before it is formulated. The boon to be granted often goes against the grantor's deepest wishes, or even his moral principles, but to fail to grant it would involve a loss of honour" (Kibler 505).⁵³

Occasionally, rash boons can be granted without any harm to the giver. In Chrétien de Troyes's Erec and Enide, a rash boon is found which does not lead to disaster. When Erec meets the vavasour, the vavasour offers him armour and a sword. Erec responds:

«Mes ancor cos coel querre un don,
 Don ge randrai le guerredon.
 Se Dex done que je m'an aille
 Atot l'enor de la bataille.»
 Et cil li respont franchement:
 «Demandez tot seürement
 Vostre pleisir, comant qu'il aut:
 Riens que je aie ne vos faut.»
 [.]
 Se vos armes m'aparelliez
 Et vostre fille me bailliez
 Demain a l'esprevier conquerre,
 Que je l'an manrai an ma terre.
 Se Dex la victoire m'an done:
 La fi ferai porter corne,
 S'iert reïne de dis citez.
 [.]
 Erec, li filz Lac, estes vos?
 - Ce sui mon, fet il, a estros.»
 Li ostes mout s'an esjoï
 [.]
 «Ja de moi n'irioz escondiz:

Tot a vostre comandemant
 Ma bele fille vos comant.»
 Lors l'a prise par mi le poing:
 « Tenez, fet il, je la vos doing.»
 (Erec 631-8, 659-65, 667-68, 673-75)⁵⁴

In Cligès, Arthur shows some discretion that is often lacking from his rash boons.⁵⁵ At first, as rash as ever, he states that he will give the victorious knight anything possible:

«Et s'il est pris par chevalier,
 Il ne savra querre loier
 Avoec la cope, qu'il ne l'ait.
 Se el monde trover se lait.»
 (Cligès 1545-1548)⁵⁶

Later Arthur specifies what is impossible, as he offers Cligès's father Alexander, the victor, anything except for his crown and queen.⁵⁷

Li rois li fet la cope randre
 De quinze mars, qui molt fu riche,
 Et si li dit bien et afiche
 Qu'il n'a nule chose tant chiere,
 Se il fet tant qu'il la requiere,
 Fors la corone et la reïne,
 Que il ne l'an face seisine.
 (Cligès 2202-2208)⁵⁸

One wonders if he learned anything from his other literary misadventures – or perhaps the writer sympathized, if not with Arthur, at least with Guinevere.⁵⁹

Again, in the early thirteenth-century Provençal romance Jaufry the Knight and the Fair Brunissende, a rash boon is granted to everyone's satisfaction. King Arthur, that notorious granter of rash boons,⁶⁰ grants a boon before he hears what it is. When the young squire Jaufry enters the hall, he approaches the king:

“My liege,” quoth he, “may He who made this world and all it holds, now save your grace.”

“Friend,” replied Arthur, “thank thee for those words. If thou dost seek a boon, it shall be thine.” (Jaufry 11)

In this instance, Arthur offers a rash boon without even being asked — a great excess. Fortunately for Arthur, this rash boon will not harm him. Jaufrý asks to be made a knight. Arthur hesitates, but Jaufrý insists: “I pray you, grant my boon” (Jaufrý 12). Fortunately, Jaufrý is the son of Dovon, a great knight of Round Table, and so Arthur acquiesces. “Young sir,’ quoth he, ‘thy father was as courteous a knight as ever lived — learned and brave. . . . For him I grant your boon” (Jaufrý 13).

Shortly after Jaufrý is knighted, Arthur grants him another boon. An armed knight on charger comes into the hall, and

with his lance struck a seated lord full on the breast and stretched him dying at the queen’s feet. Then with a cruel and haughty voice he addressed King Arthur: “This have I done to shame thee, wicked king. If it do grieve thee, and thy boasted knights should care to follow, I am Taulat, Lord of Rugimon. And each passing year, on this same day, will I return to do thee the like scorn.” (Jaufrý 14-15)

After a great outcry, Jaufrý asks to be allowed to follow and test his new knighthood. Kay the Seneschal insults him, and he uses this to press his case to a reluctant Arthur. “Sire, thou dost but prove the slander of Sir Kay if thou refuse my boon. And I have taken oath to follow Taulat, though it be on foot” (Jaufrý 16-7). And so Arthur grants his wish.

In the romance Floire et Blancheflor, the hero, Floire, also uses a rash boon to good end: to regain his beloved. Daire advises Floire how to trick the watchman whose aid he needs. He tells Floire to pretend he is an architect who wants to duplicate the

tower, and then to gamble with the watchman until he gives his word to do whatever service he can for Floire. While the porter quickly realizes that he has fallen victim to trickery, he nevertheless vows to keep his word.

«Engigniés sui, dist il, c'est voirs!
 Deceü m'a li vostre avoires.
 Par covoitise en ai le tort,
 [. . .]
 U bien m'en prenge, u mal m'en viegne,
 ne larai covens ne vos tiegne. »
 (Conte de Floire, 2263-2265, 2269-2270)⁶¹

And indeed, Floire does regain his love.

In the examples given above, King Arthur and his court do not suffer for his rash boons.⁶² This is not always the case. In The Mabinogion's Kilwch and Olwen, both harmless and disastrous rash boons are mentioned.

At the beginning of Kilwch and Olwen, King Arthur seems to guard his tongue. He begins with his usual exaggeration and excess, but then tempers his generous offer to fulfill the rudely demanded boon of a stranger at his course.

Said the youth, "I came not here to consume meat and drink; but if I obtain the boon that I seek, I will requite it thee, and extol thee; and if I have it not, I will bear forth thy dispraise to the four quarters of the world, as far as thy renown has extended." Then said Arthur, "Since thou wilt not remain here, chieftain, thou shalt receive the boon whatsoever thy tongue may name, as far as the wind dries, and the rain moistens, and the sun revolves, and the sea encircles, and the earth extends; save only my ship; and my mantle; and Caledvwlech, my sword; and Rhongomyant, my lance; and Wynebgwrthucher, my shield; and Carnewenhau, my dagger; and

Gwynhwyvar, my wife.⁶³ By the truth of Heaven, thou shalt have it cheerfully, name what thou wilt.” “I would that thou bless my hair.” “That shall be granted thee.” (Kilhwch 66)

However, this linguistic caution is merely temporary. Once he learns the identity of the stranger, Arthur’s excess again is apparent.

And Arthur took a golden comb, and scissors, whereof the loops were of silver, and he combed his hair. And Arthur inquired of him who he was. “For my heart warms unto thee, and I know that thou art come of my blood. Tell me, therefore, who thou art.” “I will tell thee,” said the youth. “I am Kilhwch, the son of Kilydd, the son of Prince Kelyddon, by Goleuddydd, my mother, the daughter of Prince Anlawdd.” “That is true,” said Arthur; “thou art my cousin. Whatsoever boon thou mayest ask, thou shalt receive, be it what it may that thy tongue shall name.” (Kilhwch 66-7)⁶⁴

If that is not enough, Arthur further swears to keep his rash word, at Kilhwch’s demand: “Pledge the truth of Heaven and the faith of thy kingdom thereof.” “I pledge it thee, gladly” (Kilhwch 67). Fortunately for Arthur, Kilhwch does not make any unreasonable demands. “I crave of thee, then, that thou obtain for me Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr; and this boon I likewise seek at the hands of thy warriors” (Kilhwch 67). Kilhwch then goes on to name four pages worth of the aforementioned warriors bound by Arthur’s oath, including “Huarwar the son of Aflawn (who asked Arthur such a boon as would satisfy him. It was the third great plague of Cornwall when

he received it)" (Kilhwch 70). Despite earlier disastrous events, Arthur does not show a great deal of caution in his promises.

This lack of caution, or linguistic *mésure*, on the part of King Arthur is also found in Chrétien de Troyes's The Knight of the Cart. William W. Kibler sees this as "the most famous example of a rash boon in Chrétien's romances" (512). When Sir Kai, not known for his courtly or just character, threatens to leave the court, Arthur is willing to do anything to make him stay.

... si vien tot droit
 Au roi, si li comance a dire,
 tot autres i come par ire:
 «Rois, sevi t'ai molt languemant
 Par boene foi et læaumant;
 Or prang congié, si m'an irai
 Que jamés ne te servirai.»
 [.....]
 Seneschax, si con vos solez,
 Soiez a cort et sachiez bien
 Que je n'ai en cest monde rien
 Que je, por vostre demorance,
 Ne vos doigne sanz porloignance.»
 [.....]
 Ez vos le roi molt desperé:
 Si est a la reine alez:
 «Dame, fet il, vos ne savez
 Del seneschal que il me quiert?
 Congié demande et di qu'il n'iert
 A ma cort plus, ne sai por coi.
 Ce qu'il ne vialt feire por moi
 Fera tost por vostre prioere:
 [.....]
 Et la reïne de si haut
 Com ele estoit, as piez li chiet.
 Kex li prie qu'ele se liet;
 Mes ele dit que nel fera:
 Ja mes né san relevera
 tant qu'il otroit sa volenté.
 Lors li a Kex acreanté
 Qu'il remandra, mes que li rois
 Otriot ce qu'il voldra einc,ois.

Et ele meïsmes l'otroit.
 «Kex, fet ele, que que ce soit
 Et ge et il l'otroierons:
 Or an venez, si li dirons
 Que vos estes einsi remés.»
 (Lancelot 84-90, 106-110, 114-121, 148-161)⁶⁵

Although it is on the king's request that Guinevere offers Kay anything for his continued stay at the court, it is interesting that she supports the rash boon, as it is the lady associated with the male giver who generally suffers. And her promise does indeed come back to haunt her.

«Sire, fet il, ce sachiez dons
 Que je voel, et quex est li dons
 Don vos m'avez asseüré:
 Molt m'an tieng a boen eüre
 Quant je l'avrai, vostre merci:
 La reïne que je voi ci
 M'avez oitroiee a baillier:
 S'irons après le chevalier
 Qui nos atant an la forest.»
 Au roi poise, et si l'an revest,
 Car einz de rien ne se desdist,
 mes iriez et dolanz le fist,
 Si que bien parut a son volt:
 La reïne an repesa molt
 Et tui dient par la meison
 Qu'orguel, outrage et desreison
 Avoit Kex demandee et quise.
 (Lancelot 171-187)⁶⁶

Being a man who has never broken his word, Arthur should be more careful with his promises,⁶⁷ but it is not he who suffers the consequences.

Et li rois a par la main prise
 La reïne, et si li a dit:
 «Dame, fet il, sanz contredit
 Estuet qu'avoec Keu en ailliez.»
 (Lancelot 188-191)⁶⁸

This is true now that Arthur has run off at the mouth. Kay's boasting is hardly reassuring:

Et cil dit: «Or la me bailliez,
 Et si n'an dotez ja de rien,
 Car je la ramanrai molt bien
 Tote beitiee et tote sainne.»
 (Lancelot 192-195)⁶⁹

And, true to tradition, Guinevere is abducted. Arthur's lack of *mésure* has led to disaster.

Arthur is not the only king to grant rash boons.⁷⁰ In the anonymous Breton lay Guingamor, the king grants a rash boon to Guingamor. This occurs immediately after the king has stated that no knight will chase the white boar, despite the queen's taunt that none of them are bold enough to do so.

«Sire.» fet il, «je vos requier
 D'une chose don't j'é mestier,
 Que je vos pri que me doigniez:
 Du donner ne m'escondisiez.»
 Li rois li dist: «Je vos otroi,
 Biaus niés, ce que toi plect di moi:
 Seürement me demandez:
 Ja cele chose ne vosdrez
 Ne face vostre volenté.»
 Li chevaliers l'a mercié.
 Puis li dit qu'il li requeroit,
 Et quel don donné li avoit:
 «En la forst irai chacier»
 [.]
 Li rois oï que se niés dist
 Et la requeste quë il fist:
 Molt fu dolent, ne set que fere,
 De l'otroi se voloit retraire,
 Et dist qu'il lessast ester,
 Ne li doit pas ce demander:
 (Guingamor 183-203, 207-212)⁷¹

While it may be true that Guingamor should not have made this request of the king,⁷² the king, if any sort of scholar of literature, should not be surprised at this turn of events.

Guingamor refuses to drop his request.

Guingamor respondi le roi:
 «Sire, en la foi que je vos doi,

Ne leroie por rien qui soit,
 Qui tot le monde me donroit,
 Que demain ne chaz le sengler.»
 (Guingamor 225-229)⁷³

Despite the king's reluctance, he is convinced by his queen, who has carefully orchestrated the entire affair,⁷⁴ to let Guingamor go.

Au roi proia que il feïst
 Ce que li chevaliers requist;
 Deliree en cuide estre atant,
 Nel verra mes en son vivant.
 Tant l'a la roïne proié
 Que li rois li a ostroïé.
 (Guingamor 239-244)⁷⁵

Here, it is a male who suffers due to a rash boon, for Guingamor stays in a fairy land for 300 years, and only returns when all those he knew are dead.

Abelard comments on this lack of judgment in real life in his letters to Heloise: even he is aware of the dire consequences of the rash boon. He discusses rulers who will not emend their proclamations, even though

they are found obstinate rather than just in the execution of the justice they have decreed and pronounced: if they blush to appear lax if they are merciful, and truthful if they change a pronouncement or do not carry a decision which lacked foresight, even if they can emend their words by their actions. Such a man could be compared with Jephtha, who made a foolish vow and in carrying it out even more foolishly, killed his only daughter. (Abelard 120-121)

Although not necessarily with the fatal results apparent with Jephtha's daughter, women continue to be plagued by the linguistic carelessness of their men. Isolde is abducted due to King Mark's rash boon.⁷⁶ A rash boon is central to the story of The

Wooring of Etain, composed as early as the eighth century (Cross & Slover 82), and later found in the Book of the Dun Cow (Bliss xxxiv), dated about 1100. The story begins when the High King of Ireland, Eochaid Airem is in need of a wife, and demands a beautiful virgin for the position. Etain is found, a woman who is "the fairest and the most beautiful the eyes of men had ever seen: and it seemed probable to the king and his companions that she was out of a fairy-mound" (Cross & Slover 83). After her marriage, Etain meets Mider of Bri Leith, who claims to be her first husband, separated from her through sorcery and spells. Mider later challenges Eochaid Airem to a game of chess, the winner to claim whatever prize he desires. Eochaid agrees to the rash boon, and is forced to grant a kiss from Etain to Mider, to be delivered a month hence. Instead of honouring his promise,

Eochaid called the armies of the heroes of Ireland together, so that they came to Tara: and all the best of the champions of Ireland, ring within ring, were about Tara, and they were in the midst of Tara itself, and they guarded it, both without and within: and the king and the queen were in the midst of the palace, and the outer court thereof was shut and locked, for they knew that the great might of men would come upon them. (Cross & Slover 91)

But Eochaid has entered into a rash boon, broken his word, and his wife will suffer for it. Alas, earthly, feudal might is no defense against supernatural machinations. Despite these fortifications, Mider appears amidst the banqueters in their hall, and takes

the woman beneath his right shoulder; and he carried her off through the smoke-hole of the house . . . they saw two swans circling round Tara, and

the way that they took was the way to the elf-mound of Femen. And Eochaid with an army of the men of Ireland went to the elf-mound of Femen, which men call the mound of the Fair-haired Women. (Cross & Slover 92)

However, as with most of the heroines taken through the rash boon, she is later recovered. Unlike Sir Orfeo, Eochaid cannot merely follow faeries into their domain. Instead, an invasion by means of hard labour is required, a variation on the battering ram to smash closed portcullises. The military might that has failed Eochaid will be successful this time. "And he followed the counsel of the men of Ireland, and he dug up each of the elf-mounds that he might take his wife from hence. . .at last the armies of Eochaid came by digging to the borders of the fairy-mound of Bri Leith" (Cross & Slover 92), and Etain is regained.

Sir Orfeo

A rash boon is also present in Sir Orfeo. However, its use is unusual: in Sir Orfeo, the rash boon works in favour of the hero. Unlike The Wooing of Etain, physical means will not save his wife from otherworldly forces: the gift of language must be used.

Sir Orfeo immediately places itself in the sphere of romance with its introduction:⁷⁷

The Brytans, as the boke seys,
 Off diverse thingys thei made ther leyes –
 Som thei made of harpyngys,
 And some of other diverse thyngnys.
 [.]
 Off all the venturys men here or se,
 Most off luffe, forsoth, thei be⁷⁸
 (Kyng Orfew, lines 7-10, 17-18)⁷⁹

Sir Orfeo is immediately placed as a proper courtly knight, rather than a feudal one, and his wife as a courtly lady.

Orfeo was a king
 In Ingland an heighe lording,
 A stalworth man and hardy bo;
 Large and curteis he was also.
 [.]
 Orfeo most of ony thing
 Lovede the gle of harping.
 [.]
 He lernikd so there nothing was
 A better harper in no plas.
 [.]
 The king hadde a Quen of priis
 That was y-cleped Dame Herodis.
 The fairest levedy for the nones
 That might gon on body and bones.
 Full of love and godenisse.
 Ac no man nay telle hir fairnise.
 (Sir Orfeo, lines 1-4, 9-10, 15-16, 27-32)⁸⁰

Sir Orfeo's wife, Heurodis, is sleeping underneath a grafted ("ympe") tree at noon, and is visited by a party from Faërie. The King of Faërie informs Heurodis of his intention to abduct her and further warns her that:

""And yif thou makest us y-let,
 Whar thou be, thou worst y-fet,
 And to-tore thine limes all
 That nothing help thee no shall:
 And they hou best so to-torn,
 Yete thou worst with us y-born.""
 (Sir Orfeo 145-50)⁸¹

Orfeo attempts to thwart the King of Faërie:

He asked conseil at ich man,
 Ac no man him help no can.⁸²
 (Sir Orfeo 155-56)⁸³

Despite the King of Faërie's warning that no man could help him, Orfeo attempts to save his wife through feudal means:

Amorwe the undertide is come
 And Orfeo hath his armes y-nome
 And wele ten hundred knightes with him.
 Ich y-armed styout and grim;
 And with the Quen wenten he
 Right unto that ympe-tree.
 They made sheltrom in ich a side
 And said they wold there abide
 And die ther everichon
 Er the Quen shuld fram hem gon.
 (Sir Orfeo 157-66)⁸⁴

But, as in The Wooing of Etain, their show of strength is for naught: physical means will not save his wife from otherworldly forces.⁸⁵

Ac yete amides hem full right
 The Quen was oway y-twight.
 With fairy fort y-nome.
 Men wist never wher she was bicombe.
 (Sir Orfeo 167-70)⁸⁶

Orfeo, distraught, leaves his kingdom in the hands of his steward, and retreats to the wilderness to live as a wild man, with only his harp to keep him company.

Orfeo, who enchants the beasts and birds with his harping, often sees Faërie hosts pass by. One fateful day he goes closer to watch them hawking and recognizes his wife. Betrayed by her tears, Heurodis is taken away by the Faërie ladies, and Orfeo follows, lamenting:

"Allas! Too long last my lif,
 When I no dar nought with my wif,
 No hie to me, no word speke."
 (Sir Orfeo 311-13)⁸⁷

He follows them into a hill,⁸⁸ and discovers a fair country, where Orfeo gains entry to the king's castle by claiming,

"Parfay," quath he, "icham a minstrel, lo!
 To solas thy lord with my glee,
 Yif his swete will be."

(Sir Orfeo 358-60)⁸⁹

Orfeo passes through the castle, noticing many abducted humans languishing about, including Heurodis beneath her grafted tree. He reaches the king.

Fortunately, Sir Orfeo is able to use his current status, and appearance as a wild man to his advantage. It appears that Orfeo's time in the wilderness has furnished him with a disguise of sorts; the King of Faërie does not recognize him as the king he is, a lack of recognition that will be echoed by the people of his kingdom when he returns to his castle:⁹⁰

“Lo,” they said. “swiche a man!
How long the here hogeth him opan!
Lo, hou his berd hongeth to his knee!
He is y-clongen also a tree!”⁹¹
(Sir Orfeo 481-84)⁹²

But his sojourn in the forest has not addled Sir Orfeo's wits. Unlike events in The Wooing of Etain, Sir Orfeo will not attempt to use military might a second time: he will resort to courtly stratagems.

He kneled adoun bifor the King.
“O lord,” he said. “yif it thy wille were,
My menstracy thou shust y-here.”
The King answerd. “What man artow,
That art hider y-comen now?
Ich no non that is with me,
No sent never after thee.
Sethen that icfh here regny gan,
I no fond never so folchardy man
That hider to us drust wende
Bot that ichim wald ofsende.”
(Sir Orfeo 394-404)⁹³

Sir Orfeo responds satisfactorily, bending the truth slightly, and omitting certain facts.

“Lord,” quath he. “trowe full well,
I nam bot a pover menstrel;

And, sior, it is the maner of us,
 To seche many a lordes hous.
 They we nought welcom no be,
 Yete we mot profery forth our glee."
 (Sir Orfeo 405-10)⁹⁴

Sir Orfeo's courtly attributes enable him to escape further questioning: he plays his harp, and the assembly is silent.

His harping having worked magic, it is then that another man's carelessness with discourse avails Orfeo.

When he hadde stint his harping,
 Than said to him the King,
 "Menstel, me liketh wele thy glee:
 Now aske of me what it bem
 Largelich ichill thee pay.
 Now speke, and tow might assay."
 (Sir Orfeo 424-28)⁹⁵

Sir Orfeo takes full advantage of the offer, and uses it to ask for what so many before him have demanded: a woman.⁹⁶

"Sir," he said, "ich biseche thee
 Thatou woldest give me
 That ich levedy, bright on ble,
 That slepeth under the ympe-tre."
 (Sir Orfeo 429-32)⁹⁷

Unlike the courtly King Arthur, the King of Faërie attempts to renege on his linguistic excess, using Orfeo's uncourtly appearance as his excuse:

"Nay," quath the King, "that nought nere!
 A sorry couple of you it were,
 For thou art lene, rowe, and black
 And she is lovesum withouten lack.
 A lothlich thing it were forthy
 To seen hir in thy company."
 (Sir Orfeo 433-38)⁹⁸

But Orfeo's cunning in discourse wins the day:

"O sir," he said, "gentil King,
 Yete were it a wele fouler thing
 To here a lesing of thy mouthe!
 So sir, as ye said nouthe,
 What I wold asky, have I shold,
 And nedes thou most thy word hold.
 (Sir Orfeo 439-44)⁹⁹

The king acquiesces:

The King said, "Sethen it is so,
 Take hir by the hond and go.
 Of hir ichill thatou be blithe."
 (Sir Orfeo 445-47)¹⁰⁰

When Sir Orfeo attempted to use military might to save his wife, he failed. Now that Sir Orfeo uses the courtly means of words and music, he is able to regain his wife. They return to the kingdom, and are joyfully welcomed back.

The gradual shift from feudal to courtly values can be seen in the contrast between The Wooing of Etain and Sir Orfeo. The eleventh-century king Eochaid Airem is successful through physical prowess in regaining his wife, Etain. Two centuries later, Sir Orfeo's military might fails, and he must use courtly means to regain his courtly queen Heurodis. His courtly means outwit the guardian king, just as the courtly knight outwits the feudal one.

Women and the Rash Boon

In Sir Orfeo, a woman is helped by a rash boon. However, in general, women tend to suffer for the rash boons of men, and, as a result, are often very careful. Although often their victims, women rarely fall prey to agreeing to the rash boon themselves.¹⁰¹ This is one sign of their greater caution with language.¹⁰² It also shows the romance heroine's wariness of the feudal system, and her ability to learn from the examples offered in

romance.¹⁰³ When Jaufray asks Brunissende for a boon, she hears what the boon is before agreeing to it.¹⁰⁴

Grown bold, the son of Devon begged her to grant a boon.

“Let me,” quoth he, “but slumber at mine ease; then do what justice bids. Fear not that I shall seek to fly. For by my troth, you have gained power over me until alone thou art a better guard than all thy men-at-arms.” (Jaufray 73)

Only after she hears his wish does Brunissende grant it. The lady knows how to guard her tongue, and herself. There is good reason for her caution: in the majority of rash boons, a lady is demanded as the prize.¹⁰⁵ It is the lady associated with the male giver who suffers.

Men cannot always extract themselves and their female counterparts from their own mistakes. Often women help them to do so. In Pwyll Prince of Dyved from The Mabinogion, it is a woman, as cautious in discourse as Brunissende, who finds the solution to her husband’s rash boon.

In Pwyll Prince of Dyved, Pwyll falls in love with Rhiannon. She tells him: “they sought to give me to a husband against my will. But no husband would I have, and that because of my love for thee” (Pwyll 7). They agree to marry in twelve months. At their wedding feast,

there entered a tall auburn-haired youth, of royal bearing, clothed in a garment of satin. [. . .] said he, “a suitor am I, and I will do mine errand.”

(Pwyll 7)

Despite the word suitor, Pwyll does not grow wary.

“Do so willingly,” said Pwyll. “Lord.” said he, “my errand is unto thee, and it is to crave a boon of thee that I am come.” “What boon soever thou mayest ask of me, as far as I am able, thou shalt have.” (Pwyll 7)

It is Rhiannon, silent until this point, that sounds the alarm for Pwyll’s carelessness.

“Ah,” said Rhiannon, “wherefore didst thou give that answer?” “Has he not given it before the present of these nobles?” asked the youth. “My soul,” said Pwyll, “what is the boon thou askest?” “The lady whom best I love is to be thy bride this night: I come to ask her of thee, with the feast and the banquet that are in this place.” And Pwyll was silent because of the answer which he had given. (Pwyll 7)

Only after the damage has been done, does Pwyll put a curb on his tongue.

However, this cannot undo his careless words, as Rhiannon reproaches him. “Be silent as long as thou wilt,” said Rhiannon. “Never did man make worse use of his wits than thou hast done.” Pwyll responds, “Lady,” said he, “I knew not who he was” (Pwyll 8). This would seem to have been a good reason to have held his tongue, or at least his *mésure*. Rhiannon replies: “Behold, this is the man to whom they would have given me against my will,” said she. “And he is Gwawl the son of Clud, a man of great power and wealth, and because of the word thou hast spoken, bestow me upon him lest shame befall thee” (Pwyll 8).

Now that his words have been spoken, Rhiannon demands that Pwyll keep his word. Pwyll balks at the prospect: “Lady,” said he, “I understand not thine answer. Never can I do as thou sayest” (Pwyll 8). However, Rhiannon has a plan to preserve them from

the consequences of Pwyll's foolish tongue. "'Bestow me upon him,' said she, 'and I will cause that I shall never be his'" (Pwyll 8).

Rhiannon quickly devises a plan, thus allowing Pwyll to respond to Gwawl with equanimity: "'Lord,' said Gwawl, 'it is meet that I have an answer to my request.' 'As much of that thou hast asked as it is in my power to give, thou shalt have,' replied Pwyll" (Pwyll 8). Rhiannon also offers Gwawl what seems a promise to honour the boon: "In a year from to-night a banquet shall be prepared for thee in this palace, that I may become thy bride." (Pwyll 8)

In a year's time, Rhiannon turns the tables, and this time it is Gwawl who is rash, granting a boon to Pwyll in disguise.

And Pwyll was clad in coarse and ragged garments, and wore large clumsy shoes upon his feet. And when he knew that the carousal after the meat had begun, he went towards the hall, and when he came into the hall, he saluted Gwawl the son of Clud, and his company, both men and women. "Heaven prosper thee," said Gwawl, "and the greeting of Heaven be unto thee." "Lord," said he, "may Heaven reward thee, I have an errand unto thee." "Welcome be thine errand, and if thou ask of me that which is just, thou shalt have it gladly." (Pwyll 9)

Although Gwawl does attempt to limit the boon at this point, his words are still careless and unclear. He is an easy victim for the trickery of Pwyll's word, as taught to him by Rhiannon: "'It is fitting,' answered he, 'I crave but from want, and the boon that I ask is to have this small bag that thou seest filled with meat'" (Pwyll 9). This is an example of

double-talk;¹⁰⁶ Gwawl does not realize that he is the meat intended for the bag, and easily acquiesces.

“A request within reason is this,” said he, “and gladly shalt thou have it. Bring him food.” A great number of attendants arose and began to fill the bag, but for all that they put into it, it was no fuller than at first. “My soul,” said Gwawl, “will thy bag be ever full?” “It will not, I declare to Heaven,” said he, “for all that may be put into it, unless one possessed of lands, and domains, and treasure, shall arise and tread down with both his feet the food that is in the bag, and shall say, ‘Enough has been put therein.’” (Pwyll 9)

Again, Rhiannon has carefully tutored Pwyll in double-talk, for while Pwyll is telling the truth, it is told in such a way as to be misinterpreted by Gwawl. Rhiannon then furthers her agency through language, doing as she has promised Pwyll: “I will cause him to go and tread down the food in the bag” (Pwyll 8):

Then said Rhiannon unto Gwawl the son of Clud, “Rise up quickly.” “I will willingly arise,” said he. So he rose up, and put his two feet into the bag. And Pwyll turned up the sides of the bag so that Gwawl was over his head in it. And he shut it up quickly and slipped a knot upon the thongs, and blew his horn. (Pwyll 9)

Pwyll finishes off the entire escapade with a lie:

as they came in, every one of Pwyll’s knights struck a blow upon the bag, and asked, “What is here?” “A Badger,” said they. And in this manner they played, each of them striking the bag, either with his foot or with a

staff. And thus played they with the bag. Every one as he came in asked,
 “What game are you playing at thus?” “The game of Badger in the Bag,”
 said they. And then was the game of Badger in the Bag first played. (Pwyll
 9)

Here, Rhiannon shows the verbal acuity that her husband lacks, and takes control of her own fate through her skill with language.

As shown above, men are continually done in by the rash boon and other verbal indiscretions, and the women around them often suffer for it. The courtly knight, despite his vaunted verbal skills, is not the master of language he would seem. While the courtly knight has more facility with language than the feudal knight, so too have women, as with Rhiannon, who handles language more skillfully than her male counterparts in the romance. Because of this continuum, with feudal males at the lower end, and women at the high end, with courtly males in the middle, a female can best the courtly male.

Men also portray their lack of verbal acuity through their inability to keep secrets. They are also bested by women who choose to do so, women who ignore both the feudal and the courtly code by lying and deceiving. In the examples that follow, I will examine two very similar texts that show both these events: Marie de France’s Lanval and the anonymous La Chastelaine de Vergi.

Chapter 3 - The Transgression of Silence

Lanval

In Marie de France's Lanval, the hero offers a rash boon, one that does not cause him grief until he indulges in further linguistic excesses. Lanval meets a fair maiden, who promptly proclaims her love for him. Lanval responds with delight and a rash boon:

“Bele”, fet il, “si vus plaiseit
e cele joie m`aveneit
que vus me volsissiez amer,
ne savriëz rien comander
que ieo ne face a mun poeir,
turt a folie u a saveir.
leo ferai voz comandemenz:
pur vus guerpirai tutes genz.
Ja mes ne quier de vus partir:
ceo est la riens que plus desir.”¹⁰⁷
(Lanval 121-130)¹⁰⁸

At first, this rash boon gains Lanval happiness, or at least immediate gratification.

Quant la pucele oï parler
celui qui tant la pout amer,
s`amur e sun cuer li otreie.
Or est Lanval en dreite veie!
Un dun li a duné après,¹⁰⁹
ja cele rien ne vuldra mes
que il nen ait a sun talent:
doinst e despende largement
ele li trover asez.
Or est Lanval bien assenez:
cum plus despendra richement,
e plus avra or e argent.
(Lanval 131-142)¹¹⁰

Soon, however, the lady makes her demand of him.

"Amis," fet ele, "or vus chasti,
 si vus comant e si vus pri:
 ne vus descovrez a nul hume!
 De ceo vus dirai ieo la sume.
 A tuzjurs m'avriëz perdue,
 si ceste amurs esteit seüe:
 mes ne me purriëz veeir
 je de mun cors saisine aveir."
 Il lis respunt que bien tendra
 ceo qu'ele li comandera.¹¹¹
 (Lanval 143-152)¹¹²

Lanval prospers for a time:

Lanval donout les riches duns,
 Lanval aquitout les prisuns,
 Lanval faiseit les granz honors,
 Lanval despendeit largement,
 Lanval donout or e argent.
 (Lanval 209-215)¹¹³

However, this great generosity (might one even dare speak of generosity without *mésure*?) brings him to the attention of the court, where Lanval will meet his downfall by speaking unwisely. Now, we have seen that Lanval does have some courtly skills, for he did respond to the maiden in a "seemly" manner. However, he does not present proof of these skills in his encounter with Queen Guenevere.¹¹⁴

First, when Guenevere offers him her love, he is distracted by thoughts of his lover, and does not answer with courtly care:

"Dame," fet il, "lessiez m'ester!
 Ieo n'ai cure de vus amer.
 Lungement ai servi le rei,
 ni li voil pas mentir ma fei.
 Ja pur vus ne pur vostre amur
 ne mesferai a mun seignur!"¹¹⁵
 (Lanval 271-276)¹¹⁶

While Lanval may have the proper sentiments, his expression of them is improper and antagonistic. Indeed, from here, the situation grows worse. To be fair, Queen Guenevere

goads Lanval, when, in a decidedly uncourtly moment of her own,¹¹⁷ she accuses Lanval of homosexuality.¹¹⁸ However, it is Lanval who speaks before he thinks:

tel chose dist par maltalent,
dunt il se repenti sovent.¹¹⁹
"Dame," dist il, "de cel mestier
ne me sai ieo niënt aidier.
Mes jo aim e si sui amis
cele ki deit avoir le pris
sur tutes celes que ieo sai."
(Lanval 291-297)¹²⁰

But Lanval cannot let the matter rest with such a small slight. He prefers to advance to outright insult of the queen:

"E une chose vus dirai:
bien le sachiez a descovert,
qu'une de celes ki la sert,
tute la plus povre meschine,
valt mielz de vus, dame reïne,
de cors, de vis e de beaulté
d'enseignement de de bunté."
(Lanval 298-304)¹²¹

Of course, this statement has a foreseeable effect:

La reïne s'en part a tant:
en sa chambre s'en vait plurant.
Mult fu dolente e curuciee
de ceo qu'il l'out si avilliee.
En sun lit malade culcha:
ja mes, ce dit, n'en levera,
si li reis ne li faiseit dreit
de ceo dunt ele se pleindreit.
(Lanval 305-312)¹²²

A complaint is indeed brought against Lanval, and he must produce his lover to prove that his claim is true. Lanval is convinced she will not come, as she has not appeared since he broke his promise to her and revealed their love.

Marie de France is aware of the dire consequences of secrets revealed. In her fable, De la singesse e de sun enfant (The Monkey and the Baby),¹²³ the moral is:

Pur ceo ne devereit nul mustrer
 Sa priveté ne sun penser.
 De tel chose peot humme joïr.
 Que ne peot mit a tuz plesir.
 Par discoverance vient grant mals;
 N'est pas li secles tut leals.
 (25-30)¹²⁴

Fortunately for Lanval, however, his lover does relent on her threat, despite his broken promise. He is saved by her when she appears as his trial is in progress. She declares,

"leo ai amé un tuen vassal.
 Veez le ci! Ceo est Lanval!
 Achaisunez fu en ta curt,
 ne vuil mie qu`a mal li turt,
 de ceo qu`il dist. Ceo saches tu
 que la reïne a tort eü;
 unques nul jur ne la requist.
 De la vantance que il fist,
 si par mei puet estre aquitez,
 par voz baruns seit delivrez!"
 (Lanval 632-642)¹²⁵

Ironically, the comment is made:

N`i a un sul qui n`ai jugié
 que Lanval a tut desrisnié.
 Delivrez est par lur esguart.
 (Lanval 645-647)¹²⁶

However, it is the lover who has saved Lanval; he was unable to extricate himself from a situation of his own making. Again, a woman has saved a man from his own linguistic excess.

For Lanval, there is a happy ending, as his lover takes pity on him. La Chastelaine de Vergi, however, presents tragedy due to a lack of secrecy.

The Chatelaine of Vergi

The thirteenth-century romance La Chastelaine de Vergi¹²⁷ makes its stance on verbal indiscretion clear from its opening statement, beginning with a warning about betrayed secrets and the dire results. This is immediately linked with the tale to follow.

Une maniere de gent sont
 Qui d'estre loial samblant font
 Et de si bien conseil celer
 Qu'il se covient en aus fier :
 Et quant vient qu'aucuns s'i descuevre
 Tant qu'il sevent l'amor et l'uevre,
 Si l'espandent par le pais
 Et en font lor gas et lor ris :
 Si avient que cil joie en pert
 Qui le conseil a descouvert,
 Quar tant com l'amor est plus grant
 Sont plus mari li fin amant,
 Quant li uns d'aus de l'autre croit
 Qu'il ait dit ce que celer doit :
 Et sovent tel meschief en vient
 Que l'amor faillir en covient
 A grant dolor et a vergoingne,
 Si comme il avint en Borgoingne
 D'un chevalier preu et hardi
 Et de la dame de Vergi
 Que li chevaliers tant ama.
 (Chastelaine lines 1-21)¹²⁸

The lady, ever cautious, has insisted on defining the rules of discourse bounding their relationship, even as she enters into a verbal pact. Perhaps taught by the romances she has read, and aware of the tradition of men's garrulity concerning their love affairs, she cautions the knight that her love (and presumably body) will only be his so long as their secret is kept. Her requirements are unequivocally stated:

Que la dame li otria
 Par itel couvenant s'amor
 Qu'il seüst qu'a l'eure et au jor
 Que par lui seroit descouverte
 Lor amor, qu'il i avroit perte

Et de l'amor et de l'otroi
 Qu'ele li avoit fet de soi.
 (Chastelaine 22-28)¹²⁹

She further attempts to ensure the privacy of their affair.

Et. a cele amor otroier,
 Deviserent qu'en .l. vergier
 Li chevaliers toz jors vendroit
 Au terme qu'ele li metroit.
 Ne ne se mouvroit d'un anglet
 De si que .l. petit chienet
 Verroit par le vergier aler,
 Et lors venist sanz demorer
 En sa chambre, et si seüst bient
 Qu'a cele eure n'i avroit rien
 Fors la dame tant seulement.
 (Chastelaine 29-39)¹³⁰

The lady has chosen well — she has kept control of the situation in her own hands, and has chosen a mute go-between who can never betray her secret. And for a while, her strategy works, her cautious measures serving their purpose:

Ainsi le firent longuement,
 Et fu l'amor douce et celee
 Que fors aus ne le sot riens nee.
 (Chastelaine 40-42)¹³¹

However, trouble soon arises. The knight's verbal acuity is lacking, for he is insensible to the verbal and amorous advances of those around him, not realizing that the Duchess has become enamoured of him.¹³² The knight has become less perceptive, rather than more, through love. And, as so many other men in medieval romance, he will pay for his lack of attention. Consumed with his lady, he does not observe the courtly conventions, nor mark the behaviour of those around him. This inattention to his surroundings will place him in an unfortunate situation.

Vexed in her (presumably relatively) subtle advances, the duchess resorts to speech to advance her cause with the oblivious knight. Even then, he misses her heavy-handed hints of an admirer in a high place. Finally, the knight's lack of comprehension, his refusal to spar verbally, lead her to a direct, uncourtly statement of her amorous intent:

“Dites moi se vous savez ore
 Se je vous ai m'amor donee,
 Qui sui haute dame honoree.”
 (Chastelaine 81-86)¹³³

The lady has declared herself outright, and without subterfuge, as the knight has not responded positively or negatively to her earlier delicate hints. The knight is trapped. He must escape from the situation, one partly of his own devising, without offending the lady, as courtly mores demand. Although hope of a good outcome is fast fading, the knight at this point still could have made some attempt to extricate himself and the lady from the situation without a loss of honour to either.

From the beginning of his statement, it appears that the knight has recalled his courtly rhetoric.

Et cil respont isnel le pas :
 “Ma dame, je ne le sai pas ;
 Mes je voudroie vostre amor
 Avoir par bien et par honor.”
 (Chastelaine 87-90)¹³⁴

This opening must have seemed hopeful to the duchess, particularly as he acknowledges her direct statement of her desire. However, the knight continues, and her hopes are dashed, and in a particularly uncourtly way. The knight damns himself through

commenting on her lack of adherence to the feudal code, rather than appealing to her through the courtly code, and in doing so, mocks the courtly code and shames her:

“Mes de cele amor Dieus me gart
 Qu’a moi n’a vous tort cele part
 Ou la honte mon seignor gise :
 Qu’a nul fuer ne a nule guise
 N’prendroie tel mesprison
 Com de fere tel desreson
 Si vilaine et si desloial
 Vers mon droi seignor natural.”
 (Chastelaine 91-98)¹³⁵

The knight, whose lack of courtly skills have led to this impasse, attempts to escape by emphasizing his feudal duty. Here, the stock dilemma of the romance, the conflict between the demands of feudalism and courtly chivalry is introduced by the protagonist, as an attempt to escape from the situation created by his verbal ineptitude. Unfortunately, due to his lack of courtly awareness, the knight, in his attempt to mitigate the unpleasant situation, further worsens it by offering a double insult to the duchess. Not only does he refuse her love, after what opened as an apparently promising response, but also, in evoking the demands of feudal loyalty, emphasizes her transgression of feudal and Christian morals. By stating that the love would be shameful and dishonourable, the Knight has accused the lady of these ignoble qualities. Further, he has made more explicit what was only suggested in her speech: carnal relations.

Certainly the duchess, when attempting to win his favour, a reversal of the traditional pursuit shown at the beginning of the tale, does not expect to be referred to as vile, sinful, and a traitor! When she attempts to deny this, the Knight again shames her by not allowing her to do so:

—“Fi!” fet cele qui fu marie,
 “Dans musars, et qui vous en prie ?”

—“Ha ! ma dame, por Dieu merci,
 Bien le sai, mes tant vous en di.”
 (Chastelaine 99-102)¹³⁶

The knight, apparently realizing his mistake, hastily attempts to recoup his losses, but to no avail: the damage cannot be undone. Through his lack of verbal delicacy, though his insistence on using uncourtly, blunt speech, he has set in motion the events that will deprive him of his courtly and true love. The Duchess has been scorned,¹³⁷ and her fury makes itself apparent immediately. The knight will pay for his linguistic shortcomings, and, as is often the case in romance, the heroine will pay for her man's linguistic carelessness.

The enraged duchess uses her husband, the duke, as her weapon of revenge:

“Certes,” fait ele, “j`ai duel grant
 De ce que ne set nus hanz hom
 Qui foi li porte ne qui non,
 Mes plus de bien et d`onor font
 A ceus qui lor trahitor sont,
 Et si ne s`en aperçoit nus.¹³⁸
 —Par foi, dame, “fet soi li dus.
 “Je ne sai por qoi vous le dites :
 Mes de tel chose sui je quites,
 Qu`a nul fuer je ne norriroie
 Trahitor, se je le savoie.
 —Haez donc,” fait ele, “celui.”
 S`el nomma, “qui ne fina hui
 De moi proier au lonc du jor
 Que je li donaisse m`amor,
 Et me dist que mout a lonc tens
 Qu`il a este en cest propens :
 Onques mes ne le m`osa dire.
 Et je me porpenssai, biaux sire,
 Tantost que je le vous diroie.
 Et si puet estre chose vraie
 Qu`il ait pieça a ce pensse :
 De ce qu`il a aillors ame
 Novele oie n`en avon.
 Si vous requier en guerredon
 Que vostre honor si I gardoiz

Com vous savez que ce est droiz.”¹³⁹
 (Chastelaine 114-140)¹⁴⁰

The Duke decides to settle the matter, and after a sleepless night reflecting on this wrong, he calls the knight before him. Just as his wife has laid the supposed treason before him in terms of a betrayal of the feudal code, so again he condemns the knight under the feudal code, and supplies a suitably feudal punishment:

Issiez errant hors de ma terre !
 Quar je vous en congie sanz doute.
 Et la vous ve et desfent toute :
 Si n'i entrez ne tant ne quant.
 Que. se je des or en avant
 Vous i pooie fere prendre.
 Sachiez je vous feroie pendre.”
 (Chastelaine 154-176)¹⁴¹

Unwittingly, however, the Duke has supplied a punishment that the Knight detests for reasons of love:

Quant li chevaliers ce entent.
 D'ire et de mautalent esprent
 Si que tuit li tranblent si membre.
 Que de s'amie li remembre
 Dont l set qu'il ne puet joïr
 Se n'est par aler et venir
 Et par reperier ou pais
 Dont li dus veut qu'il soit eschis :
 Et d'autre part li fet mout mal
 Ce qu'a trahitor desloial
 Le tient ses sires et a tort.
 Si est en si grant desconfort
 Qu'a mort se tient et a trahi.
 (Chastelaine 177-189)¹⁴²

However, once again the Knight does not stop to think where such a tale may have originated, and in the course of denying it, immediately adds insult to injury:

“S'a mal fet qui le vous a dit.”
 (Chastelaine 190-195)¹⁴³

The Duke responds to the further insult to his wife, and what he believes to be a lie:

“Cele meïsmes conte m’a
 En quel maniere et en quel guise
 Vous l’avez proie et requise,
 Comme trahitres envieux :
 Et tel chose deïstes vous.
 Puet estre, dont ele se test.”
 (Chastelaine 196-203)¹⁴⁴

The Duke speaks truer than he knows — the lady has indeed kept silent on pertinent parts of her exchange with the knight. However, reflecting on the one true part of his wife’s statement, that the knight shows no signs of love towards anyone else,¹⁴⁵ the Duke offers the Knight a chance to acquit himself of the accusation.

“Se vous me volez afier
 Par vostre leal serement
 Que vous me direz vraiment
 Ce que je vous deamnderoie,
 Par vostre dit certains seroie
 Se vous avriiez fet ou non
 Ce dont j’ai vers vous soupeçon.”
 (Chastelaine 218-224)¹⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the Knight, as with most men in romances, is not the swiftest of thinkers. Although the narrator attempts to give him some excuse, he evinces a lack of foresight, as he does not remember that he has sworn to keep secrets, nor theorize that this might in any way interfere with his current oath. He

Respont qu’il tout sanz contredit
 Fera ce que li dus a dit,
 Qu’il ne pense ne ne regarde
 De ce dont li dus se prent garde,
 Ne torment ne le lest pensser
 Ce que li dus veut demander,
 De riens fors de cele proiere :
 Le serement en tel maniere
 L’en fist, li dus la foi en prist.
 (Chastelaine 231-239)¹⁴⁷

Of course, his rash boon, if only of a linguistic sort, leads to disaster. The Duke will only believe him:

“Se vous ne me dites qu’ailleurs
 Amez en tel leu par amors
 Que m’en lessiez sanz nule doute
 Savoir en la verite toute.
 Et se ce fere ne volez.
 Comme parjurs vous en alez
 Hors de ma terre sanz deloi!”
 (Chastelaine 261-267)¹⁴⁸

The Duke has left no room to maneuver in his demands. The Knight must tell him the whole truth. And so our Knight is caught between the devil of feudalism and the deep blue sea of courtly love. Having failed already at courtliness, he must fail again in one of his two spheres. Unfortunately, however, he cannot even choose courtly love – whichever decision he makes, he risks losing his love. This is the catch-22 of courtly love.

When the knight hesitates, mentally comparing himself to the Chatelaine of Coucy,¹⁴⁹ the Duke promises his discretion.

“Cuidiez vous, se vous me disiez
 Votre conseil celement.
 Que je deïsse a nule gent ?
 Je me leroie avant sanz faute
 Trere les denz l’un avant l’autre.”
 (Chastelaine 268-322)¹⁵⁰

He further states:

Lors dist li dus : “Je vous creant
 Seur le cors et l’ame de moi
 Et sor l’amor et sor la foi
 Que je vous doi sor vostre homage.
 Que ja en trestout mon eage
 N’en ert a creature nee
 Par moi novele racontee
 Ne samblant fet grant ne petit.”
 (Chastelaine 332-339)¹⁵¹

The King has here offered reassurances of his trustworthy nature. However, he too will fall prey to the inability to keep a secret that functions as a threat to love in the romance genre.¹⁵² Yet the Knight, reassured perhaps by the exaggeration of the promises, reveals all.

Et cil en plorant li a dit:
 "Sire, jel vous dirai ainsi :
 J'ain vostre nieve de Vergi,
 Et ele moi, tant c'on puet plus.
 —Or me dites donc," fet li dus,
 "Quant vous volez c'on vous en croie
 Set nus fors vous dui ceste joie ?"
 Et li chevaliers li respont :
 "Ne nil, creature del mont."
 (Chastelaine 340-348)¹⁵³

The Knight has unwittingly told a lie, for even if the dog is dismissed, the Duke now knows as well. But the Knight has cast all caution to the wind, and now, as does Sir Gawain,¹⁵⁴ goes beyond what is demanded in a display of linguistic excess and a rash of promises that further endanger the secrecy of his love. Every time the Duke reassures him that all will be well, he further breaches the secrecy he has sworn, and promises the Duke can watch their next tryst. In his eagerness to please his feudal lord, the Knight willingly consents, and worries only about the pleasure of the Duke, rather than worrying about his broken compact with his Love.

The Duke does indeed follow the Knight, witnessing the dog, and spying on the two lovers from behind a tree. He

si tient de ce la duchesse
 Que dit li ot a menterresse,
 Et mout li plest.
 (Chastelaine 423-425)¹⁵⁵

Clearly the two value systems are at odds. As a feudal lord, the Duke is more concerned with betrayal on the part of a knight than his wife. This shows the relative value placed on female lovers versus male warriors in the feudal system. To strengthen the bonds of feudalism, the Duke swears to the Knight after this spying session:

“je vous creant
 Que toz jors mes vous amerai
 Ne james jor ne vous harrai,
 Quar vous m’avez du tout voir dit
 Et ne m’avez de mot mentit.”
 (Chastelaine 490-494)¹⁵⁶

The Knight, belatedly attempting some sort of damage control, does reiterate that the Duke must keep his promise.

—Sire.” fet cil, “vostre merci !
 Mes por Dieu vous requier et pri
 Que cest conseil celer vous plaise,
 Qu’amor perdroie et joie et aise
 Et morroie sanz nule faute,
 Se je savoie que nul autre
 Ice savroit fors vous sanz plus.¹⁵⁷
 —Or n’en parlez ja.” fet li dus ;¹⁵⁸
 “Sachiez qu’il ert si bien cele
 Que ja par moi n’en ert parle.”
 (Chastelaine 495-504)¹⁵⁹

To the Knight’s detriment, the Duke does keep the first part of his promise, showering such attentions on the Knight that

Dont tel corouz et tel deshait
 En ot la duchoise sanz fable
 Qu’ele se leva de la table
 Et a fet samblant par faintise
 Que maladie li soit prise.
 (Chastelaine 510-513)¹⁶⁰

Just as with the Knight’s face that betrays his love, and his tears that betray his anguish,¹⁶¹ so too does the Duke’s favour reveal to the Duchess that her plan has failed.

spurring her to further revenge. Again, a male inability to conceal a secret will lead to disaster. Just as his feudal vassal has been unable to keep a secret, so too the Duke will prove unable to keep a pact when he is challenged.

The Duchess charges the Duke with his show of favour, and is told the Duke has proof the allegation was a lie. Still, the Duchess cannot be satisfied without revenge, particularly with her husband proffering this accusation of mendacity. So she uses her only powers, those of her sexuality and words, to gain what she wants:

Et quant li dus couchier se vint,
 A une part du lit s'est traite :
 Samblant fet que point ne li haite
 Que li dus o li gesir doie,
 Qu'ele set bien ce est la voie
 De son mari metre au desouz.
 Par fere semblant de corouz.
 Por ce se tint en itel guise
 Afin que mieus le duc atise
 A croire que mout soit irie.
 (Chastelaine 564-573)¹⁶²

The Duke used feudal threats to convince the Knight to betray his secret. The Duchess uses those of *her* realm, that of courtly love. Ironically, however, she accuses the Duke of disloyalty, highlighting the feuding demands of the feudal and the courtly systems, for only by betraying the feudal code can the Duke satisfy the courtly (albeit unbecoming) demands of his lady to know the tale.

The Duke does realize the serious nature of what he is about to do to pacify her, and attempts to dissuade the Duchess on those grounds:

“Ma bele suer,
 Je ne soufferroie a nul fuer
 Ne vostre corouz ne vostre ire ;
 Mes sachiez je ne puis pas dire
 Ce que volez que je vous die
 Sanz fere trop grant vilonie.”

(Chastelaine 611-616)¹⁶³

However, the Duchess is a discourteous, disloyal person herself, and this appeal does not work on her. Instead, she promptly uses the argument that the Duke used on the Knight:

“Sire, si ne m`en dites pas,
 Quar je voi bien a cel samblant
 Qu`en moi ne vous fiez pas tant
 Que celaisse vostre conseil ;
 Et sachiez que mout me merveil :
 Ainc n`oïstest grant ne petit
 Conseil que vous m`eüssiez dit,
 Don`t descouvers fussiez par moi,
 Et si vous di en bone foi,
 Ja en ma vie n`avendra.”
 Quant ce ot dit, si replora.
 (Chastelaine 617-628)¹⁶⁴

The feminine wile of tears¹⁶⁵ and this statement, produce the desired effect, despite the Duke`s concerns:

trop me dot
 Que vous n`en parlez aucun mot.”
 (Chastelaine 629-638)¹⁶⁶

While this fear does show some caution on his part, remarkably little is made of the fact that the Duke knows his Duchess has lied, which would surely offer grounds for refusal, as well as a warning of her uncourtly nature. At least the Duke does link a consequence to any further verbal sins on her part. While the Knight warned that he would die if his secret were revealed, the Duke offers a more dire consequence:

“Sachiez, et itant vous en di,
 Que se je sui par vous trahi,
 Vous en receverez la mort.”
 Et ele dist: “Bien m`i acort :
 Estre ne porroit que feïsse
 Chose don`t vers vous mespreïsse.”¹⁶⁷
 (Chastelaine 639-644)¹⁶⁸

The Duke, once he has decided to reveal the secret, shows the same lack of discretion that the Knight had: he reveals every detail of the affair, including the dog.

The Duchess's reaction is unsurprising.

Et quant la duchoise l'entent
 Que cil aime plus bassement
 Qui de s'amor l'a escondite,
 Morte se tient et a despite,
 mes ainc de ce samblant ne fist.
 Ainçois otroia et promist
 Au duc a si celer ceste uevre :
 Se ce est qu'ele le descuevre.
 Que l'en la pende a une hart.
 (Chastelaine 657-665)¹⁶⁹

She hates her niece, and again resolves to seek her revenge, even though she has forced her husband to villainy, and will lead herself to ruin.

When the Chatelaine of Vergi joins the Duchess and her ladies, the verbal sparring begins:

La duchoise qui vit son leu,
 Ainz dist ausi comme par geu :
 "Chastelaine, soiez bien cointe,
 Quar bel et preu avez acointe."
 (Chastelaine 703-706)¹⁷⁰

The Chatelaine parries this thrust neatly, suggesting with her answer that there is no such lover, but also not outright denying it. She further states that she would (or does) honour both the feudal and the courtly code in any choice she made:

Et cele respont simplement :
 "Je ne sai quel acointement
 Vous pensez, ma dame, por voir
 Que talent n'ai d'ami avoir
 Qui ne soit del tout a l'onor
 Et de moi et de mon seignor."
 (Chastelaine 707-712)¹⁷¹

The Duchess admires her verbal acuity even as she reveals the Knight's betrayal to the Chatelaine:

—Je l'otroi bien." dit la duchesse.
 "Mais vous estes bone mestresse.
 Qui avez appris le mestier
 Du petit chienet afetier."
 (Chastelaine 713-716)¹⁷²

As with other characters, the Chatelaine's exterior reflects her emotions and her inner thoughts:

Li cuers li trouble d'ire et taint
 Et li mue trestoz el ventre.
 (Chastelaine 722-723)¹⁷³

She quickly realizes her lover has betrayed her. However, the Chatelaine quickly arrives at an erroneous conclusion:

Ne ce ne li deïst il ja,
 S'a li n'eüst grant acointance,
 Et s'il ne l'amast sanz doutance
 Plus que moi quant il m'a trahie !
 Mais or voi qu'il ne m'aime mie,
 Quant il me faut de couvenant.
 (Chastelaine 738-743)¹⁷⁴

She then echoes her lover, and compares herself to other romance tales:

Je cuidois que plus loiaus
 Me fussiez, se Dieus me conseut,
 Que ne fust Tristans a Yseut ;
 (Chastelaine 756-758)¹⁷⁵

She further declares her innocence of deserving this fate, and reiterates the consequences of his betrayal:

Ha ! fine amor, est ce donc droiz
 Que cil a ainsi descouvert
 Nostre conseil, don't il me pert ?
 Qu'a m'amor otroier li dis
 Et bien en couvenant li mis

Qu'a icele eure me perdroit
 Que nostre amor descouveroit.
 Et quant j'ai avant perdu lui,
 Ne puis vivre apre tel anui.
 Que sanz lui pur cui je me dueil
 Ne puis vivre ne je ne vueil ;
 De ma vie ne me plest point,
 Ainz pri Dieu que la mort me doinst.¹⁷⁶
 (Chastelaine 806-818)¹⁷⁷

The Chatelaine, unlike the other characters in this tragic tale, is a woman of her word.

She does indeed promptly die:

de ses braz s'estraint,
 Li cuers li faut, li vis li taint :
 Angoisseusement s'est pasmee.
 Et gist pale et descoloree
 En mi lit, morte, sanz vie.
 (Chastelaine 833-837)¹⁷⁸

When the Knight finds her body, he embraces it before he realizes she is dead.

Et cil . . .
 Est en la garderobe entrez
 Ou s'amie gisoit enverse
 El lit, descoloree et perse.
 Cil maintenant l'acole et baise.
 Que bien en ot et lieu et aise :
 Mes la bouche a trovee froide
 Et partout bien pale et bien roide.
 Et au samblant que li cors moustre
 Voit bien q'ele est morte tout outre.
 (Chastelaine 859-868)¹⁷⁹

After this contretemps, a conveniently stationed handmaid reveals to him the Chatelaine's pre-death anguish. He responds with, as the narrator notes, the same lack of *mésure* he has evinced throughout the entire romance:

je ferai de moi justise
 Por la trahison que j'ai fete !"
 Une espee du fuerre a trete
 Qui ert pendue a .I. espuer,
 Et s'en feri par mi le cuer :

Cheoir se lest sor l'autre cors :
 Cil a tant sainie qu'il est mors.
 (Chastelaine 892-898)¹⁸⁰

The handmaid, having watched her second death of the day, flees to the Duke and reveals her tale. Again, it is told in its entirety, apparently the only way a story can be told in this romance: when any of the characters reveal their secrets, they do not hold back any details.

Au duc qu'ele encontra a dit
 Ce qu'ele a oï et veü
 Si qu'ele n'l a riens teü.
 Comment l'afere ert commencie.
 Neïs du chienet afetie
 Dont la Duchoise avoit parle.
 (Chastelaine 902-907)¹⁸¹

Finally, after disaster has struck, the Duke becomes a man of his word.¹⁸² He does indeed kill the Duchess for her betrayal, beheading her "Sanz plus tenir longue parole" (Chastelaine 914).¹⁸³ Alas! That the ability to hold his tongue should arrive to the Duke so late! However, it does not endure and is quickly replaced with the need to again reveal the secret of the two lovers:

Et li dus trestout ausi tost.
 Oiant toz, qui oïr le vost.
 Conta l'afere en mi la cort.
 (Chastelaine 925-927)¹⁸⁴

The tale ends with a condemnation of the lack of linguistic discretion on the part of the knight. His inability to keep a secret leads to his disgrace and death:

Ha ! Dieus ! trestous cilz encombriers
 Et cis meschies por ce avint
 Qu'au cevalier tant mesavint
 Qu'il dist ce que celer devoit
 Et que desfendu li avoit
 S'amie qu'il ne le deïst
 Tant com s'amor avoir vousist.

(Chastelaine 942-948)¹⁸⁵

While the duchess is uncourtly in her behaviour, both her desire for revenge and her lies, it is the knight who is condemned for his transgression of his promise to the Chatelaine. The moral of the tale is concerned with the terrible consequences of revealing secrets, of which every character except the Chastelaine is guilty.

La Chastelaine de Vergi ends with a reiteration of the moral that began it:

Et par cest exemple doit l'en
 S'amor celer par si grant sen
 C'on ait toz jors en remembrance
 Que li descouvriens riens n'avance.
 Et li celers en toz poins vaut.
 Qui si le fait, ne crient assaut
 Des faus felons enquerreors.
 Qui enquierent autrui amors.
 (Chastelaine 949 -956)¹⁸⁶

The Knight and the Duke have been bested by the verbal wiles of the Duchess, and both they and the Chatelaine of Vergi have paid the price.¹⁸⁷ Both the courtly code and the feudal code have been broken: ultimately, neither can withstand the verbal machinations of a vengeful woman and the garrulousness of the purportedly courtly men in question.

In the courtly ethos, dissimulation is permissible. But men, despite vaunting their skills, are not particularly skilled. As a character, Gawain is known in the Middle Ages as verbally adept.¹⁸⁸ Yet even, Gawain, who has "a high reputation in the twelfth century" (Jackson, Literature 86), will be bested by the linguistic machinations of a woman. Again in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, we will see a knight laid low through his rash promises and the feminine wiles (sexuality) of a woman, but this is the knight who is

famous for his way with words. Despite his verbal acuity, he too will break both the courtly and the feudal code, and be felled, not by an axe, but by the words of a woman.

Chapter 5 – Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight takes place in a world of sympathetic magic which is invoked by language. The idea that language produces results and is therefore taken seriously. When Gawain is lost in the forest, he simply has to pray to the Virgin Mary, and name what he desires.¹⁸⁹ and it appears:

And þerfore sykyng he sayde, "I besche þe, Lorde,
 And Mary, þat is mildest moder so dere,
 Of sum herber þer heȝly I myȝt here masse
 Ande þy matynez tomorne, mekely I aske."¹⁹⁰
 (Sir Gawain 753-56)¹⁹¹

His prayer produces a swift result:¹⁹²

Nade he sayned himself, segge, bot þrye
 Er he watz war in þe wod of a won in a mote,
 Abof a launde, on a lawe, loken vnder boȝez
 Of mony borelych bole aboute bi þe diches,
 A castel þe comlokest þat euer knyȝt aȝte,
 (Sir Gawain 763-67)¹⁹³

King Arthur also names something he desires and it appears, thus setting in motion the entire chain of events:¹⁹⁴

And also anoþer maner meued him eke,
 þat he pur nobelay had nomen: he wolde neuer etc
 Vpon such a dere day, er hym deuised were
 Of sum auenturus þyng, an vncouþe tale
 Of sum mayn meruayle þat he myȝt trawe,
 Of alders, of armes, of oþer auenturus:
 Oþer sum segg hym bisoȝt of sum siker knyȝt
 To joyne with hym in justyng, in jopardé to lay,
 Lede, lif for lyf, leue vchon oþer,
 As fortune wolde fulsun hom, þe fayrer to haue,
 þis watz gynges countenaunce where he in court were,
 At vch farand fest among his fre meny
 In halle,
 þerfore of face so fere
 He stiȝtlez stif in stalle:

Ful 3ep in at Nw 3ere,
 Much mirthere he mas with alle.
 (Sir Gawain 90-106)¹⁹⁵

Despite the importance of words in the world they inhabit, King Arthur's knights seem sadly tongue-tied. The Green Knight seems to be aware of a lack of linguistic ability from the moment of his entrance into King Arthur's court:

Haylsed he neuer one bot hee he ouerloked.
 Þe first word þat he warp. . . .
 (Sir Gawain 223-24)¹⁹⁶

Instead, he speaks a challenge, to which the court's response is, to greatly understate the matter, disappointing:

Perfore to answare watz ar3e mony a þel freke
 And al stoued at his steuen and ston-stil seten
 In a swoghe silence þur3 þe sale riche.
 As al were slypped vpon slepe so slaked hor lotez
 In hy3e. . . .
 (Sir Gawain 241-45)¹⁹⁷

This is a sharp contrast to the ideal of the eloquent and courtly knight. The Green Knight points out this disparity, for the reason he chose Arthur's court was:

Bot for þe los of þe, lede, is lyft vp so hy3e.
 (Sir Gawain 258)¹⁹⁸

Arthur and his retinue do not live up to this reputation.

The Green Knight demands a rash boon of Arthur, and Arthur does indeed live up to this part of his reputation by granting it:

Bot if þou be so bold as alle burnez tellen,
 Þiy wyk grant me godly þe gomen þat I aske
 Bi ry3t.
 Arthour con onsware
 And sayd, Sir cortays knyht,
 If þou craue batayl bare,
 Here faylez þou not to fy3t.

(Sir Gawain 272-77)¹⁹⁹

But again, once the challenge is heard, the court is again struck dumb, and again the Green Knight mocks their silence:

When non wolde kepe hym with carp he coʒed ful hyʒe
 And rimed hym ful richly and ryʒt hym to speke.
 “Wat. is þis Arþures hous.” quod þe habel þenne.
 “þat al þe rous rennes of þurʒ ryalmes so mony?
 Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes.
 Your gryndellayk and your greme and your grete wordes?”
 (Sir Gawain 307-12)²⁰⁰

The Green Knight recognizes that even at King Arthur’s court, where “courtesy . . . is carried to its height” (Sir Gawain 263), mortal men are not so agile with language as they would like to pretend. And this is a dangerous lack, as the Green Knight acknowledges in the continuation of his taunts:

Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table
 Ouerwalt with a worde of on wyʒes speche.
 (Sir Gawain 313-14)²⁰¹

Here, words are power, a power he possesses, and the Arthurian court does not. While Arthur quickly claims that “I know no gome þat is gast of þy grete wordes” (Sir Gawain 325),²⁰² the damage has been done. The Green Knight has ensured a response to his challenge through the use of words.

It is when Arthur leaps to seize the axe, in order to mitigate the shame and cowardice the Green Knight is suggesting, that Gawain makes his verbal entrance onto the scene, with a veritable avalanche of rhetoric:

“Wolde ʒe, worpilych lorde,” quod Wawn to þe kyng.
 “Bid me boʒe fro þis benche and stoned by yow þere
 þat I wythoute vylanye myʒt voyde þis table,
 And þat my legge lady liked not ille.
 I wolde com to your counseyl before your cort ryche.

For me þink it not semly —as hit is soþ knawen—
 þer such an askyng is heuened so hyȝe in your sale.
 þaȝ ȝe ȝoursellf be talenttyf, to take hit to yourseluen
 Whil mony so bolde yow aboute vpon bench sytten
 þat vnder heuen I hope non hazerer of wyllē
 Ne better bodyes on bent þer baret is rered.
 I am þe wakest, I wot, and of wyt feeblest.
 And lest lur of my lyf, quo laytes þe soþe.
 Bot for as much as ȝe ar myn em I am only to prayse;
 No bountē but your blod I in my bode knowe.
 And syþen þis note is so nys þat noȝt hit yow falles.
 And I haue frayned hit at yow first, foldez hit to me.
 And if I carp not comlyly let alle þis coryt ryche
 Bout blame.”
 Ryche togeder con roun:
 And syþen þay reddē alle same
 To ryd þe kyng with croun
 And gif Gawan þe game.
 (Sir Gawain 343-61)²⁰³

This speech is ironic in nature, for Gawain claims that he is surrounded by the flower of knighthood; but these knights have not only been struck silent by the Green Knight, and are thus not good courtly knights, they have also not responded to his request for a trial of strength, thus disqualifying themselves as good feudal knights as well. They have failed the two characteristics of the liege relationship: *consilium* or counsel (implying speaking and words) and *auxilium*, physical aid.

Thus, Gawain's speech, with his false humility of claiming he is the least important and worst knight, actually proclaims him as the best, for he is offering both counsel and physical aid to the king. Further, his speech links him to Arthur. It is interesting to note that Gawain, the protagonist (if not the hero of the poem) is manipulating language in order to obtain the adventure at hand without appearing too eager or greedy. While Gawain's courtly speech does seem overwrought for the situation,

it does posit him as a master of language, or at least more of a master of language than the rest of Arthur's court, with their telling silence.

But Gawain is not so adept as he would desire. By medieval standards, it is foolish (although a common event on the part of knights) to agree to a challenge without knowing the name of the mysterious Green Knight. For if Gawain does not know his name, how can he comprehend his nature? This is particularly foolish since the Green Knight is described several times as something other than human:

Half-etayn in erde I hope þat he were
(Sir Gawain 140).²⁰⁴

Gawain knows nothing of the nature of this beast. In Gawain's world, naming would appear to master the object in question, even forcing it to appear. Yet Gawain fails to learn the name of his challenger. The Green Knight has a claim on Gawain, whose name he knows, but, as for the Green Knight, "when, still headless, he rides away from Camelot, his identity, like his destination, remains as mysterious as at his arrival" (Barron 35). For someone who is supposed to be the master of courtesy and love-talking, Gawain seems rather ignorant about the nature and the power of language. Already, Gawain is ignoring the supposed relationship between language and reality as posited by feudalism.

Nevertheless, linguistic ability is a skill for which Gawain is renowned.²⁰⁵ When he enters the enchanted castle, and "confesses" his name:

When þe lorde hade lerned þat he þe keyed hadem
Loude laȝed he þerat, so lef hit hym þoȝt,
And alle þe men in þat mote maden much joye
To apere in his presence prestly þat tyme
þat alle prys and prowes and pured þewes
Apendes to hys persoun and praysed in euer,
Byfore alle men vpon molde his mensk is þe most.
Vch segge ful softly sayde to his fere,
"Now schal we semlych se sleȝtez of þewez

And þe tecces termes of talking noble.
 Wich spede is in speche vnsurd may we lerne,
 Syn we haf fonged þat fine fader of nurture.
 God hatz geuen vus His grace godly forsoþe
 þat such a gest as Gawan grauntez vus to haue
 When burnez blyþe of His burþe schal sitte
 And synge.
 In menyng of menerez mere
 þis burne now schal vus bryng.
 I hope þat may hym here
 Schal lerbne of luf-talkyng.”
 (Sir Gawain 908-27)²⁰⁶

Indeed, this fantastical reputation could be why the Green Knight expresses delight that it is Gawain who takes up his challenge:

“Sir Gawain, so mot I þryue
 As I am ferly fayn
 þis dint þat þou schal dryue.”
 (Sir Gawain 386-89)²⁰⁷

The Green Knight is aware of Gawain’s reputation with regards to language, and is eager to test it. In fact, the Green Knight’s threat of retribution, should Gawain forsake his oath, is one of words:

“þerfire cinm oþer recreaunt be calde þe behoues.”
 (Sir Gawain 456)²⁰⁸

The Green Knight realizes, even at this early stage, that Gawain can be controlled by language.

This manipulation is possible because Gawain, at least at first, while he may manipulate language in a courtly manner himself, is a man of his word, a feudal knight.

He promises the Green Knight:

“In god fayth.” quop þe goode knyzt. “Gawan I hatte
 þat bede þe þis vuffet (quatso bifallez after)
 And at þis tyme twelmonyth take at þe anoþer
 Wyth what weppen so þou wylt—and with no wy3 ellez
 On lyue.”

(Sir Gawain 381-85)²⁰⁹

And, a year and a day from that time, he does appear at the Green Chapel to keep his end of the bargain. Here, language as a feudal system is honoured.

While the Green Knight also uses feudal language in the text, he is more adept at its usage than Gawain. The Green Knight is wise enough to discover the identity of his opponent:

þen carpez to Sir Gawan þe knyzt in þe grene,
 “Refourme we oure forwardes, er we fyrre passé.
 Fyrst I eþe þe, habel, how þat þou hattes
 þat þou me telle truly, as I tryst may.”
 “In god fayth.” quop þe goode knyzt, “Gawan I hatte”
 (Sir Gawain 377-81)²¹⁰

It is only then that Gawain asks the name of his challenger:

“Where schulde I wale þe?” quop Gauan. “Where is þy place?
 I wot neuer where þou wonyes, bi Hym þat me wrozt.
 Ne I know not þe, knyzt, þy cort ne þi name.
 Bot teche me truly þerto and telle me howe þou hates,
 And I schal ware alle my wyt to wynne me þeder—
 And þat I swere þe for soþe and by my seker trawep”
 (Sir Gawain 398-403)²¹¹

It is not until after the Beheading Challenge has been completed, when the stranger has given up his claim on, and power over Gawain, that Gawain finally learns the name of his mysterious challenger:

“How nome ze yowre ryzt nome, and þenne no more?”
 “þat schal I telle þe truwly,” quop þat oþer þenne:
 “Bertilak de Hautdesert I hat in þis londe.”
 (Sir Gawain 2443-45)²¹²

Gawain learns the dual nature of the Green Knight: he was also his host at the mysterious castle. Again, here is an instance where Gawain was amiss in his grasp of language: there

is no evidence given that Gawain ever learned the names of his host, or the host's wife; surely this is a lack of courtesy on Gawain's part.

After a year spent in what Frappier terms Gawain's "knightly dilettantism" (Frappier 167), Gawain goes in search of the headless horseman.²¹³ When he arrives at the magical castle, Gawain again is trapped due to feudal language, and his own carelessness with words. In addition to his many other linguistic faults, Gawain continually falls prey to rash boons in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. When the lord of the castle reveals to Gawain he knows the location of the Green Chapel, and thus aids him in keeping his promise, the foolish knight loosens his tongue:

". . . I schall at your wylle
Dowelle and ellez do quat ze demen."
(Sir Gawain 1081-82)²¹⁴

Thus he boasts, "as usual going further than he need, whether in making or breaking a promise" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 95). The host is quick to take advantage of this rash boon, confirming what Gawain has said, and binding Gawain via a second utterance:²¹⁵

"Ze han demed to do þe ded þat I bidde—
Wyl ze halde pis hes here at þys onez?"
"Ze, sir, forsoþe," sayd þe segge trwe.
(Sir Gawain 1089-91)²¹⁶

Gawain promptly swears to the Exchange of Winnings:

"3et firre," quop þe freke, "a forwarde we make:
Quatsoever I wynne in þe wod hit worþez to yourez
And quat chek so ze acheue change me þerforne.
Swete, swap we so: sware with trawþe.
Queþer leude so lymþ lere oþer better."
"Bi God," quop Gawayn þe gode, "I grant þertylle:
And þat yow lyst for to layke lef hit me þynkes."
"Who bryngez vus þis beuerage, þis bargain is maked."
So sayde þe lorde of þat lede; þay lazed vchone.
(Sir Gawain 1105-1113)²¹⁷

At this point, the narrator inserts a wry commentary on Gawain's wisdom:

To bed 3et er þay 3ede.
 Recorded couenauntez ofte;
 Þe olde lorde of þat leude
 Cowþe wel halde layk alofte.
 (Sir Gawain 1122-25)²¹⁸

While Gawain will keep his original promise to meet the Green Knight, he is going to break this second pledge, manipulated via language wielded by a more skillful adversary: a woman.

Gawain's first two encounters with the lady of the manor are rather uneventful.

Gawain, struck by her beauty, speaks to her courteously.²¹⁹ The next day:

. . . Wawen and þe wale burde
 Such comfort of her compaynye ca3ten togeder
 þur3 her dere dalyaunce of her derne wordez.
 Wyth clene cortays car closed fro fylþe,
 þat hor play watz passande vche prynee gomen.
 In vayres.
 (Sir Gawain 1010-15)²²⁰

Lulled by the banality of their first two encounters, and perhaps swayed by hearing his own skills with words praised overmuch, Gawain does not hesitate to enter a contest of words with the lady. Unfortunately for his virtue, Gawain does not live up to his reputation.

That Gawain is not as facile with words as he thinks — or is thought of him — should come as no surprise: in his very first speech, he claims, as a rhetorical device, that

I am þe wakest, I wot, and of wyt feeblest.
 (Sir Gawain 354)²²¹

While he may not be the weakest or the feeblest of wit, he is morally weaker than he thinks, and his wit is no match for the lady of the enchanted castle. Gawain has fallen into the apparently exclusively male trap of speaking truer than he knows.²²²

When the lady enters his room, Gawain at first feigns sleep, but finally determines that:

. . . "More semly hit were
To aspye with my spelle in space quat ho wolde."
þen he wakenede and wroth and to hir warde torned
And vnlooked hiy y3e-lyddez and let as hym wondered
And sayned hym, as bi his sa3e þe sauer to worthe
With hande.
(Sir Gawain 1198-1203)²²³

Unfortunately, this Christian talisman will be no more protection for the knight than his dissembling.

Whether or not the lady is fooled by this charade is doubtful, for she arrives with

Wyth lyppez small la3ande
(Sir Gawain 1207),²²⁴

suggesting she is aware of Gawain's attempted duplicity. She warns him that

"I schal happe yow here þat oþer half als
And syþen karp with my kny3t þat I ka3t haue."
(Sir Gawain 1224-25)²²⁵

She then proceeds to tempt him:

"I schal ware my whyle wel, quyl hit lastez.
With tale.
3e ar welcum to my cors.
Yowre awen won to wale.
Me houez of fine force
Your seruaunt be, and schale."
(Sir Gawain 1235-1240)²²⁶

On the first day, she receives the one kiss she demands; on the second, she gains two embraces. She begins their second encounter by noting:

“Sir, 3if 3e be Wawen, wonder me þynkkez
 Wy3e þat is so wel wrast always to god
 And connez not of copaynye þe costez vndertake,
 And if mon kennes yow hom to knowe, 3e kest hom of your mynde:
 Þou hatz for3eten 3ederly þat 3isterday I ta3t te
 Bi alder-truest token of talk þat I cowþe.”²²⁷
 (Sir Gawain 1481-86)²²⁸

Although she continues her speech, suggesting that it is the courtesy of kissing in which she attempted to instruct Gawain, I would argue that she is being duplicitous in her speech, using double-talk.²²⁹

Gawain does not learn from his mistakes. Rather than rising from his bed and thus avoiding a repeat of the previous day’s awkward situation, Gawain allows himself to be found in his bedchamber, *en deshabelle*, by the lady of the manor. She has already shown him that she is his better in discourse, but Gawain does not avoid a rematch. He still relies on “a code of polite or polished manners which have proved, and are going again and finally to prove, not only an ineffectual weapon in the last resort, but an actual danger, playing into the hands of the enemy” (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 86). She mocks him for this, claiming that he obviously did not understand her “poor wit,” when it is Gawain who is lacking in the understanding upon which he prides himself. The lady demands:

“Why! Ar 3e lewed, þat alle þe los weldez,
 Oþer elles 3e demen me to dille your dalyaunce to herken?”
 (Sir Gawain 1528-29)²³⁰

While Gawain responds that she is one:

“þat (I wot well) weldez more sly3t
 Of þat art, bi þe half, or a hundreth of seche
 As I am. . .”
 (Sir Gawain 1541-43)²³¹

he is merely being facetious and superficially courtly. But again, Gawain is speaking unwittingly truer than he knows. And for his arrogance in underestimating her grasp of courtly language, two kisses are claimed.

On the third day, when the lady begins her verbal stalking,

þe purpose to payre þat pyȝt in hir hert.
(Sir Gawain 1734),²³²

Gawain is again lolling in bed. This shows foolish overconfidence on Gawain's part, but is certainly true to the excess and lack of depth of Gawain's nature. Frappier states: "Gauvain indeed possesses the merits of honour, tact, and elegance, but this varnish scarcely hides a basic frivolity, a preoccupation with earthly glories and an incurable weakness for casual amours" (Frappier 189). Gawain is well aware of the risk, but cannot resist the temptation of a beautiful woman. In "hir riche wordes" (Sir Gawain 1744),²³³

Gawain is in danger:

Gret perile bitwene hem stod,
Nif Maré of hir knyȝt mynne.
(Sir Gawain 1768-69)²³⁴

This should come as no surprise to Gawain, as it has indeed been her purpose all along:

On December the 29th the lady comes to Gawain's room before he is fully awake, sits upon his bed-side, and when he arouses puts her arms about him (49.1224-5). She tells him that all is quite safe, and makes her all-out assault. It is, I think, here important to say that though some critics have held this to be a mistake on her part (which can in reality mean only a mistake on the part of the poet), they themselves are certainly mistaken. The lady is very beautiful indeed, Gawain was from the first, as we have seen, greatly attracted by her, and not only is he severely tempted on this

occasion, but by the lady's declaration (49.1235-40) *that temptation remains in force throughout his dealings with her*. All their converse and talk slips perpetually towards adultery thereafter. (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 84)

Interestingly, however, it is not the lady's words and suggestions of adultery that bring about Gawain's downfall, but his own fear of mortality, aroused with her offer of a magic belt conferring immortality:

Pen kest þe knyzt, and hit come to hi hert
 Hit were a juel for þe jopardé þat hym jugged were:
 When he acheued to þe chapel his chek for to fech,
 Myzt he haf slypped to be vnslayn þe slezt were noble.
 Penne he þulged with hir þrepe and þoled hir to speke.
 And ho bere on hym þe belt and bede hit hym swyþe
 (Ande he granted and hym gafe with a goud wylle).
 (Sir Gawain 1855-61)²³⁵

While Gawain may see this offer as a way to escape the lady's attempts at seduction,²³⁶ the lady has in fact achieved her goal, to trap Gawain via language:²³⁷

Gawain had accepted the girdle as a gift because of his dread of the beheading. But again he had been caught. The lady's timing was cunning. She pressed the belt on him, and the moment he weakened she gave it to him, and then closed the trap. She begged him not to tell her husband. He agreed. He could hardly do anything else: but with his characteristic generosity, indeed, impetuous excess, which we have already noted, he vowed never to tell anyone else in the world²³⁸ . . . To have rejected the belt, once accepted; or to have refused the request: neither would have been "courteous". . . it was quite as much hers to give as her kisses, and in that matter he had protected her already from embarrassment by refusing to say from whom he had obtained them. (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 94-5)

The lady's words simply offer Gawain a courtly way of obtaining the enchanted belt, although its concealment will mean breaking his oath to the lord of the house. But it is Gawain who has made two conflicting promises: concerning the green girdle, he promises the lady:

þat neuer wyȝe schulde hit wyt, iwysse, bot þay twayne,
 For noȝte.²³⁹
 (Sir Gawain 1863-65)²⁴⁰

Gawain has allowed himself to be caught in the trap between feudal language and courtly expectations, due to his fear of death. He then utters an outright lie, in order to keep the girdle: for the Exchange of Winnings, he tells the lord:

As is pertly payed þe porchas þat I aȝte.
 (Sir Gawain 1941)²⁴¹

Tolkien notes: "It is at this point then, and at this point only, that we may detect Gawain in a fault, such as it is. 'I shall first fulfill the compact that we made,' he says, and for what that compact was worth he does not do so. He says nothing about the girdle. And he is uneasy" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 95). Not only has he been outwitted by the lady in courtly language, he has abandoned his own belief in feudal truth. When they meet at the Green Chapel, Bercilak rebukes him for this failing:

Trwe mon trwe restore
 (Sir Gawain 2354)²⁴²

and gives him a cut for this:

At þe þrid þou fayled þore
 And þerfor þat tappe ta þe.
 (Sir Gawain 2356-2357)²⁴³

Gawain has broken his word:²⁴⁴

On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote ȝede
 As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more.

So is Gawayn, in goid fayth, bi oþer gay knyȝtez.
 (Sir Gawain 2363-65)²⁴⁵

and even he is not completely truthful.

Still, the Green Knight recognizes this fear of mortality as a human failing, and therefore not one to be reviled:

“Bot þat watz for no wylyde werke, ne wowing nauþer
 Bot for e lufed your lyf— þe lasse I yow blame.”
 (Sir Gawain 2367-68)²⁴⁶

Gawain, who has betrayed the principles of the feudal system, is not so sanguine about his failure, and looks for a reason for his failure. At first he blames himself:

For care of þy knobke, cowardyse me taȝt
 To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake:
 þat is larges and lewté, þat longez to knyȝtez.
 Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer
 Of trecherye and vntrawþe—boþe bitdyde sore.
 (Sir Gawain 2379-83)²⁴⁷

However, Gawain quickly turns his rage upon the woman who tempted him.

The Green Knight condones his wife’s duplicity because it was for a purpose: to test the knight, and his honour. Gawain is informed that his test was devised by Morgan le Fay, also known as Morgan the Goddess; it is the “cunning of lore and crafts” (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 78) of the world of faërie that has tempted and, in his mind, bested him. He has been tested:

For to assay þe surquidré, ȝif hit soth were
 Pat rennes of þe grete renoun of þe Rounde Table
 (Sir Gawain 2457-58)²⁴⁸

Of Morgan, the Green Knight says:

“And koyntyse of clergy, bi crqaftes wel lerned—
 þe maystrés of Merlyn mony ho hatz taken,
 [. . .]

Weldez non so hyȝe hawtesse
 þat ho no con make ful tame.”
 (Sir Gawain 2447-48, 2454-55)²⁴⁹

While Morgan may be skilled at such esoteric arts, it is language that has trapped Gawain, and could trap any other man, no matter what his social standing. Gawain has discovered

the Perils of Courtesy, and the unreality in the last resort of protestations of complete “service” to a lady as a “sovereign” whose will is law . . . he has had to suffer the final mortification of discovering that the will of the lady was in fact his own disgrace, and that all her flattering protestations of love were false. In a moment of bitterness he has rejected all his “cortaysye” and cried against women as deceivers. (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 99)

At the end of the poem, Gawain acknowledges the linguistic superiority of women. However, he does it in a way that begrudges them their talent, and belittles its implications:

And comaundez me to þat cortays, your comlych fere,
 Boþe þat on and þat oþer, myn honoured ladyez,
 þat þus hor knyȝt with hor kest han koynthly bigyled.
 Bot hit is no ferly þaȝ a fole madde
 And þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe;
 For so watz Adam in erde with one bygyled,
 And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson, eftsonez—
 Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde—and Dauyth, þerafter,
 Watz blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled.²⁵⁰
 Now þese were wrathed with her wyles, hit were a wynne huge
 To luf hom wel and leue hem not, a leude þat coupe.
 For þes wer forne þe freest, þat folȝed all þe sele
 Exellently, of alle þyse oþer vnder heuen-ryche
 þat mused;
 And alle þay were biwyled

With wymmen þat þey vsed.
 Þa3 I be now bigyled,
 Me þink me burde be excused.
 (Sir Gawain 2411-2428)²⁵¹

While it is true that prior to this diatribe Gawain blames himself,²⁵² here he is accusing women of provoking his weakness, as so many other males have done: when man acts “out of *mésure*,” a woman is blamed.²⁵³ However, even in making this accusation, Gawain displays his weakness in his manner of doing so. J.R.R. Tolkien comments:

fundamentally it is character, true to the general character of Gawain as depicted, and credible to his “reaction” at that particular moment. Gawain always tends to go a little further than the case requires. He only needs to say: many greater men than I have been deceived by women, so there is some excuse for me. He need not proceed to say that it would be vastly to men’s profit if they could love women and yet never trust them at all. But he does. And this is not only very like this Gawain, but not unnatural in any “courtier” whose very courtesy and pride in it has been made the means of exposing him to shame. Let it be a mere game and pretence, then! he cries — at that moment. (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 107)

However, even as Gawain again displays his verbal shortcomings, he also finally admits his own limits in discourse; he is not so adept as his female adversaries. The subject matter of his speech also demonstrates his limitations, for the courtly veneer has been completely stripped away. The man who has betrayed feudal language is now bereft of courtly language also. He can only say what he thinks — no duplicity or deception is possible.

At the end of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Gawain is still ashamed by his lack of facility with language, which has caused him sorrow. Tolkien notes that readers are

obliged therefore to come to terms with the situation deliberately contrived by the author; we are driven to consider the relation of all these rules of behaviour, these games and courtesies, to *sin*, the saving of souls, to what the author would have held to be eternal and universal values. And that, surely, is precisely why the confession is introduced, and at this point, Gawain in his last perilous extremity was obliged to tear his "code" in two, and distinguish its components of good manners and good morals. . . . We have in fact reached the point of intersection of two different plains: of a real and permanent, and an unreal and passing world of values: *morals* on the one hand, and on the other a *code of honour*, or a game with rules. The personal code of most people was, and of many still is, like that of Sir Gawain made up of a close blend of the two; and breaches at any point in the personal code have a very similar emotional flavour. (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 88-9)

Nevertheless, if he had chosen to be more mindful, Gawain could have abided by both codes. However, he was indeed careless with language, and his pride has paid the price:

Showing the green sash to the court,²⁵⁴ Gawain laments,

"Þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I laȝt haue
Of couardise and couetyse, þat I haf caȝt þare
Þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I am tan inne.
And I mot nedeȝ hit were wyle I may last."
(Sir Gawain 2507-10)²⁵⁵

While the court makes light of Gawain's tale of woe,²⁵⁶ the knight has realized, through the deception of women, that he possesses mastery of neither feudal nor courtly language.

How is this superior mastery of language by women judged in the romance? In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, two opposing views are presented: on the one hand, the Green Knight claims that his wife's deception was condoned because it was for a good purpose: to test Sir Gawain. The defeated Sir Gawain, on the other hand, donates an antifeminist rant to the question,²⁵⁷ claiming that women were deceivers ever. Kahn Blumstein sees this as characteristic of medieval romance where "women 'conquer' only with so-called feminine 'weapons' and wiles, for which they are then chastised" (39).

We have seen men bested by women in the linguistic arena, women who use their language skills for malicious or mocking purposes. But what about those women who, while retaining their superior verbal acuity, use their skills for good rather than evil? This will bring us to the heroines of medieval romance, for whom a way with words is a way to save themselves from an untenable situation.

Chapter 6 - The Lady in The Tower, or, Prison Is Not As Safe As You Think

As it is for many courtly women, marriage is an expectation for most of the heroines presented here. “Loving becomes the wife’s duty, with the further implication that husbands should be lovable” (Westphal-Wihl 177). But what happens when the husband is not lovable, is not a man to be admired, and indeed can be reviled for his actions and character? This is what will be seen in the examples to follow. Women’s agency is used to achieve goals that contravene society’s norms of what is acceptable and honourable. From an external notion of honour, that of reputation in the world (which, as the wise woman warned, is fleeting), heroines will turn to an internal, personal code of honour, one based on love, not a feudally condoned marriage. In addition, women will use a weapon with which they show much skill: language.

When we first meet the heroine of many of these romances, she is in an unhappy situation, trapped with a feudal guardian. She is a *malmariée*. A *malmariée* or *maumariée* is “Une jeune femme qui a été mariée contre son gré à un vieillard jaloux et se lamente de son destin ou regrette son ami absent” (Bertholet 114).

This was a type that existed both in literature and in real life. In her book The Fourth Estate, Shulamith Shahar gives the following example from the time of Charles VI (reigned 1380-1422):

Jean de Montreuil, in . . . [a] letter to his friend Gontier Col, lists what he considers the just complaints of his friend’s wife against her husband. She claims that she obeys him in everything and does not leave her home except to attend church, and even then only after obtaining his permission.

while he is free to come and go to play chess or dice. He is not unfaithful to her yet, and fulfils his marital duties, but with indifference and contempt. As regards the household expenditure, if she did not take care to manage their financial affairs frugally, his irresponsible squandering would reduce them to poverty. She herself says:

This is our fate, we innocent women, to be accursed always by men who believe they are above the law, and that everything is permitted to them. They are free to do as they choose, like those errants who do as they see fit, while as for us, it is enough that we look at someone and we are immediately accused of fornication. We are not wives or companions, but like slaves or prisoners. If they are not given at once all they require, such as clean garments or a soft bed, they curse us and insult us. In inns, on the highway and in other places which I do not wish to specify, they tear us into pieces with their vilifications and insults. They are unfair judges who are lenient with themselves and harsh towards others.

This picture of the life and feelings of a noblewoman is remote from the courtly ideal. One should not regard these complaints as expressions of excessive self-pity. Jean de Montreuil, who was not an advocate of women and marriage, accepted them at face value. (164)

The *malmariée* is “always justified in seeking happiness as best she can, from a stifling marital and degrading human existence, and attaining her total self-fulfillment as a woman and a human being” (Stebbins 514). In fact, her situation as an “ill-wed” woman justifies the later (often adulterous) actions of the heroine, and “It has been suggested that Chrétien depicted Arthur in decline in order to provide Guinevre with a pretext for infidelity, and it is true that the husbands of courtly ladies in twelfth and thirteenth-century French literature are often described unsympathetically” (Diverres 62).²⁵⁸

Georges Duby agrees, giving the example of the southern France parish of Montailhou:

In Montailhou pleasure guaranteed the innocence of the affair, especially when an ambitious young man lusted after an “ill-wed” woman, that is, a woman married to a much older man. This was a favourite theme of literature in the langue d’oc, a good example of which is the thirteenth-century romance *Flamenca*. (Duby & Braunstein 591)

In Marie de France’s *Yonec*, the heroine laments her fate as a *malmariée*:²⁵⁹

Cist vielz gelus de quei se crient
 que en si grant prisun me tient?
 Mult par est fols e esbaïz,
 il crient estre tuzjurs trahiz.
 leo ne puis al mustier venir
 ne le servise deu oïr.
 [. . .]
 Maleeit seient mi parent
 e li altre comunalment,
 ki a cest gelus me donerent

e de sun cors me marièrent!
 (Yonec 75-80, 85-88)²⁶⁰

In this *lai*, or narrative poem, we find many of the events and themes which characterize, and are central to texts of the “ill-wed” heroine. There is the invisible lover, the jealous husband (*le jaloux*), the spies (also known as the *lausengiers*), and, perhaps most importantly, the unhappy bride. Yonec shows the classic situation of the *malmariée* condemned to live without love. The plight of the lady is sufficient for Marie to justify her adultery with the hawk-knight” (Burgess & Busby, Introduction 28).²⁶¹

This idea of the triangle of the *jaloux*, the jealous husband; the *maumariée*, the unhappy bride; and her lover, is common in Provençal love poetry, as well as longer narrative romances. The jealous husband, by virtue of his jealousy, is discounted as a lover. In these romances, the heroines are treated like possessions by their husbands, or other feudal guardian: once they are obtained, the work is done: they are ignored, or guarded like a treasure that others want to steal. This is one of the principal problems that makes the feudal guardian unworthy of the women he guards.

In addition, the feudal male is obsessed with appearance,²⁶² and is attracted to the external beauty of the heroine, but does not see anything deeper within her.²⁶³ He sees her simply as a body, rather than a speaking subject with agency.²⁶⁴ As Jane Chance comments, “When this lover claims to ‘know’ a woman by knowing her body, he knows her only partly, which is made to stand for the whole, and which is signified by his ‘naming’ of her” (Chance 16). Indeed, the feudal guardian often does not even recognize this particular body: any young female body will do,²⁶⁵ or in some cases, a body is not needed at all.

In On Fairy Stories, J.R.R. Tolkien refers to the problem of possessiveness and appropriation:

the things that are trite, or (in a bad sense) familiar, are the things that we have appropriated, legally or mentally. We say we know them. They have become like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring ceased to look at them. (146)

This same mentality often applied to adultery, which was considered as worse for women. Jacques Voisenet notes:

l'Eglise affirme, face à l'adultère, une égalité de principe entre le mari et la femme. Mais, plus d'une fois, canons conciliaires et pénitentiels font preuve d'un traitement inégalitaire car l'épouse ne "possède" pas son corps. Elle ne peut donc en disposer librement. (62)

The woman is indeed an object,²⁶⁶ a body that must be possessed by a man in order to be controlled.

However, if these medieval husbands had read their ancient mythology, they would know that locking away their female possessions in a tower is no promise of security.²⁶⁷ If Rapunzel has not yet appeared to be impregnated in her tower, certainly Danae has been. These women, whom their husbands and fathers consider to be safely stored away, owned, will change, and become their own mistresses. For the body may appear to be guarded, but the mind will be freed.²⁶⁸

This idea of the innocent, helpless heroine imprisoned in a tower is one of the most powerful images to be impressed on the general public when they think of the

Middle Ages – probably due more to a childhood education in fairy-tales such as Rapunzel than any knowledge of medieval literature.²⁶⁹ As Marcia K. Lieberman notes,

So many of the heroines of fairy stories, including the well-known Rapunzel, are locked up in towers, locked into a magic sleep, imprisoned by giants, or otherwise enslaved, and waiting to be rescued by a passing prince, that the helpless, imprisoned maiden is the quintessential heroine of the fairytale. (192)

The heroine is often originally placed in this separate space, cut off from courtly society, by a male, who wishes to guard her. The medieval assumption²⁷⁰ that a woman could not be her own guardian certainly plays a role in this aspect of the romance.²⁷¹ Husbands, fathers, and brothers are constantly consumed with a need to guard their women.²⁷²

For some men, this simply takes the role of watching their women carefully, as in Marie de France's Laüstic, where of the wife it is noted:

kar la dame ert estreit gardeee,
quant cil esteit en la cuntree.
(Laüstic 49-50)²⁷³

Similarly,²⁷⁴ in Marie de France's Milun, the pregnant heroine comments:

mes ieo ne sui mie delivre,
ainz ai asez sur mei gardeins
vielz e juefnes, mes chamberleins,
qui tuzjurs heent bone amur
e se delitent en tristur.
(Milun 142-146)²⁷⁵

However, for many men, this is not reassurance enough; only stone walls will do. While keeps, nunneries,²⁷⁶ and even distant lands will serve in a pinch, they are principally towers in the tales examined here.²⁷⁷

Imprisonment in a tower or keep is a landscape feature for some of Marie de France's *lais*. At the beginning of *Yonec*, the heroine is imprisoned in a tower by her jealous husband:

uns riches huem, vielz e antis
 [. . .]
 Pur ceo qu'il ot bon heritage,
 femme prist pur enfanz avoir,
 qui après lui fussent si heir.
 De halte gent fu la pucele,
 sage e curteise e forment bele,
 quo al; riche hume fu donee;
 pur sa beaulté l'a mult amee.
 [. . .]
 Pur ceo que ele ert bele e gente,
 en li garder mist mult s'entente.
 Dedenz sa tur l'a enserree
 en un grant chambre pavee.
 [. . .]
 Autres femmes l'ot, ceo crei,
 en une altre chambre par sei;
 mes ja la dame n'l parlast,
 si la veille ne comandast.
 Issi la tint plus de set anz.
 Unques entre els n'ourent enfanz:
 ne fors de cele tur n'eissi
 ne pur parent ne pur ami.
 Quant li sire s'ala culchier,
 n'i ot chamberlene ne huissier,
 ki en la chambre osast entrer
 ne devant lui cirge alumer.
 Mult ert la dame en grant tristur.
 Od lermes, od suspir e plur
 sa belté pert en tel mesure
 cume cele qui n'en a cure.
 De sei meïsme mielz volsist
 que morz hastive la presist.
 (*Yonec* 12. 18-24, 29-32, 37-54)²⁷⁸

Here, Marie emphasizes that the woman is cut off from all society, not simply courtly society. Her isolation, unlike that of the lady in *Guigemar*, is complete.

In *Guigemar*, the wounded hero arrives in an ancient city:

Li sire, ki la mainteneit,
 mult fu vielz huem e femme aveit,
 une dame de halt parage,
 franche, courteise, bele e sage.
 Gelus esteit a desmesure;
 car cei purporte la nature
 qui tuit li vieil seient gelus;
 mult het chascuns que il seit cus.
 Tels est d'eage li trespas!
 Il ne la guardout mie a gas.
 En un vergier suz le donjun
 la out un clos tut environ.
 De ver marbre fu li muralz:
 mult par esteit espés e halz.
 N'i out fors une sule entrée;
 cele fu nuit e jur gardeee.
 De l'autre part fu clos de mer.
 Nuls n'l pout eissir ne entrer,
 si ceo ne fust od un batel,
 se busuin eüst al chastel.
 Li sire out fait dedenz le mur,
 pur mettre sa femme a seür,
 chambre; suz ciel n'aveit plus bele.
 A l'entrée fu la chapele.
 [. . .]
 La fu la dame enclose e mise.
 [. . .]
 Huem ne femme ja n'l venist
 ne fors de cel murail n'issist.
 (Guigemar 209-232, 245, 253-254)²⁷⁹

The lady is not happy with her fate; explaining it to Guigemar, she states:

"Ici sui nuit e jur enclose:
 ja nule feiz ne iere si ose
 que j'en isse, s'il nel comande.
 si mis sire ne me demande."
 (Guigemar 349-352)²⁸⁰

Unfortunately for her, after she is discovered with her lover Guigemar, her fate goes from bad to worse:

Par le conseil d'un seun barun
 sis sire l'a mise en prisun
 en une tur de marbre bis.

Le jur a mal e la nuit pis.
 Nuls hume el mund ne purreit dire
 la grant peine ne le martire
 ne l'anguisse ne la doolur
 que la dame sueggre en la tur.
 Douz anz I fu e plus, ceo quit,
 une n'i ot joie n e deduit.
 (Guigemar 657-666)²⁸¹

To further this sense of imprisonment, of isolation, are unwanted companions: spies. The spies are comparable to the *lausengiers*²⁸² of earlier Provençal love poetry – allies of the husband who spy on the unhappy wife: often, it is intimated, because they themselves are unhappy or uncourtly.²⁸³ In Guigemar, there are two spies. First,

uns vielz prestre la porte garde:
 (Guigemar 347)²⁸⁴

Of this spy, the lady prays,

ceo doinse deus que mals feus l'arde!
 (Guigemar 348)²⁸⁵

Later, when she has Guigemar as her lover,

Cel jur furent aparceil,
 descobert, trové e veü
 d'un chamberlene mal veisié
 que sis sire I out enveié.
 A la dame voleit parler,
 ne pout dednez la chambre entrer.
 Par une fenestre les vit:
 vait a sun seignur, si li dit.
 (Guigemar 577-584)²⁸⁶

In Yonec, the husband uses his relatives as spies.

Il ot une sue serur,
 vieillë e vedve, sanz seignur;
 emsemble od la dame l'a mise
 pur li tenir plus en justise.
 (Yonec 33-36)²⁸⁷

Later, the husband himself directs the spying on his wife. He notices that she has regained her beauty, and becomes suspicious.²⁸⁸

Sun cors teneit en grant chierté:
 tute recuevre sa bealté.
 Or li plest plus a surjurner
 qu'en nul altre deduit aler.
 Sun ami vult suvent veoir
 e sa joie de lui avoir,
 desques sis sire s'en depart.
 [. . .]
 Pur la grant joie u ele fu,
 que sovent puet veeri sun dru;
 esteit tuz sis semblanz changiez.
 Sis sire esteit mult veiziëz;
 en sun curage s'aperceit
 qu'altrement ert qu'il ne suleit.
 (Yonec 219-225, 229-234)²⁸⁹

He orders his spinster sister to spy on the couple, whose secret is revealed, leading to the death of the hawk-knight. Again, we have the husband as *lausengier*.

Ultimately, these spies and this imprisonment hasten the very fate they are meant to prevent. Imprisonment in the tower ends up causing the very thing it seeks to avoid: the women becomes adulterous in many cases.²⁹⁰ As Joan Ferrante notes of Tristan: "In Gottfried, Marke is at least partly at fault in the final débacle. When he recalls the lovers to court, he keeps close watch on them. Gottfried suggests that this kind of surveillance is responsible for the evils it attempts to prevent. Prohibition leads women astray" (Conflict 135).²⁹¹ In fact, for the medieval heroine, her imprisonment in the tower often ensures the exact betrayal that the male figure wishes to avoid. Ironically, the heroine is often innocent and passive when placed in the Other space, but in that space, becomes active, and often adulterous.²⁹²

The Solitude of the Tower

At first, how strange, and even frightening the tower must be. For these aristocratic women, theirs is a peopled world – teeming with people, animals, burgeoning with activity, even drowning in *millefleurs*. This is not a period of deserted landscapes, the pastoral visions of later centuries. This is a time of church façades riotous with scenes and figures, tapestries crowded with images, of perspectiveless paintings full of people standing on each other's heads. Against this backdrop, how radical a change must enclosure in the tower be?

For the medieval romance heroine, the tower can mean complete solitude. In Marie de France's *Yonec*, the heroine is extremely isolated. We are told:

Altres femmes l'ot, ceo crei,
 en une altre chambre par sei;
 mes ja la dame n' l' parlast,
 si la veille ne comandast.
 (*Yonec* 37-40)²⁹³

This isolation is reinforced by the following statement.

Quant li sire s'ala culchier,
 n' l' ot chamberlene ne huissier,
 ki en la chambre osast entrer
 ne devant lui cirge alumer.
 (*Yonec* 45-48)²⁹⁴

However, for many others, it is a relative solitude, with companions. The heroine is often succored by the companionship of true allies, generally female ones.

The Society of Women

Groups of women are often associated with negative circumstances. Certainly, being imprisoned in a tower would, at first glance, appear to be a dismal situation. Other

prisons incarcerated groups of women. In Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth-century romance The Knight with the Lion (Yvain), Yvain is chivalrously saving the country from assorted nefarious villains when he comes to a rather odd, anachronistic town. As he approaches, they discourteously call out:

«Mal veigniez, sire mal veigniez!
 Cist ostex vos fu anseigniez
 Por mal et por honte andurer.
 [. . .]
 S'onques en ta vie trovas
 Qui te feïst honte ne let.
 La ou tu vas t'n iert tant fet
 Que ja par toi n'iert reconté.
 (Yvain 5117-5119, 5134-5137)²⁹⁵

Of course, being foolhardy, which is rather the only way Chrétien's knights seem to come, Yvain strides through the gate, and is met by one of the few pieces of social realism²⁹⁶ in Chrétien's romances:

Vit puceles jusqu'a trois cenz
 Qui diverses oevres feisoient:
 De fil d'or et de soie ovroient
 Chascuen au mailz qu'ele savoit:
 Mes tel povreté i avoit
 Que desliees et desceintes
 En i ot de povreté meintes;
 Et as memeles et as cotes
 Estoient lor cotes derotes,
 Et les chemises as dos sales;
 Les cos gresles et les vis pales
 De fain et de meseise avoient.
 Il les voit, et eles le voinet,
 Si s'anbruchent totes et plorent
 (Yvain 5196-5209)²⁹⁷

This industrial evil is allied with the dark side of the marvelous. The desolate ladies explain that they are captive to two demons, who force them to labour for fourpence in the pound, even though their work is worth twenty shillings a week. Starving, the

maidens have no hope of escape unless Yvain saves them. As a proper courtly knight,

Yvain upholds the promise of King Arthur to protect all maidens in his kingdom:

«Qu'an la terre le roi Artu
Sont puceles aseürees.
Li rois lors a trives donees,
Qui les garde et qui les conduit,
[. . .]
. . . leal jostise
Qui est estable et asise
Par tote la terre le roi.»
(Perceval 7122-7125, 7129-7130)²⁹⁸

Yvain promptly saves the day, and the maidens are ecstatic.

This society of women is also described in the article “The Ladies’ Tournament: Marriage, Sex, and Honor in Thirteenth-Century Germany.” Sarah Westphal-Wihl begins by stating:

Courtly literature rarely portrays women celebrating community with one another. The erotic lyric displays the affects of a single subject who is usually male. In the Arthurian romance, communities are peripheral to the narrative that focuses on the hero. They generally arise through extraordinary or sorrowful circumstances: they are neither desired by nor beneficial to the women who inhabit them. The ladies of Chrétien de Troyes’s “Pesme Avanture,” for example, are prisoners, exchanged as tribute for the life of their young king. They live in poverty and starvation, producing fabrics of silk and gold for their master’s profit. Their wretched community of suffering is dissolved by the hero Yvain, who frees them from their stockade and returns them to their lands. In an adaptation of another story by Chrétien, *Erec et Enide*, the German poet Hartmann von

Aue describes a community of eighty mourning widows wearing identical black gowns and sharing a common grief. Their community of suffering is dissolved through hero Êrec's courage and King Arthur's tact and munificence. Similarly, Wolfram von Eschenbach includes an episode in *Parzifal* about four queens and four hundred ladies who are imprisoned by the vindictive enchantments of a castrated sorcerer. The sorrow of their condition lies not only in their loss of freedom but also in their total isolation from the four hundred knights held captive at the same place. Like those in the other stories, these women are liberated by a hero, Gâwân, who reunites all of the now freed knights and ladies by arranging a dance. The women's community of suffering quickly dissolves once they are no longer isolated from men. (62-3)

While her examples are valid, her statement that these communities are not beneficial is not completely valid. In the cases she cites, surely the women gave each other comfort and support. The same is true of the women imprisoned in towers. As Virginia Woolf comments:

"Chloe liked Olivia. . ." Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes do happen. Sometimes women do like women.

"Chloe liked Olivia." I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia for perhaps the first time in literature. . .All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much

has been left out, unattempted. . . . (But) almost without exception they are shown in their relationship to men. It was strange to think that the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but only seen in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that; and how little can a man know even of that when he observes it through the black or rosy spectacles which sex puts upon his nose. (1-2)

There are other examples of communities of women where they support each other. Gottfried's Iseult is raised by a mother who passes on her legendary skills to her daughter.²⁹⁹ In Guigemar, we are told of the lady:

Une pucele a sun servise
 Li aveit sis sires bailliee,
 Ki mult ert franche e enseigniee,
 Sa niece, fille sa sorur.
 Entrer les deus out grant amur:
 Od li esteit quant il errout.³⁰⁰
 (Guigemar 246-51)³⁰¹

Thus, Westphal-Wihl's assertion that "Courtly literature rarely portrays women celebrating community with one another" (62) is not true of the romances chosen for this dissertation. Indeed, in text where women show agency, a community of women seems to be the norm, rather than the exception.

In the tower, there exists an environment where women are the centre, the key, the subject of all events. This is a place where women can speak in their own language.

Toril Moi notes of Luce Irigaray that her

analysis of femininity is closely bound up with her idea of a specific woman's language which she calls "le parler femme," or "womanspeak."

“Le parler femme” emerges spontaneously when women speak together, but disappears again as soon as men are present. This is one of the reasons why Irigaray sees women-only groups as an indispensable step toward liberation. (Moi 144)

This relationship with other women allows the heroines to develop a strong sense of self, in a place where they are the subject rather than the object of the male gaze. And thus, for these romance heroines, imprisonment in the tower will result in their liberation.

I spoke earlier of imprisonment in a tower being a radical change. And yet, in some ways, it is not a change – at the time of their imprisonment, the heroines are still watching, rather than doing. Even more than half a millennium later, Tennyson’s *Lady of Shalott* waits patiently in her tower, though for her there is no knight to come and rescue her. When she takes agency into her own hands, simply stepping away from her mirror and loom to gaze at real life for the first time, her doom is sealed – a definite object lesson for the Victorian audience.

However, modern girls reading fairy tales would do better to take their lessons from the medieval heroine locked in a tower. For she does not passively wait for rescue: she constructs her own rescue while in the tower, through reading and subsequent action.³⁰² Through these acts, the prison is transformed into salvation. Ultimately, the heroine emerges from her stone cocoon as an active participant in the colourful and bewildering pageantry of those tapestries. The physical separation leads to a psychological separation from the society in question;³⁰³ only when the psychological state has changed will reintegration with the society occur.³⁰⁴ And how is this psychological transformation brought about? Through reading.

Chapter 7 - Reading in the Romance

Books In The Tower

Let us be clear. Not all heroines have books in their towers. When Nicolette and Aucassin are imprisoned, he in a dungeon, she in a tower, neither of them are mentioned as having books for solace. This is partly due to its origins. The *chante-fable* of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, “probably written in Picardy early in the thirteenth century” (Auerbach, *Introduction* 105), exhibits an unusual structure that suggests an oral ancestry. “Rare sera le mélange de la prose récitée et des vers chantés tel qu’il se pratique dans la délicieuse *chante-fable* d’*Aucassin et Nicolette*, au début du XIIIe, peut-être sous l’influence arabe” (Cohen 169). The song sections begin with the phrase “Or se cante,” while “Or diënt et content et fabloient” begins the other narrative passages. Perhaps because of this emphasis on orality, the tale does not mention romances, or indeed reading or writing of any kind. The separated lovers only communicate orally, first calling through a prison wall, then with a message relayed through a group of surly herd-boys.

Many earlier romances that seem to be more oral in structure do not possess reading or books per se. However, they do have a variation on the theme of books in the towers, that of oral or visual references to “romances.” In particular, the heroines of texts that may themselves have been, at least in part, orally presented, often have visual or oral book substitutes: paintings and tapestries, or memories of stories they have heard told. As with stories, these are signs to be interpreted, symbols that hold the key to escape.

In the twelfth-century romance of Floire et Blancheflor, Blancheflor is imprisoned in a tower, one decorated with paintings designed to be a substitute for books, as the narrator makes clear:

Molt a apris de l'escriture
 qui puet savoir de la peinture:
 li fait I sont des ancissours,
 les proueces et les estours.
 (Conte de Floire 1873-1876)³⁰⁵

Marie de France's *lais*, as texts that were at least partly oral in origin and performance, tend towards visual and oral references to books, rather than books themselves. In Guigemar, a painting in the tower presents a book.

La chaumbre ert peinte tut entour.
 Venus, la deuesse d'amur,
 Fu tres bien mise en la peinture:
 Les traiz mustrë e la nature
 Cument hom deit amur tenir
 E lealment e bien servir.
 Le livre d'Ovide, ou il enseigne
 Comment chascuns s'amur estreigne,
 En un fu ardent le gettout,
 E tuz icels escumenjout
 Ki ja mais cel livre lirreient
 Ne sun enseignement fereient.
 La fu la dame enclose e mise.
 (Guigemar 233-45)³⁰⁶

As we will see with Dante later, here the ruinous danger of choosing the wrong textual authority is emphasized,³⁰⁷ with Ovid (often admired in other romances) as the villain.

In her Fables, Marie de France again warns against reading things without judgment, in believing everything you read, see, or hear. In the fable Del leün e del vilein (The Lion and the Peasant)³⁰⁸ the moral is:

Par essample nus veut aprendre
 Que nul ne deit nient entendre
 A fable, ke est de mençuinge,

Ne a peinture, que semble sunge.
 Ceo est a creire dunt hum veit l'ovre,
 Que la verité tut descovre.
 (Marie, Fables 59-64)³⁰⁹

However, there are proper textual authorities to be examined. In the Prologue to her Fables, Marie discusses the good to be gained from the correct texts:

Cil ki seivent de lettruüre
 Devreient bien mettre cure
 Es bons livres e escriz
 E as [es]samples e as diz
 Ke li philosophes troverent
 E escristerrent e remembrerent.
 Par moralité escriveient
 Les bons proverbes qu'il oïcient,
 Que cil amender se peüssent
 Ki lur entente en bien eüssent.
 (1-10)³¹⁰

Marie de France is even more specific about what constitutes a "correct" textual authority in her Lais. In the Prologue, she refers to the *granz biens* to be gained from her *lais*.

Quant uns granz biens est mult oïz.
 Dunc a primes est il fluriz,
 E quant loëz est de plusurs.
 Dunc ad expandue ses flurs.
 (5-8)³¹¹

This comparison between literature and plants is not unique to Marie de France.

The act of writing was a sacred labour, likened by monks to ploughing the fields: "the pages are ploughed by the divine letters and the seed of God's word is planted in the parchment which ripens into crops of completed books (*libri perfecti* — 'perfect books')." These are the words of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, the great monastery in Burgundy. (Clanchy 165)

For Marie, the flower that blooms, the *granz biens*, is a feeling, and an experience, one that engenders the desire for other experiences, whether literary or otherwise, on the part of the reader. This is supported by a passage in her *lai Yonec*, where an imprisoned lady laments her fate, and wishes for a more literary destiny, citing the stories she knows:

Mult ai oï sovent cunter
 que l'em suleit jadis trover
 aventures en cest païs
 Chevalier trovoënt puceles
 a lur talent gentes e beles,
 e dames truvoënt amanz
 beals e curteis, pruz e vaillanz,
 si que blasmees n'en esteient³¹²
 ne nul fors eles nes veeient.
 Se ceo puet estre ne ceo fu,
 se unc a nul est avenu,
 Deus, ki de tut a poëste,
 il en face ma volenté!
 (*Yonec* 95-108)³¹³

And because of the lady's lament, a mysterious hawk knight comes to her rescue.

There are romances that refer to other romances, but where the secondary romance reference does not include a representation of reading. Rather, as was seen with *Aucassin et Nicolette*, these references are comparative in nature, allowing (generally) the heroine to contrast her own situation with another, more famous one, and draw a lesson from her knowledge of that other tale, thus continuing the didactic function of the romance. For example, in the thirteenth-century romance *La Chastelaine du Vergi*,³¹⁴ the heroine, having learned of her lover's unfaithfulness in revealing their relationship, laments that he is not Tristan to her Iseult.³¹⁵ Even when reading is not specifically discussed, these numerous intertextual references in the romances firmly place the heroine, and even the hero, in the romance tradition.

At the beginning of the romance of Jaufry, a feast occurs. At this feast, the knights marvel over the enchantment they have just witnessed, which has already been made into a tale. "Gay was the talk `mongst that fair company, and many a time and oft did ladies bid their lords recount the tale of how the enchanted beast was one of their own company, and now returned to them in such strange wise" (Jaufry 10). Later, Jaufry meets two youths during the course of his travels, and accompanies them to their home, where he encounters the following scene: "Beside the bridge there sat an aged knight, singing an ancient minstrel's song well-known to all, *The Lay of the Two Lovers*.³¹⁶ It was the young men's father" (Jaufry 78). As with so many romance heroes and heroines, Jaufry lives in a world very conscious of romance, one where romance is constantly presented to the characters for their consumption.

Intertextual references are very common in medieval texts: "Medieval men always referred to authorities (*auctoritates*) in their literary compositions. These came in the form of phrases, citations or entire passages from the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, or the authors of classical antiquity, which they used to lend more weight to their own line of argumentation" (Hamesse 107). But romance authors refer to other romances. These references confer authority upon the romance canon in its entirety. Many romance texts that do not feature examples of reading still contain intertextual references, firmly placing themselves as part of the romance paradigm. These references also emphasize the didactic nature of romance. But now let us turn to examples of actual reading.³¹⁷

Reading (In) The Romance

Chrétien de Troyes mentions the reading of a romance in Yvain, but offers very little by way of commentary with the scene.

Et mes sire Yvains lors s'en antre
 El vergier, apres li sa rote.
 Voit apoie desor son cote
 .I. riche home, qui se gisoit
 Sor .I. drap de soie; et lisoit
 Une pucele devant lui
 En .I. romnas, ne sai de cui;
 Et por le romans escoter
 S'i estoit venue acoter
 Une dame, et c'estoit sa mere
 Et li sires estoit ses pere.
 Si se porent molt esjoir
 De li bien veoir et oir:
 (Yvain 5362-6374)³¹⁸

While it does not take place in a tower, this twelfth-century romance is interesting for several themes that it portrays: the association of romance with female readers, and the disassociation of romance with public space.

The romance, and reading of the romance, is presented as occurring in a space outside the public sphere. Paolo and Francesca are alone when they read of Lancelot and Queen Guinevere, the image of the book is trapped in the tower with Guigemar's lady, and the noble family Yvain encounters are in an orchard, separated from the suffering of the female slaves outside their refuge: "situations of withdrawal are associated with reading, a solitary act that encourages projection into another place or another time. In one *chanson de toile*, Belle Doette 'is reading a book, but her mind is elsewhere'" (Régnier-Bohler 375). In particular, it is often the heroine who is separated from the public sphere, and uses reading to while away her imprisonment. As Danielle Régnier-Bohler notes, "Withdrawal is another constant. The heroine frequently lies in wait or delves inward by means of reading" (Régnier-Bohler 345). Weisl claims that because love was the "quintessentially private sphere of existence and desire" (Hanning and Ferrante 4), the spaces of the romance are much more

interior than those of the epic; a certain amount of the action does take place outside, but the knight's encounters with the lady (and thus with love) usually happen within gardens, rooms, and towers. . . . that both provide a location for narrative development and mirror the internal, private development of the characters in the poem. It is notable that these enclosed spaces often contain a woman, frequently one locked up by her evil husband or father, who is freed by the power of love manifested by the hero. (Weisl 17-8)³¹⁹

There may be two primary reasons that reading often takes place in a space apart from society, such as a garden or tower. First, the tower is a female space, often with a society of women supporting each other. Even though taking place in a private, liminal space, romance reading is also a social activity, binding them together: "Most twelfth- and thirteenth-century miniatures continued to show people reading in groups" (Sænger 379), and group reading can serve as a group moral session, leading to the discussion and sharing of ideas.

In The Allegory of Love, C.S. Lewis refers to the twelfth-century *jeu d'esprit* Concilium in Monte Romarici. In the text, a group of nuns partake in a most unusual service of worship:

When the virgin senate all
 Had filled the benches of the hall
 Doctor Ovid's rule instead
 Of the evangelists was read.
 The reader of that gospel gay
 Was Sister Eva, who (they say)
 Understands the practick part
 Of the Amatory Art —
 She it was convoked them all,
 Little sisters, sisters tall.

Sweetly they began to raise
 Songs in Love's melodious praise. . . .
 (qtd. in Lewis, Allegory 18-19)

While the use of Ovid in a religious service is certainly fantastical,³²⁰ the assumption of access by nuns to this work is not. Jeffrey Hamburger, in The Visual and the Visionary, writes:

Nuns maintained their ties to the world and its images in spite of their segregation from their surroundings. Cloistered women who entered enclosure as widows would have been well versed from childhood in the conventions of romance literature. But even those who entered as oblates might have known secular stories from objects such as the Malterer embroidery from the convent of Adelhausen in Freiburg that combines secular and sacred representations of the power of women. Of the decorated textiles conserved in the convents of Lower Saxony, some are stitched with tales of love and adventure, such as the story of Tristan. Secular imagery was no more out-of-place in a convent than a volume of Ovid in a twelfth-century monastic library. (51)

Reading aloud in groups for women served to emphasize a social bond that until then had been ignored by literature: that of women with each other.³²¹ With the self-reflexivity of the romance discussing romance-reading, the relationship of women is foregrounded in many romances.

Women in particular are presented as the audience, and pupils, of romance.³²² Through their choice of reading material, they choose to become active subjects in their own lives. Régnier-Bohler gives an example from the peasant classes:

In the *Evangelies des quenouilles* we move outside the aristocratic maisnie. One day, a group of wise and prudent matrons decide upon an amusement for the group: "One of us will begin her reading and recite her chapters in the presence of all assembled, in order to hold them and fix them perpetually in memory." By reading maxims and commentaries, then, together with their experience of everyday life, these women attempt to exercise a magical power over domestic society. . . . The gynaceum embraced wholeheartedly the magical and oracular function, as the secretary who recorded their sayings clearly understood: "It seemed to them that, through these constitutions and chapters, the world should henceforth be governed and ruled by them. (Régnier-Bohler 347-8)

This idea of the *gynaceum*, of women supporting other women in their rebellion, is common in romance. While the imprisoned heroine is separated from men and from the court, she is often accompanied by faithful handmaids who support her in her rebellion. This representation of the relationship of women with women, elsewhere ignored, posits romances as "the subversive literature of sexual politics" (Clair 61), because they are the literature of women. Merely by choosing to read a romance,³²³ the medieval female reader is placing herself firmly in a tradition where women are valued.³²⁴

Second, the development of silent reading was a gradual process in Europe:

St. Augustine describes how another holy man, St. Ambrose, used to read. He read, Augustine tells us, *to himself*, that is to say silently: "his eyes wandered along the page and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were at rest." This to St. Augustine seemed remarkable:

he had never seen anyone read like that, and he thought that perhaps St. Ambrose wanted to avoid being questioned “by some doubtful and attentive listener” or, more probably, wished to preserve his voice which was easily weakened. “Whatever was his motive for doing so, doubtless in such a man it was a good one.” What St. Augustine could not have known was that in watching St. Ambrose read he was seeing the birth of a new world: that of the “solitary reader who is accustomed to pass hours in the company of silent mental images evoked by written characters”. . . . The rise of romance in the twelfth century was something strangely similar: it was the birth of a world in which vernacular writings were to share with Latin texts the privilege of addressing the reader through the medium of visible, not audible, symbols; through words intended to be read, not sung or even recited; and with this went a radical alteration of the very nature of literary experience. The change heralded our modern world in much the same way as St. Ambrose’s silent approach to his text heralded our reading habits. In neither case did the new immediately supersede the old.

(Vinaver, Rise 4)

Views on when silent reading became common, and even the norm, in Europe differ widely, depending on the group of people and even the type of text in question. While Paul Sænger argues that silent reading overtakes late-medieval Europe in scholastic and monastic culture, he differentiates between these and the consumption of romance and other popular genres:

The transformation from an oral monastic culture to a visual scholastic one between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries in the world of Latin letters had at first only a limited effect on lay society, particularly in northern Europe. Until the mid-fourteenth century, French kings and noblemen rarely read themselves but were read to from manuscript books prepared especially for this purpose. When princes such as Saint Louis could read, they read aloud in small groups. In addition to liturgical texts, the literature read to princes consisted of chronicles, chansons de geste, romance, and the poetry of troubadours and trouvères. Most of these works were in verse and were intended for oral performances. Thirteenth-century prose compilations, such as the *Roman du Lancelot* and the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, were also composed to be read aloud. The nobleman was expected to *listen* to the feats of his predecessors or ancient worthies. (Sænger 405)

So some of the texts discussed here were probably written when oral transmission was the norm, or both oral tales and reading books were accepted. This would help to explain the number of texts that vary back and forth between references to oral culture of romances and a written one.³²⁵

If one accepts the idea that at least some texts were read out loud,³²⁶ this explains why the tower ultimately turns out to be a place of learning. One needs privacy to read “subversive” texts – making the tower so convenient in this way.³²⁷ It is the enforced solitude (or relative solitude) of the tower that has enabled the lady to become a scholar. The tower serves many functions: it is symbolic, and even for the modern reader,

romantic. But incarceration in the tower also serves a very practical purpose. It also provides the privacy necessary to read, to read heretical texts, or to interpret texts in a dangerous manner. As Margaret L. King notes, referring to the somewhat similar fate of many nuns: "The freedom of solitude permitted, in some cases, the learned woman to develop intellectual capacities — but that freedom, perhaps more apparent than real, was purchased at the cost of solitude" (69). Nevertheless, for the romance heroine, that solitude is entirely necessary – and, unlike their devout counterparts, merely temporary.

For romance is not merely a means of temporary escape, a means of passing time, though even that should not be scorned:

Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using *Escape* in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word. (Tolkien, On Fairy 148)

Shahar agrees:

the popularity of the courtly literature (most of which was written by men, but women cultivated its authors), which idealized extramarital love and portrayed the lover as the vassal of his mistress, may be explained if not as a protest against existing reality, at least as a longing for a different one.
(9)

But for the imprisoned romance heroine, "Reading was regarded as an active energetic exercise. . . and not as a passive sedentary pastime" (Sænger 382). Romance reading can lead to a permanent escape from a very real prison. Why? Because romances "instruct us

in our own world even while they allow us to escape from it" (Beer 78). Thus, the references to liminal space bear a further importance, for in this liminal space, the romance will become didactic and usher in societal change: "There is a clear cause-and-effect relation in thirteenth-century tales: a person first reads, then falls in love. In *Clariss et Laris* one of the heroes reads about the death of Pyramus and Thisbe and becomes susceptible to a confession of love. Flamenca, imprisoned in the tower, learns about love through books" (Régnier-Bohler 375). In direct opposition to the view of Dante's *Inferno*, romance presents itself as didactic. Peter W. Travis regards it as one of:

the kinds of literature that men and women of the Middle Ages were accustomed to experience. This literature is often "naïve" and "propagandistic" it addresses its audience not as readers but always as auditors; it thinks of itself not as "art" but rather as a performance designed to effect in its listeners a positive and therapeutic effect. (205)

He continues:

the liberal art to which medieval literature was most closely aligned was rhetoric: like rhetoric, poetry is a series of affective and suasive tropes directed at an audience whose thoughts and emotions are meant to be evoked, charged, and transformed. Because of its primary concern with social efficacy, then, medieval literature generally speaking fits into that category which R. G. Collingwood has called "magical art": "a representation where the emotion evoked is an emotion valued on account of its function, and fed by the generative or focusing magical activity into the practical life that needs it." (205-6)

Romance appeals to those that need its inspiration, that need to learn its lessons to effect change.

As Gillian Beer notes: "Revolution is one function of the romance" (13). For readers unhappy with their lives, romance offers a seductive alternative, and, in a causal relation, the means to achieve it: "Romance, being absorbed with the idea, always has an element of prophecy. It remakes the world in the image of desire" (Beer 79). Prophecy implies and desires change, a new world. But this attraction is also one of the main causes of critiques of romance in general: "The principal *moral* objection which has continuously been made to it is that it seduces the reader: it offers him a kind of fairy world which will unfit him (or more frequently her) for common life after he has sojourned there" (Beer 14). This is not always true; rather than leaving a powerless object, the reader becomes the subject, and actually causes change in the real world. Unhappy with life, women (and men) turned to romances to see there a life they desired, and they re-created themselves in that image: "Men and women increasingly turned inward in search of their identity. Reading took on new importance, for it involved such absorption that it altered the very object of the reader's perception" (Régnier-Bohler 373). The identity that is found is not merely a private one, contained in the liminal space, but spills out into the public sphere also. Romance concerned itself with this quest for identity, and the reconciliation of the private and the public sphere. "The literary imagination was obsessed by problems of identity — a lost or unknown identity that must be found or discovered, or an identity that must be concealed and that is known only through signs" (Régnier-Bohler 382). The self is consciously created, chosen.

Chapter 8 - The Education of The Heroine

Now not all the heroines do read romance while imprisoned in the tower. Yet even those romance heroines who do not read in the tower are still educated, and familiar with the romance tradition, and, thus, susceptible to love. The majority of the romance heroines are educated, and, in several cases, the heroine is educated with or by her future lover.³²⁸

One such example of this is the romance of Floire et Blancheflor, which from its opening positions itself as a didactic tale:

Signor, oïés, tot li amant,
cil qui d'amors se vont penant,
li chevalier et les puceles,
li damoiseil, les damoiseles!
Se mon conte volés entendre,
molt I porrés d'amors aprendre.
(Conte de Floire 1-6)³²⁹

The poet has heard the story from an elder sister telling it to a younger,³³⁰ who

. . . uns boins clers li avoit dit,
qui l'avoit leü en escrit.
(Conte de Floire 53-54)³³¹

Raised together from childhood, Blancheflor is permitted to go to school because Floire cannot bear to go without her.³³² The two are natural scholars, encouraged by their love for each other:

Au plus tost que souffri Nature
ont en amer mise lor cure.
En aprendre avoient boin sens,
du retenir millor propens.
Livres lisoient paienors
u ooient parler d'amors.
En çou forment se delitoient.

es engiens d'amor qu'il trovoient.
 Cisu lires les fist molt haster
 en autre sens d'aus entramer
 que de l'amor de noureture
 qui lor avoit esté a cure.
 Ensamle lisent et aprendent,
 a la joie d'amor entendent.
 Quant il repairent de l'escole,
 li uns baise l'autre et acole.
 Ensamble vont, ensamble vienent,
 et lor joie d'amor maintiennent.
 (Conte de Floire 227-242b)³³³

Love makes scholars of the pair.³³⁴ At school, they

lor tables d'yvoire prenoient.
 Adont lor veïssies escrire
 letres et vers d'amours en cire!
 [.....]
 Letres et salus font d'amours
 du cant des oisiax et des flours.
 D'autre cose n'ont il envie,
 molt part ont golrieuse vie.
 [.....]
 et consillier oiant la gent
 en latin, que nus nes entent.
 (Conte de Floire 259-61, 263-66, 271-72)³³⁵

Indeed, when Floire is sent to Montoire to study, to separate him from Blancheflor:

Il ot assés, mais poi aprent,
 car grant doel a u il s'entent.
 Amors li a livré entente.
 (Conte de Floire 375-377)³³⁶

Love does indeed inspire lovers to learn. In this case, it also supplies the lovers with a secret language with which to profess their love. Claims Floire:

Bele, forment nos entramiens
 et en escrivant consilliens:
 l'uns a l'autre son bon disoit
 en latin nus ne entendoit.
 (Floire 747-750)³³⁷

The cause of their love also stands as the symbol for their love. Blancheflor gives Floire a stylus as a token of her love.³³⁸

As an educated heroine, Blancheflor is not unusual. As with many of their real-life noble counterparts,³³⁹ the heroines of the courtly romances were often well educated, in a manner mirroring that of real life:

The well-educated noblewoman was expected to know how to ride (straight-backed, according to didactic works), to breed falcons and release them during the hunt, to play chess and backgammon, to dance, sing, recite poetry and tell stories and, according to several authors of didactic works, even to read romances and poetry. . . [with the exception of riding] All other occupations were aimed at passing time. (Shahar 152)

For some medieval authors, literate women were ideal:

Most churchmen who wrote on the subject were in favour of according women in general, and noblewomen in particular, a certain degree of education. The aim was to foster their modesty and religious piety. They should be taught to read their prayers and taught the basic tenets of faith. If they should some day choose to take the veil, this education would help them in their lives as nuns. (Shahar 154)

When Queen Margaret of Provence (wife of Louis IX of France (Saint Louis)) requested a treatise on education of girls, Vincent of Beauvais wrote (1247-49) *De eruditione filiorum nobilium* (On the Education and Instruction of Noble Children). "Vincent [of Beauvais] relied almost entirely on Jerome's letters concerning girls' education, insisting

that by busying themselves in reading and writing, girls could escape harmful thoughts and the pleasures and vanities of the flesh.” (Bell 148)

Women who did read could pride themselves on following the example of the ultimate feminine role model, the Virgin Mary. Even in a rare pictorial medieval alphabet book from 1300, “illustration shows the Virgin as a small girl holding her alphabet Psalter and standing within the shelter of her mother’s ermine cloak” (Bell 149). But all writers did not agree with the ideal of the reading woman.

Some writers thought it desirable for noblewomen to read tales of the evil deeds of women in order to draw the proper moral. Others even permitted women to read tales without moral and educational argumentation of this type. Durand de Champagne, confessor of Queen Jeanne of Navarre, wife of Philip IV, states that it is desirable to educate women and great noblewomen in particular, since education teaches, elevates, consoles and is also a source of enjoyment. On the other hand, there were sworn antifeminists, like Philip of Novare, who in their obsession with chastity totally denied the need to educated women, even of the noble class, since if a woman could read she would be able to receive letters from lovers, and if she could write she could write to them, and so on, thus bringing shame on her family and on society in general. (Shahar 155)

As well, a learned woman was often seen as entering what was predominantly a male domain, and taking agency for herself. Mary Daly notes, “the Latin term *texere*, meaning to weave, is the origin and root for *textile* and for *text*. . . Texts are the kingdom of males; they are the realm of the reified word, of condensed spirit. In patriarchal tradition,

sewing, and spinning³⁴⁰ are for girls: books are for boys” (4-5).³⁴¹ A woman who entered this male domain was denigrated for her trespass: “An eloquent woman was reputedly unchaste: a learned lady threatened male pride” (Labalme 4). These authors are correct to fear what women will do when they read. For reading and education cause the romance heroine to become susceptible to love, and to act with agency, rather than accepting the passive role offered them by their feudal owners.

For heroines, reading or education is part of their quest. Heroes, whether in romance, epic or folktale, all tend to go on quests. Joseph Campbell divides the quest up into three parts: “1) separation, 2) initiation, and 3) return” (Campbell, *Myths* 209). For these heroines, the separation is the isolation in the tower, the initiation is the reading, and the return is leaving the tower, the re-emergence into society of the heroine.³⁴²

After reading romance, being educated, or simply being in an environment that included romance, the heroine has become susceptible to love. In many cases, the heroine starts to see herself as the heroine of a romance, and to expect that she will have a properly literary destiny. Love frees the heroine,³⁴³ but not simply through providing a proper suitor. While a courtly lover does indeed arrive on the scene, he does not rescue the heroine single-handedly, but rather assists the heroine, who has become an agent of change, through her discourse, and in particular duplicitous language. Love gives the heroine both the courage and tools to seek what she desires – a true meeting of hearts and minds.

This dream of equality and respect in marriage was not limited to the romance:

Peter Lombard, in the twelfth century, explains why woman was fashioned out of man’s rib and not out of some other part of his body. If

she had been created from his head, this might have suggested that she should rule over him. If she had been fashioned from his legs, this could have been interpreted as meaning that she should serve him. But since she was neither servant nor master, she was fashioned from his rib, so that man should know that he must place at his side as his companion she who was fashioned from his side, and that the ties between them must be founded on love. (Shahar 67)

Similarly, "Thomas Aquinas depicts the marriage tie as a union of hearts which cannot be sundered. The relations between man and wife are the greatest friendship (*maxima amicitia*). . . marriage cannot survive without a certain degree of equality" (Shahar 68). None of the heroines have a relationship like this, and must thus seek one out in the romance. In order to do so, they make use of the skills that love has taught them: deception. Love teaches duplicitous behaviour and mendacity to the courtly heroes and the courtly heroines, including Isolde and Flamenca. In Floire et Blancheflor, when Floire is downhearted at his separation from his love, Love counsels him that Blancheflor will find a way to contact him, using the deception that love has taught her:

S'ele t'i set, engien querra:
 s'ele puet, a toi parlera.
 maint engien a Amors trové
 et avoié maint esgaré.
 (Floire 1637-1640)³⁴⁴

Roger Loomis discusses the Welsh Ystoria Trystan,³⁴⁵ where the heroine again uses her ability with language to make her own choice in love. Arthur is attempting to reconcile his two liegemen and succeeds in having a conference with the two:

Arthur made peace between Trystan and March, son of Meirchion, and Arthur spake with them both in turn; and neither of them consented to be without Eyllt. Then Arthur judged her to the one while the leaves were on the wood, and to the other while the leaves were not on the wood, and to her husband to make the choice. (Loomis xvii)

This seems pretty hard on Eyllt, to be split between two men without anyone bothering to ask her whom she would prefer.³⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Eyllt does manage to make her own choice, given agency by her husband's lust:

He chose the time when the leaves were not on the wood, because at that season the nights would be longer. Arthur announced that unto Eyllt, and she said: "Blessed is the judgment and he who gave it"; and sang this stave:

"Three trees have a happy way:
Holly, ivy, yew are they:
Green they keep their leaves alway,
Trystan's am I then for aye."

In this wise March, son of Meirchion,
lost his wife for ever. Thus ends
the history.
(Loomis xviii)

In her song, Eyllt has interpreted the words literally, rather than as referring to the seasons, as was meant. Her awareness of words' slippery nature is also shown earlier in the poem; when a messenger comes to tell her of Trystan's safety, she comments:

"Noble Kae, if thou unfold
Naught but truth in what thou'st told. . ."
(Loomis xv)

Not for her is the acceptance of words at face value, except when she so chooses.

Chapter 9 - Women and Language

The feudal contract has already been discussed, with its emphasis on literality and truth.³⁴⁷ But feudal linguistic contracts were between men: women were not part of this honourable system. Because they are not part of the feudal contract, women had more than these choices; they can not only tell the truth or lie, they can manipulate language in other ways. Unlike men, women can control language, and play linguistic games.³⁴⁸

At times, women were reviled for their discursive practices. Kahn Blumstein lists adjectives applied to women in the Middle Ages, and includes ones such as “deceitful,” “dishonest,” “faithless,” “false,” “hypocritical,” “loquacious,” “quarrelsome,” and “variable.” Kahn Blumstein sees this characterization as a form of misogyny, which he characterizes as “cynicism reserved for and directed especially towards women” (Kahn Blumstein 5).

There is an ironic double-standard here, for in romance it is men — Gawain, Tristan, William — who have reputations for being gifted with language. But it is the articulate women who better them:

Readers will no doubt have sensed long before now the irony of the myriad oaths broken by men. For despite the fact that in the medieval thinking of gender woman is portrayed as verbal abuse — as garrulity, contention, and indiscretion . . . — the male protagonists are the ones who, having been warned, consistently transgress an implicit faith: break, like the knight and the duke, an explicit promise; or reveal, like Lanval, what is

supposed to remain secret. This is another of the defining contradictions implicit to the discourse of misogyny. Regardless of the manifest attempt to establish and maintain sexual difference, according to which women assume the burden of indiscretion and men are assumed to be worthy of trust, and regardless of the association between femininity and the deceptive modes of representation synonymous with the literary, the possibility of clear gender distinction is obscured within the lay because of the opposition — not unlike that of the misogynist who uses rhetoric to denounce it — between what it says and what it does. (R. Bloch 139)

Medieval romance is “poetry that transgresses what it posits” (R. Bloch 123): men have a reputation for manipulating language, women have the skill.³⁴⁹

Ironically again, romances, which posit (even though it is not proved) that women are deceptive and unskilled at language, were largely written by male writers, writers who discuss secret love affairs:

according to the governing and irreducible incoherence of the discourse of antifeminism, women are portrayed as given to excessive speech by authors who themselves cannot be quiet, as well as the extent to which women are imagined to be given to contradiction by authors whose work could not be more self-contradictory. (R. Bloch 161)

This gap between their reputation and the actual ability of women to manipulate language was exploited by romance writers. However, this claiming of language by the courtly ethos and women was problematic for male romance writers. Women were feared for

their use of language, for if language gives power over things, as claim both feudal linguistics and courtly language, this power can be constructive or destructive.

While men are presented as masters of language, as with Sir Gawain, women are their betters. Because women are an "Other" in medieval literature, this superior skill on the part of women is dangerous for the feudal system, which has not accounted for women with its rules and restrictions. Of romance, Danielle Régnier-Bohler states: "Even the most fantastic tales suggest finely wrought judgments of the relations between the individual and the collectivity" (313). If feudalism is the collective, the woman and her lover are the individuals, and in romance, they generally win. But even though it is two lovers against a larger society, within that pair, the woman possesses the superior linguistic abilities. Women are more cautious with language, as they often suffer due to men's carelessness with it. As well, many heroines have honed these linguistic skills through necessity, to escape terrible fates. Language is one of the only weapons that they have to wield on their own behalf. Their skill allows them to defeat their adversaries. If skill with language is a continuum, the feudal knight is at the lower end, the courtly knight in the middle, and the woman at the end of the continuum representing a mastery of language. A woman does not merely speak, but she also uses language to change her reality, particularly after she falls in love. One skill that is particularly useful at that time is that of double-talk.

Double-Talk

There is a link between love and deception. Thus, courtly knights often lie. But romance heroines rarely lie.³⁵⁰ They walk along the line of duplicity, technically not crossing over. One particular linguistic trick that women seem to learn, either in the

tower or when they fall in love, is double-talk. Discussing Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, Andree Kahn Blumstein notes:

that of all the kinds of traps and tricks and subterfuges that Gottfried's character concoct and use, there is one kind of duplicity that is practiced *only by women*. That is the art of "double-talk." Women excel at it, and men are always taken in by it. Men do not often resort to this technique of couching a statement in such terms that it may be understood on two levels, a literal one and a figurative one; it is always the hidden level that carries the real meaning or intent, whereas the above-board statement, while seeming to be true, is misleading, to say the least. (Kahn Blumstein 149)

I would argue that this is a type of deception that is unique to women in medieval romance in general, not merely in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan. Certainly, this particular skill of double-talk is evidenced by other heroines, including Flamenca.

Kahn Blumstein sees double-talk as the "ultimate in deceit, this radical double-talk was thought up and enacted by a woman. . . . this sort of deception is woman's especial province. No man ever twists the truth in this fashion. Men lie, but women are wily. They are traditionally wily" (Kahn Blumstein 152). Ironically, however, double-talk is, strictly speaking, not a lie. Women are maintaining the rules of feudal language better than their lovers are, for they never utter outright lies, but instead offer words that can be interpreted — incorrectly — by others.³⁵¹

This use of others' prejudices evidences a self-awareness on the part of romance heroines. They are aware of the limitations of others, and the reputation of women³⁵² and

men when it comes to language, and use these factors to further their own ends.³⁵³

Through language, women display agency, and personal franchise – ultimately, language will give them the freedom to behave as they wish, not as their feudal lords dictate.

Language does indeed dictate the shape of the world around them.³⁵⁴

How is this superior mastery of language by women judged in the romance? In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, two opposing views are presented: the Green Knight claims that his wife's deception was condoned because it was for a good purpose: to test Sir Gawain. The defeated Sir Gawain, on the other hand, donates an antifeminist rant to the question, claiming that women were deceivers ever. Kahn Blumstein sees this as characteristic of medieval romance where "women 'conquer' only with so-called feminine 'weapons' and wiles, for which they are then chastised" (39). However, in other romances, women are apparently not reviled for their use of language.

Now these heroines discussed here have not outright lied; instead, they have twisted language and allowed others to misinterpret it. But even if they had resorted to mendacity, certainly some authors would see this as justified. In the fable of Del lui e de la troie (The Wolf and The Sow), Marie de France applauds the sow for saving her family through lies.³⁵⁵

Jadis avient que un lus erra
 Par un chemin, si encontra
 Une troie que preinz esteit.
 Vers li ala a grant espleit.
 E dist que pes li vot duner,
 Ore se hastast de purceler –
 Car ses purceus voleit avoir.
 Cele respunt par grant seveir:
 "Sire, cument me hastereie?
 Tant cum si pres de mei vus veie,
 Ne me puis pas deliverer;
 Tel hunte ai de vus esgarder.

Ne savez mie que ceo munte?
 Tutes femeles unt grant hunte,
 Si mains madles les deit tucher
 A tel busuin ne aprismer!"
 Idunc s'en va li lus mucier.
 Ki les purcels voleit manger.
 E la troie s'en est alee
 Que par engin s'est delibree.
 Ceste essample deivent oïr
 Tutes femmes e retenir:
 Que pur sulement mentir
 Ne laissent lur enfanz perir!
 (1-24)³⁵⁶

While Marie does use the word *engin*, which can have a positive or a negative meaning, she also refers to the lie as *grant seveir*. These women are to be applauded for using their cleverness, not reviled.

Let us now examine the sum of these ideas in two complete romances with strong, ingenious heroines: Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, and Flamenca.

Chapter 10 - Tristan and Isolde

The story of Tristan and Iseult is one of the most popular, and most copied, stories of medieval romance.³⁵⁷

No love story had a more powerful hold on medieval poets than the tale of Tristan and Isolt. Its origins lay in Celtic folk legends of fairies and giants, love-potions, and magic cures, but for the High Middle Ages, it became the classic tale of tragic love and adultery, of conflicting duties and desires. Romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries told and retold the story, adapting basic elements of the plot to very different attitudes towards love and duty.

The enormous appeal of the Tristan story in the Middle Ages and after lies, probably, in the realistic view it takes of love between man and woman and the consequences of that love for society. The view it presents of love, as a force strong enough to take control of the lover's mind and senses and prevent him from discharging his social obligations, is in direct opposition to the courtly ideal of ennobling love as an inspiration to good action within society, which is the norm in Arthurian romance. Though the story of Tristan and Isolt was not originally part of the Arthurian cycle, the problems it presents — adulterous love, the conflict of loyalties — eventually came to dominate the attention of author and reader alike, and to distract from what had been the main theme of Arthurian romance, the development of the individual towards his proper place in society.

(Ferrante, Conflict 11)

Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan begins with the same conflict that will be found in The Romance of Flamenca. Ferrante states that "in romance, where love is part of a narrative, the lover is faced by conflicting demands of chivalry and love, of society and personal desire, of worldly reputation and personal integrity" (65).³⁵⁸ This is true of Tristan, where, according to Gisela Hollandt, "there are two ethics at work, the *minne* ethic and the social ethic" (qtd. in Kahn Blumstein 145). As with Flamenca, the courtly ethos will prove the superior.

King Mark, as the feudal king, is not linguistically adept. However, King Mark is condemned for more than a lack of language. As shall be seen with Archimbaut, who is incapacitated by his overwhelming jealousy, Mark is a failure as both a courtly lover and a feudal lord. As a courtly lover, "His love for Isolt is based on lust. . . thus, because she appeals to a lower part of him, she brings faults which were not evident before" (Ferrante, Conflict 95). That Mark does only lust after Isolde is evident when he does not notice a switch on his wedding night:³⁵⁹

that night, when she was to go to bed with Mark, she, Brangane, and Tristan had gone to great trouble in advance to choose their ground and plan of action wisely and have it all cut and dried. There were none but these four in Mark's chamber: the King himself and the three. And now Mark had laid him down. Brangane had donned the Queen's robes — they had exchanged clothes between them — and Tristan now led her towards him to suffer her ordeal. Her mistress Isolde put out the lights and Mark strained Brangane to him.

I do not know how Brangane took to this business at first. She endured it so quietly that it all passed off in silence. Whatever her companion did with her, whatever demands he made on her, she met them to his satisfaction with brass and with gold. [. . .]

When she [Brangane] had done duty for Isolde and her debt had been discharged, she quitted the bed. Isolde was ready waiting there, and went and sat by the bed as if she were the same person. [. . .] the young Queen Isolde, in great distress and with secret pain in her heart, laid herself down beside her lord the King who, clasping her close to him, then resumed his pleasures. To him one woman was as another: he soon found Isolde, too, to be of good deportment. There was nothing to choose between them — he found gold and brass in either. Moreover, they both paid him their dues, one way and another, so that he noticed nothing amiss. (Gottfried 207-208)

For Mark, there is no knowledge of Isolde as a unique individual. She is merely an object to be possessed, an object he has barely even seen before his wedding night, and as such, true love cannot exist.³⁶⁰

As a courtly lover and a feudal lord, Mark also displays a lack of judgment when he promises a rash boon to Gandin in exchange for his music.³⁶¹

“If you want anything of mine, it is all at your service. Let us hear what you can do, and I will give you whatever you please!”

“Agreed,” said the man from Ireland. And without more ado he played them a lay that gratified them all. (Gottfried, 215)

Then Gandin asks for prize: Isolde.

“I declare that shall not happen!” retorted the King.

“Then you do not mean to keep your word, Sire? If you are proved a liar you should not henceforth be king of any land. Have the law of kings read out to you.” (Gottfried 215-216)

Mark further evinces a lack of courage and honour when he refuses to rescue Isolde: “no one was ready to hazard his life, nor was Mark willing to fight for Isolde in person, since Gandin was so strong, virile and courageous. None of them made it his concern” (Gottfried 216). Mark has failed under both the feudal system and the courtly code.

As did Flamenca with her husband, Isolde uses Mark’s lack of control over language against him: “Mark may not understand his wife, but she knows him well and capitalizes on her knowledge” (Kahn Blumstein 160). Using prejudice to her advantage is something that Isolde has learned from her mother: “Just as Queen Isolde plays upon the Steward’s prejudices to undermine his position, her daughter Isolde also plays upon Mark’s insipid image of womankind to disabuse him of his suspicions about her affair with his nephew” (Kahn Blumstein 159). Mark, who takes things literally, is fooled by double-talk.³⁶²

Tristan, at first, does not make the same mistake as King Mark. Mark, when knighting his nephew, tells Tristan to “Be modest and straightforward: be truthful and well-bred” (Gottfried 110): the feudal ideal. However, Tristan is a courtly knight, which is emphasized by his arrival at Mark’s court as C. Stephen Jaeger notes:

In this romance, clerical, courtier values provide the basis for the hero’s character and destiny and far outweigh in their importance chivalric ones.

The talents in the foreground are social, artistic, and intellectual. The hero makes his way in the early parts of the work by his eloquence, his learning, his skill in music, and his knowledge of languages, and hunting customs and the French terms for them. . . . His charm, beauty, manners, and affability win him the love and favor of the court and the king. He puts forward his talents with the calculating modesty that Castiglione was to call *sprezzatura*, defusing envy and producing two-fold amazement in the court. He swiftly rises to become the favourite and, finally, the heir of the king. And all this is accomplished before a single tournament is held, before a single battle is fought. These are accomplishments of courtiership, not of knighthood. Gottfried refers to his young hero as "ein lieber hoveman" ("a beloved courtier" – 3487). (102)³⁶³

Tristan is the educated knight,³⁶⁴ courtly in his mastery of both language and music. Jackson notes: "Gottfried's description of Tristan's education goes far beyond the normal. . . [it] dwells on two aspects of Tristan's training in particular, his skill in languages and his power in music" (Jackson, *Faith* 26). Ferrante adds: "His spirit is cultivated by books and music to its full capacity for perfect love and he in turn refines Isolt's spirit through *moraliteit*" (*Conflict* 118).³⁶⁵

In practice, Tristan succeeds through the "renunciation of the chivalric ideal of armed combat in favor of guile, deceit, and trickery" (Blakeslee 13), choosing the courtly love ethos. When he seeks Isolde, Tristan comments: "'I must lie to them for all I am worth today'" (Gottfried 155), whilst he is donning a disguise. Similarly, when he rescues Isolde from Gandin, he crows, "'what you tricked from Mark with your rote, I now take

away with my harp! Deceiver that you are, you have now been duped in return” (Gottfried 218). As Blodgett notes, he is “located in a text of uncertainty, secrecy, and cunning in which the manipulation of language seems to be of greatest worth” (Music 2-3).

But deception is tied to more than love with Tristan. For “subtle Tristan” (Gottfried 125), his whole character is one of deception. This is not surprising, as he was conceived in deception by his parents. As Kahn Blumstein comments: “Tristan does not only lie to further his noble attachment to Isolde and avoid the strictures of courtly norms, but he also lies almost every time he is given the chance. . . . Tristan seems to be a chronic dissembler. He derives pleasure out of creating tales, just as he creates music on the harp” (146).³⁶⁶ Tristan himself comments: “It demands great effort for anybody to act worthily against his own nature — no one believes that the leopard can change his spots” (Gottfried 194). Tristan is a deceiver ever.³⁶⁷ At the same time, Tristan gains fame as a great lover. This is not a coincidence.

Isolde is also duplicitous. For her confession of love, with its pun on the words *la mer* (the sea) and *l’amour* (love) and the uncertain source of her illness, Isolde “purposely chooses her word to have a multiplicity of meanings so that she does not immodestly confess her love openly” (Kahn Blumstein 153).

“Come now, sweet, lovely woman,” he whispered so tenderly, “tell me, what is vexing you, why do you complain so?”

“*Lameir* is what distresses me,” answered Love’s falcon, Isolde, “it is *lameir* that so oppresses me, *lameir* is what pains me so.”

Hearing her say *lameir* so often he weighed and examined the meaning of the word most narrowly. He then recalled that *l'ameir* meant "Love", *l'ameir* "bitter", *la meir* the sea: it seemed to have a host of meanings. He disregarded the one, and asked about the two. Not a word did he say of Love, who was mistress of them both, their common hope and desire. All that he discussed was "sea" and "bitter."

"Surely, fair Isolde, the sharp smack of the sea is the cause of your distress? The tang of the sea is too strong for you? Is it this you find so bitter?"

"No, my lord, no! What are you saying? Neither of them is troubling me, neither the sea nor its tang is too strong for me. It is *lameir* alone that pains me."

When he got to the bottom of the word and discovered "Love" inside it, "Faith, lovely woman," he whispered, "so it is with me, *lameir* and you are what distress me. My dearest lady, sweet Isolde, you and you alone and the passion you inspire have turned my wits and robbed me of my reason! I have gone astray so utterly that I shall never find my way again! All that I see irks and oppresses me, it all grows trite and meaningless. Nothing in the wide world is so dear to my heart but you."

Isolde answered, "So you, sir, are to me." (Gottfried 199-200)

Here, Isolde displays her skill in the ambiguity and mutability of words (Gottfried 199),³⁶⁸ her own chosen means of deception, and something that will characterize her

relationship with Tristan. Perhaps this is why this pair make such good lovers; they have already honed duplicity to an art.

Again, as will be seen in The Romance of Flamenca, the heroine, unlike the hero, does not lie. Neither does Isolde use disguises.³⁶⁹ Rather, she uses, as did Flamenca, what Kahn Blumstein defines as double-talk. In this, Isolde demonstrates a greater ability with language than her husband or her lover. Kahn Blumstein claims that Gottfried

does make certain concessions to the common view that women are mentally inferior to men. . . . Gottfried makes it clear that whatever learning and knowledge the women have, they have gleaned from men. Men are their tutors and mentors. The native ability to learn must, of course, be there, but all else is imparted to the Isoldes by their superiors, by men. (162)

Ferrante claims that Isolt is as wax to be molded by her tutor (Conflict 94): Isolde is a Pygmalionesque fair lady. Even still, some Isults show agency. In Thomas,

Ysolt and her mother, on the other hand, begin to take control of the action. It is the young Ysolt who hears of Tristan's beauty and talent and asks her parents to have him brought to the palace so she may see him. She is clever and wishes to be taught to harp and to read and write; the inference is that she has not yet been educated, which gives Tristan the opportunity to form her. Tristan's love is in many ways his artistic creation. (Ferrante, Conflict 32)

But it is she that wishes an education and selects her tutor.³⁷⁰ Ferrante argues that education leads to love in Gottfried as well, rather than the potion.

Certainly the addition of *moraliteit* to Isolt's education lends weight to this view. *Moraliteit*, like music, is a refinement of spirit which pleases man and God. . . without it there can be neither good nor honour. . . Like music, it refines their spirits so they can love. Tristan's education of Isolt, preparing her for the special kind of love Gottfried expounds, suggests the story of Abélard and Heloise, the tutor who formed his pupil's spirit so that love was inevitable. The analogy undoubtedly occurred to Gottfried's readers, and the fate of the historic lovers adds to the feeling of impending tragedy in the poem. (Conflict 26)

Here, the student far surpasses the teacher in linguistic skills.³⁷¹ Ferrante notes that, in Gottfried von Strassburg, "Tristan speaks over 1500 lines and Isolt over 700, which is proportionately much more, since she appears 7000 lines later than he does and in fewer scenes. Here again, we have a rather subtle instance of Isolt's forcefulness" (Ferrante, Conflict 98).

Isolde's language skills are superior to those of Tristan because language is presented by Gottfried as a feminine endeavor. When the Steward attempts to sway the two Isoldes with his words, Isolde the daughter "urges him to leave women's games to women" (Kahn Blumstein 159).

The Steward is wrongly trying to claim Isolde's hand in marriage. Isolde inflames him with her refusal, leading to his verbal aggressiveness:

"A lot of good your loving me will do you" said Isolde. "I swear I was never your sweetheart, nor shall I ever be!"

“I understand,” retorted the other. “I can see that you behave just like other women. You are all so constituted in body, nature, and feelings that you must think the bad good and the good bad. This vein is very strong in you. You are altogether contrary. To your mind, fools are all wise, wise men fools. The straight you make crooked, the crooked straight again. You have hitched all possible contradictions to your rope — you love that which hates you, you hate that which loves you! This bent is very strong within you. How enamoured you are of contradictions, of which one sees so many in you!”

[. . .]

“Steward!” countered the Queen, “to those who can judge of discernment, your views are strong and discerning — they seem to have been formed in the intimacy of the boudoir. Moreover, you have expressed them as befits a ladies’ man. You are too deeply versed in femininity, you are far too much advanced in it. It has robbed you of your manhood! You, too, are over-fond of contradictions, and in my opinion this suits you. You have hitched these same feminine traits very tightly to your rope — you love that which hates you, and that which you want does not want you! But this is our woman’s game — why do you have any truck with it? In Heaven’s name, you are a man — leave us our womanish ways!”

(Gottfried 171-172)

When the Steward reviles women for their use of language, he:

utters the complaint to show how irrational and confused women are: he does not perceive or even consider that it might be his own lack of understanding or his own unwillingness to try to understand that prevents him from understanding women.

Ironically, the Steward's words serve to point to their own falseness. (Kahn Blumstein 157)

Isolde is skilled at language because, as for Flamenca, it is her means of gaining independence. It first serves her when she refuses verbally to marry the evil Steward, and her mother backs her. Later, Isolde uses language to convince Mark of her innocence.³⁷² In this, Isolde takes double-talk to a doubly duplicitous level: it must deceive more than one person at a time. C. Stephen Jaeger notes:

the double-talk affects all listeners, fictional and live, at both levels. It is an "example of an ambiguous speech which tells the truth and at the same time conceals it from a second party." It "fits into a pattern of deceit which is common to the Tristan romance: the deceiver creates the perfect illusion of innocence. . . Isolde's oath and Brangaene's speech are examples of a particular virtuosity in cunning, since in both cases the deceit is successfully directed at two parties at the same time. . ." (qtd. in Kahn Blumstein 154)

Speaking to Mark, Isolde declares of Tristan: "'If it were not for you, for whose sake more than my own honour I make a show of friendship towards him, I would never look at him with friendly eyes'"(Gottfried 225). No, indeed, for she would look at him as a lover! Similarly, when they are being observed, Isolde again dissembles: "'God Himself

knows how my feelings stand towards you. . . For I declare before God that I never conceived a liking for any man but him who had my maidenhead, and that all others are barred from my heart, now and for ever” (Gottfried 236). Foolish King Mark thinks he took Isolde’s maidenhead, but it was Tristan. Mark was duped by Brangaene.

Brangaene also uses double-talk with the story of the two white shifts. Isolde is planning to kill Brangane to prevent her from revealing the wedding night secret. To escape death, she recounts the following story to her would-be executioners, convincing Isolde to relent without revealing the secret:

“When we two sailed from Ireland we each had a garment that we had chosen and laid apart from the rest, and these we took abroad with us: two shifts as white as snow! When we got out to sea . . . she was wearing her shift until she had worn it too often and had soiled all the whiteness of it . . . And when my lady had come here and married her lord the King, and was about to go to bed with him, her shift was not as presentable as it should have been, or as she would have liked it to be. Unless she is annoyed that I lent her my own, but after first refusing, and to that extent offended her, I call God to witness that I have never at any time overstepped her wishes.” (Gottfried 209-210)

Brangane’s tale serves its intended purpose. Isolde relents, and places her trust in Brangane, who assists the lovers with their assignments.

According to Kahn Blumstein, it is Isolde’s “technically correct and yet false oath during the ordeal with the hot iron [that] is perhaps the most blatant example in the

romance of a woman's double-talk" (Kahn Blumstein 151). Here the pair's different skills, his at disguise,³⁷³ and hers at speech,³⁷⁴ are combined:

Tristan repaired there in pilgrim's garb. He had stained and blistered his face and disfigured his body and clothes. When Mark and Isolde arrived and made land there, the Queen saw him and recognized him at once. And when the ship put to shore she commanded that, if the pilgrim were hale and strong enough, they were to ask him in God's name to carry her across from the ship's gangway to the harbour: for at such a time, she said, she was adverse to being carried by a knight. [. . .] He did as he was bidden, he took his lady the Queen in his arms and carried her back to land. Isolde lost no time in whispering to him that when he reached the shore he was to tumble headlong to the ground with her, whatever might become of him.

This Tristan duly did. When he came to the shore and stepped on to dry land the wayfarer dropped to the ground, falling as if by accident, so that his fall brought him to rest lying in the Queen's lap and arms.

(Gottfried 246)

When her companions wish to beat the pilgrim, Isolde deters them, pleading the frailty of the pilgrim, and even commenting archly on the situation to direct the thoughts of the viewers in the right direction:

"Would it be surprising if this pilgrim wanted to frolic with me?" asked Isolde with a smile. They set this down in her favour as a mark of her virtue and breeding, and many spoke high in praise of her. Mark observed the whole incident and heard various things that were said. "I do not know

how it will end.” continued Isolde. “You have all clearly seen that I cannot lawfully maintain that no man other than Mark found his way into my arms or had his couch in my lap.” With much banter about this bold rogue they set out towards Carleon. (Gottfried 246-247)

Mark is as unobservant as ever,³⁷⁵ as much of the rest of his court seems to be, and does not even seem to become suspicious at Isolde’s decidedly unsubtle reference to the upcoming oath.

As for Isolde, her plans have come to fruition. The fall into the river ensures her fall from grace will not be discovered. Her oath has been carefully planned with this event in mind. Still, she is nervous: “Isolde had surrendered her life and honour utterly to God’s mercy. She stretched out her hand to take the oath upon the relics with fearful heart, as well she might, and rendered up heart and had to the grace of God, for Him to keep and preserve” (Gottfried 247).

For the ordeal, Ferrante notes, it is Isolde who “plans the false oath, but she leaves the details to the council and to Marke. More conscious of the ambiguity of her position than Thomas’ heroine, she fears the ordeal and places herself in God’s hands. God’s presence and protection is stressed by Gottfried because the love sets the lovers apart from their world and closer to God” (Ferrante, *Conflict* 52).³⁷⁶ But Isolde’s faith in God is not misplaced: God and double-talk protect her.

“My lord King,” said the Queen, “my oath must be worded to your pleasure and satisfaction. . . Therefore see for yourself whether, in my acts and utterances, I frame my oath to your liking. [. . .] Hear the oath which I mean to swear: ‘That no man in the world had carnal knowledge of me or

lay in my arms or beside me but you, always excepting the poor pilgrim whom, with your own eyes, you saw lying in my arms.' I can offer no purgation concerning him. So help me God and all the Saints that be, to a happy and auspicious outcome to this judgement! If I have not said enough, Sire, I will modify my oath one way or another as you instruct me." (Gottfried 247-248)

While this last statement may seem a bit of a risk, Isolde is relying again on Mark's lack of skill with language, and his unobservant nature, to miss the ambiguities of her oath. And Mark does prove true to form:

"I think this will suffice, ma'am, so far as I can see," answered the King.

"Now take the iron in your hand and, within the terms that you have named to us, may God help you in your need!"

"Amen!" said fair Isolde. In the name of God she laid hold the iron, carried it, and was not burned. (Gottfried 248)

If it is God's duty to ensure that the red-hot iron burns the guilty, what is God's role in all this? Isolde is not burned, which causes Gottfried to note that

Thus it was made manifest and confirmed to all the world that Christ in His great virtue is pliant as a windblown sleeve. He falls into place and clings, whichever way you try Him, closely and smoothly, as He is bound to do. He is at the beck of every heart for honest deeds or fraud. Be it deadly earnest or a game, He is just as you would have Him. This was amply revealed in the facile Queen. She was saved by her guile and by the doctored oath that went flying up to God. (Gottfried 248)

Now, it could be argued that lies and deception are something in opposition to Christianity, and thus a truthful feudalism nominally supported by God is superior. Linda K. Hughes, in her essay entitled, "The Pleasure Lies in Power: The Status of the Lie in Malory and Bradley," says: "The lie has had a curiously ambivalent role — a duplicitous one, it might be said — in Western tradition. Judeo-Christian theology condemns the lie, since, if the Word is God, any denial of true words is by extension a denial of God" (99). If this is accepted, then love that ignores the constraints of society should be condemned. Yet in Gottfried, the feudal system cannot claim to avoid lies and deception; indeed, they seem to be an integral part of the system, which is why Tristan, the consummate "hero as trickster" (Blakeslee 13), is a great knight. In the conflict between Christian feudalism and the courtly love ethos, the form wins out over the content.

This plan and this oath rely on God's acceptance of the letter rather than the spirit of the law. God does prove to be such a strict constructionist: He is a courtly God. Just as the courtly society reveres form over substance, so this God will accept as literally true what is in spirit false. (Kahn Blumstein 152)

As in The Romance of Flamenca, God's sympathies appear to lie with the *malmariée* and her lover. Kahn Blumstein sees in the romance a "tension between the Christian conception of a societal morality that demands and enforces the repression of an adulterous, anti-social passion like that of Tristan and Iseult and the contrary belief in the goodness, even the sanctity of such a passion" (Blakeslee 126). Apparently God is on the side of the lovers, even if the narrator is ambiguous. Regarding the ordeal, Ferrante says that "the lovers abuse the oath by swearing to a truth which gives a false impression.

There seems to be a casual abuse of God on both sides, by the king and the lovers. But there is a difference: the lovers are exonerated by the nature of their love which lifts them out of the common sphere and beyond customs like oaths" (Conflict 49-50).

Hatto, in his introduction to *Gottfried*, claims: "In the absence of any positive statements on Gottfried's part, we must imagine to have been resigned to the existing social order and to have accepted it as a fact of life that an absolute attachment of lovers must often or always run counter to society and find its own way of survival in desperate opposition to it" (18). However, Jackson, is not so equivocal. "'Gottfried is making a criticism of the superficiality of courtly society in his work. It is in this way that for Gottfried any moral guilt for the practice of deceit is eradicated: if society of a traditional sort is being criticized, then those who act against the conventions of that society. . . cannot be faulted'" (qtd. in Kahn Blumstein 147).³⁷⁷ This argument could further be supported by the actions of such characters as Caerdin, who, when he hears of Tristan's love for the queen, aids him in his quest for a reunion, thus discarding any feudal obligations to his sister in the face of true love. True love is more honourable than feudal ties.

Again, as with The Romance of Flamenca, there is a code of honour in the use of language between the two lovers. Kahn Blumstein also claims that "Tristan and Isolde must lie and deceive to preserve their love" (145-6), an idea supported by Gottfried, who assures the reader that "Love instructs honest minds to practice perfidy" (*Gottfried* 205). However, the lovers must never deceive one another. Beer says that one of the characteristics of romance is "a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply" (10). In this text, the code of courtly and honourable conduct

seems to exist only between lovers, who must not, and, comments Kahn Blumstein, “never delude one another” (145):

if society of a conventional sort is being criticized, then those who act against the conventions of that society — i.e., those who act in the service of true, unconventional social relationships — cannot be faulted. If they use deceit, it is only to thwart that which is corrupt. This explains the basic morality of deceit that is used by true lovers against the enemy, conventional society. (Kahn Blumstein 147)

As with The Romance of Flamenca, there is an ethic, other than the feudal, traditional Christian ethic at work. The ethic of courtly love demands that deception be in the service of love, and never between the two lovers. Isolde stresses this to Tristan: “I have never noticed (as women very quickly do, you know) that you have ever dissembled towards me, nor was I ever guilty of any falsity or laxness toward you” (Gottfried 237).³⁷⁸ Gottfried adds that love must not have “Cunning or Treachery” (Gottfried 264).³⁷⁹ and that “Love should be of crystal — transparent and translucent!” (Gottfried 264).

Are the lovers condemned for their use of deception? Kahn Blumstein argues against this:

All those characters who lie and are yet characterized in other ways as good and honourable — Blancheffleur, Floraete, Tristan, Isolde, Rual, Rivalin, Grandin, and Brangaene — act under the influence of love and therefore not condemned. Those who practice deception under the pressures of the social ethic, to wit Mark, are acting out of “haz” and “leit” and are judged harshly by Gottfried. Thus, the *minne* ethic takes moral

priority over the social ethic: all lies and trickery against Mark and tradition are really truth and honesty toward the lovers. (145)

Even when Isolde decides to kill Brangaene to keep her secret safe,³⁸⁰ she is not despised by the narrator:³⁸¹ “In this the fearful Queen showed that people dread scandal and derision more than they fear the Lord” (Gottfried 208).³⁸² She is more worried about her societal appearance than the reality of murder, because only a façade will allow her to protect her love from the conflict with feudalism. This is not something Gottfried condemns; when the lovers return from the grotto, he comments: “She is no worthy woman who forsakes her honour for her body, or her body for her honour, when circumstance so favours her that that she may vindicate them both” (Gottfried 278). Personal integrity between the lovers is emphasized, but worldly reputation is also desired.³⁸³ In order to achieve both, deception is required. As Merritt Blakeslee comments: “the first motive for. . .trickery. . .is self-preservation” (119). This is again where appearance and reality part ways.

But the lovers do not escape unscathed. While Isolde is not taken in by her own deceptions, Tristan apparently takes his dissembling too far. Justly, perhaps, Tristan, a man named through etymology, is not nearly as skilled at words as is Isolde.³⁸⁴ He judges others by their names, including Isolde of the White Hands, whom he desires because “I will cherish whatever my eyes behold that bears the seal of her name” (Gottfried 291). Separated from his love, Tristan loses his grasp of language, and eventually his constructed identity. Just as he was poisoned by the dragon’s tongue, his own lies will bring him near death. He seems to become trapped in what Blodgett refers to as “the gap between signifier and signified that *Tristanliebe* opens” (Music 9). He adds, “there is no

Tristan anywhere to be found, other than a bewildered meditation on self loss” (Music 10).

Many of the themes and motifs present in Tristan are also apparent in the old Provençal romance Flamenca. Unlike Tristan, however, Flamenca offers its readers a happy ending.

Chapter 11 - Flamenca

There have been many ideas discussed about romance; let us examine a text that inhabits the intersection of these different ideas and is the nexus of this dissertation, The Romance of Flamenca (hereafter referred to as Flamenca).

As in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, in Flamenca, there are two models in conflict:

The first model seems to express an official and orthodox religious and social/feudal culture, while the second model is more idiosyncratic, an underground or hidden culture where man lives more according to his human, especially his sexual needs, than to the first model's laws and doctrines. These two cultural models exist simultaneously,

interpenetrating each other throughout the poem. (Zak, Portrayal 105)

The first model uses feudal language, while the second uses courtly language. This conflict is represented by a love-triangle of the feudal husband Archimbaut, the courtly lover William, and the courtly wife Flamenca. Of the three, Archimbaut, the feudal lord, is the worst with language.

The romance Flamenca immediately identifies itself as two things: the romance of a *malmariée*, and a romance firmly a part of the romance world, full of intertextual references. After their marriage, Archambaut calls everyone to court, including the king, to have a great celebration and to show off his new prize. At the celebration, numerous references to texts and romances are made, both from classical and Biblical sources, as well as contemporary romances.

Après si levon li juglar:

cascus se volc faire auzir.
 [.....]
 Qui saup novella violadura,
 ni canzo ni descort ni lais,
 al plus que poc avan si trais.
 L'uns viola<.l> lais de Cabrefoil,
 e l'autre cel de Tintagoil:
 l'us cantet cel dels Fins Amaz,
 e l'autre cel que fes Ivans.
 (Flamenca lines 596-97, 600-606)³⁸⁵

The litany continues with classical references, biblical examples,³⁸⁶ and more examples of romances:

L'us diz de la Taula Redonda,
 que no l veng homs que no.il responda
 le reis segon sa conoissensa;
 anc nuil jorn no l failli valensa;
 l'autre comtava de Galvain
 e del leo que fon compain
 de cavallier qu'estors Luneta;
 l'us diz de la piucella breat
 con tenc Lancelot en preiso
 cant s'amor li dis de no;
 l'autre comtet de Persaval
 co veng a la cort a vacal;
 l'is comtet d'Erec e d'Enida
 l'autre d'Ugonet de perida;
 l'us comtava de Governail
 com per Tristan ac grieu trebail.
 l'autre comtava de feniza
 con transir la fes sa noirissa;
 l'us dis de Bel Desconogut
 e l'autre del vermeil escut
 que l'yras trobet a l'uisset;
 l'autres comtava de Guiflet.
 L'us comtet de Calobrenan,
 l'autre dis con retenc un an
 dins sa preison Quec senescal
 lo Deliez car li dis mal,
 l'autre comtava de Mordret.
 (Flamenca 665-91)³⁸⁷

But even as the singers celebrate love, the darker side of romance appears. During this celebration, the Queen of France becomes jealous of Flamenca, fearing that her husband, the king, is too fond of her. She plants the seeds of her suspicion in Archimbaut, where they quickly take root.³⁸⁸ And just as the Queen's

mo.s pisset ver cella cegada
(Flamenca 822)³⁸⁹

when she accuses the King and Flamenca of being lovers, so, too, Archambaut is unable to

de som pessat venir a cap.
(Flamenca 1004)³⁹⁰

once he is seized by jealousy.

When Archambaut is trapped in the first flame of jealousy against his wife, he comments:

e per bon dreg serai cogotz.
Mais ja no.m cal dire: serai,
qu'ades o sui, que ben o sai!
(Flamenca 1116-8)³⁹¹

In the romance Flamenca, Archimbaut speaks truer than he knows.³⁹² This linguistic problem signifies his lack of linguistic ability, and thus, his suitability as a courtly lover. He will indeed be a cuckold, but, ironically, due to his own actions from this point on.

Sir Archimbaut's jealousy regarding his wife is a fact soon bruited about the land.

Ja sabon tut per lo país
qu'en Archimbautz es gelos fins;
per tot Alverg<n>'en fan cansos
e serventes, coblas e sos,
o estribot o retroencha
d'en Archimbaut con ten Flamencha:
et on plus hom a lui o chanta
no.us cujes sos mals cors s'enchanta.
(Flamenca 1175-82)³⁹³

Already, Archimbaut and his wife, as the subject of songs, have become textual creatures, and have left the everyday world for that of the romance.

That Archambaut is consumed with jealousy confirms that he is not a worthy partner for Flamenca. This idea of the triangle of the *jaloux*, the jealous husband; the *maumariée*, the unhappy bride, and her lover, is common in old Provençal love poetry, as well as longer narrative romances. The jealous husband, by virtue of his jealousy, is discounted as a lover. And Archambaut is the most jealous of the jealous. The narrator comments:

Qui es gelos non es ben sans.
 Tut l'escriva que son a Mes
 non escriurian los motz ni ves
 ni las captenensas que fes
 en Archimbautz cascuna ves,
 ans dic ques eissa Gilosia
 non sap aitan con el fasia
 d'esser gilosa, per c'uimais
 lo sobreplus also gelos lais,
 quar mout ne fean de feras merras,
 de tals n'i a, e follas erras.
 (Flamenca 1336-46)³⁹⁴

This jealousy has caused a change for the worse in Archambaut. One of Archambaut's vassals comments:

mon sener es fort camjatz
 que sol esser mout esseinatz:
 mas unquas, pois que pres mollier,
 non lasset elm ni vesti fer,
 ni tenc en ren segle ni pres:
 e ben sai qu'ausit o aves.
 (Flamenca 1982-7)³⁹⁵

The gossips have already seized upon Archambaut, as happened in Chrétien de Troyes's Erec and Énide. Here, however, it is not too much love that has caused the husband to lose interest in fighting: it is jealousy.

Jealousy brings suffering and evil upon its victims, including Archambaut:

Tot aisso. I fai sa gilosia,
 que si tan fort gilos no fos
 no for a ges tan angoissos,
 ni sa mollier non calgra fe<i>ner
 d'esser malauta. car ateinner
 pogra ben a tot so que volgra,
 et aissi negus d'ans no.s dolgra.
 (Flamenca 6118-24)³⁹⁶

Jealousy is the original sin that causes the fall of Archambaut, and, eventually, Flamenca (at least from a Christian point of view). In this sense, jealousy affects all aspects of Archambaut and Flamenca's lives, even to the point where, for Archambaut, it appears to take the place of a lover:

Lo cor el cors e. I sen li tolc
 la gelosia que l'afolla;
 e nom penses ques el la.s tolla
 anz la creis a totz jorns e dobla,
 et on mais pot el s'en encobla.
 (Flamenca 1324-8)³⁹⁷

Jealousy also causes Archambaut to become a *lausengier* or spy, another uncourtly action. Because of his jealousy, Archambaut loses his courtly and feudal status, and is thus doubly disqualified, both as a lover, and as a husband.³⁹⁸ Indeed, Flamenca herself comments, in shades of Marie de France's Yonec:

“Bel<s> sengner cars, qui ajostet
 mi e vos gran peccat y fes;
 quar unquas pois que mi agues
 costres pres non fes mas caser;
 e vos solias tan valer
 que totz le mont de vos parlava.

e Dieus e segles vos amava;
 mais ar est tornatz tan gilos
 que mort aves e mi e vos.”
 (Flamenca 6682-90)³⁹⁹

As an archetypal *maumariée*, Flamenca is to be pitied, and should not be faulted for desiring a true and worthy love.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, Flamenca is allowed to desire a true love, which allows the lovers off the hook in one sense, for her husband is not a true lover. He is rejected as a lover at least partly due to his jealousy, but this is not the only reason. When he becomes jealous, Archambaut casts off all semblance of the courtly lover, both in appearance and speech.

Archimbaut attempts to use language. However, he is caught within the feudal ethos, which no longer applies in the world of romance. For Archimbaut, reality and language are one and the same, and he interprets the words of others literally, which allows him to be duped. Archimbaut is also linguistically challenged because he is lacking as a lover. He does not understand that words must be interpreted, and does not understand how to use them.

Archimbaut does seem to be aware of the existence of courtly language, and its possible misuse. Ironically, this is what Archimbaut is attempting to protect himself and his wife against at the beginning of the romance: he does not appear worried about true lovers, but rather

que faria s'us truanz,
 que.s fenera d'amor cortes
 e non sabra 'damor ques es,
 l'avia messa en follia?
 (Flamenca 1200-3)⁴⁰¹

Ironically again, Archimbaut could be discussing himself: it is because of his knavish decision to imprison her that Flamenca eventually desires and accepts a lover. As Nancy

Zak notes, "in a certain and a very real sense the figure of the protagonist in the last two-thirds of the romance is in part the creation of her husband and his jealousy" (Portrayal 127).

It is interesting to note that Archimbaut's grievous difficulties with language, while present before that time, largely evidence themselves after he becomes a victim of jealousy:

e.l gilos venc
tan tost que a penas si tenc
e miei la via de caser.
L'us obri, e non ac poder
de parlar, tant a corregut.
(Flamenca 6053-7)⁴⁰²

Again:

Quant cuja cantar et el bela,
quant cuja sospirar bondis:
neguna ren non esisernis.
Lo pater noster diz soen
del simi, que res non l'enten.
Tot jorn maleja e regana.
(Flamenca 1044-9)⁴⁰³

Archimbaut loses his ability to speak when he forfeits his capacity to love. He also becomes animal-like, compared to apes and dogs:

Quan la for gelosia.l tocha
el estraga si coma cans.
(Flamenca 1334-35)⁴⁰⁴

Beastly Archambaut has ceased to possess courtly behaviour, and has lost his courtly appearance:⁴⁰⁵

No.s lavet cap ni.s ras la barba:
aquella semblet una garba
de vicada quant es mal facha:
pelada l'ac per luecs e tracha
e mes los pels totz en la bocha.

(Flamenca 1329-33)⁴⁰⁶

He does this to cause his wife distress, again an uncourtly action:

Ges no.s fèra los guinnos raire
 per nulla ren c'om li disses.
 Grifon semblet o Esclau pres.
 e tot o fes digastendons:
 "Major pavor aura mi donz
 si.m ve barbat e guinhonut;
 il non farà ges tan leu drut."
 (Flamenca 1558-64)⁴⁰⁷

But terrifying his wife will not suffice. Archambaut wonders how to control Flamenca, noting to himself:

E tu dizes que ges non saps
 con la tenguas ni en cals caps?
 (Flamenca 1275-6)⁴⁰⁸

Only the avid student of Andreas Capellanus should be considering threats.

To counter the threat apparently posed by the king, Sir Archambaut begins to consider guarding for his wife.

"Mais ara ve qui.s vol e vai.
 e per son grat ja venrion mai.
 Non veses qual semblant lur mostra?
 Ben fai parer que non es nostra.
 Deu! menon la'n en tot malastre!
 [.....]
 Leu es a dire del menar!
 [.....]
 Si nom pose guardar una domna
 mal levaria lar corona
 qu'es de lonc Sant Peire de Roma,
 e mal derocharia Doman
 si no puese venzer una thosa."
 (Flamenca 1087-91, 1095, 1099-1103)⁴⁰⁹

Archambaut here ties guarding a woman to his abilities as a knight; she is a possession to be guarded, a sign of his prowess. As he comments,

gardar si deu hom avan.
 (Flamenca 1198)⁴¹⁰

This correlates to his winning of Flamenca: he is chosen over a distant king due to his geographic location and his abilities as a knight.

However, through his verbal meanderings and maunderings, Archambaut soon realizes that guarding Flamenca is not enough to keep her safe. Referring to Flamenca's purported suitors, Archambaut states:

“no sai trobarau hui ubert;
 qui domna garda tens I pert
 si non la met en tal preiso
 que non la veja s'aquel no
 que la deu gardar et aver;
 aisi ben leu la pot tener.”
 (Flamenca 1155-60)⁴¹¹

Finally, Archambaut determines that imprisonment is a suitable arrangement, in order not to waste too much energy on his wife:

“En fol I metria ma poina
 a leis gardar et a servir.
 Qui.s vol sai poira ben venir
 mais ja, per Dieu! non la veira,
 en tan aut poig no.s levara
 pero qu'ab leis parle ses me,
 non, s'I venia, per ma fe!
 le coms sos paires o sa maire,
 sa sor o Jauselis sos fraire!”
 (Flamenca 1208-1216)⁴¹²

Driven mad by his jealousy, Archambaut imprisons Flamenca in a tower. In this action, Archambaut treats Flamenca like an object, to be locked away, to be hoarded. Once he possesses her, he ceases to care for her, or to make the effort to please her or gain her affection. After she is locked in the tower, the narrator comments:

quar unquas, pueis que mollier pres,
 no.s baint ne.il venc neis em pes,

ni.s resonet unglà ni pel:
 pron ac fag, car este en sel
 ab sa mollier, a son vejaire.
 (Flamenca 1553-57)⁴¹³

When they are in the tower, Sir Archambaut does indeed indulge in surveillance, to ensure that his prison is secure.

As with many of her romance counterparts, Flamenca is not imprisoned in complete solitude. Archambaut decides that, in the tower:

laïns la tenrai ensarrada
 ab una donzella privada
 o doas, que non estiu sola.
 (Flamenca 1309-1311)⁴¹⁴

Flamenca's two handmaids, Marguerite and Alis, are also imprisoned in the tower.

Nevertheless, imprisonment is still bitter. When she is first put in the tower:

Sos viures val meins de morir.
 (Flamenca 1350)⁴¹⁵

However, their resources allow the women to put the time that might otherwise be overwhelming to good use. As in other romances, Flamenca is a faithful wife, innocent of Archambaut's suspicions, *until she is placed in the tower*. But this imprisonment is used by Love to prepare Flamenca for her new role:

Ja negum tems in non amera
 si Amors, per son jausimen,
 no.il o mostres privadamen.
 mais il l'ensenet de son joc
 quan conoc la sazón ni.l luec,
 mais lonc tems plais e.s tenc per morta.
 (Flamenca 1414-9)⁴¹⁶

But what does not kill Flamenca makes her stronger. Her later agility with words and courtly games is developed during her imprisonment: "she and her companions spent the two years before Guillem's arrival at study. . . [t]he reading of literature is presented

here not just as a form of entertainment or as a pleasant pastime, but as a life-saving device, as a strategy for survival” (Zak, Portrayal 138). Once she is placed in the tower, Flamenca must do something to escape the power of her insanely jealous husband. Ironically, her husband, in the very act that condemns him, provides Flamenca with the perfect conditions for love. The narrator explains:

qu'ausit ai dir, e sai qu'es vers,
 que trop aizes e trop lezers
 adus amor mais c'autra res
 [.]
 Qui.s tol repaus amor si tol;
 per so tenc ben cellui per fol
 que vol repausar e jasser
 e sojornar a som plazer
 si d'amor si cuja defendre.
 Ma<I>s qui la vol ausir o pendre
 o tener captiva enclausa
 tolla de se aisin'e pausa.
 Proverbis es: Qui trop s'azaisa
 greu er si per amor no.s laiza.
 (Flamenca 1823-25, 1829-38)⁴¹⁷

Unwittingly, Archambaut has caused the fate he sought to avoid. By imprisoning Flamenca, he has enforced her idleness, and released Love to prey on her. And by becoming susceptible to love, and learning duplicity from romances, with their emphasis on language, Flamenca will free herself from her ivory tower.

In the meantime, William enters upon the scene. As a reader, he is diametrically opposed to Archambaut: “Archambaut is the lover with experience, while William relies solely on knowledge gleaned from his reading” (Blodgett xxxiii). William has already learned from a book about the nature of love, and love’s inevitability:

Ancar d'amor no s'entremes
 per so que lo ver en saupes:
 per dir saup ben que fon amors,
 cant legit ac totz los auctors

que d'amor parlon e si feinon
 consi amador si capteinon.
 Car be conoc que longamen
 mon po<c> estar segon joven
 ques el d'amor non s'entrameta.
 (Flamenca 1765-73)⁴¹⁸

William has fallen in love with Flamenca because he has merely heard about her:⁴¹⁹

Per moutas gens au et enten
 com tenia Flamenca presa
 cel que la cuj'aver devesa
 et au dir per ver novella
 que.l miellers es e li plus bella
 e.l plus cortesa qu'el mon sia.
 En cor li venc que l'amaria
 s'om pogues ab ella parlar.
 (Flamenca 1778-85)⁴²⁰

While this is in keeping with the fin'amor and *amor de lonhs* ethic of earlier southern France, with the tale of the Countess of Tripoli, it also signifies the importance of education, reading, and romance fiction in preparing a place in real life for love.

In contrast to Archambaut's inarticulate beastliness, the two lovers are skilled at language, in part simply because they are lovers, and language and love are entwined in this romance. In contrast to early troubadour poetry, where sight is the way to the heart, in Flamenca, words are more important than sight in creating and nourishing love.

When William is suffering from love, he comments:

per doaz partz mi sen nafraz,
 car per l'aurella e per `uil
 ai pres lo colp don tan mi doil.
 (Flamenca 2717-9)⁴²¹

He goes on to cite the four manners of inspiring love:

s'il m'auzis o si.m parles,
 o si.m vezes o si.m toques,
 adonc la pogra ben combatre
 fin'Amors per un d'aquestz quatre.

(Flamenca 2748-51)⁴²²

Words are equated with deception, love and games in the text. And the game of words and love is a game at which both William and Flamenca excel. The narrator comments:

Daus l'otra part Guillems juguèt
al mielz que saup, e ben trobent.
mon eissient, qui juec li tenc
aissi con a lui si convenc.
Jugar podon a lur talan.
(Flamenca 6497-501)⁴²³

William is portrayed as a master of love, and, as a correlation, as a master of deception and presumably, of words. The maidservant Marguerite says:

“totz homs c'aissi domneja
ben sembla que deja trobar
tot so que tain ad obs d'amar,
engieins e voutas e cubertas
E d'aissous fas, endgre mi, certas
que, si fossem el temps antic
et eu trobes aital amic,
en kujera Jupiter fos
o alcus dels dieus amoros.
(Flamenca 5226-34)⁴²⁴

Flamenca herself notes the same thing:

e ben conois
que savis es e trics e mois,
e cant ben et a bels pels.
(Flamenca 4353-5)⁴²⁵

William seems to have a decent grasp on the deceptive possibilities of the written word. When he writes a letter, he uses a *senhal* to dupe Archimbaut; William refers to Flamenca as “Belmont’s Beauty” (Flamenca 7105), a *senhal* Archimbaut interprets as referring to some woman in the town below. Flamenca is pleased:

car li mostretz la correja

aissi asautet a plegar
 qu'el fes a mon sengnor cujar
 que cela de Belmon ames
 don no.l venc em pens qu'en pesses.
 a vos, douz' Amors, o grasis.
 (Flamenca 7177-82)⁴²⁶

However, in speaking, the plain lie seems to be as much as William has been able to master. At one point in the narrative, William commands his squires not to reveal his identity, but to lie and say he is from Besançon:

Ben lur mostra e lur enseina
 per ren non digon nul' enseina
 de lui, mas per una rason
 digon qu'el es de Bezanson.⁴²⁷
 (Flamenca 2010-13)⁴²⁸

Just as with physical disguises, William is more direct and less subtle than the females of the narrative. The plain lie seems to be as far as his play with language extends. When he meets Archambaut and is invited to a tournament, William responds:

“Ben y serai,
 et ab vos, seiner, m'I metrai.
 car bon cor ai de vos servir
 s'ieu ren podia far ni dir
 ques a vos fos nio bel ni bon,
 car sapias vostr'amix son.”
 (Flamenca 7035-40)⁴²⁹

I doubt that Archambaut would consider cuckolding a favour!⁴³⁰ William seems to fall into the same trap that claimed Tristan: he lies freely, and sometimes without provocation, but he does not twist words to have a double meaning.

Similarly to the Tristan stories, this is a romance that valorizes intelligence, the “hero as trickster” (Blakeslee 13). William does not possess, however, the greatest agility with language: this skill belongs to the women, to Flamenca. William himself appears aware

of this, for he “alludes to her intelligence as he speaks of woman as an intelligent, reflective, far-sighted, thinking human being” (Zak, Portrayal 135).

Women are superior at language because it is only language that offers them choice: after her forced marriage, language gives Flamenca a “second, conscious, knowing choice, her assent to know, meet, and ultimately, to love Guillem” (Zak, Portrayal 136). After her imprisonment, “She who has been dead to the world as a result of the Queen’s act of speech to Archimbaut gives birth to a new self by means of her speech acts to Guillem at mass, and her speech acts with Alis, Margarida, and herself in the tower” (Zak, Portrayal 137). Flamenca is also agile at speaking because of her imprisonment: “she and her companions spent the two years before Guillem’s arrival at study” (Zak, Portrayal 138). Zak continues, citing Eliza Miruna Ghil: “The reading of literature is presented here not just as a form of entertainment or as a pleasant pastime, but as a life-saving device, as a strategy for survival” (qtd. in Zak, Portrayal 138). Learning duplicity from romances, with their emphasis on language, will free Flamenca from her ivory tower.⁴³¹

Words, romances, and the book, continually play an important part in the relationship of the two lovers. A book unites the lovers before their secret rendez-vous is possible. In church, William is in ecstasy after he kisses the same book that Flamenca has kissed. Similarly, the two lovers are delighted when they touch the psalter at the same time in church. Later in the narrative, Flamenca and her two maidservants, Marguerite and Alice, re-enact the word-play at the church.

- Vai sus, Alis, e contrafai
que.m dones pas si con il fai;
pren lo romanz de Blancaflor.”
Alis si leva tost, e cor

vas una taula on estava
 cel romans ab qu'ella mandava
 wu'il dones pas, e pos s'en ven
 a si dons, c'a penas si ten
 de rire quan vi ques Alis
 a contrafar ap pauc no ris.
 Lo romanz ausa davaus destre
 e fa.l biaissar a sensetre,
 e quan fes parer que.l baies
 il dis: "*Que plans?*" et en apres
 a demandat: "Et ausist o?
 - Hoc, dona, ben, s'en aquest to
 o dissest oi, ben o auzi
 vel que.us fai parlar cest lati."
 Cesta lisson ben recorderon
 la semana, tro que aneron
 al mostier on Guillems esta
 ben apensatz que respondra.
 (Flamenca 4481-502)⁴³²

It is not coincidence that romance is used as a substitute for a holy Christian book, and this substitution serves to underline the importance of the romance genre: "*Floire et Blancheflor* possesses a singular place in the poem, if for no other reason than that it is a substitute for the psalter when Flamenca mimics her game with William in church" (Blodgett xvi). For the lovers, the sacred instruction comes from the romance, not from the Christian ethic.⁴³³ The deity worshipped here is Amor, Love. The lovers pray to the goddess, and read her sacred text: a romance. In fact, just as many medieval writers value reading for the knowledge of the scriptures it permits,⁴³⁴ reading and education are here valorized for the knowledge of romance they allow: "For the lovers, the teacher above all is Love" (Blodgett xxviii).

When Flamenca is puzzling out her word-game with William, she returns to her cage in church after their exchange:

et abtan la donna.s rescon
 e torna e sa cambiola

on Amor<s> la ten ad escola.
 (Flamenca 4770-2)⁴³⁵

Again, Alice rejoices that they had education and romance to sustain them during their incarceration, and that William is an able courtly lover, due to his education:

que ben aia qui l'ensenet
 ni hanc primas letra.l mostret!
 Quar ben conosc que pa ni sal
 negus hom ses letras non val,
 e trop ne val meins totz rix hom
 si non sap letras queacom,
 e dona es trop melz cabida
 s'es de letras un pauc garnida.
 Ara digas, fe que.m debes,
 si non saupses tan con sabes
 ques agras fag ar a dos anz
 qu'aves durat aquestz afanz?
 Morta foras e cruciada!
 Mais non seres ja tan irada,
 quan leges, que l'ira no.s fonda."
 No.s pot tenir que no.il responda
 Flamenca, e dau<s> si l'acolla:
 "Amiga, cos non es gest folla,
 e ben m'acort d'aitant ab vos
 que negus repaus non es bos
 ad home si letras non sap,
 ans es vilzis et quais mort sap:
 e ja tant non encercares
 que negun home atrobes,
 si letras sap, que non volgues
 ancora mais aver apres:
 e cel que non asp ne volria
 ancor apenre si podia.
 E qui.l saber pogues comprar,
 anc non vist home tan avar
 que sivals un pauc non compres,
 sol que a vendre n'atrobes.
 Ja hom que letras non saupes
 d'aiso no.s fora entrames."
 (Flamenca 4811-44)⁴³⁶

Finally, Marguerite, aiding her mistress in the word-game,⁴³⁷ is complemented by
 Flamenca:

— Margarida, trop ben t'es pres
 e ja iest bona trobairis
 — O eu, domna, mellor non vist,
 daus vos e daus Alis en fora"
 (Flamenca 4582-5)⁴³⁸

Flamenca and her maidens have moved from passive prisoners to active participants in their own lives, "composing" their own romance, what they desire to happen.

Flamenca only practices her trickery after she finds a lover:

Res non es Amors non ensin:
 Flamenca fes un cortes gein.
 (Flamenca 4341-2)⁴³⁹

Although they may deceive others, the lovers must have no deception between themselves. Beer says that one of the characteristics of romance is "a strongly enforced code of conduct to which all the characters must comply" (10). In this text, the code of courtly and honourable conduct seems to exist only between lovers, who, comments Kahn Blumstein, must "never delude one another" (145).⁴⁴⁰ Flamenca promises:

s'ieu conose qu' Amors l'o destina
 e.il serai donna bon'e fina
 e ja mon cor no.il celerai.
 (Flamenca 4263-5)⁴⁴¹

When Flamenca and William tryst for the first time, the narrator comments:

De ren l'us vaus l'autre no.s fein,
 ans es totz cels d'entr'els eissitz,
 qu'estier non for a jois complitz.
 (Flamenca 5948-50)⁴⁴²

Similarly, when the two handmaids of Flamenca and the two cousins of William are forced to part:

. . . an si plevidas lur fes
 que tostems sion amic intier,
 e quant il seran cavallier
 autras domnas non amaran.

e quant ellas donna seran
 no fassan autres calliers:
 et aissi er lur gaugz entiers.
 (Flamenca 6490-6)⁴⁴³

While language is used to deceive others, it is still a sacred bond between the lovers, both the cause of love, and its surety.

True love is also the expiator of the sin of casuistry. It is only lovers who can be forgiven deceptive behaviour and words. The handmaiden Alice warns Flamenca, after encouraging her to seize the opportunity of a lover, that:

. . . si de cor ben no l'amas
 e nostre conseil seguias
 no.us estaria ges trop ben.
 Mais lai on Amors tira.l fren
 e bos conseilz e volontatz.
 deven to<s>t sens una foudatz.
 (Flamenca 5265-70)⁴⁴⁴

But Flamenca is associated with love: "To a great extent the poet's portrayal of his female protagonist is a portrayal of the state and act of loving" (Zak, Portrayal 106). In The Romance of Flamenca, Amor is female (Blodgett, xxvii):

The figure of Love is a woman in Provençal partly because "Amors" is a feminine noun, but clearly also because the poet thinks of Love and the lady as one . . . The force of that love is embodied in the woman. (Ferrante, Women 71)

This completes the circle of the association between the female (lover) and language, for it is Amor that inspires lovers with language and trickery. This is particularly emphasized in William's case: it is when he falls in love, that he becomes feminized in both language and actions. William comments several times that his and Flamenca's words mesh together perfectly, that their dialogue is two halves of the same whole. This is not

because Flamenca has become masculine; it is because William, in his pursuit of love and happiness, has become feminized. Archimbaut, with his emphasis on threats and control rather than discourse, both for himself and Flamenca, to whom he denies a voice, is the savage male who refuses to be tamed by a female, and is thus rejected as a lover. In this sense at least, language is the symptom of the feminizing powers of love.

Referring to Strassburg's Tristan, Kahn Blumstein sees this art of sophistry as "a kind of duplicity that is practiced *only by women*. This is the art of 'double-talk'" (Kahn Blumstein 149). That this is an art belonging to women holds true for Flamenca as well. While both Flamenca and her lover are seen as great players at the game of love and language, Flamenca, I would argue, is the better, at least as far as her manipulation of language, and relations with the real world are concerned. Rather than an outright lie, Flamenca allows her listeners to interpret her words, knowing that her husband does not interpret words at all, but merely accepts them on a literal level. In The Romance of Flamenca, Flamenca uses Archimbaut's literal (feudal) nature against himself, to tell him the truth, but in such a manner that he misinterprets it. Thus, Flamenca complains:

"Sener, al cor ai una gota
que m'auci e m'afolla tota,
e cug que d'aquest <mal> morrai
si conseuill de mege non ai."
(Flamenca 5677-80)⁴⁴⁵

Her husband seizes on a literal, physical, rather unromantic ailment, and offers a suitably physical remedy:

- Dona, eu cug que pro.us faria
si manjadas a cascun dia
sol un petit de noz muscada.
(Flamenca 5681-3)⁴⁴⁶

Flamenca counters with another remedy; visits to the baths. Her husband assumes she will bathe in the medicinal waters. Flamenca, however, knows the only cure for her spiritual illness is her lover, again, to be found at the baths.

Flamenca also uses the art of double-talk when she finally is able to extricate herself from her prison by an oath. She says to Archambaut:

“Mas certas bon plag vos faria:
 Marves sobre sanz juraria,
 vezent mas donçellas, ades,
 qu'en aissi tostems mi gardes
 co vos m'aves saïns garada;
 e prendes, si us plas, la palmada”
 (Flamenca 6691-6)⁴⁴⁷

Supposedly, at this point in the narrative Archambaut is undergoing a transformation, rejecting his jealousy, and finding new faith in his wife. However, he has not truly changed, for he still accepts things at face value, and equates appearance and words with reality. Still blinded by jealousy, Archambaut is soon unable to discern even concealed physical items, such as the new tunnel in the baths:

per mon vejaire
 sagilosia no.il val gaire.
 Los angles dels bainz quer e cerca,
 mais pauc li val aquela cerca,
 quar tot ega <no> y conoissia
 alcun pertus com far solia.
 (Flamenca 5791-6)⁴⁴⁸

Again:

No I conoc ni peira ni cautz
 ni ren c'om mogut y agues.
 (Flamenca 6374-5)⁴⁴⁹

Archambaut himself seems vaguely aware of this irony:

car ges sos oilz ben <non> cresia.
 (Flamenca 1534)⁴⁵⁰

This is a cause of his mistrust, however, rather than any realization on his part that there is a gap between appearance and reality.

The blind insistence on the part of Archambaut on equating appearance and reality leads to his dismissal in the text as a fool. For example, when Flamenca is downcast because William has left:

En Archimbautz cujava si
que per s'amor estes aissi.
e pensa ben certanaments
ab lui si port mot lialmens.
(Flamenca 6925-8)⁴⁵¹

Archambaut is the only one of the three main characters who mistakes outward appearance for reality,⁴⁵² who cannot interpret what he hears and sees. Other characters use physical disguises to carry out their mission, thus duping the near-sighted Archimbaut.

Flamenca, unlike the unfortunate heroine of Yonec,⁴⁵³ is careful to cultivate her appearance to fool her jealous husband, feigning sickness. Later, she allows her husband to proffer an excuse for the lovers' removal to her bedchamber:

Anc mais dona tan ric assag
non auset empenre, so, cug,
qu'en plena cort, on ren non fug
ad oill, a man ni ad aureilla,
ab son amic baisan cosseilla
e, vezent totz, lo cog' ab se,
que negus homs non conois re.
(Flamenca 7679-85)⁴⁵⁴

Flamenca manipulates appearances, allowing others to interpret them as they will.

Archambaut does not see beyond the surface meaning of Flamenca's words, and thus is happily unaware of her deception:

le caitius non s'en garava.
 car el saacramen si fizava
 e.l sophisme non entendia
 que Flamenca mes y avia.
 Baboins es e folz e nescis.
 s'era plus savis que Boecis.
 maritz ques. on despendre cuja.
 sa mullier ad amic estuja.
 (Flamenca 7692-99)⁴⁵⁵

There is an ironic counterpart to the idea that only women can manipulate language and achieve double meanings. Men often achieve a double meaning, but do so without realizing it; while women speak truly, whilst giving a false impression, men proffer words that can be interpreted in two ways, one of these interpretations referring to a situation of which the speaker himself is not aware. For example, Archambaut demands to know why Flamenca despises him, commenting:

Donna. fai s'el, ben m'es veja<i>re
 que no.m temes ni.m presas gaire'
 Roenada.us est encontra me
 ergoillosa, non sai per que.
 (Flamenca 6677-80)⁴⁵⁶

He thus acknowledges, if not consciously, her lack of regard and love for him. He also shows his lack of comprehension in not knowing why she does not love him.⁴⁵⁷ Certainly, Archambaut did not win his earlier prowess due to intelligence! He himself comments:

"Auras sui et estrac!"
 (Flamenca 1273)⁴⁵⁸

The unconscious irony on the part of men continues. Flamenca's father, recommending William to Archambaut as a great knight, comments,

"mout a gan pari'ab me"
 (Flamenca 6965)⁴⁵⁹

Indeed, they have a closer tie through Flamenca than her father assumes! Similarly, Archambaut reads to Flamenca a courtly letter from William, boasting that

“ja non direz, quant aures
las salutz que I son apresas,
ques hanc n'ausisses plus cortesas.”
(Flamenca 7080-2)⁴⁶⁰

As it is a letter from her lover to her, this is correct.⁴⁶¹ Archambaut later “introduces” William to Flamenca saying,

“Segner presen
dei far de vos, per covinen,
a **nostra** domna, s'a vos plas:
per so.us prec ques a lui vengas.”
(Flamenca 7316-9)⁴⁶²

The most amusing example of ironic male speech comes when Archambaut (in a scene reminiscent of Oedipus), is blind to his own sins (perhaps foreshadowing how he will later disregard those of his wife):

per pauc le gilos non s'esfella
e diz: “Prop es qui mal ne mier.”
Poissas s'en eis el escalier
et es cachutz trastotz evers
sus els escalos as travers
et ap pauc non s'es degollatz
(Flamenca 1256-61)⁴⁶³

However, Archambaut, with his history of misinterpretation, if he interprets at all, merely comments on his good luck in surviving the fall:

“*Nomine Domi!* qual enseina
es aiso de bon'aventura!”
(Flamenca 1268-9)⁴⁶⁴

Overall in the romance of Flamenca, it appears as though women have a greater mastery of language, and thus, deception. Flamenca herself comments that:

E mout pot leu domna percebre

qui l'ama o la vol decebre
(Flamenca 4267-8)⁴⁶⁵

As well, Flamenca, unlike her husband and lover, never loses her control of language.

There is one point in the romance where she *chooses* not to talk, when William leaves:

mais no i ac domna ni donzella
a cui Flamenca mot sones
ni colgues ques ab lui parles.
Ellas cujeron set agues
e per so parlar no volgues.
(Flamenca 6914-18).⁴⁶⁶

As language is one of the signs and causes of love, she is showing her love for William, and refusing to waste her words on the undeserving Archambaut and his court.

Flamenca and William use their words and their books to reinvent themselves: fully aware of their role as textual creatures, they re-create themselves in the image of their maker, the Love of the romances:

The destinies of the lovers, true to the tradition of the Old Testament. . . is affirmed by a book, and yet, paradoxically, their destinies are mutually self-constructed in the production of their roles as lovers that together make a text through the mediation of the book. Their mutual *clergia* both grounds them in a book and allows them to construct themselves as aspects of a text, and thus it takes full polysemous advantage of what books can do as signifying systems. (Blodgett xxv)

The valorization of romances seems justified by the societal changes presented in Flamenca, for "The society of the lovers' *jouissance* is transfigured to fit their conception of it" (Blodgett xxix). From a sterile, unhappy society, Flamenca's wiles, taught to her by her study of romance, have allowed her to re-enter society, and return that society to a

courtly, chivalrous one, where even the much-maligned Archambaut is better for the changes brought about by his cuckolding:

Archimbaut ques a perdut
sos mals aips e sa vilania
et a cobrada cortesia.
(Flamenca 6783-5)⁴⁶⁷

Again, later, we are told

Que `n Archimbautz era garitz
e daveras desgilositz.⁴⁶⁸
(Flamenca 6947-8)⁴⁶⁹

Flamenca, through her use of the romance, that “feminine” genre, has become an active agent in her own life: as Zak notes, she “creates herself by means of thought, choice, and acts of speech, will, and love” (Zak, Portrayal 143).

Flamenca eventually brings Archimbaut back to society, by her deceit, and thus brings about a better society. Zak says of Flamenca that “she not only gives birth to herself and her love, she helps to create a new social order in a world debilitated by her husband’s jealousy. . . . Her love renews and restores to health the entire community in which she lives” (Zak, Portrayal 131). If this is the case, it is no wonder that the narrator condones her adulterous and deceitful behaviour. Its results are better than those produced by a nominally feudal society.

The thirteenth-century Provençal romance Flamenca is a self-reflexive romance, with “continuous reference to the didactic” (Blodgett xx), featuring characters fully aware of the possibilities of self-creation via the romance. Allusions to the power of the text, particularly the romance, represent a central tenet of the narrative:

the play of the book as Bible, psalter, and romance, notably *Floire et Blancheflor*, while possibly seeming too artificial to the modern reader. . .

are sources of power in the poem and, as such, mark ways in which it might be constructed. It also marks the poems as quintessentially romance, as a text of translation, insofar as it creates tensions within the poem between kinds of books, as well as between it and its contexts, such as the *Seven Sages of Rome*, with which it is inscribed. Where else, however, does the lover of courtly romance belong but as a figure within and among books, as Dante's Paolo and Francesca so tellingly indicate? (Blodgett xxiv)⁴⁷⁰

Via the happy example of the lover, this romance offers the genre of romance as a tool for societal change for the better, and thus is self-justifying:

the poem is steeped in a rhetoric of excess, thus "reinforcing the sense that the poem is forever out-romancing romance" (Shedd 56). The phrase is suggestive. Indeed, for Shedd, by simply exposing the limits of romance in transgressing them, *Flamenca* grandly underscores "the silliness, shortsightedness, and hypocrisy which *amour courtois* is capable of spawning" (65). But "out-romancing" has a validity in itself: it suggests that *Flamenca's* singular virtue is to make romance its own ethical case, its own fine point of casuistry. (Blodgett xxii)

Chapter 12 - Conclusion – The Defense of Romance

Flamenca's happy ending is not always repeated. Some texts treat romance reading as an unhappy choice leading to tragedy, and thus attempt to denigrate the genre.

The tale of Heloise and Abelard, popular in the Middle Ages,⁴⁷¹ is a true story that possesses many of the aspects of the romances discussed in this dissertation.⁴⁷² It also becomes, in some literary and cultural traditions, a standard reference for the involuntary separation of lovers. Abelard tells their story, beginning as follows:

There was in Paris at the time a young girl named Heloise, the niece of Fulbert, one of the canons, and so much loved by him that he had done everything in his power to advance her education in letters. In looks she did not rank lowest, while in the extent of her learning she stood supreme. A gift for letters is so rare in women that it added greatly to her charm and had won her renown throughout the realm. I considered all the usual attractions for a lover and decided she was the one to bring to my bed, confident that I should have an easy success: for at that time I had youth and exceptional good looks as well as my great reputation to recommend me, and feared no rebuff from any woman I might choose to honour with my love. Knowing the girl's knowledge and love of letters I thought she would be all the more ready to consent,⁴⁷³ and that even when separated we could enjoy each other's presence by exchange of written messages in which we could speak more openly than in person, and so need never lack the pleasures of conversation. (Abelard 66)

Jane Chance comments: "As Abelard attempted to 'unlearn' his teachers and thereby master them, so also he plotted to seduce Heloise by means of intellectual conquest" (9). This is not the lover, but a man who wishes mastery. In this sense, Abelard is similar to the feudal husbands and fathers found in romance: he is not the courtly lover valorized in romances. He is a seducer, and one who immediately devises a plan to gain his desire.⁴⁷⁴

All on fire with desire for this girl I sought an opportunity of getting to know her through private daily meetings and so more easily winning her over; and with this in view I came to an arrangement with her uncle, with the help of some of his friends, whereby he should take me into his house. . . . He gave me complete charge over the girl, so that I could devote all the leisure time left me by my school to teaching her by day and night, and if I found her idle I was to punish her severely. I was amazed by his simplicity — if he had entrusted a tender lamb to a ravening wolf it would not have surprised me more. In handing her over to me to punish as well as teach, what else was he doing but giving me complete freedom to realize my desires, and providing an opportunity, even if I did not make use of it, for me to bend her to my will by threats and blows if persuasion failed? But there were two special reasons for his freedom from base suspicion: his love for his niece and my previous reputation for continence.

Need I say more? We were united, first under one roof, then in heart: and so with our lessons as a pretext we abandoned ourselves entirely to love. Her studies allowed us to withdraw in private, as love desired, and

then with our books between us, and more kissing than teaching. My hand strayed oftener to her bosom than to the pages; love drew our eyes to look on each other more than reading kept them on our texts. To avert suspicion I sometimes struck her, but these blows were prompted by love and tender feeling rather than anger and irritation, and were sweeter than any balm could be. In short, our desires left no stage of love-making untried, and if love could devise something new, we welcomed it. We entered on each joy the more eagerly for our previous inexperience, and were the less easily sated. (Abelard 66-68)

Because Abelard is not a true lover, as is fitting, the ending is certainly not happy for Heloise and Abelard. Again, a woman is brought down, at least in part due to the carelessness with language of her lover. Flaunting his relationship with Heloise, Abelard encouraged his fate and sealed her doom. Due to his verbal indiscretions, including Abelard making public love songs containing Heloise's name,⁴⁷⁵ their love is discovered. This shows a lack of discretion on Abelard's part, and his contributions to his own downfall. As Betty Radice notes:

Abelard was completely carried away and consequently quite reckless in his general behaviour. He neglected his pupils, abandoned all pretence of serious teaching, paid no attention to gossip, and allowed his love songs which mentioned Heloise's name to be sung in public. When her uncle accepted the truth of what was common knowledge and tried to separate them, they took even greater risks and were found in bed together. (15)

They are discovered *in flagrante delicto*, or as Abelard terms it, “caught in the act as the poet⁴⁷⁶ says happened to Mars and Venus” (Abelard 69). To attempt to mitigate the situation, Abelard approaches Fulbert:

In the end I took pity on his boundless misery and went to him, accusing myself of the deceit love had made me commit as if it were the basest treachery. I begged his forgiveness and promised to make any amends he might think fit. I protested that I had done nothing unusual in the eyes of anyone who had known the power of love, and recalled how since the beginning of the human race women had brought the noblest men to ruin.⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, to conciliate him further, I offered him satisfaction in a form he could never have hoped for: I would marry the girl I had wronged.⁴⁷⁸ All I stipulated was that the marriage should be kept secret so as not to damage my reputation. He agreed, pledged his word and that of his supporters, and sealed the conciliation I desired with a kiss. But his intention was to make it easier to betray me. (Abelard 69-70)

It is a Judas kiss Abelard has received, and Fulbert has no intention of honouring his word.

But Fulbert and his servants, seeking satisfaction for the dishonour done to him, began to spread the news of the marriage and break the promise of secrecy they had given me.⁴⁷⁹ (Abelard 74)

Abelard sends Heloise to a convent in Argenteuil disguised as novice.⁴⁸⁰

At this news her uncle and his friends and relatives imagined that I had tricked them, and had found an easy way of ridding myself of Heloise

by making her a nun. Wild with indignation they plotted against me, and one night as I slept peacefully in an inner room in my lodgings, they bribed one of my servants to admit them and there took cruel vengeance on me of such appalling barbarity as to shock the whole world: they cut off the parts of my body whereby I had committed the wrong of which they complained. (Abelard 75)

After his castration, Abelard enters a monastery, and his disguise for Heloise becomes reality: she becomes a nun.

However, while Abelard seems largely content with his fate,⁴⁸¹ Heloise is not. They do not see each other for ten years (Radice 97) after their religious vows, and Abelard does not maintain regular contact with her. She reproaches him with ignoring her once his lust is satisfied:

Tell me one thing, if you can. Why, after our entry into religion, which was your decision alone, have I been so neglected and forgotten by you that I have neither a word from you when you are here to give me strength nor the consolation of a letter in absence? Tell me, I say, if you can – or I will tell you what I think and indeed the world suspects. It was desire, not affection which bound you to me, the flame of lust rather than love. So when the end came to what you desired, any show of feeling you used to make went with it. (Abelard 116)

She also claims that she is inspired by love:

While I enjoyed with you the pleasures of the flesh, many were uncertain whether I was prompted by love or lust; but now the end is proof of the

beginning. I have finally denied myself every pleasure in obedience to your will, kept nothing for myself except to prove that now, even more, I am yours. (Abelard 117)

Abelard later agrees with her denigration of him: "My love, which brought us both to sin, should be called lust, not love. I took my fill of my wretched pleasures in you, and this was the sum total of my love" (Abelard 153).

Heloise also reproaches Abelard that his words were merely to entrap her:

When in the past you sought me out for sinful pleasures your letters came to me thick and fast, and your many songs put your Heloise on everyone's lips, so that every street and household echoed with my name. (Abelard 117-118)⁴⁸²

She further claims that her sorrow is great:

Of all wretched women I am the most wretched, and amongst the unhappy I am unhappiest. The higher I was exalted when you preferred me to all other women, the greater my suffering over my own fall and yours, when I was flung down; for the higher the ascent, the heavier the fall. (Abelard 120-130)

Heloise even thinks of their illicit love during religious services:

Even during the celebration of the Mass, when our prayers should be purer, lewd visions of those pleasures take such a hold on my unhappy soul that my thoughts are on their wantonness instead of on my prayers. I should be groaning over the sins I have committed, but I can only sigh for what I have lost. (Abelard 133)⁴⁸³

But while Heloise is immured in the convent, unlike many of her romantic counterparts, her words, in both the form of verbal and written entreaties, will not aid her in her escape. Ruined by a man who did not love her. Love does not come to her aid.

Abelard writes the *Historia calamitatum* to offer an example for others to heed,⁴⁸⁴ beginning his history thus:

There are times when example is better than precept for stirring or soothing human passions; and so I propose to follow up the words of consolation I gave you in person with the history of my own misfortunes, hoping thereby to give you comfort in absence. In comparison with my trials you will see that your own are nothing, or only slight, and will find them easier to bear. (Abelard 57)

He also ends by urging his readers to learn to submit to God's will. Nevertheless, it does not lessen the horror of the end of their love story. Castration and a nunnery are not a happy fate.

La Chastelaine de Vergi also sees itself as an example, even using that word in line 951. In this case, it presents an example warning lovers what not to do, as we will see with Dante. However, it does not follow Dante in showing adulterous love as evil, but rather demonizes the betrayal of love, and the inability to keep a secret:

Ha ! Dieus ! trestous cilz encombriers
 Et cis meschies por ce avint
 Qu'au cevalier tant mesavint
 Qu'il dist ce que celer devoit
 Et que desfendu li avoit
 S'amie qu'il ne le deïst
 Tant com s'amor avoir vousist.
 Et par cest exemple doit l'en
 S'amor celer par si grant sen
 C'on ait toz jors en remembrance

Que li descouvrirs riens n'avance.
 Et li celers en toz poins vaut.
 Qui si le fait, ne crient assaut
 Des faus felons enquerreors.
 Qui enquierent autrui amors.⁴⁸⁵
 (Chastelaine 942-956)⁴⁸⁶

In The Inferno, as with the two examples above, Dante also writes for the good of others, and of a terrible fate befalling lovers. In Canto V of Dante's Inferno,⁴⁸⁷ the heart-rending plight of two lovers, and their descent into the second circle of Hell is recounted. This circle is filled with famous lovers, all except one of whom are taken from literature:

"Lo! she that slew herself for love, untrue,
 To Sychaeus' ashes. Lo! tost on the blast,
 Voluptuous Cleopatra, whom love slew.

Look, look on Helen, for whose sake rolled past
 Long evil years. See great Achilles yonder,
 Who warred with love, and that war was his last.

See Paris, Tristram see!" And many — oh, wonder
 Many — a thousand more, he showed by name
 And pointing hand, whose life love rent asunder.

And when I had heard my Doctor tell the fame
 Of all those knights and ladies of long ago,
 I was pierced through with pity, and my head swam. (Dante 99)

Francesca tells Dante of her downfall.

"One day we read for pastime how in thrall
 Lord Lancelot lay to love, who loved the Queen;
 We were alone — we thought no harm at all.

As we read on, our eyes met now and then,
 And to our cheeks the changing colour started,
 But just one moment overcame us — when

We read of the smile, desired of lips long-thwarted,
 Such smile, by such a lover kissed away,
 He that may never more from me be parted

Trembling all over, kissed my mouth. I say

The book was Galleot, Galleot the complying
Ribald who wrote; we read no more that day.” (Dante 101)

These literary creatures, recounted in the tale of Dante, have themselves been led astray by a text, a romance that bore a striking similarity to their own situation:

The story went that Paolo was sent to conduct the marriage negotiations, and that Francesca was tricked into consenting by being led to suppose that he, and not Gianciotto, was to be her bridegroom. In the same way, in the Arthurian romances, Queen Guinevere falls in love with Lancelot when he is sent to woo her on King Arthur’s behalf; and it is this parallel which makes the tale of Lancelot so poignant for her and Paolo. (Sayers 103)

This parallel led to the Arthurian romance being interpreted by the lovers as a didactic text, and its example was followed accordingly. However, Paolo and Francesca da Rimini were imbuing the wrong text with authority, as they have come to realize, shown when Francesca names the book a Galleot: “In the romance of *Lancelot du Lac*, Galleot (or Galehalt) acted as intermediary between Lancelot and Guinevere, and so in the Middle Ages his name, like that of Pandarus in the tale of *Troilus and Cressida*, became a synonym for a go-between. The sense of the passage is: ‘The book was a pander and so was he who wrote it’” (Sayers 103).⁴⁸⁸

While some texts are meant to be didactic, others are not. Readers must be able to discern between didactic texts and those that are pure fantasy with no relation to reality. Dante is clear about the didactic nature of his own text: at the beginning of The Inferno, he graciously consents to remember his harrowing experience for the good of others:

Ay me! how hard to speak of it — that rude

And rough and stubborn forest! the mere breath
Of memory stirs the old fear in the blood:

It is so bitter, it goes nigh to death:
Yet there I gained such good, that, to convey
The tale, I'll write what else I found therewith. (Dante 71)

But for Dante, instructing his readers on how to avoid Hell, romances are not didactic, and are taken as such at the peril of one's soul.⁴⁸⁹ Herein lies one of the mortal faults of Paolo and Francesca: they have taken romance too seriously, and fallen prey to "the danger of believing an ostensibly true vision" (Régnier-Bohler 374). Peter Travis notes: "certain medieval literary works foreground the role of their viewers and readers as cocreators of artistic meaning" (Travis 203), and the lovers must take responsibility for their interpretation.⁴⁹⁰ And while there is some sympathy portrayed on the part of the faint-hearted narrator, nevertheless, the lovers are in Hell.⁴⁹¹

However, Abelard and Dante, with their cautionary tales, are not followed by everyone. Certainly, the tale of Aucassin and Nicolette could almost be a direct response and challenge to Dante, were it not for the timing of the tales.⁴⁹² In a curious reversal of Dante, Aucassin compares himself and Nicolette to other courtly lovers. When warned by his father that he will go to Hell for his love, he is undaunted:

Enseurquetot que cuideriës vous avoir gaegnié, so vous
l'aviës asogentee ne mise a vo lit? Mout i arës peu
conquis, car tos les jors du siecle en seroit vos cors honis, et
apre`s en seroit vo arme en infer: qu'en paradise n'enterriës
vos ja.

En paradise qu'ai jë a faire? Je n'i quier entrer, mais
que j' aie Nicolete, ma tresdouce amie que j' aim tant. C'en

paradis ne vont fors tex gens, con je vous dirai. Il i vont cil
 viel prestre et cil viel clop et cil make, qui totejor et tote
 nuit cropent devant ces autex et en ces vie`s creutes, et cil a
 ces vies capes esreses et a ces viués tatereles vestues, qui
 sont nu et descauc et estrumelé, qui moeurent de faim et de
 soi et de froit et de mesaises. Icil vont en paradis: aveuc
 ciax n`ai jou que faire. Mais en infer voil jou aler: car en
 infer vont li bel clerc, et li bel chevalier qui sont mort as
 tornois et as rices guieres, et li boin sergant et li franc
 home. Aveuc ciax voil jou aler. Et s`i vont les veles dames
 cortoises, que eles ont deus amis ou trois avoc leur barons,
 et s`i va li ors et li argens et li vairs et li gris, et si l vont
 harpeor et jogleor et li roi del siecle. Avec ciax voil jou
 aler, mais que j`aie Nicolete, ma tresdouce amie, aveuc mi.

(Aucassin et Nicolette 8-9)⁴⁹³

Aucassin is presenting himself and his lover as literary figures, the protagonists of their own romance – and one that will have a happy ending.⁴⁹⁴ The lovers' final reunion is brought about by Nicolette's ingenuity: dressed as a minstrel, she sings the story of Aucassin and Nicolette (in *lai* form).

“Escoute`s moi, franc baron,
 cil d`aval et cil d`amont!
 Plairont vos oïr un son
 d`Aucassin un franc baron,
 de Nicolete la prous?
 Tant durerent lor amors,
 [.]
 Nicolete n`en a soing,

car ele aime un dansellon
 qui Aucassins avoit non,
 bien jure diu et son non.
 ja ne predera baron.
 s`ele n`a son ameor
 que tant desire.”
 (Aucassin et Nicolette 39-40)⁴⁹⁵

This story spurs Aucassin to question Nicolette, and to reconcile with her, bringing about the desired society. The lovers, who fell in love while learning to read together as children, use their education in romance to their benefit, as well as the benefit of their land. In Aucassin et Nicolette the didactic tale within a tale, and its effect, justify the consumption of romance.

In Dante, reading a romance changed Paolo and Francesca’s lives in a rather unfortunate way. But in Yonec, the change is one desired by the heroine. Even though the ending may not seem entirely joyful, it is better than the society that preceded it. True, the hawk-knight is dead, and the lady also dies. But when they see his father’s tomb, Yonec hears the story of his ill-fated parents,⁴⁹⁶ inherits his father’s kingdom, and avenges his mother by killing his stepfather.

Il unt demandé e enquis
 a cels ki erent de païs
 de la tumbe qui ele esteit.
 e quels huem fu ki la giseit.
 Cil comencierent a plurer
 e en plurant a recunter,
 que c`ert li mielre chevaliers
 e li plus forz e li plus fiers.
 li plus beals e li plus amez
 qui ja mes seit el siecle nez.
 [.]
 `ainza avum atendu meint jur
 un fiz qu`en la dame engendra`
 [.]

Quant la dame oï la novele,
 a halte voiz sun fiz apele.
 'Beals fiz', fet ele, 'avez oï
 cum deus nus a amenez ci!
 C'est vostres pere qui ci gist,
 que cist villarz a tor ocist.
 [.]
 Quant sis fiz veit que morte fu,
 sun parastre a le chief tolu.
 De l'espee qui fu sun pere
 a dunc vengié lui e sa mere.
 [.]
 Cil qui ceste aventure oïrent
 lunc tens après un lai en fire,
 de la peine e de la dolir
 que cil souffrirent pur amur.
 (Yonec 513-22, 526-26, 528-33, 544-47, 559-562)⁴⁹⁷

Reading romance is not only didactic, but for Marie de France, desirable.⁴⁹⁸ And, as it is the means of her lady's salvation, it would appear to be encouraged in other audiences as well.

However, in The Romance of Flamenca, women are apparently not reviled for their use of language. This may be because there are some standards of usage, even if they are not those of the feudal system. For even as Flamenca rejects the demands of feudal language, in which she is not allowed to participate, but in which she is expected to comply, she presents other standards of language to which women must comply. The only women who are reviled for their use of language are those who deceive their lovers.

Amors non vol ges doman vaira,
 non es doman pos son cor vaira
 e non atent aisso que dis.
 E ques es donc? Dieu! truphairiz
 que fai languir ab totz destrics
 aicel que l'es corals amics
 e tot jorn la ser e la blan.
 Diabols es fers. . .
 (Flamenca 4275-83)⁴⁹⁹

Later in the text, a dichotomy is made explicit:

Mais, si com bona domna es
 de tot lo mon li meillers <r>es,
 li plus douza e.l plus grasida,
 aissi la mal'e.l descausida
 es la piejers e.l plus amara,
 plus enujosa e plus avara;
 e cil que n'an tastat o sabon,
 quant pauc enanson et acabon!
 De mala domna sai eu tan
 que ren non pensa mai engam
 e tot jorn troba ucaison
 consi puesca dire de *non*.
 Aicist es mala e noada.
 (Flamenca 7828-40)⁵⁰⁰

While there is certainly a code of conduct evident here, and those who transgress it are reviled, there does not seem to be the same misogynistic tone found in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, with its Christian diatribe against the wiles of women and their power to bring low great men. Nancy Zak claims that "God's role in this witty and ironic romance is to favor and help the adulterous lovers, and, most especially, the female protagonist" (Zak, Portrayal 117). Both William and Flamenca pray to be delivered to each other, and their prayers are answered.

Flamenca eventually brings Archimbaut back to society, by her deceit, and thus brings about a better society. Zak says of Flamenca that "she not only gives birth to herself and her love, she helps to create a new social order in a world debilitated by her husband's jealousy. . . . Her love renews and restores to health the entire community in which she lives." (Zak, Portrayal 131). If this is the case, it is no wonder that the narrator condones her adulterous and deceitful behaviour. Its results are better than those produced by a nominally feudal society, even for the cuckolded Archimbaut. Other

romances that offer such happy endings are Chrétien de Troyes's Cligès, Aucassin et Nicolette, Sir Orfeo, Lanval, and Floire et Blancheflor.

Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan does not have the same happy ending that Nancy Zak postulates for The Romance of Flamenca, where the woman's double-talk leads to a society superior to the former feudal state.⁵⁰¹ In Tristan, everything ends unhappily. This could be because language has broken down: while feudal language did not work, neither does courtly language, which is being judged by former feudal standards. Nevertheless, in Tristan, neither is the feudal alternative presented as desirable. Tristan is a tragedy where the ideal love cannot survive in a corrupt world; but this does not change the fact that a great love has existed. As with other tragic romances, such as La Chastelaine de Vergi, it offers a caution about the trouble of love existing in the real world.

In the majority of these romances, women possess superior manipulative powers with language, and use this skill to attempt to improve their own lives and the lives of those around them. Kahn Blumstein claims:

“the courtly code” of love and most especially the idealization of women in the romance are in many respects a *covert* form of misogyny; chivalry is but one more method by which what has been called the “great patriarchal conspiracy” is perpetrated in our culture. (2)

Not all agree. According to historian Joan Kelley, the courtly conventions in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe signify the “ideological liberation of [women's] sexual and affective powers,’ particularly in the possibilities of choice and mutuality” (qtd. in Westphal-Wihl 179). And as has been shown in this dissertation, women still achieve the bettering of their situation.

According to Gillian Beer, "The romance gives repetitive form to the particular desire of a community, and especially to those desires which cannot find controlled expression within a society" (13). For many thirteenth-century French and Provençal romances, however, the desire does not merely stay enclosed within the romance within the romance. Perceived as a didactic text, and used as such, the collective desires of its audience are translated from the liminal space of their personal experience of the romance genre to the fictional world beyond the pages of their romance that appears in the course of a given story, with desirable results. Self-creation leads to renewal on many levels. Thus, references to romance within the genre are not merely amusing intertextualities, but, as with more scholarly medieval texts, serve the purpose of conferring authority to the canon in its entirety. By presenting romances as didactic texts, the authors encourage real readers to emulate fictional readers in treating them thus. As a strategy of the genre, they not only justify its existence, but encourage its external audience to follow the example of its heroines, and apply the lessons found therein to their own social reality. From a liminal space that was entered unwillingly, desired change has occurred, and the literary protagonists, aware of their status as constructed selves, have created a new paradigm in which to exist. Authors have, moreover, changed their own space in the literary canon, moving away from the designation of "trivial" literature, and given themselves authority, so that this once "trivial" literature is taken seriously, and becomes so influential that even Dante discusses it.

And this literature is not meant to be ignored. For the majority of these romances, they involve secret love affairs that ultimately are made public. Not only are they made

public, but they are later enshrined in texts to be read or performed. These tales are meant to be told. They provide examples for others, whether cautionary or exemplary ones.

In the same way that the heroines are transformed through their reading of romance, so too the external audience is to view their reading as transformative. This is something the romances have in common with some of the visual arts of the time.

Otto Pächt has drawn attention to the fact that in the Bayeux tapestry the gestures “are never the organic result of the action in which the figures are involved. . . It is the beholder who is addressed by these gestures: the actors of the drama speak to us, the spectators, not to the protagonists in whose company they appear on the stage.” It is only in the beholder’s mind, not in the painting, that the characters are linked with one another.

(Vinaver, Rise 5)

Did the reading of romance have an effect on the life of real men and women? We have seen with Marie de France, that reading engenders the desire for other experiences, or as Tony Hunt expresses it: “the expression *romance* indicates a language, a literary form, and a quality of experience” (Hunt 11). Did real-life medieval readers desire experiences of their own? Did they seek them out? Were they successful in doing so? This may be something that cannot be determined. But what an interesting idea.

Endnotes

- ¹ For the purposes of this argument, a romance will be considered as a long narrative poem written in the vernacular, with women and romantic love as part of its theme. While some of these texts are not, strictly speaking, romances, I feel they are still part of the courtly romance tradition, with an emphasis on, in many cases, romantic love, courtly values, and women playing a role in the story. In addition, these texts are bound together by their emphasis on women's skill with language, the importance of discursive practices, and, in many cases, an emphasis on their text as didactic. They are also keenly aware of the romance tradition, and in many cases deliberately place themselves within this tradition, as evidenced by intertextual references.
- ² In the romance, feudal men are generally undervalued, even reviled and rejected in favour of the courtly knight, with his skill in language. For the courtly knight, his skill with language is the symptom of the feminizing powers of love.
- ³ There are a few examples of women lying, for example, Chrétien de Troyes's Guinevere. However, these examples are relatively rare. See the chapter on "The Transgression of Silence," starting on page 53 of this dissertation.
- ⁴ Ironically, it is men, recognized by the feudal system, who break the rules of feudalism.
- ⁵ It is interesting to note that these attacks continued through the centuries, and, indeed, continue today.
- ⁶ This is an hypothesis discussed briefly by Nikki Stiller in her article, "Eve's Orphan's: Mothers and Daughters in Medieval English Literature."

⁷ For the Old French texts, I will place the original in the text and a translation in the footnotes. Please note: the original citation will make reference to lines, while the translations will make reference to page numbers. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight will also make reference to lines.

⁸ For this reason, I have chosen not to discuss texts that have a strong religious undertone, or exist within an exclusively Christian framework, such as Grail narratives. In these While these texts are still considered romances, a 'romantic' relationship is not at the core of the narrative.

⁹ Beer notes that romance ignores most aspects of life and concentrates on one: love. Romance "intensified and exaggerates certain traits in human behavior and recreates human figures out of this exaggeration. It excludes some reaches of experience in order to concentrate intently upon certain themes until they take fire and seem to be the flame of life itself" (3).

¹⁰ Indeed, the romance Flamenca, one of the principal texts of this dissertation, is one of the few texts to make a direct allusion to courtly love, or "amor cortes" (Flamenca 1201).

¹¹ For this reason, little reference will be made to the early love poetry of the troubadours of Southern France, with their first-person accounts of what the poet is experiencing. While there are indeed trobairitz to consider as well, I am also regarding romance as a narrative, a story, not simply the outpouring of emotion at one particular time, and so the trobairitz will remain largely undiscussed in this dissertation.

¹² In addition to the fact that they are too numerous to include, positive female role models the main reason why fabliaux will not be discussed in this dissertation. As Eileen Power notes,

The decline of l'amour courtois can best be appreciated by comparing the first and the second parts of *Le Roman de la Rose*. In this elaborate allegory of lovers' pursuit, perhaps the most famous and influential poem of the Middle Ages, the first part was written by Guillaume de Lorris before 1240, and retained much of the old spirit, but the second part, finished by Jean Chopinel de Meun by 1280, was a brilliant and brutal attack upon the whole female sex. But so encyclopedic was the range of the poem, so bold its speculations and so enchanting its poetry, that it rapidly attained a popularity which outlasted the Middle Ages.

From thenceforward the chorus of anti-feminist literature sounds more strongly than ever, and the courtly note is drowned by other, mostly bourgeois, voices. The bourgeois note is first heard most clearly in those popular rhymed anecdotes which the French called fabliaux, and in which there is hardly one which does not turn on the deceit or viciousness of woman. The old are all evil-minded hags, the wives all betray their husbands, the girls are either minxes or fools. But too much importance should not be attached to the exceedingly hostile picture of women drawn in the fabliaux. In all nations and at all periods there has existed a fund of anecdotes having for its subject the perfidy of women. In this respect many of the fabliaux were medieval only in setting. The

stories which they told were often older than the Middle Ages and some of the most popular were adopted from the East or taken from the lives of Fathers. Many, too, were *contes gras* intended only to amuse, and their social significance should not be exaggerated. But even allowing for these factors, the rancour, the intense contempt for women expressed in them at least exemplify what amused the new bourgeois society.

Attack took also other forms which are not as amusing as the *fabliaux*, but were openly polemical. There were didactic poems detailing the vices of women, *blastanges des fâmes*, *epystles des fâmes*, *blasones des fâmes*, which are apt to resolve themselves into a somewhat jejune game of mud slinging. (28-29)

¹³ The character of *maumariée* or *malmariée* of narrative and poetry of Southern France can typify this. The *maumariée* is often a young woman married to an old husband, *le jaloux*: the jealous one. See page 94 of this dissertation for a further discussion of this theme.

¹⁴ It is the stereotypical genre of the Middle Ages, at least, for modern readers. In The Discarded Image, C.S. Lewis comments, "Romance and Ballad coloured men's ideas of the Middle Ages somewhat excessively" (8-9). Nevertheless, even if the Middle Ages produced literature — both fiction and non-fiction, though the line is very blurred at this point in time — in many other genres and forms, it is during the Middle Ages that the romance really becomes an important genre (genre as both form and content), and this development of a new genre is particularly significant.

¹⁵ This is also the reason that I am concentrating on the courtly, or upper class.

The wives and daughters of the wealthy and well-born alone enjoyed the leisure and carried the kind of responsibilities that would have benefited from a knowledge of letters. Reading offered such women several advantages. It freed the religiously inclined from the limitations of the rosary and made available the hours of the Virgin, the psalter and other pious works. It permitted the more frivolous to read aloud from poetry and romances when no one else was available to do so, an invaluable accomplishment on wet and wintry days. (Orme 53)

¹⁶ The one notable exception to this is Love, who appears in many of these texts. See the example of the deity Amor in Flamenca, on page 172 of this dissertation.

¹⁷ This is one of the reasons that the later Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is included in this dissertation: it reflects the concerns and themes present on the continent in an earlier day.

¹⁸ Latin texts will not be discussed in this dissertation. This dissertation is concerned with women and reading, and Latin was not as accessible to women as the vernacular: "As within the nunneries, the literary education of girls outside was probably restricted to the reading of their mother tongue, and perhaps the study of French after that language ceased to be a vernacular in England" (Orme 55). Even as late as the fifteenth century, an English convent's cartulary states: "Women of religion, in reading books, of Latin, be excused of great understanding, as it is not their mother tongue" (qtd. in Clanchy 175). Dante agrees: he writes the Divine Comedy "in the vulgar tongue, 'in which', as Dante observed later, 'even women can exchange ideas'" (Sayers 49).

¹⁹ Again, this is the reason why, as texts from France disappear. I also engage with texts from England, which escapes the decline for somewhat longer.

²⁰ “A subject peasantry; widespread use of the service tenement (that is, the fief) instead of a salary, which was out of the question; the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority – leading inevitably to disorder; and in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and state . . . – such then seem to be the fundamental features of European feudalism.” (M. Bloch 446)

²¹ See the discussion of the relationship between appearance and reality on page 26 of this dissertation.

²² The romance also challenges the culture of the Church. Discussing the different meanings of the word “romance” in the 12th-century, Tony Hunt notes: “These senses emerge in the context of a developing alternative culture to that of the Church, a culture which is not essentially serious, didactic and ecclesiastical, but imaginative, playful, and secular” (11). For romance as an alternative to the Church, see pages 116 and 172 of this dissertation.

²³ See page 97 on of this dissertation for a discussion of the treatment of the romance heroine as an object.

²⁴ See page 94 of this dissertation for a discussion of the *malmariée* or “ill-wed” woman.

²⁵ In Gottfried’s Tristan, Gandin claims that a king who lies is not fit to be king. See page 140 of this dissertation.

²⁶ “I am the king, and I must not lie nor consent to any villainy or falsity or excess; I must preserve reason and rightness, for a loyal king ought to maintain law, truth, faith, and justice. I would not wish in any way to commit disloyalty or wrong, no more to the weak than to the strong; it is not right that any should complain of me, and I do not want the tradition or the custom, which my line is bound to uphold, to fall in disuse. Rightly you should be aggrieved if I sought to impose upon another tradition and other laws than those held by my father the king. Whatever may befall me, I want to preserve and uphold the tradition of my father Pendragon, who was king and emperor” (*Erec* 59).

²⁷ See the discussion of Tristan’s relation to music, on page 141 of this dissertation.

²⁸ By contrast, there is often a rejection on the part of the feudal knight of courtly learning.

²⁹ See Jaeger’s comment on Tristan’s arrival at Mark’s court, on page 140 of this dissertation.

³⁰ “But I tell you truly that there is great honour in dying when undertaking brave deeds and feats and advice and great shame comes from speaking foolish words and giving foolish words and giving foolish advice” (Kennedy 76).

³¹ “**engyn(e)** *n.* engine, device [. . .] *male e.* deceit, trickery” (Spisak 785).

³² T. H. White, a medievalist turned children’s author, emphasized the problems brought about by the breaking down of the sacred nature of the word in the feudal system. As an old man, King Arthur ponders to himself:

Perhaps war was due to fear of reliability. Unless there was truth, and unless people told the truth, there was always danger in everything outside the

individual. You told the truth to yourself, but you made no surety for your neighbour. This uncertainty must end by making the neighbour a menace. Such, at any rate, would have been Lancelot's explanation of the war. He had been used to say that man's most vital possession was his Word. Poor Lance, he had broken his own word: all the same, there had been few men with such a good one. (671)

³³ The courtly knight is often caught between the two, which creates tension in romance.

"A problem which has no easy solution, a conflict between equally valid responsibilities or feelings, strains the conventions of Arthurian romance" (Ferrante, Conflict 11).

³⁴ However, the courtly knight does not always lie. See the discussion of the rash boon, beginning on page 32 of this dissertation.

³⁵ For other examples of the courtly knight lying, see the story of Tristan, starting on page 137 of this dissertation, and the story of Flamenca, in particular page 170 of this dissertation.

³⁶ "I'm her brother, my sister she.
 'Have no fear, friend,' said Daire. 'It's true
 You know what kin she is to you.
 But you misstate the truth a bit:
 It's foolish thus to alter it.'
 'Tis so,' the young man made reply.
 'I'm a king's son, I'll certify.
 Blanche fleur is my sweet friend, 'fore God,
 Stolen away from me by fraud.'" (Floire 68)

³⁷ This theory was also applied to a knight's armor. If a name designates the person, as "the sign is merely the substitute in discourse for the object in the world" (Arthur 11), so does the armour and the insignia designate the knight. "It is clear that a man's

heraldic device was seen in the medieval period as a simple sign for the man himself” (Arthur 48). A heraldic device, or coat of arms, did have some similarities to the name, in that it presented objects that were thought to symbolize the nature of the person in question. Richard the Lion-Hearted had a lion on his shield, while heralds would have doves on their shields, for the dove was seen to have messenger abilities (Arthur 55), probably due to the Biblical story of the flood and Jesus’ baptism. Bestiaries would have been used to find appropriate symbols for such devices. The switching of external symbols, including shields and armor, often occurs in medieval romance. Malory is particularly fond of this ploy, which rarely leads to happy results.

³⁸ See page 103 of this dissertation.

³⁹ See pages 70 and 71 of this dissertation.

⁴⁰ See page 44 of this dissertation.

⁴¹ Master Peter Guy could not keep himself from weeping.
His wife fell on her knees;
it seemed very clear that she suffered
because tears fell from her eyes,
and then her face was flushed;
(Flamenca 3573-78)

The terrible event they are weeping over? William is cutting his hair, which is much admired in the romance. See page 169 of this dissertation.

⁴² While William claims that he was a canon in Péronne (Flamenca 3560) he is not acting as a canon now, and is thus using this vocation as a disguise. It is interesting to note that William is apparently criticized for this by the narrator, who refers to him as Master Isengrim (Flamenca 3693), a symbol for a hypocritical priest. Perhaps, for the narrator,

there are limits to what is permitted in the name of love. Still, if William was a priest, it was one of the few times that he does include a modicum of truth in his elaborate dissemblances. Despite these disguises, Flamenca and her handmaids recognize William as a worthy romantic hero and savior. Thus, Flamenca, it would seem, evidences the deeper sight of true love.

⁴³ "Have a cope made for me—round,
large, ample and full—
of black or greyish wool,
of rough and homespun cloth
that would cover me from head to toe."
(Flamenca 3683-7)

⁴⁴ See page 32 onward of this dissertation for a discussion of the rash boon, and page 48 of this dissertation for the story of Pwyll's rash boon.

⁴⁵ Even Gauvain, that model romance knight, goes incognito in "L'atre Périlleux" or "The Perilous Cemetery." "Gauvain is incognito for most of the romance and is known as *cil sans nom* ("he without a name")" (Busby, Atre 23).

⁴⁶ See page 45 of this dissertation.

⁴⁷ See pages 141 and 149 of this dissertation.

⁴⁸ "the king told his knights that he wished to revive the custom of the hunt for the white stag. Sir Gawain was not pleased by what he heard. 'Lord,' he said, 'this hunt will never bring you pleasure or thanks. We have all known for some time the meaning of the custom of the white stag: whoever can kill the white stag has the right to kiss the most beautiful maiden of your court regardless of the consequences. Great peril could come from this, for there are five hundred young ladies of noble birth here, wise and charming, the daughters of kings. There is none who does not have a bold and valiant

knight for her lover, and each lover would gladly affirm, whether right or wrong, that his beloved is the most charming and the most beautiful.” (Erec 1-2)

⁴⁹ “‘I know this,’ the king replied. ‘Nevertheless I shall not renounce my plan on that account. The word of the king should not be contradicted.’” (Erec 2)

⁵⁰ See page 133 onward of this dissertation for the discussion of double-speak.

⁵¹ See pages 159, 179, and 180 of this dissertation.

⁵² See pages 84 and 86 of this dissertation.

⁵³ The rash boon is not unique to medieval romance, appearing in earlier texts as diverse as the Bible, Oedipus Rex, Gilgamesh, and The Ramayana. Tolkien sees it as an aspect of fairy tales and folktales, commenting that “the necessity of keeping promises (even those with intolerable consequences). . . together with observing prohibitions, runs through all Fairyland” (Tolkien, On Fairy 153).

⁵⁴ “‘I wish to ask one other gift of you, which I shall repay if God permits me to emerge with the honours of the battle.’

And the vavasour generously replied: ‘Ask confidently for what you wish, whatever it may be. Nothing I have will be denied you!’

[. . .] if you equip me with armour and entrust your daughter to me to win the sparrow-hawk tomorrow, I shall take her to my land if God give me the victory; there I shall crown her and she will be queen of ten cities.’

[. . .] ‘Are you Erec, the son of Lac?’

‘That is my name,’ he said, ‘exactly.’

The host rejoiced greatly at this [. . .] ‘I shall never refuse your request: I entrust my beautiful daughter to you, just as you desire.’” (Erec 45)

⁵⁵ For another example of Arthur’s discretion in granting boons, see the example from Kilhwch and Olwen, on page 35 of this dissertation.

⁵⁶ “if it is taken by a knight he shall have, in addition to the cup, whatever reward he might request if it is to be found in this world.” (Cligès, 141).

⁵⁷ Roger Sherman Loomis notes: “Certainly, as a schoolgirl once wrote, Arthur’s queen was ‘a lady very much subject to the misfortune of being run away with’” (Loomis, Development 49). Arthur’s rash boons play a considerable part in his queen’s misadventures. Surely Guinevere must have been relieved to have finally made this list, even if it is as the very last item.

⁵⁸ “The king had the precious gold cup, weighing fifteen marks, presented to Alexander, and told and assured him that there was nothing so precious in all his kingdom, saving only his crown and his queen, that he would not hand over to him if he asked.” (Cligès 149)

⁵⁹ See page 38 of this dissertation for an example of Guinevere’s unfortunate adventures due to rash boons.

⁶⁰ As many of these rash boons occur at the beginning of the romances, and spur on the action, they could be viewed as functions, a device to further the story. However, it is still significant that they are exclusively the domain of men.

⁶¹ “I’ve been subverted
By your wealth, basely put upon
By cunning and deception
[. . .]

So, whether good or ill ensue,
I shall not fail my pledge to you.”
(Floire 82)

⁶² In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain does not have any permanent *physical* damage due to his rash boon. See Gawain’s rash boon on page 82 of this dissertation. See also King Arthur’s rash boon from the same text, on page 76 of this dissertation.

⁶³ See Chrétien de Troyes’ *Cligès* for an example of a rash boon that shares some of these exemptions. See page 33 of this dissertation.

⁶⁴ Armel Diverres comments on this incident as follows:

“On his arrival at Arthur’s court, Culhwch, following his father’s instructions, asks the king to trim his hair. According to the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, this appears to have been an acknowledgment of consanguinity, and of course the two characters are first cousins, since they have a common maternal grandfather. However, in *Culhwch and Olwen* Arthur accedes to the young man’s request before learning for certain of their kinship” (55).

Diverres continues: “which suggests that in this context the writer may have understood the tradition to be part of an initiation ceremony into manhood for a youth of aristocratic birth, into a status of knighthood” (55-6). However, I believe that Diverres had the right interpretation the first time: Arthur is again displaying his lack of *mésure*.

⁶⁵ “Kay. . . came directly to the king, and spoke to him in indignation: ‘My king, I have served you well, in good faith and loyally. But now I take my leave; I shall go away and serve you no more!’

[. . .]

“Sir Seneschal, remain at court as you have in the past, and be assured that there’s nothing I have in all this world that I’d not give you at once to keep you here.”

{ . . . }

In desperation King Arthur went to his queen and asked: “My lady, have you no idea what the seneschal wants from me? He has asked for leave and says that he will quit my court. I don’t know why. But what he wouldn’t do for me, he’ll do at once if you beg him”

{ . . . }

Then the queen, in all her majesty, fell down at his feet. Kay begged her to rise, but she replied that she would not do so: she would never again rise until he had granted her wish. At that Kay promised her that he would remain, but only if the king and queen herself would grant in advance what he was about to request.

“Kay,” said she, “no matter what it may be, both he and I will grant it. Now come and we’ll tell him that on this condition you’ll remain.”” (Knights of the Cart 208-9)

⁶⁶ ““My lord,” said Kay, “know then what I want and the nature of the gift that you have promised me; I consider myself most fortunate to obtain it with your blessing; you have agreed to entrust to me the queen whom I see here before me, and we shall go after the knight who is awaiting us in the forest.”

Though it saddened the king, he entrusted her to Kay, for never was he known to break his word; but his anger and pain were written clearly on his face. The queen was also very upset, and all those in the household insisted that Kay’s request was proud, rash and foolhardy.” (Knights of the Cart 209)

⁶⁷ Caution would seem particularly warranted as, only moments before, a strange knight came and challenged the court to a duel for Guinevere.

⁶⁸ “Arthur took his queen by the hand, and said to her: ‘My lady, there is no way to prevent your going with Kay.’” (Knight of the Cart 209)

⁶⁹ “‘Now trust her to me,’ Kay insisted, ‘and don’t be afraid of anything, for I’ll bring her back quite happy and safe.’” (Knight of the Cart 208)

⁷⁰ See King Mark’s rash boon on page 139 of this dissertation.

⁷¹ “‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I ask of you
 Something which I need,
 Which I beg you to give me;
 Don’t refuse me this gift.’
 The king said to him: ‘I grant you,
 Fair nephew, whatever you wish of me:
 Ask with confidence:
 Indeed there is nothing you could want
 That I would not grant you.’
 The knight thanked him:
 He then revealed what he was asking of him
 And what favor had been granted him:
 ‘I shall go hunting in the forest:’
 [.....]
 The king heard what his nephew said
 And the request which he had made:
 He was very unhappy, not knowing what to do:
 he wanted to withdraw his promise
 And asked Guingamor to drop the matter;
 He should not make that request of him.”
 (Guingamor 183-212)

⁷² A similar sentiment is expressed regarding Kay’s demand of Guinevere in Chrétien de Troyes’ The Knight of the Cart.

⁷³ “Guingamor replied to the king:
 ‘Sir, by the loyalty I owe you,
 I will not abandon for anything,
 Even if I were given the whole world.

My plan to hunt the boar tomorrow.”
 (Guingamor 225-229)

⁷⁴ The queen is seeking her revenge on Guingamor for refusing to be her lover. This is reminiscent of the stories of Lanval and La Chastelaine de Vergi, discussed starting on page 53 of this dissertation.

⁷⁵ “She implored the king to grant
 What the knight was asking of him;
 She thought that she would soon be rid of him;
 She would not see him again in her lifetime.
 So much did the queen plead
 That the king granted the request.”
 (Guingamor 239-244)

⁷⁶ See page 139 of this dissertation.

⁷⁷ This prologue is not found in the Auchinleck manuscript version of Sir Orfeo, dated 1330, but is included in other manuscripts. (In the Auchinleck manuscript this prologue is associated with Lay le Freyne.) The description of Orfeo’s divine parentage is also missing from the Auchinleck version. (Poetry in the Age of Chaucer 41-42).

⁷⁸ “We often read and written find,
 as learned men do us remind,
 that lays that now the harpers sing
 are wrought of many a marvelous thing.
 [.]
 Of all the things that men may heed
 `tis most of love they sing indeed.
 (Sir Orfeo lines 1-4, 11-12)

⁷⁹ Please note that, excepting the first quotation, which is taken from the edition by Thomas C. Rumble (entitled “Kyng Orfew”), all Middle English quotations of Sir Orfeo are from Middle English Verse Romances, edited by Donald B. Sands, while all modern

English quotations are from the Tolkien translation, all included in the bibliography. For ease of reference, I will cite them by their titles only in the text.

⁸⁰ “Sir Orfeo was a king of old,
in England lordship high did hold;
valour he had and hardihood,
a courteous king whose gifts were good.
[.....]
Sir Orfeo, too, all things beyond
of harping’s sweet delight was fond
[.....]
He played so well, beneath the sun
a better harper was there none:
[.....]
There dwelt his queen in fairest bliss,
whom men call Lady Heurodis,
of ladies then the one most fair
who ever flesh and blood did wear:
in her did grace and goodness dwell,
but none her loveliness can tell.”
(Sir Orfeo 25-56)

⁸¹ “If let or hindrance thou dost make,
where’er thou be, we shall thee take
and all thy limbs shall rend and tear —
no aid of man shall help thee there;
and even so, all rent and torn,
thou shalt away with us be born.”
(Sir Orfeo 170-75)

⁸² This is in contrast to The Wooing of Etain, where the men of Ireland do offer counsel.

This is in keeping with the feudal tone of the Irish tale: vassals were expected to offer *auxilium*, physical aid, and *consilium*, counsel. Eochaid Airem is offered both, successfully. See page 41 of this dissertation.

⁸³ “He counsel sought of every man,
but none could find him help or plan.”
(Sir Orfeo 179-80)

⁸⁴ “On the morrow, when the noon drew near,

in arms did Orfeo appear,
 and full ten hundred knights with him,
 all stoutly armed, all stern and grim;
 and with their queen now went that band
 beneath the grafted tree to stand.
 A serried rank on every side
 they made, and vowed there to abide,
 and die there sooner for her sake
 than let men thence their lady take."
 (Sir Orfeo 181-89)

⁸⁵ This is similar to The Wooing of Etain. See page 41 of this dissertation.

⁸⁶ "And yet from midst of that array
 the queen was sudden snatched away:
 by magic was she from them caught,
 and none knew whither she was brought."
 (Sir Orfeo 191-94)

⁸⁷ "Alas! too long hath lasted life,
 when I dare not with mine own wife
 to speak a word, nor she with me."
 (Sir Orfeo 335-37)

⁸⁸ While there are several similarities, Bliss cites the lack of a passage into a hollow hill
 in The Wooing of Etain as proof that Sir Orfeo is not a direct derivative from The
 Wooing of Etain (xxxv).

⁸⁹ "In faith, I have a minstrel's skill
 with mirth and music, if he please,
 thy lord to cheer, and him to ease."
 (Sir Orfeo 382-85)

⁹⁰ Later, Orfeo also uses his "disguise" as a chance to test his steward, who proves his
 loyalty admirably.

⁹¹ Compare this to the description of Archimbaut on page 163 of this dissertation.

⁹² "O look! O what a man!" they said,
 "How long the hair hangs from his head!
 His beard is dangling to his knee!

He is gnarled and knotted like a tree!""
(Sir Orfeo 505-8)

⁹³ "he knelt him down before the king:
'O lord," said he, 'if it be thy will,
now shalt thou hear my minstrel's skill.'
The king replied: 'What man art thou
that hither darest venture now?
Not I nor any here with me
have ever sent to summon thee,
and since here first my reign began
I have never found so rash a man
that he to us would dare to wend,
unless I first for him should send.'"
(Sir Orfeo 418-28)

⁹⁴ "'My lord,' said he, 'I thee assure,
I am but a wandering minstrel poor;
and, sir, this custom use we all
at the house of many a lord to call,
and little though our welcome be,
to offer there our minstrelsy.'"
(Sir Orfeo 429-34)

⁹⁵ "At last when he his harping stayed,
this speech the king to him then made:
'Minstrel, thy music pleaseth me,
Come, ask of me whate'er it be,
and rich reward I will thee pay.
Come, speak, and prove now what I say!'"
(Sir Orfeo 447-52)

⁹⁶ One of the main differences here seems to be that the audience is on his side. See the
story of Tristan and Gandin on page 139 of this dissertation.

⁹⁷ "'Good sir," he said, 'I beg of thee
that this thing thou wouldst give to me,
that very lady fair to see
who sleeps beneath the grafted tree.'"
(Sir Orfeo 453-6)

⁹⁸ "'Nay,' said the king, 'that would not do!
A sorry pair ye'd make, ye two:

for thou art black, and rough, and lean,
and she is faultless, fair and clean.
A monstrous thing then would it be
to see her in thy company.”

(Sir Orfeo 457-62)

⁹⁹ “O sir,” he said, “O gracious king,
but it would be fouler thing
from mouth of thine to hear a lie.
Thy vow, sir thou canst not deny,
Whate’er I asked, that should I gain,
and thou must needs thy word maintain.”

(Sir Orfeo 463-68)

¹⁰⁰ “The king then said: “Since that is so,
now take her hand in thine, and go;
I wish thee joy of her, my friend!”

(Sir Orfeo 469-71)

101 See Guinevere on page 38 of this dissertation for an exception, if only by proxy.

102 See page 133 of this dissertation.

103 See page 110 of this dissertation for a discussion of romance heroines reading
romance.

104 Compare this to King Arthur’s behaviour earlier in the same text. See page 33 of this
dissertation.

¹⁰⁵ See another example of a woman suffering for a male’s rash boon in the discussion of
La Chastelaine de Vergi, on page 63 on of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁶ See page 133 on of this dissertation for a fuller explanation of double-speak.

¹⁰⁷ “Fair lady, if it were to please you to grant me the joy of wanting to love me, you
could ask nothing that I would not do as best I could, be it foolish or wise. I shall do as
you bid and abandon all others for you. I never want to leave you and this is what I most
desire.” (Lanval 74)

¹⁰⁸ Please note that all Old French quotations from the works of Marie de France are from the edition by Karl Warnke, while all English quotations are from the Penguin edition, both included in the bibliography. For ease of reference, I will reference them by their titles only in the text.

¹⁰⁹ Please note, however, that she does not grant him a *rash* boon. She herself defines the terms of her gift to him.

¹¹⁰ “When the girl heard these words from the man who loved her so, she granted him her love and her body. Now Lanval was on the right path! She gave him a boon, that henceforth he could wish for nothing which he would not have, and however generously he gave or spent, she would still find enough for him. Lanval was very well lodged, for the more he spent, the more gold and silver he would have.” (Lanval 74-75)

¹¹¹ “‘Beloved,’ she said, ‘I admonish, order, and beg you not to reveal this secret to anyone! I shall tell you the long and the short of it: you would lose me forever if this love were to become known. You would never be able to see me or possess me.’ He replied that he would do what she commanded.” (Lanval 75)

¹¹² With the repetition in this demand, Marie de France not only places emphasis on the importance of the lady’s demand, but she also acknowledges the slipperiness of words: her heroine, well aware of this, tries to protect herself as much as possible. This repetition can also be seen in Guigemar, when the lovers are “perceived, discovered, found and seen.” See page 102 of this dissertation.

¹¹³ “Lanval gave costly gifts, Lanval freed prisoners, Lanval clothed the jongleurs, Lanval performed many honourable acts.” (Lanval 75)

¹¹⁴ In both texts discussed here, it is the highest lady of the land who attempts to give her love to a knight and is rebuffed. This could certainly be seen as a misogynistic comment on the untrustworthy and dishonourable nature of women, although these portraits are offset by the behaviour of the heroines.

¹¹⁵ “‘Lady,’ he said, ‘leave me be! I have no desire to love you, for I have long served the king and do not want to betray my faith. Neither you nor your love will ever lead me to wrong my lord!’” (Lanval 76)

¹¹⁶ This is in sharp contrast to the queen, who has broken her faith with the king through the speech that provoked this response.

¹¹⁷ It is interesting that the word “mesparla” (Lanval 278) is used in reference to the Queen, when no such comment is made for Lanval’s previous speech. Is this because misspeaking is worth comment in a woman, but considered normative in a man?

¹¹⁸ This accusation is not present in La Chastelaine de Vergi, although the Duchess does make mention that the Knight’s name has never been linked with that of a woman. See page 63 of this dissertation.

¹¹⁹ Lanval is even worse at keeping a confidence than the Knight of La Chastelaine de Vergi, who at least must be commanded while under oath before revealing his secret. See page 64 of this dissertation.

¹²⁰ “‘He said something in spite that he was often to regret. ‘Lady, I am not skilled in the profession you mention, but I love and am loved by a lady who should be prized above all others I know.’” (Lanval 76)

¹²¹ “And I will tell you one thing: you can be sure that one of her servants, even the very poorest girl, is worth more than you, my lady the Queen, in body, face and beauty, wisdom and goodness.” (Lanval 76-77)

¹²² “The queen left and went in tears to her chamber, very distressed and angry that he had humiliated her in this way. She took to her bed ill and said that she would never get up again, unless the king saw that justice was done her in respect of her complaint.” (Lanval 77)

¹²³ The monkey shows everyone her baby, asking if it is beautiful. The lion says no. Depressed, she is walking home when the bear asks to hold her “beautiful” child to kiss it – the bear eats it instead.

¹²⁴ “And for this reason you should not
Disclose your secret or your thought.
Some things can bring delight to one,
Which to some others prove no fun.
Disclosure brings iniquity:
This world has no integrity.”
(Marie, Fables 25-30)

¹²⁵ “King, I have loved one of your vassals, Lanval, whom you see there. Because of what he said, he was accused in your court, and I do not wish him to come to any harm. You should know that the queen was wrong, as he never sought her love. As regards the boast he made, if he can be acquitted by me, let your barons release him!” (Lanval 81)

¹²⁶ “There was not one who did not consider that Lanval had successfully defended himself, and so he was freed.” (Lanval 81)

¹²⁷ This seems to have been a fairly popular story during the Middle Ages and later, with several manuscripts and a few pictorial renditions on ivory caskets still extant.

Touching allusions to the heroine of the story have been made by various illustrious writers. Froissart, for example, guided by Dame Pleasance and Dame Esperance into the garden of King Love, saw her there with Helen, Genievre, Isoud, Hero, Polyxena, Dame Equo, and Medea, and he ranks her love with the sad loves of Tristran and Isoud, and of the Lady of Fayel and the Chatelaine of Coucy. (Brandin 3-4)

¹²⁸ "Some there are who make pretence to be loyal, and so truly to keep secret that which is confided to them, that in the end trust is put in them. But when it happens that any one has been so indiscreet as to let them know of his love and of his doings, forthwith they noise it abroad, and make merry over it. And thus it comes to pass that he who has made known the secret, loses all delight, since the greater the love between true lovers, the more grieved are they when either thinks that that which should have been kept secret, has been made know by the other. And oftentimes does such mischief come of it, that their love must needs end in great sorrow and shame, as it chanced in Burgundy to a valiant and brave knight, and to the Lady of Vergi, whom the Knight loved so well." (Chatelaine 19-20)

¹²⁹ "that the Lady gave him her love on this condition, that whensoever he should discover unto another their love, on that day would he lose her love, and the gift which she had made to him of herself." (Chatelaine 19-20)

¹³⁰ "And to enjoy their love, they devised for the Knight to come alway into an orchard when she should appoint, and in nowise to stir from one corner of it until he had seen a

little dog cross the orchard. Then without tarrying might he come to her chamber, and know well that he would find his lady alone.” (Chatelaine 19-20)

¹³¹ “Thus, unknown to any, did their sweet and secret love longwhile dure.” (Chatelaine 10)

¹³² The knight is described as “biaus et cointes” (Chastelaine 43). Many female heroines come to poor marriages because their beauty has attracted shallow feudal suitors. Here, the knight’s good looks and valour attract the same unwanted attention.

¹³³ “Tell me if you do not now know that I have given you my love, I who am a lady of high degree.” (Chatelaine 22)

¹³⁴ “And forthwith the Knight made answer : ‘My lady, I know it not, but I would desire to possess your love in a right and honourable way.’” (Chatelaine 22)

¹³⁵ “But may God preserve me from that love between you and me which would bring shame to my lord, for by no means would I in anywise undertake aught so dishonourable as to cause base and disloyal wrong to my rightful and liege lord.” (Chatelaine 22)

¹³⁶ “For shame !’ said she, wrathful. ‘And who, Sir Knave, asked this of you ?’
‘Ah, my lady,” said he, “I well understand, thank God, but I have said enough.” (Chatelaine 23)

¹³⁷ If a woman’s sexuality is her only weapon and defense, if it is what gains her social status via a husband, and what gets her a lover to help her escape a loveless marriage, the Knight has denied the Duchess any power she may have. However, she uses this same power, the claim that her sexuality attracts men, to exact her revenge. Sexuality

is a double-edge sword for women. Their sexual appeal may land them in unappealing situations, but it can also help them escape. See also the footnote on page 67 of this dissertation.

¹³⁸ This could be considered an example of double-speak. The duchess does not say the duke is wrongly bestowing his favour, but makes her statement in such a way that the Duke interprets her statement so, exactly as she intended. The Duchess ultimately causes the Duke to do grave wrongs. (See page 69 on of this dissertation.). The idea of woman as an evil manipulator of language is also present in Flamenea, which makes a distinction between those who use language for justified purposes, and those who do not. See page 196 of this dissertation.

¹³⁹ The Duchess does lie once, but the rest of her statement is truthful. She has never heard of any other love, and it may be true that he thought of this (she half admits her lie here, but her husband does not hear it). It would also be right of the Duke to protect his honour. However, it does not need to be protected here.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Then said she: ‘Truly it greatly grieves me that a noble lord knows not who is faithful to him, and who is not, and, moreover, bestows goodwill and honour on those who are traitors to him, though he perceives it not.’

‘By my faith, lady,’ said the Duke. ‘I know not wherefore you speak thus, but of this I am quit, for by no means would I wittingly nourish a traitor.’

‘Then hate this one,’ said she (and she named unto him the Knight), ‘who has ceased not the whole day long to pray me for my love. Longtime, said he, had he thought on this, but ne’er had he dared utter it. And I was resolved, good sire, to make it

known unto you, for it may be true that he has longwhiles thought on this, for never have we heard tell that he loves another. So I pray you, in requital, to protect your honour, since you know this to be right.” (Chatelaine 22-24)

¹⁴¹ “Quit my territory forthwith, for certes I banish you from it, and wholly forbid and deny it unto you. Never enter it more, and know well that if ever I chance to catch you in it, I will have you hanged.” (Chatelaine 25)

¹⁴² “And when the Knight heard this, he was filled with anger and vexation, so that he trembled in every limb when he thought on his Love, of whom he knew that he could have no joy if he could not go to and fro, and return to the country whence the Duke would banish him; and great dole made he also that the Duke should unjustly hold himself as dead and as betrayed.” (Chatelaine 25-26)

¹⁴³ “Whosoever has told this unto you, has done evil.” (Chatelaine 26)

¹⁴⁴ “The lady herself has made known to me the way in which, like a vile traitor, you have besought her, and perchance you have said that to her of the which she keeps silence.” (Chatelaine 27)

¹⁴⁵ This is one of the few times where love does conceal itself, with unfortunate results. Generally, love cannot hide itself, but ultimately betrays itself. Refer to page 26 of this dissertation to see this problem of appearance reflecting reality, and page 103 to see this occur in Marie de France’s Yonec.

¹⁴⁶ “If you will swear to me on your fealty that you will truly make answer to me in that which I shall ask of you, by your words I shall know of a certainty whether or not you have done that of the which I have suspicion against you.” (Chatelaine 27)

¹⁴⁷ “replied without demur he would do as the Duke had said, for he thought not but on that which disquieted the Duke, and in nowise did he bethink him that the Duke would question him touching any other matter. And thus he took his oath, and the Duke accepted his plighted word.” (Chatelaine 27-28)

¹⁴⁸ “unless you make known to me that you so love another, that you leave me altogether without doubt that I know the whole truth. And if this you will not do, then forthwith shall you depart out of my territory as a perjured man.” (Chatelaine 28-29)

¹⁴⁹ It is ironic that this Knight, who has read romances, and even compares himself to the hero of another romance, could not have thought earlier to avoid the predicament by learning from the errors of others.

¹⁵⁰ “Bethink you that if you privily tell me your secret, I shall make it know unto any one ? Certes, before doing this, I would let my teeth be pulled out one by one.”
(Chatelaine 29-31)

¹⁵¹ “Then said the Duke : ‘I swear to you on my body, and on my soul, and on the love and faith that I owe to you in return for your homage, that in all my life it shall neither be told by me to any living creature, or shall allusion of any kind be made thereto.’”
(Chatelaine 31-32)

¹⁵² The Duke is promising feudal loyalty, which he betrays: he fails under the feudal system as well as the courtly one.

¹⁵³ “And the Knight, weeping, said to him : ‘Sire, then will I tell it to you. I love your niece of Vergi, and she loves me, as much as is possible.’”

‘Tell me now, if you would be believed.’ said the Duke. ‘Knows no one save you two of this?’

And the Knight answered him, ‘Not a living creature.’” (Chatelaine 31-32)

¹⁵⁴ See page 75 onward of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁵ “he determined that that which the Duchess had told unto him was false, and greatly was he pleased.” (Chatelaine 35)

¹⁵⁶ “‘I swear to you that ever henceforth I shall love you, and never again shall I harry you, for all that you have told unto me is true, and you have not lied by one word unto me.’” (Chatelaine 38)

¹⁵⁷ The Knight speaks truly, perhaps truer than he knows. He will indeed die when his secret is made known to his lover. See page 71 of this dissertation.

¹⁵⁸ It is a little too late for the Duke to urge the Knight to silence: the secret has been revealed.

¹⁵⁹ “‘Sire,’ said the Knight, ‘I pray you thanks. But by the grace of God, I demand and pray of you that you disclose not this secret, else shall I lose my Love, and all joy and comfort, and without doubt I shall die if I know that another than you have knowledge of it.’

‘Speak not of it.’” said the Duke. “and know that it will be so well kept secret, that no word of it shall ever be uttered by me.” (Chatelaine 38-39)

¹⁶⁰ “so filled with anger and mortification at this was the Duchess, that she arose from the table, and feigned to be overcome of sickness.” (Chatelaine 39)

¹⁶¹ See page 26 of this dissertation for a discussion of other texts in which this betrayal occurs.

¹⁶² "when the Duke was come to bed, she withdrew to one side. And she made pretence that it gave her no joy that the Duke should be beside her, for well knew she that to make semblance of anger was the way to make her husband yield. Therefore thus did she remain, that she might the better make the Duke believe that she was much angered." (Chatelaine 41)

¹⁶³ "My sweet friend, by no means can I endure your anger or your wrath ; but know that I cannot tell you that which you desire without committing too great villainy."
(Chatelaine 43)

¹⁶⁴ "Sire, if you tell it not to me, then from this I see well that apparently you trust me not to keep your secret. And know that I much marvel at this, for never has any secret, either great or small, that you have told me, been made known by me, and I tell you in good faith that never, whiles I love, will this come to pass."

And when she had thus spoken, she again wept." (Chatelaine 43-44)

¹⁶⁵ Other romance heroines, including Gottfried von Strassburg's Isolde, use this. See footnote 369 on page 270 of this dissertation.

¹⁶⁶ "greatly do I fear that you will repeat it." (Chatelaine 44)

¹⁶⁷ "Know then, and I now forewarn you, that if you betray me, you shall die for it."

And she said : "Wholly do I agree to this. It cannot be that I should do you any wrong."
(Chatelaine 44)

- ¹⁶⁸ Here, the duchess lies outright. She also does not believe in the consequences that the Duke swears. And indeed, why should she? He has not kept his word thus far.
- ¹⁶⁹ “And when the Duchess heard that the Knight loved one of lower rank, and for this had rejected her, she seemed to herself as dead and despised, but never did she let this be seen, but agreed, and made promise to the Duke, to keep the matter secret, and that if it should be made know by her, then might he hang her up to a branch.” (Chatelaine 45)
- ¹⁷⁰ “Then the Duchess, who perceived her opportunity, could not restrain herself, and said, as though in a jest : ‘Chatelaine, make you very quaint, for you have as acquaintance a handsome and brave lover.’ (Chatelaine 47)
- ¹⁷¹ “And she made answer simply : ‘Of a truth, my lady, I know not what acquaintance you have in mind, but I desire not to have for lover any one who may not be in all things to mine own honour, and to that of my lord.’” (Chatelaine 47)
- ¹⁷² “‘Right well do I grant this,’ said the Duchess, ‘but you are a clever mistress to have learned how to train the little dog.’” (Chatelaine 47)
- ¹⁷³ “And her heart was filled with anguish, and she paled and wholly changed colour.” (Chatelaine 47)
- ¹⁷⁴ “‘Never could he have told it unto her were it not that they have had close acquaintance, and that, since he has betrayed me, he doubtless loves her more than he does me ! Well do I now perceive that he loves me not at all since he fails in his oath to me.’” (Chatelaine 48)
- ¹⁷⁵ “‘I bethought me, God bless me ! that you would be more loyal to me than was Tristram to Isoud.’” (Chatelaine 49)

¹⁷⁶ Is this a call to the god of courtly love or *fin' amors*? It is not clear, although many romance heroines do pray to a goddess of love. See the example of Flamenca on page 172 of this dissertation.

¹⁷⁷ “Is it right, then, that he has made known our secret, by the which he loses me ?
When I freely gave him my love, I said to him, and truly made covenant with him, that whensoever he made known our love, he would lose me. And as now I have lost him, I cannot live after such sorrow, nor without him for whom I mourn, do I desire so to do. No longer have I any pleasure of my life, and so I pray God to send me death.”

(Chatelaine 50-51)

¹⁷⁸ “she clasped her arms tightly together, and her heart failed her, and her face changed colour, and she swooned with anguish, and lay dead in the middle of the bed, pale and without colour.” (Chatelaine 52)

¹⁷⁹ “the Knight . . . entered the inner chamber where his Love lay on her back on the bed, livid and without colour. And having opportunity for this, and pleasure in it, he forthwith clasped her in his arms, and kissed her, but he found that her mouth was cold, and that she was all pale and stiff, and from her appearance he saw well that she was quite dead.” (Chatelaine 53)

¹⁸⁰ “I shall do justice upon myself because of the treachery that I have committed.’
And then he drew from its sheath a sword that hung upon a nail, and ran it through his heart, and he fell on the other body, and so much did he bleed, that he died.”

(Chatelaine 53-54)

¹⁸¹ “And to the Duke, whom she met, she told all that she had heard and seen, and kept back from him naught of how the affair began, and also of the little trained dog about which the Duchess had spoken.” (Chatelaine 55)

¹⁸² See page 68 of this dissertation.

¹⁸³ “without uttering a word.” (Chatelaine 55)

¹⁸⁴ “And then the Duke, in the hearing of all who would hear it, told the whole affair before the Court.” (Chatelaine 55-56)

¹⁸⁵ “Ah, God ! All this distress and trouble came to the Knight because he so mischanced as to make known that which he ought to have kept secret, and which his Love had forbidden him to speak of so long as he would possess her love.” (Chatelaine 56-57)

¹⁸⁶ “And from this example one ought to keep secret one’s love with such great judgment, that one may always have in remembrance that to discover it avails naught, and that to hide it is of profit in every way. Whosoever does this, fears not the attacks of false and inquisitive felons who pry into the loves of others.” (Chatelaine 56-57)

¹⁸⁷ The Duke does live, but as a joyless Knight Templar (Chastelaine 937-941).

¹⁸⁸ An example of this, “*Die Krone*, a thirteenth-century German epic by Heinrich von dem Türlin (ed. H. F. Schoel, 1852), makes Gawain a Grail hero by having him ask the correct question *immediately* and thus release the victims in a castle of the dead.” (Jackson, Literature 86)

¹⁸⁹ The importance of naming is also evidence of this direct and unequivocal relationship between reality and words. Naming plays a particularly important part in the romance, for it is Gawain’s lack of understanding of the nature of naming that leads to much of

the plot. Because names give power, names are often hidden in order to deny this power to others. This is something that is seen in medieval lyric. The *senhal*, a false name, is used to hide the identity of the lady being praised by her lover in order to protect her from *losengiers* (calumniators or troublemakers) and *jaloux* (jealous husbands). (See page 97 of this dissertation.) Of course, if knowing someone's name allows power over him or her, this suggests that, by keeping one's name hidden, as the Green Knight does, one can deny others power over you. This is why Gawain, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, should have learned the name (and consequently, the nature) of his opponent: the outward appearance can be deceiving (I am assuming here that if his host had been Green as well, Gawain would have picked up on this hint that he and the Green Knight were one and the same), whereas the name tells at least something of the truth. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, many of the knights are given epithets that describe a characteristic they possess, as with "Agrauayn a la Dure Mayn" (Sir Gawain 110). This is common in other romances as well.

¹⁹⁰ Please note that all Middle English quotations of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight are from The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript, while all English quotations are from the translation by Marie Boroff, both included in the bibliography. For ease of reference, I will reference them by their titles only in the text.

¹⁹¹ "And therefore sighing he said, 'I beseech of Thee, Lord,
And Mary, thou mildest mother so dear,
Some harborage where haply I might hear mass
And Thy matins tomorrow — meekly I ask it.'"
(Sir Gawain 753-56)

¹⁹⁸ "... the praise of you, prince, is puffed up so high."
 (Sir Gawain 258)

¹⁹⁹ "...But if you be so bold as all men believe,
 You will graciously grant the game that I ask
 by right."

Arthur answer gave
 And said, "Sir courteous knight,
 If contest here you crave,
 You shall not fail to fight."

(Sir Gawain 272-77)

²⁰⁰ "When the court kept its counsel he coughed aloud
 And cleared his throat coolly, the clearer to speak:
 "What, is this Arthur's house," said the horseman then,
 "Whose fame is so fair in far realms and wide?
 Where now is your arrogance and your awesome deeds,
 Your valor and your victories and your vaunting words?"
 (Sir Gawain 307-12)

²⁰¹ "...Now are the revel and renown of the Round Table
 Overwhelmed with a word of one man's speech."
 (Sir Gawain 313-14)

²⁰² "...No guest here is aghast of your great words."
 (Sir Gawain 325)

²⁰³ "...Would you grant me the grace," said Gawain to the king,
 "To be gone from this bench and stand by you there,
 If I without discourtesy might quit this board,
 And if my liege lady misliked it not,
 I would come to your counsel before your court noble,
 For I find it not fit, as in faith it is known,
 When such a boon is begged before all these knights,
 Though you be tempted thereto, to take it on yourself
 While so bold men about upon benches sit,
 That no host under heaven is hardier of will,
 Nor better brothers-in-arm where battle is joined;
 I am the weakest, well I know, and of wit feeblest;
 And the loss of my life would be least of any;
 That I have you for uncle is my only praise;
 My body, but for your blood, is barren of worth;
 And for that this folly befits not a king.

And at this time twelvemonth take from you another
 With what weapon you will, and with no man else
 alive.”

(Sir Gawain 381-85)

²¹⁰ “Then hails he Sir Gawain, the horseman in green:
 ‘Recount we our contract, ere you come further.
 First I ask and adjure you, how you are called
 That you tell me true, so that trust it I may.’
 ‘In good faith,’ said the good knight, ‘Gawain am I.’”

(Sir Gawain 377-81)

²¹¹ “‘What is the way there?’ said Gawain, ‘Where do you dwell?
 I heard never of your house, by Him that made me,
 Nor I know you not, knight, your name nor your court.
 But tell me truly thereof, and teach me your name,
 And I shall fare forth to find you, so far as I may,
 And this I say in good certain, and swear upon oath.’”

(Sir Gawain 398-403)

²¹² “‘How runs your right name? – and let the rest go.’
 ‘That shall I give you gladly,’ said the Green Knight then:
 ‘Bercilak de Hautdesert this barony I hold.’”

(Sir Gawain 2443-45)

²¹³ Gawain almost does not find the location in time. His carelessness with time mirrors
 his carelessness with words, and indeed, almost causes him to break his oath.

²¹⁴ “... With a glad heart I shall
 Both tarry, and undertake any task you devise.”

(Sir Gawain 1081-82)

²¹⁵ Bercilak is wise to doubt, for Gawain does indeed break his word.

²¹⁶ “‘You have bound yourself boldly my bidding to do —
 Will you stand by that boast, and obey me this once?’
 ‘I shall do so indeed,’ said the doughty knight.”

(Sir Gawain 1089-91)

²¹⁷ “‘And Gawain,’ said the good host, ‘agree now to this:
 Whatever I win in the woods I will give you at eve,
 And all you have earned you must offer to me;
 Swear now, sweet friend, to swap as I say,

Whether hands, in the end, be empty or better.
 'By God,' said Sir Gawain, "I grant it forthwith!
 If you find the game good, I shall gladly take part."
 'Let the bright wine be brought, and our bargain is done.'
 Said the lord of that land — the two laughed together."
 (Sir Gawain 1105-1113)

²¹⁸ "The covenants, yet awhile,
 They repeat, and pledge anew:
 That lord could well beguile
 Men's hearts, with mirth in view."
 (Sir Gawain 1122-25)

²¹⁹ There is also an older woman with her, but Gawain pays her no note. Nikki Stiller sees this as emblematic of both the lack of respect paid to older women in romance, where they are somewhat feared. However, she also sees it as evidence of a social group of women, against which the male has little defense:

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the threatening nature of the Old Hag/Young Woman alliance becomes clearer. There are two women at table in Bercilak's castle, a beautiful young woman, she of the green girdle who will attempt to seduce Sir Gawain, and an old crone with "black brows" and "sour" lips. The poet describes both women in the same stanza: they seem to be opposites. As it turns out, however, the young woman is simply an extension, a projection, of the old one, her flesh in its youthful guise: in other words, a kind of daughter. The old woman, it also turns out, is none other than that puissant and dangerous sorceress of the Arthurian legends, Morgan. Gawain's manhood has been tested in this work, and although all he receives is a nick in the neck, Morgan has been responsible for this and indeed for the whole plot against Arthur's court. There is no one so high and mighty, Bercilak explains, that

(Sir Gawain 1224-25)

²²⁶ ...I shall while the time away with mirthful speech
at will

My body is here at hand,
Your each wish to fulfill:
Your servant to command
I am, and shall be still.”

(Sir Gawain 1235-1240)

²²⁷ This is an ironic echo of Gawain’s earlier statement that he is weak of wit (see pages 78 and 83 of this dissertation). The difference is that she is mocking, while Gawain was speaking truer than he knew.

²²⁸ ...Sir, if you be Gawain, it seems a great wonder —
A man so well-meaning, and mannerly disposed,
And cannot act in company as courtesy bids,
And if one takes the trouble to teach him, ’tis all in vain.
That lesson learned lately is lightly forgot,
Though I painted it as plain as my poor wit allowed.”

(Sir Gawain 1481-86)

²²⁹ If not using double-speak, she is at the very least offering a double entendre. See page 133 of this essay.

²³⁰ ...How! are you artless, whom all men praise?
Or do you deem me so dull, or deaf to such words?”

(Sir Gawain 1528-29)

²³¹ that, I know well, wields more power
In that art, by a half, than a hundred such
As I am. . . .”

(Sir Gawain 1541-43)

²³² “pursuing ever the purpose that pricked her heart”
(Sir Gawain 1734)

²³³ “artful words”

(Sir Gawain 1744)

²³⁴ “Great peril attends that meeting

Should Mary forget her knight."
(Sir Gawain 1768-69)

As in so many of these romances, it is a woman who must protect the male.

²³⁵ "Then the man began to muse, and mainly he thought
It was a pearl for his plight, the peril to come
When he gains the Green Chapel to get his reward:
Could he escape unscathed, the scheme were noble!
Then he bore with her words and withstood him no more.
And she repeated her petition and pleaded anew.
And he granted it, and gladly she gave him the belt."
(Sir Gawain 1855-61)

²³⁶ Thinking is not Gawain's strong suit, in this romance or others. He is, as Tolkien comments, "a man truly 'gentle', but not deeply reflective" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 97). He is often seen as the eternal lover, or adolescent, never marrying, and often encouraging his friends to stay the same, as occurs in Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain.

²³⁷ See Bercilak's revelation of the plot, page 89 of this dissertation.

²³⁸ Tolkien later comments wryly: "Which he later expiates, in the same spirit, by telling everyone" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 97). Gawain's verbal excesses are still present at the end of the tale. See page 93 of this dissertation.

²³⁹ Again, the knight displays "that warmth, almost we might say impetuous excess, of courtesy which characterizes Gawain" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 80), going beyond what is necessary in offering his promises. And indeed, as he later wears this belt as a badge, it is not one he will keep.

²⁴⁰ "That not a soul save themselves shall see it thenceforth
with sight."
(Sir Gawain 1864-65)

²⁴¹ "...all I owe here is openly paid."
(Sir Gawain 1941)

Again, Gawain not only commits the sin of omission, but he adds insult to injury by emphasizing it with an outright lie.

²⁴² ...True men pay what they owe."
(Sir Gawain 2354)

²⁴³ ...You failed at the third throw,
So take my tap, sir knight."
(Sir Gawain 2356-2357)

²⁴⁴ Gawain is the model medieval knight, as far as many romancers are concerned. (See page 73 of this dissertation.) If he cannot succeed, there seems little hope for other knights.

²⁴⁵ "Of all that ever walked over the wide earth;
As pearls to white peas, more precious and prized,
So is Gawain, in good faith, to other gay knights."
(Sir Gawain 2363-65)

²⁴⁶ ... the cause was not cunning, nor courtship either,
But that you loved your own life; the less, then, to blame."
(Sir Gawain 2367-68)

²⁴⁷ ... Your cut taught me cowardice, care for my life,
And coveting came after, contrary both
To largesse and loyalty belonging to knights.
Now am I faulty and false, that fearful was ever
Of disloyalty and lie, bad luck to them both!"
(Sir Gawain 2379-83)

²⁴⁸ ...To assay, if such it were, the surfeit of pride
That is rumored of the retinue of the Round Table."
(Sir Gawain 2457-58)

²⁴⁹ ...By subtleties of science and sorcerers' arts,
The mistress of Merlin, she has caught many a man,
[...]
None holds so high a degree
That her arts cannot subdue."
(Sir Gawain 2447-48, 2454-55)

²⁵⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien notes that taking the belt as badge shows Gawain's usual excess, still present even after his chastening adventure (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 100). It also is breaking his promise never to show the sash to anyone. See page 88 of this dissertation.

²⁵⁵ ...This is the sign of sore loss that I have suffered there
 For the cowardice and coveting that I came to there;
 This is the badge of false faith that I was found in there.
 And I must bear it on my body till I breathe my last."
 (Sir Gawain 2507-10)

²⁵⁶ Gawain cannot make light of his defeat: "the more seriously you take your games, the severer and more painful the dilemma. Sir Gawain belonged (as he is depicted) by class, tradition, and training to the kind that take their games with great seriousness" (Tolkien, Sir Gawain 89).

²⁵⁷ See page 90 of this dissertation.

²⁵⁸ The Vulgate Cycle also portrays Arthur as a discourteous husband. At one point, a "False Guenevere . . . accuses her half-sister of not being the woman Arthur married, thereby temporarily tricking Arthur into believing he is her husband. However, when the False Guenevere becomes ill and confesses her deceit, Arthur returns to Guenevere" (Wilson 149).

This is similar to King Mark, who cannot distinguish between his wife and another woman. See page 148 of this dissertation.

²⁵⁹ These characters are also central to Flamenca. See page 162 of this dissertation.

²⁶⁰ "What is this jealous old man afraid of, to keep me so securely imprisoned? He is extremely stupid and foolish, always fearing that he will be betrayed. I can neither go to

church nor hear God's service. . . Cursed be my parents and all those who gave me to this jealous man and married me to his person!" (Yonec 87)

²⁶¹ According to Burgess and Busby, this sympathy is further heightened by the career of the husband.

The lady's husband is designated in Marie's text as an *avouez* (v. 13). It is possible that this term is a general one describing the lord of the city, the holder of the fief. But it is more likely that Marie is referring to the official functions of the advocate (*advocatus*), the officer appointed by the Church to handle its secular affairs. The advocates seem often to have usurped the land they were supposed to protect and to have set themselves up as independent feudal lords. The distaste felt by many for the advocate would emphasize the plight of the lady, married off to him in order to produce an heir to lands which should rightfully revert on his death to the Church. (Burgess & Busby, Notes 127)

²⁶² For a discussion of the inability of feudal males to see beyond appearances, see the example of Mark on page 148 of this dissertation, and the example of Archambaut on page 177 of this dissertation.

²⁶³ Beauty is a double-edged sword for women. It can be a dangerous attribute, for it attracts unwanted attention. However, beauty also attracts courtly suitors.

²⁶⁴ This is one reason that the Romance of the Rose will not be discussed here. Earl Jeffrey Richards discusses Dante's attitude towards the Romance of the Rose:

For Dante literary creation should teach moral behavior rather than in the case of the *Rose* explore for the nth time self-indulgent narcissism touting itself as the

one true art, the one form of art that entails — albeit with utter artistic skill — reducing women to the status of objects. Misogyny, artistic vanity, and the belief in essential gender differences are thus closely linked in the *Rose* and in the tradition it epitomizes. (99-100)

This dissertation is concerned with romances where women stand as positive role models.

²⁶⁵ See an example of this with the wedding night switch of Isolde and Brangaene in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, on page 138 of this dissertation.

²⁶⁶ In Gottfried's Tristan, Isolde and Brangane are compared to money, as (in this case, interchangeable) commodities. See page 139 of this dissertation.

²⁶⁷ Or, as Tolkien succinctly comments: "The Locked Door stands as an eternal Temptation" (Tolkien, On Fairy 33). If Bluebeard's wives could not resist opening that door, neither can the courtly knight resist a lady who is placed out of reach.

²⁶⁸ The obsession with the body is a feudal ideal, for romance often deals with the meeting of minds and hearts. (See page 128 of this dissertation for a discussion of the ideal of mutual marriage.) In her letters, Heloise comments: "Men call me chaste; they do not know the hypocrite I am. They consider purity of the flesh a virtue, though virtue belongs not to the body but to the soul" (Abelard 133). This is true of many romance lovers. They do not concern themselves with the body, but with the soul, with true love rather than chastity of the body.

²⁶⁹ The general consensus among the modern public seems to be that if it has a knight with a sword and a damsel in distress, it must be medieval.

²⁷⁰ Alas, this assumption did not die with the Middle Ages, but remains alive and well today.

²⁷¹ See Archambaut's later comment about his "duty" to guard Flamenca, on page 165. Unfortunately for their guardians, these heroines refuse to be "kept" women.

²⁷² See Archambaut's obsession with guarding Flamenca, discussed on page 164 of this dissertation.

²⁷³ "the lady was closely guarded when her husband was in the region." (Laüstic 94)

²⁷⁴ Marie de France offers many examples of the unhappy heroine. As Harriet Spiegel notes in the Introduction to her translation of Marie's Fables:

in the *Lais* we see a writer concerned not so much with the conventions of courtly love as with the psychological motivation of individual characters. Marie shows her concern for human misfortune, unhappy and restricting marriages, trapped heroines, and seems to have a special sympathy for the females in her stories. (5)

²⁷⁵ "I am not free. I have my chamberlain and many guards, young and old, who hate to see a just love and who delight in sadness." (Milun 99)

²⁷⁶ While Marie de France does offer a woman going to a nunnery, nunneries were not the most popular choice in these romances, perhaps because medieval nuns were often accused of licentiousness. See the text Concilium in Monte Romarici on page 116. See also Daichman, Graciela S., Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature. However, nunneries were occasionally used in real life:

People of the period were aware that the nunnery sometimes served a young girl as a refuge. In a trial conducted in England in the second half of the twelfth century, the lawyer of one of the parties (in an attempt to prove that betrothal could be annulled) cited Eusebius of Caesarea and St Gregory: a betrothed girl is entitled to prefer the nunnery to marriage even against the will of her fiancé, and the law does not punish such a girl if she flees to a nunnery. The learned jurist cited these facts in support of his case, and chose this argument since it was likely to appeal to the judges. Some widows chose to enter nunneries rather than remarry or remain in the widowed state in secular society. Some married women entered nunneries after separating from their husbands by mutual consent.

(Shahar 41)

²⁷⁷ Marie de France uses two of these devices in her tale to rid protagonists of unwanted children. In Le Fresne, a mother must rid herself of one of her twin girls. Previously, she had slandered her neighbour who had twins by suggesting that twins resulted from two fathers. In order to escape being shunned herself, she sends one girl to an abbey. In a typical ending, the heroine falls in love with a brave lord, the mother confesses all, and everyone lives happily ever after. A similar device is used in Milun, where an unwed mother sends her son to the wilds of Northumbria to escape shame.

²⁷⁸ "This was man was very old and, because his inheritance would be large, he took a wife in order to have children, who would be his heirs. The maiden who was given to the rich man was from a noble family, wise, courtly and extremely beautiful. He loved her greatly on account of her beauty, but because she was so fair and noble, he took

good care to watch over her and locked her in his tower in a large paved chamber. [. . .] There were other women, I believe, in a separate room, but the lady would never have spoken to them without the old woman's permission.

Thus he held her for seven year – they never had any children – and she did not leave the tower either for family or friend. When the lord went to bed, there was neither chamberlain nor doorkeeper who would have dared enter the chamber to light a candle before him. The lady was in great distress, and she wept and sighed so much that she lost her beauty, as happens to any woman who fails to take care of herself. She would herself have preferred death to take her quickly.” (Milun 86)

²⁷⁹ “The lord who ruled over the city was a very old man whose wife was a lady of high birth. She was noble, courtly, beautiful and wise, and he was exceedingly jealous, as befitted his nature, for all old men are jealous and hate to be cuckolded. He did not take lightly the task of guarding her. In a garden at the foot of the keep was an enclosure, with a high thick wall made of green marble. There was only a single point of entry, guarded day and night. The sea enclosed it on the other side, so it was impossible to get in or out, except by boat, should the need arise in the castle. As a secure place for his wife, the lord had constructed within the enclosure a chamber of incomparable beauty, at the entrance of which stood a chapel. [. . .] In this room the lady was imprisoned. [. . .] No one, man or woman, could have gained access to this spot, or escaped from this walled enclosure.” (Guigemar 46)

²⁸⁰ “I am shut in here day and night, and not once would I dare leave without his permission or unless my lord asked for me.” (Guigemar 47)

- ²⁸¹ “On the advice of one of his barons her husband imprisoned her in a tower of dark-hued marble. She suffered during the day and at night it was worse. No man on earth could describe the great pain, agony, anguish and grief which the lady experienced in the tower, where she spent, I think, two years.” (Guigemar 52)
- ²⁸² R. Howard Bloch identifies *lausengiers* as “the bad-mouthers or court gossips whose presence constantly menaces to expose what should be kept secret.” (116)
- ²⁸³ This may be why many *lausengiers* are portrayed as dwarves – in some texts, dwarves cannot be particularly courtly, disqualified by either their physical features or their spirit, which often proves to be deformed as well. See page 26 of this dissertation for a discussion of external appearance reflecting internal worth in the romance.
- ²⁸⁴ “An old priest with hoary-white hair guarded the key to the gate; he had lost his lower members, otherwise he would not have been trusted. He recited the divine service and served her at table.” (Guigemar 46)
- ²⁸⁵ “...may he be consumed by hell-fire!” (Guigemar 47)
- ²⁸⁶ “they were perceived, discovered, found and seen by a cunning chamberlain sent by her husband. He wished to speak to the lady, but could not gain access to the chamber. Seeing them through a window, he reported the matter to his lord.” (Guigemar 50-51)
- ²⁸⁷ “He had a sister, old and widowed, without a husband, and he placed her with the lady to keep her from going astray.” (Yonec 86)
- ²⁸⁸ For other examples of this, see page 26 of this dissertation.
- ²⁸⁹ “She looked after herself well and her beauty was quite restored. How she was more content just to remain where she was than to amuse herself in any other way, for she

wanted to see her beloved often and to take her pleasure with him as soon as her lord left. [. . .] The great joy she often experienced on seeing her lover caused her appearance to alter. [. . .] Her husband was very cunning and noticed that she was different from her usual self.” (Yonec 89)

²⁹⁰ It also establishes sympathy for the heroine, for her male keeper has proven himself unworthy of the job.

²⁹¹ For a discussion of Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan, see page 137 on of this dissertation.

²⁹² This is central to the plot of Flamenca, when Archambaut becomes suspicious of his faithful wife due to the machinations of the queen. By imprisoning her in a tower, he seals his own – and Flamenca’s – fate. See page 166 of this dissertation for details.

²⁹³ “There were other women, I believe, in a separate room, but the lady would never have spoken to them without the old woman’s permission.” (Yonec 86)

²⁹⁴ “When the lord went to bed, there was neither chamberlain nor doorkeeper who would have dared enter the chamber to light a candle before him.” (Yonec 86)

²⁹⁵ “Beware, sir, beware! You were directed to this place of lodging to cause you shame and suffering. . . If ever in your life you’ve encountered anyone who’s shamed or vilified you, in there where you’re headed they’ll do much worse by you than you could ever tell!” (Yvain 359)

²⁹⁶ Auerbach sees this realistic note as innovation of Chrétien de Troyes’s work:

“the style of this court poetry was something absolutely new: it raised storytelling in verse to the level of high art, but made no attempt to imitate the

over-all plan and absolute remoteness from everyday life that are characteristic of the great ancient models" (Literary 216).

²⁹⁷ "he could make out up to three hundred maidens doing various kinds of needlework. Each one sewed as best she could with threads of gold and silk; but they were so poor that many among them wore their hair loose and went ungirded. Their dresses were worn through at the breasts and elbows, and their shifts were filthy at the collar, their necks were gaunt and their faces pale from the hunger and the deprivation they had known. He observed them, and as they caught sight of him they lowered their heads and wept." (Yvain 360)

²⁹⁸ "maidens are protected in King Arthur's land. The king has given them safe-conduct, and watches over and protects them. . . in accord with the law that is established and set throughout the kingdom." (Story of the Grail 468)

²⁹⁹ See page 137 of this dissertation for a discussion of Tristan.

³⁰⁰ Flamenca also has female companionship in the tower. See page 166 of this dissertation.

³⁰¹ "To serve her the lord had provided her with a noble and intelligent maiden, who was his niece, his sister's daughter. The two loved each other dearly, and when the husband was away, the girl remained with her until his return." (Guigemar 46)

³⁰² Of course, the heroine does generally have the help of a hero. As Marcia K. Lieberman notes of later fairytales, "The child who dreams of being Cinderella dreams perforce not only of being chosen and elevated by a prince, but also of being a glamorous sufferer or victim. What these stories convey is that women in distress are

interesting” (194). Yes, women in distress are interesting – they attract heroes who are looking for someone to save. An amusing modern variation on this theme is seen in M.M. Kaye’s An Ordinary Princess. Despairing of ever marrying of his plain youngest daughter, the king plots to hire a dragon to lay waste to the countryside; when a prince cannot resist killing it, he will be forced to accept the plain princess’s hand in marriage.

“‘A capital scheme!’ he said. ‘I’ve yet to hear of a prince who could resist the chance of killing a dragon. Some silly young guffin is sure to come charging up to slay the creature, and then,’ said the King, ‘we’ll have him! He simply can’t turn the girl down after that’” (41).

This also echoes Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan:

The tale speaks of a serpent that was then living in that country. The cursed fiendish monster had burdened the land and the people with such an excess of harm that the King swore by his royal oath that he would give his daughter to whoever would make an end of it, provided he were a knight and of noble birth. This widespread report and the enchanting young woman between them caused the death of thousands who came to do battle and met their end there. (159)

³⁰³ While in most tales, physical passage leads to psychological existence in an Other space, this order is occasionally reversed. The post-medieval fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty is an example of such a reversal. In Sleeping Beauty’s case, a magic spell places her in another realm of existence; only after is her “spiritually” or “psychologically” separate state physically manifested in the thorns that grow about the castle, setting it apart from the world beyond. This also occurs with Queen Heurodis, who is taken, first

in a dream, then physically, to the realm of Faerie. (See page 43 of this dissertation.) Of course, in both cases, the royal lover who eventually rescues the heroine must physically find and follow a perilous "passage" into this separate sphere, conquering the physical before the psychic reintegration can occur.

³⁰⁴ See page 128 of this dissertation for a discussion of Joseph Campbell's view of the quest of the hero – or in this case, heroine.

³⁰⁵ "Whoever at the paintings looks
With care learns much that's writ in books,
For ancient stories there are told
Wars, prowess, noble deeds of old."
(Romance of Floire 71)

³⁰⁶ "The walls of the chamber were covered in paintings in which Venus, the goddess of love, was skillfully depicted together with the nature and obligations of love; how it should be observed with loyalty and good service. In the painting Venus was shown as casting into a blazing fire the book in which Ovid teaches the art of controlling love and as excommunicating all those who read this book or adopted its teachings. In this room the lady was imprisoned." (Guigemar 46)

³⁰⁷ See page 192 of this dissertation.

³⁰⁸ In this fable, a peasant and a lion discuss rank and lineage. The peasant shows the lion a picture on a wall that shows a man slaying a lion with a sword. The lion takes the peasant to where the emperor is condemning a man who is thrown to a lion and killed, and suggests that the vision of their eyes is more accurate than a painting done by a man.

³⁰⁹ "From this example we should know
Not to accept that something's so

From fables which are but false seeming
 Or paintings similar to dreaming.
 Believe in only what you see:
 The truth revealed openly.”
 (Marie, Fables 59-64)

³¹⁰ “Those persons, all, who are well-read,
 Should study and pay careful heed
 To fine accounts in worthy tomes,
 To models and to axioms:
 That which philosophers did find
 And wrote about and kept in mind.
 The sayings which they heard, they wrote,
 So that the morals we would note;
 Thus those who wish to mend their ways
 Can think about what wisdom says.”
 (Marie, Fables 1-10)

³¹¹ “When a truly beneficial thing is heard by many people, it then enjoys its first
 blossom, but if it is widely praised its flowers are in full bloom.” (Prologue 41)

³¹² Again, here is the preoccupation with reputation that is apparent in other romances,
 including La Chastelaine de Vergi. See page 57.

³¹³ “I have often heard tell that in this country one used to encounter adventures which
 relieved those afflicted by care: knights discovered maidens to their liking, noble and
 fair, and ladies found handsome and courtly lovers, worthy and valiant men. There was
 no fear of reproach and they alone could see them. If this can be and ever was, if it ever
 did happen to anyone, may almighty God grant my wish!” (Yonec 87)

³¹⁴ See page 70 of this dissertation for the quotation.

³¹⁵ Tristan and Isolde are a common basis for comparison for other romance heroes and
 heroines. In Chrétien de Troyes’s Cligès, Cligès is compared to Tristan. Chrétien’s

Enide is compared to Yseult: "In truth I tell you that Isolde the Blonde had not such shining golden hair, for compared to this maiden she was nothing" (Erec 42).

³¹⁶ This may be a thirteenth-century reference to Marie de France's twelfth-century *lai*, Les Deuz Amanz.

³¹⁷ For further examples of reading in a romantic text, see the examples of Flamenca, page 166, and Paolo and Francesca from Dante's Inferno, page 191. Chaucer also offers an example of reading in Troilus and Cryseyde.

And fond two othere ladys sete and she,
 Withinne a paved parlour, and they thre
 Herden a mayden reden hem the geste
 Of the siege of Thebes, while hem leste.
 (Chaucer lines 81-84)

³¹⁸ "Then my lord Yvain entered the orchard, followed by his retinue. He saw a wealthy man lying there, propped up on his elbow on a silken cloth; and a maiden was reading to him from a romance (I don't know what the romance was about.) And to listen to the romance, a woman too had sat down there. She was the maid's mother, and the gentleman was her father. It gave them pleasure to watch and listen to her." (Yvain 362)

³¹⁹ She continues: "By being freed themselves, these ladies also free the hero aiding in his personal development. . . Thus, women are central, vital, essential to the romance lot, but though their desires can be considered, they are rarely its subject" (Weisl 17-8). While this is true of many romances, it is not true of all, particularly of the principal ones discussed here.

³²⁰ Flamenca also substitutes a romance — or, more specifically, a book on love, for a Christian text. See page 172 of this dissertation.

- ³²¹ This is a critique of literature to the present day, that women are “only seen in relation to the other sex” (Woolf 82).
- ³²² This is true of the precursors to romance as well. The troubadour Bernard de Ventadour mentions women reading. (Auerbach, Literary 291).
- ³²³ This is an association that has continued to the present day. In her book Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature, Janice Radway noticed that her interview group consistently focused “on the significance of the *act of romance reading* rather than on the meaning of the romance” (86). In 1984, she noted: “The women claimed that romance reading was a declaration of independence and a way of telling others, ‘This is my time, my space. Now leave me alone’” (qtd. in Grescoe 240).
- ³²⁴ Although such authors as Bloch and Blumstein argue misogyny and oppression, it is true nevertheless that women play a greater role in romance than in earlier genres such as the *chanson de geste*. For the romance, “its principal subject is love, the adoration of Woman, who became absolute mistress in the courtly civilization, whereas in the *chansons de geste* neither love nor Woman play any rôle” (Auerbach, Introduction 103).
- ³²⁵ See the discussion of paintings and oral commentary as a substitute for the book in the tower, on page 110 of this dissertation.
- ³²⁶ Jean Leclercq describes the medieval reading habit as follows: “Au moyen age, on lit généralement en prononçant avec les lèvres, au moins à voix basse, par conséquent en entendant les phrases que les yeux voient” (72).
- ³²⁷ See also the example of Paolo and Francesca in Dante, on page 191 of this dissertation.

³²⁸ See the examples of Tristan, page 144, and Heloise and Abelard, page 185 of this dissertation.

³²⁹ “Hear, lords, hear lovers all, all those
Who bear the burden of love’s woes;
Maidens and knights, hark to my words,
You gentle damsels and young lords.
If you will hear my tale, you may
Learn many things about Love’s way.”
(Romance of Floire 23)

³³⁰ Again, here is the insistence on romance as something shared among women, not to mention the poet as someone who does not respect secrets, whether through eavesdropping or being a voyeur, and then revealing them to others via their work.

³³¹ “had it from a clerk who took
The story from a written book.”
(Romance of Floire 24)

³³² Often women are educated because there is not a son to be educated.

³³³ “As soon as nature made them fit
For love, they turned their hearts to it.
And yet to learning too they turned
And retained everything they learned.
Authors they read and books of old,
And when they heard what Ovid told
About love’s ways and how folk loved —
Tales which they heartily approved —
His volume whetted even more
Their wish love’s country to explore,
And without let or hindrance each
Strove to learn all he had to teach.
Together they read, learn, inquire,
And to the joys of love aspire.”
(Romance of Floire 29-30)

³³⁴ See this correlation as well with Flamenca, page 172, and Tristan, page 144.

³³⁵ “Take their tablets of ivory
And grave upon the wax thereof

Verses and letters, all of love.
 [.]
 Love's greetings blossom in their words,
 With songs of flowers and of birds.
 They crave for nothing further. Thus
 Their life is sweet and glorious.
 [.]
 When they spoke Latin, those who heard
 Them could not understand a word."
 (Romance of Floire 30-1)

³³⁶ "He learned nothing from what he heard:
 With sorrow all his thought was blurred.
 Love had assailed him fore and aft."
 (Romance of Floire 34)

³³⁷ "Sweet, when we learned our lessons, we
 Loved each other devotedly.
 Spoken in Latin, all the good
 We said could not be understood."
 (Romance of Floire 44)

³³⁸ In a quite humorous passage, when Floire believes Blancheflor is dead, he decides to
 use a stylus she has given him to kill himself. He does not do so because his mother
 convinces him that he will not see Blancheflor in death if he does so.

Se voi sensi vous ociés,
 en Camp Flori ja n'enterrés
 ne vos ne verrés Blanceflor:
 cil cans ne reçoit pecheor.
 Infer son calenge i metroit:
 la irés, baix fix, orendroit.
 Minor, Thoas, Rodomadus,
 cil sont jugeor de la jus,
 en infer font lor jugement.
 Cil vos metroient el torment,
 la u est Dido et Biblis,
 qui por amor furent ocis,
 qui par infer vont duel faisant
 et en infer lor drus querant.
 Eles les quierent et querront
 tos jors, ne ja nes troveront.

(Floire 1025-1040)

"If now you die by your own hand
 You'll go to no sweet-flowering land
 Nor see Blanchefleur. You must beware:
 Sinners are not admitted there.
 Hell will assert claims none can flout,
 And there you'll go, son, beyond doubt.
 Minos, Thoas, Radamodus
 There sit in judgment rigorous.
 In hell these magistrates hold court.
 They'll give you tortures of the sort
 Borne by Dido and Bilitus
 Who died when their love went amiss,
 And weeping explore hell's domain
 Seeking their lovers, all in vain:
 Each one seeks and will seek the lover
 Whom she can never more recover."

(Romance of Floire 46-7)

Compare this to Dante, where the lovers suffer together, page 191 of this dissertation,
 and to Aucassin et Nicolette, where Aucassin looks forward to hell as long as Nicolette
 is with him, page 193 of this dissertation.

³³⁹ "Were noblewomen less educated than their male counterparts? It appears that up to
 about the thirteenth century there was no great difference between the education of men
 and women in the nobility. The nobleman was not distinguished by his education level.
 He was a *miles*, in contrast to the *clericus*, the intellectual of the age. Moreover, it is
 possible that more women than men dedicated part of their day to reading prayer books
 and romances of various types. The change to the worse for women occurred gradually
 from the thirteenth century on, as the universities developed and even those noblemen
 who were not destined for careers in the Church began to study." (Shahar 158-159)

³⁴⁰ The Lady of Shalott weaves in her tower, but the majority of the heroines discussed here will choose the reading part of the text.

³⁴¹ Daly continues,

“Small wonder that many women feel repugnance for the realm of the distaff, which has literally been the sweatshop and prison of female bodies and spirits. Small wonder that many women have seen the male kingdom of texts as an appealing escape from the tomb-town of textiles which has symbolized the confinement/reduction of female energy.” (5).

Consider this statement in light of Chrétien de Troyes maidens, suffering through endless needlework, on page 105 of this dissertation.

³⁴² Campbell goes on to say the quest is when:

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there to be encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on fellow men” (Campbell, Hero 30).

There are two types of quests — personal and societal. Societal quests are when the hero goes on a quest that will change the lives and destinies of a whole society, a whole people, maybe even the whole world. This is the type of hero that is seen in myth, sometimes legend, and foundational epics. In modern literature, he tends to show up in fantasy and science fiction. The second type of hero goes on a personal quest, a quest for something that he himself needs. His quest, and its completion, will probably not affect society as a whole. This is a type of hero that shows up in a few legends.

medieval romance, and much of modern realistic fiction, as well as modern romance novels. He also shows up in folktales. For these heroines, one leads to the other. While self-preservation and self-liberation are certainly paramount in these tales, the heroine often also improves all of society when she changes her own situation. See page 195 of this dissertation for a discussion of the outcomes of these romances.

³⁴³ Bogin suggests that freedom may have even been one of the driving forces behind courtly love.

“Because the lady of the troubadours had the power to accept or reject their love at whim, and because she had to be obeyed no matter how absurd her commands might be, it has even been suggested that women’s unspoken desire for emancipation was the motive force of courtly love” (14).

³⁴⁴ “If she perceives you, she will seek
And find some ruse, some means, to speak
To you. Lovers, I know possess
Surpassing guile and artfulness.”
(Romance of Floire 65)

³⁴⁵ Loomis claims the Welsh Ystoria Trystan as a medieval tale.

“A remnant of the old Welsh love-story is preserved in sixteenth century form, but its essential antiquity is proved both by its early version of the affair of Kaherdin and Bringvain and by its similarity to the ancient Irish legend of Diarmaid and Grainne, which, as Miss Schoepperle showed, was the source of the forest episode in the Tristram romance” (xiii).

³⁴⁶ What she would prefer would seem to be made clear by her flight from her husband, into the woods with Trystan, and perhaps Arthur’s decision not to separate her

completely from Trystan and give her to her husband is a reflection of sympathy for her plight.

³⁴⁷ See page 18 onward of this dissertation.

³⁴⁸ This was noted by many medieval sources. Boccaccio, discussing the four types of fable, comments: "The fourth species possesses absolutely no surface or hidden truth, since it is the invention of silly old women" (MacQueen 48). Women were characterized by their willingness to fabricate stories.

³⁴⁹ This emphasis on the feminine mastery of language is not exclusive to medieval European romance. This theme is central to the text *The Thousand and One Nights*. The emphasis on the superior ability of women over men with language is presented at the very first of the series of stories. When Scherazade announces her intention to wed the king and save him, or die trying, her father attempts to use stories to dissuade her from her goal. However, the Vizier uses the wrong stories, stories that have neither to do with the morals he adds to them, nor the lesson he is attempting to teach. Scherazade, however, uses stories to cure the king of his murderous rage, and they live happily ever after.

³⁵⁰ This is in contrast to the uncourtly women in Lanval and La Chastelaine de Vergi. See the chapter entitled "The Transgression of Silence", beginning on page 53 of this dissertation. Occasionally, women do lie. In Floire and Blanchefleur, Blanchefleur's mother lies and says Blanchefleur is dead, under duress from the king. Again in Floire and Blanchefleur, Claris lies after she cries out and must conceal Floire's presence from their captor, the king.

³⁵¹ The idea of the double entendre is also important here. When the heroine speaks, the listener often hears what they wish, interpreting the words by the light of their own proclivities, and thus must often take responsibility for their interpretation. However, this is not always the case, as with the equivocal oaths of Isolde and Flamenca. See page 150 and 177, respectively.

³⁵² Hélène Cixous, discussing men's attitudes towards women's speech, says that women "do utter a little, but they do not speak. Always keep in mind the distinction between speaking and talking. It is said, in philosophical texts, that women's weapon is the word, because they talk, talk endlessly, chatter, overflow with sound, mouth-sound: but they don't actually *speak*, they have nothing to say. They always inhabit the place of silence, or at most make it echo with their singing. And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside knowledge" (qtd. in Burns 196).

Here, this belief is used against the men who hold it.

³⁵³ In The Lyre of Orpheus by Robertson Davies, a group of art patrons are creating an Arthurian opera, and three of the members become an uneasy ménage-à-trois in fine Arthurian tradition. After the seduction of Maria (married to Arthur) by Powell has taken place, Maria is unsure about her own complicity in the affair, for it takes place after a conversation in which Powell claimed "'We are deceived because we will our own deception. It is somehow necessary to us. It is an aspect of fate'" (Davies 248). To a certain extent, the deceived husbands (and others) have an active hand in their own deception in these romances.

³⁵⁴ See this with the heroine's prayer in Yonec, on page 113 of this dissertation.

³⁵⁵ Carolyn Larrington notes: "Marie often modifies her fables to sympathize with the female protagonists. . . In the fable given below, her admiration of the sow's quick wit is evident" (240).

³⁵⁶ "Once long ago a wolf strolled down
 A path and chanced to come upon
 A sow who was with piglets big.
 He hastily approached the pig.
 He'd give her peace, he told the sow,
 If quickly she'd bear piglets now –
 Her piglet babes he wished to have.
 With wisdom, this response she gave:
 'My lord, how can you hurry me?
 When you, so close to me I see,
 I cannot bear my young outright,
 I'm so ashamed when in your sight.
 Do you not sense the implication?
 All women suffer degradation
 If male hands should dare to touch
 At such a time, or even approach!
 With this the wolf hid in retreat
 Who'd sought the baby pigs to eat.
 The mother pig could now proceed
 Who through her cleverness was freed.
 All women ought to hear this tale
 And should remember it as well:
 Merely to avoid a lie,
 They should not let their children die!"
 (Marie, Fables 1-24)

³⁵⁷ Isolde is often used as the basis for comparison for other romance heroines. See page 113 of this dissertation.

³⁵⁸ Ferrante also notes that "There is something of a psychomachia in these conflicts: the battle seems to be turned outwards, against other people, but the hero's enemies often

reflect aspects of his problem" (65). If this is true, King Mark represents the feudal ethic, Isolde the courtly, and Tristan is torn between the two, eventually failing at both.

³⁵⁹ Ferrante notes that all versions of Tristan substitute Brangaene on the wedding night (Ferrante, Conflict 42).

³⁶⁰ In the story of King Mark, Queen Isolde and Tristan, as told by Gottfried von Strassburg, Joseph Campbell argues that "The problem from the troubadour point of view is that King Mark and Isolde, who are to be married, are not really qualified for love. They have never even seen each other" (Campbell, Tales 190). In many romances, and even for Andreas Capellanus, sight is an important prerequisite to love. (This is true of the story of Rivalin and Blanche-flor that begins Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan.) However, it is not just any sight, but the proper type of sight, for sight can also lead to lust. Ferrante differentiates between the two as follows: referring to the medieval romance of Partenopeu and Melior, an invisible lady, a story similar to that of Cupid and Psyche, Ferrante makes a distinction between "the world's eyes" and "the deeper vision of love" (Woman 86). This ability to pierce disguises, to see the inner self beyond the appearance, is only given to true love. False love, or lust, has no such talent.

³⁶¹ Tristan later rebukes him for this carelessness, after he rescues Isolde.

"Sire," he said, "dear as the Queen is to you, Heaven knows, it is a great folly on your part to give her away so lightly for the sake of the harp or the rote. People may well scoff. Whoever saw a queen made common property for a

performance on the rote? Don't let it happen again, and guard my lady better in future!" (Gottfried 218)

³⁶² Gottfried is unsympathetic toward Mark's lack of understanding:

"Both mother and daughter, then, know how to use common misogynistic tendencies and attitudes to their own advantage, and it is clear that Gottfried's sympathies do not follow the prejudiced men but rather the intelligent and strong women he has created for us. This is one reason why *Tristan* engendered such outrage and moral indignation among the nineteenth-century critics." (Blumstein 160)

³⁶³ When comparing feudal and courtly knights, C. Stephen Jaeger would see the courtly knight as a courtier also, which is the thesis of his book *The Origins of Courtliness*.

³⁶⁴ As Ferrante notes, "Tristan's education, like his birth, prepares him for his fate" (Conflict 26).

³⁶⁵ According to Ferrante, however, for Tristan, learning is not only a joy. "Books make him even more sensitive and awaken him to sorrow: through book-learning he learns of cares he had never know before and his freedom is over" (Conflict 127). Blodgett agrees: "Book-learning is emphasized as the main source of his difficulties in life" (Music 2).

³⁶⁶ Blodgett notes:

"Music, then, appears to be a kind of *summum* of all of Tristan's skills, deeply related to his verbal mastery. It is a mastery that derives from both his parents and his foster parents. All of them are portrayed as capable of making things

seem other than what they may be thought to be, to disguise, hide, and distort through fiction and behaviour. Transposed into music, the skills are perceived as beautiful and moving” (Music 3).

³⁶⁷ As Shakespeare comments in *Much Ado About Nothing*: “men were deceivers ever.” Tristan is certainly a prime example of this tenet. In Thomas, Tristan even speaks truer than he knows when he chooses to dissemble. “In Thomas, Tristan tells the pilgrims a story he thinks is fiction, but it is actually the truth: that he is from this land and seeks his companions” (Ferrante, Conflict 129).

³⁶⁸ Isolde also shows her ability to twist words when she puzzles out the connection between ‘Tantris’ and ‘Tristan.’

“Mother,” said the daughter, “listen to the astonishing way in which I discovered that his name was Tristan! When I had solved the mystery of the sword, I turned my attention to the names, ‘Tantris’ and ‘Tristan.’ As I passed them over my tongue it struck me that they had something in common. I then examined them closely and found that the letters needed for either were exactly the same. For, whichever way I read it, it contained only ‘Tantris’ or ‘Tristan.’ and both were comprised in either. Now, mother, divide this name Tantris into a ‘tan’ and a ‘tris,’ and say the ‘tris’ before the ‘tan,’ and you will say ‘Tristan.’ Say the ‘tan’ before the ‘tris’ and you will say ‘Tantris’ again!”

“Bless me!” said her mother, crossing herself. “However did you come to think of that?” (Gottfried 181)

³⁶⁹ The closest Isolde comes to a disguise is her ability to cry at will: but that “she can cry for no real reason except to deceive is a typically feminine trait” (Blumstein 150), rather than the masculine use of disguises. As Eileen Power notes: “Does not the Wife of Bath remark that God’s gifts to women are ‘deceit, weeping and spinning’?” (67)

³⁷⁰ On page 185 of this dissertation, see the tale of Heloise and Abelard for another example of a teacher and tutor who become lovers through education.

³⁷¹ “Tristan himself says that he will be cured ‘through his music’, and it is through his music that he moves to love. In the highly detailed description that Gottfried offers of the instruction of Isolde, the stress is always on sound -- on language and on music. It is through them that she learns, as Tristan had, to move the hearts of men and render them incapable of rational thinking” (Jackson, Faith 27).

³⁷² “Just as Queen Isolde plays upon the Steward’s prejudices to undermine his position, her daughter Isolde also plays upon Mark’s insipid image of womankind to disabuse him of his suspicions about her affair with his nephew” (Blumstein 159).

³⁷³ Tristan in all his versions is very much associated with disguises. In La Folie Tristan d’Oxford, Tristan is banished and disguises himself as a fool in order to see Iseut. A similar situation occurs in Folie Tristan de Berne. In Thomas, Tristran uses numerous disguises.

“They improve progressively until the first return: when he first comes to Ireland to be cured, he tells the queen he is a student on his way to Spain to study astronomy: this suggests the incompleteness of his loveless spirit as well as his intellectual interests. On the bride-quest he is a merchant: when he wins

Ysolt from the Irish knight, it is as a minstrel; and when he appears at the ordeal, he is dressed as a pilgrim. Only after the misunderstanding does he appear in a disguise unworthy of him, as a leper, the lover deformed by love. This is when love is at its lowest point. He returns to Ysolt one last time, as a penitent, the final disguise he assumes" (Ferrante, *Conflict* 80).

See page 27 of this dissertation for discussion of courtly knights and their love of disguise.

³⁷⁴ Isolde has agency, planning her own escape. Of Bérout's Isolt, Ferrante says: "It is clear that she, more than the love, is the force which directs the action of the poem (*Conflict* 14), but the same could be said here for Gottfried's Isolde.

³⁷⁵ Members of his court reveal Tristan and Isolde's adultery to Mark; Mark had noticed nothing.

³⁷⁶ In her book *The Conflict of Love and Honour: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany, and Italy*, Joan M. Ferrante compares numerous versions of the Tristan legend, the majority of which contain the ordeal. However, they differ in their details.

"In Thomas, it is Ysolt, of course, who suggests the ordeal and plans it in every detail. . . Ysolt is confident enough to joke about the situation and, after the successful outcome of the trial, to taunt the king about his suspicions (chap. LX). Thus, through her own cleverness and God's complicity, she has managed to deceive the king and all the land and turn the whole affair to her advantage" (52).

³⁷⁷ There is no bastard child, and thus the ultimate deception and betrayal is avoided, which is perhaps why love is allowed to triumph: it does not disrupt the monarch too much. Peggy McCracken, in her essay entitled, "The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body in French Romance" comments:

In contrast to the perceived gap between the enduring nature of the king's office and his human, mortal body, the queen consort's political role in the medieval court is entirely located in her physical body: the major duty of her office is to produce heirs in order to guarantee succession and political social stability. This role is curiously absent from representations of the king's wife in medieval romance, however. In the major literary traditions surrounding Guinevere and Iseut, and in other less celebrated stories the queen is barren. Moreover, she is adulterous, and her lack of progeny is most certainly linked to a sexuality that both transgresses moral and civic law and, perhaps more importantly, potentially interrupts proper dynastic succession. (McCracken 38)

³⁷⁸ Ironically, at the same time she is using her words to deceive her husband.

³⁷⁹ Presumably he means between the lovers, since everywhere else love demands treachery.

³⁸⁰ Brangaene escapes through her clever use of the story of the two white shifts. See page 148 of this dissertation.

³⁸¹ Ferrante comments:

"The attempted murder [of Brangaene] may occur, as Jackson suggests, because relations between the two worlds — the realm of pure love and that of courtly

intrigue — are strained. Isolt attempts to rid herself of the kind of life Brangaene represents, intrigue and deception, but she has a second thought when Brangaene proves herself faithful and that way of life again seems feasible” (Conflict 44-45).

And Brangaene has a major role to play, for “the court and its intrigues is her sphere” (Ferrante, Conflict 41-2). Compared to other versions, “Gottfried expands the parts of minor characters mainly to keep his major figures free from worldly intrigue” (Ferrante, Conflict 60).

³⁸² Claims Ferrante.

Gottfried does not excuse Isolt’s action in this episode and yet he does not directly condemn her for it, except in so far as she shows that she cares more for her reputation than for God (ll. 12711-2), and acts momentarily on the basis of a courtly ethic, forgetting the higher nature of her love. But she acts to preserve her reputation, which is also important to Gottfried. This presents another paradox: once Tristan and Isolt are under the power of love, they must follow it through all the deceptions and intrigues it demands, while at the same time the deceptions degrade them and their love. (Conflict 44-5)

³⁸³ This is why, at the beginning of the romance, Blanche-flor must visit Rivalin in secret, to keep their love from those who might misunderstand it and condemn it as lust, rather than “love freed from the empty conventions of society” (Blumstein 146), and thus impugn her honour. But Gottfried does not seem to imply any lack of honour: there is no question of adultery, and in the end they are married (and it is emphasized that there

are many witness to this marriage), so there is no shame to be found for this "blameless woman" (Gottfried 64).

³⁸⁴ Indeed, much of the plot of the story arises from Tristan's misuse of words. It is Tristan's boasting (*sans mesure*) to Mark of Isolde's beauty and accomplishments that leads Mark to desire her as his wife. If he had been more self-aware, Tristan should have realized he was in love with Isolde, rather than vaunting her praises to Mark, with predictable results.

³⁸⁵ "Then the minstrels stood up;
each one wanted to be heard.
[.]
Whoever knew a new piece for the viol,
a song, a descort, or lay,
he pressed forward as much as he could.
One played the lay of the Honeysuckle,
another the one of Tintagel;
one sang of the Noble Lovers,
and another which Yvain composed."
(*Flamenca* lines 596-97, 600-606)

³⁸⁶ Samson and Delilah are named in the list. The couple are an example often cited in medieval lists of men brought low by women. See the lists on page 244 and 187 of this dissertation.

³⁸⁷ "One spoke of the Round Table,
that no man reaches to whom the king
does not respond intelligently,
where valor never fails a single day;
another told of Gawain
and of the lion who was the friend
of the knight whom Lunette delivered;
one spoke of the Breton girl
who held Lancelot in prison
when he did not return her love;
another told of Perceval,
how he went into court upon a horse;

another told of Erec and Enide,
 another of Ugonet of Peride;
 another told of Governail,
 how for Tristan he suffered grievously,
 another spoke of Fénice.
 how her nurse made her appear dead:
 one spoke of the Handsome stranger
 and another of the vermilion shield
 that the herald found at the door:
 another told of Guiflet.
 One told of Calogrenant,
 another how the Délié held
 Kay the seneschal in prison for a year
 because he had insulted him;
 another told of Mordret. "
 (Flamenca 665-91)

³⁸⁸ This is reminiscent of the stories of Lanval and La Chastelaine de Vergi. See pages 55
 and 61, respectively, in this dissertation.

³⁸⁹ "thinking was
 not right."
 (Flamenca 822-3)

³⁹⁰ "reach the end of any thought."
 (Flamenca 1004)

³⁹¹ "and quite rightly will I be a cuckold.
 But I do not need to say 'I will,'
 for I am such already, and know it well!"
 (Flamenca 1116-8)

³⁹² See page 31 of this dissertation for the discussion of this linguistic peculiarity on the
 part of men.

³⁹³ "Now they knew throughout the land
 that Sir Archambaut was truly jealous:
 throughout Auvergne poems were composed
 and sirventes, stanzas, and songs,
 estribots and retroenchas
 about how Sir Archambaut treated his wife:
 and the more such songs were sung,

believe me, he was not enchanted."
 (Flamenca 1175-82)

³⁹⁴ "A jealous man is not in his right mind.
 All the scribes that are at Metz
 could not describe the words and deeds
 and antic that Sir Archambaut
 used whenever [jealously overcame him]
 but I say that even Jealousy
 does not know as much as he about how
 to be jealous; hence, from now on
 I leave the rest to jealous husbands,
 because there are many who behave
 in a wildly extravagant and distracted way."
 (Flamenca 1336-46)

³⁹⁵ "... my lord has greatly changed:
 he used to be a paragon of knighthood,
 but, ever since he took a wife,
 he has not put on a helmet or steel
 nor cared for society or knightly worth:
 perhaps you have already heard as much."
 (Flamenca 1982-7)

³⁹⁶ "His jealousy did all this to him,
 for if he were not so jealous
 he would not be so full of anguish,
 and his wife would not have to pretend
 to be sick, for then she could
 easily have all she might wish for
 and neither of them would suffer."
 (Flamenca 6118-24)

³⁹⁷ "The jealousy that overcame him
 took his sense and feeling away;
 and do not think that he repressed it,
 but he nourished it daily and doubled it
 and, as much as he could, he mated with it."
 (Flamenca 1324-8)

³⁹⁸ Blakeslee, referring to the Tristan stories, sees the “renunciation of the chivalric ideal of armed combat in favor of guile, deceit, and trickery” (13). It is worth noting at this point that Archambaut is master of neither ethic after succumbing to jealousy.

³⁹⁹ “Dear, handsome lord, whoever married me
and you committed a great sin;
because ever since you have had me
your worth has done nothing but sink;
and you used to be of such worth
that everyone spoke well of you:
both God and the world loved you;
but now you have become so jealous
you have reduced us both to death.”
(Flamenca 6682-90)

⁴⁰⁰ “Suffering deprivation, she is an innocent martyr due to the effects of her husband’s misguided love for her” (Zak, Portrayal 133), and has the right to attempt to ameliorate her situation. Nancy Zak sees in the narrator a “sympathy for and identification with human suffering, and his validation of human life and human concerns as opposed to stringent, unflinching adherence to authority, be it spiritual/religious or temporal/feudal.” (Portrayal 117-8)

⁴⁰¹ “what would I do if one vile man,
who feigns courtly love
and does not know what love might be,
would put wild ideas in her head?”
(Flamenca 1200-3)

⁴⁰² “. . . her jealous husband came
so quickly that he almost
tripped over on his way.
He opened the door and was unable
to speak from running so hard.”
(Flamenca 6053-7)

⁴⁰³ “When he imagined he sang, he bellowed;
when he thought that he sighed, he yelled;

he made no sense of anything.
 He often repeated the ape's
 creed, which no one understands.
 All day long he grouched and grumbled."
 (Flamenca 1044-9)

⁴⁰⁴ "When a fit of jealousy struck him hard,
 he went as mad as a dog."
 (Flamenca 1334-35)

⁴⁰⁵ Unlike the courtly lover, Archambaut, our unfortunate cuckold-to-be, does not possess the ability to look beyond appearances. The entire situation thus far, which is to become a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, comes about because Archambaut (along with the Queen, it could be argued), cannot distinguish between courtly admiration on the part of the King and Flamenca and an adulterous relationship. In fact, Archambaut even cannot differentiate between appearance and reality for himself. His inner, spiritual reality is reflected in his outer, physical appearance. For Archambaut, as a feudal knight, his appearance reflects his inner reality. See page 177 of this dissertation for further discussion of this problem for Archambaut, and page 27 for a discussion of the use of disguises by courtly knights.

⁴⁰⁶ "He did not wash his face or shave his beard,
 and it looked like a bundle
 of oats when it has been badly stacked;
 he plucked it out here and there
 and stuck the hair in his mouth."
 (Flamenca 1329-33)

⁴⁰⁷ "He would not have his moustache trimmed
 no matter what anyone might say.
 He seemed a Greek or a Slav enslaved,
 and did it all to cause her distress:
 'My wife will be more terrified
 if she sees me bearded and with moustache:
 she will less readily take a lover.'"

(Flamenca 1558-64)

⁴⁰⁸ ... And you say you do not know how
to keep her nor with what threats?'"

(Flamenca 1275-6)

⁴⁰⁹ ... But now anyone who wishes comes and goes,
and if she has her way, they will keep on.
Do you see how she shows herself to them?
She makes it plain she is not ours.

[.....]

It's easy to say where it is heading!

[.....]

If a man cannot watch over a lady,
he can hardly take away the column
that is near St. Peter's in Rome
or knock down the Puys-de-Dôme
if he cannot dominate a mere girl.'"

(Flamenca 1087-91, 1095, 1099-1103)

⁴¹⁰ ... a man must always be on his guard.'"

(Flamenca 1198)

⁴¹¹ ... they will not find a door open here:
a man who guards a lady wastes his time
if he does not put her in such a prison
that no one sees her except the one
whose duty it is to hold and possess her:
thus, most easily can he keep her.'"

(Flamenca 1155-60)

⁴¹² ... It would be folly to put any of my effort
into keeping and waiting on her.

Let anyone who wants come here
but, by God, he will never see her,
no matter how high he rises in her favor
so as to speak to her without me,
no, even if should come, by my faith,
her father, the count, or her mother,
her sister or her brother, Jocelyn!'"

(Flamenca 1208-1216)

⁴¹³ ... for not once, since he took a wife,
had he bathed, nor had he even thought

of it, nor had he trimmed his nails or hair;
 he had done enough, it seemed to him,
 for he had put his wife under surveillance.”
 (Flamenca 1553-57)

⁴¹⁴ “I will keep her closed within
 with one damsel of her own
 or two, so she might not be alone.”
 (Flamenca 1309-1311)

⁴¹⁵ “Her life was worth less than death.”
 (Flamenca 1350)

⁴¹⁶ “At no time would she have known love
 if Love, for her pleasure,
 had not displayed it to her secretly,
 since she taught her how to play her game
 when she saw the time and place were right,
 yet for long she thought she was dead.”
 (Flamenca 1414-9)

⁴¹⁷ “for I have heard, and I know it is true,
 that too much idleness and leisure
 brings on love more than anything else
 { }
 Whoever avoids idleness avoids love:
 hence I think he is a fool
 who wants to lie around in idleness
 and loaf at his pleasure
 if he imagines he can ward off love.
 But anyone who wants to kill or hang Love
 or keep her an imprisoned captive
 avoids leisure and idleness.”
 (Flamenca 1823-25, 1829-38)

⁴¹⁸ “He had not yet got mixed up in love
 because he knew the truth of it:
 he had heard what love was,
 since he had read all the authorities
 who speak of love and are at pains
 to show how lovers behave.
 So he knew for some time
 that he could not follow the path of Youth
 without getting involved in love.”

(Flamenca 1765-73)

⁴¹⁹ This is similar to King Mark and Isolde: he decides he will have her as his wife based
on the praises Tristan sings.

⁴²⁰ "From many people he heard and learned
how he kept Flamenca prisoner —
the man who fancied she was his —
and heard it said truthfully
that she was the best, the loveliest
and most courtly woman in the world.
It came into his heart to love her
if he could find a way to talk to her."
(Flamenca 1778-85)

⁴²¹ "I feel as if I were wounded in two places,
because through my ear and through my eye
I've taken the blow that gives so much pain."
(Flamenca 2717-9)

⁴²² "if she would listen or talk to me,
or see me or touch me,
then True Love could lay siege
to her in one of these four ways."
(Flamenca 2748-51)

⁴²³ "As for him, William played
as well as he could, and he discovered
as far as I know, someone who played
the game in a manner matching him well.
They were capable of playing as they desired."
(Flamenca 6497-501)

⁴²⁴ "... anyone who thus pays court
seems indeed like one who must have found
every device made for love,
stratagems and tricks and wiles.
And I affirm to you personally
that, if we were in the olden days
and I found such a lover,
I would suppose that he really was Jupiter
or one of the gods full of love."
(Flamenca 5226-34)

This is one of the few times that unconscious irony appears in the words of a woman, if one remembers that Jupiter did not always favour consensual love affairs: still, this could be seen as a great grasp on the art of love, à la Ovid, on the part of the god.

⁴²⁵ “. . . she knew clearly
that he was clever, tricky and discreet,
sang well and had lovely hair.”
(Flamenca 4353-5)

⁴²⁶ “. . . since you showed how clever
he is at games of deception
by making my husband believe
he loved the Lady of Belmont,
who never entered his mind to think of,
I give you, sweet Love, my thanks.”
(Flamenca 7177-82)

⁴²⁷ Immediately prior to this, he orders his squires to be courteous. For William, courtly behaviour and lying do not seem to be incompatible.

⁴²⁸ “He instructed and taught them thoroughly
not for anything to give any sign
of who he might be, but on some pretext
should say that he was from Besançon.”
(Flamenca 2010-13)

⁴²⁹ “. . . Of course, I will come,
and I will place myself at your service,
lord, for my heart is disposed to help you
if there is anything I can do or say
that would be friendly and good for you,
because you should know that I am your friend.”
(Flamenca 7035-40)

⁴³⁰ The only way this could be considered double-speak rather than an outright lie is if William is referring to Archambaut being cured of jealousy as a service. (See page 182

of this dissertation.) While good for Archambaut, cuckolding is generally not considered the service of a friend.

⁴³¹ Kahn Blumstein claims: "The ideas of 'courtly love,' with the restrictions and limitations they force upon women who must live up to them, reduce women to objects, abstracts, public figures, whose private emotions are not permitted honest expression" (3). While courtly love may not permit honest expression, it does permit double-talk, which women use to express their desires and obtain their goals.

⁴³² ...Get up, Alice, and make as if
 you are giving me the peace, like him;
 bring *The Romance of Blancheflor*.
 Alice got up in haste and ran
 toward a table where the book
 lay from which she was told
 to give the peace, and then she drew near
 her lady, who hardly could keep
 from laughing when she saw Alice
 on the brink of laughter to give an imitation.
 She raised the romance toward the right
 and leaned down to the left,
 and when she acted out her kissing it,
 she said: 'Why grieve?' And then
 she asked: 'Did you hear that?'
 'Yes, madame, quite well, and if
 you said it so today, he heard it well,
 the one who makes you speak in such a code.'
 They repeated this lesson fully
 for the whole week, until they returned
 to the church where William stood waiting,
 fully taken up with what to reply."
 (*Flamenca* 4481-502)

⁴³³ This is reminiscent of Aucassin's rejection of heaven for a hell filled with courtly lovers, as well as of Paolo and Francesca's hellish choice of reading material. See pages 193 and 191 of this dissertation.

⁴³⁴ This was at the center of the debate as to whether women should be permitted to read or not. Some authors encouraged it for religious purposes, while others discouraged it due to the access to romance and love letters it allowed.

⁴³⁵ “and immediately the lady hid herself,
returning to her little cage
where Love made a scholar of her.”
(Flamenca 4770-2)

⁴³⁶ “good for him who first taught him
and showed him how to form his letters!
He knew well that no one is worth even
bread and salt who has not gone to school,
and a rich nobleman is worth far less
if he has not had a modicum of education,
and a lady is far better off
if she has been so fortified a little.
Now tell me, by your faith,
if you did not know as much as you know,
what would we have done the last two years
while you have endured this torment?
You would have suffered an excruciating death!
But there is no grief so great
that does not disappear while reading.’
Flamenca could not keep herself from replying
and, for her part, from embracing her:
‘Friend, you are no fool,
and I agree with you fully
that leisure is not good
for anyone who cannot read;
rather it is vile and smacks of death;
no matter how far you search
you would not find anyone
who, if the person were lettered, would
not wish to have learned yet more;
and no one untutored who would not wish
to learn if he were in a position to do so.
And if someone could buy learning,
you would not see anyone so frugal
who would not buy at least a little,
if only it could be found for sale.
No one with an education

would not make it a point to get one.”
 (Flamenca 4811-44)

⁴³⁷ Language is a bond between women in the narrative. Flamenca’s “two female companions in exile give her love, comfort, companionship, advice, support, and sympathy: such an outstanding example of female bonding serves as a counterpart to the strong male bonding so prevalent in Old French epic” (Zak, Portrayal 115-6). Marguerite and Alis are themselves able to manipulate language: they suggest some of the words in the prolonged exchange between William and Flamenca.

⁴³⁸ “Marguerite, you got it perfectly,
 and you are really a good troubadour.”
 “Yes, madame. I never saw a better,
 saving yourself and Alice.”
 (Flamenca 4582-5)

⁴³⁹ “There is nothing that Love does not teach:
 Flamenca found a courtly stratagem.”
 (Flamenca 4341-2)

⁴⁴⁰ This is also true of Tristan and Isolde. See page 153 of this dissertation.

⁴⁴¹ “if I know that he is destined here by Love,
 I will be his Lady both good and true
 and never hide my heart from him.”
 (Flamenca 4263-5)

⁴⁴² “They feigned nothing between each other;
 if anything remained hidden between them,
 their joy would not have been complete.”
 (Flamenca 5948-50)

⁴⁴³ “. . . they had pledged their troth
 to be true friends forever,
 and when the boys were knighted,
 not to love other ladies,
 and when the girls were ladies,
 not to make other knights their lovers;
 and this was the full pact they made.”

(Flamenca 6490-6)

⁴⁴⁴if you do not love him truly
in your heart and follow our advice,
it would not be very good for you.
But there where Love holds the reins,
as well as good counsel and good will,
a stroke of folly soon becomes sense.”

(Flamenca 5265-70)

⁴⁴⁵ ...Lord, I have such pain in my heart,
it's killing and destroying me completely,
and I think that I will die of this pain
if I cannot consult with a doctor.”

(Flamenca 5677-80)

⁴⁴⁶ ...My lady, I think it would do you good
if you ate every day
just a little bit of nutmeg.”

(Flamenca 5681-3)

⁴⁴⁷ ...But I would strike a fair deal with you:
I would swear directly by all the saints,
my handmaids as witnesses, right now,
that thus from now on I will guard myself
just as you have kept me here:
and take my hand on it, if you agree.”

(Flamenca 6691-6)

⁴⁴⁸ ...as far as I can see,
his jealousy hardly helped him at all.
He searched and probed the nooks
of the bath, but the search was in vain
because he found there no more
of an opening than he usually did.”

(Flamenca 5791-6)

⁴⁴⁹ ...He did not see anything in the rock or chalk,
or anything that might have been put there.”

(Flamenca 6374-5)

⁴⁵⁰ ...for he did not wholly trust his eyes.”

(Flamenca 1534)

⁴⁵¹ "Sir Archambaut supposed that
this was because of her love for him
and thought with complete certainty
she behaved quite faithfully towards him."
(Flamenca 6925-8)

⁴⁵² See page 26 on of this dissertation for a discussion of this failing on the part of the
feudal knight.

⁴⁵³ See page 26 of this dissertation for other examples.

⁴⁵⁴ "Never did lady dare undertake
such a bold exploit, I think,
before the whole court, where nothing
escapes the eye, the hand or ear,
kissing and whispering to her lover
and, in full view, went off to bed with him,
and yet no one noticed a thing."
(Flamenca 7679-85)

⁴⁵⁵ "... the wretch was not aware of it,
for he trusted in a saintly oath
and did not see through the sophistry
with which Flamenca had concocted it.
He is a simpleton, a fool and an idiot,
even if he were as wise as Boethius,
any husband who, imagining he was generous,
cozily sets up his wife and her lover."
(Flamenca 7692-99)

⁴⁵⁶ "'Lady,' he said, 'it's quite clear to me
you neither respect nor care for me.
You have turned against me
in your pride, and I don't know why.'"
(Flamenca 6677-80)

⁴⁵⁷ Flamenca informs him exactly why she does not hold him in regard. See page 161 of
this dissertation.

⁴⁵⁸ "'I am mad and act a fool!'"
(Flamenca 1273)

⁴⁵⁹ ...we are closely associated.”
(Flamenca 6965)

⁴⁶⁰ ... you will not say, having considered
this love-greeting that is here,
you have ever heard anything more courtly.”
(Flamenca 7080-2)

⁴⁶¹ Even Archambaut is aware of the importance of courtly skills, though he does not
possess them himself.

⁴⁶² ...Lord, I must
present you to **our** Lady,
as custom requires, if you agree,
and so I bid you come to her.”
(Flamenca 7316-9)

Please note: the emphasis is mine. The generally agreed word in Provençal is “nostra”
or our, although one transcriber suggests “vostra,” yours (Blodgett 252). This use of
“our” may be a simple convention, but again Archambaut is speaking more truly than
he knows, for they do indeed share Flamenca.

⁴⁶³ “the jealous man, barely controlling his rage,
said: ‘Someone near merits punishment.’
Then he went out to the stairs
and fell head over heels
all the way down the steps
and almost broke his neck.”
(Flamenca 1256-61)

⁴⁶⁴ ...In the name of the Father, what a sign
this is of good fortune!”
(Flamenca 1268-9)

Suitably, as he is the feudal, patriarchal character, Archambaut is the only one who
prays to the male, Christian God. The other characters pray to the goddess Amor, with
much better results. See page 172 of this dissertation.

⁴⁶⁵ ... A woman can tell quite easily
 who loves her and who wants to deceive her."
 (Flamenca 4267-8)

⁴⁶⁶ "nor was there any lady or handmaid
 with whom Flamenca spoke.
 nor did she wish them to speak to her.
 They thought she was thirsty
 and so did not wish to talk."
 (Flamenca 6914-18)

⁴⁶⁷ "Sir Archambaut gave up
 his bad behavior and his rudeness
 and recovered courtly manners."
 (Flamenca 6783-5)

⁴⁶⁸ "that Sir Archambaut was cured
 and truly purged of his jealousy."
 (Flamenca 6947-8)

⁴⁶⁹ When Archambaut first becomes inflamed with jealousy, due to the machinations of
 the queen, this outcome is promised.

Gran dolor l'a el cor enclausa
 don non eug que ja mais receinha
 si Amors garir no l'en deinha
 (mais per contrari l'en garra
 quan le cujars s'averara).
 (Flamenca 906-10)

"She has steeped his heart in great grief
 from which he I do not think he will recover
 if Love does not stoop to cure him.
 (But she will cure him through opposition
 when what he imagines will be confirmed.)"
 (Flamenca 906-10)

⁴⁷⁰ See the discussion of Paolo and Francesco on page 191 and on of this dissertation.

⁴⁷¹ Heloise and Abelard are mentioned in Jean de Meun's 1280 continuation of La Roman de La Rose (Radice 47), and mentioned in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue (Radice 48).

⁴⁷² Betty Radice claims, "Abelard and Heloise could not be fitted into the current ideal of courtly love, with its emphasis on the lover's devotion to the chaste and unattainable lady" (49). Radice here is discussing what would be a closer definition of *fin' amors* rather than courtly love. Most of the romances discussed here do have the lovers attaining their lady.

⁴⁷³ Why does this make her more likely to consent? Will she be impressed by his reputation? Or has education made her more susceptible to love? See page 124 of this dissertation for a discussion of the latter.

⁴⁷⁴ See page 162 of this dissertation for Flamenca's reference to the evil of men intent on seduction.

⁴⁷⁵ See pages 22 and 189 of this dissertation for Heloise's comments on Abelard as composer.

⁴⁷⁶ Abelard is probably referring to Ovid (Radice 69).

⁴⁷⁷ Heloise also agrees that women have been the downfall of man since the beginning:

"It was the first woman in the beginning who lured man from Paradise, and she who had been created by the Lord as his helpmate became the instrument of his total downfall. And that mighty man of God, the Nazarite whose conception was announced by an angel, Delilah alone overcame: betrayed to his enemies and robbed of his sight, he was driven by his suffering to destroy himself along with

his enemies. Only the woman he had slept with could reduce to folly Solomon, wisest of all men; she drove him to such a pitch of madness that although he was the man whom the Lord had chosen to build the temple in preference to his father David, who was a righteous man, she plunged him into idolatry until the end of his life, so that he abandoned the worship of God which he had preached and taught in word and writing. Job, holiest of men, fought his last and hardest battle against his wife, who urged him to curse God. The cunning arch-tempter well knew from repeated experience that men are most easily brought to ruin through their wives” (Abelard 131).

This sentiment, and even the examples of Solomon, Delilah and Adam, are echoed in Sir Gawain’s anti-feminine diatribe at the end of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. See page 90 of this dissertation.

⁴⁷⁸ Héloïse actually opposes marriage. As with many romance heroines, she was aware that marriage did not equate with love. Instead, she wished to “hold Abélard by force of a love bestowed out of complete freedom, without the pressure of marital bonds, and the long periods of separation will increase the delight of their infrequent meetings” (Shahar 76). Rather than a relationship based on legal ties, Heloise desires the equality of a true relationship based on respect and mutual desire. See page 128 of this dissertation.

⁴⁷⁹ Again, here is a man who cannot keep a secret.

⁴⁸⁰ Providing the disguise is another aspect of Abelard’s duplicitous nature. He also disguises her as a nun when she flees to the country to give birth to their son, and later

realizes the irony of this disguise: “when you were pregnant I took you to my own country you disguised yourself in the sacred habit of a nun, a pretence which was an irreverent mockery of the religion you now profess” (Abelard 146). Abelard does not term it irony, however, commenting

“how fittingly divine justice, or rather, divine grace brought you against your will to the religion which you did not hesitate to mock, so that you should willingly expiate your profanation in the same habit, and the truth of reality should remedy the lie of your pretence and correct your falsity” (Abelard 146).

His claim that she took the disguise of her own accord seems doubtful, given that he provides the disguise on another occasion. See the discussion of men and disguises on page 27 of this dissertation.

⁴⁸¹ Apart from the castration, that is, though even that serves its purpose to focus his thoughts on religion.

⁴⁸² See page 22 of this dissertation for Heloise’s discussion of her initial delight with Abelard’s songs.

⁴⁸³ For other examples of the religious service being a place of love and/or lust, see the chapter on Flamenca, starting on page 157 of this dissertation, as well as the example of the twelfth-century *jeu d’esprit* Concilium in Monte Romarici on page 116.

⁴⁸⁴ In doing so, he again emphasizes his lack of verbal discretion, sharing their lover’s tale with the world. This is reminiscent of the duke in La Chastelaine de Vergi (see page 72 of this dissertation), as well as the general paradox of composers discussing secrecy constantly uttering stories of secrets told.

⁴⁸⁵ See page 72 of this dissertation for the full citation of this passage.

⁴⁸⁶ “Ah, God ! All this distress and trouble came to the Knight because he so mischanced as to make known that which he ought to have kept secret, and which his Love had forbidden him to speak of so long as he would possess her love.

And from this example one ought to keep secret one’s love with such great judgment, that one may always have in remembrance that to discover it avails naught, and that to hide it is of profit in every way. Whosoever does this, fears not the attacks of false and inquisitive felons who pry into the loves of others.” (Chatelaine 56-57)

⁴⁸⁷ While Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is not a courtly romance, it does have certain characteristics in common with that medieval genre. Superficially, it tells the story of a lover seeking his lost lady, and was written in the vernacular.

⁴⁸⁸ According to Susan J. Noakes:

Dante makes it clear that Paolo and Francesca miss the warning provided by the disastrous conclusion of Lancelot and Guinevere’s relationship because they do not finish reading the book: ‘non vi leggemmo piu avanti’ (‘we read no further’). He is himself fully aware that the Lancelot author provided such a warning, and his reader must be, too, if Paolo and Francesca’s situation is to succeed in teaching the reader anything important.(110)

⁴⁸⁹ Gustave Cohen sees the above passage as an important one in the treatment of medieval romance. “Le témoignage de Dante est valable pour révéler comment la littérature a de l’action sur la vie” (Cohen 200). Cohen continues:

“et combien est grande déjà alors la responsabilité de l’homme de lettres qui, insufflant dans ses personnages de rêve, des passions de chair, les rend capables d’enflammer les lecteurs et lectrices qui, tête penchée, les évoquent et les écoutent et finissent, se tournant, par cueillir sur les lèvres humides la fleur ardent du baiser, qui prélude à la chute” (Cohen 200).

This is not strictly true. While an author may be reviled for his treatment of inappropriate subject matter, or inappropriate conclusions drawn therein, it is, in the end, the reader who is responsible for the didactic effect of the text, the lessons taken from the tale, which is why it is Francesca and Paolo who are in hell (as is Lancelot, their inspiration).

⁴⁹⁰ Please see the discussion of Marie de France’s emphasis on the wrong textual authority in Guigemar, on page 111 of this dissertation.

⁴⁹¹ The sympathy, however, seems to be for lovers, rather than those led astray by reading the romance, which is why Dido is presented in this earlier circle, rather than the later, harsher circle for suicides.

⁴⁹² Aucassin et Nicolette is dated to the early thirteenth century, according to Auerbach (see page 110 of this dissertation), almost a century before Dante. Nevertheless, it could certainly be read as a response to similar attitudes, as embodied in writers such as Abelard. It would be even more curious to consider whether Dante wrote as a reaction to these upstart romancers who suggest that their work is serious and affective in a positive manner.

⁴⁹³ ...Moreover, what do you think you would have gained if you had made her your paramour, or put her in your bed? Much loss thereby, little gain; for to the world's end your soul would always be in hell, and into Paradise you would never enter.'

'What have I to do in Paradise? I seek not to enter there, but let me have Nicolette my most sweet friend whom I love so much. Into Paradise none go except the sort of people I will tell you of. There go those old priests and those lame and crippled ones who all day and all night grovel before altars and in old crypts; and those clothed in old, worn cloaks and in old rags; those who are naked and bare-foot and full of sores; those who die of hunger and of thirst and of cold, and of miseries. These go to Paradise; with them I have nothing to do; but into hell I wish to go. For into hell go the goodly clerks and the goodly knights, who have died in the tourneys and in the great wars; and the good soldier and the true man. With these do I wish to go. And there go also the fair, courteous ladies who have two loves or three besides their lords. And there go also the gold and the silver and the rich furs (et li vair et li gris); and there go also the harper and minstrel and the Kings of the world. With these I wish to go, only let me have Nicolette, my sweet friend, with me.'" (Aucassin and Nicolette 11-12)

⁴⁹⁴ The lack of repentance on the part of Aucassin is reminiscent of that of Dante's Francesca, who comments, "'It [love] holds me yet and shall never leave me.'" This is why she and Paolo are in hell: they are unrepentant.

⁴⁹⁵ ...Listen, noble lords, to me,
Ye of high and low degree,
If ye care to hear a stave
All of Nicolette the brave,
And of Aucassin the true:
Mighty love between them grew.

[.....]
 She loveth only one young Knight
 He who Aucassin is hight
 In the name of God she's swore
 Ne'er will she have lover more,
 If she may not find that lord,
 By her adored."
 (Aucassin and Nicolette 50)

⁴⁹⁶ Regarding adultery. Jacques Voisenet notes:

Il est sévèrement condamné car il porte atteinte à la sainteté du mariage, à la pureté du lignage (l'adultère de la femme est plus gravement sanctionné car il risque d'introduire par la bâtardise 'un mauvais sang') et à l'équilibre de la société en multipliant les violences et les vengeances des époux bafoués ou des familles déshonorées. (64)

Georges Duby, notes in medieval literature. "adultery, though consummated, was barren. Bastardy was too serious a matter to be treated lightly even in literature" (Duby, Knight 222). Arthur's son Mordred is one of the few exceptions to the barrenness of adultery rule, while Marie de France's Yonec is another. However, these bastards are decidedly different – Mordred ruins his father, while Yonec avenges his by destroying the cuckolded husband, who, unlike Arthur, was not worthy of an heir. In Yonec, the father is the uncourtly usurper, with an ill-ruled kingdom, and deserves his fate, allowing a proper courtly kingdom to take his place.

⁴⁹⁷ "They inquired of the inhabitants whose tomb it was and who lay there. At this, the inhabitants began to weep and said amidst their tears that it was the best knight, the strongest and the fiercest, the fairest and the most beloved, who had ever been born. [. . .] "we have waited long for a son he gave the lady." When the lady heard this news, she

called aloud to her son: 'Fair son, you have heard how God has brought us here! It is your father who lies here, whom this old man unjustly killed.' [. . .] when her son saw that she was dead, he struck off his stepfather's head, and thus with his father's sword avenged his mother's grief. [. . .] Those who heard this story long afterwards composed a lay from it, about the sorrow and grief that they suffered for love." (Yonec 92-93)

⁴⁹⁸ See the discussion of Marie de France's *granz biens* on page 112 of this dissertation.

⁴⁹⁹ "Love wants no woman to be inconstant
 she is not a lady when her heart changes
 and does not abide by what she says.
 What is she, then? God, she is a deceiver
 who causes heartache and torment
 for the one who is her true lover,
 who serves and cossets her every day,
 She is a devil. . ."
 (Flamenca 4275-83)

⁵⁰⁰ "But, just as a good lady
 is the best thing in the world,
 the sweetest and most welcoming,
 so a mean and vulgar one
 is the worst and most venomous,
 the most tormenting and most hostile;
 and those who have tasted it, know it,
 since they have gained and achieved little.
 Of the vicious lady I know at least
 that she thinks of nought but being devious,
 and every day finds occasion
 how she might say *no*.
 This is a vile and knotty woman."
 (Flamenca 7828-40)

⁵⁰¹ The lack of judgment, and even the exoneration of the adultery of the lovers is something that appears to be reflected in Flamenca, although the fact that the ending is not available certainly makes this interpretation ambiguous at best. In Flamenca, the personal and the social have not yet had a chance to come into conflict for Flamenca.

William and Archimbaut, which leaves open what the result would have been, and whether any moral judgments would have been passed on the part of the poet.

Works Cited

- Abelard, Peter. The Letters of Abelard and Heloise. Trans. Betty Radice. London: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Aucassin and Nicolette: An Old-French Song-Tale. Trans. M.S. Henry. London: McLaren & Co., 1900.
- Aucassin et Nicolette. Ed. Hermann Suchier. 5th ed. Paris: J. Gamber, 1903.
- Arthur, Ross G. Medieval Sign Theory and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.
- Auerbach, Erich. Introduction to Romance Languages and Literature: Latin, French, Spanish, Provençal, Italian. Trans. Guy Daniels. New York: Capricorn Books, 1961.
- . -. Literary Language and its public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Trans. Ralph Manheim. Bollingen Series LXXIV. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Barron, W.R.J. "The Ambivalence of Adventure: Verbal Ambiguity in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Fitt I." In The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages: Studies presented to A.H. DIVERRES by Colleagues, Pupils, and Friends. Ed. P. B. Grout. R.A.Lodge, C. E. Pickford, and E. K. C. Varty. Arthurian Studies VII. Cambridge: D.S.Brewer — Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 1983.
- Beer, Gillian. The Romance. London: Methuen & Co., 1970.
- Benson, Larry D. "Courtly Love and Chivalry in the Later Middle Ages." In Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays. Ed. Robert F. Yeager. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984. Pp. 237-257.

- Bertholet, Anne. Tristan et Yseut: Bérout, Thomas. France: Éditions Nathan. 1991.
- Blakeslee, Merritt R. Love's Masks: Identity, Intertextuality, and Meaning in the Old French Tristan Poems. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989.
- Bliss, A. J. "Derivatives." In Sir Orfeo. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. Pp. 63-66.
- - -. "Sources." In Sir Orfeo. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. Pp. 36-50
- Bloch, Marc. Feudal Society. Vol. II. Trans. L. A. Manyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Bloch, Marc. La Société Féodale. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1939.
- Bloch, R. Howard. Medieval Mysogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Blodgett, E. D. "Introduction." In The Romance of Flamenca. Trans. and ed. E. D. Blodgett. Garland Library of Medieval Literature. Vol. 101A. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995. Pp. xi-lii.
- - -. "Music and Subjectivity in Gottfried's *Tristan*." In Analogon Rationis: Festschrift für Gerwin Maragrens zum 65. Geburtstag. Herausgegeben von Marianne Henn und Christoph Lorey. Edmonton, Alberta: 1994.
- Boase, Roger. The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977.
- Bogin, Meg. The Women Troubadours. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980.
- Bornstein, Diane. The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women. Hamden, CT: Archon Book — Shoe String Press, Inc., 1983.

- Brandin, L. "Introduction." In The Chatelaine of Vergi: a Romance of the 13th Century as translated by Alice Kemp Welch: The French Text from the Edition Raynaud: Introduction by L. Brandin, Ph.D. Trans. Alice Kemp Welch. Intro. L. Brandin. London: Chatto & Windus, 1907. Pp. 3-16.
- Burgess, Glyn S. and Keith Busby. "Introduction." In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics— Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 7-36.
- - -. "Notes." In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics— Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 127-128.
- Burns, E. Jane. "This Prick Which Is Not One: How Women Talk Back in Old French Fabliaux." In Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature. Ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Sanbury. New Cultural Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. Pp. 188-212.
- Busby, Keith. "Atre Périlleux, L'." In The New Arthurian Encyclopedia. Ed. Norris J. Lacy. Associate ed. Geoffrey Ashe. Sandra Ness Ihle, Marianne E. Kalinke & Raymond H. Thompson. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities. Vol. 931. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996. P. 23.
- - -. "The Characters and the Setting." In The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes. Vol. 1. Ed. Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby. Amsterdam: Gegevens Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag, 1987. Pp. 57-89.
- Campbell, Joseph. The Hero With a Thousand Faces. Bollingen Series 17. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968.

- . "In Search of the Holy Grail: The Parzival Legend." In Transformations of Myth Through Time. Perennial Library. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990. Pp. 245-260.
- . Myths to Live By. New York: Viking Press, 1972.
- . "Tales of Love and Marriage." In The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers. Ed. Betty Sue Flowers. New York: Doubleday, 1988. Pp. 185-206.
- Chance, Jane. "Introduction." In Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996. Pp. 1-21.
- La Chastelaine de Vergi. In The Chatelaine of Vergi: a Romance of the 13th Century as translated by Alice Kemp Welch: The French Text from the Edition Raynaud: Introduction by L. Brandin, Ph.D. London: Chatto and Windus, 1907. Pp. 65-111.
- The Chatelaine of Vergi. In The Chatelaine of Vergi: a Romance of the 13th Century as translated by Alice Kemp Welch: The French Text from the Edition Raynaud: Introduction by L. Brandin, Ph.D. Trans. Alice Kemp Welch. London: Chatto and Windus, 1907. Pp. 19-57.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. Troilus and Cryseide. In The Riverside Chaucer. 3rd Ed. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. Pp. 471-585.
- Chrétien de Troyes. Cligès. Trans. William W. Kibler. In Arthurian Romances. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 123-205.
- . Cligès. Trans. and ed. Philippe Walter. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard 1994. Pp. 171-336.

- - -. Erec and Enide. Trans. Carleton W. Carroll. In Arthurian Romances. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 37-122.
- - -. Érec et Énide. Trans. and ed. Peter F. Dembowski. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard 1994. Pp. 1-169.
- - -. The Knight of the Cart. Trans. William W. Kibler. In Arthurian Romances. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 207-294.
- - -. The Knight with the Lion (Yvain). Trans. and ed. William W. Kibler. In Arthurian Romances. London: Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 295-380.
- - -. Lancelot ou Le Chevalier de la Charrette. Trans. and ed. Daniel Poirion. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard 1994. Pp. 505-682.
- - -. Perceval ou Le Conte Du Graal. Trans. and ed. Daniel Poirion. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard 1994. Pp. 683-911.
- - -. The Story of the Grail (Perceval). Trans. William W. Kibler. In Arthurian Romances. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 381-494.
- - -. Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion. Trans. Philippe Walter. Ed. Karl D. Uitti. In Oeuvres complètes. Paris: Gallimard 1994. Pp. 337-503.
- Clair, Daphne. "Sweet Subversions." In Dangerous Men & Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance. Ed. Jayne Ann Krentz. New Cultural Studies. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992. Pp. 61-72.
- Clanchy, M. T. "The Written Word: from Domesday Book to Caxton." The Making of Britain: The Middle Ages. A Channel Four Book. Ed. Lesley M. Smith. New York: Schocken Books, 1985. Pp. 163-77.

- Cohen, Gustave. La Vie Littéraire en France Au Moyen-Age. Paris: Éditions Jules Tallandier, 1949.
- Le Conte de Floire et Blancheflor. Ed. Jean-Luc Leclanche. Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion 1980.
- Cross, Tom Peete and Clark Harris Slover. "The Wooing of Etain." In Ancient Irish Tales. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936. Pp. 82-92.
- Daichman, Graciela S. Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986.
- Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon, 1978.
- Dante Alighieri. Cantica I: Hell (L'Inferno). Trans. Dorothy I. Sayers. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949.
- Davies, Robertson. The Lyre of Orpheus. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada — Canada Publishing Corporation, 1988.
- Diverres, Arnel. "Arthur in *Culhwch and Olwen* and in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes." In Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend. Ed. Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley. SUNY Series in Mediaeval Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994. Pp. 54-69.
- Duby, Georges. The Knight, the lady, and the priest: the making of modern marriage in medieval France. Trans. Barbara Bray. New York: Pantheon Books, 1983.
- Duby, Georges, and Philippe Braunstein. "Solitude: Eleventh to Thirteenth Century." In "The Emergence of the Individual." In A History of Private Life: II — Revelations of the Medieval World. Ed. Georges Duby. Trans. Arthur

- Goldhammer. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press-Harvard University Press, 1988. Pp. 509-535
- Ferrante, Joan M. The Conflict of Love and Honour: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany, and Italy. The Hague: Mouton, 1973.
- - -. Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Frappier, Jean. "Chrétien de Troyes." In Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History. Ed. Roger Sherman Loomis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959. Pp. 157-91.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Introduction". In Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Trans. James Strachey. Ed. James Strachey and Angela Richards. The Penguin Freud Library, Vol. I. London: Penguin Books, 1973. Pp. 39-49.
- Gaster, Theodor H. "Myth and Story". In Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth. Ed. Alan Dundes. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. Pp. 110-36.
- Gottfried von Strassburg. Tristan, With the surviving fragments of the Tristan of Thomas. Trans. Arthur Thomas Hatto. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1960.
- Graelent. In Graelent and Guingamor: Two Breton Lays. Ed. and trans. Russell Weingartner. Garland Library of Medieval Literature. Vol. 37. Series A. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985. Pp. 40-75.
- Grescoe, Paul. The Merchants of Venus: Inside Harlequin and the Empire of Romance. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1996.

- Groag Bell, Susan. "Medieval Woman Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture." In Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages. Ed. Judith M. Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O'Barr, B. Anne Vilen, Sarah Westphal-Wihl. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. 135-161.
- Guingamor. In Graelent and Guingamor: Two Breton Lays. Ed. and trans. Russell Weingartner. Garland Library of Medieval Literature. Vol. 37. Series A. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985. Pp. 1-39.
- Hamburger, Jeffrey F. The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany. New York: Zone Books, 1998.
- Hamesse, Jacqueline. "The Scholastic Model of Reading." In A History of Reading in the West. Ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, Roger Chartier, Lydia G. Cochrane. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1999 Pp. 90-102. Pp. 103-119.
- Hollister, C. Warren. Odysseus to Columbus: A Synopsis of Classical and Medieval History. New York, London, Sydney, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974.
- Hughes, Linda K. "The Pleasure Lies in Power: The Status of the Lie in Malory and Bradley". In The Arthurian Yearbook II. Ed. Keith Busby. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992. Pp. 99-112.
- Hunt, Tony. Chrétien de Troves: Yvain. Critical Guides to French texts, 55. London: Grant & Cutler, 1986.
- Jackson, W. T. H. "Faith Unfaithful — The German Reaction to Courtly Love." In The Challenge of the Medieval Text: Studies in Genre and Interpretation. Ed. Joan M. Ferrante and Robert W. Hanning. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. 14-34.

- - -. The Literature of the Middle Ages. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- - -. "Problems of Communication in the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes." In The Challenge of the Medieval Text: Studies in Genre and Interpretation. Ed. Joan M. Ferrante and Robert W. Hanning. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. 185-96.
- Jaeger, C. Stephen. The Origins of Courtliness. Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210. The Middle Ages. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.
- Jaufrey the Knight and the Fair Brunissende: a tale of the times of King Arthur. Trans. Alfred Elwes. London: Addey and Co., 1856.
- Kahn Blumstein, Andrée. Misogyny and Idealization in the Courtly Romance. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977.
- Kaye, M.M. The Ordinary Princess. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1980.
- Kennedy, Elspeth. "The Knight as Reader of Arthurian Romance." In Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend. Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio. Ed. Martin B. Schichtman and James P. Carley. SUNY Series in Mediaeval Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994 Pp. 70-90.
- Kibler, William W. "Notes." In Arthurian Romances. Trans. William W. Kibler. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1991. Pp. 505-521.
- Kilhwch and Olwen. In The Mabinogion. Trans. Lady Charlotte Guest. 1906. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. Pp. 63-93.

- King, Margaret L. "Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance." In Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past. Patricia H. Labalme. New York, London: New York University Press, 1980. Pp. 66-90.
- "Kyng Orfew." In The Breton Lays in Middle English. Thomas C. Rumble, ed. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1965. Pp. 207-228.
- Labalme, Patricia. "Introduction." In Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past. Patricia H. Labalme. New York; London: New York University Press, 1980. Pp. 1-8.
- Larrington, Carolyne. Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Leclercq, Jean. L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu: initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Age. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1957.
- Lewis, C. S. The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- - -. The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Cambridge: Canto — Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- Lieberman, Marcia K. "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale." In Don't Bet On The Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England. Ed. Jack Zipes. Aldershot, England: Gower, 1986. Pp. 185-200.
- Loomis, Roger Sherman. The Development of Arthurian Romance. London: Hutchinson University Press, 1963.

- MacQueen, John. Allegory. The Critical Idiom 14. London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1970.
- Manguel, Alberto. A History of Reading. London: Flamingo—HarperCollins Publishers, 1996.
- Marie de France. Fables. Ed. and trans. Harriet Spiegel. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1994.
- - -. Die Lais Der Marie de France. Ed. Karl Warnke. Bibliotheca Normannica. Denkmäler Normannischer Literatur und Prache. Vol. III. Halle (Saale): Verlag von Max Neimeyer, 1885.
- - -. Guigemar. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 43-55.
- - -. Lanval. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 73-81.
- - -. Laüstic. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 94-96.
- - -. Milun. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 97-104.
- - -. Prologue. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 41-42.
- - -. Yonec. In The Lais of Marie de France. Trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby. London: Penguin Classics—Penguin Books, 1986. Pp. 86-93.
- McCracken, Peggy. "The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body in French Romance." In Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature. Ed.

- Linda Lomperis and Sarah Sanbury. *New Cultural Studies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. Pp. 38-64.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: feminist literary theory*. London: Routledge, 1985.
- Morris, Rosemary. *The Character of King Arthur in Medieval Literature*. Cambridge, England: D.S. Brewer—Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 1982.
- Noakes, Susan J. "Dante Alighieri." In *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*. Ed. Norris J. Lacy. Assoc. ed. Geoffrey Ashe, Sandra Ness Ihle, Marianne E. Kalinke & Raymond H. Thompson. *Garland Reference Library of the Humanities*. Vol. 931. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996. Pp. 109-110.
- Orme, Nicholas. *English Schools in the Middle Ages*. London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973.
- Poetry in the Age of Chaucer*. Ed. A.C. Spearing and J. E. Spearing. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, 1974.
- Power, Eileen. *Medieval Women*. Ed. M.M. Postan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Pwyll Prince of Dyved*. In *The Mabinogion*. Trans. Lady Charlotte Guest. 1906. Mineola, New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1997. Pp. 1-15.
- Radice, Betty. "Introduction." *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*. Peter Abelard. Trans. Betty Radice. London: Penguin Books: 1974. Pp. 9-55.
- Radway, Janice A. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Régnier-Bohler, Danielle. "Imagining the Self: Exploring Literature" In *A History of Private Life: II — Revelations of the Medieval World*. Ed. Georges Duby. Trans.

Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press-Harvard University Press, 1988. Pp. 313-393.

Richards, Earl Jeffrey. "Rejecting Essentialism and Gendered Writings: The Case of Christine de Pizan." In Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages. Ed. Jane Chance. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996. Pp. 96-131.

Riddy, Felicity. "The Speaking Knight: Sir Gawain and Other Animals." In Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend. Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio. Ed. Martin B. Schichtman and James P. Carley. SUNY Series in Mediaeval Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994. Pp. 149-162.

The Romance of Flamenca. Trans. and ed. E. D. Blodgett. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Vol. 101A. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

The Romance of Floire and Blanchefleur: A French Idyllic Poem of the Twelfth Century. Trans. Merton Jerome Hubert. University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, Number 63. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966.

Saenger, Paul. "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society." In Viator 13, 1982. Pp. 367-414.

Sayers, Dorothy L. "Commentaries." In Cantica I: Hell (L'Inferno). Dante Alighieri. Trans. Dorothy L. Sayers. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1949.

Shahar, Shulamith. The Fourth Estate. A history of women in the Middle Ages. Trans. Chaya Galai. London, New York: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1983.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Trans. Marie Boroff. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967.

"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." In The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd. 1978. Pp. 207-300.

Sir Orfeo. In Middle English Verse Romances. Ed. Donald B. Sands. Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1966. Pp. 185-200.

Sir Orfeo. Trans. J.R.R. Tolkien. In Sir Gawain & The Green Knight, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1975. Pp. 115-30.

Spiegel, Harriet. "Introduction." In Fables. Marie de France. Ed. and trans. Harriet Spiegel. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1994. Pp. 3-20

Spisak, James W. "Glossary." In Caxton's Malory: A New Edition of Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur Based on the Pierpont Morgan Copy of William Caxton's Edition of 1485. Vol. 2 of 2. By Thomas Malory. Ed. James W. Spisak. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Staines, David. "Introduction". In The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes, by Chrétien de Troyes. Trans. David Staines. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. Pp. vii-xxviii.

Stebbins, Charles. "The Theme of the 'Clerc-Chevalier' in the 13th Century Old Provençal Romance of *Flamenca*." In *Revue des Langues Vivantes*, 44 (1978).

- Stevens, John. "The *granz biens* of Marie de France." In Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C. S. Lewis. Ed. John Lawlor. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1966. Pp. 1-25.
- Stiller, Nikki. "Eve's Orphan's: Mothers and Daughters in Medieval English Literature." In The Lost Tradition: Mothers And Daughters in Literature. Ed. Cathy N. Davidson, E. M. Broner. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1980. Pp. 22-32
- Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy Stories." In The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983. Pp. 109-161.
- - -. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." In The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983. Pp. 72-108.
- Travis, Peter W. "Affective Criticism, the Pilgrimage of Reading, and Medieval English Literature." In Medieval Texts & Contemporary Readers. Ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Schichtman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987. Pp. 201-15.
- Vinaver, Eugène. The Rise of Romance. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Voisenet, Jacques. "Mariage et Interdits Sexuels au Moyen Age (Ve-XIle siècle)" In Sex Love and Marriage in Medieval Literature and Reality: Thematische Beiträge im Rahmen des 31th International Congress on Medieval Studies an der Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo-USA) 8.-12. Mai 1996. Vol. 40 of Series 3 Tugungsbände und Sammelschriften/Actes des Colloques et Ouvrages Collectifs.

- Weisl, Angela Jane. Conquering the Reign of Femeny: Gender and Genre in Chaucer's Romance. Chaucer Studies XXII. Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: D.S. Brewer—Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1995.
- Westphal-Wihl, Sarah. "The Ladies' Tournament: Marriage, Sex, and Honor in Thirteenth-Century Germany." In Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages. Ed. Judith M. Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O'Barr, B. Anne Vilen, Sarah Westphal-Wihl. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Pp. 162-189.
- White, T.H. The Candle in the Wind. In The Once and Future King. 1939. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958. Pp. 545-677.
- Wilson, Suzanne. "False Guenevere." In The New Arthurian Encyclopedia. Ed. Norris J. Lacy. Assoc. ed. Geoffrey Ashe, Sandra Ness Ihle, Marianne E. Kalinke & Raymond H. Thompson. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities. Vol. 931. New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996. P. 149.
- Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. London: Penguin Books, 1928.
- Ystoria Trystan. Pp. xiii-xviii In "Introduction". In The Romance of Tristram and Ysolt By Thomas of Britain. Trans. Roger Sherman Loomis. 1923. Revised edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.
- Zak, Nancy C. "Modes of Love in *Flamenca*: Legitimate/Illegitimate, Vital/Sterile, Human/Inhuman." In Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Texts and Contexts. Ed. Moshe Lazar and Morris J. Lacy. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1989. Pp. 43-51.

- - -. The Portrayal of the Heroine in Chrétien de Troyes's 'Erec et Enide', Gottfried von Strassburg's 'Tristan', and 'Flamenca'. Number 347. Göppinger Arbeiten Zur Germanistik. Stuttgart: Kümmerle Verlag, 1983.