GET A ROOM: PRIVATE SPACE AND PRIVATE PEOPLE IN OLD FRENCH AND MIDDLE ENGLISH LOVE STORIES

by

Alice Jane Cooley

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Centre for Medieval Studies

University of Toronto

© Copyright by Alice Jane Cooley, 2010

Abstract

Get a Room: Private Space and Private People in Old French and Middle English Love Stories

Submitted by: Alice Jane Cooley

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (2010)

Department: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto

This study explores the way in which one circumstance of daily life in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries—the relative scarcity of private space—influenced the literature of courtly love. It presents the argument that because access to spatial privacy was difficult, although desirable, stories of illicit love affairs carried on under these precarious circumstances had a special appeal. In these narratives we can observe a tendency for emotional privacy to be invested in trusted confidants and servants, and for spies and meddling figures to pose a special danger. Both of these character types are frequently shown to have privileged access to private space as well as to private knowledge.

The framework for this study is provided by a discussion of the material background to developing ideas of privacy, which argues for a greater resemblance between medieval and modern concepts in this area than has previously been acknowledged. The remainder of the study is concerned with literary examples. Medieval French adaptations of the *Ars Amatoria* show subtle changes in emphasis which can be attributed to the different status of privacy in the medieval world as compared to Augustan Rome. The *Lais* of Marie de France, in particular *Guigemar*, *Yonec*, *Milun*, *Eliduc* and *Lanval*, are discussed in relation to the concept of the

female household, a specific category of private space within the medieval castle. Three of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes—*Cligès*, *Lancelot* and *Yvain*—present significant variations on the theme of love mediated by third parties and flourishing in private space. Five different versions of the Tristan and Isolt story are discussed, showing their consistent preoccupation with the roles played by helping and hindering figures. The study concludes with a consideration of three works by Chaucer. *Troilus and Criseyde* gives prominent place to the most fully developed example of a character who mediates between lovers, Criseyde's notorious uncle Pandarus, while *The Miller's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale* both centre on lovers' quests for privacy, but do so to mock rather than to celebrate the conventions of courtly love.

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to be able to acknowledge all the help I have received, both practical and emotional, from within the academic world and without, which has allowed me to complete this dissertation and my degree. I was fortunate to have an excellent supervisor in Suzanne Akbari. She provided superb methodological guidance at every stage, and her cheerful encouragement repeatedly succeeded in convincing me that things were going much better than I thought they were. She and the other members of my advisory committee, John Haines and David Klausner, deserve my gratitude for their enthusiasm and for their patience throughout the long process of developing my initial ideas to their current form. I am also grateful to David Staines, who, as external examiner at my defence, very rightly refused to let me get away with any nonsense. Jill Ross provided me with a number of exciting suggestions for further research. Tom Cohen also offered a wealth of ideas for my first chapter. And Judith Deitch, although not directly involved in the progress of my PhD dissertation, has been of incalculable help and influence in my academic career since I took her Old English class more than a decade ago. I am extremely thankful for her early assistance and her continued advice.

I have been blessed with wonderful friends among my fellow students, and their contributions to the completion of the present work, though trivial in relation to their other claims on my affection, deserve mention here. Alexandra Bolintineau, among countless other offices of friendship, provided me with the idea for my title. Andrew Reeves was my trusty carrel-neighbour in Minas Morgul. Victoria Goddard read the whole thing, in short order and

with red pen in hand. Rachel Kessler was my partner in an elaborate cake-based reward system, and, even after finishing her own dissertation and going off to frolic in seminary, remained an amazing source of emotional support.

I am deeply grateful to the clergy and parishioners of St. Thomas's for the atmosphere so consistently fostered in that place of respect for intellectual and artistic endeavours and their role in the Christian life. I particularly want to thank Father Mark Andrews for his advice and guidance in the latter stages of my degree.

St. Thomas's also introduced me to Mike Degan, who became (rather in spite of himself, I think) "emotionally invested" in the progress of my dissertation. Which is, in its own way, a very significant gesture of love.

Above all, I owe thanks to my parents, who not only provided boundless encouragement and support of all kinds, but actually became quite interested in what I was writing about. I am sure they would have done the same no matter what my subject; but all the same, they are very smart people, and their approval is very gratifying.

Contents

Introduction

One scene of a crumbling mural in Runkelstein Castle, painted around 1400, shows a ship under sail, its deck crowded with figures. A sailor is hauling on a rope in the background, and in the ship's prow two trumpeters blow their instruments at the rail, marking the importance of the voyage. In the waist of the ship, well dressed men and women appear deep in conversation. In the stern, raised above the crowds and facing away from them, another man and woman stand together. The labels that hover above their heads are no longer readily legible, but they are scarcely needed. The woman wears a crown and raises a cup to her lips; the man holds out his hand as if the cup has just left it. Tristan and Isolt are depicted in their most iconic moment, drinking the potion that precipitates their tragedy by supernaturally cementing their love. What is surprising about the picture is that this intensely private experience seems to be happening with all sorts of other people present.

A slightly later moment in the same story is depicted strikingly in one of the fourteenth-century Tristan embroideries in the Cistercian convent at Wienhausen. Here Tristan and the queen, having drunk the potion, lie embracing in one half of the ship, while a servant hovers over them, holding aloft the empty cup, and on the other side of the mast a crowd of figures is again shown engrossed in conversation. Here the lovers are shown not merely experiencing the first moment of mutual love in a crowded space, but physically expressing their love without apparent regard to the presence of their fellow passengers.

These images are characteristically medieval in their execution, sacrificing pictorial realism for narrative detail. What I have referred to as a "ship" is, in the Runkelstein mural,

apparently the size of a small fishing boat, in the Wienhausen embroidery the size of a canoe, and the figures are crammed so tightly into each vessel that there does not appear to be room for all their legs. Both depictions are probably based on the narrative of Gottfried von Strassbourg, which situates the lovers in the ship's cabin at this point, where they are alone, but for a few young ladies-in-waiting.[1] This, as it turns out, is a crucial point, as it is the absence of Brangain, to whom the magic potion was entrusted, that allows the mistaken drinking of it to occur. It could be argued that by crowding the vessels with so many other people, both the mural and the embroidery do a less than satisfactory job of presenting this situation. Yet each has in subtle ways demarcated the crucial scene as private. In the Wienhausen embroidery, the mast and the curving sail set apart one half of the ship in a way suggestive of interior space, separating the other passengers from the lovers and making the servant with the cup the only clear witness to their embrace. In the Runkelstien mural, something similar is suggested by the way that the lovers stand apart, elevated in the stern of the ship, with only the two small attendant figures behind them looking in their direction. Brangain, here labelled like the lovers, is very clearly positioned with her back to them, in conversation with another passenger.[2] The creators of both mural and embroidery thus succeed in representing several important aspects of the scene at once, and illustrate at the same time an alienating feature of medieval romance. To be private in romance does not necessarily mean to be alone. The servant who could proffer the flask of potion is

1. Gottfried, *Tristan*, ll. 11667–9. Both the murals and the embroidery are illustrated and discussed in Loomis and Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, 48–52, and figures 69, 70 and 77. The murals are also discussed in Van D'Elden, "Reading Illustrations of Tristan," 348–350.

2. Medieval illustrations often show the inside and outside of buildings at the same time, to demonstrate what sort of building a scene takes place in; something similar happens with the pictures of Tristan and Isolt on the ship.

always close at hand, and the shipful of mariners and attendants never far away. Yet even under these circumstances the moment that seals the lovers into a private world can occur.

That this aspect of medieval romances reflects something about the world in which they were produced will be the argument of this dissertation. Private space was scarce in the real world outside of romance, and the literature of courtly love responds to this reality with a complex treatment of privacy. Many narratives turn upon the efforts of lovers to preserve their secrets and find opportunities to meet amid threats and obstacles. Many also give prominence to characters who either help to guarantee or attempt to violate the lovers' private world.

Romance writers do not present the details of contemporary daily life with journalistic realism, any more than do medieval visual artists. This is a point not always recognized by social historians. For instance, one author, in discussing gender segregation in medieval castles, quotes a passage from Geoffrey of Monmouth which refers to men and women dining separately at a king's court, observing, so Geoffrey says, the venerable custom of the Trojans. This is presented as having some bearing on actual medieval practice, presumably in the twelfth century, when Geoffrey was writing.[3] But the king in question is Arthur, and the only thing that this passage actually proves is what Geoffrey of Monmouth thought about the cultural continuity between one imaginary court and another. If anything, it indicates that the situation in twelfth-century England was different. Danielle Régier-Bohler also relies on an Arthurian example when she cites the behaviour of characters in *Erec et Enide* as evidence for when and why medieval people slept

3. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 123. The rest of Gilchrist's study, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 below, is very useful and does not exhibit the same type of carelessness.

alone.[4] It may indeed be true that in twelfth-century France, "When a person slept alone, it was because someone felt that he needed his sleep."[5] But Chrétien himself was aware that the events of his romances did not take place in the twelfth century, and that important things had changed since King Arthur's day.[6] His works may indeed, in most respects, represent aspects of daily life as it was lived in their author's own time, in the same way that their illustrators depicted Arthurian characters in the clothes and armour of their own day. But we must be careful not to take every detail at face value. Chrétien professes, like many romance authors, to be memorializing past events rather than inventing new stories. If his narrative calls for certain archaic customs, he will be likely to preserve these details even if they do not conform to contemporary practice. Indeed, the plot of *Lancelot* turns upon an incident which necessitates an explanation about the significance of carts "in those days."[7] Medieval narratives cannot simply be mined for data about medieval living. Rather, like the murals at Runkelstein and the Wienhausen embroideries, these texts reflect attitudes and ideas about private life shaped by the material conditions in which they were produced.[8]

To begin this investigation, Chapter 1 sets out to examine some of the evidence that can

4. Régier-Bohler, "Exploring Literature," 328. This chapter in the *History of Private Life* is focussed on extracting information from literary sources, and begins with something of an acknowledgement of the limitations of this endeavour.

5. Ibid. This is not explicitly what Régier-Bohler is arguing here.

6. See, for instance, the opening of *Yvain*.

7. Chrétien, *Lancelot*, l. 321 ff.

8. A similar point is made by Diana Webb (*Privacy and Secrecy in the Middle Ages*, 114). Webb makes use of literary and artistic sources throughout her study, but she does so with due caution and an awareness of where and how these sources can be relied on for details of domestic life.

be brought to bear on the concept of privacy in the Middle Ages. I aim to explore the material background to developing ideas of privacy, focussing on England and France from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and drawing as much as possible on non-literary sources. This results in what may seem like some obvious omissions; for instance, in citing evidence of bed-sharing arrangements among travellers, I do not mention *The Reeve's Tale*. However, the aim here is to present non-literary evidence which may provide a background to the texts which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Textual and lexical evidence is used at this point to demonstrate the existence of ideas of privacy in the Middle Ages. I argue that these ideas, as they relate to domestic arrangements, were not as distant from modern ideas as has sometimes been suggested, and that throughout the period under consideration we can see evidence of architecture catching up with desire, providing more opportunities for the private space which was wanting, and wanted, in earlier centuries. In addition, however, there were two aspects of privacy which differed markedly from modern concepts. One was a suspicion of private activity and things designated private; the other was the more widespread application of the term "private" to people as well as places and things. Both of these features can be seen at work in the texts considered in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 examines medieval French adaptations of the *Ars Amatoria*, arguing that these show changes related to the material and social circumstances sketched in Chapter 1. The adaptations of Maistre Elie and Jakes d'Amiens, the late thirteenth-century *Clef d'amors*, the prose rendering which can be considered the first "translation" of the *Ars*, and the infamous text

of Andreas Capellanus, all reproduce Ovid's insistence on secrecy in love, while adding new emphases and modifying his advice in certain ways. All reflect a social situation in which lovers' concern for maintaining the privacy of their affairs encompasses a new obsession with gossips and spies. All are more willing than Ovid to include trusted friends and confidants in the conduct of a well-ordered affair. Just as Ovid's project was to codify love according to the literary sources of his day, so too do his medieval adaptors draw on their own contemporary love literature. The remainder of this study considers some of the narrative sources of these ideas.

Chapter 3 considers the *Lais* of Marie de France, in particular *Guigemar*, *Yonec*, *Milun*, *Eliduc* and *Lanval*. In each of these five lais Marie illustrates different aspects of the relationship between illicit love and the private sphere of the female household. Drawing upon the research in gender archaeology by Roberta Gilchrist, and the arguments of Karen L. Fresco about female seclusion, I examine how each of these texts deals with the paradox of private space whereby the seclusion which is in part intended to safeguard a woman's chastity in fact facilitates private activity, including illicit love.

Chapter 4 considers three of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes: *Cligès*, *Lancelot* and *Yvain*. These texts do not depict the prototypical scenario of an illicit affair threatened by outsiders and guided by mediators. Instead, each story has been carefully shaped in order to allow for the possibility of a happy ending. *Yvain* and *Cligès* are both notable for the way in which they present confidant figures who take on quasi-authorial characteristics, calling attention to the art required to direct the narrative. In *Lancelot*, the transferral of responsibility from one

author to another similarly calls attention to the shaping of the story, and the romance ends on a positive note after recounting only a portion of a potentially less happy narrative.

Chapter 5 deals with five different texts in the complex body of literature concerning Tristan and Isolt. These poems, in Old French and Middle English, are consistently preoccupied with the roles played by helping and hindering figures in the unfolding of a tragic, adulterous love. Here I focus on the characters of the evil dwarf, the steward Meriadok, the *losengier* barons, and the generally helpful yet sometimes threatening Brangain. Characters are considered across texts, because of the complex and fragmentary way in which this narrative tradition is preserved. All of these characters are significant in part because of their privileged access to private space and the knowledge and status that comes with this. Here the hindering figures tend to play a simple narrative role that remains constant within and across texts, whereas the more fully developed Brangain shifts in motivation and allegiance, and is portrayed in different lights by the central texts of the tradition.

The final chapter considers three works by Chaucer which have particular relevance for this study. *Troilus and Criseyde* gives prominent place to the most fully developed example of a character who mediates between lovers. Pandarus embodies the complexities of the mediating function in a new way, appearing by turns helpful and meddlesome, adhering to the letter of the law on secrecy in love and at the same time violating the privacy of the couple he brings together. Finally *The Miller's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale* both mock the conventions of courtly love, turning stories of two couples' quests for privacy into exuberant farce on the one hand, and

sour satire on the other.

1. Words and Things: Conceptual and Material Aspects of Privacy

In the castles and houses where the authors and the first audiences of medieval literature made their homes, privacy was a luxury. It was, however, a luxury increasingly well provided for as the period progressed. Developments in domestic architecture, which generally tended towards increased comfort and "hominess" in the fortified house, also tended to offer increased privacy. Communal sleeping arrangements gave way to private bedrooms, and greater compartmentalization and specialization in interior space, especially in urban dwellings, allowed more people access to solitude for a variety of purposes. Ideas about when privacy was desirable, even essential, were not, as has sometimes been supposed, strikingly dissimilar from modern ones. Yet the available evidence paints a picture of households in which it was comparatively easy, throughout the Middle Ages, to be watched or overheard, and difficult to be alone.

The degree to which medieval life was communal has sometimes been exaggerated. Georges Duby writes of the aristocratic home where "there was no more solitude in the bedroom than there was in the monks' dormitory."[1] Literally, the presence of servants in the master's chamber often made this true; but it seems likely that the master of the house *felt* he had more privacy than a monk. He had his own chamber to withdraw to, away from most of his household, a private bed if he wished it, and curtains which his servants would pull around that bed at night. He might also have had a private study, where he could be truly alone during the day. The lord was at the top of his household hierarchy, and those lower down likely did not enjoy so much access to privacy. Nevertheless, to claim, as C. M. Woolgar does, that in late medieval England

1. Duby, "The Aristocratic Households of Feudal France: Communal Living," 63.

members of a great household lived with "no privacy in any sense that we would recognise,"[2] and that "privacy, in the modern sense, was a development of the seventeenth century onwards,"[3] is an exaggeration at best.

The evidence of word usage helps to demonstrate that a concept of privacy was not lacking in the Middle Ages, and that the vocabulary available to discuss it was not drastically different from that of the modern or the ancient world. The Modern English and French words "private" and *privé* derive in a fairly straightforward manner from Classical Latin. The adjective *privatus* was used in Classical literature in opposition to *publicus*, in senses such as "Restricted for the use of a particular person," and "Not holding public office."[4] The adverb *privatim* also carried the more general sense of "in private; in a private place."[5] *Secretus* was the adjective more commonly used in Classical Latin for "private" in the sense of "withdrawn from one's companions," "remote" or "secluded." *Secretum* could be used for "privacy."[6] This usage continued, with some shades of difference, in Medieval Latin, with *secretum* as a common term for "a private room," and *secreta* being used for "private business" or "the activities that go on inside a private home."[7] *Privatim* also continued to be used for "in private," along with other

2. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England*, 8.

3. Woolgar, 197.

4. "Priuatus," *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1968.

5. "Priuatim," *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

6. "Secretus," *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.

7. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources*, 428.

forms (*privater*, *private*).[8]

In the vernacular, *privatus* gave rise to Old French *privé* and *priveté*, and through them Middle English *prive* and *privete*. These words had lost some of the political and economic connotations of the CL word ("private property," "private citizen," etc.), and generally took on a more personal application; they had become somewhat closer to the meaning of CL *secretus*. In the fifteenth century, when the need arose for a word with the original connotations of *privatus*, a new borrowing from Latin resulted in the Modern English "private" and "privacy," which eventually took over the meanings of "privy" and "privity." Modern French retains *privé*, but has lost *priveté*. *Secretus* took a different course in Modern English and French, but in ME and OF *secre* still overlaps somewhat with *prive*.

Five of the OED's seventeen definitions of "private" are relevant to a discussion of domestic arrangements.[9] Every one of these meanings is attested in relation to both the Old French word *privé* and the Middle English *prive*. Examples from Tobler-Lommatzsch (T-L) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) illustrate this:[10]

> **OED: 3. a.** Kept or removed from public view or knowledge; not within the cognizance of people generally; concealed, secret.[11]

8. Latham, 373.

9. The others concern concepts, such as "not holding public office," which are not important here.

10. "Private," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, second edition, 2006, Oxford University Press, 16 Oct. 2006 <http://dictionary.oed.com/>; "privé," *Tobler-Lommatzsch, Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*; "prive," *Middle English Dictionary*, 16 Oct. 2006 <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/>

11. This meaning of "private" is first attested in 1472.

T-L: "Veilles font e afflictïons / E lor privees oreisons, / Salmes dïent e mesereles, / Letanïes e kirïeles." ("They kept vigils and did penance / And said their private prayers, / Psalms and Misereres, / Litanies and Kyries.")[12]

MED: "Chartres and oþur priue writes … in is coffres weren i-do."[13]

OED: 4. a. Of a thing: Not open to the public; restricted or intended only for the use or enjoyment of particular and privileged persons.[14]

T-L: "Plusors distrent por verité, / Que un dïable aveit privé" ("Several said that in truth, / He had a devil of his own.")[15]

MED: "Provided also, that this Acte extende not nor be prejudiciall unto Robert Broke, of oure prive Spicerie."[16]

OED: 5. a. That belongs to, or is the property of a particular individual; belonging to oneself, one's own.

T-L: "Environ lui sa maisnee privee" ("Around him his personal household.")

MED: "O moul, þou marrez a myry juele, / My priuy perle wythouten spotte."[17]

OED: 10. b. Of a conversation, communication, etc.: Intended only for or confined to the person or persons directly concerned; confidential.

12. From Robert Wace's twelfth-century *Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie*.

13. From the *South English Legendary*, ca. 1300.

14. This meaning of "private" is first attested in 1398.

15. See n. 12.

16. From the Rolls of Parliament of 1455.

17. From *Pearl*, ca. 1400.

> T-L: "l'acointance … Qui fu feit a privé consoil / Antre la lune et le soloil" ("the meeting … That took place in private / Between the moon and the sun")[18]
>
> MED: "for þei han maad a preue couenaunt wiþ sathanas here maister … "[19]

OED: 12. Of a place: Retired, unfrequented, secluded.[20]

> T-L: "Dame, pour les fols envïeus, / Qui maisdïent des amoureus / Se fair boin sagement garder: / Pour çou nous couvient esgarder / Aucun privé lieu biel et gent, / Ù ne nous sacent nulle gent" ("Lady, because of the mad envious ones, / Who slander lovers / One must well and wisely beware: / For this reason we should seek / Some private place pleasant and fair, / Where no one will know about us")[21]
>
> MED: "His heorte him gaf forto wende into a priue stude and stille, þare he migte beo al one."[22]

The *Catholicon Anglicum*, a late fifteenth-century English-Latin wordbook, provides a string of Latin equivalents for *Pryvay*, including: "Absconsus … Abditus, latens … clamdestinus, clanculus, occultus, obscurus, privatus, secretus, tacitus."[23] Glosses, word-lists and translations cited by T-L and the MED show *privé/prive* used in Old French and Middle English to translate a range of Latin terms: *occultus*, *secretum*, *clam*, *peculiaris*, *privatus*, *familiaris*, and so on. Taken together, this evidence indicates a range of uses incorporating such senses as "hidden," "obscured," "secret," "unmentioned," "unknown," "personal," and "intimate"; that is, a range

18. From Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*.

19. John Wycliffe, "Of Prelates," ca. 1400.

20. This meaning of "private" is first attested in 1494.

21. From *Le Roman du Castelain de Couci et de la Dame de Fayel*, ca. 1300.

22. From the *South English Legendary*, ca. 1300.

23. *Catholicon Anglicum*, "Pryvay."

very similar to that of the Modern English "private." In addition to *prive*, the Middle English words *dern* and *homli* overlap in some senses with Modern English "private." All of this suggests that a precise vocabulary for describing places, possessions, acts and relationships as "private" certainly existed in medieval France and England.

Old French and Middle English *privé/prive* were also used in senses that the Modern English "private" is not. The term may be associated with "the mysteries or secrets of religion,"[24] and used as a gloss for *misticus* or *archanus*. These are secrets which are meant to remain secret. Two other features are of particular importance here: the negative connotations often associated with *prive*, and the word's association with people. One of the MED's definitions for *prive* is "stealthy, furtive, treacherous," illustrated with references to "Robberie and privi Stelthe," "preuy disceytes," and so on. A "prive paiement" is a term for a bribe.[25] On the other hand, *prive* can mean "familiar, intimate, close, confidential" and is used frequently in locutions referring to the trusted personnel of a medieval household: "priue chaumberleynes," "priue knyȝt," "priuemen," "pryuy meynee" in Middle English, and "meisnee privee," "gent privee," "privez clers," "privez amis," "serjant privé," and "chers compeignons privez," in Old French. In both languages the substantive form of the word can mean "an intimate friend," and indeed this usage is quite common in Old French. But the intimate friend can become the intimate enemy. T-L quotes several proverbs which combine these two obsolete senses of the word, suggesting that,

24. MED "prive" 3.c.

25. MED "prive" 1.b.

"Nus ne puet tant grever con privez anemis" ("No one can do such harm as the close personal enemy,") and "L'en ne poet estre plus träiz / Que par privez e par nuirriz" ("One cannot be more betrayed / than by intimates and by dependants").[26] "Þare es nan sa gret mai greif / Als traitur dern and priue theif," warns the fourteenth-century *Cursor Mundi*.[27]

To "ben prive with" in Middle English can have some very good associations; there are numerous examples of the phrase being used to indicate closeness to God, both in the sense of having access to divine revelation on Earth, and in terms of placement in a heavenly hierarchy where, as at an earthly court, service is rewarded with proximity to the ruler. But the same phrase can also be a euphemism for "have sex with." David Austin notes that ME *prive* may be used of both trustworthy and treacherous actions, of confidential servants and also of treacherous thieves. He catalogues different uses associated with built spaces other than the privy itself, concluding that there are persistent associations of "ill-deed, corruption, darkness and innerness."[28] The word is also used in euphemisms for the sexual organs and sexual activity, prototypical sources of shame.[29] And Latin *privatus* could still mean simply "deprived of." These two categories of use —the personal and the negative—reflect significant aspects of the concept of privacy in the

26. This last, which comes from Thomas's *Tristan*, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

27. *Cursor Mundi*, Cotton version, ll. 7233–7234. The context is the story of Samson and Delilah, and a general warning to men not to entrust their "priuetes" to their wives.

28. Austin, "Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things," 183. In his subsequent discussion, and especially in his rather disturbing conclusion, Austin seems to go out of his way to emphasize these negative aspects of privacy in the medieval castle, perhaps as a corrective to a model of progress that would see the subdivision of interior space as a positive, civilizing move in the late Middle Ages.

29. Austin, 184. Here Austin overstates the case, claiming that in reference to the body, *prive* is used "always in a hidden or pejorative way with the body signalled as the vessel of sin," although the examples he cites do not bear this out. He also notes the association of *prive* with servants and service.

Middle Ages. When privacy was not provided by domestic architecture and the physical circumstances of daily life, the importance of being surrounded by trustworthy individuals was heightened, and the idea of privacy might more easily be vested in people than in places or in the abstract realm of rights and desires. On the other hand, there was a heightened suspicion of privacy as a state conducive to illicit activity and facilitative of sin.

Being able to label chambers, documents and even servants "private" is, admittedly, not quite the same as being able to talk about a concept of privacy. The relevant modern meanings of "privacy" (which in general has a much smaller semantic range than the adjective "private") are as follows:

> **1. a.** The state or condition of being withdrawn from the society of others, or from public interest; seclusion.
>
> **1. b.** The state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right; freedom from interference or intrusion.
>
> **3. a.** Absence or avoidance of publicity or display; a condition approaching to secrecy or concealment.[30]

Here the medieval vocabulary offers a less precise correspondence. OF *priveté* encompasses meanings such as "furtiveness" and "secrets," but also "familiarity" and "friendliness."[31] In only one quotation in T-L does the word appear to bear a meaning very like Modern English "privacy." This one, however, from the thirteenth-century *Coutumes de Beauvoisis*, is worth

30. "Privacy," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.

31. Cf. OED's obsolete definitions of "privity": "1. A thing that is kept hidden or secret. a. A divine or heavenly mystery; a secret of nature. b. A secret matter, design, purpose, or plan. c. One's private thought or counsel; private business; personal affairs. 3. Private or secret fellowship; intimacy, familiarity." "Privity," *Oxford English Dictionary Online.*

noting:

> Quant aucuns fet son gardins ou son präel en lieu privé et là ù il n'a nule veüe de voisins, et aucuns des voisins veut mesonner joingnant, on ne li pot pas deffendre le mesonner, mais on li pot bien devëer qu'il n'i face ne wis ne fenestre, par quoi le privetés du präel ou du garding soit empiriés; car aucun le feroient malicieusement por oster le priveté de lor voisins.[32]
>
> When anyone makes his garden or his courtyard in a private place and where there is no view by the neighbours, and one of the neighbours wants to build a house adjoining, one may not forbid him from building a house, but one may well prohibit him from making a door or a window by which the privacy of the courtyard or garden would be spoiled; because some do this maliciously to rob their neighbours of their privacy.

Here we can see the use of the word *priveté* to indicate "the private character of a place"[33] just sliding into the idea of privacy as an abstract good of which one neighbour might seek to rob another.

The quotations in the MED offer the following parallels to aspects of modern usage:

"With inne a yerd of priuete / Him silue henged him an an elre tre."[34] (OED 1. a)

"in þe priuyte of þi bed, ne curse þou to þe riche man."[35] (OED 1. a)

"for no priuyte is where regneþ drunkenesse."[36] (OED 3. a)

"The preye ich eft, althogh thow shuldest deye, / That priuete go with vs in this cas—/ That is to seyn, that thow vs neuere wreye."[37] (OED 3. a)

32. Phillipe de Beaumanoir, *Les Coutumes de Beauvoisis*, vol. 1, 351–352.

33. "Privater Charakter eines Ortes" is the definition given by T-L; this is the only use cited under this definition.

34. 1325, from the *Northern Passion*.

35. 1382, from the Wycliffite Bible.

36. Ibid.

37. From *Troilus and Criseyde*, ca. 1385.

Again, the correspondence between the modern word and Middle English *privete* is less exact than was the case with "private" and *prive*. The Middle English word tends to be less abstract, more often referring to, for example, "a place of privete," or a speech spoken "in privete" than privacy "as a matter of choice or right." *Privete* can mean "private affairs" or "a private place," meanings which are obsolete in Modern English. Seemingly a medieval English person would have been unlikely to formulate an idea such as "I need more privacy in my life," but could easily have come up with something like "I need more privacy in this house." Indeed, judging by what can be known now of medieval domestic arrangements, this is something that many people must have wanted to say.

A passage from Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* makes clear the connection between a luxurious lifestyle and a multiplicity of rooms. Reporting Heloise's arguments against marriage, Abelard poses a series of rhetorical questions about the compatibility of study with domestic concerns:

> Que enim conventio scolarium ad pedissequas, scriptoriorum ad cunabula, librorum sive tabularum ad colos, stilorum sive calamorum ad fusos? Quis denique sacris vel philosophicis meditationibus intentus, pueriles vagitus, nutricum que hos mittigant nenias, tumultuosam familie tam in viris quam in feminis turbam sustinere poterit? … Id, inquies, divites possunt, quorum palatia vel domus ample diversoria habent, quorum opulentia non sentit expensas nec cotidianis sollicitudinibus cruciatur.[38]
>
> What agreement indeed between scholars and housemaids, writing desks and cradles, books or tablets and distaffs, styluses or pens and spindles? In short, what man intent on holy or philosophical meditations will be able to bear the childish crying, the lullabies of the nurses who soothe them, the turbulent uproar made by both the men and the women of the household? … This, you will say,

38 Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, lines 469–479.

> the rich may do, whose palaces or houses are abundantly supplied with places of refuge, whose wealth does not feel the expense and is not tormented by daily cares.

The *diversoria* of the wealthy shield them from all the undignified activities, objects and personnel of the household, including everything connected with child-rearing. Of course, as Heloise (or Abelard, or whichever of them we imagine to be speaking here) notes in the next breath, real rich people do not use the peace and quiet provided by their private rooms to study philosophy or Scripture, as they are likely to be far too immersed in the concerns of the world. This passage probably, like the rest of Heloise's arguments against marriage, owes more to textual authority than to empirical observation of twelfth-century life. Yet what it says about the luxury of privacy is valid for that period, as well as for later centuries.

Private space was scarce in the High Middle Ages because domestic interiors were not yet highly compartmentalized. At the lower end of the social scale, throughout the period, a single room might suffice for a dwelling. For the upper classes, an important division in interior space was that between the hall and the chamber. The distinction corresponds in some respects to the division between public and private. Conceptually, the hall was the place of public activity and duty, where it was difficult to talk without being overheard; the chamber was the place to go for private conversation, and to be admitted to the chamber of a ruler was a high privilege. This is the theory that is often found reflected in literature.[39] Diana Webb, in her wide-ranging study of privacy and solitude in the Middle Ages, writes: "Phrases like 'in chamber or in hall' are

39. Thompson, *The Medieval Hall*, 116. See also Webb, 98.

commonly used to distinguish the living quarters of a house from the kitchen and other offices."[40] In non-literary texts, the distinction between chamber and hall is not always clear. Dominique Bartélemy discusses a number of documents from the eleventh and twelfth centuries in which the usage of *aula* and *camera* is not as clear-cut as one would expect. This may be explained, she suggests, by the fact that individual rooms could be subdivided by wooden partitions, allowing one large space to serve as both hall and chamber.[41] It may also simply reflect the fact that everyday usage is casual and variable. Pierre Garrigou Grandchamp describes the hall as "une pièce à vivre polyvalente, espace du repas et de la réunion, mi-privé et mi-ouvert à la vie sociale." The higher one's social status, the more likely one was to have the luxury of a more specialized hall, and with it the luxury of more exclusively private chambers.[42] The Menagier de Paris, in specifying the order in which rooms should be cleaned, speaks of the "entrees de vostre hostel" ("entries of your house") and explains what he means: "c'estassavoir la salle et les autres lieux par ou les gens entreent et se arrestent en l'ostel pour parler"[43] ("that is to say the hall and the other places where people enter and stop in the house to talk"). The *entrees* are the public areas of the house, including but apparently not limited to the *salle*; after these spaces have been swept and readied for the day, then the *chambres* are to be similarly prepared. As for the latter, according to Garrigou Grandchamp, "La chambre est en principe un espace moins public où s'épanouit la vie familiale et auquel n'accèdent que les proches." During the period under

40. Webb, 98.

41. Bartélemy, "Civilizing the Fortress: Eleventh to Thirteenth Century," 418–420.

42. Garrigou Grandchamp, *Demeures médiévales: Coeur de la cité*, 78–79.

43. *Le Menagier de Paris*, 2.3.6–14.

discussion, first in castles and palaces, later in urban middle-class homes, there was a general trend towards subdividing the available space to increase the number of chambers.[44]

As furnishings were relatively sparse until the later Middle Ages, rooms could easily be reconfigured at need.[45] Correspondingly, there was less of a tendency to identify individual chambers by a specific function. Webb presents a detailed discussion of the terms used for divisions of interior space in the Middle Ages. "For most of the medieval period," she notes, "the users of written language and the small number of people whose lives they described disposed of a very limited range of terms to describe their living spaces."[46] This lack of precision in vocabulary reflected a general lack of differentiation in function of household spaces. Classical terms, reflecting quite different ways of dividing up the household interior, would have been known to the Latin-literate in the Middle Ages, but, as Webb points out, they do not have much influence on vernacular usage. The Roman terms for dining rooms (*cenaculum*, *triclinium*, etc.) disappeared along with the Roman style of dining. Latin texts continued to use *cubiculum* for the bedchamber, but no vernacular words were derived from this apparently fossilized term, and a specialized word for "bedroom" remained lacking for centuries. Instead, descendants of the Latin word *camera* were the most widely used to designate both general living rooms and bedrooms in particular.[47]

The proliferation of smaller, more private chambers is one instance of a general

44. Garrigou Grandchamp, 79.

45. Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 119.

46. Webb, 50.

47. Ibid.

improvement in the quality of medieval household amenities. The introduction of wall fireplaces and chimneys made it easier to keep small, upper-storey rooms comfortably warm in cold climates. Obviously the central hearth, which still persisted in the hall in England until the early sixteenth century, was only suitable for heating a large room open to the roof.[48] But the importance of the fireplace in connection with "ideas of privacy" has probably also been exaggerated.[49] As Margaret Wood points out, portable braziers could have been used to heat small rooms unequipped with fireplaces.[50] And at any rate, fireplaces and chimneys were in use in England and France from at least the twelfth century; the increase in the number of chambers occurred later, and was not the immediate result of a technological breakthrough. Rather than imagining the people of medieval Europe discovering the pleasures and conveniences of private space after the introduction of the wall fireplace, it seems more accurate to see domestic architecture and social norms developing side by side, in a shifting relationship to one another.

Lambert of Ardres, writing in the first years of the thirteenth century, in his *History of the Counts of Guines and Lords of Ardres*, provides a valuable picture of the organization of an early twelfth-century aristocratic house. As in the passage from the *Historia Calamitatum*, the connection between luxury and multiple rooms is made clear. Lambert is describing the "magnam domum et excelsam" ("great and tall house") built by Arnold II of Ardres (1094–c. 1138) within the fortifications at Ardres:

48. Wood, *The English Mediaeval House*, 261.

49. e.g. in Bell, "Chambers, Cells, and Cubicles."

50. Wood, 9. This was the heating method used (probably even in Britain) by the Romans, whose houses were full of small, private bedrooms.

> In secunda autem area fuit habitatio et communis inhabitantium conversatio, in qua erant penora, hinc panetariorum, hinc pincernarum, hinc magna domini et uxoris sue, in qua accubabant, camera, cui contiguum erat latibulum, pedissequarum videlicet et puerorum camera vel dormitorium. Hinc in magne secretiori parte camere erat quodam secretum diversorium, ubi summo diluculo vel in vespere vel in infermitate vel ad sanguinis minutiones faciendas vel ad pedissequas vel ad pueros ablactatos calefaciendos ignem componere solebant. …[51] In superiori domus area fuerunt facta solariorum diversoria, in quibus hic filii, cum volebant, illic filie, quia sic oportebat, domini domus accubabant; illic vigiles et ad custodiendam domum servientes positi et constituti et semper parati custodes quandocumque somnum capiebant; hic gradalia et meicula de area in aream, de domo in coquinam, de camera in cameram, item a domo in logium … item de logio in oratorium seve capellam. … Nec mirum, si hospites et extranei omni huius domus diversoria non considerent, cum multi in hac domo ab infancia educati et in virilem etatem producti, numerum etiam portarum, ostiorum, ostiolorum, fenestrarum comprehendere et scire non potuerunt.[52]
>
> On the second floor was the dwelling and the common gathering-place of the inhabitants, in which were workrooms, here those of the bakers, here those of the butlers, here the great chamber of the lord and his wife, in which they slept, which is next door to the inner room, that is to say the chamber or dormitory of the maids and children. Here in the more private part of the great chamber was a certain private retreat, where a fire was usually lit just at the break of day, or in the evening, or in the case of sickness or bloodletting, or to warm the maids or the weaned children. … In the upper part of the house various solars were made, in which, on one side, the sons of the lord of the house slept as they wished, and on the other side the daughters of the lord slept, because that was appropriate; there the watchmen, and the servants placed and charged with the care of the house, and the ever-ready guards caught some sleep whenever they could; here were stairs and passages from storey to storey, from the house to the kitchen, from chamber to chamber, and from the house to the loggia … and again from the loggia into the oratory or chapel. … No wonder that guests and strangers do not observe every corner of this house, when many brought up from infancy and raised to man's estate in this house cannot comprehend and know indeed the number of gates, of doors, of little entrances, of windows.

As Webb notes, "It is evident that to Lambert this was the setting for as civilized an existence as

51. The four sentences omitted here contain details about the kitchens.

52. Lambert of Ardres, "Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium," 624.

the age could afford."[53] In order to emphasize this, he insists on the *complexity* of the house, the amazing multiplicity of rooms, the number of doors, not the size or grandeur of the apartments. All the same the most private area is here not a separate room but a part of a room, the "magne secretiori parte camere." The members of the household sleep in various places; the lord and lady have their *camera*, which is explicitly their bedchamber, while the female attendants and small children sleep in a communal dormitory, and the older sons and daughters of the lord, along with various other male servants, have separate lodgings, whose degree of compartmentalization is not specified. The difference between the *camera* and the *solarium* is not one of function (both are bedrooms) but of location within the house, the *solarium* being an attic or garret.[54] There is no mention of an *aula*; Duby takes the *habitatio* on the second floor to be the hall,[55] while Barthélemy suggests that the "magna camera" of the lord and lady was itself also the hall, perhaps divided by a partition.[56] In any case, Lambert's description, which is intended to convey the grandeur of the lord's new building, does not specifically mention any part of the house where anyone could be alone; even the "magne secretiori parte camere" is a place where a group of people gathers around the fire. This was one of the homes of the rich alluded to by Heloise, with the *diversoria* which ought to provide the inhabitants with the space for study and contemplation. However, even as Lambert's description emphasizes the multiplicity of rooms in Arnold's dwelling, it also illustrates just how full they were of the people who made up Arnold's

53. Webb, 56.

54. See Webb, 54.

55. Duby, 61.

56. Barthélemy, 419.

household.

Lambert's description is unique for its time, but for subsequent centuries more and different documents are available. Inventories offer the opportunity to tour certain medieval properties, viewing the furniture in each room. The bed, especially when it involved luxurious draperies, was an important piece of furniture, and inventories of this kind always mention beds. As a result, they provide, among other things, a picture of the sleeping arrangements in various medieval homes. Four inventories that range from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries illustrate some of the changes taking place and some of the elements of continuity.

In 1347 the contents of the home of Elzéar Roubat, a moneychanger in Avignon, were inventoried on the occasion of his death. The seven-room house, which was inherited by his mother, is known only through this document.[57] Each of the four rooms identified as *camera* contained a bed, with the master's chamber containing two, one large and one small, the smaller adapted to be stowed under the larger.[58] Here only the master's chamber is identified by its occupant; two others are "next to the kitchen" and simply "upper."[59]

In 1395 an inventory was made of a much larger house at Dijon belonging to Regnaud Chevalier, tailor to the duke of Burgundy. It contained twenty-four rooms, but, as in the case of the Avignon house, nothing of it survives today.[60] Regnaud's house reveals a wider variety of rooms, some of which are identified as chambers but do not contain beds. Regnaud and his wife

57. Esquieu and Pesez, *Cent maisons médiévales en France*, 417–418.

58. Esquieu and Pesez, 418.

59. Esquieu and Pesez, 417.

60. Esquieu and Pesez, 324–326.

Jehannote had no children, but must have kept a substantial household, since eight beds are mentioned in the inventory. Three of the chambers in their large house contained pairs of beds; one of these rooms, to judge by the richness of the other furnishings, was probably the master's.[61] This inventory identifies individual chambers by their location ("la chambre de costé ladite sale"), by some general description ("une chambre vert"), or by a specialized function ("une chambre darriere appelee la tailerie"). Here not all the chambers contained beds, but no functional distinction is made between rooms which were bedchambers and ones which were not.[62]

In 1456 a fourteen-room house in Arles belonging to the nobleman Nicolas Cays was inventoried. Cays was apparently one of the richest men of his time. His house shows an arrangement similar to Regnaud and Jehannote's, with four of the chambers, including the lord's, containing one large and one small bed. Besides the lord's chamber, other chambers are identified only by location. Here, however, one room is identified as a *studium*.[63]

Caister Castle, the home of Sir John Fastolf, was inventoried twice in the mid-fifteenth century, not long after it was built. Substantial remains still exist of what was once a fifty-room castle built largely of brick.[64] At Caister there were thirty-nine beds divided among twenty-eight rooms: the master's chamber contained three, as did the mistress's, and Sir John's stepson had a chamber with two beds. Chambers were now being allotted to individual officials of the

61. Esquieu and Pesez, 325.

62. Esquieu and Pesez, 324.

63. Esquieu and Pesez, 414–416.

64. Woolgar, 63–67.

household, though other servants might still sleep communally in rooms with other functions. The inventories of Caister Castle are both much more detailed than the earlier French examples, and show a mixture of styles of identifying rooms: by owner, by function, by colour scheme or by location. Thus we get the "Chamber of William Lynde and Geoffrey the Chaplain," "The yeoman's chamber, for visitors," the "White Chamber," the "Great Chamber over the Summer Hall," and so on.[65]

These examples are scattered in time and place, and represent different milieux: some urban houses, others rural estates. However, one element of change and one of continuity are amply illustrated here. First, the designation of rooms became more specific over time. Already in Lambert's description there is some identification of rooms with specific uses; aside from the kitchen, which is obviously specialized in its function, there is also the *logium*, which Lambert suggests is specifically a place for conversation.[66] Throughout the inventories, the tendency towards more specialized naming of rooms becomes clear.[67] As more specific naming of rooms developed, however, chambers with multiple beds remained common, and the master's chamber was likely to be one of these, with auxiliary beds provided for attendants. Writing of arrangements at Caister, Woolgar concludes: "It was comparatively unusual for individuals in

65. Woolgar, Table 5.

66. He explains: "logium, quod bene et procedente ratione nomen accepit—ibi enim sedere in deliciis soldebant ad colloquendum—a 'logos', quod est sermo, derivatum." Lambert, 624.

67. It is not always clear that what the inventory calls each room was actually what the inhabitants called it; the master of the house was usually dead when the inventory was being drawn up, and the person doing the inventorying might not be familiar with household usage.

this household, except those of the highest rank, to share their sleeping accommodation."[68] This observation recalls Duby's remark about the lack of solitude in the aristocratic bedroom. Residents "of the highest rank" at Caister shared their sleeping accommodations with servants and dependents, whose presence offered practical convenience and companionship. These members of the "pryuy meynee" could at any time be summoned, and at any time dismissed. But there was also an element of responsibility in the relation of master or mistress to servants. This is suggested by a passage in the Menagier's handbook in which he advises his bride on the appropriate sleeping arrangements for her teenaged female attendants. Because "en tel aage elles sont soctes et n'ont gueres veu du siecle," ("at that age they are silly and have not seen much of the world") he says, she should have them sleep near her, "en garderobe ou chambre, *scilicet* ou il n'ait lucanne ne fenestre basse ne sur rue" ("in dressing-room or chamber, that is to say where there is no window or casement low down or overlooking the street"), the better to keep watch on them.[69]

Household members like the Menagier's flighty chambermaids had a particularly interesting status in the medieval domestic sphere. Austin illustrates a conjectural notion of how the interior of the castle might have appeared to inhabitants of different status. Taking Barnard Castle, the subject of his own archaeological work, as his example, he creates diagrams which position the different spaces of the castle not as they physically stood in relation to one another, but as they would have appeared in relative importance and accessibility to the lord, to one of his

68. Woolgar, 63–64.

69. *Le Menagier de Paris*, 2.3.17–32.

vassals, to a member of his household, a burgess, and a peasant. Some interesting observations arise, not so much from the diagrams themselves (which are somewhat confusing) as from the explanation of how the diagrams were arrived at. For the lord, Austin suggests, there would be a number of unfamiliar interiors in his own castle. The head of the household would normally have had no reason to enter the dwellings of the servants, vassals and peasants under his or her control.[70] "Thus," he concludes, "ironically the castle would be full of impermeable spaces, constrained by the performance of social position, unknown and unfelt, except perhaps from memory of childhood when the flow of movement might have been less confined."[71] It is not the lord but the household servant who would possess "the fullest knowledge, the most diurnal and perennial familiarity" with the spaces of the castle. Each member of the household would of course have a slightly differing sphere of activity, but as a class, servants and attendants would have the widest freedom of movement throughout the castle complex.[72] These people tended to acquire more personal space in the later Middle Ages. Woolgar discusses an example of this at Bishop's Waltham, an episcopal palace in Hampshire. In the original twelfth-century building, only a few members of the household were assigned private rooms; most of the functionaries were housed in communal chambers, according to rank. By the fifteenth century this was evidently felt to be inadequate, and the remodelling carried out between 1438 and 1443 included

70. Austin's discussion is gendered here, but it needn't be. The same considerations would apply to a lady heading her own household, as, for example, Christine de Pizan's *Livre de trois vertus* makes clear.

71. Austin, 176.

72. Austin, 176–177.

the provision of new cellular lodgings.[73] This is one instance of a general trend towards providing private lodgings for the members of a magnate's retinue. It coincides with a move towards static rather than mobile households; according to Woolgar, after the end of the thirteenth century, "buildings were intended—and designed—for almost continuous residence."[74] The luxury of the private chamber could now be extended to more members of the household.

Within the chamber, a bed could be a smaller unit of privacy, at least if it was supplied with curtains. The canopied bed of the Late Middle Ages presents a familiar silhouette, but this style only came into widespread use in the early fourteenth century, and was not for everyone even then. The beds of the earlier Middle Ages, without integrated canopies, were less distinctive; no actual beds from this period are extant, although there are numerous clear illustrations. Penelope Eames, in her study of medieval furniture, describes the earlier styles of bed, noting: "In all twelfth-century representations, any curtains which are present appear to be part of the chamber rather than the bed, being hung between columns or slung in some similar manner to form a private cubicle in which the bedstead stands unencumbered."[75] If the beds of the twelfth century were ornamented, it was with carving, inlay, painting, etc. applied to the bed frame. Later, the curtains became the focus of ornamentation, and the canopy became obligatory as a mark of rank.[76] Even in the thirteenth century, illuminations often display beds that are almost entirely covered by drapery, so that the wooden frame underneath is hardly visible. This is

73. Woolgar, 61.

74. Woolgar, 47.

75. Eames, *Furniture in England, France and the Netherlands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century*, 73.

76. Eames, 74.

part of the fashion for lavishing more attention on textiles than on heavy items of furniture; Eames explains it as a result of the peripatetic lifestyle of the courts, where luxury was demanded but portability was also required. A compromise was achieved with expensive textiles, which were hung on walls, draped over tables, chests and cupboards, and used to cover and screen beds. This trend continued far beyond the immediate milieu of the peripatetic royal court. In one early sixteenth-century inventory, for example, the "bedstede of Frenche werk" in the Silk Chamber is valued at only eight shillings, while the pair of fustian blankets upon it were worth twelve, the tapestry coverlet ten, the featherbed, bolster and pillow together one pound, and the "bedde of yelowe and redd sarcenett," that is the hangings of the bed, an impressive three pounds.[77]

By the early fourteenth century the canopied bed had become a mark of rank. An uncanopied bed was suitable for servants, and a duchess sharing a bedchamber with a queen might provide herself with a shorter canopy, as a way of signalling deference to her superior.[78] The canopy was essential as a status symbol, but the curtains still served more practical purposes. Philippe Contamine writes of curtains hung "to enable a person to sleep safe from prying eyes and disturbing light and breezes."[79] Gilles Corrozet, apostrophizing the bed in 1539 in his collection of poems on furniture, *Les Blasons Domestiques*, mentions only one of these

77. Wanklyn, *Inventories of Worcestershire Landed Gentry 1537–1786*, 3. Similar proportions are observable in all the other chambers, although the sarcenet hangings were the most expensive in the house. The disparity is particularly interesting since by this period wooden beds (some of which survive) were often quite elaborately carved.

78. Eames, 74–75.

79. Contamine, "Peasant Hearth to Papal Palace: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," 490.

aspects: "Beau lict encourtiné de soye / Pour musser la clarté qui nuict,"[80] ("Lovely bed curtained with silk / To hide the brightness that annoys.") Alexander Neckam, itemizing the contents of a bedchamber centuries earlier, refers to curtains lining the walls "ad muscarum evitationem et aranearum" ("for the avoidance of flies and spiders"), and a tapestry suspended from a column for an unspecified purpose.[81] Probably this latter was imagined as screening the bed in some way, as shown in some early miniatures. Iconography does not help much here, however, as pictures invariably show the curtains drawn back in order to reveal whatever is going on inside. In reality, curtains would have contributed another division of space, like the wooden partitions to which Bartélemy refers, and must have mitigated the effect of having multiple beds in a chamber.

Contamine asserts that it was common for "soldiers, students, invalids … paupers" and even whole families to share beds.[82] Jean Verdon affirms the notion, noting that "Documents and miniatures frequently show an entire family sleeping in a single bed."[83] Literary sources are filled with examples of bed-sharing among aristocrats and courtiers as well as city-dwellers and students. Verdon cites the early eleventh-century penitential of Burchard of Worms, which echoes Saint Columban from the late sixth century in addressing the issue of parents who accidentally smother a child who shares their bed.[84] The fifteenth-century *Boke of Curtayse*, a

80. Corrozet, *Les blasons domestiques*, 17r.

81. Neckam, "De nominibus utensilium," 64. See also Holmes, *Daily Living in the Twelfth Century*, 82.

82. Contamine, 497.

83. Verdon, *Night in the Middle Ages*, 160.

84. Verdon, *Night*, 21. The late French examples discussed below attest to a continuity of the custom, but also suggest that it was not universal.

text apparently aimed mostly at young men entering some kind of service, offers this advice:

> In bedde yf þou falle herberet to be,
> With felawe, maystur, or her degré,
> Þou schalt enquere be curtasye
> In what part of þe bedde he wylle lye;
> Be honest and lye þou fer hym fro,
> Þou art not wyse but þou do so.[85]

The context is a discussion of travel etiquette; this is evidently advice specific to a situation one might encounter at an inn, or when lodging in someone else's house. It bears witness to the fact that bed-sharing arrangements were common for travellers, and suggests that a degree of delicacy was required in negotiating the situation.[86] Verdon mentions the record of a theft committed in a hotel room which housed four men unknown to one another, at least two of whom were sharing a bed.[87] The same author relates an anecdote about a tailor who took a young English traveller into his home for a night and put him in the same bed with himself and his wife.[88] Woolgar cites an example of valets in the royal household (during the reign of Edward II) being allotted one pallet to be shared between each two.[89] There were clearly various situations in which one might expect to share a bed.

Although it was more common in the Middle Ages than it is now for people other than

85. "The Boke of Curtasye," lines 293–298.

86. Since the other advice in this text is on the level of "don't spit on the table" and "don't pick your nose in front of your lord," it is not necessary to suppose that this was a very *great* degree of delicacy.

87. Verdon, *Night*, 23.

88. Verdon, "Dormir au Moyen Âge," 753. The episode was recorded because its outcome was disastrous: the guest tried to rape the wife, and the husband killed him.

89. Woolgar, 78. Actually, Woolgar cites two instances of supposed bed-sharing among grooms, but his first results, in my opinion, from a misreading of the text.

sexual partners to share a bed, this does not mean that the connection between bed-sharing and sex was not a strong one. Communal sleeping arrangements were deplored by moralists for the opportunities they offered for sexual contact between siblings and other family members. Jean Gerson, in a sermon of 1402 warning against the many forms of lust, mentions the danger of inappropriate contact between children, adding: "pleust a Dieu que coustume feust en France que les enfans couchassent seulx en petis litz, tant feussent freres ensembles ou seurs ou autres, comme en Flandre est la coustume,"[90] ("Would God that it were the custom in France, as it is in Flanders, for children to sleep alone in little beds, so often are brothers together or sisters or others.") Similarly, a pastoral letter written on behalf of the bishop of Saint-Brieuc in 1496 forbids siblings and other relations of more than seven years old from sleeping together, a custom which leads, we are told, to the commission of innumerable, abominable, very grave sins.[91] Monastic dormitories, which did not offer the luxury of a private sleeping space, provided single beds, for the better preservation of their occupants' chastity.[92] Some anxiety about possible sexual contact probably also lies behind the courtesy handbook's instructions to, "Be honest and lye þou fer hym fro."

Some household spaces already had in the Middle Ages the same associations with solitude which they have today. Studies may have been some of the most private rooms available, in that they would be reserved for the use of a single person. Peter Goodall, in a

90. Gerson, "Poenitemini: Contre la luxure," 831.

91. Verdon, "Dormir," 754.

92. Verdon, *Night*, 161.

discussion of privacy in Chaucer, suggests that "the desire by individuals for study areas emerges earlier and more strongly than the desire for private sleeping space."[93] He cites as an instance of this some evidence for the accommodations of medieval university students, who shared bedrooms but had private studies.[94] Webb also discusses the practice of the Dominicans of providing private cells specifically for the purposes of study.[95] The privacy associated with a personal study could be the preserve of the educated, even (contrary to Heloise's opinion) those who were not rich. Christine de Pizan offers a carefully constructed portrait of herself as a learned woman in the beginning of *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*, by describing herself sitting alone in her study surrounded by books. Here she is indeed insulated from the cares of her household, at least until her mother summons her to dinner.[96] The picture of Christine in her study does not seem to belong to an alien world, because the association of private space with scholarship is one which has persisted.

Even more private than the study was that part of the house that was commonly referred to simply as "the private room" or "the distant place": the privy. That this was *always* thought of as a place for privacy is indicated simply by its name. Here privacy seems generally to have meant just what we would expect it to mean today: the condition of being hidden from view. Woolgar suggests that this was not the case, and that it was common for attendants to be present

93. Goodall, "'Allone, withouten any compaignye': Privacy in the First Fragment of the Canterbury Tales," 9–10.

94. Goodall, 7.

95. Webb, 159–161.

96. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 3.

for "washing, taking baths and the use of the lavatory."[97] Certainly a lord would expect to have servants handy at such times, and John Russell's *Boke of Nurture* includes instructions for the Chamberlain and the Wardrober with regard to keeping the privy in order and the chamberpot at hand during the night; but the understanding here seems to be that the servant will wait discreetly outside the privy door.[98] For those of lesser importance, straightforward privacy was the norm. Remains of multiple privies at Langley Castle (late fourteenth century) show an arrangement not very different from modern public washrooms with rows of stalls.[99] A case brought before the Assize of Nuisance in London 1333 relates to a shared privy where a dividing wall had been removed, much to the horror of the neighbours, who demanded that it be replaced.[100] The status of the privy, like that of the study, proves to be an element of continuity in Western notions of private space.[101]

The arrangement of rooms in many medieval houses was a factor which probably militated against privacy. Early medieval English houses possessed "few if any internal corridors"; instead, for the most part, rooms opened directly onto one another, and spiral staircases could serve pairs of rooms on different levels.[102] External corridors linking separate elements of a castle were relatively common, along with different types of cloisters and galleries;

97. Woolgar, 42.

98. Russell, "John Russell's Boke of Nurture," 63–64 & 66.

99. Wood, 382, Fig. 115.

100. Shaw, "The Construction of the Private in Medieval London," 455.

101. Continuity, that is, from the Middle Ages to the present day. Ancient Roman toilets were not private.

102. Wood, 335.

however, according to Wood, "communicating rooms remained general until after the Elizabethan period." Curtained beds, she concludes, were especially desirable under these circumstances.[103] In addition to incidental architectural features that made privacy difficult, there were actually some features of medieval homes designed to offer certain members of the household the opportunity to spy on others. Here the idea was generally not to provide a view into the private areas of the house, but to allow people in the private areas to look out onto more public spaces. According to Wood:

> Visual access by squints or miniature windows is found in a number of houses, and there must have been many more such apertures now concealed. Look-outs from the solar down into the hall allowed the owner to maintain control there after retiring to his private chamber adjoining. This was necessary where no doorway gave direct access by means of a stairway to the hall itself.[104]

Some of these "squints" could be cleverly disguised; in the late fifteenth-century Great Chalfield Manor in Wiltshire they take the form of stone masks, through whose eye holes someone could look out on the hall from a closet adjoining the great chamber.[105] Although their intended purpose was presumably legitimate surveillance by the household authority, it is easy to see how such features could be abused, or at least how the *idea* of their abuse could occur to someone accustomed to them.

No one would expect privacy in the hall, stone masks or no; but in urban houses there was an expectation of privacy, and in fact a legal right which could be upheld. The London

103. Wood, 336–7. See also Webb, 100.

104. Wood, 365.

105. Wood, 365 and Pl. 31 A.

Assize of Nuisance existed to provide householders with a place to take complaints about any activities of their neighbours which infringed on their own rights, including their right to privacy within the confines of their home. Diane Shaw cites numerous examples from between 1301 and 1431 which make reference to the "nuisance" of having one's *secreta*, or private business, exposed to the view of neighbours who had put in unlawful windows, built unlawful towers on their houses, or taken down or neglected to repair dividing walls. The notion that householders had a right to keep their *secreta* secret seems to have been developing during this period; Shaw notes that "In the early Assize rolls, Londoners typically complained about windows or apertures overlooking their property, without giving explanation of why this was a nuisance … but increasingly claims began to specify invasions of privacy."[106] These claims of violation of privacy tended to be tacked onto other, more concrete claims involving harm to property. Shaw speculates: "The combination of the two claims, one a traditional claim of physical damage and the other a more abstract notion of personal invasion, may have been a strategy for advancing the latter issue."[107] Unlike the castle, the urban house was all private space (even its garden).[108] But the privacy that was available was the privacy of being within one's family, which did not necessarily involve any prolonged access to solitude.

For household members to have spaces of their own required a division of the house into many separate rooms, which did eventually occur. One interesting testimony to the status of the

106. Shaw, 454.

107. Shaw, 458.

108. In fact, a walled garden with only one entrance could be a particularly private place. Webb notes that "The idea of enclosure seems to be present in the etymology of most of the terms which have been used for gardens, including the standard Latin word, *hortus*" (176).

private room comes from the history of the Cistercian monasteries.[109] David N. Bell describes the situation, linking these events to the rise of individualism and the demand for privacy. In the late thirteenth century, the Cistercian General Chapter first issued a rebuke to nuns, forbidding private rooms to all, except such as were also founders of monasteries. Over the subsequent centuries, numerous statutes addressed the issue of private rooms for monks and nuns; the custom eventually became so widespread that it proved impossible to fully revert to the dormitories mandated by the Benedictine Rule. This in itself gives evidence of the increased demand for privacy which was being felt, even within the walls of a monastery, as more private accommodations became the norm in the world. A few details of these proscriptions are also of interest. In one of the earliest statutes, from 1323, it is revealed that some nuns had taken the rank of abbess and then resigned it shortly after, apparently only in order to gain the annuity and the private room that came with the rank. Elsewhere, private rooms are permitted only to the sick and to those of high rank or some other distinction. Clearly privacy was regarded as a privilege; it was not thought appropriate to the Cistercian monastic life, but it was allowed to those who somehow had a right to extra benefits. A statute of 1327 explains that private rooms are forbidden in order "to counter the vice of *personalitas* or *partialitas.*"[110] In 1335, we hear that the practice of building separate rooms "has led to many shameful and wicked things." A statute of 1370 gives details of some of the things which it was feared could go on in private rooms: "opulent meals … disorderly get-togethers, meat eating, 'murmurings' … conspiracies against

109. Bell, "Chambers, Cells, and Cubicles: The Cistercian General Chapter and the Development of the Private Room," 189.

110. Bell, 189.

either the principal officials or the institutes of the Order."[111] In 1460, monks who have private chambers "spend time in them both day and night over-indulging, sleeping, and other irregularities"; this results in "Conspiracies, 'murmurings,' and the vice of personal as against communal possession."[112] By 1493, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent in some places that the General Chapter had to tell the Collège Saint-Bernard to prevent its monk-scholars from sharing their (individual) rooms and even their beds with one another—paradoxically enforcing segregation this time instead of communal living.[113]

If the desire for privacy was ideologically problematic in a monastery, it was only practically problematic in a secular household. In a sense the head of the house had more access to privacy than the attendants; but he or she also sacrificed a degree of that privacy for the convenience of having those same attendants at hand to serve. As Webb writes, "For the great, almost constantly surrounded by servants and suitors, the boundaries between private and public space could be very fluid."[114] Woolgar provides statistics concerning the size of a number of English households, ranging from a modest forty-six people at the Earl of Devon's house in the late fourteenth century to more than eight hundred in the household of Henry VI.[115] Some of these people would be guests, or, in the royal household, courtiers important in their own right, but many were servants. Even if some of them had private rooms to retire to at night, during the

111. Bell, 190.

112. Bell, 192.

113. Bell, 193. Webb traces a similar pattern in the history of the Dominicans (198–200).

114. Webb, 47.

115. Woolgar, 10–12.

day the house was their workplace, and they circulated through it, doing their various duties. As Austin observes, this gave them access to the widest possible array of household spaces. The omnipresence of servants is the feature of medieval life that leads Phillipe Ariès to remark that "en fait, jusqu'à la fin du XVIIe siècle, personne n'était seul,"[116] and Woolgar to claim that members of a late medieval household "led a public life, with no privacy in any sense that we would recognise."[117] In fact there was privacy, and we would recognize it; but it was not easy to come by. In a household filled with servants, one way to achieve privacy would be simply to ignore them, as one might furniture or horses, until they were needed. Alexander Neckam's description of the contents of a chamber includes mention of a chambermaid, as if she were another article on the list.[118]

In the sort of atmosphere which I have been describing, it is not surprising that an imaginative culture centred around the idea of secret, illicit, or at least covertly expressed love should arise. In a sense, the story of Tristan and Isolt, for example, presents a fantasy on the theme of privacy, with the dangers posed to the lovers always taking the form of a violation of their tenuous private life. Stories like it offer a window onto privilege, because the privacy necessary to enjoy such an affair would have been difficult to attain, and that difficulty made the proceedings all the more dangerous. C. Stephen Jaeger suggests that stories of illicit love formed the ideal vehicle for expressions of the particular trials of court life, because the lovers in them

116. Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, 450.

117. Woolgar, 8.

118. Neckam, 65.

were able to create together a world of private experience which set them apart from the rest of the court, often perceived as shallow and corrupting. The court, where the connection between inner worth and outer refinement was forged, is habitually portrayed as the setting in which that connection is destroyed, where duplicity reigns and "social form and inner virtue" no longer correlate. Under these circumstances, Jaeger writes:

> humanity is measured by the courtier's *negative response to the life of the court*, by the kind of inner life he cultivates and manages to preserve from the corrosive influences surrounding him. Oddly enough, in courtier narratives the most common form in which humanity is preserved is the clandestine love affair. The lovers come to form a spiritual elite set against the shallow materiality of the court.[119]

Not only on this conceptual level, but even on the more basic level of practical, everyday arrangements, the fantasy of secret love appears to offer an ideal release from the strictures of medieval court life.

Often when a romance writer wants to indicate that someone is alone or wishes to be alone, the idea is expressed in redundant phrases such as "Tot seul a seul sanz plus de gent" ("All by themselves without anyone else"),[120] suggesting that something more than the bare word "seul" is necessary. Chrétien may refer humorously to Arthur being bled "An ses chanbres priveemant" ("privately in his chambers"), with only five hundred barons of his household to keep him company,[121] but the other side of this coin is represented by several quotations in T-L, where *priveement* is amplified with "sol a sol" or "nous dui tant seulement" ("just the two of

119. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 241.

120. Chrétien, *Cligès*, l. 5529.

121. Chrétien, *Erec et Enide*, l. 6417.

us"). These stock phrases contain an interesting reflection of a social reality. For the characters whose lives are portrayed in romance—monarchs, lords and courtiers as so many of them are—actual solitude is an unusual situation, and privacy may more normally imply the presence of a large group of *privez*.

As desirable as privacy could be, it could also be suspect. Robert Hanning describes the ambivalence with which courtly literature could approach the subject:

> In addition to singing (often rhapsodically) the praises of the private world—its dreams, its exquisite sorrows, its furtive caresses—this literature … articulates a negative and cynical view of privacy that embodies two major suppositions: one is that the world is full of people ready to invade or spoil your private life if you give them a chance; the other is that everyone has something to hide, a skeleton in the closet.[122]

The experience of characters like Tristan and Isolt could also serve as a warning. The repeated incursions by other characters into their wholly illicit private world can be seen as serving them right. A relative scarcity of private spaces increases the importance of private people, confidants who can be trusted not to reveal what they know, and guardians of space who have access to what the lovers need. It also increases the danger posed by the untrustworthy, the spies and gossips, in particular the "privez anemis" and "traitur dern," those who appear to belong to the ranks of the trustworthy.

This relationship between the physical reality of privacy in medieval life and the attention paid to privacy in romance illustrates a principle at the heart of the literature of courtly love. This literature centres on a vision of refined behaviour wedded to refined sentiment, a

122. Hanning, "Telling the Private Parts," 111.

system in which the "connections between social form and inner virtue" which Jaeger describes remain unbroken. This vision is illustrated by the knights of romance and the ladies of lyric poetry, imaginary inhabitants of a courtly utopia. As Joachim Bumke writes:

> The fact that love was the highest social value in this idealized world reveals just how far removed from reality these poetic visions were. … The poets described a fairy tale world with none of the political, economic, and social problems and conflicts that confronted noble society in real life. It would not be farfetched to say that courtly literature cast such a spell over contemporary audiences because the poets' stories made it possible to forget, at least for a brief time, the harsh reality.[123]

But on the other hand, as Bumke emphasizes, the spell cast by this picture of an ideal world proved itself to be a social force, inspiring and influencing generations of people who aspired to social grace. Courtly literature projected a flattering vision of aristocratic society. And it did so in part by incorporating the real along with the ideal, weaving aspects of everyday life into its tapestry of fantasy, so that its audience could see its own likeness as well as a picture of a world that never was.[124] A specific idea developed of the place of love in all of this. "Courtly love," writes Bumke, "was the love of a person who was striving for courtly perfection."[125] This was its essence, and on this rests the oft-disputed usefulness of the term. Under the heading of "courtly love" many contradictory models of experience and brands of fantasy may be listed. Courtly love is not necessarily illicit, nor hard-won, nor unrequited, although these are all features encountered in numerous texts. The works considered in the following chapters portray

123. Bumke, 275.

124. Bumke, 275-276.

125. Bumke, 374.

adulteries both tragic and happy, love affairs between unmarried people, and courtships culminating in marriage.[126] "What remains," Bumke writes, "as the one common characteristic of all manifestations of courtly love is still something very significant: the specifically courtly character of love, the fact that it is set within the framework of the poetic conception of courtly society."[127] Jaeger notes that in Andreas Capellanus's notorious treatise, the term *curialitas* "appears as a summation of social qualities that make men and women agreeable, charming and loveable."[128] Andreas, as will be seen in the next chapter, follows Ovid in portraying secrecy as a crucial component in a successful love affair, thus attaching discretion to the qualities required of the truly courtly lover. This ideal figure is, as Jaeger suggests, not usually comfortable in an actual court. Joan Ferrante writes: "From the earliest vernacular literature in romance, the word *cortes*, *cortois*, *cortese*, unlike the descriptions of the court, is positive; to be 'courtly' is to be courteous, refined, elegant, to behave well morally as well as socially." Meanwhile, in romance as well as in polemical writing, the court is portrayed as a cesspool of envy, mistrust and flattery.[129] Thus courtly love would seem to represent an ideal both at home in and at odds with court life itself. The following chapters will show how a variety of texts dramatize one aspect of this tension. Not all of them deal with courts, but all partake of the courtly legacy. They show

126. Some even combine or blur these categories: *Milun* begins with an affair between unmarried young people which becomes adulterous with the woman's marriage to another man, and culminates in a marriage between the lovers. *Cligès* similarly ends with marriage, but is coyly unclear about whether or not the preceding affair constitutes adultery.

127. Bumke, 361.

128. Jaeger, 158.

129. Ferrante, "The Court in Medieval Literature—The Center of the Problem," 1.

characters struggling to achieve and maintain a private world of love in an inimical atmosphere. They address the problems that face lovers in a world where privacy is a luxury, sometimes glorifying the triumph over that world, at other times chronicling the futility of trying to escape it.

2. The Chamber, the Chambermaid and the Spy: Aspects of Privacy in Medieval French Adaptations of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*

Writing in a setting far removed from the medieval court, Ovid declares near the beginning of the *Ars Amatoria*: "Nos venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus"[1] ("We sing of safe love-making and permitted secrecy"). Yet he offers detailed advice on how to send secret messages and thwart zealous guardians, and suggests that a lover should take care to befriend the husband of his beloved (1.579 ff.). In fact, even when a situation of relative security prevails, Ovid suggests that an atmosphere of frantic secrecy can help to keep a lover interested. In Book 3 Ovid offers the following advice to women:

> Incitat et ficti tristis custodia servi,
> Et nimium duri cura molesta viri.
> Que venit ex tuto, minus est accepta voluptas:
> Ut sis liberior Thaide, finge metus.
> Cum melius foribus possis, admitte fenestra,
> Inque tuo vultu signa timentis habe.
> Callida prosiliat dictaque ancilla "perimus!"
> Tu iuvenem trepidum quolibet abde loco. (3.601–608)
>
> The unhappy watching of an invented slave also excites, and the troublesome care of a too severe husband. Pleasure that arises from safety is less welcome; though you be freer than Thais, feign anxiety. Though you could better by the door, admit him by the window, and have signs of fear in your face. Let the shrewd maid pop up and say, "We are undone!" You hide the fearful youth in whatever spot you like.

This passage depends to an extent for its effect on a prior tradition of stories involving incidents like this. The scene of the lover snatching a brief interlude of pleasure with his lady out of the jaws of terrible danger is such a classic and compelling one, Ovid suggests, that it ought to be

1. Ovid, "Ars Amatoria," book 1, line 33. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by book and line number; translations are my own.

manufactured for the lover's benefit if it is not likely to happen on its own.

The lady, in Ovid's scenario, controls the private space in which love can flourish, and she is aided in this control by her female servant. Here they are in control of all means of entry, and can force the lover to enter through the window rather than the door. In this case the outside figure who threatens to violate the private space is fictional, but the behaviour of the two women is the same as if he were real; they act as co-conspirators to preserve the lovers' secret. The role of the intruder is so central that he has to be invented; the role of the maid is really what it appears to be, in that, by supporting the creation of a fictional threat, she does in fact help the love affair to proceed successfully.

This is the most specific statement in the *Ars* of the idea that love thrives on secrecy.[2] It sets out a scenario which will be familiar from many medieval works, and which is basic to this study: the helping figure, the maid, tries to preserve the integrity of the lovers' privacy, while the meddler, the spy, tries to violate it. This chapter will examine how, when the *Ars Amatoria* was translated and adapted into Old French, the elements of this scenario were subtly altered. They changed, I suggest, in ways that reflect the different preoccupations of the medieval authors, who were working within a tradition of love poetry that grew out of a social situation where privacy was difficult to obtain. Ovid makes clear the importance of secrecy in love, and both cautions against letting other people in the secret and describes some ways in which one type of intermediary may prove useful. All this makes it into the Old French adaptations, but it is also

2. The sentiment is repeated in the *Remedia Amoris* in the form of the reminder that "augeant secreta furores" (579) and that the society of friends is useful in driving away thoughts of love that would flourish in private.

amplified in interesting ways in some of them, and new precautions which Ovid did not offer are added. The medieval texts, while they are indebted to the Roman poet for most of their ideas, reflect a different social situation, in which lovers must interact more with outsiders and guard the secrecy of their affair from more specific dangers. These ideas are more strikingly drawn out in Andreas Capellanus's love treatise, which, though it draws heavily on Ovid, is situated at a further remove from the *Ars* than are the Old French texts.

A variety of sources testify to the popularity of the *Ars Amatoria* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[3] E. H. Alton remarks that though less highly regarded than Vergil, "Ovid was not neglected by the grammarians, and though they threw the cloak of respectability chiefly over the *Metamorphoses*, the fringes of that garment occasionally touched the amatory poems."[4] Twenty-three manuscripts of the *Ars Amatoria* survive from the thirteenth century and earlier.[5] It is true that only eight of these date from *before* the thirteenth century, meaning that purely in terms of manuscript numbers the *Ars Amatoria* is not particularly well represented in the *aetas ovidiana*. It makes a poor showing compared to the *Metamorphoses*, though even that is preserved in far fewer manuscripts than, for example, the *Aeneid*.[6] However, evidence from the medieval classroom suggests that Ovid's works, including the *Ars*, enjoyed a dramatic increase

3. Peter L. Allen catalogues various testimonies to the popularity of the *Ars Amatoria* throughout the Middle Ages, and in this period in particular. *The Art of Love*, 114–117.

4. Alton, "Ovid in the Medieval Schoolroom," 22.

5. Kenney, "The Manuscript Tradition of Ovid's *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*," 1–5. Eva Matthews Sandford finds excerpts from the *Ars* in only four of the *libri manuales* compiled during the same period, while the *Remedia Amoris* is represented in fourteen collections. Only two MSS contain excerpts from both works. "The Use of Classical Latin Authors in the *Libri Manuales*," 203–237.

6. Munk Olsen, "Ovide au moyen âge," 72.

in popularity as part of the school curriculum in the twelfth century.[7] Medieval schoolmasters recognized the *Ars* as a didactic work, which gave it a certain value as part of well-respected genre. "Neither," writes Ralph J. Hexter, "was there any sense of incongruousness in approaching love, that most universal human phenomenon, from a scholastic perspective."[8] Ovid was cited wherever the topic of love came up in learned literature; even when marked out for particular censure, he was nevertheless acknowledged as *the* authority on the subject. But the *Ars* was evidently popular outside of the classroom, as citations in vernacular literature testify.[9] As students sought grammatical knowledge from the study of texts like the *Ars*, they inevitably imbibed other types of influence.[10] Latin prose and verse composition was taught through imitation of classical authors, and Alton suggests that this formed an important aspect of Ovid's influence, leading to a practice "of writing verses in what the versifier thought, often indeed with slight reason, was the style of Ovid."[11] This may seem surprising, given the subject matter of Ovid's own poetry. The usefulness of these texts for instructive purposes may have been felt to outweigh any objections to their salacious content. But appreciation of their value as enjoyable works of literature must also have played a considerable role.

Vernacular translations of classical authors began to be produced in the twelfth century,

7. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 3-4. Hexter finds that the *Ars Amatoria* was more popular than the *Remedia* in pedagogical circles before the twelfth century, after which the latter text gained in popularity. Ibid., 15. See also Baldwin, "L'ars amatoria au XIIe siècle en France," and Dimmick, "Ovid in the Middle Ages."

8. Ibid., 17.

9. Ibid., 20.

10. Ibid., 23.

11. Alton, 27-28.

but only came into widespread popularity later.[12] These offer a different kind of testament to the popularity of Ovid's love manual. Fourteen manuscripts preserve adaptations of the *Ars* from Latin into Old French, all made in the thirteenth century. These manuscripts represent four different adaptations, suggesting that several people independently saw some utility in producing a vernacular version of Ovid's text.[13] The earliest surviving adaptation is one attributed to a "Maistre Elie," which likely dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.[14] It renders only Book 1 and the first three hundred lines of Ovid's original, although the translator's plan seems to have been to cover at least the first two books. There is only one surviving manuscript. Jakes d'Amiens' loose verse adaptation of the *Ars* dates from the early thirteenth century, and is preserved in six manuscripts.[15] Jakes is also known as an author of lyric poetry. At about the same time as he was writing, the first two books of a lengthy prose translation were produced; the third book was evidently translated some thirty to fifty years later.[16] This version not only expands the text, making explicit much of what is coy or allusive in Ovid, but adds copious and often redundant glosses as well. It can be considered the first "translation" in a modern sense, in

12. Hexter, 5.

13. There are also adaptations of the *Remedia*: Reginald Hyatte cites Guiart's poem, which combines the *Ars* and the *Remedia*, an adaptation incorporated into the fourteenth-century *Echecs amoureux*, and an early fifteenth century translation of the *Remedia.* "*Ovidius, Doctor Amoris*," 123. He discounts the *Remedes d'amours* attributed to Jakes d'Amiens, as it is not based on Ovid's work (133, n. 2).

14. Finoli, "Introduzione," vii. The earliest *known* version is the one apparently made by "Cil qui fist d'Erec et d'Enide." A relatively short poem by one Guiart is often considered among the number of Old French *Ars* translations, but it contains little that is relevant to the present study.

15. Finoli, xv.

16. Roy, "Introduction," 54–59. I follow Roy (and others) in making a distinction between the three verse "adaptations" and the prose "translation"; this terminology, although not absolutely necessary, helps to point out both formal and generic differences between the texts.

that its authors were clearly concerned with rendering all of Ovid's words intelligible in the vernacular. It survives in four manuscripts,[17] none of which appears to have been copied from the original,[18] and library catalogues from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggest the existence at that time of five other copies.[19] The fourth version, the *Clef d'amors*, is also lengthy, but it is another verse rendering with some pretensions to style. It dates perhaps from 1280.[20] Three manuscripts and one sixteenth-century printed edition are extant.[21]

It is clear that the *Ars Amatoria* was often a school text, but the context in which the translations were read is less obvious. The surviving manuscripts of the prose translation (the most ostensibly scholarly of the Old French versions) suggest a different context for its reception. One fifteenth-century copy comes from the library of the kings of France;[22] another belonged to the Hostung family, an illustrious house of Dauphiné,[23] and a third was in the library of the dukes of Burgundy.[24] The provenance of the fourth manuscript is unknown, but the translation is bound in with a French version of another Ovidian text and a collection of ballads

17. Roy, 17.

18. Roy, 25.

19. Roy, 17–18.

20. Roy, 6, n. 1. The poem contains a riddle about the name of the author, the name of his lady, and the date; Gaston Paris's solution to the date part of the riddle was 1280.

21. Finoli, xix.

22. Roy, 19.

23. Roy, 20–21.

24. Roy, 23. The French royal library probably contained another manuscript of this translation in the sixteenth century, and there may have been a copy in the library of the Duke of Berry in the fifteenth century, and three others in the possession of the dukes of Burgundy besides the one which survived from their library (Roy, 17–18).

by Machaut.[25] One of the manuscripts of the *Clef d'amors* also contains romances, including the *Chastelaine de Vergi*, and is illustrated (albeit badly, according to the poem's nineteenth-century editor).[26] All of this suggests an aristocratic audience who read these texts for entertainment.[27]

C. S. Lewis famously suggested that at some level the whole phenomenon of courtly love might be reducible to a misunderstanding of the *Ars Amatoria*.[28] It is a work which is apparently easy to misunderstand. It was certainly misunderstood in its own time, as Ovid's exilic poetry testifies. Lewis's point is amply illustrated by passages in the Old French adaptations of the *Ars* which depart strikingly from the tone of the original. The Roman poet advises, for instance, that a lover be attentive to his desired mistress in small matters, such as watching that no one crowd her at the theatre, because, "Parva leves capiunt animos" (1.159; "light things capture small minds"). One of the Old French authors, preserving the gist of this advice, nevertheless transforms it into the following:

> De servir puet grant bien venir;
> souvent le veon avenir.
> Par aprex cen tu doix veer
> qui lez vouz se vendra seer
> que il ne foule ne ne grieve
> celle pour qui ton cuer s'eslieve.
> Fin amourous doit tout ce fere
> que il pense a sa dame plere.
> Issi le fay se tu ez sage:

25. Roy, 21. The other manuscripts contain only the prose translation.

26. Doutrepont, "Introduction," xxx.

27. This evidence is all late; it may be that the adaptations enjoyed a different readership in an earlier period. The preface to the prose translation suggests that it may have been intended for a clerical audience.

28. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 7.

de poi se muet legier courage. (*Clef d'amors*, ll. 491-500)

Great good may come from serving;
often we see it occur.
In accordance with this you must forbid
he who comes to sit near you
from crowding or distressing
her for whom your heart rises up.
The true lover must do all this
when he thinks to please his lady.
Act thus if you are wise:
by a small thing the frivolous heart changes.

The difference in expression and tone between Ovid and the Old French adaptations indicates how much, in fact, the medieval tradition of love does *not* owe to Ovid. In passages like this, the medieval authors seem to have laboured to give the impression that they misunderstood Ovid quite thoroughly. But on another level, medieval interpreters of Ovid can be seen to have understood him better than his contemporaries did. In the *Tristia*, Ovid protests that in spite of his scandalous work, as everyone ought to know, he has led an unexceptionable life:

sed neque me nuptae didicerunt furta magistro,
quodque parum novit, nemo docere potest.
sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci,
strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum.
nec quisquam est adeo media de plebe maritus,
ut dubius vitio sit pater ille meo.
crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro
(vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea)[29]

But never did brides learn tricks with me as master;
no one can teach what he knows little of.
Thus I composed trifles and pleasing songs,
so that no gossip touched my name.
Nor is there any husband, even from among the commoners,

29. Ovid, *Tristium Liber Secundus*, lines 347-54.

> who doubts that he is a father through my fault.
> Believe me, my habits are different from my poems
> (my life is modest, my Muse joking).

This distinction between art and life, theory and practice, must be seen as central not only to the medieval use of the *Ars Amatoria*, but to the whole project of courtly love poetry. In the Christian Middle Ages, the literature of secular love could flourish only within an "enclosed garden" acknowledged to be separate from the conduct of daily life.[30] The degree to which medieval attitudes constitute a sound understanding of Ovid can be demonstrated in several ways.

To begin with, the *Ars Amatoria* seems fundamentally to be a poem about poetry. Molly Myerowitz argues that the *Ars* is primarily a celebration of culture. In his mock-didactic treatise, Ovid "glorifies neither the object nor the instinct of love but the transformation of instinctual eros by human culture."[31] He is interested in love as a problem to be solved with the right application of technique. For his purposes, love as ecstatic mutuality and sex as casual transaction are both equally uninteresting. There must be some sort of pursuit, some series of obstacles to be overcome, rules to be followed. This exploration of love as elaborate game, as an element of culture, as *ars*, in fact, is what Ovid's text is all about. By playing this game, Myerowitz suggests, Ovid's imagined pupil becomes in some sense an *artifex*, a creator of culture.[32] Other critics have formulated different variations on this reading of Ovid's work. Gregory Sadlek explores the way in which Ovid portrays love as "skilled work that could be

30. Allen, 46.

31. Myerowitz, *Ovid's Games of Love*, 33.

32. Ibid., 36.

learned, practiced, and perfected by means of a set of rules."[33] By placing "the discourse of love's labor" within the framework of a didactic poem, Ovid emphasizes the idea of courtship as an art, but always with an ironic inflection.[34] The labour which is demanded of the lover in the *Ars* emerges as literary labour, Sadlek argues, essentially equivalent to the work of the love poet.[35] The lover in the *Ars* is portrayed as artist, and art is figured as deceptive display.[36] So much of the advice dispensed in Ovid's text turns on illusion and deception that finally, as Peter L. Allen writes, "the reader learns that his or her task is not to believe what the text says but to understand it, despite its claims to the contrary, as a literary fiction, a work which is false to itself in so many ways that it cannot possibly be read as true."[37] Of course part of what Ovid is doing is parodying didactic literature. Myerowitz sees him as also having a more serious aim: "to set love within the context of culture, and, more generally, to expose the dominant role of cultural conventions in human existence."[38] In fact, what he is most serious about is poetry.[39]

Critics have also argued that the relation of the *Ars Amatoria* to its own literary milieu exposes it as a poem about poetry. Allen writes: "The true experience the preceptor claims …

33. Sadlek, *Idleness Working*, 26.

34. Ibid., 26-27.

35. Ibid., 35.

36. Blodgett, "The Well Wrought Void," 322.

37. Allen, 17. Alexander Dalzell pokes fun at scholars who search too diligently for a serious philosophical centre in the *Ars*: "Lucretius wrapped the bitter pill of philosophy in the honey of the Muses. There is plenty of honey in the *Ars amatoria*, and some readers seem to feel that if they stir it long enough, they will sooner or later come upon the pill." *The Criticism of Didactic Poetry*, 133.

38. Myerowitz, 34.

39. Ibid., 38.

turns out to be nothing but a compilation of literary experiences drawn from Ovid's *Amores*, and the preceptor himself is shown to be only the *Amores*' inept narrator, grown to a cynical middle age."[40] And Alexander Dalzell similarly notes that in spite of the narrator's claim to write from experience, "what is particularly striking about the poem is its literariness. The *Ars* … depends less upon life than upon literature. If erotic elegy had not existed, the poem could not have been written; or, rather, there would have been no point in writing it."[41] While the genre that Ovid's work formally parodies is the didactic poem, his whole portrait of love depends on the conceits of erotic elegy, the genre to which his own *Amores* belongs.

How distant is this modern critical understanding of the *Ars* from medieval interpretations? The commentaries and *accessus* give a varied impression. On the one hand there is the early fourteenth-century *accessus* which declares: "Flore iuventutis Ovidius telisque Cupidinis lacessitus ideo universas amoris fallacias doctus et expertus, hoc opus incepit et perfecit" ("In the flower of youth and provoked by the arrow of Cupid, Ovid, learned and experienced in all the deceits of love, undertook and completed this work").[42] But this same introduction also defends the status of the *Ars* as a work of ethics, "quia loquitur de moribus iuvenum et puellarum, quos introducit in hac arte" ("because it speaks of the habits of young men and girls, which it introduces into this art"). Fausto Ghisalberti summarizes the attitude of a thirteenth-century commentator: "Those who take the *Ars Amandi* as merely a frivolous tale of

40. Allen, 16.

41. Dalzell, 146.

42. Ghisalberti, "Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid," 45, Appendix C.

amorous intrigue are very dull-witted. No, this is a tractate 'de amore ad artis compositionem,' a book of precepts, an *ars* in the serious sense of the word, its object being to establish the foundations of a full and perfect art of love."[43] Medieval commentators show no inclination to believe Ovid's protestations in the *Tristia* about his blameless life. They report that the principal reason for his exile was his adultery with Augustus's wife,[44] and that he wrote the *Remedia* as a serious attempt to right the wrong done by the *Ars* to the youth of Rome.[45] The *Ars Amatoria* was generally seen as a text emerging from an ill-led life; yet its precepts continued to be read, studied, transmitted and imitated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There was an overt acknowledgement of the fact that they could only be used in this way by preserving the very disjunction between life and art that Ovid himself had avowed. Peter the Chanter's famous remark sums up the question neatly: "the art itself is good but its use is evil."[46]

In Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* the Middle Ages found a detailed exposition of love as a game with elaborate rules; this idea was taken up and played with endlessly, although part of that play entailed treating the subject in quite a different tone. All of the authors considered in this chapter attempt to some degree to combine Ovid's "teachings" with themes from the courtly love tradition. As Bruno Roy puts it, the adaptors are faced with a dilemma: "ou traduire Ovide ou écrire un poème courtois."[47] Maistre Elie transposes Ovid's Augustan Roman setting to

43. Ibid., 13.

44. Ibid., 32.

45. Ibid., 39-40.

46. Benton, "Clio and Venus," 31.

47. Roy, 7.

contemporary Paris. Jakes d'Amiens includes model courtship dialogues in the style of Andreas Capellanus. The *Clef d'amors* is framed as a *Roman de la Rose*-style dream vision, complete with a god of love who appears to the love-struck narrator. The prose translation, in a technique curiously at odds with its scholarly presentation, frequently draws on contemporary lyric poetry to illustrate points in its glosses, as if making a straightforward claim that the two sources represent parts of a continuous tradition. However, even the loosest of the adaptations is far from being an independent poem, and a surprising amount of what seems *un*medieval about Ovid's text makes it unchanged into all the Old French versions. Allen points out that the Old French adaptors (except for the prose translator) eliminate Ovid's third book, the one addressed to women. Allen calls this symptomatic of a growing misogyny in the Middle Ages,[48] but it could equally well be read as discomfort with the type of misogyny displayed by Ovid. The imagined woman addressed in Book 3 of the *Ars*—a courtesan and a freed slave—does not have much obvious relevance for a medieval audience.

The Maistre Elie adaptation does not translate the passage with which this chapter begins, but the other three Old French texts do. Each of them makes the scene more concrete, with elements that emphasize its *fabliau*-like qualities. The prose version, in an instance of its usual approach, amplifies the passage, making it more detailed and more specific:

> Faingnés a la foiz que vous estez si prez gardee que vous n'osez parler a votre ami, afin qu'il ne viengne mie si souvent et que autre y puisse venir moudre a votre molin, dont il ne sera riens. Et ja soit ce que vous fussiez assez franche et sanz garde comme fu Thays, qui fu une publique ribaude, si devez vous votre ami tousiours mectre en doubte, car le delit qui vient en doubte est mieulx

48. Allen, 56.

> prisiez que cilz qui vient en seurté. … Et ja soit ce que il puist bien entrer par la porte se tu voloiez, si le dois tu faire entrer par la fenestre adfin qu'il cuide que tu te doubtes et que tu fais assés pour lui. Puis dois tu dire ou conseiller a ta chamberiere que elle viengne un ou apres ce qu'il sera venuz, / et die: «Vous estes perdue, monseur vient!» Et adonc le dois tu faire mucer et croupir en lieu la ou tu l'aras fait mucer par un espace de temps, et puis li dois dire: «Beaux amis, veez le peril ou je me mes pour vous! Se monseur vous eüst trouvé, je eüsse esté perdue!» Et adonc il cuidera que tu dies de verité, et t'en amera mieulx et flambeement. Et sachez que, nonobstant que voz deli soient en seurté, si est il bon de faindre doubte adfin qu'il en tiengne plus grant compte et qu'il en soit plus convoiteux, et aussi que il cuide que les journeez ou les mucies que tu leur assignez soient de plus grant chierté.[49]
>
> Pretend at the same time that you are so closely guarded that you do not dare speak to your friend, so that he doesn't come so often and so another can come grind at your mill about whom he knows nothing. And even though it be the case that you are as free and without guard as was Thaïs, who was a public prostitute, you must always keep your lover in doubt, because the pleasure that comes in doubt is more prized than that which comes in security. … And although he could well enter by the door if you wished, you must have him enter by the window so that he believes that you are anxious and that you do a great deal for him. Then you must say or advise your chambermaid that she come in a little after he has arrived and say, "You are lost, my lord comes!" And then you must have him hidden and concealed in a place where you will have him hidden for a length of time, and then you must say to him, "Fair friend, see the danger that I put myself in for you! If my lord had found you, I would have been lost!" And then he will believe that you speak the truth, and he will love you better and ardently. And know that, even though your pleasures are in safety, it is good to pretend doubt so that he takes greater account and so that he is more covetous of them, and also so that he believes the days or the secret places that you assign him are of greater value.

The motivation for keeping the lover's visits infrequent is not only to whet his appetite but to provide an opportunity for further infidelity. There is no glamour associated with the name of the famous courtesan Thaïs, who was merely "une publique ribaude." The lady here is clearly

49. *L'Art d'Amours*, lines 4945–4966. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

married; the maid's cry is expanded to include mention of a husband, and the lady too refers to "monseur."

Jakes d'Amiens' version of the passage describes multiple scenarios: although you could open the door, make him come in by another entry, "petit, estroit, / Là u il past a grant destroit" ("small, narrow, / Where he passes with great difficulty"). If there is no way in but the door, then take care not to open it very wide, and shut it quickly after him, so that he is almost squashed.[50] If you meet him in a garden, make him climb down from a high place, or through a bush or a hedge.[51] Jakes does not include the maid in this scene, but focusses instead on different ways in which to make the private space, either the chamber or the enclosed garden, physically difficult for the lover to enter. The greater the discomfort, he declares, the higher the value of eventual success. The elements of the landscape which the lover must navigate—the narrow gate and the fertile garden—may also suggestively prefigure the desirable prize to be obtained within.

The *Clef d'amors* offers a closer rendition of Ovid's original, including the reference to the "invented slave":

> Suposer porras une espie
> qui de jor en jor vous espie,
> ou ton mari ou tes amis
> qui tout lor penser ont la mis.[52]

You may invent a spy

50. This reference may owe something to a passage in the *Amores* (1.6.3–4) in which the lover begs to be allowed at least to squeeze through a half open door to see his mistress.

51. Jakes d'Amiens, "L'Art d'Amours," lines 2047–2066. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

52. "La Clef d'amors," lines 3013–3016. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

> who spies on you from day to day,
> or your husband or your friends
> who have put all their thought into it.

There are three different possibilities for who the threatening outside figure or figures could be. It is not so much that love attained with difficulty is more prized, but, "fame trop abandonnee / est poy prisie et poy amee"[53] (3023–3024; "a woman too wanton / is little prized and little loved"). Specific hiding places are suggested: "si feras ton ami muchier / ou en cornet ou en huchier" (3035–3036; "and make your lover hide / in a corner or in a cabinet"). This passage seems to have appealed to each of the medieval adaptors, who add little details (dialogue, furniture, new characters) to flesh out the scene. The idea of the private space in the lady's control does not seem to have presented any problems, but rather to have offered an opportunity for further embellishment.

In other passages, the Old French adaptors adduce new reasons for Ovid's insistence on secrecy. Ovid stresses the fact that as acts of love-making are always considered private, so discretion should be observed in publishing details of a love affair (2.601–635). The emphasis here is on preserving reputation; boasting is to be avoided because it will sully a woman's good name. Ovid's discussion of how love should be kept secret is only translated in the prose version and the *Clef d'amors*. In the prose version this offers the opportunity to expound a principle of general application to medieval love, and a subject dear to the hearts of many lyric poets: "C'est moult grant vertu de savoir celer les choses; aussi grant vice est de dire ce qui est a taire" (3312–3313; "It is a very great matter to know how to conceal things; also it is a great vice to say that

53. All of the medieval adaptations, like their original, are explicitly misogynistic at intervals, but the *Clef d'amors* introduces its own type of misogyny in certain places.

which is to be kept quiet"). This is because, the gloss explains, "le feu dure plus quant il est couvers des cendres que cilz qui tousiours art et flambe" (3325–3326; "the fire lasts longer when it is covered with cinders than that which always burns and flames"). In the same way, hidden love lasts longer and is worth more than that which is known. Ovid's anecdote about how women will turn away from the sight of animals mating is made to illustrate the moral: "Et donc cellez vous, si ferez bien, car Amours le vieult" (3330–3331; "And so you will do well to conceal yourselves, because Love wishes it"). This particular idea is not in Ovid's text, and indeed is somewhat distant from the point he is making here. The translator goes on in this vein, adding in a gloss: "Et sachiez que se une pucelle oit que uns homs se vante d'une autre, elle se garde de li et de ses amours, car elle se pense que ainsi diroit il d'elle se elle devenoit s'amie" (3355–3357; "And know that if a girl hears that one man boasts about another woman, she will beware of him and his love, because she thinks that he would say the same of her if she became his friend"). The *Clef d'amors* echoes these sentiments: "Signes en apert ne fay mie / quant tu regarderas t'amie … " (1849–1850; "Don't make signs openly / when you look at your beloved"). "Grant vertu n'est pas ne grant chose," this version declares, "de tenir sa pensee close" (1861–1862; "It is not a great matter or a great thing / to keep one's thoughts concealed"). In contrast to the prose version, which claims that it is "grant vertu" to keep a secret, the author of the *Clef d'amors* takes the view that keeping his thoughts to himself is the very least that a decent lover can do. Both are in agreement, however, about the status of secrecy as crucial to love.

One other passage in the *Ars Amatoria* gives the medieval translators the opportunity to

expound on the importance of secrecy.

> Interea sive illa toro resupina feretur,
> Lecticam dominae dissimulanter adi,
> Neve aliquis verbis odiosas offerat auris,
> Quam potes ambiguis callidus abde notis. (1.487–490)
>
> Meanwhile, if she is carried reclining on her pillow,
> Approach your lady's litter dissemblingly,
> And lest anyone bring hateful ears to your words,
> Be cunning, and hide them as much as you can in ambiguities.

Ovid imagines a scene outside, the lady being borne in a litter through the street, the lover approaching to talk casually about something which may seem innocent to anyone who overhears. The translator of the prose *Art* envisions quite a different scene:

> Quant elle se gerra en son lit et en sa couche, va tout celeement et tout simplement a son lit, et si te gardes tant que tu pourras que nulz ne t'oie ne ne t'aperçoive, et te garde des mesdisans. (1578–1580)
>
> When she lies in her bed and on her couch, go quite secretly and quite simply to her bed, and take care as much as you can that no one hear or see you, and guard yourself from slanderers.

The gloss explains that it is "grant sens de soy garder des mesdisans et des envieux" (1581; "very good sense to guard oneself from slanderers and from envious people"), who are never happy unless they are breaking up lovers. Ladies generally say that a woman should beware of everyone, "fors de ses amis ou de ceulx qui portent les lettres ou les messages" (1596; "except for her friends or those who carry letters or messages"). The element of sight has been introduced into the Old French version, and whereas Ovid suggested that one should use "ambiguous words" in case of being overheard, the emphasis has shifted to making sure that no one hears *or*

sees what passes between the lovers, except of course for confidants and go-betweens (who are not mentioned here by Ovid). The translator imagines a much more private scene, and his preoccupations are significantly different from Ovid's; in particular, the idea of a world swarming with "mesdisans" and "envieux" is a new one. Jakes d'Amiens introduces a similar note into the discussion of how first to approach the beloved lady:

> Mais c'on nel sace garde toi!
> Que par eus est tost acusée
> Amors souvent et demoustrée. (128–130)
>
> But take care that no one knows about it!
> Because by them Love is soon accused
> Often and pointed out.

Again the idea is to hide one's love from the people whose essential role is to publicize and thwart love. Both Jakes and the translator of the prose *Art* display more of a preoccupation with the idea of spies at this point, and place more emphasis on preserving secrecy for its own sake than did Ovid.

Ovid counsels secrecy for two principal reasons: because it is shameful for a private affair to become public, and because love thrives in a furtive atmosphere. Jakes d'Amiens and the author of the *Clef d'amors* include passages that combine these two ideas to emphasize the importance of secrecy: if it is not preserved, people will talk about the lovers, and love once talked about quickly withers. Jakes includes a model speech given by a married woman to a lover, in which she protests that she cannot think of loving because she fears the "mesdisans" too much:

Li siecles molt tost s'aperçoit,
Et c'est mais trop de mesdisans,
De mesparliers de males gans,
C'a paines s'en puet on celer:
Por çou doit on laier l'amer. (790–794)[54]

The world very soon knows it,
And there are now too many gossips,
Slanderers and bad people,
So that one can scarcely conceal it:
For this one must abandon love.

The speaker attempts to use the prevalence of slanderers as an excuse to avoid entering into an affair which could damage her reputation. The lover responds that love can easily be hidden with a little diligence from the knowledge of the gossips. The *Clef d'amors* warns, more generally, that "amour qui n'est bien celee / ne puet estre a longue duree" (699–700; "love which is not well hidden / cannot be long-lasting"). There is nothing worse than discovery; everyone will talk about it, everyone will speak ill of it. Love cannot endure gossip, we are told, and for this reason it is best not to let anyone know the name of your beloved (700–716). Ovid too warns against boasting about love, but for the specific reason that it is a shame to damage a woman's reputation in this way. The reason why love will suffer from being known is not as specifically stated in the medieval versions; at the same time, the fear of spies and gossips is more generalized.

The lady's maid, who runs in to cry "We are undone!" in Book 3, is an important figure throughout the *Ars*. She is first mentioned in Book 1, where forty-six lines are devoted to her. The passage begins:

Sed prius ancillam captandae nosse puellae

54. One MS contains a similar passage somewhat earlier (744 ff.).

> Cura sit: accessus molliet illa tuos.
> Proxima consiliis dominae sit ut illa, videto,
> Neve parum tacitis conscia fida iocis.
> Hanc tu pollicitis, hanc tu corrumpe rogando:
> Quod petis, ex facili, si volet illa, feres. (1.351–356)
>
> But first care should be taken to get to know the maid of the girl to be captured: that one can smooth your way. See that she be one intimate in the counsel of her lady, and a trustworthy enough confidant for secret sports. Corrupt this one with promises, with begging: what you seek you will do easily if she wishes it.

She will choose the best time to approach her mistress, taking into account her moods; she may make sly insinuations about the infidelities of the lady's husband, suggesting that the lady pay him back in his own coin. "Tum de te narret, tum persuadentia verba / Addat, et insano iuret amore mori" (1.371–372; "Then she will speak of you, then she will add persuasive words, and swear you are dying of mad love"). The remainder of the passage is taken up with a discussion of whether or not to be sexually involved with the maid as well as the mistress; the conclusion is that this could be risky, and that it should only be attempted *after* achieving success with the lady. The sleaziness of this passage is amplified by its language; the word used for the proposed activity is "violare" (1.375). Like the scenario of the lover climbing through the window, this discussion presumably is funny (for those inclined to laugh at this sort of thing) because it presents in a straight-faced way something that rings true: in this case, the idea that the intermediary might herself become an object of desire or form a bond of her own with the lover. This precise situation had been dramatized in *Amores* 2.8, where the lover reveals that he has been repeatedly unfaithful to his mistress with her maid Cypassis, in spite of his earlier, face-saving assertion (2.7.26) that such a loyal servant would repulse his advances.

The initial discussion of the helpful maid makes it into all four of the Old French versions, and there is surprisingly little comment on what would seem the rather shocking discussion of whether or not to seduce the maid as well as the mistress. Only the author of the *Clef d'amors* ventures to contradict his source text on this point, and even he does so from a pragmatic standpoint. All four Old French texts emphasize the idea that the maid should be trustworthy. Maistre Elie expands considerably on Ovid's brief statement to this effect. Before confiding in the maid, he advises:

> Saches, se sa dame riens fet
> Par son los ne par son aguet,
> Qu'ele ne soit vilaine et fole
> Ni ianglarresse de parole;
> Mais s'ele est loiaus et sachanz
> Au privé conseil des amanz. [55]
>
> Know if her lady does anything
> By her advice or by her entrapment,
> That she is not base and foolish
> Nor a gossip in her speech;
> But if she is loyal and wise
> In the private counsel of lovers.

Care must be taken to make sure that the maid does not herself belong to that loathsome class of people who talk when they should not. The maid's speech of persuasion to her mistress is given at length in this version (as well as in the *Clef*), and a characteristically medieval motif is introduced with the idea that the lady *must* return the lover's affection because of his great courtliness (315–321). "Mais gardes bien qu'elle soit du conseil a la dame et qu'elle sache ses

55. "Maître Elie," lines 293–298. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

jeux et ses secrés" (1152–1166; "But take good care that she is in the counsel of the lady and that she knows her games and her secrets"), says the prose version. Jakes d'Amiens repeats the same advice, adding that the maid will be especially helpful because, "L'une feme l'autre deçoit, / Et elles volentiers le font" (393–394; "One woman deceives the other, / And they do it willingly"). The *Clef d'amors* also emphasizes secrecy as a desirable trait of the lady's maid:

> Mes garde que ce soit tel fame
> qui sache le conseil sa dame
> et qui pour rien ne desclorroit
> cen qu'elle verroit et orroit. (593–596)
>
> But make sure that she is the sort of woman
> who knows the counsel of her lady
> and who will not disclose for anything
> that which she has seen and heard.

This is the only Old French version which does not include Ovid's advice about how to negotiate an affair with the maid as well as the mistress; instead it mentions only the idea that the lover should leave the maid alone, concluding, "il couvient trop droit cariër / qui vers amours se veut liër" (671–672; "he must charge very straight / who wants to ally himself with love"). The other Old French authors here choose to remain faithful to their source. In so doing they appear to transgress against the most idealized notions of courtly love, but they remain faithful to the medieval understanding of Ovid's work, which after all had polluted the minds of Rome's youth, and whose precepts might legitimately be studied but never practised.

Ovid advises the lover to cultivate an acquaintance with all the servants of his mistress's household:

> Nec pudor ancillas, ut quaeque erit ordine prima,
> Nec tibi sit servos demeruisse pudor.
> Nomine quemque suo (nulla est iactura) saluta,
> Iunge tuis humiles, ambitiose, manus.
> …
> Fac plebem, mihi crede, tuam; sit semper in illa
> Ianitor et thalami qui iacet ante fores. (2.251–254, 2.259–260)
>
> Do not be ashamed to win over maids, as each will be first in order, nor be ashamed to win over slaves. Greet each by his name (nothing is lost by this); join humble hands with yours, ambitious one. … Make the commoners your own, believe me; let the gatekeeper always be among them, and the one who lies before the bedroom door.

The Roman poet does not give specific details about what these people can do for his pupils. The translator of the prose *Art*, characteristically, feels the need to be more specific at this point:

> GLOSE. Quant li maris demande ou est la dame de ceans, «Sire», ce dit la pucelle, «elle est alee au moustier, ou chex son pere ou chieux sa mere, ou elle est trop malade, si ne se pot huy lever». Telles achoisons treuvent et dient, quant elles ayment les personnes. Et pour ce que on ait sa volenté, si les doit on servir et estre bien d'elles tant comme on peut plus.
>
> GLOSS. When the husband asks where her lady is, "My lord," says the girl, "she is gone to church, or to her father or to her mother, or she is too sick, and she cannot get up today." They will find and say such reasons when they love people. And so that one has their will, one must serve and be good to them as much as one can.

The translation continues, interpolating under the rubric "TEXTE" details of how that the maid can deceive her mistress's husband, and should be appointed as guardian of the chamber door when the couple is together. Ovid's advice was simply to make sure that you are in the good graces of the doorkeeper. The Old French text changes the situation somewhat, concentrating on a practical aspect: choosing someone trustworthy to guard the door so that the lovers can be

alone together. The maid can help preserve the lovers' physical privacy as well as concealing the knowledge of their affair. But actually securing her affection is crucial.

At the end of Book 2, Ovid pauses outside the door of the chamber where the lovers are together at last: "Conscius, ecce, duos accepit lectus amantes: / Ad thalami clausas, Musa, resiste fores / Sponte sua sine te celeberrima verba loquentur" (2.703–705; "The conspiring couch has received the two lovers: Muse, wait at the closed bedroom door. On their own without you they will speak eloquent words"). In the prose translation, Ovid's muse has become the lady's maid:

> Or parlons des deduis. Quant les deux amans, li amis et l'amie, sont enssemble, la baiasse doit garder l'uis de la chambre par dehors, et li huis doit estre clos si que il puissent dire quanque il vouldront l'un a l'autre. Et lors ilz diront, quant nul ne les puet oïr, parolles douces et mignotes. (3499–3503)
>
> Now let us talk of pleasures. When the two lovers, and lover and the beloved, are together, the maid must guard the chamber door from without, and the door must be closed so that they may say whatever they want one to the other. And then they speak, when no one can hear them, sweet and pretty words.

Again, the Old French version focusses on some of the practicalities of the scene. The maid must guard the door; the lovers' speeches must not be overheard.[56]

Another function of the maid, besides guarding the lovers' privacy, is to carry messages between them. Ovid introduces this idea in Book 3, his section of advice for women (3.469–470). Later he goes into greater detail about the techniques to be used.[57] Messages can be written

56. The maid may also be an obstruction: "Forsitan et vultul mendax ancilla superbo / Dicet 'quid nostras obsidet iste fores?'" (2.525.526). The prose version translates this: "Lors vendra la baiesse menteresse et te dira moult orgueilleusement: «Pourquoy eschauguete tu ainsi notre huis?»" (3213–3215.

57. He begins with a disclaimer to the effect that this advice is meant only for freedwomen, who should not suffer under guardianship; of course he has no intention of teaching wives how to deceive their husbands! (3.611–616) The prose translation elaborates: nowadays wives "en font peu de compte de leurs mariz decevoir. Et ja soit ce que Ovide ne leur donne point d'enseignemens, si sont elles assez soubtilles et malicieuses pour trouver plusieurs decepcions,

in the privacy of the bath. The woman's confidant (*conscia*) can conceal the tablet in her undergarment, carry a paper in her stocking, or even have a message written on her back, the better to hide it from a suspicious guardian (3.611–658). Or she may use her body for her mistress in another way: "Nec male deliciis odiosum conscia tardis / Detinet, et longa iungitur ipsa mora" (3.649–650; "Nor is it hard for the confidant to detain the hateful one with slow dalliance, and keep him with her for a long while"). The prose translation makes the *conscia* of this passage someone other than the young maid. The best thing to do, we are told, is to have "un bonne vielle maquerelle" ("a good old go-between") who knows your secrets and can safely take messages for you (5002–5010). But there is also a role specific to the young maid:

> Un autre enseingnement Ovide monstre, c'est assavoir se la dame a un homme qui la garde, que elle face tant qu'elle ait une belle chamberiere, laquelle monstre beau semblant a celui, en tant qu'elle le tiengne de bourdes ou qu'elle le face gesir avec elle, et endementiers pourra la dame parler a son amy. (5027–5031)
>
> Ovid demonstrates another teaching, which is if the lady has a man who guards her, that she should make sure she has a pretty chambermaid, who can give him encouragement, so much so that she holds him with gossip or that she makes him lie with her, and in the meantime the lady may speak to her friend.

The translator makes the role of the maid here more explicit, and allows for different scenarios and casts of characters. This passage comes from the third book of the prose translation, which is the work of a different author than the first two, and indeed dates from a different era; this may account for the introduction of a new character in the figure of the "bonne vielle maquerelle." She is not mentioned again after this. The author of the *Clef d'amors* imagines that the guard

---

c'est assavoir aucunez et non pas toutes" (4980–4983).

might be the husband himself, or one appointed by him (3041–3044); by this point we are quite far from Ovid's disingenuous assertion that his advice was not meant for married women. In this poem, an alternative to having the maid carry a physical message is having her simply memorize it and repeat it to the lover—a simple, "oral culture" solution which does not seem to have occurred to Ovid.

Aside from the helpful maid, lovers both male and female are advised by Ovid to trust no one with their secrets, not so much because this could result in the discovery of a secret affair as because every friend is a potential rival. When it comes to love, "nomen amicitia est, nomen inane fides" (1.740; "friendship is a name, faith an empty name"). No sooner does a friend hear you praise your mistress then he seeks to replace you. The poet cites a list of mythological friends who did not behave like this, but declares that to hope for something similar is to look for apples from a tamarisk or honey in the middle of a river.[58] This state of affairs is lamented with what seems like greater sincerity than is displayed in most of the *Ars* (1.740–754).

All of the Old French texts include Ovid's reminder not to trust friends; but, having included it, they present a range of different amendments to it. Maistre Elie gives the most straightforward rendition:

> Se tu vuels avoir longuement
> Joie d'amors parfetement,
> Garde qu'a nul home nel dies;
> De celui ou plus tu te fies

58. The examples are all problematic: Patroklos may not have stolen any of Achilles' women, but Agamemnon did; Pirithous may have respected Theseus's marriage, but Phaedra was hardly a model wife; Pylades may have loved Orestes' wife like a sister, but she was still handed over to Neoptolemus after the Trojan War; Castor and Pollux succeeded in abducting a pair of sisters together, but Castor was killed in the process.

> Te doiz garder mielz que d'autrui,
> L'en ne trueve foi en nului. (663–668)
>
> If you want to have joy of love
> Perfectly for a long time,
> Take care that you say nothing to any man;
> From him whom you most trust
> You must guard yourself more than from others,
> One finds faith in no one.

He adds, like Ovid, that friends, family, neighbours, brothers and cousins are all to be mistrusted (685–688). The prose version first repeats Ovid's advice (including a fantastically garbled version of his mythological examples), and then adds a gloss that seems to reverse the whole point of the passage:

> GLOSE. Merveilleuse chose et grant desloyalté est qu'il se convient garder de ses amis. Et savez vous dont ce vient? De ce qu'il est avis a aucunes gens que quant aucuns ayme aucune femme, qu'il est affolés. Si pourchassent cil qui plus aiment l'omme, comment il soit separés de celle qu'il aime. Et pour ce dit il que on se garde de ses meilleurs amis et mesmement de ses freres et de ses cousins germains et de ceulx qui plus l'aiment. (2160–2166)
>
> It is a marvellous thing and a great shame that one must beware of one's friends. And do you know where this comes from? From the fact that some people think that when any man loves any woman, he is mad. And those who most love the man arrange for him to be separated from her whom he loves. And for this reason he says that one should beware of one's best friends and even of one's brothers and one's cousins and of those who most love one.

There is no suggestion at all in Ovid's text that this is really what he means at this point. However, by diving through the satire to fish out the idea that distancing oneself from friends for love is a clear evil, the translator produces a sentiment of which Ovid would presumably have approved. Jakes d'Amiens also weakens Ovid's satiric dictum somewhat, and adds some more

specific advice about what not to allow a friend to do. Never let a friend or companion know your intentions in love, he counsels, "S'ausi ne ses le sien penser / Ciertainement et sans douter" (281–282; "Unless you also know his own thought / Certainly and without doubt"). In this case, you may safely reveal your thoughts to him, and send him to your beloved if necessary (283–286). But this is to be a measure of last resort: "Fols est qui autrui i envoie / Fors lui puisqu'il i ait sa voie" (289–290; "He is crazy who sends another there / Besides himself when he has his way"). Jakes concludes that it is better to send women and children as messengers rather than other men. With an eye for the practicalities (if you can't get there yourself …) he admits the possibility of sending a trusted friend, something that Ovid professes not to consider possible. And if the sharing of secrets is mutual, a full disclosure of one's love to a companion is certainly viewed as a possibility.

The latter part of Jakes's discussion is reminiscent of a gloss from the prose translation, which quotes a snatch of song in support of the idea that sending a messenger is foolish. First the possibility that the messenger may seek to supplant the lover is mentioned, and the author asserts that the same thing can happen to ladies who send other women with messages:[59]

> Pour ce dient les dames ceste chançon es caroles:
> «Amis, ne me mandés mie
> Salus par vos compaignons;
> Amours qui vont par message
> N'iront ja sans traïson». (567–582)

59. The passage in Ovid that this comments on suggests ways of being attentive to the girl you are interested in, including gathering up her cloak if it drags on the ground, for which you will be rewarded with a sight of her ankles; then you should look to see that no one sitting behind her at the Circus is digging his knee into her back (1.153–157). The prose translator misunderstands this last part, translating instead: "Et se n'en aucun guerredon, au mains pourras tu veoir ses jambes; mais regardes entour toy qu'autre ne les voie, car telx les pourroit veoir qui seroit tost surpris de s'amour, qui te destourberoit vers luy" (564–566).

For this reason the ladies sing this song in the dance:
"Friend, do not send me
Greetings by your companions;
Loves which go by message
Will never go without treason."

Two different reasons not to send a male messenger are intertwined (or confused) here. One is the Ovidian idea that friends cannot be trusted not to steal one's beloved; the other (from the woman's perspective in the song) is that the messenger may reveal the love affair. The latter is not mentioned by Ovid. The *Clef d'amors* also picks up on this theme: "Ne fai ja d'omme ton message / vers ta dame, se tu es sage" (965–966; "Never make a man your messenger to your lady, if you are wise"). Women will not speak as freely to a male messenger as to a woman, the author claims; it is easier for women to talk together; and a man might always take the opportunity to court her for himself. If unsuccessful in this, he might just settle for spitefully introducing discord between the couple. Also, women have a tendency to love whomever they see.[60]

A different section of the *Clef d'amors* translates the passage from Ovid on not trusting friends. After repeating the idea that praising your mistress can make your friend fall in love with her too, and stating categorically (as Ovid does) that one must beware of one's best friends, this text introduces a new note:

Un compaignon peut bien avoir
qui son segré porra savoir;
mes le non ne li doit pas dire
de sa dame que tant desire.
Celi le porra conforter

60. So, as has been amply established elsewhere in the text, do men, but the poet does not seem to make this connection.

des griés mals qu'il a a porter:
mieus vaut un bon ami avoir
que ne fait ne or ne avoir. (1213–1220)

You may well have a companion
Who can know your secret;
But you must not tell him the name
Of your lady whom you so much desire.
This one may comfort you
In the grave ills that you must bear:
It is worth more to have a good friend
Than gold or possessions.

It is as if this poet felt honour bound to repeat Ovid's advice here, but the courtly love tradition reasserts itself in his next breath with the idea that a trusty companion is invaluable to the lover. In general, the Old French adaptors are more willing than Ovid to entertain the idea of admitting a third party to the knowledge of the love affair, and strikingly more open to the possibility of doing so for reasons other than the purely pragmatic.

The four Old French texts depart from the satirical tone of Ovid's original in different ways. The prose version, though the most literal rendering of Ovid's words, is perhaps the furthest from his style; it often seems plodding and mirthless. Maistre Elie and Jakes d'Amiens make Ovid's text their own, adding and subtracting passages where it suits them, and the *Clef d'amors* takes this even further, venturing occasionally to contradict Ovid, and in some ways producing the most "courtly revisionist" version of his text. In all four medieval texts I detect a subtle change in the complex of helper/hinderer/private space. The potential importance of both the helper and the hinderer has been amplified. The maid plays the same Ovidian role, but the possibility that a helpful friend could also play this role is seriously considered. On the other

hand, secrecy is enjoined on all lovers as a basic requirement and with a greater fervour than in Ovid; this is because the world that the Old French authors imagine is filled with "mesdisans" and "gengleors," characters who are virtually absent from Ovid's text.

Another source which the Old French authors could draw on for some of their un-Ovidian ideas was Andreas Capellanus, whose treatise on love, though indebted to Ovid, contains much more original material than the other versions discussed here. Andreas predates all of the Old French renditions of Ovid, and his influence is clear at least in the case of Jakes d'Amiens.[61] His work was apparently more widespread than any of the translations, surviving in forty-one manuscripts, most of them from the fifteenth century.[62] Andreas's approach to the questions of secrecy and privacy does indeed turn out to be similar to that of the Old French texts.

Andreas's treatise seems as prone to misunderstanding as Ovid's. Michael D. Cherniss summarizes some of the divergent viewpoints:

> In the thirteenth century, Bishop Stephan Tempier formally condemned it, while Drouart la Vache was delighted and amused by it. In [the twentieth] century, it has been read as a serious attempt to codify the sociological phenomenon known as "courtly love," as a philosophical treatise which may or may not be heretical, as a handbook of practical advice for amorous courtiers, as an ironic attack upon the sins of the flesh, and as a clever, distasteful piece of Manichean antifeminism.[63]

Monson in 1988 noted a trend over the preceding thirty-five years towards reading the *De Amore*

61. Finoli, xvi. Andreas names Ovid only once in his treatise, but quotes him more frequently than any other classical author. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition*, 93–94.

62. Karnein, *De amore in volkssprachlicher Literatur*, 267–282.

63. Cherniss, "The Literary Comedy of Andreas Capellanus," 223.

as ironic, rather than as a serious codification of the tenets of courtly love.[64] Cherniss presents a reading of Andreas's work which situates it as something remarkably like Ovid's: "a comic mock treatise, a pastiche of elements which Andreas found, or thought he found, not in the lives of his contemporaries, but in various kinds of literature in vogue in the late twelfth century."[65] Moreover, as Allen points out, "The split between the pro-love and anti-love sections of Andreas's work, though it seems motivated by Christian concerns foreign to the *Ars*, is in fact essentially and fundamentally Ovidian," in that it reflects the split between the *Ars* and the *Remedia*, and dramatizes the ambivalence of Ovid's own attitude.[66] Like Ovid, Allen argues, Andreas is concerned not so much with the art of love as with the art of love poetry; his aim is neither the serious promotion of the lifestyle which his rules and model dialogues dramatizes, nor the simple condemnation of it. Rather, he sets out "both to invoke the illusions of literary love, and, by purporting to dispel these illusions, to reveal the power of writing to create love as a textual phenomenon."[67] By this analysis, Andreas's text turns out to be "a work of literary theory, a medieval treatise on the poetic practice of love."[68] The inconsistency of the work's

64. Monson, "Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony," 539. Monson presents a useful survey of readings that emphasize irony (545–547). He also surveys approaches to the treatise that emphasize its humour (555–556).

65. Cherniss, 224. Cherniss also points out that for a serious philosophical treatise, Andreas's work is poorly organized and chaotic; "his casual approach suggests, not a serious philosophical or practical purpose, but rather a desire to amuse his readers" (226–227).

66. Allen, 60. See also Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition*, 103–104. Cherniss explicitly formulates and dismisses this line of reasoning, calling attention to the ways in which Andreas's text is unlike Ovid's, and discounting any similarity of Book 3 to the *Remedia*. This is part of his argument that Andreas's main project is caricaturing love as depicted in contemporary literature (227). Cherniss is at pains throughout his article to assert that Andreas's doctrine of love was made up entirely from literary sources; in so doing, he neglects to some degree a consideration of the relation of these literary conventions to the lives of their readers and creators.

67. Allen, 74.

68. Allen, 77.

presentation of love results from this conception; it is more a catalogue of contemporary love than a unified discourse, in spite of the way it is presented.[69] In fact, as Cherniss points out, the arguments of Book 3 *against* love are equally literary, drawn from the antifeminist tradition of the period.[70] Manuscript rubrics suggest that late medieval readers of the treatise were inclined to take two different views of the work's genre, some categorizing it as a *tractatus* or *summa*, that is a scientific discussion of the subject of love, others as an *ars*, a practical handbook. "And for a few," Monson writes, "perhaps not the least perceptive, it is both."[71] Andreas's project, though more of an independent work than the Old French texts, emerges as being something closely analogous to Ovid's.

The idea that love must be secret in order to succeed is repeated often by the various speakers in Andreas's text. It is necessary for lovers to be circumspect, the narrator declares early on, because once love is widely publicized, it will mar the lover's good name with evil gossip, and the girl will be more closely watched as a result.[72] Thus "Amoris tui secretarios noli plures habere" (1.6.268;"Do not have many confidants in your love") becomes one of the general principles of love. The necessity of keeping love secret is mentioned again and again. On the

69. On Andreas's inconsistencies, see Monson, "Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony," 570. On the way in which he alludes to vernacular sources, see Monson, "*Auctoritas* and Intertextuality in Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*," 73–74.

70. Cherniss, 235. Cherniss suggests that the point here, as in the rest of the text, is in fact to call attention to the absurdity of an illogical argument, in this case, that love of chastity should necessitate hatred of women. For humourous effect he aims "to surpass his predecessors in the art of antifeminist fulmination" (236). This viewpoint does not appear to have garnered much support.

71. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition*, 13–15.

72. Andreas Capellanus, *Andreas Cappellanus on Love*, book 1, chapter 6, paragraphs 4–6. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by book, chapter and paragraph number; translations are my own.

other hand, the "nobilior" in his address to the "plebeia" reminds her that it is essential to a woman's good character that she should not think of abandoning love simply because of gossip, since this would mean that evil people (gossips) had got their way (1.6.294–295). Practical reasons for secrecy (avoiding damage to one's reputation, preventing the woman's family from guarding her) slide easily into purely ideological arguments about the universal evil of gossips and tale-bearers.[73]

Andreas repeats Ovid's idea that love is fostered by a sense of secrecy and difficulty in meeting, noting that love can be increased "si rarus et difficilis inter amantes visus interveniat et oculorum aspectus" (2.2.1; "if it is rare and difficult for lovers to set eyes on each other"). However, Andreas's approach to involving other people in the love affair is different from Ovid's, and its influence can be seen on some of the Old French adaptations. In the course of taking up various technicalities in Book 2, Andreas's narrator discusses a case of infidelity which has come to the attention of the wronged party, adding:

> Sed dices forsan: 'Ergo illi amoris obviabitur regulae, quae dicit, amorem non esse propalandum.' Cui taliter respondemus obiecto. Dicimus enim quod coamantium personis exceptis tribus aliis potest amor licite propalari personis. Nam permittitur amatori sui amoris secretarium invenire idoneum, cum quo secrete valeat de suo solatiari amore, et qui ei, si contigerit, in amoris compatiatur adversis. Sed et amatrici similem conceditur secretariam postulare. Praeter istos internuntium fidelem de communi possunt habere consensu, per quem amor occulte et recte semper valeat gubernari. (2.6.32–33)
>
> But you may say: 'Then love's rule will be transgressed, which says that love should not be made public.' To which objection we reply thus. We say that besides the lovers themselves, love may licitly be revealed to three other people.

73. For a detailed catologue of all the places where Andreas discusses discretion in love, see Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition*, 277-284.

> For it is permitted for a male lover to find a suitable confidant for his love, with whom in private he may be able to be consoled about his love, and who will commiserate with him in love's adversity, if it should come to that. And indeed it is permitted for a female lover to claim a similar female confidant. Besides these they may have a faithful male go-between by mutual consent, through whom their love may always be managed secretly and properly.

This declaration about the role of the *secretarius* and *secretaria* seems a small concession to the overwhelming emphasis on secrecy. However, the "judgements" scattered through the text, and the premise for the text itself (advising the young Walter) reveal that actually the idea of confiding in and seeking advice from friends is more central than it appears.

The terms used here—*secretarius/secretaria* and *internuntius*—appear in other passages in the *De Amore*, revealing their quasi-technical status. The normal word used for "messenger" by Andreas is *nuntius*; *internuntius* occurs in only a few places, and designates a person who is privy to the lovers' secret, not merely paid to carry a message. The lover who refuses to entrust his secret to a *nuntius* behaves wisely, because his love might easily be betrayed if the chosen messenger proves wicked, or is killed in the execution of his duty (2.7.31–34). On the other hand, one of the first things that a man will do, according to Andreas, as his initial thoughts of love turn to action, is to find himself an *internuntius* (1.1.11–12). Another passage illuminates the distinction between *internuntius* and *nuntius*. If a woman "studeat internuntio se celare fideli" (2.5.3; "takes pains to hide herself from a faithful go-between"), or refrains from sending her messenger (*nuntius*) as usual, or if the lover realizes that "eius fidelem internuntium et specialem" (2.5.3; "her faithful, particular go-between") has become lax in his duties or hostile towards him, love is clearly on the wane. The *internuntius* mentioned here is qualified twice with

fidelis, suggesting a greater degree of trust than that accorded to the *nuntius*, who might be a mere servant sent with a note. The *internuntius*, then, though not a major figure in the *De Amore*, does appear to have a clearly defined role. He emphasizes the centrality of the mediating function to Andreas's notions of love.

The role of the *secretarius/secretaria* is likewise not large, but accorded a certain importance and invested with a certain legalism. The precept which warns lovers to avoid having too many "secretarii" has already been cited; it is referred to again at 1.6.294: "Nonne amoris praecepto testante in amore non licet secretarios plures habere?" ("Does not the precept of Love testify that one should not have several confidants in a love affair?") Lovers, we are told, should not stamp letters that they send to each other with their own seals, "nisi forte habuerint secreta sigilla quae nulli nisi sibi et suis sint secretariis manifesta," (2.7.51; "Unless perhaps they have a secret seal which is known to none but them and their confidants"). One of the judgements reported in Book 2 concerns a woman who seeks a second lover when her first shows no signs of returning from overseas; her decision is opposed and challenged by "secretarius prioris amantis" (2.7.31; "the confidant of the first lover"). There is also an acknowledgement of the principal way in which the lover/confidant relationship is thought likely to break down. Another reported case concerns a knight who was betrayed by his chosen *secretarius* when the latter sought the lady's love for himself rather than fulfilling his duty as intermediary. The judgement, attributed to the Countess of Champagne, is that any woman who accepts so disloyal a man deserves what she gets, and that the pair of them should be shunned by all ladies and knights

(2.7.37–40). The repetition of the term *secretarius* in the countess's judgement suggests an almost official status for the term: "et illa contra dominarum pudorem turpiter secretarii consensit amori" (2.7.40; "and she, contrary to the modesty of ladies, shamefully consented to the love of a confidant"). There is no suggestion, however, that the initial lover was foolish to place his trust in an intermediary. This represents a significant departure from Ovid.[74]

Also prominent in the *De Amore* are the *maledici*, the slanderers. When the woman of the higher nobility addressed by a commoner in Book 1 instructs him in the behaviour appropriate to a servant of Love, she advises him against verbal detraction, "quia maledici intra curialitatis non possunt limina permanere" (1.6.151; "because slanderers cannot remain within the threshold of courtliness"). The "precepts of love" echo her judgement: "IX. Maledicus esse non debes" (1.6.269; "You must not be a slanderer"). The lover in a later dialogue paints a portrait of the habits of the *maledici*: no set rules govern their dissemination of slander, but to ruin the reputations of others is to them food and drink (1.6.333). His interlocutor regards it as an impossible task to stem the tide of slander emanating from such people, and declares that the only thing good people can do is ignore them (1.6.340-341). Aside from these specific mentions, the existence of people like this is assumed throughout the *De Amore*, and lies behind many of the characters' statements about preserving secrecy.

Andreas's text is everywhere more theoretical and less practical than Ovid's, and than any of the Old French renditions of Ovid. Little attention is paid to concrete details of the space

74. It is interesting that the judgement, which apportions blame equally to the lady and the treacherous go-between, is represented as delivered by a woman. The standard misogynistic take on this (women are fickle, etc.) would essentially absolve the lady of responsibility.

that the lovers might inhabit. There is, however, one description of women guarding doors, which can be contrasted with the scene in Ovid with which this chapter began. The tone and the context are very different. The nobleman addressing the noblewoman in Book 1 relates an allegory about the palace of Love, which has four entrances: the eastern gate is for the god's use, while the others are guarded by different classes of ladies.

> Et dominae portae meridianae ianuis semper morantur apertis et ostii semper reperiuntur in limine, sicut et dominae occidentalis portae, sed ipsae extra ipsius limina portae semper reperiuntur vagantes. Quae vero septentrionalis meruerunt portae custodiam, semper clausis morantur ianuis et extra palatii terminos nihil aspiciunt. (1.6.223)
>
> The ladies of the south gate always linger at the open doors and are always found on the threshold of the door. Just so the ladies of the western gate, but they are always found wandering outside the threshold of the gate. But the ones who are worthy of guarding the north gate always remain behind closed doors, and look upon nothing outside the boundaries of the palace.

The ladies of the northern gate are condemned for their refusal to love, the ones of the western gate for their promiscuity. The ladies of the southern gate represent the ideal. Hovering on the threshold, they admit only worthy lovers and are careful to inquire into the character and merits of any man who approaches (1.6.225–226). The space that they guard here represents the privilege of admission into a secret love affair with a desired woman; but so, in a sense, did the literal private space in Ovid. In the account of the vision which follows in Andreas's text, the women who have followed the commands of love are themselves admitted into an idyllic inner space from which all the other women are excluded.[75]

75. This latter motif, though not the description of the palace, turns up in vernacular texts as well; see Neilson, "The Purgatory of Cruel Beauties," 85–93.

One final portion of Andreas's text is relevant to the present discussion. The concluding section of Book 2, entitled "De regulis amoris," comprises a mini-romance about a knight seeking a famous hawk from King Arthur's court in order to win his lady's love. The first event of the narrative is his meeting with "iuvencula quaedam mira pulchritudine decorata," ("a certain young girl endowed with marvellous beauty") who rides through the forest on a well outfitted horse, binding her hair (2.8.2). She proceeds to offer the knight advice about how to obtain the hawk which will in turn allow him to obtain the love of his lady. Her advice is purely the stuff of romance: she gives him her horse, instructs him about the route, and advises him of a taboo which he must not break. However, her function is essentially the same as that of the Ovidian maid: she helps the lover to gain his beloved. This involves access to private space, although in this case it is not the space in which the lady dwells but the space where an object of his quest is located. And she complicates her role, in precisely the way that the role of the maid was complicated by Ovid, by kissing the knight, once at their first meeting, and fourteen times more when they part (2.8.7, 2.8.43). She addresses him as "carissime," and assures him that whenever he passes this way alone he shall find her here. This behaviour occasions no comment from the narrator or the knight, and the latter has done nothing, as far as we can see, to encourage it. Andreas does not repeat Ovid's discussion of the maid and her potential role as a secondary object of desire; but this story obliquely dramatizes it. It gives one clue about the way in which the concerns that Ovid and his successors raise about mediation in a love affair may be played out in a romance setting.

Ovid's advice in the *Ars Amatoria* is aimed at Roman urbanites. Rome, we are told, offers a dazzling array of women to choose from (1.159), and its public meeting places, temples and theatre provide the backdrops for the early scenes of courtship as Ovid imagines them. Later the scene shifts to the household interior, with its intimate dining rooms and private bedrooms. Besides rendering Ovid's ideas in Old French, his medieval adaptors sometimes explicitly translate his advice to the setting in which they wrote. Maistre Elie declares that Paris offers the best selection of girls under the sun, (105–106), and goes on to offer Parisian equivalents for the Roman meeting places suggested by Ovid. Where Ovid envisions the seduction opportunities provided by a triumphal procession (1.219–228), the *Clef d'amors* transfers the scene easily to a tournament (501–516). The same poem offers occasional hints of the communal lifestyle which its audience is imagined as living. A chance private meeting is envisioned, "soit en chanbre soit en cortine" (802; "be it in a chamber or in an alcove"), and the lover is advised to pass secret messages of devotion at dinner by writing on his bread (857–860).

In an environment where privacy is difficult to obtain, the threat posed by spies and gossips increases, as does the necessity of relying on third-party help in securing time alone. The practicalities of negotiating a secret love affair—where to hide your lover, who should guard the door of your room, who makes a trustworthy messenger—are given a new attention by Ovid's medieval adaptors. Even Andreas, who has little time for practicalities, reflects in a more fundamental way a changed image of the place of lovers in society. The preservation of secrecy is of paramount importance, because of the hostility of all those who do not observe Love's rules.

On the other hand, among the right-thinking, Love's servants, it is possible to find friends and go-betweens who may be indispensable to the progress of the love affair.

This chapter has been concerned less with what Ovid added to the courtly love tradition than with what the courtly love tradition added to Ovid. The Roman poet was, at one level, writing a poem about poetry, specifically the love poetry of his own literary milieu. The medieval authors who translated and adapted his text were all doing, in slightly different ways, the same thing with relation to the love poetry of their own age. The scenarios and preoccupations which creep into the medieval adaptations of the *Ars Amatoria*—the practicalities of the adulterous tryst, the fear of gossip, the enthusiastic reliance on intermediaries and confidants—all appear more strikingly in the narrative poetry which will be examined in subsequent chapters.

3. The Window and the Seashore: The Female Household in the *Lais* of Marie de France

In the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work even more widely circulated and influential in the twelfth century than the *Ars Amatoria*,[1] Pyramus and Thisbe curse the wall that separates them:

> 'invide' dicebant 'paries, quid amantibus obstas?
> quantum erat, ut sineres toto nos corpore iungi,
> aut hoc si nimium est, vel ad oscula danda pateres?
>
> "Envious wall," they would say, "why do you stand between lovers?
> What harm would it be for you to allow all our bodies to be joined,
> or if this is too much, that you should open for us to kiss?

However, they acknowledge that the wall that keeps them apart also offers them their only means of communication with one another: "nec sumus ingrati: tibi nos debere fatemur, / quod datus est verbis ad amicas transitus aures"[2] ("But we are not ungrateful; we grant that we owe it to you that the passage of words to loving ears is granted"). Ovid pauses for only a moment in his fast-paced narrative to consider this irony. But the paradox of the wall that is both barrier and conduit was not lost on medieval adaptors of the story. The Old French *Piramus et Tisbé*, which greatly expands the concrete detail of the story, also amplifies the apostrophe of the wall. This passage, put exclusively in the mouth of Piramus, moves from lamentation at the thickness of the wall, through fantasies of widening the crevice so that he could pass through unobserved, to gratitude for allowing them to talk, supplication for continued secrecy, back to anger at the wall's

1. Munk Olsen, 72.

2. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 4, lines 73–78. Translations are my own.

unyielding nature.[3] In the Old French account, the love between the two young people arises initially in part because of their ease of access to one another (20), but while they are still children, their affection is observed by a servant, who thinks it wise to separate them before things become more serious (87). Accordingly, Tisbé's mother orders a maid to keep them apart (102 ff.). Piramus laments that they are guarded (184) and wishes he could find a messenger to communicate with his beloved (187). All this is original to the Old French narrative. Here also, the crack in the wall is discovered by Tisbé, in a passage much amplified from Ovid's version. Piramus is able to leave his house to go to the temple of Venus (215), but Tisbé is imprisoned inside her family's "palais" (222), shut up in the least frequented room of the house (322–324). However, she is the first to discover the hole through which they are able to talk, and the first to propose the plan to elope. This text presents another example of Ovid adapted to the circumstances of medieval life, and it illustrates, better than Ovid's version, a paradox at the heart of the story. The same structure which separates Piramus and Tisbé provides the only means for them to communicate; the cracked but unyielding wall is both friend and foe to the couple.

This story exemplifies a paradox of private space which is particularly relevant to the lives of women in the Middle Ages. Enclosure in private space, often seen as a means of regulating women's conduct, facilitates private activity, including *mis*conduct. This is precisely what happens with Tisbé, in the Old French text; imprisoned in a protected inner chamber, she is able to find the crack in the wall and through it plan her tryst with Piramus. Though the paradox

3. *Three Ovidian Tales of Love*, ll. 466–505. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number.

of the wall, articulated by Piramus, applies to both lovers, the Old French poem brings into focus the way in which the woman is able to exploit it.[4] In this it is not alone. The paradox created by female seclusion can be seen at work in many medieval stories of illicit love, including those considered in this chapter: the lais of Marie de France. Five of Marie's lais have particular relevance for this discussion, since they contain clear depictions of the relationship between secret love and the female household.

Before venturing further, it will be useful to explain what is meant by "the female household." Gender archaeology, which examines the ways in which constructed spaces were used differently by men and women, provides the necessary background here. Roberta Gilchrist, in a chapter of her book *Gender and Archaeology* entitled "The Contested Garden," discusses the identification of female space within thirteenth- and fourteenth-century English castles.[5] Gilchrist begins with the interesting proposition that the seclusion of women in specifically female spaces need not be taken as evidence of lower female prestige, but may have a variety of meanings.[6] She examines evidence from various sources (medical and literary texts, etc.), but her argument is most convincing when it deals most directly with the evidence of real medieval buildings. She notes that the gendered division of space differed greatly between social classes. Thus for

4. The Old French *Ovide moralisé* follows *Piramus et Tisbé* for the most part, while Chaucer's version in *The Legend of Good Women* is closer to Ovid. Pierre Bersuire offers an allegorization in which Pyramus represents Christ, Thisbe the human soul, and the wall that separates them is sin; they are able to communicate through the prophets (the chink in the wall) and plan their tryst, i.e., the Incarnation. Sin too can be interpreted as a force for both separation and union, in that the sins of humanity necessitated God's intervention in Christ.

5. In an earlier article she makes it clear why she later focusses on this period. In the castles of the twelfth century it is difficult to identify places where women might have been housed, except to say that they presumably occupied some of the private chambers. Gilchrist, "Medieval Bodies in the Material World," 50.

6. Roberta Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden: Gender, Space and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle," 113.

peasants, labour and seasonal demands dictated where men and women spent their time, so that though each gender had its own sphere, women would assist in the fields at harvest time, and men would spend more of the day inside the house during the winter.[7] In the castle or aristocratic manor, in the absence of these demands, women formed a separate female household. Gilchrist considers six examples of English castles for which information about the accommodation of the female household is available. One common feature is a private chapel for the women, or direct access to private, enclosed pews within the main chapel, reflecting an emphasis on separating the sexes in religious settings and also the importance to noblewomen of private devotions.[8] Private courtyards or gardens are almost universal features of the female household; often they are screened from view of the other accommodations within the castle.[9] Women's chambers are located on upper levels, the preferred space for private accommodations of high-ranking individuals within the castle. Often women are associated with spaces where they could command a good view without themselves being viewed.[10] Within the castle, women might be secluded only symbolically; spatial analysis of some households demonstrates that feminine space was located "in the deepest space on the ceremonial route through the castle, although its actual spatial relationship to secondary entrances, such as posterns and barbicans, rendered it physically vulnerable."[11] Clearly something else was at stake other than practical considerations.

7. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 116.

8. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 136.

9. Webb discusses examples of gardens associated with medieval queens and royal consorts (184).

10. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 137.

11. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 138–139.

In general, Gilchrist finds that the spatial boundaries that secluded noblewomen and their female attendants were far from rigid. They could often take in members of the public, as when guests were welcomed into women's chambers or gardens. Karen L. Fresco, in her study of Christine de Pizan's *Livre des trois vertus*, paints a picture of what the reality might have been like for a high-ranking woman of a slightly later period. As Fresco notes, "The princess [addressed in Christine's text], for example, does not live a secluded life at all. She meets with counsellors and advisors, holds court for lords, knights, and squires, visits her children in their rooms, keeps track of her husband's servants … and sits in on the consultations of her husband's doctors. She is even accessible to petitioners in places of meditation and repose" such as her chapel and her garden.[12] Although noblewomen most likely experienced spatial seclusion at least during their younger years, when their chastity and fidelity were important for securing masculine succession, Gilchrist is sceptical of the idea that this seclusion necessarily resulted in a loss of autonomy or prestige, noting that the same sort of seclusion was used to set apart rulers and monastics, in which cases it signified prestige and sanctity.[13] One very early source testifies to a perceived likeness between these two ideas of seclusion. Webb cites a remark of the fourth-century monk Arsenius which compares the holy solitude of the desert hermit to the seclusion of an unmarried girl in her father's house.[14] After her marriage, the girl "is no longer pleasing to everyone; despised by some, approved by others, she no longer enjoys the favour of former

12. Fresco, "Gendered Household Spaces in Christine de Pizan's *Livre des trois vertus*," 189–190.

13. Gilchrist, "The Contested Garden," 144.

14. Webb, 15.

times, when she lived a hidden life. So it is with the soul; from the day when it is shown to everyone, it is no longer able to satisfy everyone."[15] Arsenius's remark reverses the terms of comparison, but suggests the same conclusion: sequestration from the world can be perceived as a badge of merit. And in 1452, at the other end of the Middle Ages, Leon Battista Alberti in his architectural treatise makes the link again in a different way: "Et profecto, ubi quidem confuant mulieres, loca esse oportere arbitror non secus atque dicata religioni et castimoniae"[16] ("And indeed, I think it proper that the places where women come together should be no different from places consecrated to religion and chastity"). In connection with the conclusions of Chapter 1, that privacy in the households of medieval England and France was a valued commodity, the provision of private domains for women seems to communicate a degree of prestige and luxury.

Because Marie de France makes known her gender by naming herself at the beginning of *Guigemar*,[17] her lais have routinely been expected to show evidence of having been written by a woman. This has meant different things to different generations of scholars. In 1950, William S. Woods could write of Marie's "womanly touches"[18] and her "feminine fondness for those things which still interest women today," such as descriptions of clothes.[19] Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, writing in 1980, asserts that "le précision du souci maternel" in *Le Fresne* and *Milun*

15. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, 19.

16. Alberti, *L'Architettura (De re aedficatoria)*, Book 5, chapter 17, page 425.

17. Marie de France, "Guigemar," l. 3. Subsequent citations are noted by line number in the text; translations are my own.

18. Woods, "Femininity in the *Lais* of Marie de France," 1. Woods' analysis is pilloried in Kinoshita's article cited below.

19. Woods, 10.

"revèle chez leur auteur une nature féminine."[20] Michelle Freeman detects in the lais a feminine "poetics of silence" which elides the specific in favour of the mysterious (essentially the opposite of what Woods claims about Marie's obsession with detail).[21] Sharon Kinoshita argues that it is neither in Marie's poetic style nor in the adventures of her female characters that we should seek evidence of a female voice, but in her ideology.[22] As an example of this approach, she finds in *Lanval* a critique and ultimately a rejection of "feudal and chivalric values alike."[23] Assertions of Marie's feminism run the risk of becoming as essentializing as effusions about the femininity of her style, since it is no more valid to assume that because she was a woman she must have been a feminist, than to conclude that because she was a woman she must have taken special delight in describing clothing. Jacqueline Eccles, in a reply to Kinoshita's article on *Lanval*, points out that feminism is characterized by a questioning of established cultural structures, something which Marie's lais do in various ways.[24]

As a woman (presumably a noblewoman) of the twelfth century, Marie de France must have lived some of the experiences of her lais' heroines. She can hardly have avoided some personal contact with the reality of a female household, with whatever degree of seclusion that

20. Wathelet-Willem, "L'Enfant dans les *Lais* de Marie de France," 309.

21. Freeman, "Marie de France's Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine *Translatio*."

22. Kinoshita, "Cherchez la femme: Feminist Criticism and Marie de France's *Lai de Lanval*," 263.

23. Kinoshita, 272.

24. Eccles, "Feminist Criticism and the Lay of *Lanval*: A Reply," 282.

may have entailed.[25] The lais considered in this chapter all exploit the narrative and thematic potential of the female household, and the paradox of female privacy exemplified by Piramus and Thisbé's wall. In a few places, Marie's narrator seems to take a stand, condemning outright the institutions she describes. But this stand is not markedly different from a standard male viewpoint in medieval discourses of love, encompassing the ideas that imprisonment of a woman justifies her adultery, and that a man should subjugate himself to his mistress. The questioning of cultural structures which Eccles sees as an aspect of Marie's feminism is not strongly in evidence here. Gender was, after all, only one aspect of Marie's identity, and it often seems that she has more in common with other poets of her own time than with modern feminists. Her portrait of the female household seems to be one such instance.

A few critics have pointed out that there is an irony inherent in Marie's project of preserving and publicizing stories in which the elements of secrecy and discretion are paramount.[26] This speaks to a basic paradox noted by A. C. Spearing: if the love described is secret, how can a story be told about it?[27] John M. Bowers points out that secret relations between men and women form the primary subject of Marie's lais, and that she displays "a carefully conceived vocabulary of *privé/priveté*," which applies to instances of private conversation as well as moments of intimacy between lovers.[28] Yet in her prologue she suggests

25. Of course she might not have spent the majority of her life in a secular noble household, as she might have been a nun; but that would imply only a different type of seclusion, and a more strictly female establishment.

26. Besides the examples discussed below, see also Sturges, "Texts and Readers in Marie de France's *Lais*."

27. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet As Voyeur*, 1.

28. Bowers, "Ordeals, Privacy, and the *lais* of Marie de France," 1, 2, n. 3.

that breaking silence can be a virtue and a duty, when one has been granted the talent to tell stories.[29] "She seems to violate the cardinal rule of courtly discretion," Bowers remarks, because her tales essentially reveal the secrets of love.[30] Aside from pointing out the obvious difference between reporting on events of the past and revealing the secret of an *ongoing* love affair (most of the lais are explicitly set in the distant past), one can respond that inasmuch as Marie's accounts do reveal love-secrets to their audience, they make the audience complicit in those secrets. They place readers or listeners in the position of confidants, flattering them with the implication that they are courtly enough to hide in their hearts the secrets that they have learned. At the same time, secrets in the lais usually *are* revealed; most of Marie's plots turn upon this inevitable outcome.

Guigemar* and *Yonec

Guigemar and *Yonec* both involve young wives who have been imprisoned by their husbands. In each case the reason is the same: the husband is old, and as a result he is jealous. The narrator of *Guigemar* remarks that it is the nature of old men to be jealous, since everyone hates the idea of being a cuckold (213–216). In *Yonec*, the lord of Caerwent desires marriage specifically for the purpose of producing an heir, and although we are told that he loves his chosen bride for her beauty, it is "Grant pechié" ("a great sin") that a young and beautiful girl

29. Ibid., 23–24.

30. Ibid., 24.

should be given to him.[31] He puts much thought into guarding her, because she is beautiful (29–30).[32]

For the ladies of *Guigemar* and *Yonec*, privacy is far from being an elusive commodity. Instead, their jealous husbands have denied them all access to the public world, enclosing them in strictly private spaces. When the two women describe their situations, imprisonment, rather than possession by an undesirable husband, is identified as the main source of their unhappiness. The lady of *Guigemar* tells the hero that she is imprisoned in the enclosure where he finds her, guarded by an old priest and not allowed to leave except by his command or the command of her husband (345–352). Yonec's mother, alone in her tower chamber, laments that she cannot even leave it to attend Mass. If she were able to go out and meet people, she declares, she would be able to show a better face to her husband (77–80). It is clear that she finds this seclusion from society the worst part of her plight. This can be contrasted with the laments of some of the *malmariées* of later lyric tradition, who mention the physical revulsion that they feel for their old husbands as well as the privation they experience from their imprisonment. "Leis moi geist mes anemis, / Faire le covient; / Et se n'ai joie ne ris / Se de vos ne vient" ("Next to me lies my enemy, / I must consent; / And I have neither joy nor laughter / Unless they come from you"), the lady in one *aube* tells her lover.[33] "Vilains, car vos traites an lai," says the *malmariée* of another

31. Marie de France, "Yonec," ed. Warnke, l. 28. This phrase occurs in a four-line passage found in only one MS of *Yonec* (MS Q). Editors after Warnke have excluded these lines on the grounds of inauthenticity.

32. Marie de France, "Yonec," ed. Ewert, ll. 25–26. Subsequent citations of *Yonec* refer to this edition and are noted by line number in the text; translations are my own.

33. Duchesse de Lorraine, "*Un petit devant lo jor*" in *Songs of the Women Trouvères*, 155–161. ll. 41–44. This song is both an *aube* and a *chanson de malmariée*, and, interestingly, ascribed to a female poet in one MS.

text, "Car vostre alainne m'ocidrait" ("Churl, get away, / Your breath kills me").[34] She finishes by declaring her intention to give her lover "joie." In other respects, as Daffyd Evans points out, the laments of Marie's two heroines closely resemble this lyric genre.[35] However, the ladies in *Guigemar* and *Yonec* both complain of their isolation before they have fallen in love, unlike the lady in "*Un petit devant lo jor*," who laments her imprisonment specifically because it separates her from her lover. This places greater emphasis on the imprisonment itself as an evil.

Of course, the husbands in *Guigemar* and *Yonec* are punished for imprisoning their wives by having exactly the thing they feared—their cuckolding—come to pass. The defeat of their precautions is made possible by fantastic elements: a magic boat and a shape-shifting lover. But the seclusion in which they place their wives seems to represent an exaggeration of a real tendency. The idea that a husband should build a chamber for his wife within a private garden does not sound implausible, although in the twelfth century, in the context of the fortified house with few subdivisions of private space, such a luxury might have been rare. On the surface, the imprisonment of these characters seems far simpler than the situation Gilchrist discusses. They have been fully and cruelly sequestered by their jealous husbands, unable to receive visitors or even passively observe public events. Their private space clearly does not denote privilege or high status; they are not valued except as objects of possession by their husbands, who refuse to share them with the world. However, in fact, their seclusion is more complex than this.

To begin with, it is useful to consider the spaces in which they have been secluded. The

34. "*Au cuer les ai, les jolis malz*" in *Songs of the Women Trouvères*, 151–152. ll. 9–10.

35. Dafydd Evans, "Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes, and the *malmariée*."

lodging of Guigemar's mistress is described as follows:

> En un vergier suz le dongun,
> La out un clos tut envirun;
> De vert marbre fu li muralz,
> Mult par esteit espés e halz;
> N'i out fors une sule entrée,
> Cele fu noit e jur guardee.
> De l'altre part fu clos de mer;
> Nuls ne pout eissir ne entrer
> Si ceo ne fust od un batel,
> Se busuin eüst al chastel.
> Li sire out fait dedenz le mur,
> Pur mertre i sa femme a seür,
> Chaumbre; suz ciel n'aveit plus bele.
> A l'entree fu la chapele.
> La chambre ert peinte tut entur. (219–233)
>
> In a garden under the keep
> There was an enclosure all around.
> The walls were of green marble,
> They were both thick and high.
> There was only one entry;
> This was guarded night and day.
> On the other side it was enclosed by the sea;
> No one could enter or leave
> Unless it were in a boat,
> If need were felt at the castle.
> The lord had made within the wall,
> To keep his wife there securely,
> A chamber; there was none more lovely beneath the sky.
> At the entrance was the chapel.
> The chamber was painted all around.

The chamber, though not the enclosure itself, was created especially for the wife. With the exception of the romance detail of the green marble walls, this description is not too far from some of the female accommodations discussed by Gilchrist. The lady is provided with a garden

and a view of the sea, a chapel and a beautifully painted chamber. The luxury of her surroundings (green marble walls and all) bespeaks prestige. So too, in fact, does the single entrance, although this is one of the features that the lady bewails (346), because the guard is posted to keep her in and to keep all company out. It is this that makes the place a prison rather than a place of privilege. The narrator goes on to describe the paintings in the lady's chamber, with their ambiguous allusion to Ovid. Surrounding the heroine with references to illicit love in her matrimonial prison, these images emphasize the paradoxical quality of her space.[36]

The lady in *Yonec* is confined to a chamber within the lord's keep, described only as "une grant chambre pavee" (28; "a large, paved chamber"). Her imprisonment is from the beginning more severe than that of *Guigemar*'s heroine; she apparently has no access to the outdoors at all, and is denied the comfort of a sympathetic companion or of religious observance. Yet the one comment offered on her lodging—that it is a "paved chamber"—marks it as a luxurious place, a room that archaeologists would classify as the chamber of a prestigious person on the basis of its high-status floor-covering. Like the chamber in *Guigemar*, then, the lady's lodging is explicitly luxurious even while it is restrictive. Ironically, both husbands emphasize their wives' status by means of the places in which they keep them imprisoned. By placing and keeping their wives in private spaces within garden and castle keep, the two old lords attempt to avoid being cuckolded, but in both lais the strategy fails. In each case the solitude in which the

36. On the paintings and their meaning, see Stapleton, "*Venus Vituperator*: Ovid, Marie de France, and *Fin 'Amors*," 291–294; and Braet, "Note sur Marie de France et Ovide." Like many such details in Marie's lais, this one will not bear much scrutiny. At the very least, though, it functions as an allusion to a normative text of illicit love at a crucial moment, and reinforces the impression of luxury in the lady's surroundings.

lady is kept eventually *helps* her keep her illicit affair a secret. For a time, in each poem, the privacy that the heroine is afforded does become a privilege after all. In each case there is some flaw in the space that the husband has set up, and this allows for the supernatural entrance of the lover. The seashore welcomes Guigemar's magic boat, and the tower window admits Muldumarec in bird form.

Attempting to control the wife's spatial environment is only one of the two strategies employed by the husbands in *Guigemar* and *Yonec*, however, and it is here that the two stories of *malmariées* begin to differ most importantly. The other strategy is surveillance; both husbands attempt to control their wives through the members of the household to whom they allow access to them, as well as through the places set aside for them to live. In *Guigemar*, the lord has provided two attendants for his wife: a maid who is either his or her niece, and an old priest who may or may not have been castrated.[37] The young woman is described in positive terms: "franche e enseigniee" (248; "noble and well taught"). She has been provided to serve the lady ("a sun servise" 246). Great affection exists between her and the heroine, and the girl remains with the lady whenever the lord goes out. The priest, who is only trusted because of his eunuch status, guards the gate, serves the lady at meals, and performs divine services in the chapel (255–260).

The maid becomes an accomplice in the lady's affair with Guigemar, performing a sort of miniature of the role of go-between and confidant. It is the maid, "plus hardie de curage" (274; "braver of heart") than her mistress, who first approaches the ship and finds

37. Possibly he suffered a hunting accident like Guigemar, only more so. The niece seems more likely to be the husband's relative, on the model of the elderly sister in *Yonec*, and Meriaduc's sister later in *Guigemar*, both of whom are appointed as attendants to the lady of the house by the lord.

Guigemar apparently dead within. When the two women bring him inside, they place him on the maid's bed, which can be screened with a curtain from the rest of the lady's chamber:

> La dame en sa chambre le meine.
> Desur le lit a la meschine,
> Triers un dossal que pur cortine
> Fu en la chambre apareilliez,
> La est li dameisels cuchez. (364–368)
>
> The lady led him into her chamber.
> On the girl's bed,
> Behind a curtain which
> Was hung in the chamber as a partition,
> There was the young man put to bed.

It is not clear whether the curtain is usually drawn when the maid sleeps in that bed, but it might be, in order to give the lady a more private sleeping place. In the story, the curtain serves the purpose of giving Guigemar solitude in which to bemoan his love, and keeping the two lovers briefly apart, even though they are sharing the same chamber, so that the maid has to bring them together. It also presumably helps to keep him hidden during the year and a half that he spends hiding in the lady's lodging.

Two members of the lord's household have ready access to the lady's private space, and neither prevents that space from nurturing illicit love. The maid guesses that her mistress is in love, and takes it upon herself to find out whether Guigemar feels the same. She offers him encouragement and assures him of her willingness to help. Then she brings the two of them together so that they can reveal their love to one another. All this happens within the lady's prison, the only physical barrier the curtain that screens the bed where Guigemar lies, the only

travel that of the lady between her chamber and her chapel. In these close confines, a go-between seems scarcely necessary, but the maid's role helps the love affair to unfold gracefully. She gives each one a confidant, and allows both to behave with the utmost bashfulness and reticence and still succeed in revealing their love. Like the private space which the husband has provided, the private servant becomes an asset rather than a hindrance to the affair. The priest is an object of the lady's wrath early in the lai, when she wishes, "Ceo doinse Deus que mal feu l'arde!" (348; "God send that an evil fire burn him!"). Later she suggests that the priest might help in the proper burial of the young man they have found on the boat, if he is indeed dead (288–289). He is not dead, however, and it is never made clear whether the priest eventually becomes a conspirator in the lovers' affair, like the maid, or simply has to be kept in the dark. In any case, he does not report the affair to the husband. Both of the attendants provided by the lord fail as guardians of the wife's chastity. In the end, the affair is discovered by a chance act of spying through a window.

The fateful act of discovery is multiplied with four different verbs:

Cel jur furent aparceü,
Descovert, trové et veü
D'un chamberlenc mal veisïé,
Que si sire l'out enveié.
A la dame voleit parler,
Ne pout dedenz la chambre entrer;
Par une fenestre les vit;
Veit a sun seignur, si lui dit.
Quant li sires l'a entendu,
Unques mes tant dolent ne fu.
De ses privez demanda treis,
A la chambre vait demaneis;

Il en ad fet l'us depescer,
Dedenz trovat le chevaler. (577–590)

That day they were perceived,
Discovered, found and seen
By an evil, cunning chamberlain,
Whom his lord had sent there.
He wanted to speak to the lady,
And he could not enter the chamber.
By a window he saw them;
He went to his lord, and he told him.
When the lord had heard it,
Never before had he had such painful news.
He called three of his confidants.
He went immediately to the chamber,
Had the door broken open;
Inside he found the knight.

The chamberlain is described as "mal veisïé" even though his activity, on the face of it, does not seem particularly conniving. However, he is in the private service of the other side; his villainy consists in being loyal to the jealous husband.[38] The lord designed the imprisonment for his wife in order to keep other people out, except for his hand-picked servants, but neither the physical barriers nor the staff he selected prevents the affair from happening. In fact, the sea brings Guigemar to the lady, and the maid helps to accommodate him. In the end, the affair is discovered in much the same way that it might be if the lady and her lover had to snatch their privacy from the jaws of a more public lifestyle, i.e., by someone spying through a window. The fact that the chamberlain has to look through a window, and the lord himself has to force the door suggests that the lady by this point has gained a degree of power, keeping people out, rather than just being kept in. However, she is ultimately powerless to stop the affair being broken up.

38. This is a phenomenon which will be seen again, even more strikingly, in the Tristan stories.

There is no indication of the lady's agency in the scene of confrontation between her husband and her clothes-tree-wielding lover. Although the lord is obliged to break in, the space beyond the door has not become, in any meaningful sense, *her* space. She leaves it, after this, for stricter confines, which she finally escapes only to end up, at the poem's conclusion, imprisoned again, and literally besieged by her lover.[39]

The husband in *Yonec* provides a stricter guard for his wife than his counterpart in *Guigemar*, and this time his efforts are rewarded. The widowed sister whom he employs combines aspects of *Guigemar*'s priest and maid. A female relative like the maid, she is also old and unsympathetic like the priest. She is the lady's only constant companion.

> Autres femmes i ot, ceo crei,
> En un'autre chambre par sei;
> Mes ja la dame n'i parlast,
> Si la vielle ne comandast. (33–36)
>
> There were other women there, I believe,
> In another chamber by themselves;
> But the lady could not talk to them,
> Unless the old woman commanded.

A more complete female household is hinted at here; but the lady does not have easy access even to that limited social circle. The widow here is a more successful guardian than the priest in *Guigemar*, reluctant to admit a holy confessor even when the lady feigns illness (177–179). This time it is the lover who has a prophetic sense of foreboding: "Ceste vielle nus traïra," he says, "E

39. Because of the attention to the details of imprisonment in *Guigemar*, the ending, in which the hero besieges and starves the inhabitants of the castle *where his lady is living*, strikes an unpleasant note. Meriaduc has been keeping the lady with honour in his chamber, with his own sister as her attendant (713–716); it is Guigemar who turns her situation into one of imprisonment again, albeit briefly. Marie spends so little time on this part of the story that it is hard to see much deliberate irony in the lai's ending.

nuit e jur nus gaitera. / Ele parcevra nostre amur, / Sil cuntera a sun seignur" (203–06; "This old woman will betray us, / And watch us day and night; / She will perceive our love, / And tell it to her lord"). In fact, the old woman is not the first one to become suspicious. It is the lord who notices the change in his wife, and suspects his sister's complicity in whatever is making her happy. Given the example in *Guigemar* of how things might play out, his suspicion is not unreasonable. However, the lady in this lai has been able to make do without confidant or go-between, largely because of the supernatural status of her lover. The old woman is forced to defend herself, and reveals that she has noticed that the lady is more willing to remain alone than she had been. The lord gives her a specific assignment, which she fulfils by hiding behind a curtain in the lady's chamber. Like the priest in *Guigemar*, the old woman fades from view once she has performed her function, so that we are never told whether she remembers the incident, or whether the magic of Muldumarec's ring works on her as well.

Susan M. Johnson argues convincingly that the religious elements prominent in *Yonec* combine to present a thorough condemnation of the husband for his mistreatment of his wife.[40] The lady, in her lament, associates her husband with hell (86–90), and the bird-knight who appears in response to her prayer addresses her with words reminiscent of an angel: "n'eiez poür" (121; "fear not"). He is eager to profess his faith, in a passage which is given great attention and developed at length, and Marie interjects a prayer on the lovers' behalf: "Or li duinst Deus lunges joïr!" (224; "Now may God grant they have joy for a long time!"). Muldumarec's dying prophecy about Yonec also carries biblical overtones, and it is significant

40. Johnson, "Christian Allusion and Divine Justice in *Yonec*," 163.

that he says Yonec will avenge *both* of them: not just the murder of his father but also the mistreatment of his mother. The former, Johnson points out, would be justified in the usual terms of vengeance, but the latter gives more of an impression of divine justice.[41] The final scene takes place in an abbey, and when Yonec cuts off the husband's head, he is said to avenge "le doel sa mere" (544; "his mother's sorrow"), not his father's murder.[42] All this gives weight to the statement found in one manuscript of the lai (which might otherwise appear merely conventional): "Grant pechié fist ki li dona" (28; "The one who gave her to him [the jealous husband] committed a great sin"). Marie's lai carries a tone of moral condemnation that goes beyond the standard sympathy for the *malmariée* implicit in the lyric tradition.

Guigemar, as Robert M. Stein points out, presents an alternating pattern of closure and opening, moving between a private, feminine world, and a public, male-dominated one.[43] The same could be said for *Yonec*, and indeed for many narratives in which secret love plays an important role. The narrative details which, like the crack in Pyramus and Thisbe's wall, admit communication and foster love in a hostile environment, take on an exaggerated importance. So do the elements (sometimes identical) which allow love to be revealed and potentially destroyed. In *Guigemar*, the lady's enclosure has a single (apparent) point of entry, but it is not used by the lover; he enters by the water which is supposed to form one part of the impassable barrier around

41. Ibid., 165–168.

42. Ibid., 170.

43. Stein, "Desire, Social Reproduction, and Marie's *Guigemar*," 286.

her.[44] Later the husband himself is forced to break down the door which was supposed to be his privileged point of access. Finally, relegated to a smaller prison in her tower, the lady finds the door there mysteriously open to facilitate her escape. There is a similar sequence of enclosures in *Yonec* when the heroine follows the trail of blood to Muldumarec's kingdom. Entering by a passage through a hill, she arrives at a town enclosed in a wall, with an unlocked gate; she passes through, goes on to the entrance of a castle, and finally returns inside through a sequence of chambers (379–387). Here the lady encounters a series of open doors, contrasting with the closed and locked doors of her prison within her husband's house.[45] The dividing line between inside and outside is obscured by the fact that she passes *into* the hill to come to this countryside, and then by her rapid progress through the deserted city, into the interior of the castle. Here there is not so much a contrast between inner and outer, public and private, as a blurring of the boundaries, so that the whole fairy Otherworld, while containing rivers and forests, is basically indoor space, secluded and accessible through a single entrance which is opened to the heroine.[46] In this space the love story reaches its tragic conclusion.

Just as the tower in which the lady is kept changes its status as a symbol through the course of *Yonec*—beginning as a prison, becoming a haven for illicit love, and returning to the status of a prison when the love is discovered[47]—so too does the window in the text. The narrow

44. Cf. de Combarieu, "Les Objets dans les *Lais* de Marie de France," 37–48.

45. Ibid., 40.

46. Later, when the St. Aaron's Day party comes to the place, it has a different character, in keeping with the more public events which then unfold. It is a magical space capable of being both indoors and outdoors, simultaneously and in sequence.

47. Honeycutt, "The Interaction of Structure, Description and Symbol in *Yonec* of Marie de France," 25.

window through which the lady sees the shadow of a bird, through which Muldumarec flies to visit her, is the place that proves his death; but a window also provides her means of escape.[48] In *Guigemar* the window plays a more conventional role as a means of surveillance. It is through a window that the couple is spotted together by the chamberlain (583).[49]

Textiles, which provide impermanent concealment and privacy in the form of tapestries and curtains, play opposite roles in the two lais. In *Guigemar*, as remarked earlier, the curtain screening the maid's bed briefly separates the lovers, then conceivably helps to hide the interloper in the lady's secluded space. In *Yonec*, by contrast, a curtain conceals the spying sister-in-law (264). Beds are centre stage in both lais, as places of love, but also of concealment (Guigemar is hidden behind his curtain in the maid's bed, and Muldumarec disguises himself as his soon-to-be mistress in hers), of disastrous revelation (both couples are seen lying together) and of death (or in the case of *Guigemar*, apparent death).[50] Virtually every object connected with privacy partakes of duality and paradox. As the plot of each lai illustrates, these are qualities inherent in the concept of privacy itself.

Milun* and *Eliduc

Although *Guigemar* and *Yonec* share many features and in some respects present

48. It is apparently not the same window (337). Perhaps that window was only big enough for a bird to pass through.

49. Later Meriaduc looks out his window to see the ship bearing the lady. Like the queen in *Lanval*, who also looks out a window, Meriaduc proves an obstacle in the path of love.

50. Although the real action in both stories takes place in the *lady's* bed, it is interesting to note that each contains a lengthy description of a remarkable bed associated with the male lover: the bed in *Guigemar*'s magical ship, and the one in which Muldumarec lies dying in his castle. These descriptions are similar in their hyperbolic account of gilded and carved bedposts, costly textiles, and accompanying candelabra (*Guigemar* 170–182; *Yonec* 387–392).

variations on a common theme, *Milun* appears to take place in a different world entirely. The opening lines suggest that the contents will be different: "Ki divers cunte vuet traitier, / Diversement deit comencier" (1–2; "Who wishes to treat different stories, / Must begin in different ways"). There is nothing actually fantastic here; even the role of the swan in the lovers' affair is carefully explained as the result of training, not magic. *Milun* is full of intermediary activity. The lovers' affair is initiated by a message sent before they have even met. The girl has an elderly female guardian, but she is a sympathetic figure who helps her to conceal her pregnancy, and then smuggles the baby out to the waiting father in the garden, the scene of all the lovers' trysts. He entrusts it in turn to some loyal servants (105–108). It seems reasonable enough that the delivery and spiriting away of an illegitimate child would require the involvement of a number of other people: the old woman, the servants, and the sister who will take care of the child. But an unexpected amount of attention is paid to the process of taking the child to its foster-mother:

> Par les viles u il errouent
> Set feiz le jur se reposoënt;
> L'enfant faïseient aleitier,
> Cucher de nuvel e baignier. (109–112)
>
> In the towns where they travelled
> Seven times in the day they rested;
> They had the child fed,
> Laid down again and bathed.

This is one of many ways in which the poem dwells on intermediaries and their actions. The

baby is rather like a message in this scene, as he is passed from one messenger to the next.[51] The young man who begins his life in this way will eventually fulfil his potential as message by bringing his parents together at the end of the story.

When Milun departs and the girl's father arranges a marriage for her, she is distraught at the idea that her lost virginity will become known to her husband, and that this will mean she will be treated like a servant (138); she had thought, she says, that she would have been able to marry Milun. She claims that she is surrounded by unsympathetic figures:

> Mes jeo ne sui mie a delivre,
> Ainz ai asez sur mei gardeins
> Veuz e jeofnes, mes chamberleins,
> Ki tuz jurz heent bone amur
> E se delitent en tristur. (144–148)
>
> I am not at all free,
> But I have many guardians over me
> Old and young, my chamberlains,
> Who always hate true love
> And rejoice at sorrow.

The people of whom she complains, "guardeins" and "chamberleins," clearly belong to the class of private servant from which helpful go-betweens may also be drawn, as indeed they are in this story. The girl's lament here presents quite a different picture from that which the story has shown so far. Up to this point, everyone who has been privy to the secret of the lovers (and there have been several such people) has behaved with discretion. Yet the constant presence of servants can nevertheless be construed as threatening.

51. Bruckner noted in a recent conference roundtable (Kalamazoo 2009) that Marie pays more attention to concerns of childcare than the (likely male) authors of the anonymous Old French lais.

When Milun wants to send a message secretly to his beloved following her marriage, and writes a letter and hides it in the plumage of his favourite swan, it sounds as though the swan is going to become a faithful animal messenger, along the lines of the trained dog in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*.[52] However, the messenger role is doubled by the addition of a human squire. Not only that, but Milun makes no secret about the identity of the woman to whom the squire is to bring the swan: "Al chastel m'amie en irras" (170; "Go to the castle of my beloved"), he tells him. The reason for the cover story that the squire presents becomes obvious when he arrives at the lady's house. It is difficult to get access to her. "Amis, nul ne parole od li" (192; "Friend, no one speaks to her"), says the porter. She is kept "estreitement" (289; "strictly"), as the narrator remarks later. But she is not being treated as a servant, as she had feared. Rather, the difficulty of getting into the lady's private apartment can be seen to correspond to the type of situation that Gilchrist describes, where noblewomen were lodged in relatively inaccessible spaces within the castle.

The episode of the delivery of the swan is thus rather over-elaborate, and a large number of servants is involved. Gaining access to the lady's chamber involves securing the complicity of the porter, and when the swan has been presented, a servant is sent to fetch food for it. When the room clears out, the lady sends for a maid before opening the letter, although presumably she could have remained in solitude at this point. Clearly she is not being kept in such isolation as the ladies of *Guigemar* and *Yonec*; yet it later requires "art" and "engin" for her to acquire parchment and ink to write to Milun (255–256). From this point on, for twenty years, the swan

52. See ll. 29–39 in particular for the role of the dog.

becomes their messenger; “n’i aveient altre enparlier” (282; “they had no other messenger”). When Milun later describes this situation to his son, he explains that they did this because they could trust no one else. But this assertion seems belied by the many earlier instances when the couple does trust others with the secret of their love. The lai seems to oscillate between assertions that everyone is the enemy of love and instances in which the lovers involve more people than seem really necessary in the mechanics of their secret affair. Overall, it conveys a sense of an atmosphere in which everyone tends to know everyone else’s business, for good or ill.

If the picture of the female household in *Milun* is not very clear, in *Eliduc* it is much clearer, and quite different again. The household portrayed is that of Guilliadun, the king’s daughter with whom the hero falls in love. Her father has gone to war over his unwillingness to marry his daughter to one of his peers. After the siege is lifted with Eliduc’s help, it becomes clear that the king’s protectiveness of his daughter does not extend to keeping her immured in a castle tower. Rather, she seems to live in her own household within the castle, with her own servants, one of whom, “un suen chamberlenc privé” (275), she sends to bring Eliduc to visit her. She is surprised that the knight has not already paid her a visit (279–280). Eliduc, who is staying at this point in a lodging outside the castle (133–136), obeys the summons, bringing with him one of his knights (284). There is nothing illegitimate about the visit; Eliduc and his companion are ushered into the girl’s chamber, where she seats him on a bed beside her. That she has not offered him any extraordinary sign of intimacy at this point is clear from the fact that when she

does fall in love with him she agonizes about how to let him know. Circumscribed by the conventions of hospitality, and witnessed by attendants, this conversation on a bed in the girl's chamber is more innocent than the meetings of Milun and his beloved in the open space of a garden.

After a sleepless night, Guilliadun calls her chamberlain to the window, presumably to sit in the window enclosure, and tells him everything. The chamberlain, who is elsewhere called "li vadlet" (411) and "li dameisel" (793), two terms for a young man, may seem a strange choice for a confidant, but this is another indication of the relative freedom which Guilliadun enjoys, which also serves to emphasize her good behaviour.[53] The chamberlain performs very well as a confidant, offering her loyal counsel (353) and advising her about sending a message and token to Eliduc (355–360). He performs the office of messenger himself, carrying Guilliadun's belt and a ring to Eliduc, and returning to Guilliadun in her chamber to offer encouragement and to try to alleviate her fears. He offers a conventional commendation of the hero when he tells the girl: "Jeol tienc a curteis e a sage, / Que bien seit celer sun curage" (423–424; "I take him to be courtly and wise, / One who knows well how to hide his feelings"). However, as Sharon Coolidge points out, in this context such an aptitude for secrecy will prove a negative characteristic.[54]

When Eliduc returns to the castle, hoping to see Guilliadun, we get another glimpse of

53. It would be unusual to find a woman in the role of chamberlain, steward, etc., and the household provided for a noblewoman would contain a number of male servants, as well as the higher-ranking maids and ladies-in-waiting. See, for example, Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600*, 57.

54. Coolidge, "*Eliduc* and the Iconography of Love," 278–279.

her household arrangements. The king, having risen from dinner, has gone to his daughter's chamber, where he is playing chess with "un chevaler de utre mer" (486; "a knight from overseas") who is present in order to teach his daughter. When Eliduc enters, the king calls Guilliadun and instructs her to make his acquaintance and to show him honour. He clearly views his daughter's company as part of the appropriate hospitality to be shown to the knight who has been instrumental in rescuing him from his enemies. Yet the girl is not presented to Eliduc as a reward for his services; rather, she is called on to do her part in honouring him. The two young people sit down together, far from the others (501), and Guilliadun confesses her love. There are thus a number of other people present when this happens, but the couple's words are apparently not overheard. During the time that Eliduc remains in the king's service, he and Guilliadun often have opportunities to talk (541–542), but their "druërie" does not go further than words (575–580). Guilliadun's chamber is a private space with certain barriers to entry; when Eliduc wishes to take his leave of her, he mentions this to her father, who willingly sends a servant to open the door for him (652–653). But the king is not solely in control of access, and Guilliadun herself is able to invite men into her chamber, as we saw her doing earlier.

The loyal chamberlain figures in the story once more, when Eliduc returns to take Guilliadun away with him. Now the chamberlain apparently belongs to Eliduc's household, and he is one of the trusted companions brought on the voyage. He is the one who gains access to the girl's chamber this time, plots with her and escorts her to where Eliduc is waiting (767–780). He

is identified as the one who "le message aveit porté" (754; "had carried the message").[55] The fact that he has switched households passes without comment. We can imagine this loyal private retainer being commended to Eliduc's service by his mistress, as a gift for the lover and perhaps a promotion for the chamberlain, but Marie is not specific about this.

Eliduc's wife Guildeluec also has a loyal male servant, who performs a role which is superficially quite similar to the one played by the widowed sister in *Yonec* and the chamberlain in *Guigemar*. He spies on behalf of the wronged spouse, in this case the wife, who sends him to follow Eliduc and find out where he goes when he retreats to the forest (979 ff.). The servant, who follows Eliduc at a distance without being seen, returns to report to Guildeluec what he has seen, and then accompanies her when she goes to the chapel herself during Eliduc's absence (1008). When Eliduc's wife sees Guilliadun, she calls her servant in specifically in order to show him and to tell him that this girl must be Eliduc's beloved. But her reaction from this point on is completely different from that of the spying husbands in the other lais. She laments her rival's apparent death and eventually restores her to life, with some help from the servant who aided in the discovery of the rival. She even reconciles Guilliadun to Eliduc. After the girl laments his treachery and his negligence for apparently abandoning her in a strange land, Guildeluec assures her that Eliduc is desolate because he thinks her dead.

Eliduc, who "knows well how to hide his feelings," keeps his love for Guilliadun secret from his wife, keeps his wife secret from Guilliadun, and nearly precipitates tragedy. His actions when he returns to take Guilliadun away are full of deceit: he swears his servants to secrecy,

55. It is possible that this is a different character, who has carried some other message between the lovers.

deliberately takes lodgings where he will not be seen or recognized, sends for Guilliadun at night and meets her in the woods. Coolidge writes: "It is surely significant that when Eliduc arrives at the hermit's chapel with the supposedly dead Guilliadun, the doors are locked tight against him. … At this point both religion and love are apparently dead to Eliduc."[56] He and Guilliadun are saved from tragedy in the end by the love of Guildeluec, of which they are both the objects. It is, as Coolidge calls it, "an ideal love which unites the natural and the supernatural as it overcomes the obstacles to love and reforms society."[57] Among other things, it renders secrecy unnecessary. This lai thus presents a different and much more vital integration of sacred and secular love than *Yonec*, where an adulterous affair takes on religious overtones, or *Laüstic*, where the nightingale, emblem of an illusory passion, becomes a kind of mockery of a holy relic.

It would be unreasonable to expect Marie's lais to present an accurate picture of life in the twelfth century. Not only do some of them contain fantasy elements, but the ones considered here are all set explicitly in the distant past. The opening line of *Eliduc* refers to "un mut anciën lai bretun" ("a very old Breton lai"). In *Milun* the narrator remarks on the obsolete practices of the period: "Ceo fu custume as anciëns, / Issi teneient en cel tens" (63–64; "This was the custom of the ancients, / Such was their practice at that time"). In *Yonec* we are told, "La cité siet sur Duëlas; / Jadis i ot de nes trespas" (15–16; "The city stood on the Duelas / where formerly there was passage for ships"). And in *Guigemar* the narrator promises: "Vos mosterai un'aventure / Ki en Bretaigne la menur / Avint al tens anciënur" (24–26; "I will tell you of an adventure / Which

56. Coolidge, 280.

57. Coolidge, 285.

happened in Brittany / In ancient times"). In these four lais, however, the treatment of privacy and women's domestic space bears a reasonably close relation to what was likely the case in Marie's world. The ladies of *Yonec* and *Guigemar* are kept in exaggerated isolation but eventually benefit from their seclusion, at least temporarily. Although their imprisonment is excessively strict and the means by which their lovers arrive are fantastic, both tales illustrate the paradox presented by women's private space in noble households. As Fresco writes, "Women are secluded in order to protect their virtue and the honour of their families; yet this very seclusion provides women with the opportunity to engage in behaviour that compromises their virtue and honour."[58] *Milun* focusses attention on the way in which the involvement of the private servants of the household can be both a threat and a necessity to an illicit affair. *Eliduc* is set in a world where male access to a high-ranking woman is controlled but not impossible, and where the princess herself is able to send a male servant to run errands for her. The lives of Guilliadun and Milun's mistress sound more like the life of the princess described by Christine de Pizan over two hundred years later.

In all four lais the female household displays the paradoxical quality described above. The household, with its physical restrictions and its cast of characters, is an obstacle to the formation of illicit love affairs, and an advantage to them once they have been formed. In *Guigemar* and *Yonec* the seclusion in which the women are placed by their husbands at first prevents them from meeting any eligible lovers, and later allows them to keep their affairs secret. In *Milun* and *Eliduc* the women are less strictly secluded, and the roles of their attendants

58. Fresco, 189.

become more important. In *Milun* messengers and go-betweens are necessary for every stage of the lovers' proceedings, because the heroine is enclosed within first her father's and later her husband's household. She laments her lack of privacy; but the attendants around her are instrumental in the success of her affair with Milun and the safe concealment of her pregnancy and illegitimate child. Similarly, in *Eliduc*, Guilliadun is kept within her father's house, not under terms of strict imprisonment, but in a situation that, like what Gilchrist and other archaeologists of gender have posited for real medieval noblewoman, seems designed to emphasize her prestige within the household while also safeguarding her honour as a marriageable young woman. The provision of her own household allows her the luxury of a confidant and messenger. When she leaves with Eliduc, it is necessary for her to escape from her father's house; but this escape is easily accomplished with the help of the chamberlain who was originally a private member of her own household.

***Lanval* and its Middle English Successors**

Like the heroine of *Yonec*, Lanval is able to carry on a secret affair without the help of intermediaries because his partner possesses a supernatural ability that facilitates private meetings. In this case the reason for secrecy is a taboo imposed by the lady herself, rather than a restriction of the real world. The narrative in *Lanval* never ventures into the fairy otherworld (instead the hero departs for it at the end, and is never heard of again), but members of the heroine's household appear outside of that world. Lanval's mistress possesses a female

household, in that she has a number of young women as attendants; but the character of that household is quite different from the ones depicted in Marie's other lais, and indeed from the typical female household as described by Gilchrist. Rather than being secluded within the private space of a castle, the heroine's household is mobile. She tells Lanval that she has left her own lands and travelled to meet him: "Pur vus vienc jeo fors de ma tere: / De luinz vus sui venue quere" (111–112; "For you I left my land: / From afar I have come to seek you"). She has brought with her the trappings of the aristocratic household on the move: servants, provisions and a fantastically expensive tent. But that moving household, according to available evidence, was typically male. In order to oversee the different regions of his domain, a lord would often move from one castle to another throughout the year, taking with him a subset of his household, typically composed almost entirely of men.[59] Noblewomen travelled as well, with their own trains of attendants, but less frequently, and at a slower pace.[60] Thus the paradigm of the peripatetic household is a masculine one. Lanval's mistress is not travelling from one stronghold to another, but has left her own land in order to seek out Lanval. The manner of her travel perhaps resembles the expedition of a lord who goes to attend the court of a sovereign, or participate in a tournament. While she is not doing something that a real woman of Marie's time could not do, she is shown heading a type of household that was typically a male institution. The impression created by her first appearance is not accidental. The fact that Lanval meets his mistress out in the open is likely a relic of an early version of the story which may (like the

59. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 19. Specific evidence about the makeup of these travelling households comes mainly from the late Middle Ages, but the practice was even more common earlier.

60. Vale, *The Princely Court*, 52.

analogous lai, *Graelent*) have had the heroine bathing in a fountain.[61] But the trappings which give the scene its aristocratic flavour are almost certainly Marie's addition.

Of course this is not the only way in which expected gender roles are upset in *Lanval*. The hero is placed in a subservient role in relation to his mistress, not only in the metaphorical sense appropriate to the courtly love tradition, but in a concrete sense as well, dependent as he is upon her whim and her financial support. He can summon his beloved at will, but it is she who comes into *his* private space, he who remains in his chamber to receive her. And when he refuses the queen's advances, she replies by accusing him of an even more disruptive gender reversal: preferring men to women as sexual partners (279–282). The household of Lanval's mistress is part of a pattern in the lai as a whole of destabilizing gender roles to show a relationship in which power is vested principally in the female partner. It would be naïve to see this as a feminist project on the part of the author, however, since instances can be multiplied of the same sort of power being vested in female characters in other, male-authored and not notably feminist texts.[62] The reversal in gender roles here serves to characterize the lai's heroine, and to illustrate the interaction of the mundane (the subservient Lanval) with the supernatural (the imperious, other-worldly mistress).

In contrast to the other lais discussed here, *Lanval* does not focus on a story of illicit love. Yet secrecy, proclaimed one of the most important conditions for love by the likes of Andreas Capellanus, plays a central role. Lanval's mistress gives him clear instructions:

61. Ménard, *Les Lais de Marie de France*, 156.

62. Laudine in *Yvain* has a similar power over her husband, for example. And Guinevere sometimes has almost as much power over Lancelot.

> "Ami," fet ele, "or vus chasti,
> Si vus comant e si vus pri
> Ne vus descovrez a nul humme!
> De ceo vus dirai ja la summe:
> A tuz jurs m'avriëz perdue,
> Se ceste amur esteit seüe;
> Ja mes ne me purriez veeir
> Ne de mun cors seisine aveir." (143–150)
>
> "Beloved," said she, "now I instruct you,
> And command you and beg you:
> Do not reveal us to any man!
> I will tell you now the truth about this:
> You will have lost me for ever,
> If this love becomes known;
> You will never be able to see me
> Nor to have possession of my body."

This led early commentators to class the text as primarily an exploration of one of the key issues of courtly love. Moshe Lazar, echoing Ernst Hoepffner and Leo Spitzer, writes of the test of constancy imposed by a fairy mistress who resembles a Provençal lady: "C'est donc le thème du secret amoureux, thème courant de la lyrique occitane, que Marie cherche à illustrer dans ce lai."[63] The lai poses "un problème de casuistique courtoise," relating to the "law of secrecy" which is central to the courtly love code.[64] Other critics object, pointing out that the lady's prohibition is essentially a mysterious taboo, not the expression of an imperious whim on the part of a courtly *domna*. Philippe Ménard points out the different reasons for secrecy in the lais; in *Yonec*, the discretion which Muldumarec advises is "un simple acte de prudence et n'a rien d'une

63. Lazar, *Amour courtois et fin'amors dans la littérature du XIIe siècle*,176–177. See also Spitzer, "Marie de France—Dichterin von Problem-Marchen"; Hoepffner, ed. *Les Lais de Marie de France*, 70.

64. Lazar, 178.

vertue qui ennoblit," while in *Lanval* the element of secrecy arises from the story's folklore origins.[65] In neither case need a courtly code be invoked. Eithne M. O'Sharkey likens the prohibition in *Lanval* to the traditional Irish *geis*, adding that Marie has treated it in such a way as to appeal to a twelfth-century audience.[66] In fact, critics who refer throughout their discussions of *Lanval* to "la fée," or "the Fairy Mistress," seem to lose sight of the extent to which Marie has de-fairyized her heroine. We may detect the Celtic taboo lying behind the lady's prohibition, but that is because of outside knowledge that we bring to the text, not because of what the narrative actually tells us. One effect of this, which may very well have been part of Marie's intention, is to make the text seem more courtly love story and less fairy tale. The lady's prohibition may constitute a taboo whose source must be sought in folklore, not in courtly lyric, but the story's theme of secret love does link it thematically with contemporary lyric poetry, and makes it a natural choice for inclusion among Marie's lais.

Two Middle English versions of *Lanval* exist, neither of which compares favourably with Marie's text. The earlier *Sir Landevale* is a serviceable translation; Thomas Chestre's late fourteenth-century *Sir Launfal* considerably expands the Old French story, but almost everything that Chestre does to *Lanval* would have been better left undone. There are many differences of detail between the Old French poem and the Middle English ones, as well as between the two Middle English versions themselves, and speculations about the exact relationship of the three

65. Ménard, 134. See also Walkley, "The Critics and *Lanval*," 15–17.

66. O'Sharkey, "The Identity of the Fairy Mistress in Marie's *Lai de Lanval*," 19.

poems, as well as the possibility of lost intermediary versions, have abounded.[67] Chestre has added new characters and incidents, the author of *Sir Landevale* has modified the ending of the story, and both remove the reference to homosexuality in the queen's accusation of the hero. In both Middle English poems, but more strikingly in Chestre's, the status of the heroine and her household have changed. Both English redactors were at pains to add back in much of the "fairy" that Marie had, presumably, taken out of her version. In *Sir Landevale*, the damsels who first approach the hero come out of the wood, a more obviously fairy-appropriate locale than a meadow, and lead Landevale to a pavilion which is decorated "Al of werke of the faryse."[68] Inside he finds "The kyngys doughter of Amylione; / That ys an ile of the fayré / In occian, full faire to see" (92–94). Chestre takes this even further, giving his heroine a name as well as a lineage:

> He fond yn the pavyloun
> The kynges doughter of Olyroun,
> Dame Tryamour that hyghte;
> Her fadyr was Kyng of Fayrye,
> Of Occient, fer and nyghe,
> A man o mochell myghte.[69]

Specifying who and what the lady really is has the (presumably unintended) effect of making her seem *less* like a fairy than Marie's mysterious heroine. More important for the present study, however, is the fact that by mentioning her father, both Middle English texts make it clear that

67. The anonymous Old French lai *Graelent*, which has a plot similar in many points to *Lanval*, was evidently a source of episodes in *Sir Launfal*, including those involving the magic horse and servant. Laskaya and Salisbury, eds., *The Middle English Breton Lays*, 201.

68. Chestre, "Sir Launfal," l. 80. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number.

69. "Sir Landevale," ll. 277–281. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number.

the lady is not a ruler in her own right. They remove part of the impression created in Marie's version of the lady's status as an independent magnate, focussing attention instead (especially in Chestre's case) on her father.

In a couple of other places, Chestre betrays an inattention to the ways in which Triamour's supernatural status changes her role as a woman. When Launfal leaves to accept Sir Valentyn's challenge, he takes leave of Triamour as if he were leaving her behind, something which makes little sense, since she is able to appear anywhere he calls on her:

> Launfal tok leve at Triamour,
> That was the bryght berde yn bour,
> And keste that swete may. (546–548)

The stock phrase "bright in bower" is interesting here. Triamour does appear to the hero in the private space of the bower, but at the same time she is not confined to that space in the way that most women are; it is not really her natural habitat, and the phrase seems inappropriate to her. Again, when Launfal goes to Arthur's court, we are told that he "toke leve at Triamour" (625). But of course Launfal will summon Triamour while at court, and expect her to appear (she doesn't, but that is only because he has broken her taboo by that time). This passage betrays sloppy storytelling on Chestre's part, but also the assumption that a female character gets "taken leave of" and remains behind while the man goes travelling, which of course Triamour does not do.

The lady is not the only one whose character is changed in the Middle English adaptations. As Bernadine McCreesh points out, one aspect of the extreme passivity displayed by

Marie's Lanval is the fact that he never speaks until spoken to.[70] In *Landevale*, which turns much of Marie's reported speech into direct discourse, the hero becomes more active in his speech. He bewails his lack of money twice, addresses the maidens before they speak to him, soliloquizes when he realizes he has lost his lady, replies in direct speech to the knights when the damsels ride in, and speaks to his mistress at the end as he leaps on her horse.[71] Chestre has added other occasions for Launfal to speak, as he deals with the snobbish mayor who is introduced into the story (97–108, 410–414). In the other new episode, the joust with Sir Valentyn, Chestre's hero is not talkative, but he is alarmingly violent (565–612).[72] Both Middle English heroes behave differently at court than the Old French one. Where Marie has Lanval sit by himself while the other knights are dancing, Chestre has Launfal join in the dance with the others (639–640), and the author of *Sir Landevale* goes further, putting the hero at the head of the dance, an honour accorded him because of his generosity (193–194). By giving the hero a more active nature, the Middle English poets further reduce the impression of the heroine's powerful status. Unlike Marie, apparently, they were not concerned with presenting a reversal of gender roles.

Marie's lais memorialize ancient events, stories that "li Bretun" have handed down and that a female poet thought worth preserving. This, at least, is their stated purpose. The theme of

70. McCreesh, "The Use of Conversation in Medieval Literature: The Case of Marie de France and her First Redactor," 193.

71. Ibid., 194. This last addition has its merits, as it allows for some exposition of the lady's motivation, and makes her forgiveness of Landevale explicit.

72. Marie's hero may seem passive, but Chestre's comes across as a buffoon, creeping about in ragged clothes at the beginning, and needing his mistress's magical servant Gyfre to pick up the shield and helmet that he loses in the course of his joust with Valentyn. He also appears not to realize that he has lost his mistress by speaking of her until he tries and fails to summon her after his run-in with the queen. It seems quite plausible that *Sir Launfal* was written entirely as a parody.

secret love runs throughout the lais, not, as Ménard points out, because the stories are designed to exemplify an artificial "code" of courtly love, but because the need for secrecy arises organically from the narratives.[73] In the first four lais discussed here, illicit loves flourish in secluded spaces, in spite of the precautions that lie behind the creation of those spaces. Constricted at first by physical barriers and unsympathetic households, the heroines of *Guigemar* and *Yonec* experience in the course of each narrative the metamorphosis of one or more of these restrictions into an advantage. The women of *Milun* and *Eliduc* are afforded greater freedom. *Milun* focusses attention on the ways in which the private servants of a household can be both a threat and a necessity to a secret affair. *Eliduc* presents two women whose confidential servants help them to achieve their desires, in a narrative which moves beyond the fulfilment of illicit passion to display love as self-effacing charity. In *Lanval*, the need for secrecy is mysterious rather than practical, but privacy still presents a paradoxical nature. The hero is able to summon his mistress at will, but never to reveal her to his peers. Goaded by the queen, he plays the part of informant on his own love affair and nearly destroys it. In the end, his happiness is restored by the public revelation of his lady's identity, which would seem to reverse the usual order of things. After this, however, Lanval is removed from public life altogether, as he rides away with his mistress, never to be seen again.

Other lais also illustrate Marie's attention to the details of the female household. In *Equitan*, although the household headed by the seneschal's wife is not clearly depicted, we get a glimpse of the freedom she is afforded as she stays at home in her husband's castle. When the

73. Ménard, 134.

amorous king visits her there, "Asez poeit a li parler, / Sun curage e sun bien mustrer" (49-50; 'He could easily speak to her, / to reveal his feelings and his desire'). In *Le Fraisne*, the female household is the setting in which catastrophe is averted at the beginning, when the lady's attendants—"Celes quë en la chambre esteient" (95; "The women who were in the chamber")—dissuade her from infanticide, and again at the end, when the heroine's true identity is revealed through the female rituals surrounding the marriage night. Finally, *Laüstic* is the lai which most closely resembles the Pyramus and Thisbe paradigm, with the lovers simultaneously brought together and kept apart by architecture. Not only is the unconsummated love of the knight and his neighbour's wife kept alive by the closeness of their houses, which allows them to talk and exchange gifts from their windows, but, like that of the Old French Piramus and Thisbé, it was kindled in part by this proximity. The lady comes to love her neighbour "Tant pur le bien quë ele oï, / Tant pur ceo qu'il iert pres de li" (27-28; "not only for the good that she hears of him, / but also because he was close to her"). Marie's lais thus display a particular type of concern with privacy. The spaces set aside for aristocratic women in medieval castles constituted private spaces *par excellence*, inhabited by an array of private personnel, and Marie was attentive to the narrative opportunities and difficulties that they presented.

4. Happy Endings: *Cligès, Lancelot* and *Yvain*

Chrétien de Troyes occupies a central place in the history of Arthurian literature: the earliest author of romances featuring Arthur's court, he was responsible for setting some of the genre's enduring themes, notably the quest for the Holy Grail and the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere. Yet he is atypical, in relation to both his followers and his contemporaries in Northern France. Author of the text upon which Gaston Paris based his definition of *amour courtois*, Chrétien has frequently been described as basically hostile to this system of love, because more of his romances feature happy marriages than glorify courtly adultery.[1] Unlike Marie de France, Chrétien never presents a straightforward picture of adulterous love mediated by confidants and private counsellors. In *Lancelot*, the central couple's love has apparently been mutually acknowledged, though not consummated, before the beginning of the romance, and we never see any evidence that go-betweens have been necessary. In *Yvain*, Lunete serves in many respects as a model go-between; she is an attractive character who exemplifies several of the traits of the Ovidian maid. Yet she does not mediate in an illicit affair at all, but brings Yvain and her mistress together for marriage. So does the queen in the first part of *Cligès*. It is only in the second part of that romance that illicit love flourishes with the help of confidential servants. Yet *Cligès*, with its equivocal presentation of the lovers' extra-marital affair, is also anomalous, and appears to represent a deliberate revision of the expected paradigm. On the evidence of his surviving, finished romances, it would seem that Chrétien had a preference for happy endings. In each of

1. Bogdanow, "The Tradition of the Troubadours and the Treatment of the Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier au lion*," 76; Noble, *Love and Marriage in Chrétien de Troyes*, 42–43; Topsfield, *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances*, 75; Nykrog, *Chrétien de Troyes: Romancier Discutable*, 82. Frappier suggests that Chrétien was bending to the tastes of Marie de Champagne and her entourage when it came to "les controverses amoureuses et la casuistique sentimentale." *Étude sur Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion, de Chrétien de Troyes*, 149.

the romances considered here, the material of the plot has been carefully shaped in order to make such an ending possible. In *Lancelot* this means eliding certain implications to narrate only an episode of the love affair. In *Yvain* a typically Ovidian figure is made to serve as a mediator within a legitimate marriage, and in *Cligès* the love of the title character avoids the tragedy of Tristan and Isolt only through the use of ambiguous magic and the convenient death of an emperor. In both *Yvain* and *Cligès* the confidant figures call attention to the art required, of author and characters, to bring the story to a satisfactory conclusion.[2]

Cligès

Cligès presents the stories of two loving couples: Alixandre and Soredamors, and Cligès and Fenice. The first story is the simpler of the two. Leslie Topsfield calls it "a copybook exercise" and "an Art of Love in dramatic form."[3] Per Nykrog aptly describes the composition as one of "thème avec variation(s)," with the love of Alixandre and Soredamors presented as a simple motif on the flute, that of Cligès and Fenice played by the full orchestra, replete with dramatic flourishes.[4] The reliance of the second pair of lovers in *Cligès* on authorial contrivance

2. Erec and Enide marry without intermediaries, and without much courtship, either. Perceval and Blancheflor have extra-marital relations, as does Gawain with several damsels in the same romance; the unfinished state of the work leaves Chrétien's intentions in doubt, but the emphasis on love within marriage is certainly not strong.

3. Topsfield, 64 & 69.

4. Nykrog, 98.

for their happy ending has sometimes been seen as unsatisfactory.[5] But all characters are always dependent on authorial contrivance, and Cligès and Fenice (like Alixandre and Soredamors, though more obviously) have in addition been made to depend upon the art of their fellow characters, making this manipulation a prominent theme of the romance.

Cligès has conventionally been read as a response to the legend of Tristan and Isolt.[6] This is clear enough; the poem's major heroine draws this parallel herself, and details throughout the romance echo and transform elements of the Tristan story. What to do with this evident parallel, however, has proved a thorny critical problem. It is not clear what written versions of the story Chrétien may have known or been influenced by. Fenice herself refers not to a specific account but to the legendary figures of Tristan and Isolt, in much the same way that lyric poets sometimes allude to the couple. Fenice condemns them, but it is not clear whether Chrétien meant his romance to be a corrective to, a satire on, or simply a re-imagining of their story. Various theories have been advanced. David Staines suggests that this aspect of the text has received too much attention, at the expense of other critical issues.[7] Versions of the Tristan and Isolt story will be considered in the next chapter; here I will consider *Cligès* as an independent work. The narrator declares that he draws his story from a pre-existing text, which suggests that

5. See Doggett, "On Artifice and Realism: Thessala in Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligès*," 55 for examples of complaints about the potions as unrealistic romance devices. Shirt, "*Cligès*: A Twelfth-Century Matrimonial Case-book?" counters criticism that Chrétien's romance does not do a good job of promoting marriage, because of its contrived and unconvincing plot.

6. Noble, *Love and Marriage*. 31; Freeman, "*Cligés*," 98–109; Nykrog. 82; for a helpful summary of the "classical interpretation" of *Cligès* as an Anti-Tristan romance, see Grimbert, "*Cligés* and the Chansons: A Slave to Love," 123–24.

7. Staines, "*Cliges*: Chrétien's Paradigmatic Experiment."

the romance was not designed from the ground up to reply to, comment on, or invert the Tristan legend.[8] Rather, Chrétien chose as his source a story which bore some central similarities to what Nykrog calls "le triangle tristanique,"[9] and elected to amplify and make explicit these parallels.[10] In so doing, he created a somewhat anomalous text. It is perhaps no coincidence that this is the only one of his romances not to have inspired any adaptations into other languages.[11]

Both of the love affairs of *Cligès* unfold with the help of mediating figures, and here again Nykrog's "theme and variation" image is apt. The queen, in the prologue to the main story, performs a straightforward mediating role. She is only unusual in that she is an authority figure rather than a loyal functionary in the mode of the Ovidian maid. Fenice's nurse Thessala, on the other hand, is reminiscent of an established Classical type, the elderly guardian. She is embellished with magical abilities, and her function in the romance is rather different from that of her ancient predecessors. The builder Jehan is a more unusual accomplice for a pair of lovers. He has a simple role, which is to provide the lovers with a dedicated private space, designed specifically to protect them from the outside world, but his involvement, along with Thessala's, contributes to the romance's distinctive emphasis on artifice.

The queen is presented as someone with a knowledge of love. She gradually becomes aware of the mutual attraction between Alixandre and Soredamors (1568 ff.), and acts as a

8. Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès*, lines 18–23. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

9. Nykrog, 97.

10. Ibid., 106.

11. Ibid., 81.

mediator between them (2240–2331). She offers to teach them about love (2272), and in fact gives Soredamors, who is her attendant, to Alixandre in marriage.[12] Instead of being an attendant figure observing unnoticed the secrets of her superiors, the queen observes and mediates from a position of power. The mediation completed, "La reïne andeus les anbrace / Et fet de l'un a l'autre don" (2322–3; "The queen embraces them both / And makes of each a gift to the other"). Though she is never named, the queen of *Cligès* is of course Guinevere, who appears in all of Chrétien's romances, and in *Lancelot* is shown to have a very personal knowledge of love. However, since *Cligès* was composed before *Lancelot*,[13] and especially because of Chrétien's statement that the theme of the latter poem was given to him by Marie de Champagne, it is not clear that the queen's status as a courtly lover was already established at this point. Thus the irony of the fact that she is here concerned with brokering a marriage may not initially have existed.

The queen's intervention is crucial, as the two young people in the first half of the romance are both paralysed by their emotions and constrained by their circumstances. Soredamors is one of the maidens of the queen's chamber (581), and King Arthur's niece. Attracted to the foremost of the Greek newcomers to Arthur's court, she must conceal her feelings from her brother Gawain (466–467), not because her love is forbidden, but in order to avoid mockery, and because she thinks her affection is not returned. The love between the two young people first blossoms during a Channel crossing, helping to set the Tristan theme echoing

12. This role of a queen is mentioned by Béroul's Isolt when she laments her loss of status. See Chapter 5.

13. *Cligès* is taken to be the second of Chrétien's extant romances, because only *Erec* (along with several lost texts) is mentioned at the beginning when he lists his works (1–7).

through the romance early on. The queen, perceiving the discomfort of both parties, initially interprets these signs of love as seasickness (545–546), and the l'amor/amer/la mer pun is fully exploited.[14] Both Alixandre and Soredamors are obliged to mislead people: "Estuet chascun que il deçoive / Par faus sanblant totes les genz" (612–613; "Each one must deceive / Everyone with a false appearance"). Clearly intermediary action here is absolutely necessary, even though there is no important practical or moral reason for the couple's love to be kept secret. Alixandre remains silent for fear of rejection (643–645), Soredamors because her gender demands this passivity (998–1001). He begins to make a habit of visiting the queen's tent, where he comes to gaze on Soredamors under the pretext of waiting on the queen (1548–1550). The shirt embroidered by Soredamors, sent by the queen to Alixandre on the occasion of his knighting, becomes a focus of the subsequent mediation, although its significance is at first unknown both to Alixandre (because he doesn't know who embroidered it) and to the queen (because she is unaware of Alixandre's love). At first this object seems likely to provide an excuse for conversation, when the young people, along with Alixandre's attendants and the rest of the queen's entourage, are together in the queen's tent. Soredamors draws near Alixandre with the intention of broaching the subject of the embroidery, but cannot decide how to address him, and the opportunity passes by (1380–1415). Then, when Alixandre is sitting with the queen, and Soredamors is present at a distance, the queen recalls that the shirt has been embroidered with strands of Soredamors's hair (1563–1564). Now, looking closely at the two, she perceives their

14. This is also exploited by Thomas, in the recently discovered Carlisle fragment (ll. 48–70), and the general consensus is that Chrétien imitates him rather than *vice versa*. See Freeman, 104–5 on whether Chrétien's use (taken to be an imitation of Thomas) is successful or not.

mutual love, but seeks to spare them embarrassment, with a discretion which the narrator commends (1596). Overjoyed to learn of Soredamors's involvement in making the shirt, Alixandre suffers from the necessity of concealing his raptures from his companions (1612–1618). After he has acquitted himself well in battle, Alixandre knows that he could ask the grateful king for Soredamors's hand, but he fears to displease her: "Que mialz se vialt sanz li doloir / Que il l'eüst sanz son voloir" (2209–2210; "For he would rather be miserable without her / Than have her against her will"). By now, however, the queen is aware of everything, and she is able to arrange the couple's union in a way which satisfies the demands of love as well as society. When Alixandre comes to her tent, she summons Soredamors, and the three of them sit down to talk at a distance from the others present (2248–2250). The queen sits between the two young people, and is the first to speak. She presents herself as an authority on Love, warning them of the danger of concealing their feelings from one another, and effectively revealing the love of each to the other at the same moment. In this she assumes a great degree of authority, appropriate to her status as queen, taking all agency from both parties and becoming the only one to give voice to love. She urges them specifically: "Par marïage et par enor / Vos antre-aconpaigniez ansanble" (2286–2287; "In marriage and in honour / You should join mutually together"), eschewing both *force* and *volanté d'amor*. She warns against marital tyranny on the one hand, and the sinful gratification of an illicit affair on the other.[15] When Alixandre and Soredamors speak after this, it is to the queen; his speech is directly quoted, hers reported, but in

15. William W. Kibler translates the queen's injunction as: "I urge you not to seek to dominate one another, nor merely to satisfy your desires." Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances,* 150.

both cases they address not each other but the intermediary figure, who then formally gives one to the other. The formula in which she does this emphasizes the reciprocity expected of their union, in which neither is to take mastery, but each is to belong to the other: "L'un de vos .ii. a l'autre doing: / Tien tu le tuen et tu la toe" (2328–2329; "Each of you two I give to the other: / You take him as yours, and you her as yours").

Alixandre and Soredamors require the mediating efforts of the queen because of their own reticence, like the lovers in *Guigemar*. Indeed, the first section of Chrétien's romance presents some similarities to Marie's lais; the main difference is that there is nothing illicit about the love, which leads neatly and immediately to a marriage which happily combines affection with dynastic necessity. The second half of the romance ends with the same type of union, but the process by which it is arrived at is more complicated, and the eventual solution less neat.[16] The romance's second couple need the help of Thessala and Jehan for more practical purposes than was the case with Cligès's parents. Capable of declaring their love to one another, eventually, without help, and even of coming up with a plan to deal with their impossible situation, Cligès and Fenice nevertheless rely on their servants' particular abilities, their *art*, to succeed in their design.

Thessala is Fenice's *maistre*, an ambiguous term also used of Lunete, and of Isolt's attendant Brangain by Béroul.[17] It seems to carry a principal sense of "someone in charge of something." Tobler-Lommatzsch lists a variety of definitions of the masculine noun *maistre*

16. *Guigemar* of course also ends with the lovers marrying, but there is a lot of undeniable adultery first.

17. See Chapter 5.

(lord, artificer, ship's captain, teacher, etc.), but for the feminine form (spelled the same) only the sense of "lady, dueña, governess." Thessala was Fenice's nurse, but Cligès as well as Fenice addresses Thessala as "Mestre" (6285, 6286), which suggests that this title could refer to her status as a practitioner of her art. She is characterized first of all by her knowledge of magic:

> Sa mestre avoit non Thessala,
> Qui l'avoit norrie d'anfance,
> Si savoit molt de nigromance.
> Por ce fu Thessala clamee
> Qu'ele fu de Thessalle nee,
> Ou sont feites les deablies,
> Anseigniees et establies.
> Les fames qui del païs sont
> Et charmes et charaies font. (2982–90)
>
> Her *mestre* had the name Thessala,
> Who had nursed her from infancy,
> And knew much of necromancy.
> For this she was called Thessala,
> Because she was born in Thessally,
> Where devilries are done,
> Taught and established.
> The women who are from that country
> Make both charms and spells.

The source of Thessala's magical ability is her homeland, given an uncomfortably supernatural valence. Her first function, however, has nothing to do with her occult powers, but is similar to the role played by the queen in the earlier part of the romance. Seeing Fenice alternately pale and blushing, Thessala bombards her with questions, asking whether she is *fesniee* (2994; "enchanted"), what is wrong with her, where does it hurt, and declaring that she has a personal stake in maintaining Fenice's health. She possesses the skill to return Fenice to good health, no

matter what her illness (2994–3002). She proceeds to list the diseases she knows how to cure, and adds that she knows charms and enchantments too; clearly the two areas of endeavour blur together in her mind. She has kept this knowledge a secret, however (3012). Fenice is motivated to confide in Thessala by her assertion that she is skilled in potions and enchantments (3034–3039), and she presents her complaint as if it were medical rather than emotional. Neither magic nor medicine is necessary yet, however. When Fenice describes her symptoms, Thessala, "qui molt estoit sage / D'amor et de tot son usage" (3075–3076; "who was very wise / Concerning love and all its ways"), like the queen in the first half of the romance, is quick to identify the source: "Que d'amor est ce qui l'afole" (3078; "That what was hurting her had to do with love"). She tells Fenice that it would be foolish to hide the truth about her love from her. The first step to a cure, Thessala declares, is to tell her all (3103–3105). Fenice trusts her, and is sure she would not speak to anyone about what she confides in her. The proposal that Thessala's *art* should be used to find a solution comes from Fenice (3157–3160), who phrases it as a desire to prevent Alis from betraying his oath to Alixandre, so that Cligès should not lose any of his rightful honour. But by this sacrifice on his behalf she openly hopes to win Cligès' love (3200–3209). With these revelations made, Thessala and Fenice swear a pact of secrecy (3212–3214). Although Thessala is introduced as an enchantress, her first role in the romance falls solidly within the tradition of the confidant to a young woman in love.

Thessala's potential as enchantress comes into play only at Fenice's instigation, and the young mistress remains in control of the situation throughout. The moral dimension here is

ambiguous, in part because Thessala's art is shown to create only illusion. In response to Fenice's declaration that she will not become a second Isolt, Thessala offers to enchant the emperor so that he will not touch her. We see Thessala mixing the potion (3229–3236) that will turn the emperor's joy on his wedding night into "losange" and "mançonge" (3192), and talking Cligès into administering it by telling him, "Voel l'empereor losangier / D'un boivre qu'il avra molt chier" (3260–3261; "I want to flatter the emperor / With a drink that he will find very valuable"). The lovers thus collaborate in the emperor's deception.[18] In contrast to the public nature of the imperial wedding, with the blessing of the bed in which the marriage will not be consummated (3308 ff.), the young couple's love remains private and undetected:

> Molt ot fez sopirs et sangloz
> Au partir celez et coverz,
> Que nus n'ot tant les ialz overz
> Ne tant n'i oï cleremant
> Q'aparcevoir certenemant
> D'oïr ne de veoir seüst
> Que antr'aus .ii. amor eüst. (4308–14)
>
> So much they kept their sighs and sobs
> At parting hidden and concealed
> That no one had eyes open wide enough
> Nor heard clearly enough
> To perceive with certainty
> So as to known by hearing or by sight
> That between those two love existed.

By implication, they are surrounded by eyes and ears that pose a danger. Their need for trustworthy accomplices is thus all the more acute. Later, Fenice declares that Thessala will help

18. In spite of Fenice's protestations, this is quite like what Tristan and Isolt do, for instance in Thomas's version. See Thomas, "Un Nouveau fragment du Tristan de Thomas," ll. 140–145.

her with her plan of feigning death, "Car molt est sage, et molt m'i fi" (5349; "Because she is very wise, and I greatly trust her"). The plan, however, is once again Fenice's own. Compared to Soredamors, Fenice is much more willing to take the initiative in the love affair. She has decided that she will give herself only to Cligès even before she knows that he reciprocates her love.[19] Thessala merely facilitates the escape from Alis's household; she does not instigate it. Later, the narrator remarks that Thessala searches "par molt merveilleuse guile" (5703) for a sick woman, to use her urine "Por mialz feire la traïson" (5708; "To better commit her treachery"). Although Thessala's action is referred to as *traïson*, it is Fenice, with her persistent concern for her reputation (e.g. 5292 ff., 5343 ff.) who directs the subterfuge. The moral implications remain ambiguous. Thessala's potions, in contrast to the potion shared by Tristan and Isolt, create illusions: the illusion of love in the first instance, and the illusion of death in the second. Michelle Freeman suggests that, "the very areas disturbed by Béroul's potion—politics and morality—are in fact the ones safeguarded in Chrétien's romance by Thessala's device."[20] Nykrog sees Thessala as Chrétien's accomplice, like him a creator of illusions, directing the action with her art.[21]

Thessala has been linked with various Classical figures, who might be thought to offer some insight into her moral status. Foster E. Guyer, in an early study of the influence of Ovid on Chrétien, calls Thessala "an unmistakable descendant of Ovid's nurses and confidants who aid

19. This point is made by Peter Noble: "Fénice has every expectation and intention of becoming Cligès' lover." Noble, *Love and Marriage*, 36.

20. Freeman, 100.

21. Nykrog, 100.

their mistresses in matters of love."[22] He stresses the similarity of Thessala to Myrrha's nurse in the *Metamorphoses*:

> Both nurses have cared for the heroines since their infancy; both find the young ladies of whom they have had charge suffering from love-sickness and loving a person denied to them by law and custom; in each case a crime must be committed (in *Cligès* the crime is palliated by casuistry); in each case the young lady hesitates to confess and the nurse discovers that the girl is in love; both nurses plead hard, promise secrecy and every kind of help, first to cure any malady by means of medicine or sorcery … then to procure the love desired by the maiden; and finally each is able to realize her promise of help.[23]

This likeness serves to cast Thessala in a negative light, since Myrrha's nurse facilitates the incestuous love of a daughter for her father, regarded by everyone in the story with horror. Under these circumstances, Myrrha's nurse is intensely reluctant to offer her service, whereas Thessala readily suggests a means of deceiving Alis (3176–3194). The similarities in the behaviour of the two characters, when investigated further, are not striking. Myrrha's nurse finds her mistress attempting suicide, and begs to know the reason.[24] She promises aid, but does not claim to be able to use charms or medicine herself, only to know someone who can. She suggests madness, an evil spell or the anger of the gods as causes of her mistress's mental anguish. When she learns the real cause, she does her best to dissuade Myrrha from her desire, and only carries out the role of go-between as a last resort. Thessala, on the other hand, sees what she takes to be evidence of physical illness in Fenice, and proposes to help with personal knowledge. Her assumption that Fenice is ill is like that of the queen in the earlier part of the romance, although her response is

22. Guyer, *The Influence of Ovid on Chrestien de Troyes*, 118.

23. Ibid., 221–22.

24. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.382–95.

quite different. Unlike Myrrha's nurse, she does not have to deceive or even persuade the object of the young woman's affection. The only exact match between the two scenes is the mention of a spell in both cases as a possible cause of the young woman's distress.

Thessala likens herself to another Ovidian figure when she declares that she knows more "D'anchantemanz et de charaies" than Medea (3008–3011). For D. W. Robertson, this comparison "is not very propitious and certainly does not suggest that Thessala is a person whose enterprises may be considered to be at all virtuous."[25] On the other hand, Laine Doggett points out important differences between Thessala and each of the two iterations of Medea which Chrétien and his readers might have had in mind. Medea in the *Metamorphoses* prepares a potion which is described in elaborate detail, but unlike Thessala's, it is full of specific, exotic and obviously magical elements. Chrétien, on the other hand, does not name the active ingredients in Thessala's potions. Medea in the *Roman de Troie*, also sometimes cited as a source for Thessala, is not shown practising healing, only various kinds of protective magic.[26]

Leyla Rouhi, in her study of the go-between figure in medieval literature, classifies Thessala as part of the "Greco-Oriental" trappings of the romance, "infused with a presupposition of exoticism and, more importantly, identified with 'Oriental' traits so as to disengage [her] from any serious moral objections." She is distanced from Chrétien's own world and morality, Rouhi suggests, in order to "alleviate the weight of anxiety normally associated

25. Robertson, "Chrétien's Cligés and the Ovidian Spirit," 178.

26. Doggett, 70.

with pandering."[27] This suggestion is plausible, but then everything in Chrétien's Arthurian world is to a degree distanced from the reality of the twelfth century, often explicitly.[28] In relation to Thessala, Rouhi argues that tension is created by the weaving together of different elements which both play up and attempt to attenuate the anxiety caused by third-party activity. Although Fenice's nurse offers practical, down-to-earth suggestions, Chrétien, according to Rouhi, "insists on presenting the character first and foremost as a sorceress." Departing from his Classical sources, where old women are gratuitously accused of sorcery, Chrétien makes Thessala actually use her supernatural skills; but there are still sinister associations, as when she mentions Medea.[29] Ovid himself specifically rejects the use of magic potions in the *Ars*, with a reference to Thessaly as a source of witchcraft (2.99–103). Rouhi suggests that this intertextual allusion gives a "mistrustful twist" to the portrayal of Thessala, but that Thessala is also contrasted with the character of the *lena* from Roman comedy and elegy, often accused of dabbling in sorcery to *frustrate* the lover, but never successful in these attempts. Chrétien presents a courtly transformation of this character by making her a member of a young noblewoman's household, but maintains a connection with "the sceptical perspective of Antiquity" in the vocabulary he uses to describe Thessala.[30] In her role as Fenice's confidant, Thessala offers consolation and what amounts to "a pledge of allegiance … visibly reminiscent of the words of a vassal to his liege." By eliminating any financial motivation in Thessala's service, and emphasizing her

27. Rouhi, *Mediation and Love*, 76.

28. See for instance the opening of *Yvain*, the description of the custom of the cart in *Lancelot*, etc.

29. Rouhi, 76.

30. Ibid., 77.

loyalty to her mistress in feudal terms, Rouhi argues, Chrétien considerably ameliorates the portrait of an old woman as go-between, compared to Classical iterations of the type.[31] Rouhi seems to suggest that Chrétien aimed to completely rehabilitate the character type, and to present Thessala in a wholly positive light, but that he was only mostly successful. By emphasizing the sincerity of the lovers and the loyalty of Thessala, he was able to attenuate the negative implications of the use of sorcery, but because the nurse is only a minor character, and because of the weight of negative associations, this strategy does not totally overturn the prevailing tradition. It is of course equally possible that a degree of ambiguity in the presentation of Thessala and the love affair was Chrétien's aim. Certainly Thessala is not the only element of the story to provoke moral qualms.

It is also worth asking how sinister Thessala's knowledge of "nigromance" is meant to be. Doggett addresses this question in a persuasive article, contending that, "Thessala offers a highly realistic depiction of an empirical healer and magical practitioner of the later twelfth century, whose function is to create illusions."[32] The necromancy which is ascribed to Thessala in Chrétien's initial description was not always a precisely defined term, and the character is never described as a sorceress or witch. She *is*, however, characterized as a *mire* or physician (3007), and her actual skill at healing is demonstrated after Fenice is tortured by the (licensed) physicians of Salerno. Thessala is also able to interpret the urine of the dying woman in the same way as the king's doctors, as part of her project of helping Fenice feign illness. On the other

31. Ibid., 78–79.

32. Doggett, 46.

hand, when Thessala initially offers to help Fenice, she says that she knows "enchantments and spells" akin to Medea. Doggett points out that the categories of medicine and magic were fluid and overlapped, meaning that it is unhelpful to see Thessala as exclusively a practitioner of magic rather than medicine, or to fault Chrétien for not being more specific about which she is. "Medieval individuals would not have seen her offer to turn to magic in the face of Fenice's difficulties as an indicator of false medical knowledge or quackery, but rather as yet another potential means by which to resolve Fenice's problem. … [O]f all the capacities she enumerates, she lists magic last and focuses on it less than her other talents."[33] In fact, there is no reason to suppose that the potions which Thessala prepares would have stretched medieval credulity. In both descriptions of making the potions, Thessala appears like an apothecary, skilfully mixing different ingredients, not muttering incantations.[34] On the whole, Thessala's *nigromance* is not notably stigmatized. What is labelled and condemned in the romance is deceit (*traison*), in both Thessala and Fenice's behaviour, not magic. Doggett writes: "Deceit is what counts: there is no interest in singling out necromantic acts as more severe or dangerous. Certainly Thessala's magic practice could have been a threat. Yet the romance shows little concern for the magical aspects of this threat."[35] Only at the end of the romance, when the lovers flee to the Arthurian court, is Thessala said to use enchantments to keep them safe (6638 ff.). We are given no specifics about how this works. In the end, Thessala seems neither wholly evil nor wholly blameless; her

33. Ibid., 54.

34. Ibid., 58.

35. Ibid., 70.

magical intervention is not portrayed as immoral, but some of her more mundane activities are questionable.

While Fenice secures Thessala's cooperation, Cligès speaks to Jehan "a son ostel priveement" (5469; "at his lodging privately") and "celeement" (5470; "secretly"), assures himself of his trustworthiness, and asks him to help with building the tomb which will feature in the couple's deception. Jehan's activity in the poem lacks the moral ambiguity of Thessala's; he is notable rather for the initiative he shows, which serves to render the hero even more passive. As the couple discusses Fenice's plan to feign death, Cligès proposes this new ally:

> An ceste vile a un ovrier
> Qui mervoilles taille et deboisse;
> N'est terre ou l'en ne le conoisse
> Par les oevres que il a feites
> Et deboissiees et portreites.
> Jehanz a non et s'est mes sers.
> N'est nus mestiers, tant soit divers,
> Se Jehanz i voloit entandre,
> Que a lui se poïst nus prandre,
> Car anvers lui sont tuit novice
> Com anfés qui est a norrice. (5358–5368)
>
> In this city I have a craftsman
> Who carves and sculpts marvels;
> There is no land where he is not known
> For the works he has made,
> Both sculptures and images.
> Jehan is his name and he is my serf.
> There is no task, no matter how extraordinary,
> If Jehan wants to understand it,
> That would not derive something from him,
> For compared to him everyone else is a beginner,
> Like an infant still nursing.

In one manuscript Jehan is referred to as Cligès's "mestre," which suggests a parallel with Thessala, although in this case *mestre* must refer to Jehan's status as a skilled craftsman.[36] Like Thessala, Jehan brings a specific set of skills to the lovers' aid; like Thessala, he owes allegiance to one half of the couple. But his motivation is slightly different from hers. Jehan is Cligès's serf, and if his loyalty can be trusted, Cligès will promise to free him and his heirs in return for his assistance. He is an *ovrier*, but his skill is more than merely mundane.

Asked to assist with the building of the tomb, Jehan assents, and also says he will show Cligès "une soe maison" (5523; "a house of his") that he has built secretly outside the city, unknown to the members of his own household (5524–5525). This tower house is where Jehan works, "Tot seul a seul sanz plus de gent" (5529; "All alone without any company"). This suggests that his craft already has a clandestine character. The subdivision of the interior space is emphasized as Jehan conducts Cligès through "les estages … Les chanbres et les cheminees" (5537 and 5540; "the storeys … The chambers and the heated rooms"). The house is also isolated and empty of inhabitants (5542–5543). But when Cligès thinks he has seen it all, Jehan declares that the house has still more to disclose: "Encor i a de tex reduiz / Que nus hom ne porroit trover" (5554–5555; "There are in addition such refuges / As no man may find"). The building is a marvel of privacy, with rooms that are entirely hidden from view, underground. Their entrance cannot be found by anyone to whom Jehan has not shown it: "Par tel engin et par tel art / Est fez li huis de pierre dure / Que ja n'i troveroiz jointure" (5570–5572; "By such

36. See: Chrétien de Troyes, *Cligès* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 1993). 193, collation l. 5358. Governal is sometimes called Tristan's *mestre*, but he is more of a guardian figure than a craftsman.

cunning and such art / The door is made of hard stone / So that you would never find the joins”). Nor is this underground space a dank dungeon; rather it is a luxurious retreat, furnished with everything “qu’a dame coveigne” (5563; “that is appropriate for a lady”). Jehan takes Cligès by the hand (5577) and leads him to the hidden entrance and down the stairs to his most secret workshop. The chambers here are furnished with baths and hot running water (5607–5609). A man could not ask for a better place, Jehan declares, “Por s’amie metre et celer” (5611; “To put his mistress and hide her”). The attention given to the architectural details of seclusion and enclosure recall accounts of the precautions of jealous husbands, such as those in *Guigemar* and *Yonec*. What makes this situation markedly different is that Cligès is almost deprived of agency. The secluded tower house with its secret underground rooms is indeed presented as a means of safeguarding his total possession of Fenice, but it is Fenice herself who has insisted on being so exclusively possessed, and Jehan who volunteers the house. Nevertheless, Fenice is kept there like a falcon “en mue” (6300) while her lover is able to come and go “Hardïement, tot a veüe” (6299; “Boldly, all in public”), continuing to lead a public life, with the excuse that he is visiting his bird at the secluded tower. Although Jehan has been promised a reward for his help, and it is stated that he greatly desires his freedom (5481), he proceeds to act as a loyal conspirator beyond his central role of preparing and then opening the tomb, protesting along with Cligès and Thessala when the physicians insist on emptying the palace (5905). When he and Cligès bring Fenice to the tower, he is sent to fetch Thessala, and while she labours to cure Fenice, he works to provision the tower for the couple’s protracted stay (6296–6297). His role in

the affair too has become more prolonged than was initially indicated; now he functions as a guard on the tower house (6306).

Jehan's resourcefulness and loyalty are further demonstrated as the romance proceeds. After the nightingale's song awakens Fenice's desire for the open air, she wishes to leave the tower where she has seen neither sun nor moon for more than fifteen months (6340–6341) for a garden, if there is any nearby. Unlike the captive wives of *Guigemar* and *Yonec*, Fenice, visited frequently by her lover, and attended by faithful servants, does not suffer from a lack of company; it is the physical confinement within the tower, cut off from the pleasures of nature, that weighs upon her. Cligès consults Jehan, who reveals a new aspect of his property, accessible by another hidden door: "Lors vet Jehanz ovrir un huis / Tel que je ne sai ne ne puis / La façon dire ne retraire" (6363–6365; "Then he saw Jehan open a door / Such that I do not know nor can I / Tell or relate its appearance"). The *vergier* is thus presented as the most secret place of all, even more inaccessible than the underground chambers, and surrounded by high walls so that it can only be entered through the tower (6399–6402). However, it is open to the air, and therefore cannot be as private as the interior of the tower or its subterranean apartments. It is, in fact, accessible to a real hawk, that belonging to the knight Bertran, who climbs the garden wall to retrieve his bird, and sees the lovers together (6422–6429). This sight would not be enough to convince him that the woman he sees is really Fenice, if she did not awake and exclaim that all is lost. It is only at this point that Bertran is sure that she is the supposedly dead empress (6452–6453). But the sequel to this discovery is not, as in the Tristan and Isolt texts, a serious threat of

exposure from which the lovers must escape through cunning or miracles. Fenice is supposed dead, and Bertran's report is not at first believed (6488 ff.). Jehan, sent for by the emperor, displays his loyalty to his master, first declaring that he had no choice but to obey the man who owns him and all that is his, then blaming Alis for taking a wife in defiance of his oath to his brother. He appears at first to shift all responsibility onto the master whom he cannot choose but obey, but in fact demonstrates his staunch loyalty by defying Alis in the face of death (6513 ff.). It is Jehan who reveals to the emperor the truth about the potion, and thus the falsity of his marriage to Fenice, and Jehan accompanies the messengers who bring the news of Alis's death to the young couple. As Topsfield points out, "it is the presence of Jehan in the embassy to Arthur's court which guarantees the truth of their message."[37]

Scholars have expressed a wide range of opinions about what moral judgement should be passed on the love affair of Cligès and Fenice. A central question is whether one views Fenice, with her condemnation of Isolt, as expressing the author's own viewpoint or not. This question has various interesting ramifications. Topsfield speculates on the condemnation of Lancelot and Guinevere in Chrétien's later romance that is implied "if Chrétien meant what he said in Fenice's attack on Yseut."[38] In Topsfield's view, he did.[39] Peter Noble writes, "Through Fénice Chrétien is expressing his distaste for the adulterous relationship of the Tristan legend and also for the

37. Topsfield, 89.

38. Ibid., 110.

39. Ibid., 75.

adultery associated with courtly love."[40] Nykrog declares that in *Cligès*, Chrétien takes a position "contre l'amour adultère glorifié par la culture 'courtoise'."[41] On the other hand, Peter Haidu condemns Fenice, pointing to her concern with her reputation, and calling her ruse a failure because she does not fully preserve that reputation.[42] Robertson characterizes Fenice as basically selfish, and emphasizes that her deception of Alis constitutes "a kind of treason."[43] Deborah Nelson is also critical of Fenice, referring to her as an "amoral creature" and declaring that Chrétien portrays her negatively, though without overt criticism, making clear his opinion in the ironic comment with which the romance concludes.[44] Both Haidu and Joan Tasker Grimbert make the case that Chrétien is basically opposed to anti-social love, as demonstrated in *Erec et Enide* by the title couple and by the Joie de la Cour episode, which features a pair of lovers isolated in a magically private world much like that inhabited by Cligès and Fenice during their idyllic time away from the imperial court.[45] Dafydd Evans points out that although Fenice rejects the possibility of adultery, "she does not appear … to put forward any claim to be heard in the choice of a husband. Before her society she acquiesces; in private she seeks a means of evasion. One wonders how uncontaminated by social considerations her purity may be." In particular, by appearing to be the emperor's wife while in reality having only Cligès as a sexual partner she

40. Noble, *Love and Marriage*, 35.

41. Nykrog, 82.

42. Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes*, 104–06.

43. Robertson, "The Idea of Fame in Chrétien's *Cligés*," 191–92.

44. Nelson, "The Public and Private Images of *Cligès*' Fénice," 81–88.

45. Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, 103; Grimbert, "*Cligés* and the Chansons," 124.

could insure that any sons she bore would be her lover's issue, but could succeed to her husband's throne.[46] These arguments, and others like them, suggest that the romance must be interpreted in one of two ways. Either Fenice is Chrétien's mouthpiece for a condemnation of adultery, it seems, or she is herself condemned implicitly by the poem for her inappropriate response to her loveless marriage and extra-marital attachment. But it is not strictly necessary to choose between these two options; they are not mutually exclusive.

The romance's other interpretative crux is whether or not Cligès and Fenice are to be viewed as genuine adulterers. That is, do the various schemes and contrivances of the lovers and their accomplices succeed in keeping them from real immorality, or do they merely satisfy Fenice's obsession with her reputation? This question has led scholars into some peculiarly illogical statements. Haidu declares: "Fénice's love is socially and morally adulterous, whatever the details of consummation."[47] It is not clear what he means by qualifying "adulterous" with "socially and morally" or why it is only Fenice's love that is so characterized. Nelson agrees that the lovers commit adultery even though Chrétien "plays with" the idea of Fenice as a new person after her torture, feigned death and "resurrection."[48] Noble concedes that Fenice's unconsummated marriage "could be considered to be null and void," but argues that, "this point is not made by Chrétien. In the eyes of the world, ignorant of the potion, the lovers must be seen

46. Evans, "Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes, and the Malmariée," 169.

47. Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance*, 106.

48. Nelson, 85.

to be adulterous."[49] But while the world remains ignorant of the potion it is also ignorant of the love affair, so it is hard to see why this matters. Topsfield, who views Chrétien as entirely on the side of Fenice, feels that he "shows no disapproval of the sexual love of Cligès and Fenice at a time when Fenice is still 'married' to Alis."[50] This seems to go too far in the other direction. Douglas Kelly points out that even if Fenice and Cligès's love is not technically adulterous, it is still extra-marital, i. e. fornication.[51] David J. Shirt argues that Chrétien subscribes to Gratian's view that a marriage is not valid until consummated, and that for various reasons, Alis could not contract a valid marriage with Fenice anyway (he violated his oath to remain celibate, she did not consent to the marriage, and he is not able to consummate it). Shirt suggests that Chrétien is attempting to put the lovers' affair in the best possible light, and that his original audience would have been able to appreciate this.[52] No doubt they would also have been able to appreciate the possible counter-arguments as well. Grimbert points out that the issue of whether or not adulterers could enter into a valid second marriage was one being discussed at the time of the romance's composition, and it cannot be taken for granted that Cligès and Fenice would be excused. Rather, "Chrétien's audience could only have been intrigued by the problems posed in this romance."[53]

---

49. Noble, *Love and Marriage*, 45 n. 22.

50. Topsfield, 91.

51. Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure in the* Chevalier de la Charrette, 81.

52. Shirt, "Cligès." Shirt notes (84) that Fenice describes herself as still a *pucele* and not a *dame* after her "marriage," suggesting that in a real sense she does not view herself as being married (ll. 5175–83); this rather gives the lie to Noble, who claims that Chrétien does not make the point that the unconsummated marriage is invalid.

53. Grimbert, "*Cligés* and the Chansons," 129–30. See also Lonigan, "The *Cligès* and the Tristan Legend," 206.

After the relative simplicity of Alixandre and Sordamors's romance, with its textbook example of mediation in love, the second part of *Cligès* presents a story whose moral ambiguity is irresolvable. The arts of Thessala and Jehan are important in bringing this second story to a happy ending, but it also serves to complicate that happiness. Fenice is able to turn up her nose at Isolt because she is provided, by authorial fiat and by the machinations of her supporting characters, with the means to a more graceful solution to her own untenable situation. Her virginity preserved by a potion, her private idyll of love made possible by the art of two supernaturally gifted servants, she is finally saved from a life on the run by the timely death of the emperor, and allowed to marry her lover and live as his queen. She has made the best of a bad situation; but she cannot escape, in the end, lasting infamy in the Byzantine court, where her success inspires generations of possessive husbands to keep a more restrictive watch over their wives.

Lancelot

Godefroy de Leigni, concluding Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrete* apparently with his permission, writes that he wishes neither to omit anything nor to add more, "por le conte malmetre" ("so as to harm the story").[54] "Seignor," he writes, "se j'avant an disoie, / Ce seroit oltre la matire" (7098–7099; "Lords, if I were to say further about it, / That would be beyond the plot"). This conventional statement points to a curious feature of the story as Chrétien and

54. Chrétien de Troyes, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette, ou Le Roman de Lancelot," l. 7112. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

Godefroy have told it. The adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere is here presented as relatively unproblematic. To add more to the romance might mean, among other things, dealing with the serious consequences of this affair.[55] These consequences would only be fully explored later, with the longer Arthurian cycles, and presumably no knowledge of any tradition in which the couple's adultery precipitates a political crisis and ends in tragedy is assumed on the part of Chrétien's audience.[56] However, Guinevere was already associated with politically disastrous infidelity in the accounts of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, and the analogous, tragic love of Tristan and Isolt was well known.[57] Hult suggests that "the social and political ramifications of the Lancelot/ Guenevere affair—ones that were irrevocably encoded in the most famous literary and historical works of the late twelfth century—risked carrying [Chrétien] further than he wished to go" with his romance.[58] Topsfield argues that Chrétien had to invent a reason to keep Lancelot away from Arthur's court, in order to avoid a Tristanesque situation in which the lover/rescuer restores the wife to her husband only to continue the affair in secret. In fact, it is necessary, in order to preserve Chrétien's "thematic structure," to avoid "any formal recognition that this love affair might continue at the court of the cuckolded Arthur."[59] Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner points out that no date is set for a future meeting between the lovers, and the last reference to the two of them as

55. Something similar happens in the *Folies Tristans*, which likewise present only a piece of the story, and thus are able to end happily (see Ch. 5). The difference is that there the conclusion of the story was already well known.

56. Gaston Paris was the first to suggest that Chrétien (or Marie) invented the idea of Lancelot and Guinevere as a couple, and it has been generally accepted. See Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 6.

57. Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*," 87.

58. Ibid.

59. Topsfield, 156–57.

a couple is to the queen's frustration at being unable to go to Lancelot in the presence of others. "Both these passages suggest that the major 'loose end' of the *Charrette* is precisely the future of Lancelot and Guenevere's love affair. Their story is decidedly not closed, cannot be closed, when Chrétien's romance ends."[60] But when the *Chevalier de la Charrete* ends, it is debatable whether it is Chrétien's romance any more. Chrétien has to tell only part of the story in order to avoid its tragic potential; in the event, he only told part of that part before turning the romance over to Godefroy.

If the romance's ending avoids dealing with the consequences of adultery, does the rest of the text do the same? Some critics have suggested that Chrétien employs deliberate strategies to empty the adulterous affair of moral meaning. Joan B. Williamson, attempting to argue that Chrétien did not disapprove of the theme of adultery which he presents, suggests that "Chrétien situates his romance in a symbolic world where Christian concepts of right and wrong do not apply," and as such neither Lancelot and Guinevere's adultery nor their attempted suicide can be condemned.[61] It is hard to believe, however, that his intended audience would have taken the romance in this way. Its characters, for one thing, are demonstrably Christian themselves. More cogently, Bruckner points out that Meleagant's capture of Guinevere, and Lancelot's rescue, can both be interpreted as instances of the "custom of Logres" whereby a woman riding with a knight is fair game for any other knight able to defeat her escort. Bruckner continues:

60. Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot)," 164.

61. Williamson, "Suicide and Adultery in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*," 574.

> Their night of love is, according to the custom of Logres, nothing more than Lancelot's just due: having won Guenièvre by force of arms, the knight may do as he pleases, 'sanz honte et sanz blasme.' Here is Lancelot's perfect justification, not in the secret value system of courtly love, not in the marvellous realm of the *pays de Gorre*, but in the time-honored customs of Arthur's own kingdom! [62]

But, as Bruckner is quick to add, this possible justification for Lancelot is never acknowledged by the narrator. In fact, Chrétien does not ignore the problems posed by his main characters' adultery. He simply doesn't comment on them.

Rather than being elided, the problem of adultery is presented in a complex, albeit oblique manner. When Guinevere is accused of sleeping with Kay, she and others are quick to characterize this hypothetical act as abominable treachery. The queen asserts that Kay should be above suspicion: "Je cuit que Kex li seneschax / Est si cortois et si leax / Que il n'an fet mie a mescroire" (4839–4841; "I believe that Kay the seneschal / Is so courtly and so loyal / That he would not do anything to be suspected"). At the same time, she asserts her own innocence in carefully chosen words: "je ne regiet mie an foire / Mon cors, ne n'an faz livreison" (4842–4843; "I do not sell my body at market / Or take money for it"). Meleagant is the one to accuse Kay of treason against Arthur (4854–4857), declaring that no knight of Kay's status has ever committed "si grante descovenue" (4887; "such great impropriety"). For him, of course, this consideration is secondary to his own outrage at the idea that his prisoner has enjoyed carnal relations with the queen while he, her captor, has been kept at bay. Kay, the only one who can speak with perfect sincerity in this situation, defends himself: "Certes, mialz voldroie estre morz / Que tex leidure

62. Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma: Why Are There So Many Interpretations of Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette*?" 61. She also makes the point that "Damsels may be up for grabs, but not married ladies" (63).

ne tiex torz / Fust par moi quis vers mon seignor" (4863–4865; "Indeed, I would rather be dead / Than that such foulness or such wrong / Should be believed of me against my lord"). The fact that Lancelot has actually just committed exactly this treachery passes without narratorial comment, although the audience cannot fail to consider it. The introduction of the discourse of treason into the story forces this consideration upon them. What we had just heard described as "Une joie et un mervoille / Tel c'onques ancor sa paroille / Ne fu oïe ne seüe" (4677–4679; "A joy and a wonder / Such that never since its equal / Has been heard of or known") is now characterized, indirectly, as *leidure* and *torz*. As Gerald Morgan writes, "The Queen's protestation of her innocence serves only to remind us of her guilt," and "Keu's response to the accusation further underlines the nature of Lancelot's crime and moreover suggests the moral condemnation that is appropriate to it."[63] The situation is further complicated by the fact that the queen's accuser is himself a much more obvious traitor to Arthur than Lancelot, and is motivated by his own frustrated desire to be the queen's partner in adultery rather than just her captor. Bruckner writes that Chrétien "shields Lancelot by making Meleagant the accuser and Kay the mistaken culprit," and this displacement "obscures the adultery by deflecting it onto another issue: Meleagant's error."[64] The irony of the fact that Lancelot is able to defend the queen against her accuser simply because of the wording of his accusation may be read as either delightful or

63. Morgan, "The Conflict of Love and Chivalry in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*," 195. Morgan also suggests that Chrétien reminds his audience of the adulterous status of the couple's love by habitually referring to Guinevere by her title rather than by name. However, this is his common practice with other characters, especially women.

64. Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 157.

troubling, depending upon one's perspective.[65] The religious overtones to Lancelot's love, as expressed in the consummation scene, are similarly ambiguous, offering either an exaltation of love by assimilating it to religious experience, or a condemnation of it by figuring it as idolatry, or, as Morgan suggests, both at once, in another of the poem's instances of unresolved moral tension.[66] Chrétien can be both sympathetic to the lovers and critical of them at the same time.[67]

The fact that Chrétien's romance does not follow the affair of Lancelot and Guinevere to its possible disastrous conclusion does not mean that the text represents a glorification of adultery.[68] The examples cited above serve to show how equivocal is the presentation of the couple's relationship, in spite of the rapturous way in which their love is sometimes described. Nor does the text end with any kind of "happily ever after," although it closes on a positive note. Without the stability of a marriage bond, such an ending is impossible, and the text must remain simply an isolated episode suspended within an implied longer narrative, neither recounting the beginning of Lancelot and Guinevere's love nor examining its results. In effect, this 7000-line romance presents a less complete story than any of the lais discussed in the previous chapter.[69] This has led some critics to propose displacing the love story altogether from the centre of the

65. Topsfield writes of the "ensuing farce" of the scene, in which "A courtly audience would revel in Kay's misfortune" because the seneschal is often an unsympathetic character (Topsfield, 155).

66. Morgan, 196–97.

67. Morgan contends that this moral tension evaporates once Godefroy takes over the romance. Ibid. 201.

68. The thirteenth-century *Prose Lancelot* and Grail cycle, which give due attention to the problem of how the hero's adultery can be reconciled with his status as an exemplary knight, in effect make explicit some of the interpretation which might be required of the audience of Chrétien's story. See Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 25.

69. Hult likens *Lancelot* to the lai, because of the restricted scope of its plot. Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker," 76. In fact, *Lancelot* deals with a much shorter period than, say, *Yonec* or *Milun*, but also contains many more digressions and incidental details.

romance. Kelly argues that the poem's main plot should be seen as revolving around the theme of freeing the prisoners from Gorre, with the love of Lancelot and Guinevere as a subplot.[70] As David F. Hult points out, the plot involving Meleagant begins the romance and is concluded at its end, "while the theme that has struck most readers' fancy, the love story involving Guenevere and Lancelot, is largely left in suspension."[71] Hult contends that in Godefroy's continuation, "Guinevere is largely effaced from the romance: Not only does Lancelot not mention her or even think of her after being placed in the tower, but even Meleagant's aggressive intentions have turned from a single-minded desire to possess the queen to a largely self-consumed escalation of boastfulness and rage."[72] Emanuel J. Mickel suggests that the poem's major theme, rather than a glorification of "courtly love" (by which he means "adulterous love") is an exploration of the true meaning of honour, which is to be found in "the acceptance of apparent shame to one's self for the sake of others."[73] Mickel sets out numerous examples of how this theme pervades the text. However, in endeavouring to show how Chrétien's poem focusses on something other than love, his analysis does not give adequate attention to the actual importance of love as a motivating force in the text. Lancelot's concept of honour is entirely wrapped up in his love for the queen, as is demonstrated in the monologue in which he considers Guinevere's cold reception at their reunion (4352–4360). Lancelot's willingness to suffer shame both for the queen's sake (in the cart) and at the queen's request (at the tournament) stems not from charity but from adulterous

70. Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 167; see also Hult, "Author/Narrator/Speaker," 77.

71. Ibid., 77–78.

72. Ibid., 86.

73. Mickel, "The Theme of Honor in Chrétien's *Lancelot*," 245.

desire. Bruckner makes an important point about the social role of this love: "Though Lancelot and Guenevere's love is adulterous and must, therefore, remain hidden away in the private realm of the two lovers, it is not asocial like Tristan and Iseut's love. Its values are secret, but operate in the service of Arthurian society: to rescue the Queen is to rescue all the captives of Gorre."[74] If Guinevere disappears from prominence in Godefroy's continuation, it is not because she was of less than primary importance in Chrétien's narrative. *Lancelot* neither glorifies adultery nor explores its tragic potential, but it is nevertheless a romance centred around an adulterous affair.

The mechanics of this affair form a central part of Chrétien's story, and are described in greater detail than is often recognized. The first hint that this will be the case comes when Guinevere laments that her lover is not present to prevent her being taken out of the court by Kay. Unknown to her, her words are overheard: "Molt le cuida avoir dit bas, / Mes li cuens Guinables l'öi, / Qui au monter fu pres de li" (212–214; "She believed she had said it very quietly, / But the count Guinables heard it, / Who was close to her as they were mounting"). Guinables has not been mentioned before, and is not heard of again. In the event, nothing comes of this incident, but it seems sinister, and one wonders if Chrétien might not have at some point had an ending in mind that would have revived this threat. As Meleagant's captive, Guinevere is not only imprisoned to keep her from escape, but also guarded by Bademagu to protect her from her captor. The king assures Lancelot of this himself: "La reïne a boene prison / que nus de char a li n'adoise, / neïs mes filz (cui molt an poise)" (3362–3364; "The queen is well imprisoned / For no one may join with her in the flesh, / not even my son [which bothers him greatly]"). Later,

74. Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 157.

Kay confirms it:

> Mes ne savez pas la franchise
> Que il a a ma dame faite.
> Onques ne fu par nule gaite
> Si bien gardee torz an marche,
> Des le tans que Noex fist l'arche,
> Que il mialz gardee ne l'ait,
> Que neïs veoir ne la lait
> Son fil, qui molt an est dolanz,
> Fors devant le comun des genz
> Ou devant le suen cors demainne. (4048–4057)
>
> But you do not know the generosity
> which he has shown to my lady.
> Never by any watchman was
> Any border tower so well guarded
> Since the time when Noah made the ark,
> That he does not guard her better,
> For he does not even let his son see her,
> For which he is very sorrowful,
> Except before the general populace
> Or before his own noble person.

Here imprisonment is specifically figured as honour, because it guards the queen from the assaults of her captor. Kay even uses the word *franchise* to describe Bademagu's treatment of Guinevere. She is said to have control over her imprisonment: "Onques deviseor n'i ot / Fors li qu'ainsi le devisa" (4062–4063; "There is no other arranger / But she who has arranged it thus"). Clearly, however, she does not have as much control as she could wish. Overcome with grief at the report of Lancelot's death, Guinevere is forced to dissemble because she is in the presence of others (4165–4176), and retreats from the dinner table, "si se demante / Si que nus ne l'ot ne escoute" (4178–4179; "and lamented in such a way / That no one could listen or hear"). In the

central episode of the consummation, the lovers face obstacles because of the precautions taken by Bademagu to guard Guinevere from Meleagant (4524–4525). Kay's presence in Guinevere's chamber, presumably related to his invalid state, presents another obstacle, one which is mentioned only to be overcome without apparent difficulty (4520–4523; 4621–4626).[75] Lancelot feigns weariness and goes to bed that night, although he has no intention of sleeping, "por la gent de son ostel" (4552; "on account of the people at his lodging"). The narrator comments archly that "vos qui avez fet autretel" (4551; "you who had done likewise") will understand well why he did this. Half a century before the *Roman de la Rose*, the lovers act in accordance with the advice given there by Amor:

> Souvent, quant il te sovendra
> de tes amors, te convendra
> partir de gent par estovoir,
> qu'il ne puissent apercevoir
> le mal dont tu es anguisseus.[76]
>
> Often, when you remember
> your love, you will have
> to depart from company of necessity,
> so that they may not perceive
> the sickness with which you are tormented.

Guinevere's captivity imposes special limitations on the lovers, but these are no more than variations on the constraints experienced by all adulterous couples.

Some of the romance's physical details have a particular symbolic and intertextual

75. Kelly points out that Guinevere's room is "ancortinee" (4738), which he evidently takes to mean that there was some provision of privacy. Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 134. One would hope so; but Kay's presence still seems unusual.

76. Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ll. 2257–61.

resonance. During his first battle with Meleagant, Lancelot is compared favourably with Pyramus by the narrator, who describes him as one "Qui plus ama que Piramus, / S'onques nus hom pot amer plus" (3803–3804; "Who loved more than Pyramus, / If any man could love more").[77] Lancelot encounters physical obstacles in the course of the story closely analogous to Pyramus and Thisbe's wall: the orchard wall and the barred window which stand between him and the queen on the night of their tryst. Surpassing Pyramus, as the narrator has already commented, he easily overcomes both of these, passing through a hole in the orchard wall in the way Pyramus and Thisbe fantasized about doing, and tearing out the bars in the window to enter the queen's chamber.[78] Windows are important elsewhere; Lancelot and Guinevere look at each other through windows upon the first two occasions where they are together (although separated) in the text (540 ff., 3570 ff.). As Helen Roberts points out, the person inside the window looking out is rendered inactive; this is first Lancelot, when he sees the queen passing by, then Guinevere, when she watches the first combat between Lancelot and Meleagant. At the same time, although Guinevere is framed by the window while Lancelot fights below, when he looks up at her he is once again immobilized. Finally, Lancelot's passage through the barred window represents the passage "du domaine de la vue, de l'image idéal, à l'amour physique."[79] Lancelot surpasses Pyramus in achievement as well as in emotion. When Chrétien abandoned the romance, his hero was once more the passive figure inside at the window, this time in the tower

77. Jean Dornbush points this out as part of an elaborate and largely unconvincing commentary on Chrétien's use of Ovid's story. "Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* and Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*," 36.

78. Ibid., 39–40.

79. Roberts, "Lancelot par la fenêtre: la dégradation de l'idéal chevaleresque dans *le Chevalier de la charrette*," 385–395.

where he is immured by Meleagant (6139). Godefroy is able to get him out through this window, with the aid of a damsel and a pickaxe, but there is no second night with the queen awaiting him in the conclusion of the romance.

Certain aspects of the adulterous affair are oddly refracted in the text. Karl D. Uitti suggests that Chrétien "splits the jealous husband figure into two characters: Arthur is the spouse, Méléagant is the *gilous*."[80] Of the two, Lancelot interacts only with Meleagant. The latter sees himself as Lancelot's rival for possession of the queen, but does not recognize the full extent of their rivalry. He desires the queen, whom he declares to be "la rien que plus aim" (3279; "the thing I love the most"), and his desire is frustrated by his father's opposition, but he does not realize that Lancelot has achieved the union with the queen that he has been denied. Instead, he thinks that this privilege has been accorded to Kay, the man he has legitimately defeated in battle.[81] Discovering the evidence of an interloper in the queen's bed, Meleagant rails that guarding a woman is useless (4758–4761). He has arrived at the conclusion discussed in the previous chapter; he thinks that the honourable imprisonment which his father has insisted upon has been transformed into an invitation to dishonour, giving Guinevere the opportunity to cuckold her husband and rob Meleagant himself of his perceived "rights." He is wrong, however. Guinevere's imprisonment in this instance proved a true obstacle, one which was only overcome by the extraordinary strength of Lancelot's love. But by providing Meleagant as an adversary for his hero, Chrétien has neatly side-stepped a conflict between husband and lover, substituting the

80. Uitti and Freeman, *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited*, 74.

81. See Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma," 62.

conflict between lover and captor in which the lover is clearly in the right.

There are a few instances of intermediary activity in the romance. One occurs when a "pucele molt sage" (3635; "very wise girl") recognizes that Lancelot is motivated by love of the queen, and asks the queen if she knows his name (3650–3655). Guinevere considers the request before granting it, concluding that there is "nule haïne, / ne felenie" (3658–3659; "no hatred, / nor baseness") in the question . There is also the "pucele cointe et sage" (5637; "clever and wise girl") whom Guinevere sends with her messages to Lancelot during the tournament of Noauz (5636–5654; 5835–5855; 5876–5889). In both of these instances, the concern is with establishing Lancelot's identity, not bringing him and Guinevere together. Neither involves any manipulation of private space. The first maiden perceives what could potentially constitute a powerful secret: that Lancelot loves the queen. But she uses this knowledge only to assist the knight in defeating Meleagant. She apparently does not construe the love of a knight for the queen (which could after all be unrequited, and *is* apparently at this point unconsummated) as treason or a threat to feudal stability. The second maiden does not ask questions about the mysterious messages she is made to bear from the queen to the unknown knight. Nor, if she did, would the answers be incriminating. Lancelot's devotion by itself does not constitute a crime.

The anonymous women who seek Lancelot's love (or at least sexual favours) in the course of the romance act without intermediaries. The maiden who takes him in early in his journey stages an elaborate scene of attempted rape apparently in order to win his sympathy, or

perhaps only to test him,[82] and boldly maintains her demand that he sleep with her, finally giving up only after prolonged proof of his indifference, admiring his dedication to an honourable mission (1243–1261).[83] Even then, she continues to accompany him for some time.[84] The seneschal's wife similarly takes the initiative, asking Lancelot to confide in her and requesting his love in return for his temporary freedom, but recognizing that his heart belongs to another when he refuses her (5476–5494). Lancelot's exemplary courtliness is demonstrated in his deference to women throughout the romance.[85] Guinevere's status as a sympathetic character may suffer from the arbitrary tyranny she exerts over her lover—behaviour which is mirrored in the irrational demands of the maiden who stages the rape, but also in the rash oath incident which opens the romance.[86] However, the story presents a number of minor female figures who are characterized by their loyalty and good sense: Meleagant's sister, the seneschal's wife, the maiden who asks Lancelot's name at the tournament, and the girl sent as a messenger by

82. For a discussion of why she does this, see Bruckner, "An Interpreter's Dilemma," 61–62.

83. She also presumably, as Bruckner points out, recognizes his love and its object (when she sees him fall into a stupor over the comb). Ibid., 64–65.

84. Ellen Lorraine Friedrich makes a case for reading the scene of the finding of the queen's comb as a description of a sexual encounter between Lancelot and the maiden, but this is in no way convincing. "The Beaten Path: Lancelot's Amorous Adventure at the Fountain in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*," 199–212.

85. Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 148.

86. Kelly notes: "Guenevere seems to strike most readers of the *Charrette* by her complete domination of Lancelot. The manner in which she receives him at their first meeting has been the source of much of the scholarly invective heaped upon her, and her apparently whimsical disregard of Lancelot's honor at the Tournament at Noauz has strengthened this view and even led some to regard her as an enemy of chivalry." *Sens and Conjointure*, 57. Kelly's rather weak explanation is that as Arthur's queen Guinevere "must have the best, submitting him to constant trial both to test and to increase his valor."

Guinevere.[87] Yet none of them is made to play the role of intermediary between the lovers.

Absent from the practical details that surround Lancelot and Guinevere's affair is any reference to an intermediary figure. The couple make the plans for their tryst while talking together in the presence of others (4506–4519), and come together without involving any third party. They also escape the detection of the truth of their affair, and Lancelot's knightly prowess is able to dispel the threat posed by the misinterpreted signs that are discovered. Unlike Tristan and Isolt, they are not caught out in truth; the charge from which Lancelot defends the queen is actually somewhat independent of her actual transgression, and when she declares that the blood on her sheets is the result of a nosebleed, the narrator remarks, "Et ele cuide dire voir" (4784; "And she believed she spoke the truth"). The outcome of Lancelot's combat with Meleagant is that the lovers' affair fully maintains its secrecy. Later, when Lancelot arrives to fight Meleagant in front of Arthur and his court, Godefroy's narrator comments that Guinevere must with difficulty restrain her joy and await "un boen leu et un plus privé" (6851; "A good and more private place") to express her feelings.[88]

The presentation of a love affair carried on without the aid of confidants or intermediaries is in keeping with the way that the romance as a whole delicately skirts the more troubling implications of an adulterous love between Arthur's queen and one of his knights. If more were to be added, as Godefroy asserts it should not be, it is hard to avoid the conclusion

87. Mickel also points out that Guenevere behaves honourably in acceding to Bademagu's request that she halt the combat between his son and Lancelot (265).

88. Hult makes this passage a major point of discussion, focussing on the fact that the queen is presented here as being absent even while her emotional "presence" is invoked. I'm not sure I agree that this is what is going on. "Author/Narrator/Speaker," 93–94.

that the lovers would need to employ some of the figures listed by Andreas Capellanus: the *secretarius*, *secretaria* and *internuntius* needed to help in the conduct of an ongoing affair. And the more they meet, the more people they involve in their secret, the greater the chance of discovery would become, until the story also included figures with a primary function of spying or revealing the existence of the illicit affair. Indeed, this is precisely what happens with the expansion of this story into the vast Prose Lancelot. There the love affair is initiated with the help of Galehaut; Bors, Lionel and the Dame de Malehaut are also in the secret; and Agravain and Morgan le Fay attempt to break the couple up by revealing their affair.

If Godefroy gives an explicit statement about where the romance must end, did Chrétien, by abandoning it some thousand lines earlier, implicitly indicate where *he* felt it needed to end? Wendelin Foerster was the first to propose that Chrétien left *Lancelot* unfinished because its theme of adultery was distasteful to him.[89] This view is founded partly on a judgement of *Lancelot* as an inferior, poorly composed poem, an opinion already expressed by Paris.[90] Marie de Champagne, associated with the glorification of adultery by Andreas Capellanus,[91] gave Chrétien the assignment of writing a romance on that theme, and perhaps, as a result, his heart was not really in it from the beginning.[92] It has even been claimed that by ascribing to Marie the

89. Foerster, "Einleitung," LXVIII.

90. Paris, "Le conte de la charrette," 464.

91. Andreas presents a "judgement" purportedly given by Marie, which states, among other things, that love cannot exist between husband and wife (1.6.397). Cross and Nitze explain: "with the single exception of the *Charrete*, Chrétien upholds the ideal of love-in-marriage." *Lancelot and Guenevere: A Study on the Origins of Courtly Love*, 67–68.

92. Kelly cites a number of other examples of scholars who espoused this view: *Sens and Conjointure*, 12, 14–16. He concludes: "That Chrétien did not like adultery is almost universally accepted." Ibid., 17.

matiere and *san* in the prologue, Chrétien seeks to absolve himself of blame for the choice of a subject which he personally disliked.[93] Topsfield, convinced of Chrétien's antipathy for Tristan and Isolt, supposes that "he must have had doubts about the love triangle at Arthur's court after Lancelot's return from the land of Gorre. … In this light, it is understandable that Chrétien should leave Lancelot imprisoned in the tower, in the amorous impasse of consummated *Fin'Amors.*" Rather than bring Lancelot, Tristan-like, back to court, Chrétien chose to pass off the romance to Godefroy.[94] Morgan presents a slightly more sophisticated version of the same idea when he argues that "Chrétien's characteristic concern as a poet is with the fact of moral tension" between love and chivalric fame, and that Chrétien abandoned *Lancelot* because, since the story could not be modified along the lines of *Cligès* to have a happy ending, the moral tension could not be resolved, something that he was unwilling to deal with.[95] Hult suggests that an "unfinished" version, in which the text ended with Lancelot immured in Meleagant's tower, could in fact have been seen by Chrétien as an appropriate expression of the hopelessness of his hero's plight as lover of Arthur's queen, while avoiding the "endless sequence of adulterous episodes in the *Tristan* mold" which would otherwise loom on the narrative horizon.[96] On the other hand, if the hint of a *losengier* character in the person of Guinables was intended to set the stage for future difficulties for the lovers, it is possible to imagine a different reason why

93. Bruckner discusses this suggestion in "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 137–38.

94. Topsfield, 110–11.

95. Morgan, 193–200.

96. Hult, 87. Hult goes on to suggest (rather cheekily, I think) that Chrétien might have made Godefroy up entirely, so that he could have his cake (leave Lancelot in the tower) and eat it (provide a tidy end to the romance) too.

Chrétien turned his work over to Godefroy. Scholars who speculate about the reason why Chrétien abandoned *Lancelot* have tended to focus on the idea that he disliked Marie's plans for the work and therefore failed to fulfil his commission. It is perhaps more likely, given the power dynamic suggested by the work's prologue, that Marie herself should have been the one dissatisfied by Chrétien's proposed conclusion, and we might well imagine that the impetus to take the work away from Chrétien and give it to Godefroy could have come from her.[97]

This type of argument has rightly been challenged as a flimsy biographical speculation. Mickel calls it "a perfect example of an argument created to fit a preconceived interpretation of the text." The only certain facts, that Marie gave Chrétien the "matière et sens" of the romance, and that Chrétien did not write the last thousand lines of the text, are not sufficient to establish Chrétien's own attitude towards the work (or, for that matter, Marie's).[98] Reto R. Bezzola was the first to speak out definitively against not only the idea that Chrétien disliked *Lancelot*'s adultery theme, but also the notion that all of his other romances glorify romantic marriage.[99] Frappier points out that by the time Chrétien abandoned his romance, "l'essentiel avait été dit," and it is not necessary to imagine him being repulsed by his subject matter.[100] Kelly sensibly notes that the allusions to *Lancelot* in *Yvain* indicate that Chrétien could not have abandoned the earlier poem

97. Was the story going to deteriorate into Tristanesque tragedy, or was Chrétien going to try to kill off King Arthur? This type of speculation is not particularly helpful, but it is very hard to resist, as the body of scholarship on this romance attests. As far as I know, no one has suggested that Marie de Champagne might have handed the romance over to Godefroy de Leigni to complete because she didn't like Chrétien's proposed ending, but this is not markedly more absurd than some of the things critics *have* suggested.

98. Mickel, 244.

99. See Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 19.

100. Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: L'homme et l'oeuvre*, 125.

in disgust; he need not have mentioned it again, much less made the plot of the subsequent romance interlock with it, if he were actually disgusted with it.[101] The assumption that Marie de Champagne was a champion of adulterous love rests on a very shaky foundation, since it involves taking seriously the "documents" presented by Andreas Capellanus. Bruckner writes: "I have the impression that readers of the *Charrette* have been led to invent a romance about Chrétien and his patroness based on Chrétien's own romance about Lancelot and the Queen: the superior, even capricious lady who requires unquestioning obedience from her lover/servant."[102] In this scenario, Chrétien, who abandoned his appointed task in disgust, comes across as distinctly less obedient than his hero.

As groundless as they may be, these speculations about Chrétien's motivation do address a real aspect of his work. *Lancelot* presents a scenario which does not, in the long run, seem likely to end well, and the romance does not follow it to any real conclusion. In this it differs from Chrétien's other extant works. Only in *Lancelot* is the possibility of the main characters' love being sanctified by marriage made completely out of the question. Alexandre Micha suggests that the theme of adultery was in fact one of the major additions made by Chrétien to his putative source, in which the queen's rescuer is her husband, aided by Saint Gildas.[103] Chrétien's prologue assures us that we should not ascribe any of the romance to his invention, but it is not clear that we can ascribe it to Marie de Champagne's either, or which of

101. Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 23–24.

102. Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 138.

103. Micha, "Sur les sources de la 'Charrette,'" 345–58.

them was responsible for any modifications to a presumed source text. In any case, this is the only romance in which Chrétien gives unequivocal adultery such a prominent place. By way of a response to the incompatibility of dynastic marriage with courtly love, he seems less interested in glorifying adultery than in elaborating fantasies within which characters are able to combine love and marriage. The story of *Lancelot* does not provide any such opportunity, and Chrétien at some point, for some reason, abandoned it.

Yvain

Yvain begins with a public figure unexpectedly retreating into his private chamber. It is a curious scene, coming immediately after the statement that Arthur is responsible for the preservation of the fame of exemplary chivalric lovers.[104] Those same knights are surprised by the king's behaviour on this particular Pentecost:

> Mais chel jour mout s'esmerveillierent
> Del roi, qui d'entr'euz se leva,
> S'i eut de tix qui mout pesa
> Et qui mout grant parole en firent
> Pour che quë onques mais ne virent
> A si grant feste en chambre entrer
> Pour dormir ne pour reposer.
> Mais chel jour ainsi li avint
> Que la roÿne le retint,
> Si demoura tant delés li
> Qu'il s'oublia et endormi. (42–52)
>
> But that day they greatly marvelled
> At the king, who got up from among them,

104. Chrétien, "Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)," ll. 39–41. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number; translations are my own.

> And there were those who were very troubled
> And who made much talk about it
> Because never before had they seen him
> At such a great feast enter the chamber
> To sleep or to rest.
> But that day the queen kept him,
> And he stayed so long beside her
> That he forgot himself and fell asleep.

A group of knights sits outside the chamber door. The royal couple's privacy is guarded, but their recourse to it constitutes a public spectacle. This scene seems rife with domestic detail, but it is prefaced with the statement that all this took place in another era, when love and manners were different (that is, better) than at the time of writing. If Chrétien went straight from the unfinished *Lancelot* to *Yvain*, as is frequently assumed, he went from writing about the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere to this scene in which Arthur retreats to the chamber with his wife, who subsequently leaves him sleeping to go out to join the knights by the door, whose conversation she has overheard (62–63).[105] But if the events of the two romances are reconciled into a single time scheme, the beginning of *Yvain* happens before the events of *Lancelot*; that is, Guinevere at this point is not yet guilty of adultery.[106] The tension between private love and public honour,

105. The implications are even stranger if one assumes that Chrétien was writing the two romances at the same time. On the intertwined time-schemes of the two poems, and the implications for their relative composition, see, among others: Shirt, "How Much of the Lion Can We Put Before the Cart?"; Krueger, "Reading the *Yvain/Charrete*: Chrétien's Inscribed Audiences at Noauz and Pesme Aventure," *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, which includes a chart showing the comparative chronology of the two stories; Janssens, "The 'Simultaneous' Composition of *Yvain* and *Lancelot*: Fiction or Reality?" which refutes Shirt's argument, and concludes that there is no firm grounds for asserting that the two texts were composed simultaneously. Evelyn Mullally summarizes the debate on the subject, including a cogent criticism of Shirt's argument, also concluding that it makes most sense to simply take *Lancelot* as having been written (up to the point where Chrétien abandoned it) immediately before *Yvain*. "The Order of Composition of *Lancelot* and *Yvain*."

106. Frappier suggested that this scene was written before Chrétien wrote of the adultery in *Lancelot*; he felt that "Chrétien aurait eu le tact de ne pas esquisser cette scène discrètement conjugale, si déjà il avait conté les amours de Lancelot et de la reine infidèle au roi" (*Étude sur Yvain*, 15). One suspects Frappier may be projecting his own notions of tact onto Chrétien here.

introduced here in a slightly whimsical way, will be a major concern later in the romance.

The plot of *Yvain* may be likened to that of *Lanval*. In both, a hero who is something of an underdog at Arthur's court is elevated by his union with an imperious mistress who possesses some supernatural characteristics, loses her by breaking a taboo, and finally regains her, though not through his own merits. That Chrétien's characters marry, while Marie's do not, does not radically alter the pattern. More significant is the figure of Lunete. The intermediary figure is absent from Marie's story; or it might be more accurate to say she is attenuated, reduced to the attendants who first bring Lanval to his mistress. Lunete is probably not one of Chrétien's additions, however, but an element of the traditional plot he was using. Analogues to her can be found in similar folktales.[107] However, Chrétien, to an even greater extent than Marie, has distanced his heroine and her attendants from their fairy origins.

From her first entrance, Lunete is linked with private space. She first appears entering from ".i. huisset estroit" ("a narrow little door") issuing from "une cambrete" (968; "a little chamber"). She emerges from a private space, and her first action in the romance is to hide the hero. Yvain is trapped in an area between two portcullises, in a space which turns out to be a richly decorated and furnished hall. He has ridden through "le porte du palais" (904) after Esclados, who escapes through "Une autel porte … derrier / Comme chele devant" (954–955; "Another door … behind / Like the one before"). Lunete emerges from her little chamber "yleuc delés" (968; "next door"), "Et l'uis aprés lui refrema" (973; "And closed the door behind her"). For some reason, the possibility that the lord's killer could have escaped by this door is not

107. Ibid. 104–05.

considered by his pursuers. Instead of this, however, Lunete has hidden Yvain within the hall by means of her magic ring. The power of Lunete's ring is described as concealing Yvain by enclosing and covering him:

> Si li a dit qu'il a tel forche
> Comme a li fus desous l'escorche
> Qui le keuvre, c'on n'en voit point. (1025–1027)
>
> And she told him that it had the same power
> As the wood under the bark
> That covers it, that one cannot see at all.

Once again, Lunete is linked with secret interior space. The ring, which is activated by turning the stone inward towards one's palm, seems not to be the extent of the protection Lunete offers Yvain. She seats him on a bed in the hall, then returns to her room to fetch food for him. She tells him to remain sitting on this same bed, because people will search under benches and beds for him. The crowds who arrive observe that no one but a bird could have escaped through the windows, and that the doors have remained shut (1118–1119). The bed where Yvain sits is marvellously spared from their searching. When his deliverer returns, she is identified (since her name has not yet been mentioned) as "La damoisele de la cambre" (1259), her identity appropriately linked with the space from which she emerged, and in which she conceals the hero.

Throughout the romance, Lunete is described in generally positive terms, particularly as concerns her loyalty to her mistress. Although the people searching for their lord's killer declare that devils must be responsible for his disappearance, this suggestion is never connected to Lunete. She is first described as "mout avenans et bele" (972; "very charming and pretty"), later

as “brete” (1580; “crafty”). Later, in the course of explaining the appropriateness of her name, Chrétien’s narrator enumerates her qualities. She is “de grant foy et de grant aÿe” (2411; “very faithful and very helpful”), “Tres sage, et tres noble, et tres cointe” (2417; “very wise, and very noble, and very cunning”). Her association with the moon is said to be appropriate because of her name and her “boin renon” (2413; “good reputation”), not because of any overtones of lunar mutability. Indeed, it is the mistress rather than the maid who exemplifies this quality.

Lunete’s cunning is not shown to be of an occult nature; rather, she combines a purely practical facility for courtly intrigue with a control of private space which is both mundane and, as embodied in the ring that hides Yvain, supernatural. One of her useful attributes, arising from her status as faithful and helpful attendant, is her access to private conversation with her mistress. She uses this access to further the aims of the hero, to whom she is personally indebted. Their relationship throughout the romance is characterized by a back-and-forth exchange of favours, originating in his kindness at Arthur’s court before the beginning of the story. Unlike the maiden who offers Lancelot hospitality and the seneschal’s wife who allows him to attend a tournament, Lunete does not seek Yvain’s love for herself as payment for her service to him; instead, she begins from a position of gratitude. She counsels discretion: “Li sages son fol penser keuvre / Et met, s’il puet, le bien a oevre” (1329–1330; “The wise man conceals his foolish thought, / And, if he can, makes use of the good”). It is appropriate that someone in her position, as trusted counsellor of her lady, should be associated with the virtue of discreet speech as well as with access to private space. She leaves Yvain, because her absence from the court retinue

would be noticed (1338–1342), but she returns later to keep him company, and quickly deciphers his statement that he has passed a pleasant day and seen something which made him very happy (1563–1564). Now she brings him into her room, where she looks after him.

Lunete's favour with her lady is emphasized and explained at this point (1588 ff.). There is nothing that she fears to say to her, we are told, no matter how important the subject. Indeed, Lunete will essentially presume to arrange her lady's marriage, something which, as we saw in *Cligès*, her lady ought more properly to be doing for her. Lunete is Laudine's "maistre et sa garde" (1593). Both of these terms seem unusual, since Lunete is identified as a *pucele* in the service of a married lady; that is, she does not appear to be older than Laudine. Both *maistre* and *garde* seem to be used here to identify an attendant in a position of such trust and confidence as to exercise a significant degree of personal control over her mistress. Uitti draws upon the meaning of "craftswoman" attached to *maistre* to suggest that Lunete, like Thessala, is a sort of artisan "whose powers extend even to magic artifacts."[108] Most other critics call attention to Lunete's use of persuasive speech as a source of power. Within the text, the suggestion that Lunete wields great, even excessive power over her mistress is countered, perhaps slightly archly, with the question: "Mais pour quoi fust chele couarde / De sa dame reconforter / Et de s'onnour amounester?" (1594–1596; "But why should she be afraid / To comfort her lady / And to counsel her for her honour?") Chrétien consistently refuses to condemn Lunete for her manipulation of her mistress. Although Lunete is shown to have power over Laudine, that power is portrayed as largely beneficent.

108. Uitti, "Le Chevalier Au Lion (Yvain)," 216.

Lunete speaks to Laudine "a conseil" (1597), and comments that no one can hear them (1691). She roundly condemns the knights of Laudine's household as unfit to defend the fountain. "La dame set mout bien et pense / Que chele le conseille en foi" (1638–1639; "The lady knew well and thought / That she counselled her faithfully"); but, like most other women, we are told, Laudine indulges her folly and rejects advice that actually accords with her desire. Lunete ignores Laudine's order not to speak (1664), and her persuasive discourse is referred to as "son latin" (1786). Laudine reflects on Lunete's loyalty and decides that she would never give her advice that would bring her shame (1741–1748). Motivated like Fenice by a fear of public opinion, Laudine is concerned about what people will say of her if she marries her husband's killer (1807–1810). She asks Lunete to bring Yvain to her, "Celeement et en repost, / Dementiers que lez moy n'est nuz. / Gardez que n'en i viegnge plus, / Car g'i harroie mout le quart" (1902–1905; "Covertly and in secret, / While there is no one around me. / Take care that no one else comes, / For I would hate for there to be a fourth"). Once again there is a repeated insistence on the literal meaning of privacy, in a situation where intermediary activity has already been introduced and even foregrounded. Lunete rejoices in her success, but prudently conceals her joy (1908–1909); here as later, we see her taking a personal delight in the service she is performing, and her discretion is exercised this time on her own behalf. To Yvain she pretends to be in trouble with her lady, and to have been found out in her scheme of sheltering him. Laudine will refrain from harming him, she says, but intends to keep him imprisoned, heart and all (1918–1926). To this Yvain acquiesces meekly.

Lunete's manipulative behaviour may be hard to justify from the point of view of a personal morality ascribed to the character, but as part of the romance's love story it works very well, serving to illustrate the abjectness of Yvain's love, allowing him to subjugate himself completely to his lady's will, and bringing him before Laudine still believing that he goes to his doom rather than his reward, a situation which, as it transpires, is not without humour. Similarly, Lunete's manipulative speech, though potentially troubling for her status as a sympathetic character, reveals an essential romance truth about the equivalence of love and prison: "Por ce a droit qui prison le claime / Que bien est en prison qui aime" (1943–1944; "For they are in the right who call it prison / For he is indeed in prison who loves"). The idea of love as imprisonment, already introduced, is further developed at this point, through Lunete's playful speech. This paves the way for the argument of Gawain that Yvain needs to leave this pleasant imprisonment in order to maintain and increase his knightly honour (2484 ff.). Lunete brings Yvain to her mistress, leading him by the hand (1945) and pulling him forward when he won't speak (1966). If Yvain will not speak, Lunete declares, she is shamed for having brought him before her lady (1961–1965). Her mocking assurance that Laudine will not bite Yvain (1968–1969) is compared by Fanni Bogdanow to Bernart de Ventadorn's remark that his beloved is not a bear or a lion who would kill him.[109] When she succeeds, she has "fait / Quanqu'elle vouloit entresait" (2051–2052; "done / Everything she wanted without fail").

The narrator inserts a short digression about Lunete and Gawain, and the private meeting between them (2395–2440). She finds a confidant of her own, telling Gawain how she

109. Bogdanow, 83.

arranged affairs between Yvain and her lady (2424–2430). Gawain, amused and apparently impressed, promises to serve her loyally. In the event, however, he will be busy in *Lancelot* during her time of need, and it will be Yvain, with whom she does not have a romantic relationship, who comes to her rescue. The "acointanche … Qui fu faite a privé conseil / Entre le lune et le soleil" (2395–2398; "meeting … That took place in private / Between the moon and the sun") comes to nothing. However, it is one of the ways in which Lunete, the romance's most developed female character, is set apart; she receives the attention of one of the brightest lights of the Arthurian court. On a narrative level, the relationship between Lunete and Gawain is another manifestation of the tension between love as a force for private life and honour as a public good. While Lunete is repeatedly associated with private space and personal manipulation, Gawain is perhaps the most prominent ambassador of the Arthurian court, eager to ride off on quests and speak out in the royal hall. These two characters, who do the most to move Yvain in one direction or the other, according to their own allegiance, are thus briefly brought together, but the pairing doesn't quite work.

Lunete's performance in the rest of the narrative reaffirms earlier elements of her characterization. Her role as mediator between Yvain and his lady does not end with their marriage. She must intervene between them again, to re-establish the bond that is broken with Yvain's broken oath. First, however, she appears in a different role, as a slandered innocent in need of a champion. When Yvain finds Lunete imprisoned in the chapel, their places are reversed in comparison to their first meeting. Now he must restore her to her lady's favour, although he

has lost that favour himself. Lunete does not repent of having brought Yvain and her lady together; she declares that she did it "Plus pour son preu que pour le vostre" (3652; "More for her profit than for yours"). Whereas when she told the story to Gawain she explained "A com grant paine ele conquist / Sa dame" (2425–2426; "With what great pains she had conquered / Her lady"), now she characterizes her activity more benignly as *amonnestement* (3248; "counsel"). The seneschal who accuses her of treason is motivated, she declares, by his own envy of the position of trust she enjoys with their lady (3665). Lunete acted out of gratitude when she saved Yvain initially; now he declares that she has done so much for him that he must be at her service in her need (3753–3755). Once again, gratitude is the motivating force in the exchange between the two of them. Yvain accomplishes the reconciliation of Lunete and Laudine, but by force of arms rather than through persuasion.

Lunete alone accompanies Yvain as he sets out on his return journey, and promises to intervene again on his behalf with her lady (4633–4644). True to her word, she repeats her method of talking Laudine into receiving Yvain. This time she suggests that the Knight with the Lion is the best choice to defend the fountain, aware that he is in fact Yvain, and tricking her mistress into promising to reconcile the knight with his lady. She goes as far as making Laudine swear an oath on relics to this effect, so that this reconciliation falls somewhere between the pure persuasion of her first endeavour and the judicial intervention of Yvain on her own behalf. Lunete entraps her mistress "molt cortoisement" (5525), the narrator remarks, once again refusing to condemn, except perhaps with archness. She has a personal stake in this, once again:

"De riens n'avoit tel couvoitié / Com de che quë ele avoit fait" (6650–6651; "She had desired nothing so much / As this which she had accomplished").

Yvain's reunion with Lunete is marked by physical signs of affection, but these are given after she has told him of her success on his behalf with Laudine (6684), and may be seen as having more to do with her status as bearer of good news than with the bond between her and her lady's husband. She professes herself still in his debt (6698–6699). Once again, when Lunete brings Yvain in to Laudine, she is the first to speak, this time giving instructions to her mistress: "Dame, relevés l'en / Et metés paine et forche et sens / A le pais faire et au pardon" (6723–6725; "Lady, raise him up / And put labour and effort and sense / Towards making peace and pardon for him"). Laudine's anger is in keeping with her earlier obstinacy in the face of Lunete's advice, and Yvain apparently sees through it and realizes that he is going to be truly forgiven (6767–6769). Lunete's happiness at this outcome is again emphasized by the narrator (6799). Throughout the romance we have seen her exhibiting a consistent, though complex, set of qualities. Trustworthy but manipulative, loyal and at the same time tricky, she is motivated by her own gratitude to Yvain as much as by devotion to her mistress, and demonstrates an emotional investment in the outcome of her machinations.

Lunete is a character who seems to attract equal shares of personal affection and moral disapproval from critics. Early critics such as Guyer and Frappier write approvingly of Lunete's moral character in comparison with Ovidian confidant figures.[110] More recently, Lunete's role as a figure for the narrator or author has been the focus of much positive commentary. Grimbert, for

110. Guyer, 229; Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain*, 155.

instance, calls her the author's agent, and writes of Lunete's limitless capacity for deception, her fabrication of lies "pour le pur plaisir de jouer, un peu à la manière du narrateur."[111] Uitti points out that Chrétien identifies her as "she 'who made' (*a fet*) the peace that constitutes the fount of Yvain's and Laudine's joy. Her 'work' is assimilated to that of the poet," he suggests, making her a feminine counterpart to the masculine Chrétien.[112] Where Thessala works with herbs and spices, Lunete uses language to accomplish her ends.[113] Grace M. Armstrong's approval of Lunete is expressed in phrases like "gloriously manipulative" applied to her activities; she also sees Lunete as "very much like the clerkly narrator," and refers to her "experiment in mind-control" and her "stage-managing."[114] Similarly, Judith Rice Rothschild's article on Lunete is full of effusions about her "clever machinations, her verve, her acuity and her artful psychological control."[115]

Machinations and psychological control are not necessarily admirable, however, and a number of other critics have made precisely these traits the focus for their censure of Lunete. That she manipulates both Laudine and Yvain is undeniable. Nykrog calls her "La malicieuse Lunete" for toying with Yvain's emotions,[116] and suggests that her mistress is justified in her accusation of treason (which is not, in fact, *her* accusation) because Lunete's concern for Yvain

111. Grimbert, *Yvain dans le miroir*, 113.

112. Uitti and Freeman, *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited*, 83.

113. Ibid., 84.

114. Armstrong, "Women of Power: Chrétien de Troyes's Female Clerks," 42–45. For other instances of Lunete being likened to the narrator, see McGuire, "L'Onguent et l'initiative féminine dans *Yvain*," 76–77.

115. Rothschild, "Empowered Women and Manipulative Behaviors in Chrétien's *Le Chevalier au lion* and *Le Chevalier de la charrette*," 176.

116. Nykrog, 161.

has always superseded her loyalty to Laudine.[117] Tellingly, he finds the lament of the poor ladies and their description of Lunete's charity unexpected: "on ne connaissait pas Lunete par ce côte."[118] It is Roberta L. Krueger, however, who offers the most cogent and fully developed case against Lunete. She argues that in the relationship between Yvain and Laudine, the lady is reduced to an object of exchange, but that this aspect of the romance is obscured and "mystified" by an emphasis on love and mutuality. Yvain does not use physical force to win Laudine, but "neither does he *court* her. … He instead comes to ask for her hand as a result of negotiations made by a go-between, Lunete" who owes Yvain service for the honour he did her at Arthur's court. Lunete's faithful service to Yvain is one of the ways in which the romance "creates the fiction of the 'good marriage' for Laudine." Lunete, however, "serves first of all Yvain and the system of knightly honor when she convinces Laudine to marry the man who has killed her husband," and the argument she presents to persuade Laudine is tinged with misogyny.[119] Krueger notes that, "even as the reader may sympathize with Lunete's intentions as she plays the role of the good counsellor, in the terms of the romance's structure of exchanges, she acts as a relative who hands a daughter or sister over for marriage, to honor a peer or appease an opponent."[120] At the end of the romance, Lunete once more delivers Laudine to Yvain, "as one knight might to another." She has privileged Yvain's desire over Laudine's honour, according to Krueger, and Laudine acquiesces at this point purely in order to avoid perjuring herself; that is,

117. Ibid., 159.

118. Ibid., 170. The passage in question is 4353–4378.

119. Krueger, "Love, Honour and the Exchange of Women in *Yvain*: Some Remarks on the Female Reader," 308.

120. Ibid., 309.

she thinks of her oath to Lunete first, while Lunete thinks first of her loyalty to Yvain.[121] The romance ends by emphasizing the exchange between Yvain and Lunete more than the love of Yvain and Laudine, Krueger contends, because the lady is not named, while the satisfaction of both Yvain and Lunete at the happy outcome of their transaction is described.[122]

> Yvain and Lunete's courtly reciprocity finds its final expression in the gift Lunete makes of Laudine to Yvain, a gift for which Yvain has said he can never repay her. … If Lunete's verbal manipulations exemplify female strength, we should not forget that she derives her momentary parity with Yvain by exploiting another woman's powerlessness in repayment for the protection the knight has offered her.[123]

Krueger's indictment of Lunete's behaviour is compelling. However, the assertion that Laudine is reprehensibly trapped and tricked at the end of the romance ignores the words with which she protests: "chelui qui riens ne me prise / Me feras *amer* mal gré mien" (6752–6753; "he whom I value at nothing / You have made me *love* against my will"; my italics). Laudine covers in her heart the memory of Yvain's disloyalty (or of Lunete's treachery?) in an image reminiscent of the effect of Lunete's ring: "Si com li fus cueve en la chendre" (6763; "As if it was covered in ashes"). Like Lunete's manipulation of Yvain and of her mistress earlier in the romance, this may not be satisfying from the point of view of psychological character consistency; but from the point of view of narrative shape, it is entirely apt, and leads the romance to a happy conclusion.

The idea of Lunete playing a masculine role, suggested in Krueger's focus on her

121. Ibid., 315.

122. The fact that Laudine is not named through most of the romance (and not at all in most MSS) could be seen as either strengthening or weakening this point; it means that there is nothing special about the omission of her name at the end, but it does also suggest that she is somewhat marginalized through the whole romance.

123. Ibid., 316.

reciprocity with Yvain, has been pushed further by other critics. Armstrong views Lunete as transcending gender categories, albeit perhaps only briefly. The passage in question is Lunete's parting misogynistic barb flung at Laudine: "Bien y pert que vous estes femme / Qui se coureche quant ele ot / Nului qui bien faire li lot" (1650–1652; "It is indeed obvious that you are a woman / Who gets angry when she hears / Anyone who advises her to do well").[124] Armstrong asserts that by classifying women as foolish, Lunete "excludes herself from the category of women, since she is clearly aware of her own good sense."[125] Ellen Germain also argues, unconvincingly, that Lunete fills a masculine role in the romance, exchanging "knightly services" with Yvain and displaying a concern with honour which Germain sees as a marker of masculinity.[126] To this Renée Allen replies succinctly: "If he meant Lunete to be read as male, why would Chrétien not have created a male character?"[127] One problem with the idea of Lunete and Yvain as collaborators in the exchange of Laudine is that it ignores the other mainstay of the anti-Lunete argument: her manipulation of Yvain himself. The sense of reciprocity between Lunete and Yvain which is certainly present throughout the romance is undercut by the fact that she keeps him prisoner for a time and apparently takes pleasure in teasing him. James R. McGuire argues for a nuancing of Krueger's negative view of female agency in the romance, pointing out that Laudine exercises great power over Yvain, banishing him from her court and effectively from the chivalric world (because her rejection causes him to go mad) and also

124. This remark also formed part of Krueger's basis for criticizing Lunete. Krueger, 308.

125. Armstrong, "Women of Power," 41.

126. Germain, "Lunete, Women, and Power in Chrétien's *Yvain*," 15–25.

127. Allen, "The Roles of Women and Their Homosocial Context in the *Chevalier au lion*," 146.

condemning Lunete to death. Lunete, McGuire suggests, acts for the common good in securing a defender for the fountain, rather than as part of a system of exchange between herself and Yvain.[128]

Allen offers a more detailed reply to Krueger's arguments about Lunete. Although Lunete manipulates Laudine, Allen points out, she is dependent on her mistress for her livelihood and for her own honour; therefore the idea of her status as an independent agent should not be exaggerated.[129] Lunete is *not* a relative who hands over a dependent for marriage; she is a servant who wields a strong influence over her mistress. Her function is not to make a gift of Laudine, in the manner of Enide's father or the queen in *Cligès*, but to convince Laudine to grant herself to Yvain. In emphasizing Lunete's "knightly" function, Allen argues, Krueger neglects to consider how female readers could respond to and identify with the character.[130] Angelica Rieger suggests that a major reason for the frequent use of female characters whom the hero encounters on his adventures could well be to give the women of Chrétien's audience someone to sympathize with.[131] Allen also addresses Germain's argument about Lunete as a masculine figure. Making Lunete fill a typically male role (arranging for the exchange of Laudine) does not necessarily make her masculine, Allen argues; it could rather "redefine the boundaries between the male and female spheres."[132] In fact, it is not clear that the role of arranging another woman's marriage is

128. McGuire, 77–79.

129. Allen, 142.

130. Ibid., 143.

131. Rieger, "Balade des demoiselles du temps jadis," 103.

132. Allen, 144.

inherently masculine. This assumption perhaps stems from the model of a father arranging a marriage for his daughter; but no such relationship is in question here. To be sure, Lunete can be seen to be reversing the polarity seen in *Cligès* of the mistress who arranges for the marriage of her dependants, but this does not entail any kind of gender reversal. On Lunete's misogynistic statement, Allen comments: "Lunete embodies the contradictions of the text. [She] controls people and events through her logical words, while at the same time reiterating a stereotype of women as illogical."[133]

There is no need to see Lunete as a masculine figure in order to consider her as a "surrogate narrator," either, as was recognized by Uitti. "Because Lunete's [misogynistic] statement clearly does not apply to herself," Allen writes, "it undermines both its own misogyny and that of the narrator, while foreshadowing that Laudine will accept Lunete's good counsel."[134] In a rather surprisingly negative judgement on Lunete's final manipulation, Allen writes that she "has brutalized Laudine" by forcing her to accept a husband she does not want. Krueger may be right, Allen concedes, in suggesting that Lunete exploits Laudine's powerlessness, but it is also significant that Lunete, as Laudine's attendant, derives all of her power from her mistress. It is not clear to what extent Laudine believes the seneschal's accusation of treason against Lunete; she is forced to act upon it, because it is made publicly, but after Lunete is cleared, her mistress continues to trust her and seek her counsel. Allen concludes: "There is abundant textual evidence that these two women rely on, support, and trust each other more than either trusts anyone else,

133. Ibid., 146.

134. Ibid.

male or female," in spite of the fact that "some of Lunete's actions are abusive."[135] Taken as a whole, the critical discussion of Lunete suggests that neither a wholly laudatory nor a thoroughly condemnatory approach to the character is quite adequate.

As was the case with Thessala, Lunete's literary ancestors have proven difficult to pinpoint convincingly. Guyer viewed Lunete as a clear descendent of various Ovidian characters. He asserts that the description of Yvain's initial winning of Laudine "is doubtless elaborated" from the *Ars Amatoria* passage advocating the use of a maid as go-between. The resemblance rests on three points: the importance of Lunete's role in securing Laudine for Yvain; Lunete's status as an utterly trusted attendant; and her skill in choosing the right moment to advance her case.[136] It is certainly true that all these are aspects of Lunete's role, and that they are the essentials of Ovid's description of the helpful maid. However, the similarity is not very striking. Ovid recommended winning over the maid, which Yvain does not need to do, and suggested that the maid would describe vividly the depth of the lover's attachment, which Lunete does not do. Her machinations, although aimed at bringing the couple together, may also be likened to political counsel, in that she addresses the stability of Laudine's rule. J. M. Sullivan suggests that "Lunete is first and foremost an active and effective counsellor, and it is in that capacity that the narrative's noble auditors would have identified with her character."[137] Ovid's maid, by contrast, is first and foremost a hairdresser. Where Lunete is like the maid of the *Ars* is in her acting on

135. Ibid., 148–49.

136. Guyer, 116.

137. Sullivan, "The Lady Lunete," 336.

behalf of the male lover to manipulate the female beloved, her social superior, into forming an attachment to him.[138]

Guyer also links Lunete with characters from Ovid's *Amores*: Dipsas, Cypassis and Nape.[139] There is no doubt that Chrétien was steeped in the Ovidian tradition,[140] and it is likely that Lunete's role, like Thessala's, is modelled in part on Ovid's go-between characters. But here, to a greater extent than with Thessala, there is a gulf between Ovid's characters and Chrétien's. Dipsas, who appears in *Amores* 1.8, dispenses much of the advice later incorporated into Book 3 of the *Ars*: demand presents, encourage jealousy, feign passion.[141] She is also much coarser, concerned solely with the conduct of a mercenary affair, and she is credited with hyperbolic and baneful magical abilities by the speaker. Her advice bears little resemblance to Lunete's, her social status even less. She is old and is herself clearly out for what she can get. She is not the young woman's dependent or even a member of her household.[142] Cypassis, the maid with whom the poet has cheated on his mistress in *Amores* 2.8 (in 2.7 he denies the charge) is an even worse analogue for Chrétien's character, although she exemplifies one of the aspects of the maid imagined in the *Ars*. Nape's function is conceptually much closer to Lunete's. Ovid addresses her in *Amores* 1.11, a poem which is entirely concerned with the sending of a written message to his

138. Jakes d'Amiens speaks of the maid leading the lover to her mistress and putting his case better than he could himself (381–396). Jakes was writing some time after Chrétien, however, and was thus possibly influenced *by* Lunete.

139. Guyer, 119.

140. See the opening of *Cligès*, for instance.

141. Ovid, *Ovid's Amores: Book One*.

142. She makes this clear in ll. 87–92 when she refers to actual members of the household.

mistress and his hopes for her reply. Nape is Corinna's maid, a very similar figure to the maids described in the *Ars*, trustworthy in matters of love and stealthy nocturnal arrangements (3–4), helpful in encouraging her mistress to accept the lover. The poet speculates that she too knows something of love (11), which makes her his natural ally. The air of conspiracy between lover and maid may be compared with the trust between Lunete and Yvain. However, there is no sense of the maid herself being in control of the situation. And her functions, both in her mistress's household and in the unfolding love affair, are different, in a concrete way, from Lunete's. Nape is the maid responsible for arranging her mistress's hair (1), and she is called on here to carry and deliver a letter which the poet hopes will bring a reply inviting him to spend the night.

Frappier makes the same connection as Guyer with the figures from the *Amores* and the maid of the *Ars*, but adds that Lunete and Laudine (who in some ways resembles the Ovidian mistress) are not entirely Ovidian figures, because they are "en réalité des fées plus ou moins adaptées à la société féodale et courtoise." Laudine's behaviour resembles that of the fairy mistress frequently encountered in lais and Breton romances, Frappier argues, and Chrétien has created a fresh and interesting fusion of the two sources.[143] Elsewhere Frappier asserts that Laudine "est une fée, la vision anthropomorphique et divinisée de la source elle-même." In support of this he adduces parallels from other texts in which a fairy plays a role similar to Laudine's.[144] However, this does not prove that Chrétien's character is herself a fairy. Similarly, although the parallel between Lunete and the fairy counsellor of the Cuchulainn story, adduced

143. Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain*, 73.

144. Ibid., 102.

by Frappier, is suggestive, it is going too far to assert that these characters are "in reality" fairies.[145] Nykrog makes the sound point that although Lunete enters the romance "un peu comme une bonne fée," when she depends upon Yvain to save her life, later, this is something that would never happen to a fairy.[146] Chrétien is not averse to labelling elements of the marvellous in his romances; Lunete and Laudine possess magic rings and inhabit a castle attached to a magic spring, but they are never actually called fairies. As Frappier himself notes, in the folktales featuring a hero who wins the love of a fairy, the fairy's love is represented as a sort of force of nature; this is not the case with Laudine, who debates within herself and gradually comes to recognize the necessity of remarrying and finally to desire Yvain.[147] If Chrétien's source did involve fairy characters, he must have made a decision to change their status. The result, in the case of Lunete, is a figure who can be linked to the Ovidian tradition as well as to folklore, whose actions echo classical texts even as they embody feudal values.

Kelly points out that Laudine is every bit as demanding and capricious as Guinevere—even more so, in fact, in that she never repents of her treatment of Yvain, as Guinevere repents of her coldness towards Lancelot. The portraits of love in the two romances are so similar, Kelly contends, that we are given "no reason to believe that, in Chrétien's eyes, the marital love of Yvain and Laudine is morally superior to the adulterous love of Lancelot and Guenevere."[148] But is it really necessary for Chrétien to display such a conviction? Of course married love is morally

145. Ibid., 104–05.

146. Nykrog, 158.

147. Frappier, *Étude sur Yvain*, 103.

148. Kelly, *Sens and Conjointure*, 83.

superior to adultery; no one would dispute this. Even Andreas Capellanus does not seriously and consistently advocate adultery. The fact is that when there is no need to represent the lovers as other than husband and wife, Chrétien makes them marry. He also links his characters' marriages to dynastic and political stability. In the first part of *Cligès*, the queen's mediation between Alixandre and Soredamors alleviates their lovesick suffering and at the same time brings about a union between the Greek and Arthurian courts. In the second part, the marriage of Cligès and Fenice, brought about with considerable ingenuity, coincides with the hero's succession to his father's throne and Fenice's resumption of her interrupted role as queen. In *Lancelot*, where no less a figure than King Arthur stands in the way of the lovers' passion being sanctified by marriage, Chrétien (and after him Godefroy) breaks off the narrative without ever showing this adulterous love disrupting the royal couple's marriage or, through it, the stability of the realm. Indeed, Lancelot's love, which spurs him on to rescue the queen, serves to restore her to her husband and his court, and Chrétien begins his next romance with Arthur and Guinevere calling attention to their married state. In *Yvain*, Lunete plays a role typically associated with an illicit affair, but in the context of a legitimate marriage, satisfying the desire of the man to whom she is indebted by winning for him the woman he loves, and solving the strategic problem of the woman to whom she owes allegiance by delivering to her the husband who can help her hold onto her property. In these romances (as also in *Erec et Enide*) Chrétien clearly acknowledges that passionate love and legitimate marriage have different functions, sometimes in tension with one another, sometimes—and this is the better option—overlapping.

Alixandre and Soredamors, Cligès and Fenice, Yvain and his lady are all deeply dependent upon the support of confidants and mediators for their success in combining love with marriage and attaining happy endings. Characters who are able to discern signs of secret love, elicit confidences and engineer opportunities for private activity are crucial in both *Cligès* and *Yvain*. That these characters by their scheming within the texts bear some resemblance to the author has become a common critical observation. In *Lancelot*, characters of this type are notably absent, and the author himself apparently retreats from the text, handing it over to another writer to complete. In each romance different strategies are employed to reach an ending which is both publicly and privately satisfying, emphasizing not the dangers of private love and love mediated by third parties, but rather their joys. Each of these endings, however, contains notes of ambiguity. In *Cligès* the example of Tristan and Isolt is raised only to be dismissed, by clever planning on the part of the characters and favourable circumstances provided by the author. Yet we are shown that Fenice's determination to avoid an Isolt-like reputation is not altogether successful. In *Yvain*, Lunete's intervention restores order in both the hero's marriage and Laudine's realm; but we are left with the question of whether her manipulation of her mistress has been justified and can result in lasting happiness. And in *Lancelot*, the only happy ending available is one which sees the defeat of the villain, but not the union of the lovers. Here Tristan and Isolt are not invoked, but a knowledge of their tragedy can only complicate the partial story that Chrétien's romance tells. It is that tragedy, and its own depiction of secret love, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

5. Brangain and the Barons: Helping and Hindering Characters in Five Tristan Narratives

Roger and Laura Loomis's pioneering work on medieval Arthurian art catalogues more than two dozen examples of scenes from the legend of Tristan which appear outside of the context of manuscript illustration: in wall-paintings, embroideries, and wood-carvings; on ivory caskets and floor tiles. "The Tryst Beneath the Tree," the scene of King Mark hiding in the branches of a tree to spy on a meeting between his nephew and the queen, appears in numerous decorative media on objects from all over Europe.[1] More extensive decorative schemes combine multiple scenes, as on the famous Forrer Casket, a tiny carved box of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, whose sides bear six vignettes.[2] Other artifacts, such as the early fourteenth-century Wienhausen embroideries, present full pictorial cycles.[3] Certain scenes stand out, making the identification of the story clear. Tristan in the bath, menaced by the women who have just discovered his identity, makes a particularly recognizable tableau, as does the scene of the lovers lying in the forest, separated by a sword. In between these, other elements of the narrative are illustrated with more generic scenes: boats crowded with figures appear when the story moves from one setting to another; stock images of couples in bed can be decoded through the crowns on certain heads. These artifacts illustrate something about the Tristan material that is also true of its written versions. The legend is made up of separable episodes, easily depicted within the confines of a column capital or under a misericord. When these incidents are strung together and

1. Loomis and Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, 65–69.

2. Loomis and Loomis, 43–44.

3. Loomis and Loomis, 51–53.

the whole progression illustrated, it takes on a patterned appearance: battles and sea-voyages alternate with scenes of banqueting and lovemaking. In written versions, the episodic and patterned nature of the narrative is most striking when the story turns to the love affair of Tristan and Isolt. In the narrative of the love affair, precarious safety at court alternates with miserable exile and separation, with moments of discovery and reconciliation bringing about the change from one state to the other. Certain episodes within the longer narratives appear to be doublets of one another; others, given independent "short story" treatment, could easily be slotted into the chronology of the fuller versions.[4]

The medieval Tristan material survives in a complex tangle of fragmentary texts, conflicting versions and adaptations. This chapter will focus on four of the earliest texts belonging to this tradition, and one of the most complete. These are the Old French romances of Thomas and Beroul, the so-called *Folie de Berne* and the related *Folie d'Oxford*, and the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*.[5] Several related texts, which help to fill in gaps left by incomplete manuscripts and intentional omissions, must also be considered. Within this material, two main narrative branches are discernible, represented in their earliest extant forms by the poems of Beroul and Thomas. Both come from the latter half of the twelfth century (and resist attempts at

4. Joseph Bédier, in his monumental reconstructive study, emphasizes the episodic nature of the legend when he sets out to determine which incidents belonged to the "poème primitif" which he saw as lying behind all extant versions. Thomas, *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*, 2:194–319.

5. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number, from the following editions: Thomas, *Le Roman de Tristan*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1991); Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ed. and trans. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1989); "La Folie de Berne," *Les deux poèmes de la Folie Tristan*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1994) 17–36; "La Folie d'Oxford," *Les deux poèmes de la Folie Tristan*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1994) 53–84; *Sir Tristrem*, ed. Eugen Kölbing (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1882). All translations from Old French are my own.

more precise dating), nothing is known of either author, and neither poem is complete. Thomas's text is in a particularly pitiful state; six different manuscript fragments preserve bits of the poem, amounting to perhaps a quarter of the original, but including the end.[6] Beroul's version, preserved in only one manuscript, lacks both a beginning and an end, but is still some thousand lines longer than what is left from Thomas.[7] It has become traditional to refer to the *version courtoise*, of which Thomas is the earliest exemplar, and the *version commune* presented by Beroul.[8] Joan Tasker Grimbert succinctly explains the difference between the two: "It is generally thought that the *version commune* is most faithful to an earlier state, while the *version courtoise* incorporates changes that were a product of the court culture flourishing in France and Germany in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries."[9] However, the relevance of these terms has deservedly been challenged.[10] Both versions were no doubt disseminated in a courtly context, and both draw on folk tale material for their episodes. The most striking differences between Thomas and Beroul are stylistic; their narratives differ, but they also contain many analogous elements, and similar, if not identically named characters.

Gottfried von Straßburg's early thirteenth-century *Tristan*, the Old Norse *Tristrams saga*

6. Hunt and Bromiley, "The Tristan Legend in Old French Verse," 118.

7. It is harder to say with any accuracy how long a complete text of Beroul's poem would be, since there are no surviving derivative texts. Richard Illingworth discusses various speculations about the original length and conclusion of Beroul's poem, including the possibility that it had a radically different ending from other surviving versions. "Thematic Duplication in Beroul's *Tristran*," 12–13.

8. Mary Brockington's caveat on Beroul is worth repeating: "Use of the name Beroul is simply a convenient shorthand, implying nothing more dogmatic about authorship than 'the person who first put together this particular episode as it is preserved in the version now known as Beroul's.'" "Tristan and Amelius," 305, n. 1.

9. Grimbert, "Introduction," xvii.

10. Grimbert, xxvii–xxviii.

ok Ísöndar, written in 1226, and the late thirteenth-century Middle English *Sir Tristrem* all explicitly follow Thomas's text, while the twelfth-century poem of Eilhart von Oberg belongs to the same branch as Beroul's. The two "*Folie*" texts also fall one on either side of the Thomas/ Beroul divide, with the *Folie de Berne* referencing incidents from the Beroul version and the *Folie d'Oxford* matching Thomas's text closely enough, in both substance and style, to have led to the speculation that he might have written it.[11] The *Folie d'Oxford* is an Anglo-Norman text of the late twelfth century.[12] The *Folie de Berne* is virtually undatable,[13] but it seems likely that it is the earlier of the two. Of all of these related texts, only Eilhart's is a complete, single-authored poem that covers a version of the legend from start to finish. Gottfried left his brilliant retelling of the story incomplete, and his continuators drew on Eilhart's version rather than maintaining Gottfried's close adherence to Thomas.[14] The Old Norse prose translation, made by one Brother Robert for King Haakon of Denmark, is complete, but represents a drastic condensing of the poetic version. The Middle English text condenses, muddles and renders ludicrous much of the story, and lacks the very end due to a missing manuscript leaf.[15] The two *Folies*, complete poems

11. Bédier, 2:88–90; Hunt and Bromiley, 125–126; cf. Félix Lecoy, ed., *Le Roman de Tristan* (Paris: Champion, 1991), 11, n. 9, who rejects the suggestion summarily.

12. Lecoy, 51.

13. Lecoy, 16.

14. Shirt, *The Old French Tristan Poems*, 85. On Gottfried's faithfulness to Thomas, see Bédier, 2:76–81. Until the early 1990s, Gottfried's text left off at about the same point where surviving fragments of Thomas's text began. The discovery of the Carlisle fragment, which contains a scene from earlier in the story, has fortunately reduced the irony of the situation; it also allows for an even greater appreciation of how attentively Gottfried followed Thomas's version. See: "Un Nouveau fragment du *Tristan* de Thomas," ed. Michael Benskin, Tony Hunt and Ian Short, *Romania* 113 (1992–1995): 289–319.

15. Tony Hunt makes the important point that the works based on Thomas, though they preserve incidents not extant in the original, give "nothing of the detail or flavour of Thomas's treatment." "The Significance of Thomas's *Tristan*," 42.

unto themselves, cover only one incident of the legend, although the focus of that incident is the series of allusions made by the hero to previous episodes. Thus the *Folie* texts, like the Forrer casket and the Wienhausen embroideries, emphasize the episodic nature of the legend, presenting the lovers' past as a series of images and iconic moments. Beroul's text also presents a highly episodic narrative, with periodic recapitulation and chronological gaps between incidents. Richard Illingworth writes that "although the events [Beroul] describes fit easily and naturally into the context of the legend, there is little doubt that each one was perceived as an entity within a larger unity, a discrete episode with a beginning, middle and end, that could be detached from the narrative and enjoyed in its own right."[16] There are also certain inconsistencies. The king vows revenge on the dwarf in one episode, only to be easily convinced to trust him again in the next, so that an essentially similar incident can be played out; later, one of the three villainous barons is killed by Governal (1710), but some thousand lines after his death, there are still three villainous barons. The primary method of reception for longer romances was likely the performance of shorter segments,[17] and Beroul's text seems particularly adapted for this type of delivery. The text that has come down to us might be essentially part of a transcription, "a copy of the work of a poet who was more used to reciting episodes and naturally reminded the listener of the general context of the legend before absorbing him in one particular event."[18]

Through all of this there runs a persistent concern for telling the story accurately. This

16. Illingworth, 13.

17. Hunt and Bromiley, 113. See also: Bumke 522.

18. Illingworth, 13.

means, in part, following the best authority. It may also mean putting together a string of disparate episodes in such a way as to make the best possible sense, and to maintain a degree of consistency with regard to recurring characters. It is in connection with character that Thomas brings up the issue of differing versions. "Seignurs," he explains, "cest cunte est mult divers, / e pur ço l'uni par mes vers" (2108–2109; "Lords, this tale has many versions, / and because of that I unify it through my verse"). "The task of the narrator," Ben Ramm writes about this passage, "is to 'manage' the material as he finds it; not only is a narrator required to unify the narrative, ironing out any tensions in its divergent strands, he must also define the very boundaries of the text, selecting the material that he deems necessary or suitable for inclusion."[19] After a digression about his source, Thomas comes to the narrative point which evidently occasioned this discussion: one commonly-told version of the story has Tristan send Governal to England to bring back Isolt (2131–2133). This version Thomas rejects, "e si volt par raisun mustrer / que içe ne puet pas ester" (2149–2150; "and wants to show by argument / that this cannot have been so"). His "raison" is that Governal was well known as a go-between and messenger for the couple, and thus would never be able to present himself incognito at court and spirit Isolt away (2137–2150). Beroul too is concerned with characterization when the subject of divergent traditions comes up:

> Li contor dïent que Yvain
> Firent nïer, qui sont vilain;
> N'en sevent mie bien l'estoire,
> Berox l'a mex en sen memoire,
> Trop ert Tristan preuz et cortois

19. Ramm, "'Cest cunte est mult divers': Knowledge, Difference, and Authority in Thomas's *Tristan*," 367.

A ocirre gent de tes lois. (1265–1270)

The churlish storytellers say that
They [Tristan and Governal] drowned Yvain;
They don't know the story at all well,
Beroul remembers it better,
Tristan was too valiant and courtly
To kill people of that sort.

He is concerned to establish that a certain action would have been *out of character* for the noble Tristan. Even the Middle English author expresses a sort of concern with characters, or at least with establishing who was who, and who did what, in the poem's preamble (1–11). None of this amounts to a demand for complete psychological coherence or novelistic realism, but it is significant that in these cases each reteller of the story gives some thought to the issue of character.[20]

From the drinking of the potion on, the lovers' story becomes one of alternating safety and discovery. In the Old Norse text (narratively the most complete of the Thomas branch), the "discovery" of the lovers' guilt is made no less than nine times, all before Tristan's marriage to the second Isolt. After his marriage, as Ann Trindade writes, the remainder of the narrative in Thomas's version is "underpinned by a very simple thematic structure based on the opposition between separation and union."[21] Separation is reinforced through Tristan's marriage; union is achievable only briefly, in fleeting moments of security before the danger of discovery overtakes

20. Other instances of concern with telling the correct version occur in Beroul at 1787–1792, when the narrator refers to his written source, and in *Sir Tristrem* at 397–407, which seems to refer to research done to determine the true version of events. The limits of a consideration of character in these texts are demonstrated by Juliet Hohenberg Thompson, whose discussion of Tristan as a "creative hero" and self-fashioning artist figure becomes unconvincing when she attempts to treat the character as a coherent individual across disparate works, able to reveal "his real nature." "Identity and the Creative Hero in Four Twelfth-Century Tristan Stories," 3.

21. Trindade, "Time, Space, and Narrative Focus in the Fragments of Thomas's *Tristan*," 390.

the lovers again. The *Folie* texts are situated in the period after Tristan's marriage, and the incident that they narrate—Tristan's return to court disguised as a madman—though it does not occur in the extant versions of the full narrative, essentially doubles the episode in which he returns in the guise of a leper. The main interest of the story, for most of its narrators, lies not in the periods of security which the lovers are able to enjoy—these are sometimes glossed over very briefly indeed—but rather in the means through which their love is revealed, and, even more importantly, the means by which the lovers repeatedly nullify these revelations. These twin foci bring into prominence two types of supporting characters: those who are hostile to the lovers, and those who are sympathetic. The first group comprises the envious barons, the meddling dwarf, the steward Meriadoc, and Cariado, unsuccessful rival for Isolt's affection. The second group includes such figures as Tristan's servant Governal, his brother-in-law Kaherdin, and Mark's steward Dinas, but its most important representative is Isolt's attendant Brangain.[22] Of all the sympathetic characters in the texts considered here, she has the most to do with the lovers *as lovers*, and thus she merits particular attention.[23]

The people who threaten the lovers are characterized as *losengiers*, and play a stereotyped role in which motivation is either presented quite simply or elided altogether. This role they reprise repeatedly over the course of multiple episodes in different branches and

22. Except in quotations, the names of major characters have been standardized throughout this discussion as Tristan, Isolt, Mark and Brangain. The choice of these spellings is somewhat arbitrary. There is considerable variation between texts, but also *within* texts, which means that to use one spelling for Beroul's character and another for Thomas's, for instance, would suggest a consistency which the texts do not actually display.

23. In the Prose Tristan, Governal is made more of a counterpart to Brangain, responsible with her for the administering of the potion, and sharing in her sense of guilt for bringing about the love affair. Dinas is only in Beroul and the *Folie de Berne*, as is the hermit Ogrin, whose main role is to urge the lovers to repent and then to facilitate their reconciliation with Mark after the potion has worn off.

retellings of the narrative. Brangain, by contrast, takes on different roles, according to the demands of different episodes and the conceptions of different storytellers. As a result she is an altogether more complicated figure, in her shifting role in the lovers' affairs, in their perception of her allegiance, and in the motivation which lies behind her changing status.

Faced with betrayal by her long-time confidant, Thomas's Isolt observes: "L'en ne poet estre plus traïz / que par privez e par nuirriz" (1449–1450; "One cannot be more betrayed / than by intimates and by dependants"). This maxim is amply illustrated in all versions of the Tristan story. Characters' happiness is repeatedly threatened by members of their intimate social circle. The one most severely harmed in this regard is King Mark, who perceives himself as alternately betrayed on two fronts. Tristan's access to the king's private sphere facilitates his affair with Isolt, while the barons' access to the same space allows them to perceive the affair and produce the "slander" which torments the king as well as the lovers. This theme is exploited particularly well in Beroul's text. As Tony Hunt points out, Beroul's poem is centred on a paradox: "In respect of Mark the lovers are entirely exempt from malice, the barons wholly infected by it."[24] Traces of the same theme may also be found in the Middle English poem; and the *Folie* texts, which focus on a specific attempt by Tristan to regain private access to Isolt, present another aspect of the issue.

At the beginning of the extant fragment of Beroul, Tristan has been exiled from the royal bedchamber, in what is obviously at least a quasi-official sense. As he and Isolt put on a show of innocence for the watching Mark, Tristan laments that he has often sent for Isolt, wanting to

24. Hunt, "Beroul's *Tristran:* The Discovery of the Lovers in the Forest," 234.

speak to her, “Puis que chanbre me fu veee” (104; “Because the chamber has been forbidden me”). A little later, Isolt says that the king has forbidden Tristan the chamber because of her, using the same phrase, “chanbres veer” (175). Convinced of their innocence, Mark decides to give them “La chanbre tot a lor voloir” (297; “The chamber completely at their disposal”). He is duly reconciled to Isolt, and after this, Tristan and Isolt “Allent et viengent a lor buens” (465; “Come and go as they please”). The king’s chamber is more than a convenient place to be alone. Webb writes: “References to the early medieval royal bedchamber and its personnel … evoke something close to an institution, certainly a space or set of spaces rather more complex and more highly populated than we might expect a mere bedroom to be.”[25] Tristan is not the only one to have access to the king’s chamber, and Beroul’s narrative moves very quickly from recounting the couple’s happiness at being able to meet to setting the stage for the next disruption of their affair:

> Accordez est Tristran au roi.
> Li rois li a doné congié
> D’estre a la chanbre: es le vos lié.
> Tristran vait a la chanbre et vient;
> Nule cure li rois n’en tient.
> Ha, Dex! Qui puet amor tenir
> Un an ou deus sanz descovrir?
> Car amors ne se puet celer:
> Sovent cline l’un vers son per
> Sovent vienent a parlement
> Et a celé et voiant gent.
> Par tot ne püent aise atendre,
> Maint parlement lor estuet prendre. (568–580)

25. Webb, *Privacy and Solitude in the Middle Ages*, 51.

> Tristan is reconciled with the king.
> The king has given him leave
> To be in the chamber: he is pleased about this.
> Tristan comes to the chamber and goes;
> The king does not worry about it.
> Ah, God! Who can love
> For a year or two without discovery?
> For love cannot conceal itself:
> Often the one nods to the other
> Often they meet for conversation
> Both in secret and with witnesses.
> They may not always await comfort,
> They must have many "conversations."

The narrator's "Ha, Dex!" dramatically interrupts the account of the lovers' success, and this commentary on the difficulties of an illicit affair prepares the way for the next discovery of their love. What follows is an account of the three treacherous barons, and how they have often seen Tristan and Isolt together and want to get Tristan out of court because of it.

Beroul several times makes it clear that the default for people of the status of Mark and Isolt is to have constant attendance. For the king to come to his chamber alone is a circumstance that warrants comment. Twice Isolt is frightened to see her husband come to his private quarters alone, believing that this must betoken danger. After the scene of eavesdropping by the fountain: "A sa chanbre li rois en vient. / Iseut le voit, qui molt le crient: / 'Sire, por Deu, dont venez vos? / Avez besoin, qui venez sous?'" (387–390; "The king came to his chamber. / Isolt saw him, who greatly feared him: / "My lord, for God's sake, why have you come? / Is something wrong, that you come alone?"). Her fear is occasioned by her own guilt, but if it were usual for the king to be unattended she would have no reason to comment on this. Later in the poem, Mark returns from the hunt alone, having deliberately abandoned his barons, and Isolt similarly notes his anger and

his lack of attendance, as if both have a sinister appearance: “Aperçut soi qu’il ert marriz, / Venuz s’en est aeschariz” (3161–3162; “She perceived that he was angry, / He had come there unattended”). Her first thought is that Tristan, who is in hiding at this point, has been caught. This is one of many instances in Beroul’s poem of the misinterpretation of signs; the king’s anger is not directed towards Isolt, and in fact his solitary appearance is due to his disgust with his followers. Earlier in the poem, while other members of the court sleep in the hall, Tristan attends the king to bed (680–681), and sleeps in his chamber (655), obviously a high privilege, not only from the point of view of illicit love but also of court protocol. But a number of other people also have access to that chamber, as is illustrated in the episode of the flour on the floor: the dwarf moves about the room after everyone has gone to bed, and when the barons burst in to accuse Tristan, the squire Perenis is also there, asleep at the foot of Tristan’s bed (763).

The attendants who have access to the royal chamber gain honour from this privilege, but they also confer honour by their presence. In their exile in the woods, Tristan and Isolt sleep in a “loge” made of branches (1290), and never spend more than one night in the same place (1430). Beroul emphasizes the privation that they experience in the forest, rather than painting a picture of an idyllic existence, as the Thomas-derived texts do. And after the love-potion has worn off, Tristan laments that he has abandoned “cort et baronie” (2165). He is ashamed of the situation to which he has subjected the queen. He has forced her to exchange “beles chanbres … Portendues de dras de soie” (2182–2183; “beautiful chambers … Hung with curtains of silk”) for a humble dwelling in the woods. “Estre peüses a anor,” he says, “En tes chanbres, o ton

seignor" (2257–2258; "You might have dwelt with honour, / In your chambers, with your lord") were it not for the potion which forced them together. Isolt laments in her turn:

> Les damoiseles des anors,
> Les filles as frans vavasors
> Deüse ensenble o moi tenir
> En mes chanbres, por moi servir,
> Et les deüse marïer
> Et as seignors por bien doner. (2211–2216)
>
> Young women of honour,
> The daughters of worthy vassals
> I should be able have with me
> In my chambers to serve me,
> And I should be able to arrange their marriages
> And give them to lords for good purpose.[26]

This is a particularly clear statement of the benefits that an entourage confers on a woman of high status. Not only would the "filles as frans vavasors" attend to Isolt's needs, but they would be dependent upon her for needs of their own; in particular, she would have the power to give them away to suitable husbands. Instead she is living in the woods with Tristan, with neither chamber nor damsels nor honour. Although the lovers have exchanged the dangerous world of the court for the solitude of the woods, they lament the lost honour which only troops of attendants can provide. It is striking that when they evoke the vanished splendour of the court to which the queen should be entitled, they focus not only on material trappings, but also on the people who should have been around her, specifically contrasting their current solitude with the crowds of the court. Tristan himself should be part of those crowds, just as Isolt should be their

26. Or possibly "for goods"?

focus. To be deprived of this society constitutes for them a serious loss. In the versions of the Thomas branch,[27] where the love-potion does not have an expiration date, the lovers merely endure the privations of life in the woods with joy in each other's company. "In on erþe hous þai layn," says *Sir Tristrem*, "Þer hadde þai ioie ynouȝ" (2478–2479).[28]

The Middle English poem, which covers far more of the story than any of the other texts considered here, contains a few references to the importance of private space. When Tristrem first arrives at Mark's court as a child, the king shows him his favour by giving him rich clothes and admitting him to his chamber: "His chaumber he liþ inne / And harpeþ notes swete" (571–572). Later, Tristrem is made "constable" in Mark's household, after the episode of spying in the tree, and the lovers are able to enjoy a period of security:

> Now haþ Ysonde her wille
> Tristrem constable is heiȝe.
> Þre ȝere he playd stille
> Wiþ Ysonde briȝt so beiȝe;
> Her loue miȝt no man felle,
> So were þai boþe sleiȝe. (2168–2178)

Their cunning helps to keep them safe, but Tristan's position of trust at court is part of the condition necessary for the success of their affair. Again, after a subsequent period of banishment, Tristan is recalled to court and given a position of authority, but, as in Beroul, their security evaporates once more, in the space of a stanza:

> Mark gan Tristrem calle
> And toke him al bidene

27. The episode is not extant in Thomas's own version.

28. See: Guy R. Mermier, "Thomas' (or Beroul's) Innovations: A Reassessment," 104.

> Cites and castels alle,
> Steward as he hadde bene.
> Who was bliþe in halle,
> Bot Ysonde, þe quene?
> Hou so it schuld bifalle,
> Þai playden ai bitvene,
> Þo tvo;
> So long of loue þai mene,
> Þat Mark seiȝe, it was so. (2432–2442)

The pace of the Middle English poem is often rushed, but in this instance the rapid movement from security back to danger echoes the passage from Beroul quoted above, as well as a similar passage in Thomas (1993–1997). Here as elsewhere, the focus is on the periods of separation and strife rather than on the intervals of peace that the lovers occasionally enjoy.

The actual action in both the *Folie* texts is very simple, and involves a move from public to private space. This movement is postponed, in each case, by Isolt's inability to recognize Tristan. Phyllis Gaffney observes that in several other "so-called *retours* narratives," accounts of Tristan's periodic returns to Mark's court to meet with Isolt, the queen is portrayed as quick to see through his disguise (as in Thomas) or interpret his secret signals (as in Marie de France's *Chievrefoil*), whereas in the *Folie* texts the whole episode is structured around her failure to recognize him.[29] Here Tristan arrives at court, disguised as a fool, where he speaks to the king in front of his wife and courtiers, recounting episodes from his past which no one believes, and which provoke the king either to anger (in the *Folie de Berne*) or mirth (in the *Folie d'Oxford*). In either case, the king, having heard enough, decides to depart on the hunt, the queen retreats to

29. Gaffney, "Iseut la (Dumb) Blonde: The Portrayal of the Queen in the *Folies Tristan*," 403. The incident narrated in the *Folie* texts is similar to one in Eilhart's poem, and is also incorporated into the Prose Tristan, but in both of these the queen is quicker to see through his disguise (Gaffney, 404).

her chamber, and the hall empties, leaving the fool to sit by himself. Brangain is sent out by the queen to speak to the fool, and brings him into the queen's chamber, where he has some difficulty convincing Isolt of his true identity, but is finally successful. Both poems end with the couple going to bed. The whole story thus centres on a successful attempt by Tristan to regain, if only for an afternoon, his once–privileged access to Isolt's chamber. Gaffney points out that the "dramatic intensity" of the *Folies* depends in large part upon the fact that Isolt as well as Mark is fooled by Tristan's disguise.[30] Deceit functions in these texts on several levels. In the *Folie d'Oxford*, Tristan comments on how lovers must use trickery to overcome the restrictions placed upon them:

> …amans ki sunt destraiz
> purpensent de mainte veidise,
> d'engin, d'art, de cuintise
> dum il purunt entre assembler,
> parler, envaiser e juer… . (734–738)
>
> …lovers who are oppressed
> plan many tricks,
> cunning, artifice, scheming
> so that they can come together,
> to talk, to amuse themselves and to play… .

Amidst the specific anecdotes which Tristan relates, this digression has a more general descriptive quality. Tricks and cunning are indeed a main focus of all versions of the story, though they are employed not only by the lovers but also by their enemies. In this case, Tristan is recalling an incident when the couple engineered an opportunity for privacy by taking advantage

30. Gaffney, 408.

of the practice of bleeding, typically an occasion for retreating into restful private space.[31] Once again, they were dependent on both their own wits and Tristan's right of access to the royal bedchamber.

Meriadok, Cariado and the Dwarf

Of the courtiers close to Mark who present a threat to the lovers, three stand out as more or less independent individuals. These are the steward Meriadok, the evil dwarf, and the rival Cariado. Of these three, only the dwarf figures in Beroul's text as it now stands. Thomas's text alludes briefly to the dwarf, preserves an extensive episode involving Cariado, and must originally have also contained a character named something like Meriadok, probably a steward, who was responsible for revealing the love of Tristan and Isolt to Mark for the first time.[32] *Sir Tristrem* contains all three characters: Meriadok is Tristan's friend, who discovers their love and tells the king; the dwarf appears out of nowhere to perform unmotivated acts of malice; Canados is an unsuccessful rival for Isolt's love. The *Folie d'Oxford* alludes to the dwarf and the steward, but not to Cariado. Each of these figures has a relatively simple function to fulfil, and this

31. See Webb, 58. The use of this incident as a ploy by the lovers is unique to the FO; in other versions, the bleeding is arranged by Mark, as part of the dwarf's plan to catch the loves together.

32. Thomas's Meriadok may also have been in love with Isolt, but he was certainly a different person from Cariado. In the Old Norse text, these two have been collapsed into one character, or two characters with the same name: Maríadokk, who is first the king's steward, who tells on Tristan, and later (ch. 72) an earl who is in love with Isolt (but who is also identified as a steward in ch. 88). Gottfried, who didn't get to the Cariado part of the story, has a steward, Marjadoc, who does everything that the ON Maríadokk does, but who is, in addition, in love with Isolt, until he finds out about her affair with Tristan. As one scholar has pointed out (Raphael, "Why Does Brangien Denounce Kariado?" 203–204), it would make a certain amount of narrative sense for Meriadok and Cariado to be the same person. This figure would have a history of interaction with the couple, and therefore more motivation for the vindictiveness he displays when he tells Isolt of Tristan's marriage. It would also add background to Brangain's vengefulness. However, the fact that Meriadoc is usually identified as a steward, and Cariado as a count or an earl, suggests that they originated as separate characters. See also Bédier, 1.180, n. 1.

function depends crucially upon access to private space and a privileged status at the royal court.

The main function of Cariado is to tell Isolt of Tristan's marriage, which he does with malicious intent. The blend of vengeful envy and frustrated desire associated with this character makes him one of the more coherently motivated of the lovers' antagonists. Thomas stresses his high status and physical attractiveness. The Middle English poet makes him "constable," the position previously held by Tristan. In both versions, he has access to Isolt's private space. In Thomas we see him in Isolt's room, overhearing her singing.[33] Brangain, blackening his name to the king, later remarks on how much Cariado hangs around the queen, and what easy access he has to her. This ease of access is linked with danger when accompanied by amorous intent. Brangain warns the king: "entur li est pur vostre hunte" (1698; "he is around her to your shame"). And Cariado's stated intention is: "pur requere / la reïne de druerie" (850–851; "to entreat / the queen for love"). It is this that has brought him to court (861–862). The narrator of *Sir Tristrem* explains:

> Sir Canados was þan
> Constable, þe quene ful neiȝe;
> For Tristrem Ysonde wan,
> So weneþ he be ful sleiȝe,
> To make hir his leman. (3015–3019)

The position of constable previously belonged to the exiled Tristan, and it was this position that allowed him access to the queen. Apparently Canados, seeking to replace Tristan in the queen's affections, has taken the first step of assuming Tristan's former function at court. As in Thomas's

33. In the ME poem, Isolt is apparently not in her chamber at this point, because she retreats to it *after* her altercation with Canados.

text, he attempts to better his own position by revealing his rival's infidelity, but succeeds only in angering Isolt. Cariado is a *losengier* in both senses of the word, attempting to win Isolt with flattery (Thomas 1701), and slandering Tristan and Kaherdin by claiming that they fled like cowards before him.[34] Isolt also condemns Cariado's account of Tristan's marriage as slander, though, like the barons' account of her infidelity, it is no more than the truth. Having encountered no success with Isolt, Cariado is definitively foiled by Brangain, who takes advantage of her own access to the king to have him banished from court.

Like Cariado, Meriadok has one main function in the narrative. His motivation, however, is less clear than Cariado's. In the *Folie d'Oxford*, Tristan alludes to the seneschal who "fu li premer ki al rei / nus encusat, si cum je crei" (725–726; "was the first who before the king / accused us, as I believe"). The seneschal, elsewhere identified by name as Meriadok, has the dubious honour of being the first to tell Mark the truth that will subsequently be so difficult to prove. He engages in some detective work, tracking Tristan by his footprints in the snow as he goes to meet Isolt (FO 719–722; ME 1937–1952), and finding the broken board or fence paling (ME 1953; ON ch. 51) through which Tristan has passed, with a telltale piece of Tristan's garment snagged on it (ME 1955–1957).[35] But he is not motivated to follow Tristan out of malice. He is Tristan's roommate and bedfellow, and he discovers the adultery accidentally because of this domestic situation. The Middle English Meriadok "was a man, / Þat Tristrem

34. This is narrated in the ON text, ch. 88, and presumably occurred in Thomas's original.

35. This section of Thomas's text is missing, but it is fairly clear from *Tristrams saga* and Gottfried what it would have contained.

trowed ay" (1926–1927).[36] The day after seeing Tristan with the queen, he reports his discovery to the king, and promptly suggests a scheme to ascertain Isolt's guilt. The passage concerning this first discovery of the lovers is somewhat more coherent in the Old Norse text, which generally can be relied upon to transmit the narrative fully.[37] Here Meriadok wakes from a foreboding dream of a boar attacking the king to find Tristan gone from the bed that they share. He follows Tristan's footprints in the snow, thinking that his friend has gone to meet one of the queen's attendants, and eventually overhears Tristan and Isolt talking, but does not know what to do. In the end, he goes back to bed and says nothing to Tristan. The subsequent ploys to test Isolt do not come so clearly from the steward, and indeed it is not absolutely clear when he reveals what he knows to the king. The narrator merely remarks that this was the first time their love was discovered, and that eventually Markis was told by "öfundarmenn ok óvinir Tristrams" ("Tristram's enviers and enemies").[38] In any case, Meriadok's role as the first to discover the love affair is made possible by the fact that he shares Tristan's chamber.

The potential to make Meriadok a sympathetic character is obvious. He begins as Tristan's trusted friend, and is not prompted to uncover the lovers' secret by any malice of his own. His dream, evidently part of Thomas's version, clearly prefigures the adultery, portraying it

36. This characterization evidently formed part of Thomas's version, because even the relatively terse *Tristrams saga* insists on the trust and comradeship between the two men (ch. 51).

37. When it comes to Thomas's long interior monologues and psychomachias, Brother Robert has drastically trimmed the original, but not in the straightforward narration of events. This passage might, of course, have contained more details of Meriadoc's thoughts in Thomas's original, especially if Thomas's Meriadoc was actually in love with Isolt (Thomas seems mainly interested in expatiating on the psychological effects of love).

38. *Saga af Tristram ok Ísönd*, p. 111, ch. 51. Schach's translation. As Bédier points out (1:181, n. 1), this version of events makes Meriadok redundant.

as an injury to the king. Even when he has discovered the secret, he hesitates before revealing it to the king. Exactly what Thomas made of all this is hard to guess.[39] Gottfried, who includes the dream, exploits the ambiguity here, making a compelling character of Marjadoc; but even he does not keep him sympathetic for long, quickly bringing him into association with the villainous dwarf and making his desire for Isolt fuel his vengeful rage.[40] The author of *Sir Tristrem* has removed everything that could make Meriadok sympathetic. The character has no interiority here, and no account is given of his feelings at seeing Tristan with Isolt; but then, this author does not have time for very many accounts of people's feelings. The only indication of Meriadok's interiority is given later, before he plays a role elsewhere universally assigned to the dwarf. During the three years that Tristan and Isolt carry on their affair in peace in the Middle English poem, the steward is always on the lookout, with specifically malicious intent: "Meriadok wiþ ille /Waited hem ful neiȝe" (2174–2175).[41] The potentially sympathetic figure of Meriadok seems bound to turn into a malicious character once his allegiance to the forces that oppose the lovers has been settled.

The dwarf is a more complex character, in that he has more roles to play in the narrative. There are four episodes which, if illustrated, would likely contain the figure of the dwarf. One of these occurs only in Beroul, and is somewhat extraneous to the story of the lovers: this is the dwarf's eventual demise as a result of his betrayal of the king's bizarre secret. In general, Beroul

39. This is essentially Bédier's judgement on the issue (1:180, n. 1)

40. Gottfried, *Tristan*, 219–229.

41. One of the statues that Tristan commissions from Beliagog shows "Meriadok ful of þouȝt" (2844), which seems ironic, since we have never got to hear much about Meriadok's thoughts.

seems to make more use of the dwarf than the other authors, giving him a name (Frocin) and recounting his downfall.[42] The other three episodes involving the dwarf occur in different forms in multiple texts: the tryst beneath the tree; the flour on the floor; and the final discovery precipitating the exile of Tristan.[43] In all of these the dwarf is depicted as simply and motivelessly out to get the lovers.

The episode in which Mark hides in a tree at the dwarf's suggestion is recounted by Beroul, the Middle English poem, the *Folie d'Oxford* and the Old Norse text, and obviously formed part of Thomas's original. In the *Folie d'Oxford* the incident is alluded to simply, with the dwarf on the watch and eager to report to the king. When Tristan carves telltale wood chips into a fountain beneath Isolt's window, "Li neims sempres s'en aparceut, / al rei Markes cunter le curut" (795–796; "The dwarf immediately saw it, / and ran to tell King Mark about it"). The Middle English version has Meriadok come up with the plan of spying on the lovers, and the dwarf suddenly appear in the tree, as the plot is being carried out.[44] Unlike Meriadok, who is presented more or less neutrally, the dwarf is here characterized as villainous in action and intent. We are told: "His falsnesse for to fille / Forþ þo went he" (2069–2070). He comes to Tristan with

42. Gottfried calls the dwarf Melot; Bédier thinks perhaps Thomas did too (2:246).

43. The relationship of Meriadok to the dwarf is somewhat involved. The Thomas fragments refer to a dwarf, but only in relation to the king. The Old Norse text has both the dwarf and Maríadokk, but there is no connection between them; the plan of sitting in the tree to catch the lovers, and the plan of sprinkling flour on the floor, both come from the dwarf. In *Sir Tristrem*, the plan involving the tree is Meriadok's, but the dwarf suddenly appears to execute it; the plan of the flour on the floor is Meriadok's too, and he executes it. In Beroul and the *Folie d'Oxford*, both plans are made and executed by the dwarf alone. Beroul's text has no Meriadok, but is missing the section in which he would appear; the *Folie d'Oxford* mentions a seneschal, but does not connect him with these plans. In Gottfried, the dwarf works for Marjadoc, who wants him to get proof of the affair to tell the king. It seems likely that this was also the case in Thomas; see Bédier, 1:191, n. 3.

44. In fact, the ME poem makes it seem as though Meriadok and the dwarf might be the same person.

a message: “Mi leuedy me sent þe tille, / For icham priue” (2073–2074). He claims to be “priue,” that is, in Isolt’s counsel, or simply discreet. His message is that she should meet Tristan, because Mark is out of the country, therefore “Priue it schal be diȝt!” (2079). He thus presents himself as a potential go-between, and even though Tristan fails to be taken in and does not reveal any incriminating information, the dwarf is still able to predict accurately for Mark when and where the lovers will meet.

The extant fragment of Beroul’s poem opens with this meeting. Alain Corbellari argues in a brief comparative study that Beroul exploits the potential of this situation more fully than most of his contemporaries or successors, even given the abrupt way that his mutilated text now opens.[45] Mark is hidden in the tree, where he witnesses the conversation staged for his benefit by the lovers. Convinced of their innocence, he blames the one who made him believe otherwise: “Molt het le nain de Tintaguel” (264; “He greatly hated the dwarf of Tintagel”). He displays a combination of sorrow and anger, the latter directed towards the barons who made him believe a “slander” and the dwarf who convinced him to test his wife. He makes up his mind to punish the dwarf, who has disgraced him by causing him to spy on the queen. “Il ne me pout plus ahonter” (268; “He could not shame me more”), he declares. Presumably Frocin had been introduced earlier in Beroul’s text, but as it stands our first description of him comes when Mark is hunting him down and the dwarf foresees the danger. “Oiez du nain boçu Frocin” (320; “Hear about the hunchbacked dwarf Frocin”), says the narrator, and goes on to describe how he gazes at the stars, using his knowledge of astrology to perceive the king’s anger. He has already been

45. Corbellari, “Le rendez-vous épié de Tristan et Iseut,” 231.

presented as a conventionally unappealing character, a hunchbacked dwarf, and his occult knowledge is put to no good use. Nor is Beroul's narrator content to leave the dwarf's moral character open to question. Frocin is "plains de voisdie" (327; "full of guile"). When he perceives from the stars that the king seeks his death, his reaction is one of rage: "De mautalent rogist et enfle" (332; "With anger he flushed and swelled"). But he also fears for his life, and flees before the king's wrath. We are shown Frocin acting on his own initiative, rather than simply serving as the pawn of an evil master, as is the case in a number of other texts involving malign dwarfs.[46] But his reason for pursuing this particular course is no more specific than a general inclination towards evil.

Beroul's Mark, unable to find Frocin to punish him, tells his wife about the dwarf's role, revealing the plot and proclaiming Frocin's villainy (470–473). Later, however, when the barons suggest calling on the dwarf for help, Mark seems to forget his anger.[47] This is necessary so that another episode can be added which in some respects doubles the previous one, only this time with a different outcome. As Illingworth points out, it is necessary for Beroul to present Mark as "vacillating … and credulous beyond the point of belief" in order to exploit one of his favourite themes, duplicating episodes in which the lovers attempt to evade detection.[48] The barons suggest seeking the dwarf's advice because "il set de maint latin" (636; "he has much learning"). When he arrives, one of the barons shows his allegiance to the dwarf by embracing him (641). The

46. Houdeville-Augier, "Pourquoi tuer Frocin?" 170.

47. Why the barons need to do this, when it has been easy enough for them to see Tristan and Isolt together, is not clear.

48. Illingworth, 14.

narrator curses him, presenting his actions to his hearers' attention as "traïson / Et confaite seducion" (643–644; "treason / And planned betrayal"). The dwarf is in the chamber at night (701), where he is observed by Tristan, and when the king leaves at midnight, Frocin accompanies him (722–724). He sees that the lovers are together: "A la lune / Bien vit josté erent ensenble / Li dui amant" (736–738; "By the moon / He sees clearly that they are together / The two lovers"). Norris J. Lacy translates "A la lune" here as "By the moonlight,"[49] suggesting that Frocin looks through a window and literally sees Tristan and Isolt by the light of the moon. An alternative reading would have Frocin using his astrological skill to perceive from the moon that all is going according to his plan, which would explain why Mark cannot see what is happening at this point.[50] Instead, the dwarf returns to the chamber with the king, carrying a candle (758). Spearing discusses this scene as an instance of voyeurism:

> Beroul, with the partisanship that pervades his telling of the story, encourages us to hate and despise the dwarf; but in this scene Frocin's is the only consciousness opened towards us, and it is inevitable that we should at least temporarily share this contemptible figure's point of view and participate in his voyeuristic pleasure.[51]

However, even if Frocin is peering through a window in this passage, what he sees is not described. Nor is his consciousness "opened" to the reader; rather, his reaction is described with an external sign: "De joie en trenble" (738; "He trembles with joy"). It is by no means inevitable that the audience should share any sense of voyeurism. We are not even given anything to take

49. Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ed. and trans. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1989), 37.

50. This supernatural explanation is assumed by Mermier.

51. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet As Voyeur*, 58.

pleasure *in*. The narrative emphasis in this episode is not on what takes place within the king's bed, but on everything else: the dwarf's plot and Tristan's attempt to evade it; the flour on the floor and the blood on the sheets; the actions of people entering and leaving the chamber, sneaking about and jumping from bed to bed. The scene thus encapsulates an aspect of the larger narrative, in and beyond Beroul's telling of it, in that attention is drawn away from the lovers' bliss and towards everything that threatens it.

In the *Folie d'Oxford*, after reminding Isolt of the seneschal who was their enemy, Tristan mentions the dwarf "de pute orine" (741; "of low birth").[52] His constant presence is emphasized; he was around them night and day, Tristan recalls, with the express purpose of spying on them. He was apparently motivated by envy or by simple malice: "Il n'amad pas mun deduit" (729; "He did not like my pleasure") says Tristan. When the lovers attempted to secure privacy by having themselves bled together, the dwarf scattered flour between the beds, "kar par tant quidat saver / l'amur de nus si ço fust veir" (743–744; "because he thought by that to know / if it was true about our love"). Tristan was able to outwit this precaution, only to be caught through the interpretation of another telltale sign: the blood in both beds, seen and correctly interpreted by the king (751–754).

The only mention of the dwarf in the surviving fragments of Thomas is in the scene of discovery in the garden. The dwarf has brought the king there to see the two of them together (4); the king tells him to wait while he goes to fetch witnesses (9–13), but he then loses the

52. The two episodes of the tryst beneath the tree and the flour on the floor are reversed in this poem, one of the few instances in which Tristan does not relate incidents in the order they occur in other texts.

opportunity when Tristan wakes. To judge by the Old Norse text, the dwarf played a role earlier in Thomas's original, but did not appear again after this scene, except as a statue, being trampled under Isolt's feet in the hall of images that Tristan commissions (ch. 80). The Middle English text also contains the scene of discovery in the garden. As in Thomas, the dwarf reports to the king that he has seen Tristan and Isolt sneaking off to their "play" (2578). Here the lovers are meeting in the paradoxically open and enclosed space of the garden, and the dwarf's action in observing and reporting them remains covert, so that they are not aware that they have been detected. Bédier suggests that Thomas deliberately removed allusions to the dwarf's supernatural role, substituting his prosaic observation of Tristan carving wood chips into the fountain for references to his astrological knowledge.[53] Frocin's access to the occult may make him a more redoubtable and interesting enemy, but the dwarf's basic role remains the same whether he has magical knowledge or not. He is principally concerned, in each of the episodes where he features, with spying out the lovers' activities and revealing them to the king.

The extant fragments of Thomas offer no commentary on the dwarf's character or his motivation. *Sir Tristrem* has only one comment, that when the dwarf goes about his plan, it is to accomplish his "falsnesse" (2069). The *Folie d'Oxford*'s Tristan suggests that the dwarf was personally hostile to him because of his success with the queen. Beroul's narrator remarks repeatedly on the dwarf's treachery and evil, but without explaining his motivation further than showing that he does evil because he is evil. Even when the dwarf's actions appear relatively

53. Bédier, 1:197. This is obviously related to Bédier's thesis that Beroul's *version commune* preserves more "primitive" elements of the story.

mundane (e.g. buying flour; 673–678) we are told that they are done with evil intent. The narrator's opinion is echoed by that of the general public in the poem, who are consistently shown to be on the lovers' side, and to hate Frocin. The people who lament the capture of Tristan and Isolt naturally curse the evil dwarf (840–843). The barons who have been the dwarf's allies eventually turn on him, and his death at the king's hands pleases all those who hate him for what he did to Tristan and Isolt (1348–1350).

Quite apart from his more sinister abilities, Frocin possesses practical insight into people's behaviour, which leads him to formulate the plot to catch Tristan and Isolt together; he knows that Tristan will not be content to leave court without seeking a last rendezvous with the queen. More than a confidant to the king, he is shown to have exaggerated power over Mark, convincing him to spy on his wife, worming his way back into a position of trust after the king has sworn his death, and, we finally learn, not only possessor of his most closely-guarded secret but the actual cause of this bizarre source of shame.[54] The barons ask him about his closeness with the king: "Un jor le mistrent a raison / Que ce devoit que tant parloient, / Il et li rois, et conselloient" (1312–1314; "One day they took him to task / About why they talked so much, / He and the king, and took counsel together"). He claims that the king has always found him faithful "A celer bien un suen consel" (1315; "In concealing well a secret of his"). Although the subsequent story of the king's secret and Frocin's method of revealing it, drawn as it is from the Midas legend, seems curiously at odds with the rest of the story,[55] it is in keeping with the role

54. See Houdeville-Augier, 171.

55. Particularly since, as has been noted by others, Mark's horses' ears are never mentioned before or after.

that Frocin has played as the king's indispensable and sinisterly controlling counsellor. In each of their iterations across these related texts, Cariado, Meriadok and the dwarf intervene to oppose the lovers in specific episodes, all of which turn on the characters' access to private space. A more generalized, and in some ways more complex threat is presented by the next category of antagonists.

The Barons

In Thomas, Mark runs to fetch his barons when the dwarf brings him to where Tristan and Isolt lie together in the garden. "Verront com les avon trovez" he says, "ardoir les frai, quant ier provez" (12–13; "They will see how I found them, / I will have them burnt, when it is proven"). It is necessary for him to show the barons before he can act, before he can consider the adultery proven. This is the only place in the surviving fragments of Thomas where the barons are specifically mentioned. Later, there is a general sense of envious forces aligned against the lovers. Isolt has not heard any good news of Tristan, when they are separated, because "ço est costume d'envie / del mal dire, e del bien mie" (807–808; "that is the custom of envy / to tell the evil, and nothing of the good"). In *Sir Tristrem*, it is the envy of the barons that precipitates Mark's marriage in the first place. Determined "To fel Tristremes pride" (1345) they convince the king to wed, so that his nephew may not succeed him on the throne. Again, there is a general sense of a court arrayed against the hero, and, later, the adulterous lovers. When Isolt goes to her trial, although it was specifically Meriadok who was behind the scheme to catch her and Tristan

together, the narrator remarks, "Men sayd, sche brak þe lay" (2227). In the tournament towards the end, when Tristan and Ganhardin defeat everyone, "Þe wraiers, þat weren in halle, / Schamly were þai schende" (3288–3289).

Mark's barons are a major force in Beroul. Their function is consistent: they seek to expel Tristan from the king's court. In this they appear from one point of view to act as loyal vassals of Mark, attempting to open his eyes to his wife's adultery. In fact, however, they are shown persecuting him, threatening rebellion and disloyalty if he does not obey their demands and get rid of Tristan. And, like the dwarf, they are repeatedly cursed and branded traitors, not only by the general public of the story, but also by the narrator.[56] They are first mentioned, in the surviving text, as hating Tristan in spite of the fact that he fought the Morholt for their sakes (26–30). Tristan professes the wish that Mark had not believed the "losengier" (119), the "fel covert Coneualeis" (121; "treacherous, sly Cornishmen") who urged the king to banish him. This credulity does harm to the king, Tristan declares (143–144). All this is said for Mark's benefit, as the lovers stage their scene of slandered innocence for the king whom they know to be eavesdropping. Just as they plan, when the king comes down from the tree, "En son cuer dit or croit sa feme / Et mescroit les barons du reigne" (287–288; "In his heart he said that he now believed his wife / And disbelieved the barons of his realm") because these latter have clearly made him believe something which is not true. In spite of further proofs produced in the course of the story, Mark will return to this conviction that the barons are lying to him, and it is

56. Note that this partiality on the part of the narrator is not unique to Beroul. Chrétien, for example, execrates Meleagant, and the traitors in *Cligès,* in similarly vehement terms.

reinforced by other characters. “Ne dois croire parole fause” (4145; “You must not believe false speech”), King Arthur tells him when he comes to witness Isolt’s oath, denouncing the men who have called for this “outrage” (4142).

The three named barons who feature prominently in Beroul’s narrative, Godoine, Ganelon and Denoalen, are first introduced with the remark that “Ainz ne veïstes plus felons” (582; “You never saw [anyone] more villainous”). They have made a compact among themselves to the effect that if Mark does not exile his nephew from the country, they will retreat to their castles and make war upon their king (583–588). The reason for their anger is that they have witnessed the undermining of Mark’s honour by Tristan, many times over:

> Qar, en un gardin, soz une ente,
> Virent l’autrier Yseut la gente
> Ovoc Tristran en tel endroit
> Que nus hon consentir ne doit;
> Et plusors foiz les ont veüz
> El lit roi Marc gesir toz nus;
> Quar, quant li rois en vet el bois,
> Et Tristran dit: “Sire, g’en vois,”
> Puis se remaint, entre en la chanbre,
> Iluec grant piece sont ensenble. (589–598)
>
> Because, in a garden, under a grafted tree,
> They saw the noble Isolt the other day
> With Tristan in such a place
> As no man should consent to;
> And many times they had seen them
> In King Mark’s bed lying quite naked;
> For, when the king went to the woods,
> And Tristan said: “My lord, I am going there,”
> Then he stayed, entered in the chamber,
> And there they were together a long while.

The lovers have been seen together not only in the outdoor (and enclosed) space of the garden, but within the king's chamber. The barons clearly have the freedom of the chamber which was denied to Tristan at the beginning of the extant fragment. This gives them knowledge of the illicit affair that takes place principally in that space. They decide to tell the king what they know, taking him aside ("A une part"; 605) to tell him that the love between Tristan and Isolt is obvious to all, and that they refuse to tolerate it (607–609). They know that the king is aware of the adultery, and thus consents to it. They threaten their lord with rebellion and abandonment—they will get others to leave the court as well, they say—if he does not exile Tristan. Then they advise calling in the dwarf again. They are present to see the outcome of the dwarf's plot with the flour; indeed, they are credited with having "porpensee priveement" (743; "secretly plotted") this treason, since it was their idea to employ the dwarf. At the climax of this plot, they have access to the king's chamber again, this time in the king's presence (771–774). The people who are sympathetic to Tristan and Isolt (apparently everyone other than Mark's closest advisors) lament that "cil gloton" have committed such treachery against them (835–836). Later, when the barons ask Mark to subject his queen to a public trial to demonstrate her innocence, they tell the king to broach the subject with Isolt "Priveement, a ton couchier" (3052; "Privately, at your retiring to bed"), thus intruding their influence, though not their persons, into the royal bedchamber. Although the barons are often shown as Mark's close companions, he acts under duress when he follows their dictates, and expresses his anger with them (e.g. 287–288; 3185–3190). They are held in check to a degree by their fear of Tristan (1121–1122; 3095), and the

king is able to reproach them with their unwillingness to face his nephew in combat (3128).

Although Mark makes a special effort after Isolt's oath to show his love for his wife, the three traitors remain eager for further treachery (4272). A spy comes to tell them that he knows how to spot Tristan and Isolt together. When the king goes out, he tells them, Tristan will come to the chamber to say farewell (4285–4287).[57] Then he describes the spot where they should wait to spy on Tristan and Isolt. Spearing comments perceptively that the subsequent scene, which places readers in the position "of peering with a concealed watcher through a gap in an enclosure," has a rather cinematic effect.[58] Godoine reaches the "petit pertus" (4314; "little opening") that looks into the queen's chamber, pokes the curtain out of the way with a stick, as instructed, and we look, with him, into the chamber: "Tot vit quant que dedenz avoit" (4415; "He sees everything which is inside"). A scene of spying into private domestic space is carefully stage-managed, but it is never clear here whether what Godoine would have seen through that window would constitute proof of Tristan and Isolt's guilt or not. Tony Hunt points out that although Beroul's narrative provides many examples of ambiguous statements intended to deceive, his characters tend not to lie outright. To see the lovers here as still engaged in adultery would be to take Isolt's statement to the contrary (2329–2330) to be a lie. This would be to assume, with the barons, "that since the lovers' continued meetings are clandestine, the lovers

57. The spy gives such an exact description of where to wait, how Tristan will appear—wearing his sword, holding a bow in one hand and two arrows in the other—and the time of day when this will take place, that it rather smacks of prophecy, such as the dwarf was capable of earlier (4289–4294). But in answer to the question of how he knows this, the spy only replies that he has seen Tristan that morning.

58. Spearing, 64–65. This is more convincing than Spearing's comments on Frocin's voyeurism; here the scene is described as Godoine sees it, whereas in the earlier passage there was no such description.

must be guilty. The counter-argument would be that the clandestine nature of the meetings results from the lovers' continued persecution."[59] Certainly the episode plays out very differently from similar instances of spying alluded to earlier in the narrative. Previously the barons were able, "plusors foiz" (593) and apparently with ease, to observe Tristan and Isolt naked in the king's bed. Now, after elaborate preliminaries, Godoine peers in the crack in the wall, and sees the entirety of the rush-strewn chamber beyond, but no man is present except the harmless squire Perinis (4414–4416). Tristan enters, with bow and arrows, as predicted. But Isolt sees the shadow of Godoine's head on the curtain, and manages to communicate the danger to Tristan without alerting the watcher, who is killed, appropriately, by an arrow in the eye. Perhaps it is because the potion has worn off and the pair is no longer blinded by love that Isolt and Tristan are finally able to destroy their adversaries rather than merely trick them. At any rate, with this triumph Beroul's fragmentary narrative breaks off.

The barons have access to private space, and eventually have recourse to spying, but the activity for which they are most chastised in the text is telling lies. In fact, of course, their "slander" is no more than the truth about Tristan and Isolt's adultery, which gives the persistent condemnation of them a peculiar effect. Beroul's narrator refers to them with loaded terms and inserts curses frequently.[60] The other characters are made to recognize and comment on the barons' treachery, in terms similar to those used by the narrator. Although the professed reason

59. Hunt and Bromiley, 116. Grimbert, on the other hand, assumes that the lovers are still carrying on their affair at this point ("Introduction," xx–xxi).

60. E.g. "li troi felon" (741; "the three traitors"); "Un de ces trois (que Dex maudie!)" (1657; "One of these three (God curse them!)"); "Oiez des trois, que Dex maudie" (3028; "Hear of the three, God curse them"); "li troi felon / Sont a esgart de traïson" (4271–4272; "the three traitors / were on the lookout for treachery").

for their action is outrage in the face of Mark's shame, the barons are also said to hate Tristan "Por sa prooise, et la roïne" (774; "For his prowess, and the queen").[61] They are also shown to be personally terrified of Tristan. The stance taken by Beroul's narrator is notorious, and various critical explanations for it have been offered. His sympathy for the lovers, often expressed through condemnation of their enemies, seems out of proportion to their deserts. Are we meant to take all his narratorial asides seriously? If we do, Beroul as a poet seems to emerge as either very stupid, or morally suspect, and neither of these alternatives will do. E. Jane Burns sees in the poem a triumph of adultery and "deceitful speech," a "radical redefinition of the social contract in which sexual and linguistic deviance surface as the new norm."[62] This is too resounding and unlikely a claim to make for a fragmentary text, and it ignores the extent to which the poem does identify Tristan and Isolt's behaviour as sin. R. Howard Bloch, by contrast, describes Beroul's text as the inauguration of "subjective conscience," a pivotal point in the movement from shame to guilt culture being reached in the scene of discovery in the forest, when Mark eschews vengeance and pardons the lovers.[63] That is, Bloch finds in the poem a refinement of morality appropriate to the Middle Ages, while Burns sees a rejection of that morality. Brian Blakey has attempted to show that Beroul dealt in a system of truth and falsehood whereby the literal words of an oath carried almost magical value, and lying in anything less than an oath-taking situation was of much less import. This would effectively absolve the lovers of much of the guilt that a

61. As Lacy points out, in its context this line could mean either that they hate Tristan because of his prowess and because of his relationship with the queen, or that they hate both Tristan and the queen. "Both are defensible, grammatically and thematically" (223, n. 774).

62. Burns, "How Lovers Lie Together: Infidelity and Fictive Discourse in the *Roman de Tristan*," 91–92.

63. Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, 238–247.

modern audience (and, by this reckoning, only a modern audience) would ascribe to them, and in turn release Beroul from charges of cynicism or naïveté.[64] Lacy contends that "in this text the identity of fact and truth has been undone, with the result that truth is established as a contingent category. Only the lovers' enemies equate or conflate fact and truth, and the narrator's unequivocal condemnation of those characters effectively invalidates that equation."[65] But *is* that invalidation really so effective? Another way of looking at the situation is summarized by William Calin:

> perhaps the lovers are guiltless in intent if not in act, since their passion is the result of the love potion drunk on board ship. They do not wish King Mark harm; indeed they are concerned about his reputation. Conversely, the accusers act from the basest of motives. They do not love Mark or serve him well.[66]

This accords well with what the lovers tell the hermit Ogrin, in explanation of their inability to repent: "Que ele m'aime en bone foi," says Tristan, "Vos n'entendez pas la raison: / Q'ele m'aime, c'est par la poison" (1382–1384; "That she loves me in good faith, / You do not understand the reason: / That she loves me, is because of the potion"). Calin himself prefers to emphasize the "shock component" of Beroul's version of the story, his massive and wholehearted allegiance to the idea of love as an irresistible, undeniable good.[67] Hunt offers a less radical assessment: "Beroul looks at human behaviour from the outside, giving due weight to circumstances, and assessing the moral position of the lovers in a situation where deception is

64. Blakey, "Truth and Falsehood in the *Tristran* of Béroul."

65. Lacy, "Where the Truth Lies," 4.

66. Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*, 43.

67. Calin, 43–44.

their only weapon against injustice. The conflict is essentially an external one, to which Mark holds the key."[68] Beroul tells a story in which magic is real, and characters must deal with its consequences. The potion, while it is in force, may absolve the lovers of moral responsibility for their adultery, but the fact of that adultery threatens the stability of the court and of King Mark's rule, and the barons who see only that side of the story cannot but be presented as hateful antagonists. At the same time, in a work which lingers so often on instances of deceptive language, the narrator's own outbursts cannot necessarily be taken at face value.

Like Meleagant in *Lancelot*, the barons in Beroul's *Tristan* bring into the poem the language of sin and guilt that the narrator disingenuously keeps out. Unlike Meleagant, they have got their accusations right; they not only introduce the vocabulary of adultery, but also attach it to the couple who have actually committed adultery. In this sense, Chrétien, as usual, can be seen to build on the model presented by the Tristan story, creating a situation in which he can condemn Meleagant without the problems posed by Beroul's condemnation of the barons. Meleagant is shown by his actions to be a blackguard, and his accusation of adultery, though ironically apt, is literally false. Beroul's barons, on the other hand, have the status of villains primarily because Beroul tells us that is what they are, and their accusations, though repeatedly nullified and discredited, are quite true. But the comparison with Meleagant is suggestive. Part of the barons' function in Beroul's text is see a spade and, while the narrator stoutly lambasts them for it at every turn, call it a spade.

68. Hunt and Bromiley, 117. In an earlier article, Hunt argued convincingly that an Abelardian conception of intention as the crucial component of sin underlies the morality of Beroul's poem. (Hunt, "Abelardian Ethics and Beroul's *Tristran*.") More recently, he seems less convinced of the relevance of this approach (see "Beroul's *Tristan,*" 234).

It will be obvious by now that it is Beroul, with his different roster of episodes and his slightly different cast of characters from Thomas and his successors, who makes the most of the unsympathetic figures in the story. When we turn to the lovers' principal confidant, however, the situation is reversed. Beroul's text, in its current state, gives comparatively little attention to Brangain. Instead, it is Thomas and his successors, as well as the authors of the *Folie* texts, who more fully explore the possibilities of Brangain's role in the lovers' affair.

Brangain

Isolt's attendant Brangain is usually described with conventional epithets of beauty and youth.[69] Beroul calls her Isolt's *magistre*, a term which suggests her responsibility for Isolt and for her conduct, and appears to place her in the same category as Lunete, who is called Laudine's *mestre*.[70] Brangain's first important role is her involvement in the drinking of the love potion. There is significant variation here between texts, and neither Beroul's nor Thomas's account is extant. This section of Beroul's poem is completely absent, and the Carlisle fragment of Thomas picks up shortly after the potion has been drunk. Of the other texts, *Tristrams saga*, the *Folie d'Oxford*, Gottfried and even Eilhart all have the potion given to Tristan and Isolt by an

69. Neither Beroul's nor Thomas's introduction of Brangain survives, and nowhere is she given a full description. Thomas calls her "la franche Brengven (1374) and "Brengien la bele meschine" (1234); the FB, "demoisele Brangain" (170); the FO, "Franche Brenguain" (612), "vostre meschine" (692; Tristan to Isolt), "bele sor" (549; Isolt), "ma bele amie" (592; Isolt); the ME poem, "þat trewe may" (1793; Isolt), "Brengwain, þe briȝt" (1647, 1691), "Brengwain fair and gode" (2985), "þat leuedi … / Brengwain briȝt and fre" (2998–3000; Ganhardin).

70. Lacy translates the word here as "mistress," and notes, "Brangain is both Iseut's servant and her advisor and confidant" (220, n. 345). Governal is likewise called Tristan's master, although he clearly functions as his servant.

otherwise anonymous servant.[71] Brangain may still be made to bear a degree of responsibility in these texts, as it was to her that Queen Isolt entrusted the potion, and she may be chastised for her poor guarding of it. But in *Sir Tristrem* and the *Folie de Berne*, Brangain herself is the one who gives the drink to the lovers.[72] In the *Folie de Berne* in particular, this is made a major point, and a theme of Tristan's reproaches to Brangain.[73]

In Beroul, Isolt alludes to the circumstances of the potion's consumption when its effects have worn off and she laments her state in the forest. She ascribes responsibility to Brangain: "Ce fist Brengain, qu'i dut garder: / Lasse! Si male garde en fist!" (2207–2208; "Brangain did this, who should have guarded it: / Alas! Such a bad watch she kept on it!"). But a few lines later she says:

> Amis Tristran, en grant error
> Nos mist qui le boivre d'amor
> Nost aporta ensenble a boivre,
> Mex ne nos pout il pas deçoivre. (2217–2220)
>
> Friend Tristan, in great error
> He plunged us who brought us
> The love drink to drink together,
> He could not have deceived us more.

In this last line, Lacy's edition substitutes "el" for the "il" of the manuscript, basing this

71. This is almost certainly what happened in Thomas's poem, too; only the ME version casts any doubt on this, but its testimony should perhaps be taken to indicate that on this point its author was influenced by another version of the story than Thomas's.

72. The Prose Tristan has Brangain and Governal collaborate in this error, while Malory makes the lovers themselves entirely responsible for the mistake.

73. For a comparison of different versions see Bédier, 2:234.

emendation on the assumption that it is Brangain who brought them the potion.[74] This is certainly possible. However, considering the testimony of other versions of the story, and of the rest of Beroul's surviving text, it is by no means certain that Brangain is intended as the antecedent of the pronoun in that line.[75] Brangain is held responsible here, however, even if the actual bringer of the potion was male, because the potion was hers to guard, and she did so poorly.

In the *Folie de Berne*, the potion episode is alluded to three times, with increasing clarity. First Tristan, in his fool's disguise, tells the king: "Rois Marc, demoisele Brangain / traist, je t'afi enz en ta main, / del boivre don dona Tristan" (170–173; "King Mark, the maiden Brangain / committed a betrayal, I swear to you / concerning the drink which she gave Tristan"). Sylvia Huot suggests that Tristan here makes a formal accusation against Brangain.[76] In this instance she did more than simply fail to guard the potion. Later, when Brangain comes out to speak to the fool alone, he refers to the incident again, stating that Brangain behaved badly when she brought the potion to him (314–315). It is after this that Brangain herself recognizes Tristan. He refers to the potion and Brangain's role in administering it once more, this time addressing Isolt, making it clear that it was Brangain herself who brought the potion to them: "Brangien, qui ci est devant toi, / corut en haste au trosseroil; / ele mesprist estre son voil" (431–433; "Brangain, who is here before you, / ran in haste to the container; / she made a mistake against her will"). Brangain acted wrongly, but in haste and by accident. Neither Tristan nor Isolt accuses Brangain

74. Lacy, 229, n. 2220.

75. Sven Sandqvist notes that in other instances the MS has "il" for "el", and asserts that this one "désigne sûrement" Brangain. *Notes textuelles sur le "Roman de Tristan" de Béroul*, 83.

76. Huot, "A Tale Much Told: The Status of the Love Philtre in the Old French Tristan Texts," 84.

of malicious intent. She seems to have run to fetch the drink of her own accord, however, since there is no mention of either of the lovers requesting it. Huot writes of the later conversations in the *Folie de Berne*: "These private complaints have the effect of binding Brangain to the lovers by continually asserting that their guilt is also hers, and that she must save them if she is to save herself."[77] Tristan curses Brangain at the end of the passage, but with a relatively light formula: "Mar vos vi onques, damoisele!" (439; "Alas that I ever saw you, maiden!"). In the Middle English poem we are told, "Brengwain was wrong biþouȝt" (1666) when she runs to fetch the potion. This time it is Isolt who asks for a drink at sea, and it is specifically Brangain to whom the request is directed (1660–1661).

The *Folie d'Oxford* also refers to the potion at more than one point, as Tristan retells his anecdotes to different people, but in this version a male servant was responsible for serving the potion. However, the potion was entrusted to Brangain, which is what justifies Tristan's outburst: "Cel baivre, bele, mar le bui, / e je unques mar vus cunui" (657–658; "That drink, fair one, alas that I drank it, / and alas that I ever knew you"). This is quite similar to what he says to her in the *Folie de Berne*, where she *did* give the couple the potion. Her connection with the potion is still her most significant role, and it is this incident that Tristan uses to try to prove his identity to her. When this does not convince her, he persists:

> Brenguain, des puis k'amai Ysolt,
> a nul autre dire nel volt.
> Vus le soüstes e oïstes
> e vus l'uvraine cunsentistes.
> Ço ne sout nul ki fust el mund

77. Ibid.

fors nus treis de tuz çous ki sunt. (661–666)

Brangain, as long as I have loved Isolt,
I have not wanted to tell it to anyone else.
You knew it and heard
and you consented to the matter.
No one in the world knew this
except for us three of all those who are.

He implicates her in the affair which she blessed with her consent. As in the *Folie de Berne*, Tristan endeavours to bind Brangain to the lovers, to insist on her responsibility for them now, because of her responsibility for the potion then. Physically, the adultery is an act that takes place between Tristan and Isolt, but conceptually the affair is a secret shared by the three of them.

The Carlisle fragment preserves the portion of Thomas's narrative in which Tristan and Isolt take Brangain into their confidence and secure her co-operation in the affair.

A Branguain de l'amur parolent:
Tant ly promettent, tant li dïent
Que par fïance s'entrelïent,
E ele lur voleir consent.
Tuz lur bons font privëement,
E lur joië e lur deduit,
Quant il pöent e jur e nuit. (78–84)

To Brangain they talked of their love:
They promised her so much, they said so much
That they joined her to themselves by oath,
And she consented to their will.
All their pleasures they had privately,
And their joy and their merriment,
When they could both day and night.

The emphasis on Brangain's consent to the adultery is similar to the *Folie d'Oxford*. Brangain's help here is juxtaposed with the statement that they enjoyed their pleasure "privately"; by

implication, her involvement helps to assure that privacy. Her knowledge of the affair is flatly stated in the Middle English poem, in a similar context:

> Tristrem in schip lay
> Wiþ Ysonde ich niȝt,
> Play miri he may
> Wiþ þat worþli wiȝt
> In boure niȝt and day.
> …
> Þat wist Brengwain, þe briȝt … (1684–1691)

Brangain's involvement is crucial again when it comes to deceiving King Mark on his wedding night. The Carlisle fragment shows Tristan and Isolt begging her to help them in their scheme. In the privacy of the chamber, the pair, "A conseil apelent Br[anguain]: / Tendrement plor[e *Ysolt e prie*] / Que cele nuit ly fac[e *aïe*]" (123–125; "They took Brangain into their counsel: / Isolt cried tenderly and begged / That that night she would give them aid).[78] Brangain is apparently convinced here by tears and pleading, rather than by bribery, although some promises may be made: "Tant enchantent [*la dameisele*] / E prïent e font s[*erement*] / Que la request lur [*consent*]" (129–131; "So much did they bewitch the maiden / And beg and swear oaths / That she consented to their request"). All three are involved in staging the deception. Tristan, present as a matter of course due to his closeness to the king, extinguishes the candles in the room. Isolt hovers nearby, worrying already that Brangain will betray them, since she may prefer the pleasure of the king's bed to loyalty to her mistress (Carlisle 140–145).

This deception is carried out successfully, but Isolt's distrust presumably lingers, and a

78. The text in square brackets was reconstructed by the editors of the fragment, which is in poor condition; the italics represent the more conjectural reconstructions.

subsequent episode relates her attempt to protect her secret by having Brangain murdered.[79] This incident is not preserved in any fragment of Thomas, but it is alluded to later by Brangain herself. It is narrated in the Middle English version, where Isolt apparently worries about Brangain's loyalty because she was bribed to participate in the wedding-night plot ("For y bihiȝt hir cloþ, / Gold and riche wedding" 1741–1742). Isolt concludes that it would be better to silence Brangain now than to live with the fear of discovery. At this point Brangain proves her loyalty sufficiently, and when that loyalty is later called into question, the power dynamic is very different. Isolt, however, does not repent of ordering the assassination of her servant until Brangain has demonstrated her loyalty with the story of the nightgowns (1793), and in fact the scruples of the hired "werkemen" are what save Brangain, not the mercy of her mistress. Brangain emphasizes this later in Thomas, when she alludes to this episode.

Brangain plays a sporadic role in subsequent episodes, as simple functionary or as wise counsellor. The Middle English poem has her abducted along with Isolt in the incident with the Irish harper. Later, the lovers benefit from her intimate knowledge of their doings and her status as Isolt's confidant (1987–1991). When Isolt naïvely falls into Mark's trap, Brangain's shrewder intelligence sees through it and proposes a way out of the difficulty (1987–1997). In the fuller Old Norse version, Brangain gives Isolt advice twice in this doubled incident (chs. 52–53). She has a slight role to play in the episode in which Meriadok spies on Tristan and Isolt, where she is seen simply arranging the practical aspects of the lovers' tryst (ON ch. 51). One of the statues that Tristan commissions from the giant Beliagog is of Brangain. The section describing the

79. There is no indication of Isolt's misgivings at this point in the ME poem.

statues in Thomas is missing, but that concerning Tristan's interaction with them is preserved. Imagining that Isolt has deserted him, Tristan turns to the statue of Brangain as to an ally and confidant, complaining to her "del change e de la trischerie / que envers moi fait Ysodt m'amie" (971–972; "of the change and of the treachery / that Isolt my mistress has committed towards me"). This is a role we never see Brangain herself play in Thomas's text. In the *Folie de Berne* and in Beroul, she is shown playing the role of ally to Tristan under circumstances of real and feigned conflict between the lovers. There, however, her power of speech (even of lying) is of primary importance. Here, the mute statue that stands in for her cannot perform the necessary function of assuring Tristan of his lady's continued love.

The only place where Brangain appears in the extant fragment of Beroul's poem is after the lovers succeed in deceiving Mark in the tryst beneath the tree. Brangain is awaiting Isolt in her room, where Isolt proceeds to tell her the story of how she averted catastrophe at the fountain. Brangain replies joyfully, interpreting the lovers' escape as a miracle which shows God's care for "ceus qui sont buen et loial" (380; "those who are good and loyal"). This is a strikingly direct assertion that the adulterers are in the right. But Brangain's certainty is echoed elsewhere in the poem. The narrator declares of the barons and the forester, "Dex les venga de toz ces quatre" (2763; "God avenged them on all four"), and Isolt again sees divine intervention when the king turns against his barons after her return to court (3203). Both of these instances occur after Tristan and Isolt have repented in the forest, however.[80] Brangain, on the other hand,

80. There is also Isolt's oath, which, as Grimbert points out, if it cannot be taken as evidence of her essential guiltlessness, suggests some kind of divine blindness to the reality of her actions. "Introduction" xx. This too happens after the lovers' repentance.

is shown happily proclaiming a miracle which protects the lovers in the midst of their sin and allows them to continue in it. To call the lovers' conduct at this point "good and loyal" is to put an extremely positive spin on it. Yet the interpretation that is put into Brangain's mouth here is one that critics have sometimes taken to be the overall judgement of Beroul's poem. Burns cites several other instances of the lovers being said, as she puts it, "to have God on their side."[81] Aside from those already mentioned, these are the narrator's statement that God "est plains de pité" (910) and does not want a sinner to die, thus allowing Tristan to miraculously escape from his captors with the famous leap from the chapel, and several other references to the same incident.[82] Suggesting that the lovers are divinely rewarded for their goodness and loyalty, as Brangain does, is a far cry from asserting, as the narrator and other characters do, that God has mercy upon sinners. Nor is Braingain held up as a model of truthfulness by Beroul's narrator. She is called on again, shortly after this scene, when the king sends her to fetch Tristan so that they can be reconciled (506–507). She protests that Tristan will not come at her request, because he hates her, blaming her for his estrangement from the king. The narrator comments immediately and strikingly on her duplicity:

> Oiez que dit la tricherresse!
> Molt fist que bone lecherresse;
> Lores gaboit a esscïent
> Et se plaignoit de mal talent. (519–522)

81. Burns, 82.

82. The narrator remarks, "Bele merci Dex li a fait!" (960); Tristan says, "ja m'a Dex fait merci" (979); Ogrin declares the incident to be an instance of God's mercy (2380–4); and Tristan's letter to Mark declares that God had mercy on the lovers when they were able to escape from the king (2583). Burns cites one more passage (3028), but this is merely a parenthetical cursing of the barons by the narrator.

> Hear what the traitress said!
> She acted very much as a good slut;
> At that time she deceived intentionally
> And complained of [Tristan's] ill will.

Illingworth interprets this as Beroul "revelling" in Brangain's deception,[83] but Hunt seems closer to the truth when he writes that the narrator "indignantly brands her a liar."[84] This aside is similar to those the narrator gives about the barons and dwarf. Nothing like it is said of Isolt herself as she talks her way duplicitously through the preceding scene. Brangain, however, does not act under the irresistible influence of the love potion, which prevents the lovers even repenting their sin. She seems to be presented here as a force for deception, both of Mark and of the lovers. Responsible to some degree for their love because of her role in administering the potion, she is here shown rejoicing at the circumstances that allow the affair to continue, and boldly lying in its defence. Immediately afterward, Tristan's affection for Brangain, arising from his gratitude for her intermediary role, is demonstrated. She meets him outside, by the wall ("a la paroi"; 529) where he has been eavesdropping on the conversation within. He embraces her (532), kisses her (547) and is led into the chamber by her (549–551). Brangain's main practical function is to bring Tristan to Isolt, which involves movement from the space outside where he was waiting, into the chamber. A similar pattern will be seen in other texts, but at different points. On a thematic rather than practical level, it would not be a stretch to see Brangain here as a figure for Tristan and Isolt's sin, which they are unable to relinquish because of the potion of which she was the bearer. If they cannot be blamed for their actions because of the potion, she has no such

83. Illingworth, 16.

84. Hunt and Bromiley, 116.

excuse. Their trust in and affection for Brangain mirrors their abandonment to the love which the potion kindled.

Brangain's role becomes complicated in a different way in those texts that contain the plot related to Tristan's brother-in-law Kaherdin. Much of this is preserved in the extant fragments of Thomas, and it is narrated in a somewhat condensed and confused form in the Middle English poem. It is completely absent from Beroul's text, which does not extend to the part of the story concerning Tristan's marriage. In *Sir Tristrem*, Ganhardin (Kaherdin) falls in love with Brangain after seeing her statue in the hall made for Tristan by the giant. Tristan, now established in his brother-in-law's good graces, promises to bring him and Brangain together, and after a furtive return to Cornwall this is eventually accomplished. In the Middle English text, Ganhardin specifically proposes to marry Brangain (3135).[85] The party remains in the forest for two nights, before they are disturbed by Canados's spy. Canados himself arrives to break up the party, and takes the queen away (3159). A crucial episode is missing after this from both poems: in the case of Thomas because that section of the text is lost; in the case of *Sir Tristrem*, because it has been elided. *Tristrams saga* fills in the gap, to explain Brangain's later motivation. Maríadokk (who is the same character at this point as Cariado) discovers the horses belonging to Tristram and Kardín, and the pages who have been left in charge of the horses flee, carrying their masters' shields and armour. Taking the pages for Tristram and Kardín, Maríadokk puts it about that the two knights fled in terror before him. An angry exchange between Maríadokk and

85. *Tristrams saga* preserves a more complex version in which Brangain fends him off for two nights with a magic pillow—the only place, other than the potion episode, where she is connected with magic (ch. 87).

Bringvet follows. She defends her lover against Maríadokk's accusations, but is personally convinced of his cowardice (chs. 88–89).

The next fragment of Thomas picks up with Brangain berating the queen. Brangain is given several long speeches here, and in the fragmentary state of Thomas's poem, this episode takes on a prominence which it would likely not have had when embedded in the complete narrative. It also brings up a number of issues of central importance to judging the morality of the love affair. Brangain's response at being abandoned by the man chosen for her by Isolt is psychologically plausible, as she moves from the present issue to all her past grievances against Isolt and Tristan. Both women engage in a lot of conspiracy-theorizing here. Brangain accuses Isolt of having dreamt up an elaborate plan to shame her, while Isolt accuses Tristan of similarly plotting against her, and professes to believe that what Brangain really wants is to elope with Kaherdin. At the same time, the language in which the bond between Brangain and Isolt is expressed is decidedly feudal, concerned with the honour and protection owed to each by the other. Both of them disclaim responsibility; Brangain says she has trusted in Isolt, who has set her up with an unworthy man, and Isolt replies that Brangain bears all the responsibility for her affair with Tristan. Exactly who is in charge in their relationship varies according to who wishes to present herself as the more sinned against.

Brangain, by her own account, has given Isolt her allegiance, and has made sacrifices for her sake: "Tut mun païs pur vus guerpi, / e pus, pur vostre fol curage, / perdi, dame, mun pucelage" (1272–1274; "For you I abandoned my whole homeland, /and then, for your foolish

intentions, / Lady, I lost my virginity"). All this was done for the sake of the honour promised to her by Isolt and Tristan, who have reneged on those promises (1275–1279). Isolt once desired Brangain's death, but Brangain continued to love and trust her, rather than reciprocating her distrust. Isolt has now rewarded Brangain's service with shame. She egged on Kaherdin on the one hand, and Brangain on the other, and is therefore responsible for bringing Brangain together with an unworthy man, with malicious intent (1280–1336). Isolt is thus made complicit in the relationship in the same way that Brangain is elsewhere proclaimed to be complicit in the central couple's adultery. By lying about Kaherdin's worth, Isolt has betrayed Brangain and shamed her. Brangain was courted by other, worthy men, she claims, but was proof against them until now: "Cuntre tuz me sui ben gardee" (1329; "I was well guarded against all"). She makes it appear that this guardianship was part of Isolt's responsibility towards her. This recalls the lament of Beroul's Isolt at having lost the privilege of giving her attendants in marriage to worthy husbands. Here, Isolt in turn is upset at being insulted and betrayed by one she trusts, who should have protected her honour (1340). Each evidently sees the other as responsible for guarding her honour. Isolt responds to Brangain's seventy-line tirade by blaming Tristan. She declares that she has endured shame for Tristan, just as Brangain says she has for Isolt. Isolt's lament here is formally similar to Brangain's, citing the loss of family and homeland that she has endured for Tristan's sake (1369–1370). In addition, she says, because the adultery has come to light, "pur vus ai de mun seingnur guerre / e de tut ceus de ceste terre / priveement u en apert" (1357–1359; for you I have hostility from my lord, / and from all those of this land / privately or openly").

Now Tristan and Kaherdin have schemed, she claims, to deprive her of her most loyal companion, the one who made the privations of her life bearable (1360–1374). She accuses Tristan of wanting to take Brangain away with him to serve Isolt as Blanches Mains, Kaherdin's sister. This is of course nonsensical, but as the wild suggestion of a distraught character, it has a convincing ring. Once more Isolt cites her status as a woman isolated, "en terre estrange, senz ami" (1388; "in a strange land, without friends"), beseeching Brangain not to abandon her. She declares that she relies on Brangain for "confort," but offers to let her go if she desires to elope with Kaherdin. Isolt thus professes to believe that Brangain's real intention is to disengage herself from the service of her mistress, in order to attach herself to Kaherdin and his family.

Brangain, unsurprisingly, denies this interpretation, and reproves Isolt for blaming Tristan. Some of David Hult's comments on *Lancelot* are instructive here. He writes of shame in that poem that, "as an objectivized social attribution it is passed from person to person; a person literally 'has shame' when society has given it to him."[86] In the altercation between Brangain and Isolt, we see the two women attempting to pass this objectivized shame back and forth like a hot potato. Brangain recasts the adulterous relationship to suggest that it is Isolt, not Tristan, who is the one in control, and that shame thus belongs to her (1404–1406). Isolt is also in control in her relationship with Brangain. Isolt *gave* her attendant to Kaherdin. Brangain declares: "al plus cuard que unc fud né / m'avez par vostre engin duné" (1423–1424; "to the greatest coward that was ever born / you gave me by your trickery"). Isolt exercised the right of her rank by arranging a marriage for her attendant, acting like the queen in *Cligès*, but without her sound motivation.

86. Hult, "Lancelot's Shame," 33.

Each woman attempts to disclaim agency in order to accuse the other of dishonouring her. Isolt claims that, surrounded as she is by so many enemies, her honour depends on Brangain's continued support, because Brangain, in a position of confidence, has power to shame Isolt by revealing her secrets. Brangain should refrain from exercising that power, however, because she is implicated in Isolt's wrongdoing by being her confidant and counsellor; any shame attached to Isolt will rebound on her (1453–1459). Isolt points out that her ruin will not present any advantage for Brangain; rather, Brangain will lose both Isolt's love and the goodwill of her lord, who will hate anyone who tells him that which he least wants to hear. Brangain cuts through all of this by simply insisting on Isolt's treachery. She broke her oath, she has behaved badly, she has got into the habit, forgotten honour, and is not going to reform on her own (1504–1540). Brangain makes Isolt's honour depend not upon the relative secrecy of her affair, as Isolt has been trying to claim, but on its very existence. From someone who has been privy to the affair from the beginning, this may seem hypocritical, but there is no denying that Brangain's charge is sound. The idea of the shame that Isolt brings on the king, her family and her friends is now introduced. Shame is multi-faceted, however. Isolt would be shamed if the king had her nose cut off, as her beauty would be destroyed; but this would make her friends happy, because it would prevent her continuing to shame her husband and them. The king endures dishonour because of his love for Isolt, but this very endurance is a source of shame. Isolt replies angrily that if she has done wrong, it has been with Brangain's counsel. Isolt's response is understandable; if Brangain was going to object, why didn't she do it long ago? But Isolt goes further, and tries to place the

whole responsibility for the affair on Brangain. Now their relationship is figured as one in which Brangain is supposed to guard Isolt, rather than the other way around.

Isolt's attempts at persuasion fail, and Brangain goes to speak to the king "tut a celee" (1621). When Brangain takes her case to Mark, she positions herself as *his* loyal servant, and honour and shame take on still different meanings in relation to him and his behaviour to Isolt. In particular, shame and honour are differently defined depending on gender. Mark's shame consists of having an unfaithful wife; Brangain's (as she sees it) consists of being given to an unworthy husband. Brangain now characterizes herself as guardian of the king's honour because of the loyalty she owes him. He is facilitating his own shame, Brangain says, by giving Cariado access to Isolt.

That Brangain should accuse Cariado here rather than Tristan is not what Thomas has been preparing us for. The only evidence of Brangain's interiority is encapsulated in the statements that "de grant engin s'est purpensee" (1622; "she has decided on a great scheme"), and, later, that she speaks "par grant cuintise" (1689; "with great shrewdness"). In the preceding conversation with Isolt a number of reasons for this change of plan have been suggested. Isolt was of course right in pointing out that Brangain bears a degree of responsibility for the affair due to her continued support of the lovers, and that the king would not be likely to look kindly upon her if this came to light. Pierre Le Gentil interprets Brangain's accusation of Cariado as the product of sober reflection: "Elle a eu le temps de réfléchir et de mesurer les terribles conséquences qu'auraient entraînées, si elles avaient été maintenues jusqu'ai bout, les menaces

violemment formulées devant Iseut."[87] It is not difficult to provide an explanation for Brangain's course of action, but Thomas does not do it for us.

As she builds up to her fallacious revelation, Brangain explains that Isolt needs stricter supervision, and asks Mark:

> Oïtes unques la parole:
> "Vuide chambre faite dame fole,
> aise de prendre fait larrun,
> fole dame vuide maisun"? (1645–1648)
>
> Have you ever heard the saying:
> "An empty chamber makes a lady foolish,
> ease of taking makes a thief,
> a foolish lady, an empty house"?

Brangain's proverb suggests that privacy, conceived of as an enclosed and empty space, a freedom from surveillance in an indoor area, will make a woman misbehave, in the same way that unguarded property may tempt someone to steal. She here acknowledges one half of the paradox discussed in Chapter Three: privacy facilitates misbehaviour. But this is rather beside the point, since Isolt's misbehaviour did not initially result from an excess of privacy (although the couple's lack of supervision on the ship was an important factor), and it is an ironic statement coming from Brangain, who was privy to the lovers' affair from the very beginning. In fact, Isolt's privacy, the guarantor of her status as well as facilitator of her misconduct, has always *involved* Brangain, upon whom she depends for the maintenance of her honour. Her personal attendant, as well as her private space, has formed one aspect of her private life, a life which has been dominated by extra-marital love. Nevertheless, Brangain's hostile surveillance after this

87. Le Gentil, "A propos du mariage de Tristan et de la colère de Brangain dans le roman de Thomas," 403.

incident does prevent the lovers from coming together. She demonstrates not so much the difference between free access to privacy and oppressive supervision, as the ability of someone in her position to be either a facilitator of a love affair or its effective obstacle. Because she has all along been an occupant of the "vuide chambre" along with Isolt, Brangain is able to choose whether she will allow love to flourish there or not. What Isolt fears, both in the earlier episode when she tries to have Brangain killed, and later, when Brangain threatens to betray her, is *revelation* of the affair. Exposure—the rendering public of what was private—is the basic danger always faced by the adulterous couple. What Brangain demonstrates is that there are other ways for her to exercise her power over the couple besides revealing secrets. She is able to control Isolt's space, and to restrict Tristan's access to it. Isolt is to have no privacy that excludes Brangain. The king declares: "Privé conseil ne li celez / ne de barun ne de chevaler / que ne seiez al conseiler" (1744–1746; "Do not let her keep private counsel / either with barons or with knights / unless you are present").

What Mark mandates, when he puts Brangain in charge of his wife, should mean no more than an affirmation of the status quo. Isolt has already declared that she is guided by Brangain's counsel, and Brangain has claimed, to Mark, that she guards Isolt. But it does make a difference. Armed with the knowledge of the couple's true secret, Brangain is able to use the king's mandate to revenge herself upon Isolt:

> Ore est Ysolt desuz la main
> e desuz le conseil Brengvein;
> ne vait ne dit priveement
> qu'el ne seit al parlement. (1749–1752)

> Now is Isolt under the hand
> and under the power of Brangain;
> she neither comes nor speaks privately
> without her being present at the conversation.

To be under the power of a hostile figure is quite different from having a loyal attendant privy to every word and action. Brangain has radically switched categories, demonstrating how closely related the roles of private friend and private enemy were in the first place. The immediate consequence of this is that when Tristan returns in the guise of a leper, and Isolt is about to throw her ring into his cup as a token of recognition, Brangain stops her. She is able to recognize Tristan in spite of his disguise, as did Isolt. She calls the sergeants, has Tristan turned out of the church where he has been begging, and chastises Isolt for her unwonted generosity (1842–1850). Tristan understands what is going on: "que Brengvein li e Ysolt het" (1856; "that Brangain hates him and Isolt"). Isolt pleads with Brangain to go and comfort Tristan, as he lies sick in the porter's lodging, and tell him the reason for her anger. It is interesting that here Isolt's plea is for Brangain to go to Tristan, not for her to allow Isolt to go to him. As Rosemarie Deist points out, Thomas's Brangain is never shown to have a particularly strong bond with Tristan; instead, what is emphasized is "his helplessness and absolute dependence on her."[88] This passage is the only hint in the surviving text of a closer bond between the male lover and the female mediator.

Isolt seeks here to restore Brangain to her original role as facilitator of the affair. Brangain replies that it is useless for Isolt to make such a request, and that she would rather see Tristan dead. She briefly reprises the subjects of their previous fight, making a pretence of

88. Deist, 278.

returning to the moral high ground: “Oan mais ne m’ert reprové / que pare moi aiez fet folie: / ne vul covrir la felunie” (1948–1950; “This year I will not be reproached / with your having done wrong through me: / I do not want to conceal evil”). But the real source of her anger remains her sense of injury at having her loyal service rewarded with an unworthy alliance to a cowardly knight:

> qui felon sert,
> u tost u tart sun travail pert.
> Servi vus ai a mun poër,
> pur ço dei le mal gré aveir.
> Se regardissez a franchice,
> rendu m’ussez altre service,
> de ma pein altre guerredun
> que moi hunir par tel barun. (1955–1962)
>
> [she] who serves a criminal,
> sooner or later loses [her] labour.
> I have served you to my ability,
> for this I have deserved ill will.
> If you considered generosity,
> you would have rendered me different service,
> a different reward for my pain
> than to shame me with such a nobleman.

Isolt now seems to beg her attendant’s pardon without anger or recrimination, and at last she prevails. Brangain goes to Tristan, who is able to assure her that he and Kaherdin did not actually flee in a shameful fashion. Brangain’s role is now to bring Tristan into the private space which she has been keeping him out of, the “chambre marbrine” (1992) where the queen awaits him. The lovers’ happiness takes a distinctly secondary place here to the working-out of the problems that they face, in this case Brangain’s opposition. Their “deduit” occupies only a few lines, after

which they are separated again, as Tristan takes his leave in the morning to return to Brittany (1994–1998). Sarah Kay argues that in this passage, as elsewhere in Thomas's poem, there is a pessimistic emphasis on the lovers' (especially Tristan's) suffering, with "no hint of ecstasy in the narrative of their reunion."[89] Throughout all of this, although Brangain plays an important role and says a great deal, there is little indication of her emotion beyond what is expressed straightforwardly in her words. Thomas's narrative style, in contrast to Beroul's, has often been characterized as peculiarly detached.[90] Whereas Beroul's narrator is anxious to tell his audience at every turn what they are to think of the evil barons, Thomas refrains from offering any judgement of Brangain as she sets out apparently to betray her mistress, changes her plan, exacts a private revenge, and finally is reconciled with her. This is her last significant function in the romance.[91]

Brangain's anger and its consequences are explored more sketchily by the English author. Here, interestingly, Isolt's reaction to Brangain's revelation to the king is quite different, and seems to take into account the fact that what she has revealed does not really harm the couple. It is not clear why this has been changed. Brother Robert explicitly states that Brangain did not want to denounce Isolt: "Enn þo vildi Bringvet ekki hrópa hana fyrir konunginum um Tristram, ok stóð þetta enn svá nökkura hríð" (ch. 90; "And yet Bringvet was not willing to

89. Kay, "Contradiction and Abjection in the *Tristan* of Thomas and the Poetry of Marcabru," 34.

90. E.g. Bruckner, "The Representation of the Lovers' Death: Thomas' *Tristan* as Open Text," 121.

91. She plays one more brief role, advising Isolt when the message from the dying Tristan arrives.

disgrace her before the king because of Tristram, and matters remained thus for some time").[92] In the Middle English version we are told simply: "And Brengwain þretned ay, / To take hem in her dede" (3182–3183). Brangain's threat here makes less sense; she is in a position to reveal secrets, not "catch them in the act." When she speaks to Mark, she places emphasis on how Canados wishes to shame him, rather than on Isolt's behaviour. Mark thanks Brangain, and promptly exiles Canados from court. The sequel is quite different from Thomas's version:

> So couþe Brengwain bring
> Canados for to fle,
> Þat heiȝe.
> Glad was Ysonde, þe fre,
> Þat Brengwain couþe so liȝe. (3208–3212)

Brangain's intention was apparently to get Canados out of court, and Isolt is pleased at her success. Isolt then asks Brangain where Tristan is, and whether it isn't a lie that he fled from Canados; Brangain allows Tristan into the "bour," but it is not made clear whether she has been keeping him away or not. Taking all this at face value, a very different relationship between Brangain and Isolt prevails at this point in the Middle English poem.[93] Tristan and Isolt are happily reunited, and Tristan promises Brangain that he and Ganhardin will carry all before them at the tournament. Later, when this comes to pass, "Brengwain haþ her bone" (3294).

The two *Folie* texts narrate an event which can be placed between the Kaherdin story and the tragic conclusion of the legend. Brangain in these texts can be compared with the

92. The translation is Schach's, but "because of" here should probably be taken as "concerning" rather than "on account of".

93. It is always difficult to know how much of this is intentional in *Sir Tristrem*, however.

Ovidian maid who helps the lover gain access to her mistress. In both *Folies* Brangain plays a significant role, and her relationship with Tristan in particular is given prominence in the *Folie de Berne*.[94] After Tristan, in his fool's disguise, has spoken in front of the king and queen, Mark goes out to distract himself with his birds, while Isolt retreats to "sa chanbre / don li pavemanz est de lanbre" (256–257; "her chamber / where the floor was paved") leaving Tristan alone in the hall. Isolt calls Brangain, who was present in the hall to hear the fool, but did not play a role at that point. Isolt remarks irritably on the fool's behaviour, and sends Brangain to fetch him to her. Tristan is pleased to see Brangain (269), but she addresses him rudely, calling him "Dan fol" (270; "Sir fool") and declaring that hanging him would be a good deed (274–275). Tristan calls her by name, at which Brangain is clearly startled. He begs her to speak to the queen for him. She studies him closely, in a way that no one else in the poem has done, and her inspection leads her to an unexpected conclusion:

> Brangian si l'a bien agaitié:
> biaus braz, beles mains et biaux piez
> li voit avoir a desmesure;
> bien est tailliez par la çainture.
> En son cuer panse qu'il est sage
> et meillor mal a que n'est rage. (290–295)
>
> Brangain looked well on him:
> beautiful arms, hands and feet
> she saw he had exceedingly;
> he was well proportioned at the waist.
> In her heart she thought that he was sane
> and suffered a better sickness than madness.

94. Here she shows some similarity to Lunete in the *Chevalier au Lion*, whose relationship with the hero predates, and to a degree upstages the central love affair.

She has not yet recognized him, however, and "being courtly" (303) asks him to refrain from his pretence of being Tristan. He replies that he would do so, but that the potion which she gave him on the ship robbed him of the will to do anything but serve love. It is now, when he declares himself once more to be Tristan, that "recognition" takes place: "A cest mot l'a bien conneü" (321; "At this word she knew him well"). Brangain is able, through her own observation, to arrive at the conclusion that the fool is sane, which is more than the other characters do. She proceeds to speak to him as to a sane person, begging his pardon for her previous abuse. Then he is able to convince her of his identity by appealing to her recollection of that most important role that she played in the love affair. In fact, he appeals to her knowledge of her own culpability in reducing him to his present state, forced to impersonate a fool because of his helpless subjugation to love. Brangain is thus convinced of his identity partly by his words and partly by her own observation. She begs his pardon, either for her earlier treatment of him, or for her negligence with the potion, or both. His affection for her is displayed in actions as well as words: "Cil la relieve par les doiz, / si la baisa plus de cent foiz" (324–325; "He helped her up by the fingers, / and kissed her more than a hundred times"). Then she leads him into the chamber to Isolt, as in Thomas's poem after their reconciliation, and in Beroul's after the staged reconciliation. The physicality of her action is emphasized: "Brangien l'an moine par lo poin, / l'uns pres de l'autre, non pas loing, / et vienent en la chanbre ensanble" (330–332; Brangain led him by the hand, / the one close to the other, not far, / and they came into the chamber together). This recalls the action of Lunete bringing Yvain in to her lady. Like Lunete, Brangain has shifted

allegiance here from the lady to the knight, although she continues to act in the best interest of her mistress. She presents Tristan, as Lunete presents Yvain, as under her protection at this point. Once in the chamber, Tristan is the first to speak, but when the queen refuses to acknowledge him Brangain intervenes, emphasizing Tristan's loyalty, as displayed in his assumption of the fool's disguise, and proclaiming his identity (358–365). Isolt remains indignantly unconvinced (366–369). After this, the lovers talk without interruption from Brangain. She is sent to fetch the dog which will recognize Tristan as its master (507). Then when Isolt finally recognizes Tristan and faints, "Or voit Brangian ce qu'el voloit" (549; "Now Brangain saw what she desired"); the moment of recognition is in effect seen through Brangain's eyes, recalling the ending of *Yvain*, where Lunete's happiness is emphasized. Isolt, berating herself for being the cause of Tristan's suffering, turns to Brangain to ask what she should do. It falls to Brangain to direct the final reunion of the lovers:

> – Dame, nel tenez mie a gas.
> Alez, si li querez les dras.
> Il est Tristanz et vos Yseut.
> …
> – Tandis con vos avez loisir,
> mout vos penez de lui servir,
> tant que Mars veigne de riviere. (558–560, 564–566)
>
> Lady, do not take it as a joke.
> Go, and fetch him clothes.
> He is Tristan and you Isolt.
> …
> As long as you have leisure,
> you should be at pains to serve him,
> until Mark comes from the river.

Brangain sums up how things stand, and how they must be: "He is Tristan and you Isolt." It is a statement of their identity—his now proven and accepted as much as hers, which has never been in doubt—but it also directs their actions. Their names are those of legendary lovers; the conclusion of the episode must be their union in love, now that they have thwarted the obstacles in their path. The poem ends with Tristan entering the most private space within the queen's chamber, "soz la cortine" (571), an action which has been facilitated to the very end by Brangain.

Although both Brangain and Isolt experience moments of "recognition" in the *Folie de Berne*,[95] these moments are preceded by long series of proofs offered by Tristan. Thus the process seems less one of actual recognition than of being convinced by the weight of evidence. This happens more swiftly for Brangain than for Isolt. Like the Ovidian maid, Brangain represents the first hurdle that Tristan has to overcome on the way to his mistress, the doorkeeper to his beloved's private space, and an easier conquest than the mistress herself. Like Beroul's Brangain, she appears to have a particularly close relationship with Tristan herself, and she performs the function of bringing Tristan inside to Isolt, and makes an attempt at the further Ovidian role of persuading the lady to accept the lover. Here she is unsuccessful, and she disappears from view as Tristan works to convince Isolt of his identity himself. At the end, Brangain reappears, and the final coming together of the lovers occurs with her urging and to her approval. Even though this story is set up as a piece of a longer narrative, it is made to stand alone in the *Folie de Berne*, and it presents the narrative shape of a complete love story, with the hero striving to win (or in this case *re*win) his beloved, achieving success only at the end.

95. "A cest mot l'a bien conneü" (321), and "Or s'aparçoit en son corage, / c'est Tristans a cui el parole" (541–542).

Brangain's role in the *Folie de Berne* fits into this narrative shape, so that although the love affair long predates the beginning of the poem, she performs much the same function as an intermediary in a story of unfolding love.

In the *Folie d'Oxford*, Brangain's role has been greatly reduced, as part of what seems an overall effort to infuse greater realism into the story. The relationship between the *Folie de Berne* and the *Folie d'Oxford* is unclear,[96] but in some respects the Oxford poem seems to deliberately rework elements of the Berne version. The allusions to past events are here presented much more methodically, and in close to chronological order.[97] Neither Brangain nor Isolt undergoes quite the same process of convincing followed by recognition as in the *Folie de Berne*. Brangain suspects Tristan's identity early on, without seeing the fool, but continues to pretend that she has no such suspicion when she talks with Tristan. Isolt retreats to her chamber, "mult pensive" (547), where, seated on her bed, she addresses Brangain, telling her all about the fool. "Quanque je vai, tut m'est cuntraire" (557; "Wherever I go, everything is against me"), she laments. As soon as Brangain hears how the fool relates events known only to herself and the lovers, she comes to the right conclusion: "Je pens pur droit / k'içо Tristran meïmes soit" (575–576; "I think truly / that this is Tristan himself"). Isolt denies the possibility, because the fool looks so much unlike Tristan. Brangain suggests an alternative: "Dame, je quid, par sen Johan, / k'il seit le messager Tristran" (597–598; "Lady, I believe, by Saint John, / that he is Tristan's messenger"). The process by which she reaches this conclusion about the fool is totally different

96. See Lecoy, 10.

97. Hunt and Bromiley, 125.

from that in *Berne*. There, Isolt's maid was able, unlike her mistress, to penetrate the fool's disguise visually, to perceive the disjunction between his appearance and the reality of his "sickness." Here, Brangain pre-empts that whole process by suggesting that the fool might be Tristan before she even sees him. Isolt, who has seen him, completely denies the possibility. In this way, *Oxford* presents a sort of twist on the story as narrated in *Berne*. The author of *Oxford* seems to be doing what Trindade describes as "remotivating a traditional feature of the narrative source."[98] Brangain is still the first one to suggest the identification of the fool with Tristan, but for different reasons.

Isolt is willing to admit the possibility that the fool might be a messenger, and on this basis she sends Brangain to investigate, though not to bring the fool to her, as in *Berne*. On the whole, events here unfold in a more naturalistic and logical way than in *Berne*, where Isolt's sending for the fool seems somewhat unmotivated. As in that poem, however, Brangain returns to the deserted hall, where she finds the fool seated on a bench. Again, Tristan recognizes Brangain and calls her by name, but this apparently makes no impression on her. In contrast to the abusive speech of Brangain in *Berne*, here her responses are very guarded: "E je de quai / volez k'aie merci de tei?" (615–616; "And why / do you want me to have mercy on you?"); "Nu l'estes veir / si cum jo quid al men espeir" (621–622; "It is not true / as I believe and hope"). He tells her the story of how they left Ireland together, and of the drinking of the potion at sea. She professes not to remember any of this. He then invokes her early and continual involvement in the secret affair. Brangain's thoughts are not opened to the reader here (nor have they been

98. Trindade, 394. She is not here commenting on the FO, but I found the phrase to be a useful one.

earlier). But she turns back towards the chamber, and Tristan follows her, begging for mercy (668–670). The passage which follows is a curious one:

> Brenguain est venue a Ysolt,
> si li surrist cum faire solt.
> Ysolt culur muad e teinst
> e sempres malade se feinst.
> La chambre fu sempres voidee,
> kar la raïne ert deshaitee. (670–676)
>
> Brangain has come to Isolt,
> and smiles at her as she is accustomed to.
> Isolt changes colour and grows pale
> and immediately pretends to be ill.
> The chamber was immediately emptied,
> because the queen was indisposed.

The situation is not quite as clear-cut as in *Berne*. Brangain's smile seems to be a signal to Isolt, and suggests that she has made up her mind about the fool. But Brangain has still given the fool no sign that she believes his story. She brings him into the chamber at this point, as in *Berne*, but she does not speak on his behalf. Instead, he laments: "Certes, unc ne quidai ço veir / de vus, Ysolt, franche raïne, / ne de Brenguain, vostre meschine!" (690–692; "Indeed, I never would have believed this / of you, Isolt, noble queen, / nor of Brangain, your servant!). Isolt holds out against all the tokens presented as evidence, recognizing Tristan only when he abandons the fool's mannerisms and reverts to his own voice, which suggests that Tristan in this case has been deliberately testing her.

Brangain's role at the end of *Oxford* is much less crucial than in *Berne*. It is Isolt herself who goes to fetch the dog, although it is remarked that only she and Brangain can handle it since

its master left (929). Isolt is not convinced by the sight of the ring, as she was in *Berne*, and only believes Tristan to be himself when he speaks "a dreit" (975; "normally"). This drastically changes the tenor of this poem, implying that Tristan has been testing Isolt all this time, since he has not abandoned the fool's voice. Seemingly it is not so much recognition that he has been seeking from Isolt, as proof of her loyalty.[99] It is also possible that Isolt has been testing him; the smile that passes between her and Brangain might suggest this. In any case, Isolt does not faint here, as she does in *Berne*, but throws herself into Tristan's arms and kisses him. Brangain's role is now a purely practical one: she is sent to fetch water so that Tristan can wash off the dye with which he has disguised his face (983–990). All sign of a special bond between Brangain and Tristan has been effaced, and her role in bringing the lovers together is of much less significance than in *Berne*. In fact, the *Berne* version corresponds best to the role Brangain plays in the extant part of Beroul's poem, while *Oxford*, which also omits certain details found in Beroul (the hermit Ogrin; the leap from the chapel) has apparently scaled back and reoriented Brangain's involvement with the lovers.

Although not accorded markedly more interiority, in most of these texts, than the *losengiers* who oppose the lovers, Brangain is strikingly different from them in the variability of her roles in relation to the lovers. She is responsible for their love through her carelessness with the potion on the ship, and implicated in the affair through her early knowledge and "consent." She functions as a guardian of the lovers' privacy, the loyal confidant of Isolt, keeper of her secret even in the face of betrayal and death, and a wise counsellor who protects Isolt from her

99. Hunt and Bromiley, 126.

husband's traps. She is also the confidant of Tristan, ally in the face of Isolt's displeasure (real or feigned) in a way which recalls the role of the Ovidian maid. And on the other hand she represents a threat to the lovers' secrecy, because of her knowledge and early involvement in the affair, and a barrier to the lovers' happiness because of her power over Isolt. No surviving version of the story presents Brangain in all of these guises, but this is partly because of the fragmentary nature of the texts. The figure has the potential to fulfil all these roles while still appearing a coherent character.

Beroul and Thomas, at around the same time and in the same language, apparently wrote full-length romance versions of the Tristan and Isolt story. They followed different versions of the legend; that is, they acknowledged different collections of episodes as authentic and worth recounting. The approach of each poet to telling the story differed considerably, too. Thomas was interested in delving into his main characters' thoughts, particularly their inner debates and struggles about love. He liked to repeat ideas in subtly different formulations, sometimes over and over. Beroul seems to have been more interested in exploiting opportunities in the story for misinterpretation, occasions where sights and statements are not what they seem.[100] As Mary Brockington points out, Beroul is an attentive and ingenious narrator, transforming implausible and inconsistent elements of his story into opportunities for effective comedy or pathos.[101] Rather than opening his characters' inner turmoils to the audience, he tends to give narratorial statements that take a decided stand, cursing the villains of the story and upholding the heroes;

100. See Calin, 47; Hunt, "Beroul's Tristan."

101. Brockington, 307.

but these statements themselves cannot necessarily be accepted at face value, if only because they often seem so outrageous as to defy a "straight" reading. Beroul seems to promote the claims of community and public honour above the private delights of love. His Tristan and Isolt wake up to reality in the forest and desire to return to court. The barons, too, whom his narrator so execrates, threaten the honour of the king and the status of the lovers at his court. Thomas seems more concerned with telling a personal tragedy.[102] At the same time, his narrator remains more detached from the events he relates.[103] As Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner writes, "He can neither endorse nor condemn, but—to the best of his limited ability—only tell." Yet he delves at great length into his main characters' thoughts, ultimately leaving his audience "caught between the two voices of lyric identification and critical distance."[104] The Middle English poem takes up the story narrated by Thomas and reduces it to a series of events often only loosely connected by characterization or logic. It is still an interesting series of events, and there are places where the Middle English poet's hurried style treats the subject well. Dialogue and scenes of combat and hunting are presented effectively, and the elaborate verse form which tends to alienate modern readers might have been admired by the original audience.[105] However, attempts to defend the poem as a skilful and coherent work of art have been unconvincing, and its principal claim to

102. On Beroul and Thomas's different approaches, see Mermier, 105–107.

103. See Deist, "The Description of Isolde and Iseut and their Confidantes in Gottfried von Straßburg and Thomas de Bretagne," 279.

104. Bruckner, 109.

105. Pickford, "*Sir Tristrem*, Sir Walter Scott and Thomas," 227–228. The one place where the ME poem is, in my opinion, flat-out better than Thomas, is in its account of Tristan's thoughts on seeing Isolt's ring on his wedding night. Thomas's Tristan wallows in nearly two hundred lines of unconvincing interior monologue. Sir Tristrem simply looks at the ring, thinks that Ysonde never betrayed him, that he still loves her, and that therefore he has done wrong.

fame must remain its relative completeness.[106] It dates from a century later than Beroul and Thomas, and is often assumed to have been composed for a very different sort of audience,[107] but this does not seem to have made a demonstrable difference to the way that it portrays private space and the people who have access to it. The *Folie* texts are formally the most interesting of all. Taking a particular episode as their main subject, they manage to allude to all the high points of the story which precede that incident. The episode itself changes nothing in the larger narrative, being merely a repetition of the motif of the separated lovers coming together through trickery, only to be separated again, an event anticipated though not recounted at the end of each "short story" text. The repeated references to memory, as Tristan asks Isolt to recall events of their past, reinforce the structure of the two texts. Gaffney writes: "Both [*Folie*] poems presume audience knowledge of the legend of the lovers, and play on our memory too. For the reader as well as for the protagonists, the narrative is a re-presentation, a re-enactment through recollection, of the major events of Tristan and Iseut's legendary love affair."[108]

In all these texts there are characters who are branded as *losengiers* and villains, and reprise this function repeatedly. Their reasons for acting in this way are variously characterized. The dwarf belongs to a generically evil type. Cariado is motivated by unrequited love and rivalry, while Meriadok makes a discovery which has implications for his king's honour, and the barons seem to act mainly out of envy. Brangain is basically a force for uniting the lovers, but

106. E.g. Symons, "Does Tristan Think, or Doesn't He? The Pleasures of the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*"; Gilbert, "Gender, Oaths and Ambiguity in *Sir Tristrem* and Béroul's *Roman de Tristan*."

107. Gilbert, 237. Personally I like to think of this poem as having been written not so much for an unsophisticated audience as by a teenager.

108. Gaffney, 413–414.

she also functions at times to keep them apart. More than a simple functionary, however, she is portrayed as an interesting figure, given long, psychologically coherent speeches by Thomas, and accorded an important role and close relationship with Tristan in the *Folie de Berne*. Beroul gives more attention to the *losengiers*, in keeping with his interest in the role of the lovers in society; Thomas seems more concerned with developing Brangain and her complex personal relationship with Isolt and Tristan. Beroul appears to have used Brangain as a figure for the lovers' sin, cherished until the waning of the potion and repudiated afterwards. Thomas, in keeping with his general pessimism, explores the way in which the bond between Brangain and Isolt is strained and broken.

Both the *losengiers* and Brangain have access to private space in all the texts. This accords them power to influence the outcome of the narrative, and it is in this that the danger posed by each of them inheres. Beroul's barons are able to observe what goes on in the king's chamber, and to interfere with it, both in their own persons and through their counsel. The dwarf similarly has access to the king, spatially and conceptually, and, in Beroul's poem in particular, an exaggerated influence over him. Meriadok shares Tristan's space, and makes an unpleasant discovery because of this, which turns him into a threat to the lovers. Cariado attempts to woo Isolt by intruding himself into her chamber, from which he is ejected on the advice of Brangain, who thus demonstrates her control over access to that space. Privy to the lovers' secret from the very beginning, responsible for the mismanagement of the potion and physically involved in the deception of King Mark on his wedding night, Brangain is inextricably involved in Tristan and

Isolt's private life, for good or ill. Brangain's proverb in Thomas's text, "Vuide chambre faite dame fole," proves to be less apt, for all versions of the story, than Isolt's observation that "L'en ne poet estre plus traïz / que par privez e par nuirriz." The mainstay of the Tristan and Isolt narrative is the effort of the lovers to maintain the secrecy of their love, not only because discovery would lead to separation, but also because their king's honour is at stake. The importance of this theme means that these texts dramatize a preoccupation with spies and confidants, people who have access to private space and the knowledge that it affords.

6. Tragedy in Troy, Farce in Oxford, Satire in Lombardy: Chaucer Gets the Last Word

Tragedy: *Troilus and Criseyde*

At the end of Book One of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as Pandarus considers how to set about his project of persuasion, Chaucer introduces an image drawn from the *Poetria Nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, likening an artistic creation to a building project:

> ffor eueri wight that hath an hous to founde
> Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
> With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
> And sende his hertes line out fro with-inne
> Aldirfirst his purpos forto wynne.[1]

Pandarus does not build any actual houses in Chaucer's poem, but the plot whose conception is introduced with this image does make considerable use of the literal architecture of Troy. Pandarus is a mediating figure who is constantly associated with private space, and clearly uses his access to and control over this space to further his aims. Like some of the characters discussed in earlier chapters, Pandarus has frequently been compared to the author himself, or to the narrator of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Easily as his machinations can be assimilated to authorial activity, however, one of the striking things about Pandarus is that he keeps his own counsel. As an advisor to lovers, and as a lover in his own right, he is wholly committed to an ethic of secrecy in love. So is the rest of the poem: the narrator as well as the other characters insist in a number of places on the idea that love must be kept secret. Yet there is no practical reason for this, and in fact secrecy is actually shown to work against the lovers in certain ways. Some critics

1. Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book 1, ll. 1065–69. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by book and line numbers.

have suggested that the insistence on secrecy here arises from an interest in newly developing ideas of privacy, and a distinction between privacy and secrecy. Pandarus is implicated in both concepts. His activities between and on behalf of the lovers connect him to both newly articulated ideas of privacy and the centuries-old tropes of secret love.

Scholarship on Pandarus has tended to focus on two issues: the question of his moral status and the question of his origins. A number of discussions, especially from the early twentieth century, present what amount to defences or condemnations of Criseyde's uncle, focussing in particular on the issue of his friendship with Troilus. In the early twentieth century George Kittredge was full of praise for Pandarus's wit, optimism, high spirits, etc., viewing him as a tragic character because of his involvement "in an action that sullies his honor to no purpose."[2] By 1949, however, Eugene E. Slaughter was able to cite a long list of varying opinions about Pandarus, most of which opposed his own view that "Chaucer intended Pandarus's role as intermediary, uncle, and friend to be ideal, and wholly commendable."[3] He bases his argument on a conception of courtly love as a "charmed circle"[4] within which different rules apply, and on the assertion that in acting to prevent his friend's death from unrequited love, Pandarus does no more than a friend's true duty according to classical models. E. Talbot Donaldson seems to start from a position as sympathetic as Kittredge's when he compares Pandarus's reputation to Criseyde's: "Just as in later literature Criseide was to become the type of

2. Kittredge, "*Troilus*," 18–19.

3. Slaughter, "Chaucer's Pandarus: Virtuous Uncle and Friend," 186.

4. Ibid., 195.

a faithless woman, so her charming, witty, intelligent uncle Pandarus was, by a worse fate, to become the type of a pimp."[5] However, he goes on to address some of the more troubling aspects of the character's presentation, noting that the solution arrived at when Troilus and Pandarus discuss the worthiness of the latter's assistance is not entirely satisfactory; in effect, the question remains: "Is this the action of a loyal friend or of a mere pimp?" Chaucer does not give a definite answer to the question; we are assured that Pandarus's motive is to help his friend, but "we seem to glimpse potentials … that are not of a piece with the notion of a friend acting with entire altruism." Donaldson seems to want to like Pandarus, but to be unable to ignore his misgivings:

> In general he seems, like his niece, a person of great charm: gay, cheerful, witty, mocking and self-mocking, friendly, helpful, practical, intelligent, sympathetic, loyal—one could hardly wish for a better companion or friend. But despite these qualities, one's confidence in him does not remain altogether secure.[6]

Donaldson acknowledges Pandarus's major role as a creator of illusions, upon which, in fact, the whole love affair largely depends. The poem, he notes, offers "no overt comment" on the significance of these illusions, not even to the extent of revealing whether Pandarus's account to Criseyde of how he discovered Troilus's love is fact or fiction. However, we cannot avoid the implications of Pandarus's illusions, "because we know that in the end Criseyde's love of Troilus will prove to be a kind of illusion."[7]

Writing half a century after Slaughter, John Hill still sees most criticism as hostile to

5. Donaldson, "*Troilus and Criseyde*," 48.

6. Ibid., 49. Spearing, in an analysis which is based more on impressionistic "common sense" reading than an analysis of sources, similarly writes of Pandarus's "good nature" and the "lack of principle" which corrupts his conception of friendship. Spearing, *Chaucer: "Troilus and Criseyde,"* 44.

7. Donaldson, "*Troilus*," 50.

Pandarus, and attempts to right the balance again.[8] He focusses on the notorious passage in which Troilus offers to return Pandarus's favour of securing Criseyde's love by acting as a go-between with any of his sisters. Hill argues that this passage does not undermine the sincerity of the love affair or of the friendship between the two male characters.[9] He takes Pandarus's worries at this point to be sincere, and points out that it is crucially important for Troilus to negate Pandarus's suggestion that he might think less of him for what he has done, because this strikes at the root of their friendship, which has developed in the course of pursuing Criseyde, and which Pandarus now sees threatened.[10] Pandarus's allegiance to Troilus is, according to Hill, "strong enough to reflect homosocial and even unconsciously homosexual ties."[11] What his grounds are for discussing the unconscious desires of a character whose thoughts are only rarely opened to the reader he does not say.[12] Hill calls Pandarus "somewhat manipulative,"[13] but does not appear to take seriously Pandarus's claim that he is acting to save Troilus's life.[14] Instead, Hill defends him partly because he "anticipates no gain for himself."[15]

Hill's perception of a negative critical consensus on Pandarus is borne out by an

8. Hill, "Aristocratic Friendship in *Troilus and Criseyde*," 167.

9. Ibid., 165.

10. Ibid., 179.

11. Ibid., 166.

12. Even more puzzlingly, he adds in a footnote that "Pandarus's unconscious homosexual desires have to be understood as largely desexualized," a suggestion whose logic is difficult to understand. Ibid., 166, n. 1.

13. Ibid., 170.

14. This had been declared a precondition for absolving Pandarus of blame by Cook; see below, p. 270.

15. Ibid., 172.

examination of the more influential scholarship. D. W. Robertson famously characterizes Pandarus as "a masterpiece of medieval irony," superficially "an attractive little man, wise, witty, and generous," but in fact wholly pernicious, "a priest of Satan" in his role of leading Troilus astray.[16] This is in keeping with Robertson's interpretation of the poem as a tragedy which consists in Troilus's fall to become subject to Fortune by succumbing to Criseyde's physical attractions.[17] Most subsequent readings have stopped short of Robertson's extremism, but the idea of Pandarus as priest has been picked up, in modified form, by several other scholars. Ian Bishop argues that Pandarus's "doctrine of love" is even closer to a perceived courtly ideal than Troilus's, and that as part of his obedience to this doctrine he goes through the motions of an unrequited love affair without hope of success. "This enforced celibacy," Bishop writes, "seems to fit him for the metaphorical role of priest of Cupid and Venus. … His hovering officiousness on the lovers' behalf right up to the threshold of consummation may be interpreted as his ritual ministrations at the altar of Cupid."[18] Nicholas R. Havely notes that Pandarus plays a pastoral role similar to that which the narrator sets up for himself as "priest of love"; but besides preaching he also acts as a confessor, which may serve to connect him to the tradition of the friars. This in turn links him with antifraternal stereotypes, which cast friars as seducers of widows, deceivers who enter the homes of women under false pretences.[19] These are interesting

16. Robertson, "Chaucerian Tragedy," 16–17. Robertson repeatedly uses "little" in relation to Pandarus, referring to the "little sermon" he gives Troilus (17) the "little picture" he paints Criseyde (21), and so on. This seems telling. Although he concedes Pandarus's importance to Troilus's tragedy, his language is persistently dismissive.

17. Ibid., 36.

18. Bishop, *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: A Critical Study*, 36–37.

19. Havely, "White Words, False Words," 254–55.

suggestions, but at best they address only peripheral aspects of Pandarus's character, leaving more major questions about him unanswered.

Slaughter and Hill praise Pandarus as a model friend, but analysing Pandarus according to medieval ideas of friendship has become an important method of criticizing him as well. Alan T. Gaylord in 1969 presented the argument that friendship is as thematically central to the poem as is love, and that Pandarus confuses the roles of "erotic advisor" and virtuous counsellor, thereby betraying Ciceronian and Christian ideals of friendship.[20] Robert G. Cook points out the crucial link between virtue and friendship in the formulations of ancient and medieval writers on the subject. According to Cicero, whose *De Amicitia* is central to this tradition, only virtuous action is permissible for the sake of friendship, and a friend has a duty to advise and rebuke rather than flatter.[21] Pandarus and Troilus's relationship, according to Cook, is initially presented as an exemplary friendship. However, to take Pandarus's subsequent efforts to "save Troilus's life" seriously is to ignore the patent hyperbole of the idea of dying for love.[22] Once one acknowledges that Pandarus is not *seriously* trying to save Troilus's life, then the actions which he takes become questionable.[23] Chaucer has made Pandarus much more devious than Boccaccio did, Cook points out; all the outright lies that the character tells are Chaucer's own addition, and he even forces Troilus himself to lie to Criseyde about the fictional Horaste.[24] Cook concludes

20. Gaylord, "Friendship in Chaucer's *Troilus*," 239–64.

21. Cook, "Chaucer's Pandarus and the Medieval Ideal of Friendship," 411.

22. Ibid., 412–13.

23. Ibid., 418. This is the conclusion which is ignored by Hill.

24. Ibid., 418–20.

that Chaucer intended "to undercut the notion that Pandarus is a true friend."[25] As a result of this, Chaucer's poem seems contradictory, insisting on Pandarus's status as a friend but giving him actions to perform which undermine that status; Cook calls this contradiction an essential feature of *Troilus and Criseyde*, an aspect of the duality of the poem's narrator, who vacillates between naïveté and condemnation, perhaps because Chaucer himself could not decide whether to sympathize with or condemn his flawed characters.[26] Leah Rieber Freiwald argues that the friendship between Pandarus and Troilus is revealed as fragile; like the love affair, it is vulnerable to the vicissitudes of Fortune, and although it reaches heights of happiness and devotion, it eventually fails, revealing itself to be imperfect. The deterioration of the friendship thus parallels the deterioration of the love affair in the course of the poem.[27]

In the course of a 1979 article which sets out to rehabilitate the character of Troilus, E. G. Stanley asserts that while Chaucer's hero remains similar in status to Boccaccio's, there has been a "lowering in the value of Pandarus," which makes Troilus's infamous offer of his sister seem worse in *Troilus and Criseyde* than it did in *Il Filostrato*.[28] Chaucer's Pandarus, according to Stanley, is "a hanger-on of a prince," whereas Boccaccio's character was "something nobler."[29] Interestingly, however, when Stanley discusses his evidence for considering Pandarus within the

25. Ibid., 419.

26. Ibid., 422–24.

27. Freiwald, "*Swych Love of Frendes*: Pandarus and Troilus," 120–29. A similar point is made in Pugh, "Queer Pandarus? Silence and Sexual Ambiguity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*."

28. Stanley, "About Troilus," 90.

29. Ibid., 91.

tradition of the court flatterer, it emerges that this impression of insincerity is based mostly on what Criseyde's uncle conceals from the *reader*, not what he conceals from the other characters.[30] This calls attention to an important aspect of the character which is not often enough acknowledged.[31] As large as Pandarus looms in the story of *Troilus and Criseyde*, we are rarely told what he is thinking. C. David Benson discusses the extent to which the characters of Chaucer's romance can be viewed as "both believable human beings and artificial literary types," noting that the mixture of individual and type is different for each of the main characters, and that they are shown to us in differing ways by Chaucer's text.[32] In the case of Pandarus, what we get is largely an exterior portrait: "Despite his feverish activity, his motives and inner being remain absent, and the few times we are allowed into his mind all that we find there are the mechanisms of plots and schemes."[33] Because of this, as Benson observes, attempts to explain Pandarus's actions on the basis of his psychology are frequently unsuccessful.[34]

The other major theme of critical discussion of Pandarus has been the attempt to fully account for his character by pinpointing his sources. This can mean two different but overlapping things: identifying characters who could have served Chaucer as inspiration for the creation of Pandarus; and identifying the texts that Pandarus himself seems to have read. Of the latter, a few are of particular interest here. John V. Fleming notes that in his copious pronouncements

30. Ibid., 97–98. Stanley does not himself draw this conclusion.

31. For instance, this is part of the problem with Hill's argument about unconscious desires, cited above.

32. Benson, *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde*, 87.

33. Ibid., 92.

34. Ibid., 94.

Pandarus echoes almost all of the various preceptors of love in the *Roman de la Rose*.[35] Michael A. Calabrese emphasizes Pandarus's connection to Ovid, and the *Ars Amatoria* in particular, characterizing him as an attentive reader of Ovid, likening him to Ovid's own persona in the love poems, and calling him "an *Ars Amatoria* incarnate," in close succession.[36] Calabrese calls attention to Pandarus's interest in love as game, which forms part of his "complex Ovidian identity" and distinguishes him from Boccaccio's Pandaro.[37] Ultimately, "Ovidian art" is unable to keep the lovers together, and even while it is successful, Pandarus's Ovidian strategy of inventing a rival is not appreciated by either of the lovers.[38] When Criseyde's departure is foreseen, Pandarus becomes an advocate of the *Remedia Amoris* instead, but here he fails completely. Calabrese notes that Pandarus's shift from the tone and content of the *Ars* to that of the *Remedia* mirrors the medieval understanding of the relationship between the two works, the latter having been written, it was thought, to stem the tide of suicidal despair among devotees of the former.[39] Maud Burnett McInerney, noting the resemblance of Pandarus to Ovid's *praeceptor amoris*, shows how Troilus fails to act in accordance with the advice of the *Ars Amatoria*, really succumbing to the symptoms of lovesickness which Ovid advises his pupils to cultivate.[40] The

35. Fleming, *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's* Troilus, 198.

36. Calabrese, *Chaucer's Ovidian Arts of Love*, 39. The mixed metaphors are not altogether felicitous, but perhaps do convey something of the complexity of the character.

37. Ibid., 40.

38. Ibid., 51–52.

39. Ibid., 59–60.

40. McInerney, ""Is This a Mannes Herte?": Unmanning Troilus Through Ovidian Allusion," in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, 229. Rouhi also links Boccaccio's character (and by extension Chaucer's) with Andreas and the Arthurian tradition (117–18).

Ovidian tradition is clearly an important aspect of Pandarus's makeup; however, it does not account for all aspects of his character.

Of course the immediate source for the figure of Pandarus was Boccaccio's Pandaro, and it is indicative of the complexity of Chaucer's character that a whole body of scholarship has developed around the attempt to identify not so much where he comes from as where *else* he comes from, besides *Il Filostrato*.[41] La Vieille and Ami from Jean de Meun's *Rose* were early on identified as sources.[42] He has also been linked with Ovid's Dipsas, the character of Anus in the Latin *Pamphilus*, and the Spanish Trotaconventos of the *Libro de Buen Amor*.[43] James I. Wimsatt adds to these Venus from *Pamphilus* and the God of Love from the *Roman de la Rose* as models for the "colorful, witty, and unidealistic preceptor of Love."[44] Bishop indicates the incompatibility of Pandarus with models of mediation and support of lovers drawn from the lyric tradition. In the consummation scene, "Just as he remains too long for a go-between, so he performs 'too shortly [hys] offys' as watchman."[45] Yet his presence does recall this figure, even if only to demonstrate Pandarus's difference from him. Gretchen Mieszkowski argues in a 1985 article that the character of Houdée from Jean Brasdefer's *Pamphile et Galatée* is a major source for Pandarus, mostly on the basis of their modes of speech. Where Houdée is so full of contradiction as to function only as a joke, Pandarus works as a coherent character, according to

41. Cf. Guthrie, "Chivalry and Privacy in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *La Chastelaine De Vergy*," 153.

42. Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, 28.

43. Wimsatt, "Realism in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Roman de la Rose*," 46–47.

44. Ibid., 48.

45. Bishop, 47.

Mieszkowski, because of his different social status.[46] Martin Camargo argues that Pandarus's resemblance to Lady Philosophy, taken by other scholars to be merely parodic, should be taken more seriously.[47] McInerney suggests that Pandarus has a different sort of Ovidian model in Myrrha's nurse.[48] Steven R. Guthrie discusses some of these proposed sources and notes their inadequacy to fully account for the specificity, and, in particular, the polyvalence, of Pandarus.[49] Even if all these figures are taken together, Pandarus emerges as somehow unique, partly because of his gender, and partly because of his prominence in the story. Leila Rouhi devotes a short section of her study on mediation to Pandarus. Like Hill, she focusses on the passage in which Pandarus expresses his anxiety at the possibility of being categorized as a procurer, but she addresses it in terms of a tradition in which the spectre of prostitution looms over any successful effort at mediation between lovers, even in a courtly setting.[50] The tension between courtly and non-courtly modes of mediation, addressed to a lesser extent in the portrayal of Thessala in *Cligès*, gains a new prominence in Chaucer's text.[51] Because of his important role in the poem, Rouhi suggests, and because of his gender, "Pandarus illustrates the nature and function of mediation (including all the tensions associated with it) when removed from the sphere of female

46. Mieszkowski, "Chaucer's Pandarus and Jean Brasdefer's *Houdée*." In her recent book, Mieszkowski does not elaborate much on this, but she does not appear to have substantially changed her mind about the status of Brasdefer's work as an immediate source for Chaucer's.

47. Camargo, "The Consolation of Pandarus."

48. McInerney, 229. Robert Levine advances an unconvincing argument about Pandarus's relation to the figure of Davus, originating in Roman comedy but developed as a medieval type of a despicable person. Levine, "Pandarus as Davus."

49. Guthrie, 153–54.

50. Rouhi, 121.

51. Ibid., 123.

and aged activity."[52]

The most comprehensive study of Pandarus's ancestry is Mieszkowski's recent book, *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*. Mieszkowski goes beyond the search for sources and analogues, presenting an account of Pandarus's origins which finishes by positing them as key to an interpretation (albeit not a new interpretation) of the whole poem. She disposes of some of the earlier suggestions of sources, noting, for instance, that Dipsas is not a go-between at all, and that her influence on the medieval tradition has been exaggerated.[53] La Vieille, Trotaconventos and Houdée are discussed as examples of go-betweens in the service of lust, although Mieszkowski discounts the effectiveness of previous scholarship at demonstrating Pandarus's participation in this tradition.[54] Mieszkowski views *Pamphilus* and its related text, *Pamphile et Galatée*, as direct sources for Chaucer's character,[55] but her argument is based around the idea that it is not one or two sources that are important here, but that the entirety of the medieval tradition of "going between" lies behind the character. In its basic outline, this argument is very similar to Rouhi's, although greatly expanded.[56] Mieszkowski identifies two distinct types of go-between characters in medieval texts, each normally confined to, and indeed defined by, narratives of a specific type: go-betweens in stories of lust and sexual conquest, and

52. Ibid., 124.

53. Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*, 16–17.

54. Ibid., 4.

55. Ibid., 62.

56. Mieszkowski does not acknowledge a close link between the two. Ibid., 4–5.

go-betweens in stories of idealized love.[57] The former category is composed mostly of elderly female characters whose narrative function is to "coax, inveigle, trick, or force women, and rarely men, into sex acts," usually with a mercenary intent on the part of the go-between, who expresses a cynical attitude towards desire but may use "accounts of the joys of love" as part of a strategy of persuasion.[58] In this category Mieszkowski discusses characters from fabliaux, the so-called "Latin comedies," and other genres. The common thread that binds these narratives is the lack of consent on the part of one half of the couple being brought together (usually the woman). "Going between for lust and sexual conquest," Mieszkowski writes, "is about violating consent, and the work of the go-between is to set up a situation in which consent can be violated."[59] By contrast, in the stories of "idealized love" (that is, romances) the consent of both parties is essential, and the go-between's role is quite different. Acting usually from motives of friendship and loyalty rather than for personal profit, these characters are there to help lovers overcome the paralysing humility which is the sign of sincere love, and sometimes to supply solutions to more mundane problems such as parental objections. Their social status is typically different too; they are "usually members of the lovers' immediate social circle" and have close familial, affective or feudal ties to one or both halves of the couple.[60] A number of these characters have been discussed in earlier chapters of the present study. Pandarus is unique, Mieszkowski argues, in

57. These terms are Mieszkowski's, and are used throughout her study. They have the advantage of precision, but the fact that the two traditions cannot be summed up more concisely casts a certain amount of doubt on Mieszkowski's assertion that they would have been viewed as coherent separate traditions by medieval audiences.

58. Ibid., 9.

59. Ibid., 78.

60. Ibid., 79.

that he partakes of both traditions, occupying the position typical of a go-between in an idealized story, but employing the tricks and exhibiting the predatory attitude of a go-between for sexual conquest. Mieszkowski asserts not only that Chaucer developed his character deliberately to express a paradoxical fusion of the two traditions, but also that medieval audiences would have perceived him as alternately one type of character and then another, that this would have coloured their perception of the whole narrative, and that in fact *Troilus and Criseyde* is left without a genre because of this indeterminacy in one of its characters.[61] A failing to which studies of Pandarus are prone is the tendency to neglect the latter part of the poem because Pandarus is largely absent from it.[62] This is particularly pronounced here; Mieszkowski states early on that she will not consider the poem's conclusion because her concern is only with Pandarus,[63] but she ends her study with such substantial claims about the effect that Pandarus has upon the love affair that her failure to address anything after Book Three seems unsatisfying. The reading of the poem that emerges from Mieszkowski's study is fairly pessimistic. Guided by her interpretation of Pandarus as in part a "go-between for lust" she sees his entrapment of Criseyde as virtually depriving her of consent in her union with Troilus, thus souring the poem's presentation of love. Although Mieszkowski presents very ample evidence of two distinct go-between traditions, she gives virtually no evidence that medieval audiences would have thought in terms of the categories that she sets up, which somewhat weakens her argument. However,

61. Ibid., 138.

62. The present chapter is admittedly no exception.

63. Ibid., 8.

Mieszkowski does make it clear that Pandarus differs significantly from the members of both of her categories, by combining traits from each but also by exceeding the role of either. As Rouhi points out, he occupies "an unusually large space in the tale."[64] And as Mieszkowski observes, he fails in the process to maintain the "decorous distance from the lovers' feelings" kept by most romance intermediaries.[65]

As well as a go-between, Pandarus is apparently a lover in his own right. When he first upbraids Troilus for not disclosing his love, declaring that he might have been able to do something to help, Troilus is sceptical. "Thow koudest neuere in loue thi seluen wisse," he observes; "How deuel maistow brynge me to blisse?" (1.622–623). Pandarus declares that it is precisely his extensive experience of love's "Greuances" (1.647) that qualifies him to offer Troilus counsel. He compares himself, by way of Oenone, to Apollo, skilled in medicine yet unable to heal his own lovesickness (1.659–665).[66] The cause of his own sorrow, he explains, is having fixed his heart on one unattainable object (1.666–667). Later, in the course of trying to convince Troilus to name his beloved, he argues that his friend need not fear that he might try to win her himself, for: "Thow woost thy self whom that I loue, parde, / As I best kan, gon sithen longe while" (1.717–18). At the beginning of Book Two, Pandarus is prompted to go on his errand for Troilus after encountering some discouragement in his own affair; implicitly Troilus's love offers him the opportunity to experience some vicarious success. Criseyde seems to know

64. Rouhi, 116.

65. Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 145.

66. That is, he compares himself to a woman, who compares herself to a male deity, who is well-known for having same-sex love affairs (although in this instance he is presented as in love with a woman). Things are never straightforward with Pandarus.

about her uncle's love affair, for when he asks whether she and her ladies are listening to a love story, she remarks, "youre maistresse is nat here" (2.98). Pandarus has evidently revealed the identity of his beloved to Troilus, and perhaps also to Criseyde, the two people to whom he is closest in the poem. Yet an air of mystery hangs about Pandarus's love, because its object is never revealed to the audience, "never appears in person on this side of the poem's horizon," as Bishop puts it.[67] Pandarus jokes and complains about his love in a conventional way to Criseyde at 2.1096–1106, and Troilus alludes to Pandarus's faithfulness when he refutes the latter's suggestion about finding other fish in the sea: if he is really so fickle, Troilus asks, why doesn't he practice what he preaches? and if Pandarus cannot forget his own love, how can he expect as much from Troilus, who has actually enjoyed the fruits of love? (4.484–490) The fact that Pandarus is in love with someone is mentioned just often enough to make the lack of any other details about this person notable, and indeed suspicious. The object of his love is so thoroughly hidden from the reader as to raise the possibility that this person may be either nonexistent or male. The former suggestion is addressed by Bishop, who notes that Troilus, at least, is not sceptical.[68] The latter is discussed by Tison Pugh, who concludes that the poem avoids any statement which would definitively exclude the possibility. "The silences of *Troilus and Criseyde*," Pugh writes, "through their refusal to address in detail the heterosexual when one

67. Bishop, 36.

68. Ibid.

might expect it, afford one the opportunity to find the queer."[69] In effect, the secrecy surrounding Pandarus's love calls into question the gender of its object. In fact, however, the poem and its characters continually make the case that love's secrets should be kept on principle, even when there is nothing specifically transgressive, or fictional, about the love in question. Pandarus has apparently invited the same interpretation that Guinevere applies to Lanval's behaviour, by doing what Lanval does himself: that is, scrupulously keeping his love secret from everyone. It is emblematic of the different status (and relative complexity) of secrecy in each poem that in Chaucer's this possibility is left hovering inconclusively in the background, neither confirmed nor explained away.

Pandarus is presented, then, as a character wholly committed to the principle of secrecy in love. In this he seems to represent the status quo of the romance. The danger of gossip and publicity to a love affair is raised in a conventional way in the prologue to Book One. There the narrator asks happy lovers who have achieved their desire to pray for others: those who are in Troilus's plight, those who are in despair, "And ek for hem that falsly ben apeired / Thorugh wikked tonges, be it he or she" (ll. 38–40). The context is thus a sort of catalogue of the different typical states a lover may be in. Troilus himself, though initially scornful of love, knows enough to be determined to "werken pryuely" when he finds himself in love, because love known to many yields bitter fruit (1.379–385). He tells Pandarus that it is only for the best that he conceals the cause of his sorrow (1.581), and he fears that telling his secret may bring him to grief (1.737–

69. Pugh, 22. Pugh notes Criseyde's reference to Pandarus's "maistresse" (2.98), but suggests that since this is clearly some kind of joke, it could well be the kind of joke that would fit with his thesis (i.e. that Pandarus is out to Criseyde).

749). The narrator concurs, remarking on the folly of speaking of matters "That toucheth loue that oughte ben secree" (1.744). In *Il Filostrato*, the reason for Pandaro's lack of success as a lover is that he failed to keep his love secret.[70] Chaucer has changed this, so that instead of presenting a warning to Troilus about the danger of not loving secretly, Pandarus is a model of covert behaviour. In his roles of confidant to both parties and prime mover of the love affair, he has to tread carefully around the issue of secrecy, as of course this imperative threatens rather to cramp his style. He must convince Troilus to break strict secrecy by permitting him to know of his love, but then he must make it clear to Criseyde that Troilus can be trusted not to reveal the secret to anyone else, anyone who would really count. The way in which he talks about secrecy makes it clear just how important he does consider it. First there is his hyperbolic declaration that he would not reveal Troilus's secret even under torture (1.673–675). Then, having learned the truth, he is sanguine about the couple's prospects, because he knows that they can both keep a secret (1.987–994); this is presented as an important qualification for successful love. With Criseyde he plays down the issue of gossip, declaring that nobody will suspect Troilus's motives and that besides, he will only visit her infrequently (2.367–378). This seems disingenuous.[71] More sincere-sounding is the long speech in which he begs Troilus to be careful of Criseyde's honour and to preserve strict secrecy, not only for her sake but for his own (3.256 ff.). Criseyde herself is consistently afraid of gossip. She thinks of this at 2.724 ff., comments on "thise wikked tonges" when she considers the disadvantages of love, and begs Pandarus to beware "of goosissh

70. Boccaccio, *Il Filostrato*, 2.11.

71. And, as Mieszkowski notes, it puts the cart well before the horse, because Pandarus has not even officially admitted yet that Troilus's goal is a love affair. Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 149.

poeples speche" (3.584). Towards the end of the poem her fear of public dispraise and gossip recurs, when she uses it as an excuse to preserve secrecy until the end, secrecy which eventually helps to separate her from Troilus and facilitate her disloyalty. In response to Troilus's suggestion of flight together, she argues that he would be shamed if it became known that he abandoned Troy in its hour of need for the sake of a woman (4.1555–1561), that their love would be mistaken for "lust voluptuous" (4.1573), and that her "honeste, / That floureth ȝet" (4.1576–1577) would be irreparably sullied. While she still plans to rejoin Troilus, she expresses an entirely conventional, and, as it turns out, hollow contempt for "wikked tonges ianglerie" (5.755). Finally she uses her fear of wicked speech as an excuse once she *has* been unfaithful, claiming that she stays in the Greek camp in order to squelch rumours about them "with dissymelyng" (5.1610–1613). It is of course ironic that a character who becomes a byname for infidelity should be so concerned with her reputation, and Chaucer makes Criseyde somewhat aware of this. She laments:

> Allas, of me vnto the worldes ende
> Shall neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
> No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
> O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge;
> Thorugh-out the world my belle shal be ronge! (5.1058–1062)

As her life has already been touched by the negative effects of public opinion, her fear of gossip seems psychologically plausible. However, it is also quite conventional. The Old French love handbooks discussed in Chapter Two of this study, for instance, illustrate how central to the courtly love tradition is the dynamic in which the woman fears the speech of the public, or the

speech of the man which might provoke it, and the man fears the loss of the woman's love on account of public speech.

Crucially, however, there is no clear reason why Troilus and Criseyde need to conceal their love from the world. They do not commit adultery, and, as has often been remarked, there seems to be no reason why they could not be married.[72] As Criseyde's protestations at the idea of flight demonstrate, the necessity of maintaining secrecy does not foster their love but rather works against it. Yet there are reminders at every turn that secrecy and love go hand in hand. The reasons for this are never clearly articulated. Boccaccio's heroine gave voice to a sentiment straight out of Ovid and Andreas:

> Il nostro amor che cotanto ti piace,
> é per ch'el ti convien furtivamente
> e di rado venire a questa pace;
> ma se tu m'averai liberamente,
> tosto si spegnerá l'ardente face
> che or t'accende, e me similemente;
> per che, se 'l nostro amor vogliam che duri,
> com'or facciam, convien sempre si furi.
>
> Our love, which pleases you so much, does so because it is necessary for you to act furtively and to seldom come to this peace. But if you will possess me freely, soon the burning torch will be extinguished which now enkindles you and me likewise. For if we wish our love to last, as we now do, it must always be stolen.[73]

Chaucer's heroine says nothing of the kind. Readers of *Troilus and Criseyde* could arrive at the same conclusion, but it is never so cynically stated. Instead, the references to the importance of

72. See, for example, Spearing, *Chaucer*, 32; Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur*, 125.

73. Boccaccio, 4.153. Trans. apRoberts and Seldis.

secrecy connect Chaucer's poem to the roots of the courtly tradition and its subtler restatements of the Ovidian theme. Spearing specifically connects the importance of secrecy in the poem with developing ideas of privacy. Chaucer's characters, Spearing writes, are "children of an age which was first discovering the delights of private and personal experience, when such experience was still difficult to obtain."[74] As this study has been showing, however, to attempt to address this issue was no very new thing in Chaucer's time. Lee Patterson suggests another factor underlying the insistence on secrecy: the necessity to suppress overt expressions of female sexual desire. Patterson proposes that secrecy in the poem "is best understood as a metaphoric displacement of [the] need for *self*-concealment: it is less 'every pie and lette-game' (3.527) who threaten the affair than the guilt and shame with which sexuality, and specifically female sexuality, is invested."[75] Again, this is an explanation which could serve for Chaucer's poem, but also for earlier works which exhibit the same theme, though not the same emphasis on female sexuality.

Guthrie makes the case that the poem is concerned not only with secret love, but specifically with private love, and with privacy as an emerging category of experience and a right unconnected to property.[76] Whereas in romances of adultery such as the Tristan and Isolt texts, love must be kept secret because the lovers have no defensible right to the private experience they enjoy, in Chaucer's poem Pandarus's continual intrusions into "the circle of the

74. Spearing, *Chaucer*, 33.

75. Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 145.

76. Guthrie, 157.

lovers' intimacy" begin to suggest the idea that they have a right to privacy, and that he is violating it.[77] Guthrie presents a compelling and nuanced argument, which, like Mieszkowski's, presents Pandarus in a fairly unflattering light, but which makes a better case for the particular ethical specificity of *Troilus and Criseyde* than do Spearing's or Patterson's. Guthrie notes that in Chaucer's poem the surrounding society is not shown to pose a very real danger to the lovers; there are no spies or gossips to contend with. Instead, Pandarus himself poses a threat, even while he works to bring about the love affair. The narrative requires only a conventional go-between, who can allow Troilus to succeed with Criseyde while remaining a traditionally passive courtly lover, but Pandarus exceeds this requirement, overwhelming not only the story but the lovers themselves.[78]

Pandarus bridges the gap between secrecy and privacy, then, insuring the former while insidiously and continually violating the latter. He is in both Troilus and Criseyde's confidence, he insists on his own ability to keep secrets, and he is often found in private space. Pandarus's control of space is all the more remarkable because he is not employed in the capacity of an attendant in the entourage of either character. Instead of part of his job description, this trait has become part of his personality. He first appears entering Troilus's chamber as his friend laments there alone (1.548). As he sets off on his errand, the narrator invokes Janus, appropriately enough not only god of beginnings but also god of doors. Doors are never closed to Pandarus. When he comes to Criseyde's house, he immediately proceeds into her "paued parlour" (2.82). His

77. Ibid., 172.

78. Ibid., 154–55.

(invented?) scene of overhearing Troilus talk in his sleep takes place in a garden, an enclosed, private space, and he describes how he came "romyng al allone / In-to his [Troilus's] chaumbre" (2.555–556). We see him do this several times more, as well as entering Criseyde's chamber in Book Four.[79] He takes Criseyde into her garden to talk "preuely" (2.1114). He peeks in bed curtains (3.60), whispers with Criseyde (3.566–568), sits in the window with her (2.1186), and several times sits down on Troilus's bed (5.294, 3.236, etc.). When Troilus wakes from his nightmare in Book Five, he calls on Pandarus, who is seemingly close at hand (5.1244–1253). B. A. Windeatt notes that in the scene at Troilus's house in Book Two when Pandarus reports on his successful mission to Criseyde, Chaucer's expansion of the analogous scene in *Il Filostrato* includes a more vivid sense of domestic detail. In Boccaccio's poem, Pandaro comes straight to Troiolo and reports his news immediately.[80] In Chaucer's, Troilus first sends messengers for Pandarus and awaits their return (2.935–938), then has to sit through dinner and wait until bedtime, when "euery wight out at the dore hym dyghte" (2.948) and they may have privacy to talk. Similarly, Chaucer provides more of a sense of Criseyde's household than did Boccaccio, adding domestic details like Pandarus's retreat to the window to speak privately with his niece.[81] Boccaccio's Pandaro is first seen entering Troiolo's bedroom, like Pandarus, and he draws Troiolo into a garden for private conversation, like Pandarus, and comes into Criseyde's chamber. But Chaucer has changed the setting of one conversation from the public space of a

79. He comes into Troilus's chamber at 2.935, 2.1305, and 3.1585, and Criseyde's at 4.810. Sarah Stanbury counts "at least ten occasions" on which Pandarus enters Troilus or Criseyde's private space. Stanbury, "The Voyeur and the Private Life in *Troilus and Criseyde*," 143.

80. Chaucer, 199 n. 939–66.

81. Ibid., 215 n. 1163–9 and n. 1193–4.

temple to the privacy of a bedroom (3.232–8), brought Pandarus to Troilus's bedside in another scene which in *Il Filostrato* had Troiolo already up (3.1584), and added two more scenes in Troilus's bedroom in Book Five (5.292 and 5.514).[82] And of course the elaborate circumstances surrounding the lovers' first conversation and the consummation scene are entirely Chaucer's invention. In fact, most of the places in Chaucer's poem where Pandarus appears in private space are Chaucer's additions. Although Boccaccio's Pandaro was already a figure who had access to both halves of the couple in their homes, Chaucer has greatly amplified this aspect of the character.

Achieving enough privacy for a secret conversation in Chaucer's Troy is repeatedly shown to require some manoeuvring. Troilus and (in particular) Criseyde are shown to have many people around them at all times. Pandarus, who also has his own household, does not appear to have a large entourage to contend with; certainly he is able to go out alone without difficulty. Criseyde's household consists of as many people as her honour requires (1.126–130). So, presumably, does Prince Troilus's. In Book One we see him obliged to make an excuse to send them away in order to be alone in his chamber. In Book Five he must make an excuse for passing by Criseyde's empty house, "his meyne for to blende" (5.526). For Troilus and Pandarus, the privacy necessary for their conversation can only be achieved with shared sleeping arrangements. The situation is similar in Criseyde's establishment. Her home is referred to as a "palays," and when Pandarus enters her parlour he finds her surrounded by her women. Neither Troilus nor Criseyde lives a life of enforced seclusion, and the stratagems necessary to have

82. See Windeatt's notes on the specified passages.

private conversation in their households are not elaborate; but they are stratagems, and Chaucer does linger over them to some degree. We see Troilus making an excuse to send away his entourage and be alone (1.354–359), Pandarus making innocent conversation with Criseyde while the women of her retinue are present, and these latter discreetly withdrawing when Criseyde asks Pandarus to stay and "speke of wisdom" (2.214–217). Criseyde is able to go into her "closet" to be alone with her thoughts (2.610), or to write a private letter (2.1215–1216), but she is more usually seen amid a numerous entourage, as when she walks in her garden with her three nieces, "And other of hire wommen a gret route" (2.818), when she comes to dinner at Deiphebus's house with Antigone and Tarbe (2.1563), and when she arrives at Pandarus's house with male servants, one niece and nine or ten other women (3.596–598).

The Troy that Chaucer describes has often been assumed to be more or less a portrait of fourteenth-century London. H. M. Smyser and Saul N. Brody's separate attempts to map the events that take place in Pandarus's house onto the layout of a typical fourteenth-century townhouse produce coherent results, although they may exaggerate the regularity of household plans for the period.[83] More important than the exact layout of the houses is the impression their descriptions convey, as Mark Lambert points out:

> Architecturally, those small rooms, the little closet Criseyde occupies on the night of her visit to Pandarus, and the chamber where Troilus lies at his brother's house, would almost certainly have been located off to one side of the hall in which host and guests ate their meal. But linguistically, each of them is the small

83. Smyser, "The Domestic Background of *Troilus and Criseyde*"; Brody, "Making a Play for Criseyde: The Staging of Pandarus's House in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*."

> area *within*: one moves *in* to and then *out* from the little chamber into the hall again.[84]

The small rooms of the early part of the poem form part of the pattern of inward motion, reversed in the poem's tragic conclusion, as Criseyde leaves the encircling walls of Troy, and Troilus travels beyond the bounds of earthly life.[85]

Enough details about the architecture of the setting are revealed to make it seem that space is relatively compartmentalized, and the high-status main characters all have their own establishments and are able to come and go with relative freedom. If securing privacy were really all that were required, it would not be necessary for Pandarus to be as heavily involved in Troilus and Criseyde's affair as he is. However, part of his plot is aimed at securing—or, as Mieszkowski sees it, obviating—Criseyde's consent. His manipulation of private space works not only to allow the lovers opportunity to be alone together, but also to overcome Criseyde's reluctance to enter into an affair at all, and to egg Troilus on at strategic moments. In this sense, his involvement is all the more crucial, and, as Guthrie points out, more invasive of the lovers' privacy conceived conceptually rather than spatially.

Sarah Stanbury writes of *Troilus and Criseyde* that: "The creation of private space, the interior that is delineated by an entrance, a window, an exterior view, is one of the most remarkable and insistent features of the narrative."[86] By repeatedly describing private spaces and the different means of access to them, Chaucer makes the architecture of the besieged city part of

84. Lambert, "*Troilus*, Books I–III: A Criseydan Reading," 123.

85. Ibid.

86. Stanbury, "Voyeur," 142.

the love story. In both the lovers' initial conversation and the events leading up to the consummation, Pandarus's manipulation of private space is crucial. Lambert describes the parallelism of these two scenes: "We are aware in both—in the scene at Deiphebus's house and in that at Pandarus's—of movement from larger to smaller rooms, and also of meals taken in common out there, in the great hall."[87] In the first instance, Pandarus assembles the guests at Deiphebus's house and positions Troilus in an inner chamber, where access to him can be controlled. He uses the small size of the chamber as an excuse to bring the guests in a few at a time. The privacy appropriate to the reading of a letter sends Deiphebus and Helen out into the garden, and after they leave, Pandarus returns to the "grete chaumbre" to fetch Criseyde, first suggesting that she bring some attendants, then pretending to change his mind and advocate bringing her in himself. Mieszkowski draws a connection between the complexity of Pandarus's actions here and the manipulations of fabliaux "in which much of the pleasure of the story depends on its difficulty and neatness." A more important parallel, she argues, is that in Chaucer's poem as in the fabliau tradition, the complex plot turns on a successful attempt to deprive a female character of consent to entering into an affair.[88] Yet here, as in the consummation scene, we see Pandarus manipulating and trapping not only Criseyde, but also Troilus himself.[89]

The machinations which lead up to the lovers' consummation are much more elaborate.

87. Lambert, 122.

88. Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 162–63.

89. Ibid., 169.

In Pandarus's house, the convolutions of his plot to bring the lovers together are mirrored in the architectural details described. This time Pandarus uses space that belongs to him, staging the whole thing within his own home. Troilus has been shut in the *stewe* since midnight, unknown to any but Pandarus. The elaborate sleeping arrangements proposed by Pandarus are allegedly meant to ensure that Criseyde and her host are "nat … far asonder" and that she should not be disturbed by the noise of rain and thunder (3.659–662). In fact, he takes care to provide Criseyde with a small, *fully* private bedchamber, excluding her female attendants but keeping them nearby for her convenience. They are close enough to be called if she should need them (3.684–686), but they will not, as it turns out, be woken by anyone entering Criseyde's chamber, because of the alternate entrance of which only Pandarus is aware. A curfew is apparently enforced among Criseyde's women, and possibly others in the house (3.690–693). Chaucer focuses attention on the minutiae of the scene, giving a sense of Pandarus's machinations, contrasting quotidian details with the excesses of love, as a net of petty circumstances is drawn around Troilus and (especially) Criseyde, bringing them together.

Pandarus still has the run of the house, after the curfew that sends the attendants to bed, and he goes to open the door of the room where Troilus waits (3.698). He creeps about softly, and sits down by Troilus "stille as stoon" (3.699). Then he precedes Troilus into Criseyde's room, opening the trap-door and physically drawing his friend behind him, "by the lappe" (3.742), in an action recalling that of Lunete. The noise of the storm, which Pandarus had professed to fear would keep Criseyde awake, in fact serves to prevent anyone overhearing what

goes on within her chamber, a detail which suggests that under normal circumstances being overheard by servants might be a problem (3.743–744). When Criseyde wakes, Pandarus keeps her quiet by expressing his concern for not waking anyone else (755–756), and suggesting that anyone who came in and saw him in her room would get the wrong idea (763). He has in fact come into her bedroom in an inappropriate way. Guthrie notes that although the space technically belongs to Pandarus, he is nevertheless quite clearly shown invading Criseyde's privacy within it.[90]

Pandarus still has much work to do, even after all his manipulation of sleeping arrangements, even after he has actually brought Troilus into Criseyde's room, to get Criseyde to see Troilus that night. All the rest is done with verbal persuasion, which has always been his most powerful line of attack. He must convince Criseyde that she needs to act now, that seeing Troilus tomorrow will be too late, that sending her ring is not enough—all this while Troilus is actually standing in the shadows. But if Pandarus had not already carefully arranged the setting so that Criseyde is in a room by herself, separated from her attendants, and Troilus can come directly in, none of his persuasion could overcome the obstacle of the lack of privacy. In fact, however, privacy continues to be lacking, because Pandarus continues to be present, and we are made to see this as something awkward in a way that, for instance, Kay's presence was not in *Lancelot*. Pandarus's presence is not a malign spying one like Frocin's, either, but Chaucer has developed the character to the point where he cannot serve as a simple functionary or be completely forgotten while he remains in the room with the lovers. Pandarus takes care to tell

90. Guthrie, 171.

Criseyde: "I wol my self be with yow al this nyght" (l. 915). It is not clear whether this is supposed to mean, "Nothing will happen because I'll be here," or "You don't need to worry about being caught." Is he offering to protect Criseyde from Troilus, in other words, or Criseyde and Troilus from prying gossips? The ambiguity leaves room for Criseyde to interpret as she chooses. Among the factors that have an effect on Criseyde, and perhaps work to excuse her, is Troilus's "priue commyng and the siker place" (921).

Towards the end of the poem, as the narrative moves from private to more public spaces, Pandarus loses control and importance. Benson notes that Pandarus's final speech begins with "I may do the namore" (5.1731) and ends with "I kan namore seye" (5.1743): "Because Pandarus realizes himself almost entirely through practical action and language meant to influence others, his announcement that both are lost means his extinction as a character."[91] In Book Four, as Stanbury writes, "Pandarus makes repeated forays into private apartments … but in these forays [he] lacks the power to wrest secrets or fabricate an effectual story" as he did before. Following the consummation of Troilus and Criseyde's love, "Pandarus is increasingly excluded from the private life." In Book Five his control is completely removed, and we see him having to be sent for by Troilus, and even then unable to come for a while because he has been kept busy by Priam, presumably on *public* business. Simultaneously, the narrative "leave[s] the inner chamber for the outer and public world," with Troilus looking at Criseyde's empty house from outside, and finally looking down at the earth from the eighth sphere.[92]

91. Benson, *Chaucer's Troilus*, 93.

92. Stanbury, "Voyeur," 153–54.

Besides his various purported sources, the other figure to whom Pandarus is frequently linked is the poem's narrator, or indeed Chaucer himself. Lambert formulates this perception well when he writes of Pandarus: "we are often unsure just where his manipulation ends and that of a larger, vaguer force begins."[93] That is, there are places where it is difficult to tell Pandarus's stories apart from Chaucer's.[94] Allen J. Frantzen refers to Pandarus as the narrator's surrogate and "chief framer" in particular of Book Two of the poem. Like the narrator a servant of the servants of Love (1.15), apparently deriving vicarious pleasure from his involvement in the main characters' affair, Pandarus often repeats observations made by the narrator.[95] Spearing compares Pandarus to Chaucer, noting that like the poet, he creates situations and fictions in order to further the plot.[96] The image quoted at the beginning of this chapter is one of the poem's most explicit equations of Pandarus's plotting with literary creation.

This equating of character with author recalls critical responses to Thessala and Lunete. The latter is a particularly clear analogue to Chaucer's character.[97] They even use a similar phrase: "poour n'aiez / De ma dame qu'elle vous morde," (1968–1969; "don't be afraid / That my lady will bite you,") says Lunete, as Yvain stands dumbfounded before Laudine; "Artow

93. Lambert, 117.

94. I am thinking in particular of the account that he gives Criseyde of discovering Troilus lamenting in a garden, and later his tale of Troilus entering his house by the infamous and possibly nonexistent *goter*. Because the narrator does not tell us in either case that he is lying, we are left in doubt as to whether or not either account contains elements of truth.

95. Frantzen, *Troilus and Criseyde: The Poem and the Frame*, 64.

96. Spearing, *Medieval Poet*, 133. Spearing also considers Pandarus to derive sexual pleasure from arranging the affair, something which, like Hill's imputation of unconscious homosexual desire, is difficult to prove.

97. Muscatine calls Pandarus "a poetic descendent of Lunete" as well as of numerous other go-betweens. Muscatine, *French Tradition*, 139.

agast so that she wol the bite?" (3.737) asks Pandarus, impatient with Troilus's lengthy prayers before entering Criseyde's chamber. The two characters' manipulation of events and, in particular, of other characters, has caused each of them to be viewed with mingled admiration and suspicion by commentators. Each seems to evoke an emotional response even from otherwise detached critics.[98] Both have more work to do than uniting a couple already in love; in each case there is quite a large task of persuasion required. Mieszkowski diminishes the similarity between the two by distinguishing between Lunete's reasoned arguments and Pandarus's subtle entrapment, and by claiming that Lunete does not seek to make Laudine love Yvain, merely to make her marry him.[99] These are fine distinctions upon which to base an assertion that Pandarus behaves in a way totally unprecedented in the romance tradition. Pandarus is a much more fully developed character than Lunete, in much the same way that the architecture of Chaucer's Troy is more coherent and concretely imagined than the confusing interior of Laudine's castle. In both cases it is true that an idea of the go-between's motivation and personality can only be built upon a shaky foundation of speculation. In the case of Pandarus, however, we are given enough incidental detail by Chaucer to make this speculation both more tempting and less necessary.

Pandarus, then, is a striking character who has attracted a wide variety of attackers and defenders, and a host of inconclusive theories about his origins and motivation. He plays a central part in the drama, and his part is elaborated in greater detail and with greater enthusiasm

98. As may have become obvious by now, I like both of them.

99. Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 150–51.

than are lavished on most other characters of his type. In short, he seems to take the role of the go-between to a new level. Yet his preoccupations connect him securely to the heart of the courtly love tradition with its obsessive concern with secrecy. A number of critics have voiced the conclusion that *Troilus and Criseyde* is not only a complex but a fundamentally and irresolvably ambiguous poem. This is the central theme of Benson's book-length study, which considers the multiplicity of interpretations of the poem in order to illustrate the extent to which opposite readings can be equally valid.[100] Mieszkowski arrives at a similar conclusion with her analysis of the double go-between tradition. Pandarus seems, indeed, to be at the heart of this irresolvable ambiguity, as he is at the heart of the poem's ambiguous relation to the theme of secrecy, which is both forward-looking, as Guthrie suggests, and, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, quite traditional.

Comedy: *The Miller's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale*

The last two works to be considered here demonstrate some of the ways in which lovers' quests for privacy can be played out in texts that wholeheartedly mock rather than celebrate the conventions of courtly love. The Miller's and Merchant's tales both take elements of the courtly love tradition and render them absurd. Both turn on lovers' attempts to gain privacy for the conduct of their illicit affairs, like many of the other texts considered here. In the *Miller's Tale* the machinations of an urban couple go to preposterous extremes, well beyond what seems

100. Benson, *Chaucer's Troilus*.

required either to maintain secrecy or to secure privacy.[101] In the *Merchant's Tale*, an aristocratic wife secures privacy for adultery in the courtly setting of a garden, but the preceding courtship and resultant union are rendered more grotesque than appealing. Neither tale involves the intervention of a third party; rather, all the plotting and manipulation are carried out by the lovers themselves. In the *Miller's Tale* it is the cunning lover who displays the mastery over private space that characterized many of the intermediary characters. In the *Merchant's Tale* the unfaithful wife is the prime agent in securing privacy.[102]

That these two tales mock courtly conventions has often been remarked, as has the fact that each involves significant issues of privacy. However, these two aspects have not often been connected; instead, the emphasis on privacy has been seen as reflective of the tales' debt to fabliaux. As I have been demonstrating throughout this study, however, privacy is a central concern of the courtly tradition as well, and these tales can be seen to make comic use of that aspect of the tradition.

Courtly convention is subtly mocked in the language of both the *Miller's Tale* and the *Merchant's Tale*. Benson, who argues that Chaucer creates a "unique poetic" for each of the *Canterbury Tales*, notes the common elements of the Miller's, Reeve's, Shipman's and Merchant's tales. In each of these, "a husband is cuckolded by a younger man whom he himself

101. The carpenter is shown spending the day away from home on two occasions in the poem, and on one other we are specifically told that he makes a habit of this and is sometimes gone for days at a time. Combined with Nicholas's privileged position as a member of the household, these circumstances would seem to allow the lovers much easier and less dangerous opportunities to be alone together than the one Nicholas manufactures.

102. I am deliberately avoiding referring to these texts as fabliaux, as I find the term somewhat limiting and unhelpful. There has, however, been considerable debate about the applicability of this genre name, some of which will be discussed below.

has introduced into the household. All four stories take place in a restricted setting, and the culminating events happen in a space inside another space—an enclosed garden or a bedroom." The most significant differences between the tales, Benson suggests, are not in plot but in style.[103] Interestingly, each of the two tales considered here makes use of a different register of courtly language for its mockery. While the *Merchant's Tale* depicts aristocratic characters whose vocabulary is not unlike that of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Miller's Tale* uses the conventional diction of earlier Middle English romance to comic effect. Donaldson's 1950 study demonstrates how "clichés borrowed from the vernacular versions of the code of courtly love" serve to enrich with comedy the characters and dialogue of the tale. "The key to the matter," Donaldson writes, "is in the constant epithet applied to the hero … that is, in hende Nicholas' almost inseparable *hende*." The term is common in Middle English verse, ubiquitously attached to genteel heroes and heroines, that is to every "proper exponent of courtly love." But Chaucer does not use it to describe any of his own aristocratic lovers; it does not appear attached to Troilus or Criseyde, Arveragus or Dorigen, Palamon, Arcite or Emily. Instead, it is applied eleven times to Nicholas in the *Miller's Tale*, and scarcely anywhere else. "It is clear," Donaldson writes, "that for Chaucer 'hende' had become so déclassé and shopworn as to be ineligible for employment in serious poetry."[104] Yet the fact that it had a longstanding association with romance characters adds to the comic effect of its use in the *Miller's Tale*. Here, in fact, the term is so firmly associated with Nicholas that it is not only the narrator who calls him *hende* but even the

103. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama of Style: Poetic Variety and Contrast in the Canterbury Tales*, 89.

104. Donaldson, "Idiom of Popular Poetry in the *Miller's Tale*," 123.

carpenter himself.[105] As Donaldson notes, Nicholas embodies not so much the developed meaning of the word as its basic significance of "at hand, handy." Much turns upon the fact that Nicholas, as opposed to Absolon, is "at hand."[106] Similarly, the phrase *derne love* is given a courtly valence in earlier Middle English lyric poetry, but is never applied by Chaucer to serious characters.[107] Absolon's use of the phrase *love-longynge* is another instance of the same thing,[108] as is his petition for Alison's *ore* ("mercy"), a word used nowhere else by Chaucer but also resonating with Middle English romance tradition.[109] Much the same could be said for the word *lemman*, used by both Absolon and Nicholas, but never in *Troilus and Criseyde*. The vocabulary of love is not exclusively restricted to native Middle English terms, however, as Absolon is said to stay up at night "For paramours" (3354), and *hende* Nicholas knows of both *deerne love* and *solas* (3200).[110]

Courtly parody is also present in the tale's descriptions of its characters, particularly of Absolon and Alison. The portrait of Absolon uses a number of descriptors more commonly attached to female characters, here presented in a deflationary manner. For example, the romance phrase for a lady's complexion, "As whit as is the blosme upon the rys" is applied not to

105. Chaucer, "The Miller's Tale," l. 3462. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number.

106. Donaldson, "Idiom," 122–24.

107. Ibid., 125–26.

108. Ibid., 135.

109. Ibid., 137.

110. *Solas* is what Nicholas and Alison enjoy in the carpenter's bed (3654), and *paramours* is what Absolon swears off after his misadventure at the window (3756–3758).

Absolon's face but to his surplice.[111] Benson notes: "Even the surprising detail that his eyes are as 'greye as goos' exactly defines the clerk's difference from the genuine courtly lover (I.3317): the usual phrase in the romances is 'gray as glass,' but Absolon is, indeed, a silly goose and the change accurately predicts his amatory incompetence."[112] The description of Alison similarly focusses on her clothes, turning the expected catalogue of the heroine's physical perfections into a minute, but nevertheless suggestive, account of her wardrobe.[113] This passage takes the conventional catalogue of the lady's appearance and transposes the details to put them into the context of contemporary Oxford, but Alison is still, like a romance heroine, festooned with superlatives. Her description thus functions on two levels, Charles Muscatine suggests; it both honestly presents Alison as a paragon of beauty in her own setting, and at the same time adds a comic element similar to that presented by Absolon.[114]

After Donaldson, most studies that deal with the relation of the *Miller's Tale* to courtly convention are less specific about how that convention is to be defined. Muscatine writes: "The courtliness in the *Miller's Tale* is never given full, traditional value. It is never a norm, always an idiosyncrasy; and it is juxtaposed to a naturalism of exceptional force and vitality."[115] The "naturalism" which Muscatine detects includes an unusually close attention to practical details: the names of characters, the geographical locale, the layout of the house, the days of the week

111. Ibid., 127–28.

112. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 78.

113. Donaldson, "Idiom," 131.

114. Muscatine, *French Tradition*, 229.

115. Ibid., 223.

and hours of the day.[116] But what exactly is the "courtliness" to which he refers? More obvious than parody of the linguistic level, and at the same time more difficult to satisfactorily define, is the parody of courtly convention inherent in the characters' behaviour, the use not only of certain terms but of certain ways of shaping, presenting and understanding their experience. The idea of dying for love, for instance, is a staple of courtly lyric and romance. After grabbing Alison, Nicholas says, "Ywis, but if ich have my wille, / For deerne love of thee, lemman, I spille" (3277–3278). And again, after a mention of a crude physical action: "Lemman, love me al atones, / Or I wol dyen, also God me save!" (3280–3281) It is the combination of crude action with apparently courtly speech which is so outrageous here. We are told that he succeeds by virtue of his words: "This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye, / And spak so faire, and profred him so faste, / That she hir love hym graunted atte laste" (3288–3290). However, it is clear that the whole episode has involved a combination of physical assault and verbal persuasion, and that both have been effective in winning over Alison.[117]

Absolon presents a different level of parody in his behaviour. Benson describes how Chaucer distinguishes between "Nicholas's artful appropriation of courtly language" and "Absolon's ludicrous incompetence with the same idiom."[118] Unlike Nicholas, Absolon is not skilled in the ways of *deerne love*; rather, he is given to publicly ogling married women, and his wooing of Alison is singularly lacking in discretion. Rather than cynically co-opting the language

116. Ibid., 224.

117. Cf. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 79; Muscatine, *French Tradition*, 233.

118. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 81.

of courtly wooing, as Nicholas does, Absolon seriously attempts to live as a courtly lover, with absurd results. He takes a nap in order to be able to stay up all night (3685 ff.), and describes symptoms of lovesickness (sweating, fainting, anorexia) which, though quite conventional, do not make him appear in a very favourable light, and should really not have been mentioned in the context of courtship.[119] His speech at Alison's window moves from imagery recalling the *Song of Songs* (honey and cinnamon) to greater and greater absurdities, made the more ridiculous by their juxtaposition. Patterson sums up the two types of "travesty" of courtly love presented by Nicholas and Absolon: "Nicholas is the predatory seducer who deploys the forms of courtly wooing in order to gratify his appetites, Absolon the narcissistic, inefficient dandy who plays at lovemaking without understanding how to do it."[120] Absolon's language is from the beginning much meeker than Nicholas's, and rather than hitting on the right combination of words and action, as Nicholas does, he tries out a whole array of possible methods of wooing:

> He kembeth his lokkes brode, and made hym gay;
> He woweth hire by meenes and brocage,
> And swoor he wolde been hir owene page;
> He syngeth, brokkynge as a nyghtyngale;
> He sente hire pyment, meeth, and spiced ale,
> And wafres, pipyng hoot out of the gleede;
> And, for she was of town, he profred meede (3374–3380)

The list, which is not un-Ovidian, descends from the plausibly courtly to the altogether base, and even includes an attempt at the use of a go-between. All of it fails, of course. Kara Virginia

119. Muscatine, *French Tradition*, 227–28.

120. Patterson, 260. Patterson does not dwell on this point, but goes on to argue that the poem's main satirical thrust is anticlerical rather than antiseigneurial.

Donaldson attempts to argue that Absolon "appropriates the authoritative language of the courtly lover in order to seduce Alisoun without recognizing that the controlling social context is not a courtly one."[121] What Absolon does, according to this Donaldson, is to appropriate the language of courtly love "to gain power over Alisoun's sexuality," borrowing "the monological language of courtly texts to gain the status of that language," but failing to recognize his own (bourgeois?) unfitness to aspire to this status, and misreading Alison as a result.[122] Donaldson's argument here seems to suggest that Absolon's use of courtly language is ineffective because it is the inappropriate type of language to use, not because he uses it ineptly. But in fact it is the same type of discourse used successfully by Nicholas.

Benson characterizes Nicholas as "a gifted storyteller," another artificer figure who shapes the plot of the story he is in.[123] His manipulation of John is "so elaborate that it suggests love of inventiveness for its own sake,"[124] and he displays powers of fabrication to equal those of the tale's narrator.[125] Nicholas's scheming is aimed at securing privacy, of course, but also the luxury of a whole night with Alison, and the satisfaction of audaciously violating the carpenter's control over his wife in the carpenter's own bed, with the carpenter still in the house. As was the case in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the machinations undertaken by this scheming character exceed the apparent necessities of the situation. Here, however, this excess forms the main interest of the

121. Donaldson, "Alisoun's Language: Body, Text and Glossing in Chaucer's 'the Miller's Tale,'" 139.

122. Ibid., 145–46.

123. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 71.

124. Ibid., 72.

125. Ibid., 82.

tale.

The tale abounds in references to privacy and activities labelled *privee*. Various senses of the term are deployed. Nicholas is "sleigh and ful privee" (3201), and when he assaults Alison, he grabs her "prively" (3276). Alison advises him: "Myn housbonde is so ful of jalousie / That but ye wayte wel and been privee, / I woot right wel I nam but deed" (3294–3296). John declares that "Men sholde nat knowe of Goddes pryvetee" (3454) echoing words already used by the Miller, but without the added mention of wives; then Nicholas himself uses the phrase, to account for some seemingly arbitrary aspects of the plan he explains to John (3558). John tells his "privetee" to Alison after receiving instructions from Nicholas, "And she was war, and knew it bet than he" (3603–3604). Both *prively* and *privetee* are used in close conjunction in explanation of John's activities in preparation for the supposed flood (3622–3623). Absolon asks "ful prively" after John at Osenay (3662), but this action is not really a model of discretion; rather, he seems to be seeking gossip about John, and receives it. He resolves to knock "pryvely" at the window (3676), and Nicholas's final ill-fated action is taken with the same adverb (3802).

Thomas James Farrell, in his study of the *Miller's Tale*, discusses the importance of privacy to the fabliau tradition:

> Most Old French fabliaux construct a private universe, one where society's concerns and well-being are subordinated to the satisfaction of some character's personal desires … The genre's two chief narrative topoi—sexual triumph and physical battery—do not provide a realistic depiction of the fabric of life so much as powerful metaphors for private vengeance or domination … The typical setting is also private, since fabliau plots repeatedly demand small hiding places —tubs, closets, rafters, chests, cupboards, nooks—and of course beds. These loci circumscribe or limit the action, and also dictate that the typical larger

> settings be relatively crowded middle-class houses rather than the spacious halls and wide forests of romance.

In the fabliau, "characters are fully empowered to manipulate private space to their own advantage."[126] As we saw in the case of *Troilus and Criseyde*, however, romance need not unfold in "spacious halls and wide forests," and the manipulation of private space can have other effects than the broadly comic. Farrell notes that just as justice is a public concept, "privy" action is often characterized as unjust. There is therefore in the fabliaux a profound lack of justice.[127] Farrell is concerned with discussing the extent to which the *Miller's Tale* is in fact a fabliau; he formulates the problem as one which hinges on the concept of privacy, because privacy is central to the fabliau genre. Thus, if the tale is to be considered a fabliau, we should expect to find a fundamental concern with private activity and a lack of anything that could be termed justice; if these features are not found, then the tale is not a fabliau.[128] Up to the first kiss at the window, Farrell argues, the tale operates according to conventional fabliau rules, concerned with private vengeance rather than with justice. When Absolon returns to the window with the hot ploughshare, however, things change; his intention is to carry out a further act of private vengeance upon Alison, but he is foiled in this attempt, and instead the tale seems to deliver a just punishment for Nicholas. Similarly, Farrell notes, it is not Nicholas's intention to further injure John by crying "Water!" but the effect is to add physical harm and public humiliation to his state of cuckoldry. Thus "the two schemers against 'Goddes pryvetee' both receive a sharp

126. Farrell, "Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in the *Miller's Tale*," 773.

127. Ibid., 776.

128. Ibid., 779.

physical rebuke for their supposed metaphysical calculation."[129] When Nicholas seeks to "amenden al the jape" he believes himself to be still in control of events, still playing an authorial role in the unfolding fabliau plot. However, Absolon was not part of his plan: "Nicholas, suddenly finding himself inscribed in Absolon's comically inept effort to compose a courtly romance, will be unable to rewrite the text as a new fabliau."[130] In this way, Farrell suggests, the two genres almost cancel each other out.

Karma Lochrie also makes the claim that in the fabliau, "The outcome of personal desires … is directly related to the lovers' ability to make their actions private." Much the same could, of course, be said of illicit love stories in romance, a consideration which Lochrie neglects. She goes on to argue:

> Privacy is the governing principle and woman's 'pryvete' the object of desire in the fabliau, even if both are ultimately violated by the public world of angry parish clerks and bemused neighbors. In fact, the logic of the fabliau requires that this private world and women's sexuality be first secreted away and then exposed to the laughter of the public, including the world of the tale and the reading public.[131]

It would seem, then, that public exposure accompanied by ridicule is more properly the mark of the fabliau than is the struggle to attain and preserve privacy. Lochrie suggests that "The elaborate ruse that Nicholas concocts serves to increase [the lovers'] desire and pleasure, rather

129. Ibid., 780.

130. Ibid., 781. Farrell's subsequent discussion of the use of 'privily' at this point in the text fails to take into account the word's more basic meaning of 'secretly,' which is clearly what is meant here.

131. Lochrie, "Women's 'Pryvetees' and Fabliau Politics in the *Miller's Tale*," 293–94.

than to protect the woman's honor, as such furtive devices are supposedly designed to do."[132] Lochrie is right to point out that Nicholas's scheme drastically exceeds what is necessary for him to consummate his affair with Alison, and that protecting her honour seems to have little to do with it. But similarly, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and in *Lanval* with its supernatural proscription, the ends to which the lovers go to protect their privacy apparently far exceed the mundane requirements of their situation. The difference is that here the excess proves absurd.

Nicholas is identified to a fascinating degree with his dwelling space. He is introduced as the carpenter's lodger, and after the initial account of his astrological abilities, we get this description:

> Of deerne love he koude and of solas;
> And therto he was sleigh and ful privee,
> And lyk a mayden meke for to see.
> A chambre hadde he in that hostelrye
> Allone, withouten any compaignye,
> Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote;
> And he hymself as swette as is the roote
> Of lycorys or any cetewale.
> His Almageste, and bookes grete and smale,
> His astrelabie, longynge for his art,
> His augrym stones layen faire apart,
> On shelves couched at his beddes heed;
> His presse ycovered with a faldyng reed;
> And al above ther lay a gay sautrie,
> On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
> So swetely that all the chambre rong … . (3200–3215)

Coming immediately after the account of his astrological skill, the mention of his ability in the field of love sounds like a reference to a technical accomplishment. Indeed, it seems clear that

132. Ibid., 298.

the set phrase *deerne love* should be taken in this way, along with the conventional *solas*, the goal of the game to which Nicholas knows the rules. His slyness and discretion, along with his maidenly demeanour, serve to protect him from suspicion, thereby making him more apt as a lover. Peter Goodall points out that Nicholas's private bedroom in the *Miller's Tale* calls for explanation, citing evidence to suggest that it was not common for university students in this period to have private rooms.[133] Most members of the University either lived in lodgings or in academic halls, the latter of which involved communal dormitories. In the fifteenth century there was a movement to confine university students to academic halls, meaning that Nicholas might have been seen as somewhat anomalous as a student lodging in the town.[134] Attention is drawn to the privacy of Nicholas's chamber, emphasized in the conventionally redundant line: "Allone, withouten any compaignye." The room is suggestive of eremitic solitude and scholarly obsessions, with its carefully itemized and neatly arranged contents, but it is also appropriate to a character who is "sleigh and ful privee," and it would seem to provide an ideal setting for *deerne love*.[135]

As it turns out, though, it never does. The suggestion which is followed up on in the tale is the one which associates private space with arcane study, not with illicit love. Goodall suggests the possibility that private space was associated more strongly with study than with

133. Goodall, ""Allone, Withouten Any Compaignye": Privacy in the First Fragment of the *Canterbury Tales*," 5–6. Goodall somewhat exaggerates the degree to which a private room would have been uncommon for someone in Nicholas's position and social milieu. His discussion of the scarcity of private bedrooms depends on Margaret Wood's remarks pertaining mainly to aristocratic houses, not to the type of dwelling John the carpenter inhabits. John's house need only have two separate chambers, which does not seem excessive.

134. Ibid., 8.

135. Goodall notes the "sensual qualities" in the description of Nicholas's room. Ibid., 9.

sleeping in this period, and notes that this fits with the sense of *prive* as "secret." Nicholas, portrayed as a person with a desire for private space and an inclination towards solitude, is also portrayed as pursuing particularly secretive studies.[136] This type of activity is shown to be suspect: in the carpenter's view, "Study is seen as the process of investigating what should be left alone and remain a secret, a pryvetee."[137] Nicholas makes good use of his private chamber in the course of his over-elaborate plot to spend the night with Alison, but when that night arrives, they spend it in her chamber. Instead of being a private space for love-making, Nicholas's chamber, barred from the inside, is the site in which he stages a scene to begin his trickery of the carpenter. Secretly ("ful softe") he provisions his private chamber so that he may comfortably remain there for a couple of days, in order to occasion alarm (3410–3418). Far from depriving himself of material comforts in the service of love, Nicholas "eet and sleep, or dide what hym leste" (3421) while hiding in his chamber. The not-yet-cuckolded husband and his servant force the chamber door of the would-be lover, but with the intention of saving his life rather than in an attempt to punish adultery. When John has succeeded, as he thinks, in rousing Nicholas from his trance, Nicholas promises to tell him "in privetee" (3493) what he has discovered. The primary meaning of this phrase is "in secret"; Nicholas says that he will tell no one but John of this matter. But the setting for this private conversation is the same private bedroom, with the door shut once more (3499).[138] This is the main purpose of the private chamber in this tale: as the setting in which

136. Ibid., 10.

137. Ibid., 13.

138. Evidently it has been replaced on its hinges in the interim.

Nicholas can convey his deceptive *conseil* to John, swearing him to secrecy (3502–3507). The *conseil* does not concern secret love; but at the same time, John's promise is a crucial aspect of the conduct of a secret affair. And the promise that he makes recalls the qualities required of confidants in other stories of illicit love: "Quod tho this sely man, 'I nam no labbe, / Ne, though I seye, I nam nat lief to gabbe'" (3509–3510). The carpenter is said several times to be jealous (3224, 3294, 3851), but none of his jealousy attaches to Nicholas, who has succeeded in deflecting all suspicion by associating himself and his habits, which are in fact entirely appropriate for a courtly lover, with scholarly obsession. "Ultimately," as Goodall writes, "the sexual significance of privacy is superseded by its other meanings."[139]

There are, then, a number of ways of looking at the role of privacy in this tale: as a marker of the fabliau genre, a concept that glides wittily from scholarly to sexual associations and back again, and, finally, an element in the tale's light-hearted parody of courtly romance. The manipulation of private space is carried out not by an auxiliary figure but by one of the principal actors. He is able, like Pandarus, to act as an authorial surrogate for a while, but control of the plot is eventually wrested from him, so that the tale ends with further comedy at his expense.

In the *Merchant's Tale*, courtly conventions are mocked within an aristocratic setting, and there is nothing light-hearted about the treatment.[140] The parallels to courtly literature have long been recognized, but the tale has often been equated with its teller to such a degree that the characters' aristocratic status has been forgotten or purposefully diminished by critics. In fact,

139. Ibid., 9.

140. Cf. Boothman, "'Who Hath No Wyf, He is No Cokewold': A Study of John and January in Chaucer's Miller's and Merchant's Tales," 10.

however, the aristocratic setting is important to the way in which the tale's bitter parody of courtly love plays out.

In 1937 Margaret Schlauch referred to "the threadbare conventions of courtly love" used to embellish "that puppet figure, the enamoured squire" Damian.[141] She goes on to suggest that Chaucer deliberately turned away from the conventions of courtly love because he eventually perceived and disapproved of its aristocratic bias and inapplicability to all walks of life. Schlauch lays out a comparison of passages from the *Merchant's Tale* with passages from the romance *Amadas et Ydoine* to show how faithfully the courtly tropes are repeated by Chaucer for satiric purposes. The romance's hero is in a similar social position to Damian with respect to the lady's husband, both are overcome by faintness in public as love seizes them, and both retreat to bed, apparently ill.[142] The romance heroine takes much longer to capitulate than May, but finally does so as a result of the same combination of pity and fear at the idea of the young man's dying from love. Both men are then restored to health by visits from their ladies.[143] C. Hugh Holman enumerates a few more characteristic elements of courtly love in the tale, this time with reference to Andreas Capellanus.[144] He too sees Chaucer as rejecting and revising in the *Canterbury Tales* the enthusiasms of his younger days and earlier poetry. Muscatine also asserts that courtliness is an important theme here, more so than in the *Miller's Tale*. He offers an interesting comparison of the three texts discussed in the present chapter, noting a progressive deterioration in the

141. Schlauch, "Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* and Courtly Love," 202.

142. Ibid., 207.

143. Ibid., 208.

144. Holman, "Courtly Love in the Merchant's and the Franklin's Tales," 246–47.

presentation of the courtly:

> In the *Troilus* courtly love is revealed, by comparison with naturalism, to be impractical, naïve, shortsighted; but its idealism preserves for it an indestructible value. In the *Miller's Tale* the courtliness is at least innocent, parochial, harmlessly misplaced. In the *Merchant's Tale* we have courtliness without its innocence or idealism. The 'courtly' action is propelled by egotism and sensuality. The naturalism that is played against this courtliness is similarly bled of value.[145]

The narrator of the *Merchant's Tale* "is both prominent and unsympathetic."[146] We are shown no reason for May's acceding to Damian's request; their courtship is entirely perfunctory. Muscatine describes the "perverted diction" of the tale, which is thick with rhetoric, appropriate to a courtly narrative, but presents a "dyspeptic" tone.[147] He is never specific, however, about what he takes to be the "courtly" as opposed to the "naturalistic" elements of the narrative.

The use of courtly language and modes of behaviour is more striking here than in the *Miller's Tale*. Like Nicholas, "fresshe May" has an almost inseparable epithet. But whereas Nicholas's designation was humorously apt, May's, with its associations of cleanness and innocence, proves sourly inappropriate.[148] Damian, on the other hand, makes the conventional courtly lover ridiculous simply by embodying him in a particularly insipid form. He reacts appropriately to the first pangs of love: "He was so ravysshed on his lady May / That for the

145. Muscatine, *French Tradition*, 231.

146. Ibid., 232.

147. Ibid., 233.

148. Benson notes that the epithet becomes increasingly inappropriate as her behaviour worsens. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 119.

verray peyne he was ny wood. / Almoost he swelte and swowned ther he stood."[149] The phrase "swelte and swowned" echoes Absolon's "I swelte and swete" (3703), highlighting the fact that by contrast with the foolish clerk, the foolish squire gets it right. Love forces Damian to retreat hastily to bed (1779), where he weeps and laments, disconsolate until he may be pitied by the object of his affection (1781–1782). This reaction is ascribed to the effect of Venus's *brond*, flourished at the marriage feast where Damian succumbs to May's charms (1723–1728). Damian's love is focussed on his social superior, unlike Nicholas and Absolon's, but in keeping with a courtly stereotype. He "langwissheth for love" (1867) and the narrator addresses a peculiar facetious direct speech to him, telling him that May will deny his suit, or betray him to his lord, which must be what he fears. He burns in Venus's fire, and "dyeth for desyr" (1876), and so is determined to risk his life by declaring himself. The detail that he must borrow a pen case in order to write to May is prosaic enough; there is no sending of a swan or carving of wood chips into a stream here. However, the message that he writes is in poetic form, "in manere of a compleynt or a lay" (1881) a detail which is often overlooked. The undercutting of romance convention at the point is not yet devastating.

The aristocratic setting of the *Merchant's Tale* adds a layer of resemblance to romance that was lacking in the *Miller's Tale*, and makes the narrative's departures from that mode all the more striking. The narrator makes much of Damian's role in January's household, in a rather surprising passage:

O perilous fyr, that in the bedstraw bredeth!

149. Chaucer, "The Merchant's Tale," ll. 1174–776. Subsequent citations are noted in the text by line number.

> O famulier foo, that his servyce bedeth!
> O servant traytour, false hoomly hewe,
> Lyk to the naddre in bosom sly untrewe,
> God shilde us alle from youre aqueyntaunce!
> O Januarie, dronken in plesaunce
> In mariage, se how thy Damyan,
> Thyn owene squier and thy borne man,
> Entendeth for to do thee vileynye.
> God graunte thee thyn hoomly fo t'espye!
> For in this world nys worse pestilence
> Than hoomly foo al day in thy presence. (1783–1794)

This develops the theme introduced by Thomas's Isolt, of the particular danger posed by trusted dependents turned enemies.[150] What is surprising about this is that Damian has not so far given the impression of *intending* anything in particular, or of presenting much of a threat to January; rather, he has been shown prepared to wait passively for May's mercy. Nor has any of the preceding discussion of marriage focussed on the danger posed by men who might try to steal other men's wives. The vehemence of this passage makes it stand out as an ironic comment on the relative degrees of agency exercised by Damian and May. The narrator insists on his own mystification at May's easy acquiescence to Damian's suit, several times emphasizing her *pitee*, ostensibly by way of explaining her behaviour. He "kan nat seye" whether the cause was destiny, chance, nature, the influence of the stars, or what; only God knows (1967–1976). Susan K. Hagen notes that we begin to lose sympathy with May once she begins to act on her own sexual desires, once the Merchant's comic strategy moves from innuendo, suggesting the disparity between what January thinks and what we can assume (though we are never told) May thinks, to showing what May actually *does*. "Admittedly," Hagen writes, "had she and Damian met in a

150. See pp. 14 and 304 above.

flowered bower in the tenderness and bashfulness of secretive young lovers rather than in a tree, our sympathies might well have remained with her. But then, we would have a romance, not a fabliau, and the Merchant would not have fulfilled his intention to speak of the cursedness of women."[151] In fact, even the typical fabliau lovers of the *Miller's Tale* preserve more dignity in their love-making, and seem more deserving of the audience's sympathy, than Damian and May. But they were further from the status of romance characters to begin with. Hagen makes an important point with this passing comment; Damian and May begin to sketch out the trajectory of a romance couple, not just in their behaviour but also in their social situations, then horribly belie romance expectations. As Benson observes: "Part of the reason that May's infidelity and January's lust seem uglier than anything in Chaucer's other fabliaux is that we are forced to measure them against much higher standards."[152] This is in part because of the aristocratic setting of the tale.

At the same time, the *Merchant's Tale* has never really been in any danger of being a romance. Janet Boothman calls attention to the tale's hybrid form, contrasting it with the more easily classifiable *Miller's Tale.*[153] January's desires are presented in more detail and more negatively than is the case with John in the *Miller's Tale*; although both men are presented as doting upon their young wives, only in January's case is there "a crass, unfeeling, almost

151. Hagen, "Chaucer's May, Standup Comics, and Critics," 136.

152. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 129.

153. Boothman, 4.

pornographic detachment" in the details.[154] January is presented as self-centred, treating May as an object, in contrast to John, whose first thought on hearing of the impending flood is for the safety of his wife.[155] As the opening of the tale moves from January's origins to describing how he "folwed ay his bodily delyt / On wommen" (1249–1250), Benson notes,"the potentially noble world of knighthood is reduced to be the low fabliau world of gross physical appetite—foreshadowing many other contrasts to come."[156]

Some critics argue that January should be understood as basically a merchant like the teller of his tale. Elizabeth Simmons-O'Neill seems to contradict herself when she writes that "January is simply enacting the role of a knight in a romance" in his attempt to mould May to his desires, and later comments on "his mercantile view of humanity," which leads him to view his wife as an object to be possessed.[157] A. S. G. Edwards suggests that Damian is criticized by the narrator less for being an adulterer than for violating the household hierarchy and January's property.[158] Simmons-O'Neill similarly refers to "class warfare" as an element in Damian's betrayal of his lord.[159] Calabrese suggests that January, although called a knight, is in fact portrayed as a merchant, treating May as property in a way that clearly "betrays his mercantile

154. Ibid., 7.

155. Ibid., 8.

156. Benson, *Chaucer's Drama*, 118.

157. Simmons-O'Neill, "Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*," 395–96.

158. Edwards, "The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer," 425.

159. Simmons-O'Neill, 405.

identity."[160] The garden which January creates in order to disport himself with May is likened to the merchant's storehouse because of its stone walls, and is frequented by Pluto, god of avarice, and Proserpina, goddess of wealth.[161] This serves to merge "the imagery of sexual and mercantile delight."[162] January is associated with merchants "in name, in implied profession and in lustful inclination," and is thus linked with the teller of the tale.[163] Calabrese characterizes the tale as "about a fearful merchant who stores up his wife, and clutches her avariciously by the hand."[164]

Other critics acknowledge the importance of the aristocratic setting to the tale's effect. In discussing how the *Merchant's Tale* represents the bourgeois outlook of its teller, Patterson notes that besides reflecting learned Latin and clerical culture, it is "saturated with the materials and tropes of courtly writing." The tale's protagonist is a knight, and "the Merchant never allows us to forget that the action takes place within a courtly context and that much of the behaviour it represents—both marital and extramarital—is governed by courtly norms of value." For instance: the celebration of January and May's marriage is embellished with classical allusion typical of courtly writing; May's seclusion after the wedding is said to be a specifically noble custom (1889), and there is a "tragic import" ascribed to her unfaithfulness by the use of epic apostrophe (1783–94, 1866–74) and "Boethian metaphysics" (1967, 2057). Finally there is the scene in the garden, which brings in Pluto and Proserpina as well as a reference to the *Roman de*

160. Calabrese, "May Devoid of All Delight: January, the *Merchant's Tale* and the *Romance of the Rose*," 273.

161. Ibid., 277–78.

162. Ibid., 278.

163. Ibid., 279.

164. Ibid., 280.

la Rose.[165] Patterson, like Benson, argues that there is more to this tale and its relationship with its teller than simply bitterness and mockery; the use of courtly convention here "harbors affirmation as well as negation."[166] The ambivalence which applies to the narrator's deployment of learned and biblical allusion can also apply to his use of "courtly discourse," so that when May defends her status as "a gentil womman," "the force of the irony derives from the Merchant's commitment to an idea of gentility that passes judgement on her depravity."[167] Edwards comments on the complexity of May's designation as *gentil* in her dealings with Damian. The use of the word for her, and her use of it for herself, just before she commits adultery, remind us of what she is and what she is meant to be, just "as she is about to do what is incompatible with that status."[168]

Rosalind Field argues that January is clearly depicted as a knight in a number of ways. As an old man, he does not fit the mould of the romance knight, but rather displays knightly features more appropriate to his age, in particular his aristocratic household.[169] His home is called a *paleys* (1712), a term used for the dwellings of Theseus in the *Knight's Tale* and also of Criseyde, and one which indicates either the home of a ruler or another luxurious and high-status dwelling.[170] His palace is filled with the household one would expect of a prominent aristocrat.

165. Patterson, 335.

166. Ibid., 336.

167. Ibid., 337.

168. Edwards, 424.

169. Field, "January's 'Honeste Thynges': Knighthood and Narrative in the *Merchant's Tale*," 39.

170. Ibid., 40.

He has a squire who fills the role of "marchal of his halle" (1930), something which indicates a large and prestigious household.[171] We see him surrounded in his daily life by deferential squires, of whom his "famulier foo" Damian is one. Field notes, "The irony latent in the concern [January] expresses for Damian draws on the sense that this is a relationship of public dependence and a publicly acknowledged difference in rank."[172] It is entirely appropriate in this context that a lord should send his wife to visit a sick dependent. Damian, begging for May's love, fears for his life if she reveals him to his lord. Field points out that this fear on the part of the would-be cuckolder posits January as a more powerful figure than the typical fabliau husband.[173] Placebo's speech emphasizes January's status as a lord; he professes to have been a counsellor to great men all his life, and has got on well by assuming that they are always right. January is placed firmly in the category of lords whom Placebo knows to be wise by virtue of their position (1492–1511). January's marriage feast is celebrated with appropriate ostentation, with the narrator distancing himself from the customs of "thise nobles alle" (1890).[174] The narrator also calls attention to January's status, in a scornful way, when describing the life that he sets out to live with May, and the garden that he has built (a usual feature of an aristocratic house).[175] (2023–2029) January is shown to be concerned not so much with wealth as with his

171. Ibid., 40–41.

172. Ibid., 41.

173. Ibid., 42.

174. Ibid., 41.

175. Ibid., 42.

succession, an aristocratic rather than a mercantile concern.[176] He remarks, for instance: "Yet were me levere houndes had me eten / Than that myn heritage sholde falle / In straunge hand" (1438–1440). Field concludes that January is presented consistently as a knight, and that to insist otherwise shows a perverse unwillingness to grant that he can be both a nobleman and a reprobate, "a belief that finds no easy support in the works of Chaucer." Rather, January, as a member of the aristocracy, is satirized, perhaps with an underlying idea of an antagonism between his class and that of the merchant tale-teller, "between the new man and the old money."[177]

Privacy in the aristocratic home is shown, as usual, to be a fleeting luxury. The master of the house is surrounded by attendants, who must be sent out of the room before he can enjoy private pleasures with his new bride (1813). January's name ironically recalls the god of doors and thresholds who was invoked in relation to Pandarus. But January is not favoured by his namesake, and possesses no real control even of his own space and its entrances.[178] There is a hint of intermediary activity early in the poem, not in connection with illicit love but with aristocratic marriage. January sends for his friends when considering marriage, not so much to ask their opinion as to tell them "th'effect of his entente" (1398). He intends to look for a suitable wife, but asks his friends also to keep an eye out, since they have the advantage of numbers (1410–1414). In the end, he chooses "of his owene auctoritee; / For love is blynd alday, and may

176. Ibid., 43.

177. Ibid., 44.

178. On January's relation to Janus, see Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, 224–227.

nat see" (1597–1598). Then he sends for his friends to inform them that they may cease their search (1614). He forbids any disagreement this time, but asks for his friends' assistance in arranging the marriage: "And preyed hem to laboure in this nede, / And shapen that he faille nat to spede" (1631–1632). This they do: "They wroghten so, by sly and wys tretee, / That she, this mayden which that Mayus highte, / As hastily as evere that she myghte / Shal wedded be unto this Januarie" (1692–1695). The communal nature of the household works in Damian's favour, as his absence from hall is noticed by January, who sends May to see him, with her "wommen alle" (1921). Afterwards, however, the use of privacy in the poem changes drastically in tone. The tale's most notorious moment is May's reading of Damian's note in the privacy of the privy. Hagen's comments on this detail are astute: "Literature on the tale abounds with disapprobations of May for reading a love letter in such an uncouth place. But in all fairness to May, where else was she to get some privacy from her hovering husband?"[179] There is a certain realism about the choice of venue; but the impact of the scene depends largely on the complete inappropriateness of such realism to a story of courtly love.[180]

January's garden is a private, locked place, associated with courtly love from its first description, as well as with unbridled sexuality (with the reference to Priapus), and fully accessible to the fairy king and queen. More than just a convenient place for lovers to meet, the garden is crucial to the tale's climax. May's privacy is severely curtailed by the constant physical proximity, indeed contiguity, of her husband, and both she and Damian suffer from the

179. Hagen, 137.

180. And, of course, on the devastating use of the word "softely."

frustration of their desires. Speech becomes impossible because of the constant eavesdropper. However, they are able to communicate by visual means, and indeed to set up a fairly elaborate plan in this fashion. The narrator's outburst about the lengths lovers will go to, is, as Gwen Griffiths observes, singularly inapt in its citation of Pyramus and Thisbe. The Ovidian lovers were able to speak but not touch, and failed where Damian and May succeed, in their attempt to come together.[181] May makes use of the private nature of the garden, with its one key; Damian gains entry "in swich manere / That no wight mighte it see neither y-here" (2153–2154). "January's chamber," Field writes, "and later his garden, are attempts to create private space, a private space in which his most intimate relationship can be enjoyed. The tale is suspicious of privacy and secrecy and the narration is intrusive and prurient."[182] Although January's foolishness is revealed to the audience, he is never made a public fool of within the tale. Indeed, the moment when he comes to know his own shame happens in one of his most private spaces. Whereas John the carpenter is exposed to the laughter of his neighbours, aware of his foolishness, and physically injured by its outcome, January, believing his honour intact, is held up as an object of scorn to the audience alone. The tale concludes not with an unravelling of its deceptions but with their final, discomfiting knitting up.

Few critics today would agree with the assessment of Schlauch and Holman that Chaucer, having begun his career comfortably within the courtly love tradition, rejected it in his later years in a fit of egalitarianism. Even in *Troilus and Criseyde*, with its serious presentation of

181. Gwen Griffiths, "Receding Images of Initiators and Recipients—Yet Another Reflection on the Merchant's Tale," *Papers on Language and Literature* 25 (1989), 256.

182. Field, 45.

an idealized love story, the overtones of a non-courtly tradition of mediation complicate matters considerably. Both the Miller's and the Merchant's tales presuppose an awareness of the courtly tradition, and neither can be taken as a thorough rejection of it. All three of these works deal in relatively complex ways with the theme of lovers' privacy. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the go-between character who manipulates, insures and at the same time violates privacy has taken on a more prominent role than ever before. Still living in a recognizably medieval setting and subject to many of the same concerns as their literary predecessors, the lovers in Chaucer's romance are aided and manipulated by a figure who draws out some of the tensions of the mediating role in a wholly new way, while at the same time toeing the line of courtly secrecy. In the two *Canterbury Tales*, the romance staple of lovers seeking to create and maintain private experience is turned into first boisterous comedy, then bitter satire. The precepts of Ovid and Andreas Capellanus still echo in these texts, and while their characters are shown failing and falling short of courtly perfection, the tales probably come closer than any of the serious romances to recapturing the satiric outlook of the preceptors themselves.

Conclusion

> Loncs tems pot nostr' amors durar,
> sol can locs er, volham parlar,
> e can locs non er, remanha.
>
> Our love may last a long time,
> If only we converse when the place is safe,
> And when the place is not safe, we desist.[1]

This is a sentiment which could easily be put in the mouth of Tristan or Guinevere, aristocratic adulterers carrying on their affairs precariously at legendary courts. It is reminiscent of advice given by Ovid and echoed by Andreas Capellanus; it speaks to fears voiced by characters as diverse as the bird-knight Muldumarec in Marie de France's *Guigemar* and Chaucer's Criseyde. In this case it is expressed by Bernart de Ventadorn, encouraging his lady to defy the *lauzengiers* who would interfere with their love. Troubadour lyrics have little to say about literal private spaces, but much to say about the outsiders who threaten the private mutuality of lovers. Bernart elsewhere expresses the wish that "lauzenger" and "trichador" had horns in their foreheads, so that they could be more easily identified, thus allowing his lady to recognize his own sincerity.[2] He has nothing to share with these villains, because they will not keep "rics jois celatz" ("precious joy hidden").[3] The *lauzengiers* are hostile outside forces; the troubadours often define themselves by asserting their difference from them.[4] There are beneficent outside forces as

1. "Estat ai com om esperdutz," in *Chansons d'amour*, 176–178, ll. 46–48.

2. "Non es meravelha s'eu chan" (PC 70,31), in *Chansons d'amour*, 60–62, ll. 35-36.

3. "Per melhs cobrir lo mal pes e·l cossire" (PC 70,35), in *Chansons d'amour*, 140–142, ll. 37-42.

4. On the *lauzengiers* in troubadour poetry, see, among others, Cropp, *Le Vocabulaire courtois des troubadours de l'époque classique*; Kay, "The contradictions of courtly love: the evidence of the *lauzengiers*"; Köhler, "Observations historique et sociologiques sur la poésie des troubadours"; Monson, "Les *Lauzengiers*."

well. Dialogue songs dramatize conversations between poetic personae seeking and offering love advice. Giraut de Bornelh mentions friendly advice in a number of his songs, and explains in one that he needs a confidant not only for practical purposes of message-carrying, but also because he needs someone to talk to about his lady when she is not around.[5]

It is in narrative poetry that we see characters like the *lauzengiers* and messengers of lyric acting in time and space, and access to private space, as this study has shown, becomes a prominent feature of their role. The circumstances of daily life in the Middle Ages, in courts and in cities, gave rise to a category of people who could be called "private." For members of the nobility and the middle class, an array of such people—attendants, confidants, household servants and trusted friends—could share in one's *priveté*, both by occupying or controlling private space, and by compensating for the lack of such space, becoming repositories of secrets and guardians of private experience. Medieval adaptations of the *Ars Amatoria* show the importance of these figures, whose presence in these texts subtly changes the advice of the ancient master. They also acknowledge the dangers posed by impostors in the private realm, such as the *lauzengiers* whom the troubadours execrate and fear. The lovers in *Milun* fear these figures too, but manage to evade them. Tristan and Isolt are confronted by specific examples of the conventional type, and repeatedly succeed in negating their influence and escaping their judgement. There is also the danger of surveillance by agents of legitimate (or, judged according to love's values, illegitimate) authority. This is faced by the lovers in *Guigemar*, where it is ultimately overcome, and in *Yonec*, where it is not.

5. "De chantar" (PC 242,19), in *The Cansos and Sirventes of Giraut de Borneil*, 246–250, ll. 65–80.

The private people in courtly love narratives who are not slanderers and spies are often very engaging characters. Even slightly sketched figures such as the maid in *Guigemar* and the chamberlain in *Eliduc* seem to present an appealing freshness, speaking across the centuries with their practical concerns and their affectionate service to their mistresses. Other, more fully elaborated figures of this type are often read as stand-ins for the author. They present a piquant elusiveness: in the end, we don't know whether Thessala's magic is good or evil, why Brangain accuses Cariado instead of Tristan, whom Lunete really serves, or if Pandarus actually has a mistress. But this is to be expected; these are characters who keep secrets.

Both the positive and negative mediating figures reflect a concern with private space which can be seen in other texts that centre on lovers' attempts to achieve privacy without recourse to go-betweens. Lancelot and Guinevere confront different obstacles than Nicholas and Alison, and the tones and outcomes of each story are very different. But both Chrétien and Chaucer portray adulterous lovers who must go to great lengths to enjoy their "jeus dolz et buens" and their "bisynesse of myrthe and of solas" in very tenuous privacy. The lack of private space in medieval daily life can thus be seen reflected in the literature of courtly (and not-so-courtly) love in widely varied ways.

This study has also shown that, contrary to what some critics have suggested, ideas of privacy were being treated by writers considerably earlier than Chaucer. Privacy was desired by the inhabitants of twelfth-century France as well as by those of fourteenth-century England. But just as the circumstances in which privacy could be achieved, and the extent to which the desire

for private space could be satisfied, changed in the course of the Middle Ages, so did the ways in which literary works explored this aspect of life. There is a considerable distance between the presentation of Beroul's adulterous couple, for instance, triumphing over the characters and circumstances that threaten the crucial secrecy of their affair, and Chaucer's portrayal of Troilus and Criseyde, for whom secrecy seems more a matter of tradition than of necessity. For Tristan and Isolt, privacy is desperately required, but fraught with danger, and the people in their courtly surroundings who are characterized as *privé*, with access to both space and secrets, can be either benevolent or threatening. For Troilus and Criseyde, an unmarried prince and a widow living in an ancient Troy that seems rather like late medieval London, privacy is, in practical terms, much less elusive. Yet the action of the poem depends largely on the fact that neither of them has any privacy where Pandarus is concerned. Privacy here, as Guthrie argues, has become something more abstract; it is on its way to being considered a right to which one might be entitled, just as it is in the Assizes of Nuisance from roughly the same period.[6] This is a narrative development that we would expect, based on the semantic development of the words used to describe privacy.[7] But there is something else important to note here. Troilus and Criseyde carry on their affair rather as if they were Tristan and Isolt, or Lancelot and Guinevere, preserving the courtly secrecy which was counselled by Andreas Capellanus, even though they are not adulterers. This is partly for the same reason that the stories of Tristan and Isolt, Lancelot and Guinevere, and others like them,

6. See above, p. 36.

7. See above, pp. 9–17.

were so popular in the Middle Ages. Like the lady in Book 3 of the *Ars Amatoria*,[8] Chaucer's lovers construct for themselves a version of an ever-compelling scenario: secret love behind closed doors; private experience snatched from the jaws of public disapproval. They are, in a way, influenced by a tradition of love stories in which social or supernatural threats frequently force lovers to maintain secrecy. The term "courtly" is particularly applicable to this aspect of that tradition, since the circumstances that make stories of secret love compelling—the lack of physical or emotional privacy—formed a quintessential aspect of medieval court life.

It has not been possible within the confines of this study to explore in any detail the connection between the figures discussed here and the *lauzengiers* and counsellors of troubadour poetry alluded to briefly above. That there is a connection is clear, but the different ways in which both lyric and romance texts reflect the realities of medieval private life and the preoccupation with secret love await further investigation. While this study has expanded the field of inquiry by considering the role of private space and private people in texts from an early period, it would also be possible, and interesting, to pursue the development of the themes and types of characters discussed here in later literature. As the circumstances of private life change, so do the obstacles and opportunities presented to lovers. Go-between figures are found in many later texts, as are characters who attempt to interfere between couples; Juliet's Nurse comes to mind, along with Iago. The findings of this study suggest that an investigation into the ways in which such characters interact with private space and typify developing ideas of privacy would be fruitful. Indeed, the potential for further exploration of this topic extends well beyond the

8. See above, p. 46.

Renaissance. Although privacy in the modern world is a concept with a far more varied application than was the case in the Middle Ages, the basic need for private space remains much the same, especially for lovers.

Bibliography

I. Primary Texts

Abelard, Peter. *Historia Calamitatum*. Edited by J. Monfrin. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *L'Architettura (De re aedificiatoria)*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Milan: Edizioni il Polifilo, 1966.

Andreas Capellanus. *Andreas Capellanus on Love*. Edited and translated by P. G. Walsh. London: Duckworth, 1982.

Bernart de Ventadorn. *Chansons d'amour*. Edited and translated by Moshe Lazar. Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1966.

Béroul. *The Romance of Tristran.* Edited and translated by Norris J. Lacy, New York: Garland, 1989.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Il Filostrato*. Edited by Vincenzo Pernicone. Translated by Robert P. apRoberts and Anna Bruni Seldis. New York: Garland, 1986.

"The Boke of Curtasye." In *Meals and Manners in Olden Time*, edited by Frederick J. Furnivall, London: Trübner, 1868.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The Merchant's Tale." In *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 154–68. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

———. "The Miller's Tale." In *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 68–77. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

———. *Troilus and Criseyde: A New Edition of "The Book of Troilus."* Edited by B. A. Windeatt. London: Longman, 1984.

Chestre, Thomas. "Sir Launfal." In *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya, and Eve Salisbury, 210–39. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.

Chrétien de Troyes. "Le Chevalier au Lion (Yvain)." Edited and translated by D. F. Hult. In *Romans*, by Chrétien de Troyes, edited by Michel Zink, 706–936. Paris: Librairie Générale

Française, 1994.

———. “Le Chevalier de la Charrette, ou Le Roman de Lancelot.” Edited and translated by Charles Méla. In *Romans*, by Chrétien de Troyes, edited by Michel Zink, 496–704. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994.

———. *Arthurian Romances*. Translated by William W. Kibler, and Carleton W. Carroll. London: Penguin, 1991.

———. *Cligès*. Edited by Stewart Gregory and Claude Luttrell. Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 1993.

Christine de Pizan. *Le livre des trois vertus*. Edited by Charity Cannon Willard. Vol. 50, *Bibliothèque du XVe Siècle*. Paris: Librairie Honoré Champlain, 1989.

———. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated by Earl Jeffrey Richards. New York: Persea Books, 1982.

“La Clef d’amors.” In *Artes Amandi: Da Maître Elie ad Andrea Capellano*, edited by A. M. Finoli, 125–228. Milan: Cisalpino, 1969.

Corrozet, Gilles. *Les blasons domestiques*. Paris: Société des Bibliophiles françois, 1865.

“La Folie de Berne.” In *Les deux poèmes de la Folie Tristan*, edited by Félix Lecoy, 17–36. Paris: Champion, 1994.

“La Folie d’Oxford.” In *Les deux poèmes de la Folie Tristan*, edited by Félix Lecoy, 53–84. Paris: Champion, 1994.

Gerson, Jean. “Poenitemini: Contre la luxure.” In *Œuvres Complètes*, edited by Mgr. Glorieux, 822–32. Paris: Desclée, 1968.

Giraut de Bornelh. *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition*. Edited and translated by Ruth Verity Sharman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.

Gottfried von Strassburg. *Tristan*. Edited by Gottfried Weber. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967.

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*. Edited by Félix Lecoy. 3 vols. Paris: Champion, 1965.

Jakes d’Amiens. “L’Art d’Amours.” In *Artes Amandi: Da Maître Elie ad Andrea Capellano*, edited by A. M. Finoli, 31–121. Milan: Cisalpino, 1969.

L'Art d'Amours. Edited by Bruno Roy. Leiden: Brill, 1974.

La Chastelaine de Vergi. Edited by F. Whitehead. *French Texts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951.

Lambert of Ardres. "Lamberti Ardensis historia comitum Ghisnensium." In *Monumenta Germaniae historica. Scriptorum*, edited by Johann Heller, 550–642. Hanover: 1879.

Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem. Edited by Alan Lupack. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994.

Le Menagier de Paris. Edited by Georgine E. Brereton, and Janet M. Ferrier. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

"Maître Elie." In *Artes Amandi: Da Maître Elie ad Andrea Capellano*, edited by A. M. Finoli, 3–30. Milan: Cisalpino, 1969.

Marie de France. "Eliduc." In *Lais*, ed. Alfred Ewert, 127–157. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Equitan." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 26–34. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Le Fresne." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 35–48. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Guigemar." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 3–25. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Lanval." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 58–74. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Laüstic." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 97–101. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Milun." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 102–115. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

———. "Yonec." In *Die Lais der Marie de France*, edited by Karl Warnke, 123–145. Halle: Niemeyer, 1925.

———. "Yonec." In *Lais*, edited by Alfred Ewert, 82–96. Oxford: Blackwell, 1947.

Neckam, Alexander. "De nominibus utensilium." In "Trois traités de lexicographie latine du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle," edited by A. Scheler, 60–74, 155–173. *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur* 7 (1866): 58–74, 155–173.

Ovid. "Ars Amatoria." In *Amores, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris*, edited by E. J. Kenney, 119–219. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

———. “Metamorphoses.” *The Loeb Classical Library* 2 (1916):

———. “Ovid’s Amores: Book One.” (1973):

———. *Tristium Liber Secundus*. Edited by S. G. Owen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924.

Robert. *The Saga of Tristram and Ísönd*. Translated by Paul Schach. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection. Translated by Benedicta Ward. London: Mowbray, 1981.

“Sir Landevale.” In *The Middle English Breton Lays*, edited by Anne Laskaya, and Eve Salisbury, 423–37. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.

Sir Tristrem. Edited by Eugen Kölbing. Heilbronn: Henninger, 1882.

Songs of the Women Trouvères. Edited by Eglal Doss-Quinby, Joan Tasker Grimbert, Wendy Pfeffer, and Elizabeth Aubrey. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Thomas. “Un Nouveau fragment du Tristan de Thomas.” *Romania* 113 (1992): 289–319.

———. *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*. Edited by Félix Lecoy. Paris: Champion, 1991.

Three Ovidian Tales of Love (Piramus et Tisbé, Narcisus et Dané, and Philomena et Procné). Edited and translated by Raymond Cormier. New York: Garland, 1986.

II. Secondary Texts

Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Allen, Peter L. *The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

Allen, Renée. “The Roles of Women and Their Homosocial Context in the *Chevalier au lion*.” *Romance Quarterly* 46 (1999): 141–54.

Alton, E. H. “Ovid in the Medieval Schoolroom.” *Hermathena* 94 (1960): 21–38.

Ariès, Philippe. *L’Enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien Régime*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973.

Armstrong, Grace M. “Women of Power: Chrétien de Troyes’s Female Clerks.” In *Women in French literature : a collection of essays*, edited by Michel Guggenheim, 29–46. Saratoga, Calif: Anma Libri, 1988.

Austin, David. “Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things.” In *Die Vielfalt der Dinge: Neue Wege zur Analyse mittelalterlicher Sachkultur*, edited by Helmut Hundsbichler, Gerhard Jaritz, and Thomas Kühtreiber, 163–206. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998.

Baldwin, John W. “L’ars amatoria au XIIe siècle en France: Ovide, Abélard, André le Chapelain et Pierre Chantre.” In *Histoire et société: mélanges offerts à Georges Duby*, 19–29. Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 1992.

Bartélemy, Dominique. “Civilizing the Fortress: Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries.” In *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, edited by Georges Duby, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988.

Beaumanoir, Phillipe de. *Les Coutumes de Beauvoisis*. Edited by Comte Beugnot. 2 vols. Paris: Jules Renouard, 1842.

Bédier, Joseph, (ed.) *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*. 2 vols. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1901.

Bell, David N. “Chambers, Cells, and Cubicles: The Cistercian General Chapter and the Development of the Private Room.” In *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*, edited by Terry N. Kinder. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004.

Benson, C. David. *Chaucer’s Drama of Style: Poetic Variety and Contrast in the Canterbury Tales*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

———. *Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.

Benton, John F. “Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love.” In *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, edited by F. X. Newman, 19–42. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968.

Bishop, Ian. *Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde: A Critical Study*. Bristol: University of Bristol, 1981.

Blakey, Brian. “Truth and Falsehood in the *Tristan* of Béroul.” In *History and Structure of French: Essays in Honour of Professor T. W. B. Reid*, edited by F. J. Barnett, and et al, 19–

29. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972.

Blodgett, E. D. "The Well Wrought Void: Reflections on the Ars Amatoria." *Classical Journal* 68, no. 4 (1973): 322–33.

Bogdanow, Fanni. "The Tradition of the Troubadours and the Treatment of the Love Theme in Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier au lion*." *Arthurian Literature* 2 (1982): 76–91.

Boothman, Janet. "'Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold': A Study of John and January in Chaucer's Miller's and Merchant's Tales." *Thoth: Journal of the English Graduate Group* 4, no. 1 (1963): 3–14.

Bowers, John M. "Ordeals, Privacy and the *lais* of Marie de France." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 1 (1994): 1–31.

Braet, Herman. "Note sur Marie de France et Ovide." In *Mélanges de philologie et de littérature romanes offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem*, 21–25. Liège: Marche Romane, 1978.

Brody, Saul N. "Making a Play for Criseyde: The Staging of Pandarus's House in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 73 (1998): 115–40.

Bruckner, Matilda Tomaryn. "An Interpreter's Dilemma: Why are there so many interpretations of Chrétien's *Chevalier de la charrette*?" In *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook*, edited by Lori J. Walters, 55–78. New York: Routledge, 1996.

———. "Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot)." In *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, edited by Douglas Kelly, 132–81. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1985.

———. "The Representation of the Lovers' Death: Thomas' Tristan as Open Text." In *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, 95–109. New York: Garland, 1995.

Bumke, Joachim. *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Burns, E. Jane. "How Lovers Lie Together: Infidelity and Fictive Discourse in the Roman de Tristan." In *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, 75–93. New York: Garland, 1995.

Calabrese, Michael A. "May Devoid of All Delight: January, the *Merchant's Tale* and the *Romance of the Rose*." *Studies in Philology* 87, no. 3 (1990): 261–84.

———. *Chaucer's Ovidian Arts of Love*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994.

Camargo, Martin. “The Consolation of Pandarus.” *Chaucer Review* 25, no. 3 (1991): 214–28.

Cherniss, Michael D. “The Literary Comedy of Andreas Capellanus.” *Modern Philology* 7, no. 3 (1975): 223–37.

Collette, Carolyn P. “Criseyde's Honor: Interiority and Public Identity in Chaucer's Courtly Romance.” In *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture: Selected Papers from the Seventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA, 27 July–1 August 1992*, edited by Donald Maddox, and Sara Sturm-Maddox, 47–55. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994.

Contamine, Philippe. “Peasant Hearth to Papal Palace: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries.” In *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, edited by Georges Duby, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, 425–505. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988.

Cook, Robert G. “Chaucer’s Pandarus and the Medieval Ideal of Friendship.” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 407–24.

Coolidge, Sharon. “*Eliduc* and the Iconography of Love.” *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 274–85.

Cropp, Glynnis M. *Le Vocabulaire courtois des troubadours de l’époque classique*. Geneva: Droz, 1975.

Cross, Tom Peete, and William Albert Nitze. *Lancelot and Guenevere: A Study on the Origins of Courtly Love*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930.

Dalzell, Alexander. *The Criticism of Didactic Poetry: Essays on Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.

de Combarieu, Micheline. “Les Objets dans les *Lais* de Marie de France.” *Marche romane* 30 (1980): 37–48.

Deist, Rosemarie. “The Description of Isolde and Iseut and their Confidantes in Gottfried von Straßburg and Thomas de Bretagne.” *Bibliographic Bulletin of the International Arthurian Societ* 48 (1996): 271–82.

Dimmick, Jeremy. “Ovid in the Middle Ages: Authority and Poetry.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, edited by Philip Hardie, 264–87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Doggett, Laine E. “On Artifice and Realism: Thessala in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Cligès*.” *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 1 (2004): 43–

72.

Donaldson, E. Talbot. "Idiom of Popular Poetry in the *Miller's Tale*." In *English Institute Essays, 1950*, edited by Alan S. Downer, 116–40. New York: AMS Press, 1965.

———. "*Troilus and Criseyde*." In *Critical Essays on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, edited by C. David Benson, 44–56. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Donaldson, Kara Virginia. "Alisoun's Language: Body, Text and Glossing in Chaucer's 'The Miller's Tale'." *Philological Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (1992): 139–53.

Dornbush, Jean. "Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* and Chrétien's *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*." *Romance Philology* 36, no. 1 (1982): 34–43.

Doutrepont, Auguste. "Introduction." In *La Clef d'Amors*, edited by Auguste Doutrepont, ix–xlvii. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1890.

Duby, Georges. "The Aristocratic Households of Feudal France: Communal Living." In *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, edited by Georges Duby, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988.

Eames, Penelope. *Furniture in England, France and the Netherlands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century*. London: The Furniture History Society, 1977.

Eccles, Jacqueline. "Feminist Criticism and the Lay of *Lanval*: A Reply." *Romance Notes* 38 (1997): 281–85.

Edwards, A. S. G. "The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer." *Modern Language Quarterly* 51 (1990): 409–26.

Esquieu, Yves, and Jean-Marie Pesez, (eds.) *Cent maisons médiévales en France*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1998.

Evans, Dafydd. "Marie de France, Chrétien de Troyes, and the Malmariée." In *Chrétien de Troyes and the Troubadours: Essays in Memory of the Late Leslie Topsfield*, edited by Peter S. Noble, and Linda M. Paterson, 159–71. Cambridge: St. Catharine's College, 1984.

Farrell, Thomas James. "Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in *The Miller's Tale*." *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 56, no. 1 (1989): 773–95.

Ferrante, Joan M. "The Court in Medieval Literature—The Center of the Problem." In *The*

Medieval Court in Europe, edited by Edward Haymes, Munich: Fink, 1986.

Field, Rosalind. "January's 'honeste thynges': Knighthood and Narrative in the *Merchant's Tale*." *Reading Medieval Studies* 20 (1994): 37–49.

Finoli, A. M. "Introduzione." In *Artes Amandi: Da Maître Elie ad Andrea Cappellano*, edited by A. M. Finoli, vii–xlvii. Milan: Cisalpino, 1969.

Fleming, John V. *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Foerster, Wendelin. "Einleitung." In *Der Karrenritter (Lancelot) und das Wilhelmsleben (Guillaume d'Angleterre) von Christian von Troyes*, edited by Wendelin Foerster, I–CLXXXIV. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1899.

Frantzen, Allen J. *Troilus and Criseyde: The Poem and the Frame*. New York: Twayne, 1993.

Frappier, Jean. *Chrétien de Troyes: L'Homme et l'oeuvre*. Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1957.

———. *Étude sur Yvain, ou Le chevalier au lion, de Chrétien de Troyes*. Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1969.

Freeman, Michelle A. "*Cligés*." In *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, edited by Douglas Kelly, 89–131. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1985.

———. "Marie de France's Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine *Translatio*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 99 (1984): 860–83.

Freiwald, Leah Rieber. "*Swych Love of Frendes*: Pandarus and Troilus." *Chaucer Review* 6 (1971): 120–29.

Fresco, Karen L. "Gendered Household Spaces in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de trois vertus*." In *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe c. 850–c. 1550*, edited by Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic, and Sarah Rees Jones, 187–97. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003.

Friedrich, Ellen Lorraine. "The Beaten Path: Lancelot's Amorous Adventure at the Fountain in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*." In *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries*, edited by Bonnie Wheeler, and Fiona Tolhurst, 199–212. Dallas: Scriptorium, 2001.

Gaffney, Phyllis. "Iseut la (Dumb) Blonde: The Portrayal of the Queen in the *Folies Tristan*." *Romania* 113, no. 3–4 (1992): 401–20.

Garrigou Grandchamp, Pierre. *Demeures médiévales: Coeur de la cité*. Paris: R.E.M.P.ART, 1996.

Gaylord, Alan T. "Friendship in Chaucer's *Troilus*." *Chaucer Review* 3, no. 4 (1969): 239–64.

Germain, Ellen. "Lunete, Women, and Power in Chrétien's *Yvain*." *Romance Quarterly* 38 (1991): 15–25.

Ghisalberti, Fausto. "Mediaeval Biographies of Ovid." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 9 (1946): 10–59.

Gilbert, Jane. "Gender, Oaths and Ambiguity in *Sir Tristrem* and Béroul's *Roman de Tristan*." In *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, edited by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert, 237–57. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2000.

Gilchrist, Roberta. "Medieval Bodies in the Material World." In *Framing Medieval Bodies*, edited by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, 43–61. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.

———. "The Contested Garden: Gender, Space and Metaphor in the Medieval English Castle." In *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the Past*, 109–45. London: Routledge, 1999.

Girouard, Marc. *Life in the English Country House*. London: Yale University Press, 1978.

Goodall, Peter. "'Allone, withouten any compaignye': Privacy in the First Fragment of the *Canterbury Tales*." *English Language Notes* 29, no. 2 (1991): 5–13.

———. "Being Alone in Chaucer." *Chaucer Review* 27, no. 1 (1992): 1–15.

Griffiths, Gwen. "Receding Images of Initiators and Recipients—Yet Another Reflection on The Merchant's Tale." *Papers on Language and Literature* 25 (1989): 242–63.

Grimbert, Joan Tasker. *Yvain dans le miroir: Une poétique de la réflexion dans le* Chevalier au lion *de Chrétien de Troyes*. Vol. 25, *Purdue University Monographs in Romance Languages*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1988.

———. "*Cligés* and the Chansons: A Slave to Love." In *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, edited by Norris J. Lacy, and Joan Tasker Grimbert, 120–36. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005.

———. "Introduction." In *Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook*, edited by Joan Tasker Grimbert, xiii–ci. New York: Garland, 1995.

Guthrie, Steven R. “Chivalry and Privacy in *Troilus and Criseyde* and *La Chastelaine de Vergy*.” *Chaucer Review* 34, no. 2 (1999): 150–73.

Guyer, Foster E. *The Influence of Ovid on Chrestien de Troyes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921.

Hagen, Susan K. “Chaucer’s May, Standup Comics, and Critics.” In *Chaucer's Humor: Critical Essays*, edited by Jean E. Jost, 127–43. New York: Garland, 1994.

Haidu, Peter. *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes*. Geneva: Droz, 1968.

Hanning, Robert W. “Telling the Private Parts: ‘Pryvetee’ and Poetry in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.” In *The Idea of Medieval Literature: New Essays on Chaucer and Medieval Culture in Honor of Donald R. Howard*, edited by James M. Dean, and Christian K. Zacher, 108–25. London: Associated University Presses, 1992.

———. “The Crisis of Mediation in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*.” In *The Performance of Middle English Culture: Essays on Chaucer and the Drama in Honor of Martin Stevens*, edited by James J. Paxson, Lawrence M. Clopper, and Sylvia Tomasch, 143–59. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998.

Havely, Nicholas R. “White Words, False Words: Chaucer’s Pandarus and the Antifraternal Tradition in *Troilus*, Books I–III.” *Medium Ævum* 61, no. 2 (1992): 250–60.

Hexter, Ralph J. *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid’s Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto, and Epistulae Heroidum*. *Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 38*. Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1986.

Hill, John. “Aristocratic Friendship in *Troilus and Criseyde*: Pandarus, Courtly Love and Ciceronian Brotherhood in Troy.” In *New Readings of Chaucer’s Poetry*, edited by Robert G. Benson, and Susan J. Ridyard, 165–82. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003.

Hoepffner, Ernst (ed.) *Les Lais de Marie de France*. Paris: Boivin, 1935.

Holman, C. Hugh. “Courtly Love in the Merchant’s and the Franklin’s Tales.” *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 18 (1951): 241–52.

Holmes, Urban Tigner, Jr. *Daily Living in the Twelfth Century: Based on the Observations of Alexander Neckham in London and Paris*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952.

Honeycutt, Benjamin. “The Interaction of Structure, Description and Symbol in *Yonec* of Marie

de France." *The University of South Florida Language Quarterly* 12 (1974): 24–25, 28.

Houdeville-Augier, Michelle. "Pourquoi tuer Frocin?" *Annales de la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Nice* 39 (1983): 169–76.

Hult, David F. "Author/Narrator/Speaker: The Voice of Authority in Chrétien's *Charrete*." In *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, edited by Kevin Brownlee, and Walter Stephens, 76–96. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989.

Hunt, Tony, and Geoffrey Bromiley. "The Tristan Legend in Old French Verse." In *The Arthur of the French*, edited by Glyn S. Burgess, and Karen Pratt, 112–34. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006.

Hunt, Tony. "Abelardian Ethics and Beroul's Tristran." *Romania* 98 (1977): 501–40.

———. "Beroul's Tristran: The Discovery of the Lovers in the Forest." In *Reading Around the Epic: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Wolfgang van Emden*, edited by Marianne Ailes, Philip E. Bennet, and Karen Pratt, 233–48. London: King's College, 1998.

———. "The Significance of Thomas's Tristan." *Reading Medieval Studies* 7 (1981): 41–61.

Huot, Sylvia. "A Tale Much Told: The Status of the Love Philtre in the Old French Tristan Texts." *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 124 (2005): 82–95.

Hyatte, Reginald. "*Ovidius, Doctor Amoris*: The Changing Attitudes Towards Ovid's Eroticism in the Middle Ages as Seen in the Three Old French Adaptations of the *Remedia Amoris*." *Florilegium* 4 (1982): 123–36.

Illingworth, Richard. *Thematic Duplication in Beroul's Tristran*. Vol. 101, *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*. 1985.

Jaeger, C. Stephen. *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Janssens, Jan. "The 'Simultaneous' Composition of *Yvain* and *Lancelot*: Fiction or Reality?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 23, no. 4 (1987): 366–76.

Johnson, Susan M. "Christian Allusion and Divine Justice in *Yonec*." In *In Quest of Marie de France, A Twelfth-Century Poet*, edited by Chantal A. Maréchal, 161–74. Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen, 1992.

Karnein, Alfred. *De amore in volkssprachlicher Literatur*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter

Universitätsverlag, 1985.

Kay, Sarah. "Contradiction and Abjection in the Tristan of Thomas and the Poetry of Marcabru." In *Études de langue et de littérature médiévales offertes à Peter T. Ricketts*, 27–36. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005.

———. "The Contradictions of Courtly Love: The Evidence of the *Lauzengiers*." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26 (1996): 209–53.

Kelly, Douglas. *Sens and Conjointure in the* Chevalier de la Charrette. The Hague: Mouton, 1966.

Kenney, E. J. "The Manuscript Tradition of Ovid's *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*." *Classical Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1962): 1–31.

Kinoshita, Sharon. "Cherchez la femme: Feminist Criticism and Marie de France's *Lai de Lanval*." *Romance Notes* 34 (1993): 263–73.

Kittredge, George Lyman. "*Troilus*." In *Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Stephen A. Barney, 1–23. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1980.

Köhler, Erich. "Observations historiques et sociologiques sur la poésie des troubadours." *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 7 (1964): 27–51.

Krueger, Roberta L. "Love, Honour and the Exchange of Women in *Yvain*: Some Remarks on the Female Reader." *Romance Notes* 25 (1985): 302–17.

———. "Reading the *Yvain/Charrete*: Chrétien's Inscribed Audiences at Noauz and Pesme Aventure." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 19, no. 2 (1983): 172–87.

Lacy, Norris J. "Where the Truth Lies: Fact and Belief in Béroul's *Tristan*." *Romance Philology* 52, no. 2 (1999): 1–10.

Lambert, Mark. "*Troilus*, Books I–III: A Criseydan Reading." In *Critical Essays on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, edited by C. David Benson, 110–27. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Laskaya, Anne, and Eve Salisbury (eds.) *The Middle English Breton Lays*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.

Latham, R. E. *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Lazar, Moshe. *Amour courtois et fin'amors dans la littérature du XIIe siècle*. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964.

Le Gentil, Pierre. "A propos du mariage de Tristan et de la colère de Brangain dans le roman de Thomas." In *Mélanges de philologie romane offerts à Charles Camproux*, 401–05. Montpellier: Centre d'Etudes Occitanes, 1978.

Levine, Robert. "Pandarus as Davus." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 92 (1991): 463–68.

Lewis, C. S. *The Allegory of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Lewis, Robert E. "The English Fabliau Tradition and Chaucer's "Miller's Tale"." *Modern Philology* 79, no. 3 (1982): 241–55.

Lochrie, Karma. "Women's 'Pryvetees' and Fabliau Politics in the *Miller's Tale*." *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 2 (1994): 287–304.

Lonigan, Paul R. "The Cligès and the Tristan Legend." *Studi Francesi* 18, no. 2 (1974): 201–12.

Loomis, Roger Sherman, and Laura Hibbard Loomis. *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938.

McCreesh, Bernadine. "The Use of Conversation in Medieval Literature: The Case of Marie de France and her First Redactor." *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa Quarterly* 53 (1983): 189–97.

McGuire, James R. "L'Onguent et l'initiative féminine dans *Yvain*." *Romania* 112 (1991): 65–82.

McInerney, Maud Burnett. ""Is this a mannes herte?": Unmanning Troilus through Ovidian Allusion." In *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, edited by Peter G. Beidler, 221–35. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998.

Ménard, Philippe. *Les Lais de Marie de France: contes d'amour et d'aventure du moyen âge*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979.

Mermier, Guy R. "Thomas' (or Beroul's) Innovations: A Reassessment." *Tristania* 14 (1993): 97–107.

Mertes, Kate. *The English Noble Household 1250–1600*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

Micha, Alexandre. "Sur les sources de la 'Charrette.'" *Romania* 71 (1950): 345–58.

Mickel, Emanuel J. "The Theme of Honor in Chrétien's *Lancelot*." *Zeitschrift für Romanische*

Philologie 91, no. 3 (1975): 243–72.

Mieszkowski, Gretchen. "Chaucer's Pandarus and Jean Brasdefer's *Houdée*." *Chaucer Review* 20, no. 1 (1985): 40–60.

———. *Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's Pandarus*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Monson, Don A. "Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* (1988): 539–72.

———. *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition*. Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2005.

———. "*Auctoritas* and Intertextuality in Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore*." In *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Moshe Lazar, and Norris J. Lacy, 69–79. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1989.

———. "Les *Lauzengiers*." *Medioevo Romanzo* 19 (1994): 219–35.

Morgan, Gerald. "The Conflict of Love and Chivalry in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*." *Romania* 102, no. 2 (1981): 172–201.

Mullally, Evelyn. "The Order of Composition of *Lancelot* and *Yvain*." *Bibliographic Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society* 36 (1984): 217–29.

Munk Olsen, Birger. "Ovide au moyen âge (du IXe au XIIe siècle)." In *La réception de la littérature classique au Moyen Âge (IXe–XIIe siècle)*, 71–94. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1995.

Muscatine, Charles. "*Troilus and Criseyde*." In *Critical Essays on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, edited by C. David Benson, 23–31. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

———. *Chaucer and the French Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Myerowitz, Molly. *Ovid's Games of Love*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985.

Neilson, William Allan. "The Purgatory of Cruel Beauties." *Romania* 29 (1900): 85–93.

Nelson, Deborah. "The Public and Private Images of Cligès' Fénice." *Reading Medieval Studies* 7 (1981): 81–88.

Noble, Peter S. *Love and Marriage in Chrétien de Troyes*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press,

1982.

Nykrog, Per. *Chrétien de Troyes: Fomancier discutable*. Publications romanes et françaises 213, Geneva: Droz, 1996.

O'Sharkey, Eithne M. "The Identity of the Fairy Mistress in Marie's *Lai de Lanval*." *Trivium* 6 (1971): 17–25.

Paris, Gaston. "Le conte de la charrette." *Romania* 12 (1883): 459–534.

Patterson, Lee. *Chaucer and the Subject of History*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

Pickford, Cedric E. "Sir Tristrem, Sir Walter Scott and Thomas." In *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead*, edited by W Rothwell et al., 219–28. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973.

Pugh, Tison. "Queer Pandarus? Silence and Sexual Ambiguity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*." *Philological Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2001): 17–35.

Raphael, Maxwell I. "Why Does Brangien Denounce Kariado?" *Modern Philology* 28 (1930): 203–04.

Régier-Bohler, Danielle. "Exploring Literature." In *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, edited by Georges Duby, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, 313–93. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988.

Rieger, Angelica. "Balade des demoiselles du temps jadis: Essai sur l'entrée en scène des personnages féminins dans les romans arthuriens de Chrétien de Troyes." In *Arthurian Romance and Gender—Masculin/Féminin dans le roman arthurien médiéval – Geschlechterrollen im mittelalterlichen Artusroman (Selected Proceedings of the XVIIth International Arthurian Congress/Actes choisis du XVIIe Congrès International Arthurien/ Ausgewählte Akten des WVII. Internationalen Artuskongresses)*, edited by Friedrich Wolfzettl, 79–103. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995.

Roberts, Helen. "Lancelot par la fenêtre: La dégradation de l'idéal chevaleresque dans Le Chevalier de la charrette." In *Par la fenestre: Etudes de littérature et de civilisation médiévales. Actes du 27e colloque du CUERMA, 21–22–23 février 2002*, edited by Chantal Connochie-Bourgne, 385–95. Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 2003.

Robertson, Durant W. "Chaucerian Tragedy." *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 19

(1952): 1–37.

———. “Chrétien’s Cligés and the Ovidian Spirit.” In *Essays in Medieval Culture*, 173–82. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

———. “The Idea of Fame in Chrétien’s *Cligés*.” In *Essays in Medieval Culture*, 183–201. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Rothschild, Judith Rice. “Empowered Women and Manipulative Behaviors in Chrétien’s *Le Chevalier au lion* and *Le Chevalier de la charrette*.” *Medieval Perspectives* 7 (1992): 171–85.

Rouhi, Leyla. *Mediation and Love: A Study of the Medieval Go-Between in Key Romance and Near-Eastern Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Roy, Bruno. “Introduction.” In *L’Art d’Amours*, edited by Bruno Roy, 3–59. Leiden: Brill, 1974.

Russell, John. “John Russell’s Boke of Nurture.” In *Meals and Manners in Olden Time*, edited by Frederick J. Furnivall, London: Trübner, 1868.

Sadlek, Gregory M. *Idleness Working: The Discourse of Love’s Labor from Ovid Through Chaucer and Gower*. Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2004.

Sandford, Eva Matthews. “The Use of Classical Latin Authors in the *Libri Manuales*.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 55 (1924): 190–248.

Sandqvist, Sven. *Notes textuelles sur le “Roman de Tristan” de Béroul*. *Études romanes de Lund 39*. Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1984.

Schlauch, Margaret. “Chaucer’s *Merchant’s Tale* and Courtly Love.” *ELH: Journal of English Literary History* 4 (1937): 201–12.

Shaw, Diane. “The Construction of the Private in Medieval London.” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26, no. 3 (1996):

Shirt, David J. “*Cligès*: A Twelfth-Century Matrimonial Case-book?” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 18, no. 1 (1982): 75–89.

Shirt, David J. *The Old French Tristan Poems: A Bibliographical Guide*. London: Grant and Cutler, 1980.

Simmons-O’Neill, Elizabeth. “Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer’s

Merchant's Tale." *Modern Language Quarterly* 51 (1990): 389–407.

Slaughter, Eugene E. "Chaucer's Pandarus: Virtuous Uncle and Friend." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48 (1949): 186–95.

Smyser, H. M. "The Domestic Background of *Troilus and Criseyde*." *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies* 31 (1956): 297–315.

Spearing, A. C. *Chaucer: "Troilus and Criseyde."* London: Edward Arnold, 1976.

Spearing, A. C. *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Spitzer, Leo. "Marie de France—Dichterin von Problem-Marchen." *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 50 (1930): 29–67.

Staines, David. "*Cliges*: Chrétien's Paradigmatic Experiment." In *Courtly Romance: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Guy R. Mermier, 251–72. Detroit, MI: Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1984.

Stanbury, Sarah. "The Voyeur and the Private Life in *Troilus and Criseyde*." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 13, no. 1 (1991): 141–58.

———. "Women's Letters and Private Space in Chaucer." *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 2 (1994): 271–85.

Stanley, E. G. "About Troilus." *Essays and Studies* 29 (1979): 84–106.

Stapleton, M. L. "*Venus Vituperator*: Ovid, Marie de France, and *Fin' Amors*." *Classical and Modern Literature* 13 (1992): 283–95.

Stein, Robert M. "Desire, Social Reproduction, and Marie's *Guigemar*." In *In Quest of Marie de France, A Twelfth-Century Poet*, edited by Chantal A. Maréchal, 280–94. Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen, 1992.

Sullivan, J. M. "The Lady Lunete: Literary Conventions of Counsel and the Criticism of Counsel in Chrétien's *Yvain* and Hartmann's *Iwein*." *Neophilologus* 85 (2001): 335–54.

Symons, Dana M. "Does Tristan Think, or Doesn't He? The Pleasures of the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*." *Arthuriana* 11, no. 4 (2001): 3–21.

Thompson, Michael. *The Medieval Hall: The Basis of Secular Domestic Life, 600–1600 AD*.

Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1995.

Topsfield, L. T. *Chrétien de Troyes: A Study of the Arthurian Romances*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Trindade, W. Ann. "Time, Space, and Narrative Focus in the Fragments of Thomas's Tristan." *Romance Philology* 32 (1978): 387–96.

Tristan and Isolde: A Casebook. Edited by Joan Tasker Grimbert. New York: Garland, 1995.

Uitti, Karl D. "*Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*)." In *The Romances of Chrétien de Troyes: A Symposium*, edited by Douglas Kelly, 182–231. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1985.

———, and Michelle A. Freeman. *Chrétien de Troyes Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.

Vale, Malcolm. *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe 1270–1380*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Van D'Elden, Stephanie Cain. "Reading Illustrations of Tristan." In *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture: Selected Papers from the Seventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA, 27 July–1 August 1992*, edited by Donald Maddox, and Sara Sturm-Maddox, 343–51. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994.

Verdon, Jean. "Dormir au Moyen Âge." *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 71, no. 4 (1994):

Verdon, Jean. *Night in the Middle Ages*. Translated by George Holoch. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

Wanklyn, Malcolm, (ed.) *Inventories of Worcestershire Landed Gentry 1537–1789*. *Worcestershire Historical Society New Series 16*. Worcestershire Historical Society, 1998.

Wathelet-Willem. "L'Enfant dans les *Lais* de Marie de France." In *L'Enfant au moyen-âge*, 301–12. Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1980.

Webb, Diana. *Privacy and Solitude in the Middle Ages*. London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007.

Wentersdorf, Karl P. "Imagery, Structure, and Theme in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale." In *Chaucer and the Craft of Fiction*, edited by Leigh A. Arrathoon, 35–62. Rochester, Michigan: Solaris Press, 1986.

Williamson, Joan B. “Suicide and Adultery in *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*.” In *Mélanges de littérature du moyen age au XXe siècle offerts à Mademoiselle Jeanne Lods*, 571–87. Paris: École Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles, 1978.

Wimsatt, James I. “Realism in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Roman de la Rose*.” In *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*, edited by Mary Salu, 43–56. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979.

Wood, Margaret. *The English Mediæval House*. London: Bracken Books, 1983.

Woods, William S. “Femininity in the *Lais* of Marie de France.” *Studies in Philology* 47 (1950): 1–19.

Woolgar, C. M. *The Great Household in Late Medieval England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.